

From Warzone to Godzone: Towards a new Model of Communication
and collaboration Between schools and Refugee families.

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Abstract

Somalia has undergone a prolonged period of civil war, lawlessness and turmoil, which has resulted in many people becoming displaced, and a number of those displaced people have migrated to New Zealand as refugees. This thesis is a study of communication and collaboration between Somali refugee families and their children's schools in Christchurch, New Zealand in the light of their experiences pre and post-resettlement in New Zealand. This was to take into account recommendations of the UNHCR Handbook for best practice.

Informed by interviews with 40 Somali parents, 15 Somali secondary students, two school principals, and 15 teachers, the thesis examines collaboration with schools in the context of the families' experiences in their home country, the flight process, the refugee camps and the migration and resettlement in New Zealand.

Data were gathered using questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, observation, and document analysis, and subjected to a qualitative analysis.

The study revealed a remarkable degree of heterogeneity among Somali refugee families who have been settling in Christchurch over fourteen years. Many diverse factors were identified such as gender, previous socio-economic status, urban versus rural origins, level of English language, poverty, employable work skills, and refugee experiences such as the level of trauma, all of which have impacted on the capacity of individuals and families to adjust during their resettlement. Many refugees were identified as having undergone major trauma during the civil war and refugee flight process.

These experiences have affected the integration of many into their new society, but this study found that those with the greatest apparent level of recognised need and vulnerability were those with the poorest communication skill. This resulted in their having a poor relationship with schools and left them quite alienated. For many such families the only interface with their local school was being summoned to discuss the infractions of their children and any subsequent disciplinary measures. Therefore, one of the greatest needs to improve communication and collaboration was identified as the ability to learn the English language.

Other barriers to successful communication and collaboration included issues associated with racism, cultural awareness, teacher workload, lack of acknowledgement of refugees' special needs in school policies, teachers' low expectations of refugee parents, intimidating school environments, ambiguous information, the Somali oral culture, parents' financial hardship, parents' lack of transport, parents' workload, inadequate housing and the families' high mobility.

There are currently neither national policies nor adequate resources to facilitate refugees improving their English language skills, nor to support schools in other aspects of their communication and collaboration with refugee families, and this study suggests that the absence of guidelines and resourcing is another key factor behind the poor engagement between the families and schools. Schools and their teachers also need good professional development that takes account of the diverse needs of these families in order to help build and strengthen better working relationships with refugee families.

The thesis goes on to discuss the current models of parent-school collaboration, and it concludes by presenting a proposed new empowerment model of parent-school collaboration which is tailored to help support refugee families. Key tenets of the proposed new model are that there must be principals who provide committed leadership and support, by meeting and welcoming parents when children are enrolled, providing follow-up meetings after enrolment, and developing structures, policies and guidelines to promote parent-school collaboration. They need to provide adequate resources to educate school personnel and mainstream parents about the refugees' culture and experiences, and a designate a co-ordinator with responsibility for creating an inclusive environment with positive ethnic relations, while conducting monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures on communication and collaboration. The model also suggests that there should be greater inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation between the schools and organisations such as health services, social services, WINZ, NZIS and the Police. Implementing the proposed model would build on existing social capital to result in adults and children who are more actively involved not only in education, but also in health care and social and recreational activities where the school is the hub for empowering those families which are most at risk.

Glossary

asTTle	Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BOT	Board of Trustees
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
DOL	Department of Labour
ECE	Early childhood Education Centre
ECRE	European Council on Refugee and Exiles
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
ERO	Education Review Office
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
HSP	Home-School Partnership
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IRD	Inland Revenue Department
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement

NAG	National Administration Guidelines
NEG	National Education Guidelines
NESB	Non English Speaking background
PEETO	Pacifica Employment and Training Organisation
NZIS	New Zealand Immigration Service
NZPTA	New Zealand Parent Teachers Association
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZPTA	New Zealand Parent Teachers Association
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him

PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RMS	Refugee and Migrant Services
TCS	The Correspondence Schools
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TKI	Te Kete Ipurangi (the knowledge basket)
VFST	Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture
WINZ	Work and Income New Zealand
HSP-LM	Home-School Partnership- Literacy Model

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Teachers frequently seek avenues to communicate home when they perceive pupils as “misbehaving” or being “non-cooperative” in other ways, for example, attendance, lack of equipment, incorrect uniform, incomplete/late homework, and so on. The level of contact on these matters can be quite high, thus setting up an enduring negative relationship between the school and home (teacher). One mother asked:

What am I going to say to the people in the school when the only English [words] I know are: How are you? What is your name? Where did you come from? ... Shall I use my hands (sign language) to explain what I say?

New Zealand is one of only ten countries in the world that has refugee resettlement programmes (New Zealand Immigration Service [NZIS], 2004). New Zealand is an increasingly multicultural society (MOE, 2004). As a consequence, there have been changes occurring in the diversity of families in New Zealand schools in recent decades, which have resulted in an increase in the number of families for whom English is not the first language, and who have special cultural and religious needs (MOE, 2004). Somalia is an impoverished country and is both culturally and linguistically very different from New Zealand. There is, therefore, a wide disparity between Somali refugee families and other New Zealand families. In New Zealand, refugee families have equal rights with other citizens. Also, under the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs), schools are required to have proper systems in place to establish good communication and collaboration with all families. Section 77(a) of the Education Act (1989) specifically requires principals of state schools to keep parents informed of issues hindering a student’s learning.

This thesis examines the experiences of Somali refugee families in the education system in Christchurch, New Zealand. In particular, it focuses on the issue of parent - school collaboration. Drawing on and analysing the experiences of this group of families, it seeks to develop a better model for parent - school collaboration. It is hoped that the model that emerges will not only assist with education and broader social progress of Somali refugees in Christchurch, but might also provide a starting point for addressing the needs of other refugee communities in other contexts.

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the thesis, presents the aims and significance of the research, and outlines the main questions that the research intends to address, as well as the scope of the research. It then presents the main theoretical frame-work, the methodology applied, ethical considerations, and outlines the content of the thesis chapters.

Becoming a refugee is a demoralising experience which results from hardships, war, and impoverishment in the refugees' home country. The process of becoming a refugee and fleeing from the home country and resettling in a third country involves numerous hardships (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). Also, there is no universally agreed approach that resettling countries can follow to provide effective resettlement support and integrate refugees into the receiving societies. Because the resettlement process is a continuum, it is essential that policy makers in the receiving countries have a good grasp of the sufferings and hardships that refugees have gone through in their lifetime in order to manage resettlement well. It is widely acknowledged in New Zealand that education is critical in the resettlement process, and it is for this reason that access to education is at the centre of the New Zealand resettlement strategy (see New Zealand Immigration Service, 2004). Therefore, it is critical that barriers to refugee access to education are identified and abolished to help achieve smooth integration.

International research has also concluded that collaboration between schools and families has a significant impact on children's educational achievement (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1996). Similar research in New Zealand (see Humpage, 1999, 2010) found harmful loopholes in the environment of schools. Humpage's (1999, 2010) research also showed a disparity between children from refugee backgrounds, including Somalis, and other students in New Zealand educational institutions. However, there is no previous research conducted in New Zealand that can inform how the impact of refugees' experiences in the home country, the first country of refuge and in the resettling country, can affect the collaboration between refugee families and schools in New Zealand. Because there is no previous research in this area, it remains unclear to New Zealand school staff the extent to which the cultural, religious, and linguistic differences that refugee communities bring with them to New Zealand clash with New Zealand schools' policies and strategies for parent - school collaboration. Furthermore, one of the objectives for carrying out the New Zealand education reform in 1989 (discussed in Chapter 3) was to promote partnerships and make the system responsive to the needs of all cultures (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988). However, it is not clear whether the system is responding well to the

needs of all families equally, and to the needs of refugee families in particular. To address that knowledge gap, this study aims to explore how Somali families' pre- and post-arrival experiences and the policies in schools are impacting on the effective communication and collaboration between those families and their children's schools.

This thesis places some emphasis on the effects of gender disparity on home-school communication. This is because the bulk of Somali refugees are women (Guerin, 2004). Somalia is a male-dominated, patriarchal society, and some of those women are solo mothers who have had to adapt to performing family leadership and other roles in New Zealand which are foreign to them. This has potentially made the resettlement process more stressful and, by inference, also potentially affected their ability to interact with their children's schools. These issues appear to be recognised in the UNHCR best practice guidelines for refugee resettlement (UNHCR, 2002), which stress that consideration should be given to gender differences when planning refugee resettlement programmes.

1.1 Research motivation

My desire to carry out this study emanates from my experience as a former refugee and a parent of children in the New Zealand education system. These two factors gave me insight into the realities of the challenges refugee parents experience in the pre-resettlement and in the integration in New Zealand.

My first experiences with New Zealand schools started soon after my arrival in Christchurch from the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre in 1999. Upon our family's arrival three of our children were enrolled in school. My first experience, which actually triggered me to look into refugee resettlement, took place one day while I was returning from the Christchurch hospital. On my way back I approached a group of students returning from Hagley Netball Centre and heading back to their school. My eyes caught my daughter who was travelling with the students and was wearing the school P.E. uniform which did not comply with Islamic dress.

Soon after she returned from school, I asked my daughter why she was wearing the short pants and no headscarf. She responded by saying that she was instructed by her teacher to wear the school uniform because it was the policy of the school. She also requested me to talk to the teacher because she was not feeling comfortable with wearing the P. E. uniform.

Her mother also started weeping because she was disappointed and suspected that this was a calculated move by the school to encourage our daughter to give away her Islamic faith.

The following morning, I met with my daughter's teacher to explain our concerns that the P.E, uniform was against our religious beliefs. The teacher responded that, while she appreciated our concerns, the school could not legally support any religious related matter because the New Zealand school system is secular and therefore does not favour any religion.

Because I was new to the country and did not know a lot about the education system in New Zealand and its policy, I contacted a Somali bilingual worker whom I met during my time in the Mangere Refugee Centre and explained the situation. He informed me that, although New Zealand schools are secular, they are also required to respect children's culture and values. He also informed me of research which was carried out in Christchurch which he said identified similar issues facing Somali refugee families. He also gave me the contact for the author of that research (Dr Louise Humpage) and asked me to request a copy of her research. Dr Humpage's report (1999) was a real eye-opener for me.

After reading the report, I met with officials from the Christchurch Refugee and Migrant Centre who then contacted the principal of the school on our behalf. This conversation resolved the problem with P.E. uniform.

The issues identified in the Humpage Report supported concerns raised by the police and high schools in Christchurch about Somali youth dropping out of schools and developing behaviour problems. Concerned about these, I started consulting with officials of organisations providing resettlement support such as PEETO- (Pasifica English and Employment Training Organisation-), the Christchurch Central MP and the Ministry of Education's Christchurch Manager. The members agreed on the formation of the Christchurch Refugee Education subgroup to lobby on refugee education issues. I became a member of the group and was elected co-chairperson. Shortly after that, I attended the National Refugee Resettlement Forum and presented a paper about the issues around the Somali children's education in Christchurch, including some of the issues raised in the Humpage report.

In the following months, The Ministry of Education created a new position of Refugee Education Coordinator, a position which I successfully applied for. Interestingly, after only

three days in the Ministry role, I was asked by the regional manager to prepare a reply to a letter from the education subgroup (of which I was the Co-chair) addressed to the Minister of Education, outlining the issues affecting the Somali students in Christchurch. I was also appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Refugee Resettlement and Integration.

I later completed a dissertation for a Master's degree on the "Resettlement of Somali and Afghani families in Christchurch". This research helped me to become familiar with some adversities that refugees have experienced and how those experiences are not exposed to the policy makers and the institutions in New Zealand, including the education institutions. It was this factor and issues raised in the Humpage Report that influenced my desire to deepen this research through my current thesis topic.

1.2 The Significance and Aims of the Study

A key aim of this study is to identify any deficiencies in the current system in relation to collaboration between refugee parents and schools. The data and findings in the study shed light on those and their causative factors, and provides recommendations for their solution. The study will also contribute to the understanding of African/Muslim refugees' needs, and especially for families from less-developed and traditional societies for whom English is not the first language.

Somalia has recently experienced a period of civil war and subsequent political upheaval (see Section 1.6). Because most of the available research in New Zealand and in other refugee-receiving countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK and Norway) has paid more attention to the experiences in the camps and in resettlement integration, there is minimal information to explicitly highlight the effects of experience prior to the war, during the war and the impacts of these on the resettlement stage. Furthermore, most of the available research on refugee education has emphasised students' academic integration into schools, but there appears to be no major research about how families' past experiences affect communication and collaboration between parents and schools. Also, it is not clear whether school policies in the resettlement countries are taking into account the experiences that families went through in their lifetime. Therefore, the significance of this study is that it establishes links between the families' experiences in the home country (before the conflict and during the war), in the flight process, in the first country of refuge and the refugee camps, the experience of resettling and attempting to integrate into New Zealand and the experience of dealing with their children's schools. This comprehensive approach increases

understanding of refugees' experiences and will assist Government agencies, schools and resettlement agencies to re-evaluate their policies and strategies for resettlement and parent - school collaboration. The thesis argues that attention paid to the families' lifetime experiences in the planning process will significantly enhance resettlement outcomes, especially community involvement in education. The research will also help to raise understanding of refugee families, schools and institutions, including in other refugee resettling countries, about how to put in place more responsive support systems for those families.

1.3 Definition of Parent-School Collaboration

To help understanding of the thesis, parent -school collaboration can be described as a collaborative activity which “focuses on the relationship between home and school and how parents and educators work together to promote the social and academic development of children” (Elizalde-Utnick, 2002, p. 413).

The terms applied to describe parental involvement have evolved over time. Several terms, such as parental involvement, participation, partnership and collaboration are among the terms employed over the past decades, indicating the gradual development of the parent–school collaboration concept. Recently, academics have preferred to employ the term home-school collaboration with the view that it “refers to the relationship between families and schools where parents and educators work together to promote the academic and social development of their children” (Christenson, Rounds, & Franklin, 1992, in Cox, 2005, p. 47).

Lueder (2000) helped to develop a broader definition and widened the coverage of the concept of parent–school collaboration. His work extended the concept to a home/school/community partnership:

A family/school/community partnership is a collaborative relationship between the family, school, and community designed primarily to produce positive educational and social effects on the child, while being mutually beneficial to all other parties involved” (Lueder, 2000, p. 30).

His work shifted the focus of home-school collaboration or partnership from being limited to curriculum activities and programmes within the school, to a broader role beyond the school and reaching to the family level.

Contrary to the traditional role of parents, which focused on parents helping schools to enhance students academically, Lueder's work suggested that incorporating the social growth of the child should be a key focus of the parent-school partnership. He is supported by Asher (1988), who also provided insight into how the focus of parental involvement shifted from school-based support to home-school activity, and furthermore suggested establishing links between school and home-based activities:

While parent involvement once conjured images of parents, sitting on advisory councils and participating in a range of ... the meaning of parent involvement in this era has shifted from the affairs of the school to the home site. The term parent involvement now is largely used to suggest parents' efforts to socialize their children at home both in informal and in school directed learning tasks (Asher, 1988, in Greenwood & Hickman, 1991, p. 281).

1.4 Research Questions, Scope and Methodology

The key questions that this thesis seeks to address are:

I: How do the refugee families' experiences in the home country, the refugee flight process and the experiences in the refugee camps impact on communication and collaboration between refugee families and the schools in their host community?

II: Given the refugee families' language, culture and experiences, how appropriate are the schools' policies and systems for parent - school collaboration?

III: What model/models of parent-school collaboration best suit refugee families?

These questions are investigated by face-to-face interviews and other forms of data gathering, followed by an analysis of the data.

The scope of this study is limited to Somali refugees in Christchurch. This decision was mostly motivated by financial considerations and practicality, because there was neither adequate funding to cover the costs of engaging interpreters on an on-going basis to interview refugees of other nationalities, nor to travel to other cities (such as Wellington, Hamilton and Auckland) to interview their Somali communities. Therefore, restricting the research to the Somali community in Christchurch was deemed to be more realistic to carrying out the study. The extent to which the findings of this study are generalisable beyond the Somali community in Christchurch is discussed in the conclusion.

I have chosen to place my research in the context of refugee resettlement and the parent–school relationship using the literature on refugee experience, resettlement and parent–school collaboration as a framework for analysis. The theoretical basis of this research is presented in Chapter 2. The decision to link the families’ experiences in the home country during and after the civil war, during the flight process, and in the refugee camp and integration in New Zealand with their communication and collaboration with schools is consistent with the UNHCR Best Practice Guidelines for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (UNHCR, 2002), the Canadian Council for Refugee’s Best Practice Model (CCR, 1998) and the European Council for Refugee’s working paper on the integration of refugees in Europe (ECRE, 1998).

The UNHCR, the ECR and the CCR all advocate for the inclusion of individual’s experiences in the home country, including their personal profile (gender, education, lifestyle, age, and language), the flight process, their experience in the refugee camp and their experience in the receiving country, in planning resettlement and integration programmes.

The choice of methodology for the research was influenced by the aim of examining the refugee families’ experiences in the home country, in the flight process, and in the first country of refuge, followed by resettlement in New Zealand and collaboration with schools.

A qualitative research method that involved focus groups, individual interviews and observational methods was employed, because it was well-suited to solicit a broad range of experiences and perspectives from the various participants (parents, students, teachers, deans, and principals). It is generally agreed that qualitative research methods create a more equitable power relationship between the researcher and the research participants than might otherwise occur (see Maykut & Morehouse, 1999). This is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

The participating families in individual interviews and observational were selected from the Somali families who have children in the two participating schools. Participating parents in the focus groups were identified from the Somali families across the Christchurch city to achieve a fair representation, based on gender, age, educational level, the number of school-age children and the length of time that the families have been in New Zealand.

The participating teachers were identified from the two participating schools. Considerations were also given to the selection of teachers in the participating schools.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 provides an overall introduction and significance of this thesis, and definitions of parent-school collaboration. The background, aims, ethical considerations, and the methodology are all introduced. This will be followed by a description of the historical background to Somalia, a description of Somali education, and collaboration between Somali refugee parents and schools.

Chapter 2 will introduce the theoretical consideration of the displacement, resettlement processes, and the concept of integration and its best practice.

Chapter 3 will review the New Zealand education system, the organisations involved in the New Zealand education sector, how schools are governed and provide an overview of the New Zealand curriculum of teaching. It will review the existing literature on parent - school collaboration and its associated benefits. It also discusses the key ideologies underpinning the radical reform of the education system commenced in 1989, the declared aims of these reforms to promote positive parent -school collaboration. The chapter also describes the various models of parent - school collaboration and how they apply to the New Zealand education system. This chapter also discusses current policies on how parents in New Zealand receive information about individual schools, their children's learning and how they can support their children.

Chapter 4 will discuss how theoretical thinking influenced the research methodology applied in this study. The chapter will explain the design of the research, the selection of participants, the interview process and the procedures for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations and the study limitations will also be discussed.

Chapter 5 will present findings and a discussion of families' experiences in the home country, in the flight process and in the first country of refuge. The first section of this chapter presents the findings on the participants' education and lifestyles (rural/urban dwellers). The second section covers the families' experiences of the war in Somalia and the flight journey to the first countries of refuge, and the third section presents the families' experiences in the refugee camps.

Chapter 6 will present findings and the discussion of the families' migration process to New Zealand, resettlement experiences in New Zealand and the challenges they faced. It begins by showing how the participants were accepted into New Zealand and the support they received upon initial arrival in New Zealand. Then it documents the families' experiences and the problems they faced in the resettlement and integration processes in New Zealand.

Chapter 7 which comprises of four sections, discusses the families' experiences of their children's schools and the responsiveness of their policies and systems. The first section reports on the parents' expectations of schools and their experiences of choosing and enrolling their children in current schools. Section two presents the parents' experiences of engaging with schools after enrolment and the effectiveness of parent-school communication and collaboration from the perspectives of the families and schools. The third section discusses the key barriers to parent-school communication and collaboration. Finally, section four presents a discussion of the suitability of current models of parent-school collaboration in the context of refugees, and it will present a new model that is tailored to the needs of Somali parents, with suggestions for implementing the proposed model.

1.6 Somalia Historical Background until the Civil War

Geographically, Somalia is situated on the Horn of Africa, bordering Kenya to the Southwest, Ethiopia to the Northwest, Djibouti and the Gulf of Aden to the North and the Indian Ocean to the East. Although there has been no official census for over 20 years, the estimated population is about 10 million, excluding those Somalis living in Kenya and Ethiopia. Pastoral animal husbandry remains the main source of living for the nomadic population, which represents about 60 per cent of the total population (Cummings & Tonningen, 2003). Livestock is also the backbone of Somalia's export earnings. Due to the great reliance on livestock for sustenance, rain plays a crucial role in people's conditions of life and shapes their standard of living.

Climatically, Somalia experiences two rainy seasons (*Gu* and *Deyr*) and two dry seasons (*Jilaal* and *Hagaa*). The *Gu* rain season falls between April and June while the *Hagaa* (dry) season falls between July and September. The *Deyr* rain begins between October and November followed by the *Jilal* season between December and March. Most parts of the country receive annual rainfall of approximately 500mm. The two seasonal rivers of Juba

and the Shebelle, originating from the Ethiopian highland, remain the main sources of water for irrigated agricultural land along the river banks.

Ethnically, Somalis are regarded as descendants of the Hamites¹ in terms of their “language and life style, their economic mode and social institutions, by traditions and physical demeanour” (Laitin & Samatar, 1987, p. 5).

In relation to social organisation, clan lineage is crucial to Somali politics and social organisation. Kinship and clan lineage also play important roles in mobilising and combining forces during war and gathering resources for political power during peace time (Lewis, 1984). Somalis recognise each other by tracing their sub-clan and clan lineage. Because this clan lineage is taught to children at a young age, it is easy for any Somali to trace their genealogy for many generations.

Two major clan groupings exist in Somalia, the Samaale and the Sab. The Samaale, which is the larger, comprises four major clans called the Dir, Hawiye, Darood and Isahaaq. The Sab is made up of clans that include the Digil and Mirifle who comprise a club of clans residing in the South (see Abdullahi, 2001). Each of these clans is further divided into smaller sub-clans and each clan lives in a specific area recognised by their ownership. The Dir live in the North and in the South, while the Hawiye are found in parts of the central regions and parts of the Banadir Region in the South. The Darood are found in the north eastern, central regions and south. There are also other Somali minority groups who include the Bantu, Barawan and Benadir (Menkhaus, 2004). It is worth noting that because the Somali culture is male dominated, all the tribes and clans are named after a male ancestor. Knowledge of one’s ancestors is crucial, both in times of peace and war as clans’ affiliations are important sources of protection, and determine one’s access to and control of important resources such as water, pasture land and state assets.

In terms of religious affiliation, Somalis are virtually 100 per cent Sunni Muslim, and while the Islamic religion reached Somalia in the first century of the Islamic faith (i.e., the six century), the greatest number of Somalis converted to Islam in the fifteenth century (Laitin, 1977). Subsequent sustained contacts between Somalis and Arab missionaries paved the way for the spread of Islam, which eventually became the common belief of all Somalis.

¹ Original inhabitants of the Horn of Africa.

Somalia has had a turbulent political history, with frequent invasions by foreign powers and an on-going dispute with neighbouring Ethiopia over their common border. Italy invaded Somalia in 1925–27, but the British drove them out in 1941. Then in 1948, a commission of representatives of the victorious allied nations granted the disputed territory, Somali West to Ethiopia and a ten-year trusteeship to Italy. Somalia was granted full independence in 1960 and a democratically elected government was formed but was subsequently overthrown by a military coup in 1969 which adopted a Marxist ideology.

Fighting occurred between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Somali-dominated Western region in 1978 and led to the formation of Somali opposition movements in Ethiopia. The military government was overthrown in 1991, but the power vacuum created was too difficult for the clan-based factions to fill. Despite many reconciliation meetings, the clan-based factions failed to agree on the formation of a broad-based government and this led to inter-clan fighting between the warring factions in 1991. The resulting widespread war and famine forced many Somalis to seek refuge in other countries, including New Zealand.

1.7 Historical Overview of Somali Education

The Somali education sector has gone through a series of historical challenges which can be categorised in three stages: traditional or pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.

1.7.1 Pre-colonial (traditional) education and the roles parents played in their children's education

Traditionally, the first informal system of learning in Somalia was based on a process of mentoring children, whereby the elderly trained the younger generation in important aspects of public life, including manners, methods of utilising environmental resources, responsibilities and other important skills such as fighting skills (Keto, 1990). Oral education also played the crucial role of sustaining norms and values (UNDP, 1999). Training around division of labour along gender lines was another important tenet of Somali traditional education. Mothers trained their daughters in household-related skills to acquire the skills necessary for becoming successful housewives. Fathers similarly trained their sons to acquire leadership skills.

As Somalia was one of the first countries in Africa to take Islam as the dominant religion, Koranic schools played an important role in pre-colonial Somali education. Generally, children started the Koranic schools at the age of 5 or even 4 and completed the Koran (i.e., they were able to recite the whole Koran by heart), which usually took up to 5 years.

Normally, students could pursue further studies in other specialised programmes of Islamic theology which were offered in Islamic teaching centres in local towns in Somalia, Harar in Ethiopia and Egypt.

Besides providing religious teaching, Koranic schools played an important role in providing social and moral education for children, which is why parents were more supportive of them than of secular schools. Parents played a crucial role in sustaining the operation of Koranic schools, as teaching the Koran to children is seen as a spiritual obligation on all parents which emanates from the prophet PBUH (Peace be upon him)'s emphasis on seeking knowledge as a duty upon every Muslim, like other religious duties. One of the ways that parents contributed to their children's education was through the remuneration of the teachers whose payment was usually in kind (livestock) with the amount depending on the student's achievement. For example, students who complete the whole Koran (114 verses) usually paid five she camels. In addition to the low participation, girls usually did not continue their education in the Koran as they became committed to household responsibilities or were married.

There were other reasons why Koranic schools enjoyed more parental support than did secular schools. Firstly, the Koran was, and is still, used to bless the people and livestock. Secondly, the Koranic schools were, and are, still considered to be a means of shaping children's attitudes, as there was more focus on providing skills for self-discipline and respecting others.

Contrary to Western views on discipline, from the Islamic perspective, the term discipline has a wider interpretation. Al-Attas's work on the concept of education in Islam defines discipline as "the discipline of the body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potential" (Al-Attas, 1999, p. 22).

In terms of Koranic schools' accessibility to boys and girls, it can be argued that they were generally male-oriented. This gender disparity originates from the viewpoint that religious titles such as Sheikh were exclusively for male scholars. Also, spiritual leaders, who are solely men, performed other important roles in their communities such as counselling, performing marriage and blessing the dead.

Koranic schools became the preferred option for locals to protect themselves from the challenges presented by colonial administration ambitions to foster modernisation through secular education in Somalia. From the viewpoint of Somali communities, the colonial administration's introduction of secular education was partly driven by a desire to modernise Somali society, which was considered a traditional and backward society. Somali nomadic communities expressed great hostility towards urbanisation, which is an important tenet of modernisation, because they saw it solely as a tool for eroding their cultural and religious values. Public resentment towards urbanisation and modernisation impacted greatly on children's enrolment in secular schools. It appears that Somali parents in New Zealand have similar resentment to the secular education system in New Zealand, because they believe that the New Zealand curriculum has a Christianity focus.

1.7.2 Education in the colonial era

The arrival of British and Italian colonial rulers paved the way for the opening of a few colonial pioneering secular schools. Apart from local resentment, the early colonial education systems were inadequate in terms of quantity and quality, as their focus was on providing clerical training to meet the acute skill shortage faced by the colonial rulers (Laitin & Samatar, 1987). Due to the fact that the colonial secular schools were established in major cities, nomadic communities had limited access or none at all to these kinds of schools. The education sector developed more during the Trusteeship (the period when the United Nations was governing Somalia), as education was managed under the Trusteeship agreement, which suggested specific measures to be taken to develop Somali education during the Trusteeship period in 1954–1960 (Laitin & Samatar, 1987).

Despite Italian opposition, the UN put a clause in the charter encouraging a system of public education, covering elementary, secondary and vocational training, which provided free education at least to the elementary level (Laitin & Samatar, 1987).

Article four of the Trusteeship Agreement served as a term of reference for the development of the Somali education sector during the period of Trusteeship authority. Article four of the agreement specifically stated that the “Administrative Authority shall take all appropriate steps: (a) to provide that an adequate number of qualified students ... receive university or professional education outside the territory... (b) to combat illiteracy by all possible means ...” (Laitin, 1977, pp. 65–66). While the Italian government did not fully maintain its commitment to this agreement, some improvements were made in school enrolments.

Most Somali parents resisted engaging with the first secular schools set up by the colonial rulers, even after independence. As discussed earlier, the reason was that parents were suspicious about the programmes delivered by those schools, which they saw as having a Christian theology focus. Such perceptions caused a low student enrolment. Table 1.1 below indicates the number of schools and the student enrolment from 1960 to 1997.

Table 1.1 Number of Schools and School Enrolments from 1960 to 1997

Year	Schools numbers	Pupils number
1960	233	Not Available
1970	287	2,800
1975	844	220,000
1980	1,407	271,000
1990	644	150,000
1994	465	165,000
1997	604	151,085

Source: (UNESCO, 2000)

Because of these suspicions, colonial secular education could not fulfil locals' needs for education. As a result, they had to address their needs through the Koranic schools. Apart from the concerns about the programme of delivery, the few secular schools were built in major cities so children from nomadic communities had limited access. This made the Koranic schools a preferred option in terms of accessibility, appropriateness of programme, costs, ability to manage and stability.

The fact that the Koranic schools relied more on local resources, meant they were more accessible to the larger population than were secular schools. For example, a flat finely polished piece of wood was used in place of a book to write on, while sharp fine-pointed sticks and a mixture of crushed charcoal and milk were used as pens and ink. As the ink was washable, the wood could be used by different people and lasted longer.

1.7.3 Education in the post-independence period

In 1960, when Somalia became an independent state, there was no unified system of education. Depending on the donor, each school had a separate language of instruction and management structure. There were state-owned schools managed by the Ministry of

Education, Egyptian schools were managed by the Education Mission, Italian schools under the Italian Embassy, and there were a number of other Islamic and Catholic Missionary schools (Laitin & Samatar, 1987).

Because of the disarray that existed in the education system, the first step taken by the first post-independence government in the education sector was the creation of a unified system for the entire country, providing more resources to expand primary and secondary education, and establishing a National University, whose teaching staff were mostly Italian academics.

As pointed out by Laitin and Samatar (1987), the lack of a cohesive education policy in Somalia gave way to the language reform programme involving the introduction of a written Somali language and the launching of an adult literacy campaign in 1972. Before the adoption of the Somali script, which is based on the Roman alphabet, English and Italian were the two official languages of Somalia. The Arabic language, which is the language of the Koran, was the third official language. Because of the low literacy rate, a minimal number of the population could speak English or Italian, and only these people could take up the few available clerical and technical jobs. Clerical and technical training became popular and in demand as there was an acute shortage of people with clerical and technical skills. Rodney (1974, cited in Abdi, 1998, p. 331) asserted that “the focus of colonial schools was to train Africans on administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms, which meant the participation of few Africans in the domination and exploitation of the continents” This argument is supported by the popular Somali poem by Abdullahi Qarshe, which states “*dowlad wada karani ah dunidaba majoogtee*”. This poem implies that there is no government in the world whose people are trained for clerical works.

Two policies which were central to the military government education reform were the closure or nationalisation of all private schools, and making primary education compulsory for school-age children. This gave a boost to state primary and secondary school enrolments. As part of the restructuring programme, two Ministries were formed; one responsible for the compulsory sector and the other for tertiary education. The Ministry of Education was assigned the responsibility of promoting education in primary, secondary and technical schools, and in vocational primary and technical teachers training colleges. The Ministry of Higher Education and Culture looked after secondary teacher training colleges, the Somali Academy for the Development of Science and Arts, the museums and the

National Library. The National University was given autonomous status (UNICEF, 1987). The length of time spent in each part of the education system was redefined. Students now spend 3 years in early childhood education (optional), followed by 4 years elementary, 4 years intermediate, 4 years secondary and university. Other tertiary options included courses in nursing (2 years), veterinary science (2 years), and range management and forestry (also 2 years; UNICEF, 1987).

Unlike New Zealand, in Somalia, student class placement is based on students' academic level of learning, rather than age level. In terms of parents' involvement, in the Somali culture, teachers are deemed to be responsible for the child's entire development, rather than just delivering the curriculum learning. Parents are usually only called upon by teachers when their child is a problem.

The education system became more centralised with the government being in charge of the administration of schools. Regional Education Officers and District Education Officers were responsible for fulfilling Ministry policies in their local schools.

Educational institutions were charged not only with the responsibility of disseminating knowledge, but were also responsible for raising the political consciousness of students in relation to the military regime's political policies. Special programmes covering socialism and revolutionary ideology were introduced into the curriculum in all schools. As school principals and teachers were public servants, they were legally required to promote revolutionary ideas within their institutions.

Significant improvement was made in the education sector during the 1970s when Somali was adopted as a medium of instruction as a consequence of the massive nationwide literacy campaign of 1974. Primary enrolment was one of the areas of huge gain. It increased from 28,000 in 1970 to 271,000 by 1982 and the number of primary schools increased from 287 in 1970 to 1,407 by 1980 (UNDP, 1999).

During the unsuccessful attempt to liberate those areas of Somalia which Ethiopia was occupying, funding which had been previously directed to human development was redirected to the military. The education sector was one of the sectors severely hit by budget cuts. The World Bank report released in 1990 stated that Somali "public education is threatened with extinction as MOE receives only 1.5 per cent of total recurrent expenditure" (Retamal & Devadoss, 1994, p. 3). The huge funding cuts resulted in diminished

programmes for student support initiatives. As pointed out by UNDP (1999), government spending on every primary student in 1990 was only USD 3.5 compared to USD 27 in 1982. Such decrease in funding heavily undermined the quality of Somali education, causing a drastic decline in student enrolments and teacher retention.

1.7.4 Education in the post-civil war period

The Somali educational institutions that had been crippled by many years of under-funding (1988–1991), fully collapsed as a result of the 1991 civil war (Eversamann, 2003). After years of under-funding, the quality of Somali education started to drop in the 1980s when the military government diverted the resources that would have been invested in social and economic infrastructure to military armament (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996). The decline in funding for the education sector resulted in low pay, poor working conditions for teachers and scarcity of text books, while almost 90 per cent of school properties were either partly or completely ruined (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996; Retamal & Devadoss, 1994). This level of under-funding made Somalia a country with one of the highest attrition rates in terms of teacher retention in the world (Retamal & Devadoss, 1994).

The situation worsened in 1990 when the Somali central government collapsed and different warring factions failed to agree on the formation of a broad-based government.

The civil war resulted in the looting and destruction of the few ill-equipped school properties and other essential resources, making access to education a near impossibility. The physical damage done to the school properties resulted in a lack of education for entire generations for decades (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996). Decades of lost generations imply a huge loss of human capital from which it will be hard for Somalia to recover. “The entire fabric of the Somali society has been damaged, the existence of the whole nation has sunk into a deep dark sea of unimaginable human and material disaster, and the communal mind of the people is in coma” (Afrax, 1994, p. 233).

In describing the desperate situation of Somali education, Abdi, (2003, p. 336), writes:

With no organised systems of learning in place now, millions of Somalia’s children, young adults and adults are all at the mercy of whatever informal education “bestows” upon them. Informal education, seen in this context as what is randomly learned from general societal situations, may sometimes, and depending on the situation, enhance social development. In Somalia’s case, though, the country’s

situation in the last seven years or so would lead us to believe that informal education is not only destructive at the moment, it also seems to be legitimizing a host of negative consequences, and in the process, it is self-perpetuating.

Initiatives to revive the Somali education system started in 1993 when Somali local communities and former teachers got together to form education committees. As there was no central government to spearhead education development, regional education committees were charged with the responsibilities of reopening schools in major cities (UNDP, 1999). Humanitarian organisations, for example, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF, funded initiatives to restore learning resources and up-skill teachers; a role usually fulfilled by the MOE. Several schools that were rehabilitated by the humanitarian organisations later closed due to decreased donor funding and low community support.

In response to the recommendation of the World Bank Report, UNESCOPEER undertook measures to restore Somali education, with an emphasis on restoring educational governance at the regional level and recovering and redeveloping curriculum, material, teachers' remunerations and training (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996).

As noted by Bennaars, Seif and Mwangi (1996), humanitarian organisations' efforts to restore Somali education were hindered by other factors such as a lack of textbooks and trained teachers, the absence of a standardised curriculum and the absence of central government to co-ordinate the restoration process. Growing insecurity, a lack of law and order, and other factors complicated the efforts of NGOs to sustain their rehabilitation programmes. Lack of security also hindered the access of children from minority clans to the few existing schools. Low enrolment of girls is also believed to be related to the insecure situation, as girls opted to stay at home for fear of rape.

Despite the progress made in lifting the literacy level of Somalia in the post-war era (1991-2005), gender disparity remained an issue of concern. Based on a UNICEF 1998 report on the state of the world's children, the literacy rate for Somali men was 36 per cent and for women was 14 per cent (Cumming & Tonningen, 2003). This reflects the dominant role in society of Somali men, and boys' better access to education compared to girls.

The absence of state schools and the increased parental desire to find education for their children resulted in the proliferation of private schools in major cities, enabling families with the financial means to enrol their children. Home schooling also became a popular

means of providing education for the children of business people and employees of humanitarian organisations. As the civil war resulted in mass displacement, private and home schooling, which were the only existing systems, became beyond the reach of displaced families who were already struggling with their daily survival. As a result, internally-displaced families were, and still are, alienated from the education system, widening the education gap between the poor, displaced minority clans and the rich and powerful clans.

Although a limited number of schools have been operating in recent years in most regions and a small number of universities were established in major cities e.g., in Mogadishu, Hargeisa, Borama and Bosaso, accessibility to education remains restricted for the majority of Somali families. Children aged between 20 and 27 can be described as the lost generation, as there have been no formal schools for the last two decades. The only practical experience to which children of this age group have been exposed for three decades are conflicts, hardship and human rights abuses.

Despite the growing disparity between boys and girls, school enrolments generally increased significantly between 1997 and 2004². This increase was partly driven by increased donor funding for educational programmes, and the establishment of private education institutions during this period.

² No significant data is available on Somalia education since 2004 because of the war.

Table 1.2 Enrolment in 604 primary schools in Somalia 1997

Grade/Yr	Boys		Girls		Total no. of pupils	Pupils per grade as % of total no. of pupils
	No. of boys	% in grade	No. of girls	% in grade		
1	30,289	57%	22,485	43%	52,774	35%
2	23,690	60%	15,616	40%	39,306	26%
3	17,986	65%	9,710	35%	27,696	18%
4	11,723	67%	5,683	33%	17,406	12%
Total 1–4	83,688	61%	53,494	39%	137,182	91%
5	5,373	71%	2,172	29%	7,545	5%
6	2,602	72%	1,032	28%	3,634	2%
7	1,398	73%	512	27%	1,910	1%
8	641	79%	173	21%	814	1%
Total 5–8	10,014	72%	3,889	28%	13,903	9%
Total 1–8	93,702	62%	57,383	38%	151,085	100%

Source: (UNDP, 1999, p. 62)

Table 1.2 above indicates that of the total enrolment of 151,085 children in 604 schools in 1997, approximately 38 percent were girls. Enrolments for grades 5-8 indicate a lower enrolment for girls (only 28 percent). This suggests a high drop-out rate in upper primary classes for girls.

Table 1.3 gives Enrolment in Primary Schools by grade and gender in Somali Schools in 2004.

Table 1.3 Enrolment in Somalia State Primary Schools by grade and gender (2004)

Grade	Boys	%	Girls	%	Total	Pupils as % of enrolment
Grade 1	35,982	62.1	21,991	37.9	57,973	28.3
Grade 2	29,231	63.2	16,992	36.8	46,223	22.6
Grade 3	22,652	65.4	12,008	34.6	34,660	16.9
Grade 4	15,755	65.6	8,260	34.4	24,015	11.7
Lower Primary	103,620	63.6	59,251	36.4	162,871	79.5
Grade 5	11,184	67.1	5,472	32.9	16,656	8.1
Grade 6	7,491	68.9	3,378	31.1	10,869	5.3
Grade 7	5,582	70.7	2,309	29.3	7,891	3.9
Grade 8	4,662	74.0	1,637	26.0	6,299	3.1
Grade 9	165	57.0	124	43.0	289	0.1
Upper Primary	29,084	69.9	12,920	30.7	42,004	20.5
Total	132,704	64.8	72,171	35.2	204,875	100.0

Source: (UNICEF Somalia, 2004)

UNESCO research found four factors that affect the demand and supply of gender equality in Somali Education. While there are aspects of these factors that also affect boys, the research found that they have dire consequences for girls. The UNESCO research categorised these factors into socio-economic, cultural, political/institutional, cultural and school factors. The socio-economic factors, specifically poverty, was found to hinder the affordability of Education, while the cultural factors, more particularly the Somali patriarchal culture influence the Somali societal attitudes towards prioritisation of girls' education.

There are also factors related to the budgetary, political settings and the general education policy framework in Somalia which, affect the ability of the system in Somalia to provide girls' education.

There are also other school factors which the UNESCO research found to contribute to the situation of gender disparity in the Somali Education. These include limited female trained

teachers and the failure of schools to acknowledge and accommodate the special needs of girls.

The findings for this research concluded that the affects of these factors (socio-economic, cultural, political/institution) results in girls’ low enrolment, high female school drop-out (due to teen-age and early pregnancy) and females’ limited bargaining power. These factors are listed in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Factors affecting gender equality in Education

DEMAND	SUPPLY
Socio-economic factors	Political/Institutional Factors
Poverty	Budget constraints; structural adjustment programmes
Direct costs (fees, uniforms, transportation)	Insufficient public support for the poor
High opportunity costs/lower rate of return	Political instability; inconsistent educational policies
Girls needed for household/agricultural tasks	Poor quality of education programmes
Residence in remote, low population areas	Lack of clear strategy for women’s and girls’ education
Limited employment opportunities for graduates	Limited employment prospects
Lower remuneration	
Cultural Factors	Factors Linked to the Schools
Parents’ low level of education	High school fees
Lower priority for girls’ education	Low proportion of female teachers
Girls’ education perceived as incompatible with traditional beliefs and/or religious principles	Teachers untrained/not sensitised to gender issues
Early marriages and pregnancies	School curricula in conflict with traditional culture
Role of the girls/women as a wife and mother	Orientation of girls/women to non-scientific fields
Sceptical attitude towards the benefits and outcomes of educating girls	Lack of accommodation for or exclusion of pregnant adolescents and young mothers
	Sexual harassment; insecurity
	Distance from school

Source: (UNESCO, ND, p. 9)

As stated earlier, internally-displaced families suffered the most in terms of accessing education. According to UNICEF (2005) data, the number of students enrolled in 101 nationwide schools in 2005 was 3,572, with 2,309 of these being internally-displaced people (IDP) from the central south zone and only 1,263 being students enrolled in the rest of the country.

Based on the same data, the trend in the distribution of teachers indicates that male teachers significantly outnumbered women. For example, of the total 9088 teachers in 2005, 7908 were men while only 1180 were women. The data also give an interesting indication of the distribution of teachers by qualification; an acute shortage of teachers with teaching qualifications is one problem facing local schools. According to the UNICEF 2005 data, 46.5% of teachers have secondary certificates as their highest qualification.

Koranic schools still appear to be the most accessible and preferred means of schooling for families in the urban, rural and nomadic areas. Table 1.5 shows that more children are enrolled in Koranic schools than formal (secular) primary schools.

Table 1.5 Primary school and Koran school enrolments in North Eastern Somalia (1997)

Population grouping	% of 6–14 year old children enrolled in primary and Koranic School				Total
	Enrolled in primary school but not in Koranic school	Enrolled in Koranic school but not in primary school	Enrolled in both primary and koranic schools	Enrolled in neither primary nor Koranic school	
Urban (<i>n</i> =544)	5%	39%	36%	20%	100%
Rural (<i>n</i> =727)	3%	48%	24%	25%	100%
Nomadic (<i>n</i> =375)	NIL	7%	NIL	93%	100%
Total (<i>n</i> =1646)	2%	24%	13%	61%	100%

Source: (UNICEF Somalia, 1998 p. 40, cited in UNDP, 1999, p. 6)

Besides the local schools, Egypt and Sudan, which maintained diplomatic ties with Somalia throughout the civil war, supported Somali education by providing scholarships to students from local private providers to study in Egypt or Sudan. Based on the World Association of Muslim Youth report, a total of 261 students received scholarships between 1999 and 2004

(World Association of Muslim Youth, 2004). Table 1.6 shows the courses of study chosen by the 261 students.

Table 1.6 Courses of study Chosen by 261 Scholarship students 1999–2004

Faculties/Departments	Number
Education	74
Law	37
Engineering	17
Medicine	28
Business management	18
Computer Science	37
Science	21
Veterinary medicine	6
Pharmacology	2
Islamic studies	21
Total	261

Source: (World Association of Muslim Youth, 2004 <http://www.mbali.info/doc427.htm> accessed on 4/8/2011)

1.7.5 Education in the refugee camps

Following the 1991 outbreak of civil war in Somalia, a large number of Somali families fled to neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen. The majority of the children have not attended school since they arrived and settled in refugee camps in 1991. According to UNHCR (2005), only 17 percent of children in camps attend primary school and only one third of these are girls. The Dadab (Kenya) refugee camp has 50,000 Somali children. Only half have access to education and two thirds of these are boys. Some barriers specifically affect girls and some equally affect boys:

girls' traditional domestic role; poor families prioritising their resources in favour of boys; the income from child labour; early and/or forced marriages, security factors such as risk of rape and assaults on the way to school; lack of clothes and other personal belongings; and widespread attitudes that girls are destined to become housewives and therefore not worth investing (UNHCR, 2005, p. 2).

As pointed out in the same UNHCR report, refugee girls experienced other barriers within the schools, for example, discriminative facilities which involve the use of shared toilets, physical punishment, girls expelled and excluded from schools for becoming pregnant, school administrations' lack of understanding about girls' domestic workloads.

1.7.6 Somali refugee parents collaboration with schools in an international context

Research shows that Somali parents attach a lot of importance to the education of their children (McBrien, 2011, Alitolpa-Niitamo, 2002). This is well illustrated by the Somali proverb "*bar ama baro*" which implies teach or learn. It is a concept often used in Somali society to stress the value of education. Somali refugee parents attach particular significance to their children's educational success because they consider achievement in education as a tool to re-establish in the countries of resettlement (Alitolpa-Niitamo, 2002).

Despite this, there is also evidence that many Somali families do not accomplish their educational goals. The research (Atwell, Gifford, & MacDonald-Wilmsen, 2009; Humpage, 1999, 2009; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), suggests that several barriers contribute to Somali children's underachievement. The first factor is the policies in the Western refugee-receiving countries, which do not always acknowledge the differences between Somali and mainstream families, while expecting Somali refugees to easily fit into their education systems. The second factor is the differences between the Somali education system and the systems in the Western refugee resettlement countries. The third factor is the Somali families' language and education abilities and their cultural and religious differences from the mainstream communities in the refugee receiving countries in the west.

In the New Zealand context, the Refugee Convention, the New Zealand Bill of Rights (Human Rights Commission, 2010), the National Education Guidelines and the National Administration Guidelines (MOE. 2003), all acknowledge equity and support refugees to have equal access to education as members of the mainstream society. It is also important to note that one of the motivating factors for the 1989 education reform was to promote community participation in school decision making and to make the system responsive to the growing diversity of New Zealand families. Despite these, the education system in New Zealand appears not to respond well to the special needs of refugee families. This is evident from the research carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) on student achievement. It found that, while significant numbers of New Zealand students achieved

highly compared with students from PISA participating countries, there was a large disparity between Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and the New Zealand born students (MOE, 2010).

The disparity between NESB (including refugees) and the mainstream students may be the consequence of the system's failure to identify and acknowledge the special needs of refugee students as identified by Humpage's (1998, 2008) work with Somali students in Christchurch. Her work found that the policies in schools are paying less attention to the experiences which Somali refugees went through in their home country. Alitolpa-Niitamo's (2004) work with Somali refugees in Finland also found standardisation of school policies and a hostile environment in schools were among the challenges faced by Somali refugee parents. Also, a study conducted in Australia (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007), focusing on policy and support for refugee students found no specific refugee policy in schools. The absence of refugee policy contributed to refugee students being classified as ESL (English for Second Language). Similar practice appears to be followed in education policy in New Zealand, because refugee students are put in the same category as students with special education needs and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds (See MOE Statement of Intent 2010-2015). This implies that while the Ministry recognises that refugee students have English language needs, it does not acknowledge or take into account the other refugee-related needs of students and their families.

The Ministry's failure to acknowledge refugees as a separate group with unique needs in its strategic priorities can result in it not allocating sufficient funding for the schools to set-up special programmes for refugee families. As identified in research in the UK (Arnott & Pinson, 2005), such oversight can also result in schools concentrating solely on the English learning needs of refugee families and ignoring other needs these students have. Arnott and Pinson also found that the needs of refugee students were not acknowledged at the policy level in the UK.

Loewen (2004) also argues that acknowledging refugees' pre-resettlement experiences in policy planning is critical, because the primary difference between the refugees and those of the mainstream is their migration and pre-migration experiences. This suggests that understanding refugees' past and present experiences is critical, because of their effect on how refugees cope with education in the host country and in widening the disparity between the refugee and host community families. On the other hand, the limited recognition given

to the experiences in the home country may be the consequence of the limited research done on refugee education and the pre-resettlement experiences of refugees. For example, research by Taylor and Sindhu (2012) asserted that the special educational needs of refugees have not received much attention by researchers and policy-makers because the focus was on migrants and multiculturalism and that this had a detrimental effect on refugees' education and integration into the host community. The refugee education field appears to have received some attention in recent decades, but still most of the research on this field has been criticised for treating refugees as homogeneous (McBrien, 2005).

The gap in the research may have played a role in the lack of understanding of refugees' pre-resettlement experiences by the resettlement authorities in Western countries. Sherriff's (1995) work with refugee families from the Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, found that although schools perceived communication between refugee parents and schools as an issue with the highest impact on the educational outcomes for refugee students, the professionals were not recognising Somali refugees' needs. Sherriff maintains that this was because the professionals knew very little about the Somali refugee families' culture, pre-refugee background, their lifestyles and the important differences between refugees and migrants.

Besides the challenges discussed above, the empirical evidence shows that parents' pre-resettlement language abilities and level of education can affect their relationships with schools. Hamilton's (2004) work on refugees in New Zealand found links between refugee parents' lack of understanding of the host community language and their ability to support their children's education. In Australia, parents' inability to understand the roles which parents are expected to perform in the Australian education system, as well as the language gap, were found to prevent many Somali parents from supporting their children's learning (Atwell, Gifford, and MacDonald-Wilmsen, 2009). Similar findings were also observed in Canada, where Somali refugee children's educational achievement was compromised by their parents' limited English and formal education (Wilkinson, 2002). Similarly, in Canada Somali parents' limited education and formal education was also found to affect the collaboration between Somali families and their children's schools (Scott, 2001).

In addition to these factors, the differences in the education systems and the cultures in Somalia and the refugee-receiving countries in the West also presented additional challenges for Somali families. In the U.S., Nderu (2005) asserted that because of the

differences between the two education systems (Somali and U.S.), the Somali parents often found it difficult to understand schools' expectations. For example, the difference in the concept of understanding and following time and dates was found to affect the communication and collaboration between Somali parents and schools in the U.S. This suggests that since Somali parents are not used to managing time and dates and some of the activities in schools, such as parent and teacher interviews (which are planned in advance), some Somali parents may not remember the dates and the time these activities are scheduled.

Nderu's finding is also in harmony with the findings from a study by African American Relief & Development Initiatives (2003) on the education-related challenges facing Somali refugees. This study acknowledged the differences in the education systems in Somalia and U.S., and inadequate support to up-skill Somali parents in the resettlement process, as impediments to Somali students' achievement in the U. S. A. education system.

Aside from the challenges resulting from the above barrier factors, the Somali families' desire to maintain their Islamic values in the secular school environment in New Zealand appears to be a possible source of tension between Somali families and schools. In explaining the possible clash between the Somali families' Islamic values and the secular education system in New Zealand, Humpage asserted that "the religious beliefs and practices of the Somali students contested the dominant understandings of state schools as a secular, religiously 'neutral' space" (2009, p.75). Humpage's argument is consistent with that of Zine (2001) who argued that Somali parents may become concerned about their children's experience in the secular schools, especially the peer pressure which can lead to practices around dating and inappropriate dress code that are in direct confrontation with their Islamic values.

This experience in schools may become a source of tension between Somalis and schools because parents may perceive schools as a venue for promoting Western values and eroding their religious values. The secular culture in schools is contrary to the families' experience within their home country. In Somalia, while schools were teaching Islamic religious education as part of mainstream academic subjects, they were also responsible for teaching important values that children are required to have as true Muslims. Another significant difference between the schools in Somalia and New Zealand is the disciplinary systems. In Somalia, corporal punishment was permissible in schools, which is why families had to

collaborate closely with schools when there were behavioural problems. In fact, in Somalia, modelling correct conduct to children and shaping their behaviour was seen as a collective responsibility, so extended families and neighbours also had a responsibility to discipline children. Renzaho, Green, Mellor and Swinburns'(2011) work with migrants from Africa, including Somali, revealed that instilling good discipline and community values in children was a collective responsibility for the entire community. In traditional societies, such as the Somali society, parents' standing in the community is judged by how well their children succeed in Education.

Aside from the challenge of living as Muslims in a Western secular country, the Somali refugees are from a traditional society. Therefore adjusting to the modern society in New Zealand presents new challenges and may also influence families' dealings with schools. In the traditional Somali culture, the term 'family' covers parents and their children and other members of the extended family, such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

The members of the family are culturally obliged to be sources of support for one another in times of need. The extended family members play a key role in the upbringing of children and protecting the wellbeing of the family. As New Zealand is both a modern society and a welfare state, the extended family support network is replaced by resettlement agencies, schools and mainstream Government agencies that provide English language training, social work, housing, health and income support to refugees.

Differences also exist between the Somali traditional and modern families in both the parenting styles and the role of parents in managing the families. In the Somali culture, parents, particularly fathers, have the highest decision-making authority in their families. The rest of the family, especially children, are obliged to obey parents' decisions without questioning. This includes decisions about marriage and career path. Similar respect is also offered to teachers because of their important role in modelling children. Aside from immediate and extended families, the members of the community are a source of support for families. For example, elders in the community are called upon when there are family disputes and for important decisions such as marriage or divorce.

Another area of difference between the traditional Somali families and the modern New Zealand families are how roles within in the family are set. A key difference is the role of mother in the family, which is traditionally to manage the domestic affairs of the family with fathers traditionally fulfilling the roles of breadwinner and decision-maker of the

family. In a society like New Zealand, Somali families are confronted with quite different models of parenting with roles that are unfamiliar for both fathers and mothers. For example, single mothers may struggle to manage their families in New Zealand, because some of the new tasks which they have to pick up are unfamiliar to them.







Further research conducted in Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK) (Degni, Pontinen, & Molsa, 2006; Omar, 2005; Scott, 2001) also identified the breakdown of traditional Somali family structures as a hindrance to the achievement of Somali students in those countries (Morrissey et al., 1991, p.9) researched one traditional and one modern family in Australia in order to establish the existing differences in the family structure. They found key areas of difference that are relevant to this research. Table 1.7 shows the key differences between the two societies that they found.

Table 1.7 The differences between family structures in less-developed and highly-developed nations.

Less developed countries/traditional	Highly developed countries/modern
<p>Family Family is more likely to be extended. Social control is handled within the family unit. The family itself enforces behavioural norms. The family or kinship group takes precedence over the individual.</p> <p>The Individual The individual is expected to sacrifice personal desires and needs if they conflict with the overall goals of the family unit</p> <p>Class System A rigid caste-like social structure may preclude any attempt or even the thought of achieving upward social mobility. The individual is born into a set of ascribed roles, which he (sic) can do little to alter.</p> <p>Marriage Mate selection and marriages are often totally arranged by the parents.</p>	<p>Family The nuclear family predominates. Outside agencies such as the police and the courts, are a major factor in the enforcement of formal laws and regulations.</p> <p>The Individual Individualism and independence are encouraged. The child is taught to think of his (sic) own future and to value personal satisfaction above all else.</p> <p>Class System A class system of some kind exists, but there are at least some opportunities for social mobility. Parents often make sacrifices so that children may reach a higher socio-economic level. There is also the possibility of downward mobility.</p> <p>Marriage Much more emphasis is placed on romantic love as a prerequisite to marriage.</p>

Source: Das and Bardis (1979) cited in Morrissey (1991, p.9)

Further explanation on the key differences between traditional and modern cultures is best provided by a framework devised by Overton and Storey (1999). This framework (Figure 1.1) shows that traditional cultures' political systems are built on the basis of kinship and strong religious elements, while a modern political system involves democracy and secular organisation. The framework of Overton and Storey can be a tool for analysing existing differences between societies in refugees' countries of origin and New Zealand society.

TRIBAL-TRADITIONAL	MODERN
<p>Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high & fluctuating mortality - high fertility - fluctuating growth <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">   </div>	<p>Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low mortality and fertility - slow, steady growth
<p>Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - localised units (tribe, extended family) - social status ascribed - kinship & local ties control political power, social prestige, production politics etc. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">   </div>	<p>Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive social & economic networks - nuclear families - status achieved - centralised agencies control exchange & consumption
<p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low level of economic differentiation - subsistence economies - production and & exchange in same context - reciprocal & barter exchange <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">   </div>	<p>Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high degree of occupational specialisation - production, exchange & consumption separated - money & market exchange controls the movement & allocation of goods & services
<p>Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small local units 	<p>Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - based on nation states

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - based on kinship & inheritance - often religious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - political democracy - secular organisation
<p>Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong local ties - limited spatial domains - poor communications - temporary or circular migration 	<p>Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mass communication & transport - highly mobile population - diverse migration patterns

Figure 1.1 Features of traditional and modern societies. Source: Overton and Story (1999, p. 28)

The above discussion suggests the Somali refugee families' integration into the secular schools in the New Zealand modern society presents new challenges to both schools and the Somali families. Because the process alters parents' traditional parenting practices and gender roles in the families, it also affects collaboration between parents and schools. For example, with parents no longer able to apply corporal punishment in New Zealand, both they and their children are not familiar with New Zealand parenting methods, and they may not be able to support schools in dealing with disciplinary problems.

This further suggests that understanding the challenges resulting from the differences between the Somali traditional culture and the modern New Zealand families discussed above is essential in the planning of parent - school collaboration. Renzaho, Green, Mellor and Swinburn' (2011, p.238) argued that "there is tension between the old collectivist and individualistic social structures that presents significant challenges for parents in their role as nurturers and guides for children".

1.7.7 Best practice guidelines

Across the literature, several best practices are presented. These include schools establishing close links with community agencies to provide English language and basic adult education to refugee parents. Other best practices included the development of forums in which

refugee parents (especially mothers) can meet/socialise, and learn the school culture and familiarise with their children's teachers (Nderu, 2005b). Unfortunately, while schools and Somali parents may do their best to communicate and collaborate with one another, many Somali parents have limited language and educational ability. Similarly, teachers also may lack the cultural and language background to communicate and collaborate with their learner's parents.

To address such language and cultural gap, Hamilton and Moore (2004) proposed the employment of bilingual workers (cultural mediators) to facilitate the communication between parents and schools. Hamilton and Moore indicated that while refugee parents have different involvement needs from the mainstream families, the existing variation within the refugee families must be taken into account in the planning of parent - school collaboration. They also proposed that schools should establish education programmes through which refugee parents can learn the host community language and raise the awareness of parents on how to support their children (2004).

Well-funded, targeted policies are critical for schools to establish specialised programmes for refugees. Taylor and Sidhu argued that in the absence of "policies and accompanying budget support, individual schools and staff experience tremendous experience in translating social justice ideals into practical programmes of support for refugees" (Taylor & Sidhu 2012, p. 46)

Schools need to develop specific policies and systems aimed at fostering the integration of refugee students and their families into the school (Brizuela & Garcia-Sellers, 1999). Such policies and systems must foster and enhance the communications between schools and families, parents' involvement in school activities, as well as raising the understanding of school staff about refugee students and parents' special needs. Richman's work with refugees in UK schools (1998) proposed that schools should conduct induction for new parents at the time of enrolment to gather information about the child and parents, to inform parents about school policies and procedures, and to impress upon parents the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

Rousseau, Drapeau and Corin's (1996) work with schools with refugee families, including Somalis, found a mismatch between the perceptions held by teachers and refugee parents in relation to barriers to their collaboration. Their work concluded that for parents, the barrier to communication and collaboration was more to do with mismatches between the cultural

expectations of the families and their children's schools. However, the teachers held the view that parents' poor language ability was a factor hindering the communication and collaboration between schools and parents. Similar research with refugees in the USA (including Somalis) linked refugee parents' limited involvement in their children's education to the past challenges they had experienced (McBrien, 2011). McBrien went on to state that "Central to misunderstandings about parent involvement is a culturally different attitude towards teachers, schools and education" (McBrien, 2011, p.77).

1.8 Conclusions

This chapter has examined Somali history, including the history of Somali education. Relevant literature has revealed that while the Somali people are ethnically homogenous, they are divided along clan lines that greatly influence their political organisation and sharing of resources. The literature has also demonstrated that while the Somali education system was underdeveloped during the period of colonial rule, education under subsequent governments remained underdeveloped in terms of quality and quantity. The literature review also found that Koranic schools have been the preferred option for education, particularly during the colonial and the post-civil war era. In addition, the literature points towards gender disparity in education since the colonial eras, which is a factor limiting women's roles in Somali society. It also presented Somali refugee parents collaboration with schools in an international context.

Chapter 2 will discuss the theory and practice of refugee resettlement and integration.

Chapter 2: Refugee Resettlement in Theory and Practice

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces refugees in general, in the international and the New Zealand contexts, and examines the literature dealing with resettlement and the integration process. It will also present models of best practice to promote effective policies and programmes for resettlement and integration.

2.2 Refugees in the international context

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as:

... a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 1951, 1967).

It is more than 60 years since the international refugee convention came into being. In 1951 the UNHCR became the formal structure for responding to refugee crises and the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted as an internationally-agreed instrument for protecting refugees. The initial object of the convention was to protect refugees from Europe. However, since its inception, the composition of refugees and their countries of origin have significantly changed. On the other hand, even after almost half a century since the convention was adopted, conflicts caused by underdevelopment and other factors linked with the widening gap between the rich and the poor, still remain the leading causes for the displacement of people and their becoming refugees.

While the convention has been, and still is, a widely-used instrument for protection, some critics assert that the current international approaches to protecting refugees fall short of resolving the world refugee problem, because they treat only the symptoms of refugee status while ignoring the root causes of displacement (Loescher, 1993).

As a result of globalisation, the ethnicity and cultural background of refugees has considerably changed during these six decades, and particularly in recent years. While increased diversity of refugees enriches the cultural diversity of the resettling countries, it

also presents new challenges, particularly for countries which have no proper policy framework for promoting multiculturalism.

According to UNHCR (2011) there are a total of 10.55 million refugees worldwide. War-torn countries such Afghanistan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia remain the main origins of refugees. Although the number of Afghan refugees has dropped in recent years, Afghanistan remains the country of origin of the largest number, while Somalia is ranked third (UNHCR, 2011). Table 2.1 shows the main source countries of refugees, their primary host countries, and the ultimate destination country.

Table 2.1 The main source countries of refugees, their primary host countries, and the ultimate destination countries

The main source countries of refugees (in reducing order of importance):

Afghanistan , Iraq , Somalia, Dem. Rep of Congo, Myanmar, Colombia, Sudan , Vietnam, Eritrea and China

The major hosting countries (first countries of refuge):

Pakistan, Islamic Rep of Iran, Syria, Germany, Jordan, Kenya, Chad, United States and United Kingdom

The main countries of resettlement of refugees

United States, Australia, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom , Ireland, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Iceland and Mexico

Source: (UNHCR 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.html> accessed on 9th August 2011)

Refugee experiences can be classified into four different levels: the pre-refugee experience; the flight process; the experience in the first country of refuge or camp life; and the settlement or integration into society in the second country of resettlement (Keller, 1975, cited in Stein, 1980). Understanding the challenges that refugees go through in these phases and their impacts on integration is critical to designing responsive programmes, including support in schools.

2.3 Refugees in the New Zealand context

New Zealand has a long history of providing resettlement assistance to refugees who are faced with situations of human rights violation in their home country. New Zealand humanitarian policy and the make-up of refugees selected for resettlement reflect New

Zealand's generosity and its commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligation.

New Zealand started to resettle refugees in 1944, when 900 Polish children and their guardians were accepted for resettlement (Walker, 1996). The source countries of refugees and their ethnicities started to change in 1987 when the New Zealand Government approved the quota programme of 750 places on an annual basis as its contribution to global refugee crises. Another contestable (ballot system) 300 places are also accepted under the refugee quota family reunification programme, which allows refugees who have come to New Zealand under the quota programme to bring their families to New Zealand. As three-quarters of the world refugee populations are women and children, not surprisingly so are the majority of the refugees in New Zealand (B. Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye, & Abdi, 2004). The fact that refugees coming to New Zealand under the quota refugee system since the early 1990s have been coming from less-developed countries with a different culture to that found in New Zealand, has resulted in unforeseen challenges to New Zealand people who were used to hosting refugees from countries that were at a more advanced stage of development, and had some characteristics in common with New Zealand in terms of culture, values and beliefs. Countries stricken by war and famine; for example, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Myanmar (Burma); still rank at the top as sources of refugees. Table 2.2 shows Refugee Quota Programme approvals by country, 2007/08–2009/10, while Table 2.3 shows the New Zealand Refugee Quota intakes for 2008/09 and 2009/10, according to the category of refugee.

Table 2.2 Refugee Quota Programme approvals by country, 2007/08-2009/10

Source country	2007/2008	2008/09	2009/10
Bhutan	150	163	77
Colombia	27	56	91
Myanmar	212	180	83
Democratic republic of Congo	21	59	63
Afghanistan	41	33	36
Other	344	266	189

Source: (<http://www.dol.govt.nz> accessed 3/8/2011)

Table 2.3 Refugee Quota intakes 2008/09 and 2009/10

Refugee Quota Programme	2008/09		2009/10	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Refugee Protection Policy	541	71	337	53
Refugee Family Policy	92	12	143	22
Refugee women at Risk Policy	101	13	122	19
Refugee Medical policy	21	3	32	5
Refugee Emergency Policy	2	< 1	5	1
Total	757	100	639	100

Source: (<http://www.dol.govt.nz> accessed 3/8/2011)

Upon arrival in New Zealand, quota refugees spend six weeks in the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre where they take part in intensive orientation programmes, language training, and have medical check-ups before being relocated to other main centres, mainly Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch. NZIS recently started to settle smaller numbers of refugees from Myanmar and Iraq in Napier and Nelson.

2.4 Theories of Resettlement and integration

From the diverse body of literature relevant to the refugee field, some theories are more relevant to this research situation as they relate to refugee resettlement and in particular, to refugee students and their families' integration into schools' systems.

2.4.1 The displacement process

The displacement process is an experience that occurs as a consequence of factors related to poverty caused by high unemployment, inequality, high population density, environmental degradation and unequal access to resources. These factors are also recognised as the underlying causes of civil unrest and ethnic conflict resulting in refugee flight and displacement. Displacement or the refugee experience is painful and is characterised by loss, grief and trauma.

2.4.2 Resettlement concepts

Based on the definition of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, refugees are people with special needs (UNHCR, 2011). As the organisation with an international

mandate for protecting refugees, UNHCR suggests three models of durable solution applicable to refugee protection. The three models are repatriation, integration and resettlement (UNHCR, 2011).

The resettlement model as one of the three durable solutions has evolved over the last decades both as a concept and theory. Its definition has also gone through many changes and so scholars and resettlement countries are not yet able to agree on a definition (Ager & Strang, 2008). Scholars also differ on what actually constitutes a positive resettlement outcome. Castle, Korac, Vasta & Vertovec (2001) contend that there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of resettlement and refugee integration.

The difficulty in defining resettlement appears to result from the fact that it refers to both process and outcome (Elliot & Gray, 2001). Its definitions range from obtaining status to “full participation in the economic and social opportunity structure of the society” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 8).

Despite the key goal of resettlement being to empower refugees to achieve self-reliance (socially, economically and politically), early research dealing with resettlement appears to have paid less attention to discussing strategies for refugee empowerment. It can be argued that such a bias is based on the fact that most of the research concerning resettlement is the work of Western scholars who were motivated by westernisation and so believed that refugees from developing and traditional societies would achieve total empowerment through mixing with the receiving community culture.

2.4.3 Integration

In the early resettlement approach, the concepts of human rights, empowerment, social justice and social inclusion had not been attended to because the focus of resettlement was solely driven by cultural assimilation. However, the integration approach, which appears to have departed from the shortcomings of assimilation, takes its central objective as being the empowerment and capability-building of refugees in the context of human rights, with the intention of helping them to become visible members of the receiving communities. This new concept shifted the emphasis from assimilation and invisibility to retention of original values and beliefs, capability-building and restoration of livelihood as the core to both the definition and outcomes of resettlement. The new shifts in terms of the expected outcomes of resettlement have helped in defining the definition of integration. Under the new

approach, integration is defined as: A mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. From the refugee's perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population (UNHCR, 2002, p. 12)

A desire to empower refugees to achieve complete integration motivated scholars, resettlement countries and the UNHCR to explore and understand more about the process of new refugees integrating into their local communities and the challenges that they face. However, even with the new focus on integration, most researchers appeared to have focused their attention on the camp and post-arrival experiences and ignored the experiences in the country of origin and the flight journey to the first countries of refuge.

The limited attention paid to the pre-resettlement experience in the early research may be a factor contributing to the failure of resettlement programmes in the receiving countries to respond equally to the needs of refugees (Burnett, 1998). However, it is also worth noting that subsequent research in this field raised the understanding about the factors shaping the resettlement and integration of refugees in the receiving country. For example, Voltonen (1999) argued that the key to individual refugees participating successfully in the new society is dependent on their resources and capabilities, which include language, social, vocational and professional skills. Human capital, which encompasses education, skills and other professions that the refugee has come with from the country of origin or gained in the country of residence, influence their ability to access and capitalise on the resources existing in the second country of resettlement. Social capital, which refers to the individual refugee's ability to network, interact or become a member of local groups or networks, also governs the efficiency and the timeframe for integrating into the receiving community.

A subsequent work by Bloch (2002) also noted four key factors that he argues are central to the resettlement process of new settlers. These are the political systems in the receiving countries, the refugee's own community network, the entry profile of the refugee and the refugee's pre-resettlement experiences.

This suggests that for some refugees, achieving integration can be a lifetime journey. It is a journey that starts from the moment the individual finds it unbearable to live under the prevailing injustice and human rights violations committed in his/her country of birth. The

journey may not end even after attaining citizenship in the new country of resettlement and having achieved reasonable self-reliance. Even after achieving citizenship and self-reliance, and once the country of origin is safe, refugees still become concerned about when to go back as they remain occupied with the question of whether their children will hang on to their values and beliefs if a parent passes away while the children are living in this foreign culture. The elderly and middle-aged usually find it more difficult because of their longer connection with the country of origin and resistance to adopt local cultures, or they may have the expectation of going back.

The stages that refugees go through in the process of integration in the receiving country

While there is broad agreement in the literature about effective integration being the achievement of empowerment and self-reliance, there is considerable disagreement about the stages of integration that refugees have to follow before achieving full integration and how the process takes place for different individuals. The absence of internationally - recognised stages of integration may be the result of the blurred definition of the terms resettlement and integration. Beyond that, there are no distinct benchmarks upon which resettlement and integration outcomes can be measured. As argued by Fletcher (1999, p. 22) a “difficulty in defining settlement is the essential open-endedness of the process. There is no clear point – defined either by time or circumstances – at which settlement can be said to be complete”. The UNHCR (2002) also suggests that the integration process is not linear and that it varies with individuals’ past experiences and the factors related to the receiving country.

Despite the absence of clear definitions and mechanisms for measuring integration, there seems to be some consensus about the factors that influence the process of refugees resettling and integrating into the receiving country. Williams (2010) classified these factors as individuals’ experiences in the country of origin, the pre-flight experience, the camp experience and the final experience of resettlement and integration in the hosting country.

The UNCHR also introduced four stages to the integration process that are slightly different from those proposed by Williams (2010). The first stage in the UNHCR model is the Honeymoon stage and is the period between the journey to the receiving country and the initial resettlement period. UNHCR suggests that, in this period, refugees develop high expectations about the host community; despite the fact that some of their expectations may

be unrealistic and hard to achieve. The second stage is the confrontation stage, which refers to the period when refugees realise the realities in the receiving country and start to re-evaluate the initial expectations they set during the honeymoon period. The third stage is the adjustment stage: In this stage refugees start to reorient themselves and develop new mechanisms to cope with the challenges they are facing in the receiving country. The final stage is the reconstruction stage and it is the period when refugees achieve reasonable empowerment and start to feel a sense of belonging in the hosting society.

ECRE's (1998) work, although it is rather out of date, has some merit because it describes the important links between the refugees' pre- and post-arrival experiences. ECRE's work suggests that the process of refugees resettling and integrating into the host country varies and is influenced by factors related to the opportunities and constraints experienced in the country of origin, the flight experience, the individuals' entry profile, the refugee's own community and the responsiveness of the resettlement policies in the new country. The broad picture of these factors of influence is presented in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Factors governing the refugee resettlement and integration process

Country of origin factor	Flight experience	Refugee initial profile	Refugee community factor	Second country factor
<p>causes of flight (international or civil war or changes of social structures)</p> <p>attitude towards the situation in home country (belonging to majority or the minority, or the persecuted minority)</p> <p>attitude towards displacement (being a passive victim of circumstances or having actively planned for a non-achievable goal);</p> <p>refugee long-term perspectives (possibility of returning to the country of origin to effect political change, acquisition of citizenship of new country, coping with whatever develops)</p>	<p>type of flight (anticipatory of crises or in response to an emergency requiring immediate flight);</p> <p>conditions of fleeing (exposure to physical or sexual harassment, lack of documentation and identity papers or resources, internalisation in refugee camps)</p>	<p>age</p> <p>gender</p> <p>education/training/occupation;</p> <p>family situation</p> <p>language</p> <p>ethno-cultural affiliation</p> <p>lifestyle (urban or rural);</p> <p>experience in first country of refuge</p> <p>length of residence in the host society.</p>	<p>existing human resources in the community (awareness and knowledge) which raises the community capability</p> <p>level of unity</p> <p>ability to participate in local and national decision making</p>	<p>degree of cultural compatibility between refugees and the host community (in terms of language, values, traditions, religion, politics)</p> <p>the attitude of host country towards immigration in general;</p> <p>the attitude of host country towards newcomers (acceptance and tolerance of difference/expectation of assimilation/pluralistic approach promoting integration/separateness in schools, employment or housing);</p> <p>national policies towards refugees;</p> <p>demography;</p> <p>macro-economic situation of the host country³ and suitability of refugee characteristics to the host society's labour;</p> <p>existence of same ethnicity assistance networks;</p> <p>length of asylum determination procedure.</p>

Source: Adapted from (ECRE, 1998, p. 14)

³ The host country economic performance and the chance of providing employment opportunities for refugees and minimising competition from members of the host country or when the structure of local labour markets is capable of occupational mobility.

Similar work by Fletcher (1999) classified the refugee experiences into five stages: pre-arrival, arrival, immediate post-arrival, adaptation and the final stage of integration. His work progressed further the ECRE's model by explaining the tasks that refugees have to achieve and the resources required to move on to the following stage. Table 2.5 provides the tasks to be accomplished, the resources required, and the indicators of success, as well as the indicators of failure in Fletcher's immediate post-arrival, adaptation and integration stages.

Table 2.5 Stages in the resettlement process and key factors of influence

Task	Resources needed to achieve tasks	Indicators for engagement in tasks	Indicators of difficulty engaging in tasks
Stage III: Immediate post-arrival			
<p>Achieving physical security</p> <p>Achieving emotional security, i.e., developing new relationships balanced by appropriate separation from people from the country of origin</p>	<p>Simple information provided in meaningful terms</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Income</p> <p>Education for children</p> <p>interpreting facilities</p> <p>Introductory facilities</p> <p>Introductory English classes</p> <p>Casework services comprising:</p> <p>counselling</p> <p>advocacy</p> <p>referral to other agencies/govt. departments</p> <p>Material assistance</p> <p>Link with community</p> <p>Support system e.g. ethnic group hosting</p>	<p>Ability to locate and use community resources as appropriate</p> <p>Ability to recognise positive and negative aspects of both the old community and the new community</p> <p>Ability to move to next stage</p>	<p>Misplaced anger</p> <p>Depression/immobilisation</p> <p>Excessive anxiety</p> <p>Stressed family relationships</p> <p>Physical hardship</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Homesickness' - includes range of emotional reactions such as anger, pain, regret, idealisation of home country</p>

Stage IV: Adaptation			
<p>Achieving goals set for migration in pre-arrival stage, e.g., economic goals</p> <p>Fulfilment of children's prospects expected quality of life</p> <p>Achieving sense of personal security and identification in the host community</p> <p>Having some sense of contribution to the society of the host community</p>	<p>Access to training</p> <p>Advanced English courses</p> <p>Education resources adequate for children to compete equally</p> <p>Ethnic group support</p> <p>General community support, e.g. income maintenance welfare services</p>	<p>Satisfaction with economic status/future</p> <p>Participation in ethnic group structures or formation of primary networks, e.g., by family reunion</p> <p>establishing women's group</p> <p>Influencing service provision, i.e., not passively using services</p> <p>Modification of any unrealistic goals set for migration in pre-arrival stage</p> <p>Ability to move to the next stage</p>	<p>Loss of hope</p> <p>Regression – to state of dependency</p> <p>entrenched /serious mental and social breakdown (interpersonal problems, family and marriage breakdown)</p> <p>Unfocused anger and resentment</p> <p>Inability to take personal responsibility for problems-inappropriate blame</p> <p>Inability to move to the next stage</p>
Stage IV: Integration			
<p>Fulfilling of ambitions</p> <p>Achieving sense of self-esteem</p>	<p>Access to a range of groups for social, cultural and political expression</p> <p>Including ethnic groups</p> <p>Access to welfare services on a need/request basis</p>	<p>Expressing needs in terms other than ethnic identity, e.g. needs resulting from stage in the cycle (such as old age) or from economic position</p> <p>Access to resources and influence on power positions</p>	<p>Regression to earlier stage</p>

Source: (Fletcher, 1999, p. 35)

The factors presented under Fletchers work (1999) and provided in table 2.5 are critical in the planning of resettlement and integration programmes, because once refugees arrive in their final destination, such as New Zealand, they are confronted with new challenges and barriers related to resettling and integrating into the local society. These include the difficulty of maintaining their cultural heritage and adapting to life in the new society. Other challenges encountered also include the difficulty of accessing the services in the host community, such as education, housing, health, employment and learning the new language of the host community (Elliot & Gray, 2001). The literature also showed that the integration process can be more challenging for “refugees originating from rural or pastoral communities in developing countries where they lived a traditional way of life and had limited exposure to modern technology and the effect of urbanisation and industrialisation” (UNHCR, 2001, p. 23). This suggests that refugees from traditional societies and a non-English speaking background, like the Somalis, are likely to face the most difficulties in integrating into the host community, because of their cultural and linguistic differences.

Models of integration best practices

According to the literature, the first step towards developing a best practice approach for integration is defining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders who are involved in the planning and implementation of integration policies and programmes. Another aspect of best practice is to determine the extent to which the government in the receiving country maintains control over the processes of reception and integration of refugees. Besides these, it is important that the roles and responsibilities of various central and local government agencies and NGOs are defined and clarified to refugees (Ekhmon, Megennis, & Salmein, 2005).

The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) also asserts that effective integration requires coordination and a holistic approach be employed across government agencies and between government departments with responsibility for refugee resettlement and with other agencies. It is also critical that there is effective consultation between the Government’s other stakeholders in those sectors (GCIM, 2005). In his work, Korac (2001) also introduced three elements of best practices in relation to integration policy:

A successful integration policy should provide refugees with a legal, financial and institutional framework within which they are given space for agency and the functional adjustment of their attitudes and skills necessary for entering the society as social actors

Such a framework should also provide a certain degree of flexibility and allow for differentiated strategies for integration of refugees of different age, gender, and educational backgrounds.

Successful policies and accompanying resources have also to address the issues of integration in community and promote a notion of social and individual belonging grounded in social interaction between refugees and the established community (pp. 116–117).

In New Zealand, the recommendation of the NGO Sector (2000) to the incoming Labour Government described the components of best practices to refugee resettlement and integration policy as: (a) establishing a safe and appropriate home, (b) family reunification, (c) employing an integrated approach in refugee resettlement programmes, (d) addressing the physical and mental health needs of refugees (e) providing English language training tailored to clients' needs to facilitate access to services, and (f) enabling refugees to participate in the New Zealand society and to access employment by making skills acquired in the home country transferable or allowing them to acquire new skills.

In an effort to make resettlement programmes responsive to the generic and special needs of refugees, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) developed integration best practice guidelines as a tool to guide the planning and implementation of integration programmes. The development of the CCR guidelines follows the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook in 1997 (UNHCR, 1997) which significantly articulated the factors determining individuals' degree of integration into the refugee receiving communities. The CCR, best practice guidelines stipulate that individual's chances of integration are shaped by personal and external factors (CCR, 1998). The individual factors include their gender, age, skill level, education, and pre-settlement experiences. The external factors are related to the opportunities and constraints experienced in the country of resettlement. They include the challenges experienced in accessing the support systems and any hostile reception experienced from the host community. The guidelines were intended to be a tool for the analysis, planning and evaluation of resettlement programmes by the controlling body of refugee re-settlement organisations. There are eleven components which form the best practice guidelines and are presented below:

1. Accessible Services: services have to be accessible to refugees by creating a welcoming environment and offering services in refugees' first language and in a culturally appropriate manner. Information about the providers and their services should be

transmitted to the refugees, while accommodating the special needs of women, including providing childcare support.

2. Offering services in an inclusive and culturally-responsive manner: Inclusiveness can be achieved by acknowledging the diversity within the refugees, based on their special needs, experiences and promoting non-discriminatory policies.
3. Empowering refugees: this is to be achieved by encouraging refugee participation in the Boards [of resettlement providers] and involvement in all aspects of organisations. Making information and education accessible to refugees in order to make informed decisions and supporting individuals to receive the services best suited to their needs. Programmes and initiatives are established which contribute to career advancement and employment, while acknowledging the employment skills and other social capital that refugees arrive with.
4. Making services responsive to the perceived needs of refugees: conducting individualised assessments to determine the special needs of refugees, their future dreams, goals and priorities and to evaluate how well the services delivered are helping the client to achieve their goals. The refugees should be involved in the entire process. Acknowledging and responding to any emerging needs as refugees progress towards the next level of their integration goals, and making programmes flexible enough to respond to the changing needs of clients. Refugees are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes.
5. Services recognise the complexity, interconnectedness and multifaceted aspects of settlement and integration: This holistic approach can be achieved by acknowledging the discrepancies and diversity of clients' needs and responding to both individual and collective needs equally. Recognising that integration is a continuum process and employing a one-stop shop approach in service delivery, while establishing strong links between various services to avoid compartmentalisation.
6. Respecting the rights and dignity of clients in the delivery of services: To ensure that intrinsic rights of individuals and their confidentiality are respected and ensure that services are free from all forms of discriminations, while adhering to the necessary code of ethics and ensuring that the refugees are given complete and accurate information about the resettlement services.

7. To deliver services in a culturally responsive manner: This can be assured by employing staff and volunteers who are from a refugee background and ensuring that professionals working with refugees are familiar with, and have a good understanding of, refugees' cultural norms and their important values. In addition, there should be formulation of policies and guidelines on inclusive cultural practices and anti-racism, with a commitment to respecting different cultures.

8. Service promotes and develops the capacities of refugee communities and develops the host community's receptiveness towards refugees: Prioritise community capacity building, developing the leadership in the refugee communities and building strong links between the refugees and the host community. Also, removing all barriers that are likely to hinder refugees' participation in the host community and taking measures to ensure refugees have access to information about essential services in the host community. This works towards creating a positive public perception and attitudes towards refugees.

9. Ensure services are delivered in a spirit of collaboration: Collaboration is achieved by promoting partnerships and collaboration between the sector organisations and creating mechanisms for sharing information, referrals for services. This builds solidarity among organisations and maximises opportunities and resources.

10. Service delivery is made accountable to the refugee communities served: This is to be achieved by the Boards [controlling bodies] of the organisations providing resettlement services to refugees by conducting monitoring and evaluation of their programmes with the involvement of refugees. This is also achieved by the formulation of policies and procedures (financial and administration) in collaboration with refugee communities and setting goals and objectives with realistic and achievable outcomes.

11. Resettlement services are creating opportunities for improved conditions of life for refugees and strengthening the capacity of the host community to promote equality of opportunity for all: progress towards positive changes can be achieved by advocating and lobbying for improved policy and developing new initiatives and models of resettlement support. Enhancing services based on research evidence and capacity building training and celebrating success.

The UNHCR framework for planning refugee integration programmes

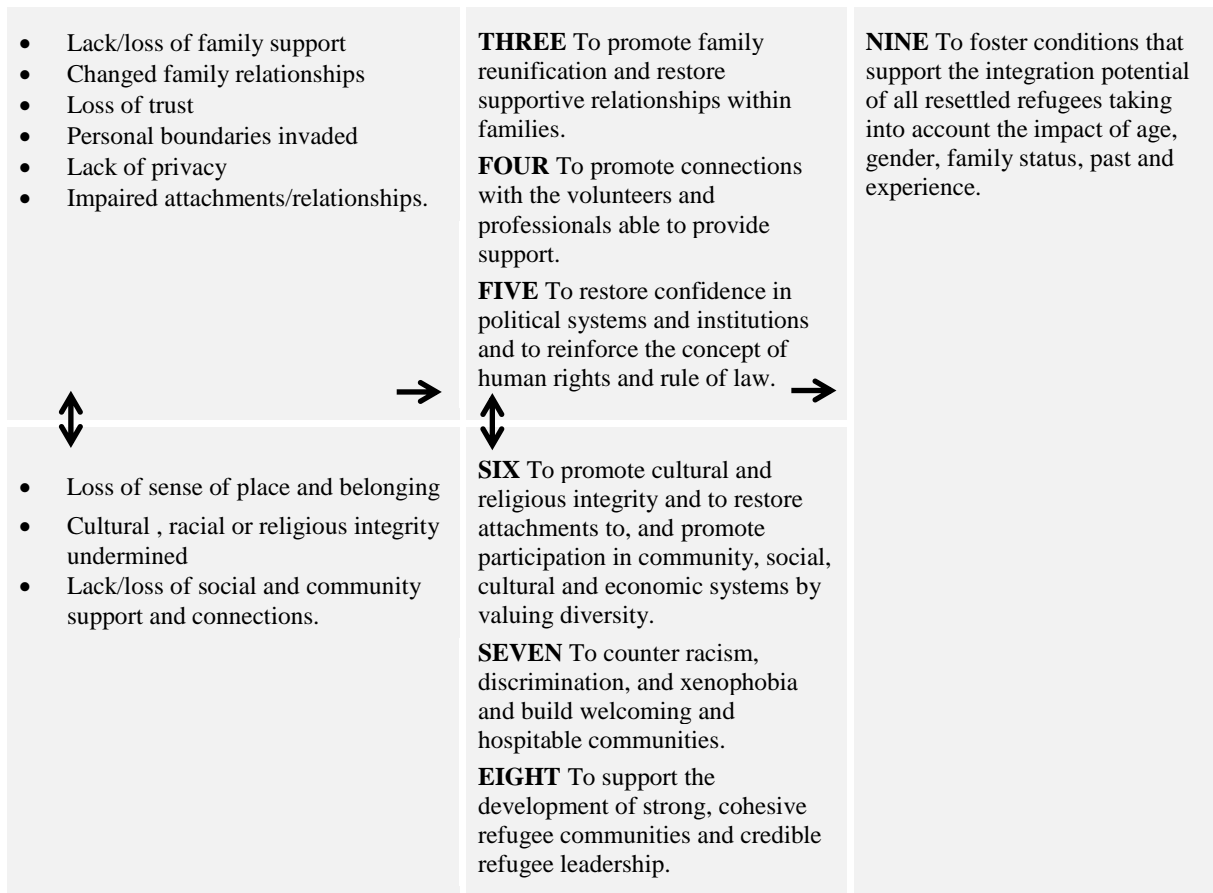
Building on the experience gained from Canadian Refugee Integration model of best practice, the UNHCR, in consultation with resettlement countries, developed a handbook on the reception and integration of refugees. The UNHCR's Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration (UNHCR, 2002) provided broader goals and practical guidelines on how refugee receiving countries can establish effective programmes for refugees.

Because of the existing diversities in the experiences which refugees have gone through in the pre-resettlement phase, the UNHCR Handbook for best practice, can be an important tool which resettlement and integration planners can employ for the planning of resettlement, because it unifies the economic/structural, political and socio-cultural factors which refugees have experienced in their country of origin (Table 2.6; see column 1) and factors which contribute to refugee flows (Table 2.6; column 2). It is significant to note that while these are the factors which the refugees have experienced in the home country, their psychological impact can vary, although there can be some commonalities as shown in columns three and four.

As well as presenting the possible indications of the experiences refugees have gone through in the pre-resettlement phase, the framework also helps in the planning and implementing integration programmes because it provides the basis for setting specific integration goals in the receiving country. It can also contribute in developing an individualised integration goal for each refugee and matching individuals' entry profiles and the resettlement services in the receiving country.

Table 2.6 A framework for planning refugee integration programmes

Conditions in refugee producing countries →	Conditions characterising experiences in countries of origin and refugee →	Possible emotional consequences
<p>Economic/Structural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic, social service and essential physical infrastructure broken down. • Inequitable distribution of resources • Poor economic • Growth/structural poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation of food, shelter, employment, health care • Unsanitary/harsh conditions • Loss of livelihood • No/disrupted education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Helplessness • Future orientation impaired • Identity/sense of meaning and purpose undermined.
<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly developed systems for maintenance of governance, civil order and rule of law • Fragile political system; often characterised by corruption • Abuse of political processes, infrastructure and government authority • Lack of transparency and fairness in political processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence, human rights violations • Climate of fear and chronic insecurity • Loss of freedom of speech, movement or association • Separation from family/loss of family members • Detention and torture • Breakdown of political process • Loss of state protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear, anxiety, grief, depression, guilt and shame • Basic assumptions of human existence shattered • Capacity for intimacy impaired.
<p>Socio-cultural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic, racial, cultural, clan, gender or religious tensions • Poor social cohesion • Systematic oppression and discrimination • Undermining/destruction of cultural and religious systems and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exclusion • Disrupted attachments to community, cultural, religious and social and economic institutions and systems. • Undermining of religious, racial and cultural integrity and identification • Forced displacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity undermined.
<p>Possible personal and social consequences →</p>	<p>Goals for integration in countries of resettlement</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and economic dependency • Loss of control • Poor health • Education/employment skills impaired. 	<p>ONE To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.</p> <p>TWO To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.</p>	



Source: (UNHCR, 2002)

In New Zealand, the Change Makers Refugee Forum (2008) also developed a framework (Standards for Engagement) to help promote collaboration between government agencies, NGOs and communities. An important feature of the Standards for Engagement guidelines is that they acknowledge the issue of power imbalance between the refugee communities and service providers. The guiding principles of the Standards of Engagement guideline can be summarised as follows:

Meaningful participation: Promoting community participation in the planning of resettlement programmes. It also involves identifying the potential barriers that are likely to prevent the participation of groups in the refugee communities (women, elderly and youth).

Partnerships: This involves identification of key stakeholders and undertaking measures to promote their collective involvement, in a spirit of partnership.

Planning together: To collectively identify the general and special needs refugees and the available resources, and getting all stakeholders to agree on the goals, objectives and the implementation strategies of resettlement programmes.

Communication and information sharing: Ensuring that there is effective and transparent communication about the partnership between the stakeholders (The process for sharing information between the parties involved in the collaboration). Language used for communication should be easy to access and understandable to the refugee families, and where necessary interpreters should be employed.

Processes: Making sure that the collaboration process is inclusive and is agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Acknowledgment and Utilisation: Ensuring that the expertise and skills of different stakeholders are acknowledged, recognised and are used for the purpose of the engagement.

Feedback: Sharing information about progress between stakeholders.

Monitoring and evaluation: On-going monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to gauge progress made towards the original goals and objective of the Standards of Engagement.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter discussed refugee resettlement and integration in an international and in the New Zealand context. It is clear from the literature that the concept of refugees resettling and integrating into their host society is not a straight-forward path and it has no clear definition and indicators. Hence, there is no standardised model of resettlement and integration or agreed stages of integration that refugees can follow to achieve full integration. Because there are diversities within refugees' pre-settlement experiences based on age, gender, education, lifestyle and social class, there are also variations in how individuals, families or communities progress towards achieving full resettlement and integration. Broad factors are found to either facilitate or hinder the integration process. The factors of greatest influence include the opportunities and constraints that individuals have experienced in the home country, in the flight process, in camp life and the experience of resettling and integrating into the receiving country. The level of compatibility between the new refugees' language, culture and religion and those of the host community are also critical. This implies that significant differences between the refugees' language, culture and religion and host community present challenges for policy makers and the resettlement support-providers in the receiving country of resettlement.

It is evident from the literature on the best practices approach that integration is influenced by the responsiveness of resettlement policies and the effectiveness of the coordination and collaboration between the stakeholders in the host country such as central and local government agencies and the NGOs.

Chapter 3 will discuss the New Zealand education system and the literature on parent - school collaboration.

Chapter 3: The New Zealand Education System and the Theoretical Background to Parent - school collaboration

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the New Zealand education system, with particular emphasis on the key ideologies underpinning the 1989 reform of the education system and this reform's objective of promoting positive parent - school collaboration. The chapter also discusses the main sources from which parents in New Zealand can receive information about schools, their children's learning, and how they can support their children. It will review the existing literature on parent - school collaboration as a concept, and its associated benefits. Finally, there will be a discussion of the merits and limitations of the various models of parent-school collaboration and how they apply to the New Zealand education system.

3.2 The New Zealand education system

New Zealand has a long history of education which is as old as the history of the Māori; the indigenous people of New Zealand. Early Māori communities practised their own system of education which was geared to meeting the knowledge and skills critical for Māori to maintain their lives. Anecdotal evidence suggests the responsibility for educating Māori children was a collective task shared by parents and the whānau (community). Parents, including grandparents, were responsible for teaching children their first language and shaping their social development. Māori parents also mentored their children on other key roles involving leadership, household management, spirituality and the Māori customs, to prepare younger people to become valued members of society. The members of the whānau were responsible for transmitting to children important skills such as hunting, fishing, weaving, fighting and cultivating (McIntosh, 1966).

The quality and scope of traditional Māori education was eroded after the arrival of European settlers in New Zealand. Instead of developing and enhancing the Māori indigenous education system and their values and customs, early British settlers brought with them new "models of government law, public service and an education system" (Timperley & Robinson, 2002, p. 33). The establishment of missionary schools, in particular, altered the way traditional Māori society practised education. As well as disseminating knowledge, the Missionary schools focused on converting the Māori people

to Christianity alongside the normal education. The purpose of this education was to encourage Māori to give away their culture, values, customs, language, and to embrace European values. The translation of the Bible into the Māori language was one of the first steps taken by the European missionaries to speed up the process of assimilating Māori into European culture. So, the use of Christianity became an important tool employed by the European settlers to Europeanise the Māori people (Simon & Massey, 1994). The settlers encouraged the Māori community to assimilate into the European culture as the path to achieving modernity.

In terms of traditional Māori parents' participation in children's education, the literature suggests that the concept of families participating in children's education has always been part of Māori culture. In fact, the traditional Māori education system was renowned for encouraging community participation in education. According to Māori culture, dissemination of knowledge is a collective responsibility. As argued by Jones et al. (1990, p. 35), traditional Māori communities considered knowledge as a community asset:

The extent to which the traditional Māori community valued education is best illustrated in the Māori word "ako" which implies "teach and learn" (Jones, Marshall, Mathews, Smith, & Smith, 1990, p. 36). This suggests traditional Māori parents used to participate more actively in education than they did after formal education was established in New Zealand.

Formal education in New Zealand officially started after 1877 when the Department of Education was established and took over the responsibility for running schools (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). The system of education was based on the principles of social democratic liberalism (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). It was characterised for being strongly centralised, secular and compulsory (Olssen & Mathew, 1999). An 1877 Act made education free, compulsory and accessible to all children aged between 5 and 15 years regardless of their social class and culture (Simon & Massey, 1994).

Because education was considered an essential to which people had an intrinsic right, the successive governments in New Zealand have pursued policies promoting equality to ensure that the benefit of education is accessible to all families. On the other hand, on-going changes have been made to the system to improve its capability to respond to the needs of New Zealand society. The greatest changes occurred in the 1991, when educational reforms were made after "sweeping economic and social reforms" (Barker, 2001, p. 2) were implemented in New Zealand in the mid-1980s.

Prior to 1991, the old Department of Education was responsible for running the New Zealand education system. There were seven elected Education Boards responsible for running primary schools. High schools were controlled by Boards of Governors and the universities had Grants Committees and individual Acts of Parliament for each university. Colleges and Polytechnics were managed by Councils which were under Department of Education control (Snook et al., 1999).

3.2.1 Theoretical background to education reform

The reform was championed by the Fourth Labour government when it came to power in 1984. The reform was motivated by a combination of factors related to both politics and economics and had the following broad intended outcomes:

- (i) to give the central agencies of the state more control over economic supply and political demand; and
- (ii) to shift the focus of legitimisation problems away from central government (Codd & Gordon, 1991, p. 21).

There was a huge emphasis placed on promoting public participation in the decision-making process, but even so, the reform process was top-down, because the public had no input into the planning. Furthermore, there was no baseline needs analysis, with public input, undertaken prior to the introduction of the reform. Similarly, the public's opinion was not sought since the reform was carried out. Although there was research done on specific projects which focused on the initial period of the reform (1990-1992) and Wylie's work (1997a, 1997b, 1997c), there was no major research done to assess the negative and positive impacts that the reform had on the entire education sector (early childhood, compulsory and tertiary).

Reforming the education institutions was among the measures taken towards introducing the market-driven ideology in New Zealand. The education reform was popularised by the Treasury and politicians who were very sympathetic to the market-driven ideology, and in particular, the neo-liberal ideology (Larner, 2000). Their hypothesis for education reform was underpinned by a belief that education was the vehicle for driving New Zealand wealth and the system of the time was inefficient in producing a workforce with "the skills required in a modern, internationally competitive economy" (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p. 34). The Treasury asserted "schools have difficulty responding to changes in the labour

market and in technology and hence in producing courses which are and remain relevant” (The Treasury, 1987, p. 141, Vol II). The Treasury also argued that the path to achieving full economic recovery was in overhauling the education system (Snook et al., 1999). It was maintained that an “effective and efficient school system can and will provide for a nation’s quick economic recovery” (Novlan, 1998, p. 7).

Three major policies developed by the government outlined how the reform was to be implemented. These are: *Before Five*, which concerned early childhood; *Tomorrow’s Schools*, which is concerned with the primary and secondary sector, and *Learning for Life I and II*, which concerned universities, polytechnic and training colleges (Lauder, 1991).

The education reform introduced new structures and altered some of the functions of the old Department of Education. Most functions of the Department of Education were devolved to other agencies such as the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), the Education Review Office (ERO) and, later, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). Other specialist institutions were also established with defined roles such as Career Services and the Teachers’ Councils. Subsequent changes focusing on assessments and the curricula were carried out by the National government when it came to power in 1993, and further changes were made under the National-led government of 1996.

3.2.2 The implementation process of the reform

The implementation of the reform started with the government of the time forming a number of taskforces to advise the government on how to fix the existing inefficiency in the education system. The taskforces came up with a series of reports resulting in a number of changes occurring in the system. These reports were almost similar to the argument presented by the Treasury and the supporters of the market-driven ideology. These taskforces included:

The Picot Report, *Administering for Excellence* resulted in *Tomorrow’s Schools*; The Meade Report, *Education to be More* was followed by *Before Five*; and the Hawke Report on tertiary education resulted in *Learning for Life*” (Peters, Marshall, & Massey, 1994, p. 19). Of these, the Picot Report had the biggest influence on the reform. It identified areas of shortcomings and came up with a number of recommendations which were the bases for the education reform. These areas of concern were: “over-centralisation of decision-making, complexity, lack of

information and choice, lack of effective management practices and feelings of powerlessness (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988, pp. 22-29).

The Picot Taskforce recommendations

The Picot Taskforce presented to the government a number of recommendations to address areas of shortcomings which the Taskforce argued were hampering the efficiency of the system. The recommendations included: responding to the cultural needs of New Zealand society, promoting partnership and community participation in the running of schools, improving the flexibility and responsiveness of the system, empowering students, parents and communities, and promoting equity and access to education.

To enable the system to respond to the cultural needs of New Zealand society

The taskforce recommended that the government make sure the education system was able to meet the educational needs of different cultural groups in New Zealand, regardless of their background. It was suggested that special attention be given to the cultural needs of different New Zealand families.

Cultural sensitivity must play a greater part in the education system – which has been slow, in the past, to recognise the aspirations of other cultures. New Zealand has a particular and a general need for cultural sensitivity. Māori people have a special status under the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi: however, in addition to this bicultural requirement, the issue of cultural sensitivity extends to all cultures in New Zealand (Picot Taskforce 1988, p. 4).

Warning against the consequences of the system failing to pay attention to cultural sensitivity, the Taskforce asserted:

The effects of cultural insensitivity can be considerable. Learning institutions have been largely inimical to cultural values outside the mainstream – and without a sense of security about the worth of their culture, individuals can suffer a personal and social dislocation that makes learning difficult, if not impossible (Picot Taskforce, 1988, p. 5).

To promote the concept of partnership in the running of learning institutions

The committee recommended the establishment of boards of trustees (BOT) comprised of representatives from parents and teachers, and students in the case of secondary schools.

The establishment of BOTs was considered so important because they were to be the mechanism by which to promote partnership and collaboration between families and schools. Promoting partnership in the running of schools was an important component of the Picot Report. It stated “Education must be based on the notion of a partnership of equals. Partnership implies incorporating the organisational styles and procedures of other cultures [in] the day-to-day work of the institutions” (Picot Taskforce, 1988, p. 41).

To make the education system flexible and responsive

It was suggested that the education system needed to be flexible and sufficiently responsive to meet the educational needs of individuals and communities. The recommendation made specific reference to making the structure of the system simpler so that the stakeholders could gain better understanding and participate in the decision-making more effectively (Picot Taskforce, 1988).

To empower students, parents and communities to have a say in the decision-making process

As commitment to partnership was a cornerstone of the reform (therefore, empowering all stakeholders to participate effectively in the decision-making), one of the Taskforce’s recommendations presented to Government was: that “decisions should be made at that level of the system which is most affected by it and has the best information about its consequences” (Picot Taskforce, 1988, p. 42).

This suggests that the concept of community empowerment was at the heart of the Picot Report, because it was being seen as the possible path to achieving equity and access.

To promote equity and access to education for all New Zealanders

Promoting the concept of equity and access were cornerstone to the Picot report. It was argued that the system was struggling with how to achieve equity for all groups in New Zealand. There was a particular concern about the growing disparity in the system which could encourage the formation of a social underclass particularly for Māori and Pacific communities. The growing disparity in the system is explained by the work of Simon and Massey (1994) who argued that there was always a strong discontent about the education system not serving the public equally. There was a sense that the system was rather promoting inequality, with some cultural groups including Māori, having less access compared with families from a European background. As mentioned before, commitment to

achieve access and equity was a cornerstone to the signing of the 1877 Act which made education compulsory and was intended to solve the problem of inequalities in the system (Simon & Massey, 1994).

Commitment to equity and access has been a priority for successive New Zealand governments' educational goals. This started with the Minister of Education in 1939, the Hon. Peter Fraser who stated:

Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers (Spoonley, Pearson, & Shirley, 1994, p. 162).

In 2005 the then Minister of Education, the Hon. Trevor Mallard also asserted: "To be successful we need to continue our drive to raise educational standards for all learners so that everyone, irrespective of their background, age, location or ethnicity, has the opportunity to learn and to make a contribution to society" (MOE, 2005, p. 4).

Another former Minister of Education, the Hon. Steve Maharey also stated in 2006:

We need to build an education system for the 21st century; a system where every child and student is stimulated to learn. We need to improve the system's ability of all those within the system to respond to the diversity of our learners of all ages (MOE, 2006b, p. 2).

However, the politicians in successive governments after Fraser have found that, to at least some extent, practical realities have prevented the total of their educational ideologies from being realised.

3.2.3 Analysis of the post-reform period

Despite parent/community participation in decision-making being at the heart of the 1989 education reform, past research in this area (see for example, G. L. Anderson, 1998). Malen and Ogawa (1998, cited in Timperley & Robinson, 2002), has shown that decentralisation of school governance did not bring about the expected level of parental participation in decision-making. McNaughton, Langley and Sauni (2006) contend that "the education system at all levels did not involve communities of interest to the extent necessary". Furthermore, although it is over two decades since the reform was carried out, community

participation in school decision making still appears to be a major concern for Maori, Pasifika and minority groups in New Zealand, including communities with a refugee background. The data on BOT ethnic make-up (see table 3.1) suggest that while the population of migrants has increased during that same period, Maori, Pasifika and ethnic communities remain underrepresented in BOT membership.

Table 3.1 Boards of Trustee membership by ethnicity, 2011

Ethnicity	Number	%
Maori	246	5.9%
Pasifika	192	5.9%
Asian	55	1.7%
Other/not stated	362	11.1%
European/Pakeha	2402	73.7%
Grand total	3257	100.0%

Source, MOE, 2011

Although there may be other contributing factors, the New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) linked the deficiency in community participation in decision-making to the absence of a national body that can lobby on parent issue at the political level. The PPTA argues that the abolition of the Parent Advocacy Council was a setback to collaboration between parents and schools (PPTA, 2008). The original intent for establishing the Parent Advocacy Council was to promote the interests of parents at the government level. It was part of the changes introduced under the reform, but was abolished by the National Government in 1991.

Aside from the concerns around limited parental participation in the decision-making process, the literature also indicates that the reform has not resulted in improved communication between parents and schools. As indicated in Wylie's (1999) research, the level of contacts between parents and school declined since the implementation of the reform. This finding is also contrary to the justification presented in the Picot Report upon which the reform was based. However, the decline can be linked also to other external factors, including more parents taking on full-time employment (Wylie, 1999).

While another key motivating factor for the reform was to make the system responsive to the needs of Maori, Pasifika and other low socio-economic background families, Wylie's research (2007, p. 2) found limited gains in both secondary qualification attainment and the rate of student retention in secondary schools for these communities. Wylie's work is also supported by a report commissioned by the MOE (2007) which confirmed that children from low socio-economic communities in New Zealand have the lowest participation, numeracy and literacy, and qualification attainment.

The PPTA (2008, p. 1) similarly asserted that 'there has been no measurable improvement in achievement that can be attributed to the Tomorrow's School Reforms'. While it may also apply for other low socio-economic background families, Wylie's report confirms that 53% of Maori boys were leaving school with no recognised qualification in 2005. The evidence also shows that even after 22 years, the situation of Maori education has not changed significantly. For example, the Treasury's 2011 Briefing to the incoming Minister of Finance showed that five in ten Maori students are currently leaving school without NZQA level two (The Treasury, 2012).

Aside from the limited progress on lifting students' achievement, the reform appears to have had negative impacts on schools financially. For example, Wylie's (1999) work on schools' perception on the reform found that, in almost 10 years after the reform, 87 % of principals and 65 % of trustees in New Zealand schools expressed concerns about inadequate funding, compared with 20% prior to the 1989 reform . Based on Wylie's work, the reform also had negative consequences on principals and teachers' workloads. Her work confirmed that in 1999 principals were working, on average, 60 hours per week, while teachers' average weekly work was 51.5 hours per week. It is likely that the increase in teachers' and principals' work load may also affect communication and collaboration between school staff and parents. With their increased workload, school staff might not have the time to visit parent's homes, or otherwise meet parents when they are available.

Other ways which the reform has impacted upon parent - school collaboration will be explored in greater depth in the discussion.

3.2.4 Organisations involved in the education sector

There are a large number of organisations involved in New Zealand education. Each organisation has distinctive roles and responsibilities. Table 3.2 illustrates the roles and responsibilities of these organisations.

Table 3.2 Organisations involved in New Zealand education

Organisation	Responsibility
Parliament.	Makes the law, provides the money and expects accountability
Minister of Education	Sets the policy direction for the compulsory and early childhood sectors
Minister responsible for the Education Review Office (ERO)	Evaluates the performance of individual schools
Minister responsible for Tertiary Education (TEC)	Sets the policy and resourcing direction for the Tertiary sector
New Zealand Teachers Council	Manages and maintains Teacher Registration (teacher licensing in New Zealand).
MOE	Gives policy advice, implements policies, develops curriculum statements, allocates resources, and monitors effectiveness
NZQA	Administers qualifications assures qualifications quality, manages the school-based examination system, and develops the National Qualifications Framework and National Certificates of Educational Achievement
ERO	Evaluates schools and reports publicly
TEC	Responsible for funding all post-compulsory education and training offered by universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, wānanga, private training establishments, foundation education agencies, industry training organisations and adult and community education providers

Source: <http://www.nzqa.gov.nz/about/education.htm>, retrieved on 3/10/06

3.2.5 How schools are governed in New Zealand

All New Zealand state and integrated schools are governed under the provisions of the Education Act 1989. The Act made New Zealand schools self-governing and granted parents the right to play a greater role in the running of schools. The mechanism for playing this role is by joining a school's BOT and participating in school strategic planning.

The Board of Trustees consists of “elected parent and community volunteers, the school principal and a staff representative. Secondary school boards must have a student representative” (MOE, 2003, p. 23). The BOT is responsible for making important decisions concerning the running of the school.

The Ministry of Education maintains the overall responsibility for providing policy advice, curriculum development and allocating resources. The Ministry also provides schools with the resources for building the professional capabilities of teachers and to help the BOT meet the Government’s educational goals.

The principal is employed by the BOT and is accountable to the BOT in managing the day-to-day activities of the school. Because principals are employed by the BOT they are required to manage the school affairs according to the policies set by the Board of Trustees and school strategic priorities. During the planning, the BOT is required to take into account the priority needs of all learners in the school community. It is the responsibility of the BOT to have a charter which sets out the long-term goals and annual targets for the school. The principal is required to work towards achieving the goals set by the BOT and report on how the school is progressing towards the goals and targets set by the school every year.

Another important responsibility of the principal is to ensure that the school is meeting the guidelines laid down in the National Education Guidelines (NEGs) which are statements of desired achievements by schools. The NEGs describe the government’s national priority for education. The BOTs are required to take into account these guidelines when preparing their charters (MOE, 2004).

The report of Education Review Office to the Ministry of Education (Education Review Office, 1994) explains the tasks expected of BOT as follows:

Boards are responsible for enacting centrally determined legislative, regulatory and other requirements. They are responsible for ensuring that the views ...of the community that the school serves are reflected in the decision they take. They are accountable to both the crown [the government] and their local electoral community ... The board is responsible for ensuring that the principal, as chief executive, manages the school effectively and in accordance with national requirements and local objectives. This means that even though it may exercise its rights to delegate responsibilities to the principal or other employees, the Board itself remains

accountable. The Board is also the employer of the principal and all other [staff of] the school, and must meet the responsibility that comes with such a role (Education Review Office, 1994, p. 4).

3.2.6 Schooling in New Zealand

New Zealand education is divided into compulsory and tertiary. Compulsory education is divided into primary, intermediate and secondary schooling and is for children aged between six and 16 years, but as a rule children start school at the age of five years and remain in primary school until the end of Year 6.

Intermediate schools are for children in Years 7 and 8 and can be either in a separate intermediate school or part of a primary school. Secondary schools are designed for students from Year 9 (first year in high school) until the end of Year 13 (last year in high school).

Types of schools

Most students in New Zealand attend state or state-integrated schools which are funded by the government. State schools are co-educational (mixed sexes) at primary and intermediate level, but some secondary schools offer single-sex education. The lessons taught in state schools are based on the New Zealand curriculum. However, some state schools also provide special programmes for adult students or run community education classes.

Integrated schools are schools that were first established as private and then became part of the state system. State-integrated schools teach the New Zealand curriculum but can retain their own special character as part of their school programme; for example, Catholic or Islamic schools.

Special schools are state schools that provide an education service for students with special educational needs; for example, schools for children with a hearing impediment. The curricula of these schools are the same as other state schools. Designated character schools are state schools that teach the New Zealand curriculum but have been allowed by the government to develop their own set of aims, purposes and objectives to mirror their own particular values.

Independent (or private) schools are governed by their own boards. They are required to meet certain standards before getting approval for registration. Independent schools may be either co-educational or single-sex. They charge fees to families but also receive some

subsidy funding from the government. Boarding schools can operate as independent or part of a state-funded school. All boarding schools charge boarding fees and there are no standard fees.

The Correspondence School (TCS) provides distance learning for students who cannot attend normal schools because they may live away from their nearest school, live overseas, study with TCS for medical reasons or have special educational needs. Secondary students are also allowed to enrol in specific subjects if these subjects are not available at the school in which they are enrolled. There is no age limit to enrol at TCS, so any learner including adults can enrol. TCS also runs programmes for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and some specialist programmes, for example, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other languages) for children and adults for whom English is not their first language.

Home-based schooling is another form of schooling available to parents and caregivers who want to educate their children at home. Parents and caregivers need to get approval for home schooling from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and are required to educate their children to a standard similar to that which their children would have received at a registered school. Parents who are granted permission for home schooling are entitled to an annual grant from the MOE to help them with the costs of learning materials and can use the grants to purchase teaching resources from TCS (MOE, 2004).

3.2.7 The Curriculum of Teaching in New Zealand

The curriculum is New Zealand's official Education policy document which describes how teaching, learning, and assessment are to be implemented in schools (MOE, 2006a). It informs practitioners of the best approach by which they can equip students with the attributes they need to achieve to their potential and contribute to New Zealand society. All schools in New Zealand and all BOTs are required to apply the curriculum statements to support the academic and social development of all learners, regardless "of their gender, ethnicity, beliefs, ability or disability, social or cultural background or geographic location in New Zealand" (MOE, 2006a, p. 7).

Many changes have taken place in New Zealand since 1992 when the implementation of the current curriculum began. Some of these changes include the growing diversity of New Zealand learners, changes in New Zealand's economy, the rapid expansion of information and communication, and the need to increase equity for all learners in New Zealand,

regardless of their background (MOE, 2006a). Following the decentralisation of the education system, schools now have a greater freedom to design and implement their own curriculum to meet the educational needs of learners according to their abilities and interests.

A desire to reduce disparity in the education system, particularly for learners from the Māori and Pacific Island communities, who were achieving least, played a major part in the curriculum review. The mechanism for achieving this was partly to apply the curriculum statement to support students according to their needs and ability. Also, the role of the Treaty of Waitangi and its implications for Māori was one of the key driving factors of the 1992 review (MOE, 1993). The curriculum review was also motivated by a desire to promote and preserve the culture and heritage of learners based on the cultural diversity and bicultural identity of New Zealand. To this extent, the New Zealand education system is following the Curriculum-Enrichment and Partnership Models of Hornby (2000), and there are also some elements of Ravn's participation and Shared-Responsibility Models. The applicability of these, and the various other models of parent-teacher interaction will be assessed more fully in the discussion. A major focus of this thesis will be on investigating how well the New Zealand education system conforms with the models' framework, with respect to refugees, and especially Somali refugees.

The revision of the curriculum began when the curriculum stock-take was completed in 2002. The stock-take report contained a number of recommendations aimed at adding value to the curriculum to make it match the changes taking place in New Zealand society and its socio-economic priorities.

The recommendations included better clarifying the principles and the values of the curriculum and to better explain how schools are required to implement the intent of the curriculum. Other recommendations were related to restructuring of the curriculum so that the essential learning skills and attitudes become the competencies, and to make the objectives of all learning areas simpler, relevant and future-oriented. The recommendations also included ensuring greater attention was paid to excellence and enhanced outcomes for students.

The current curriculum (2007) is made up of the following sections:

- a vision;
- the core principles on which the curriculum is based;
- values that New Zealanders expect schools to model and foster;
- key competencies for learning and life;
- brief descriptions of the eight learning areas;
- pedagogy that creates the conditions for effective learning.

3.2.8 Vision

The vision explains what New Zealand learners can obtain from the system. It also clarifies the competencies which learners in New Zealand need to develop in order to achieve the attributes critical to becoming valued members of society. In addition, the vision stipulates that all learners in New Zealand are to become confident, connected, lifelong learners and be able to be actively engaged. Table 3.3 explains each of the areas discussed above.

Table 3.3 The visions in the New Zealand curriculum

The vision	Explanation
Actively involved	Participants in a range of life contexts. Contributors to the wellbeing of New Zealand. Social, economic, and environment.
Confident:	Positive in their own identity, Motivated and reliable, Entrepreneurial, Enterprising and Learners being resilient
Lifelong learners	Literate and numerate. Critical and creative thinkers. Active, seekers, users, and creators of knowledge and informed decision makers.

Source: (MOE, 200b, p. 8)

3.2.9 The principles

The principles provide guidance and direction to schools on the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum has a number of strengths for enhancing student learning. Firstly, the principles put students at the centre of all the teaching and learning. Secondly, they are flexible and can match the “diverse experiences, values, and cultural beliefs which students bring from their formal learning” (MOE, 1993, p. 6). Thirdly, New Zealand schools now have more ownership of the curriculum, so they can design programmes to suit their learners’ needs (Flockton, 2007).

According to the curriculum, the components that make up the underlying principles of the draft curriculum are: excellence, learning to learn, cultural heritage, equity, connection and coherence.

Excellence prescribes all learners to be empowered to learn and achieve to the best of their abilities, regardless of their individual circumstances and the learning to learn component suggests that all learners experience a curriculum that enables them to become active, confident, creative, and innovative thinkers.

The cultural heritage suggests all students experience a curriculum that reflects New Zealand's bicultural heritage and its multicultural society. This allows students who identify as Māori to have the opportunity to experience a curriculum that reflects and values all aspects of Māori culture. The principle of equity proposes all students' identities, cultures, languages and talents be recognised and affirmed. This principle encourages schools to identify and address the learning needs of students.

The principle of connections implies all students should experience a curriculum that makes connection with their lives and engages the support of their families and communities. The last principle of coherence suggests that all students should experience a curriculum which provides a range of coherent transitions and pathways for further learning.

3.2.10 Key competencies

The key competencies define those capabilities which are vital for people in order to live, learn, work and contribute as a valued member of New Zealand society. The five key competencies identified in the curriculum are managing self, relating to others, participating and contributing, thinking and using language, symbols, and texts (MOE, 2006a).

The curriculum also provides guidance to schools on the best ways they can meet the academic and social development needs of learners. It provides guidance by establishing direction for learning and assessment in New Zealand schools, fostering achievement and success for all students. Each level of the curriculum defines the achievement objectives against which students' progress can be measured.

Because the curriculum provides some flexibility, schools and teachers now have a better chance to design programmes that suit the learning needs of their learners, and can facilitate the learning process.

The curriculum encourages students to become independent and be life-long learners and provides all students with equal educational opportunities. Particular recognition is given to the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi and the multicultural nature of New Zealand society (MOE, 2006a).

3.3 Parent-School Collaboration in a New Zealand Context

The amount and quality of information presented to parents is the cornerstone to their partnerships with schools. Information presented to parents benefits not only the parents themselves, but also the school and its staff (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). It is for this reason that educational authorities in many other countries are making concerted efforts to ensure that parents have adequate access to information about their children's learning, information about a particular school and education providers.

3.3.1 The New Zealand Policy Contexts

The provision of information to parents influences the extent to which parents can be involved in their children's education and the extent to which they make effective partnerships with schools. Providing high quality information to parents implies giving parents tools and power they can utilise to support their children (Broussard, 2003). This is exceptionally important in New Zealand, since the 1989 education reform Tomorrow's Schools was underpinned by an ideology that considered schools to be the producers of goods and parents the consumers of those goods. In order to access schools' services it is therefore imperative for schools to provide parents with high quality information which they can use to analyse and make sound decisions about the services provided by schools. Given that the Tomorrow Schools was designed to give greater parental choice, the information that schools transmit to parents needs to be of a high quality, so as to assist parents to compare schools and make the right choice of school for their children.

There is a variety of other reasons why schools should provide high quality information to parents about how the school is to meet the academic and social needs of their children. Firstly, increasing the amount and quality of information provided to parents can be a tool for empowering parents (Cox, 2005) and is a sign of schools' readiness to work with parents. Parents become empowered by gaining greater understanding of school policies, the staff and the roles they all perform in the school. The increased parental understanding often strengthens their relationships with schools.

Secondly, high quality information about the school empowers parents because they become familiar with the programmes of the school and the capacities of the school to meet their children's needs. Their knowledge of the school enables them to make the right decision about enrolment of their children and become familiar with the school's expectations.

Thirdly, because parents and their children's schools should ideally have an amicable relationship, providing high quality information to parents can be a process for building confidence and trust between parents and the school. The trust that parents develop from open communication with schools encourages them to approach the school with confidence. It also helps parents to articulate their needs and concerns without any fear. This is more important for parents from undemocratic countries like Somalia, where parents are not allowed to make negative comments about the school and the system because schools are part of the government machinery. This open communication helps the school to remain informed of the activities taking place in the community. As schools in New Zealand are required to be responsive to the needs of their local communities (Lange, 1988; MOE, 2007a), the provision of information should not be limited to parents who have children in the school; instead the information should be available to the wider community. Transmitting information about the school to the wider community builds schools' reputations and encourages more parents to enrol their children.

The mechanisms employed for transmitting information have to be capable of explaining to parents and the community the qualities of the programmes the school can offer. This information helps the community to be kept informed about the academic achievement history of the school and the areas that the community has identified as a priority for the school. It also informs parents as to how the school intends to meet those needs and is a requirement under the National Administration Guidelines (NAG) 1 (V) (MOE, 2007b).

The dissemination of information has to be implemented in an inclusive fashion if the school is to keep its community well abreast of its routines. It also informs parents of the qualities of the school programmes before they even enrol their children and it will help the school to obtain feedback on how its programmes are being perceived by the wider community. This will attract good community support for the school when it is drawing up its charter and preparing its strategic plans, which are legal requirement under the NAG 2 (1) (MOE, 2007c).

In addition to the information transmitted to the wider community, separate information has to be made available to parents who wish to enrol their children for the first time. The school should take into account that parents' choice of a school about which they feel comfortable is the first step taken towards establishing a formalised parent–school relationship and is the gateway to an effective parent–school relationship.

As discussed above in this chapter, collaboration between parents and schools has always been a highly valued activity in New Zealand. According to the literature, it claimed a centre-stage in the policy in 1906 when the New Zealand Parent Teacher Association (NZPTA) was formed as a formal structure to promote collaboration between parents and schools (Mutch & Collins, 2012). However, it gained even greater status following the 1989 Education reform which shifted decision making of schools closer to the communities (The Treasury, 1987).

The evidence from the research in New Zealand (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2003; Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; MOE, 2003) and overseas which suggests effective collaboration between parents and schools contribute to improved student learning outcome also gave rise to its publicity and recognition at the political level. Consequently, engaging parents in their children's education remained a key strategic priority in the Ministry of Education's strategic documents under successive governments in recent decades.

The activities parents can be involved in at the school

The 1989 Education Act granted parents certain rights including the right to receive meaningful information about their children's performance; to stand for or elect members of the Boards of Trustees in their local schools and to be asked for their consent when their children are to be involved in outdoor activities.

As well as participating in school decision-making, parents can collaborate with schools in other important activities within the schools. These include making resources and volunteering as teacher aids or bilingual workers to assist students as a group or individually. Parents can also participate in school trips, coaching sports teams in the school or become a lead parent in the home and school partnership programme and organising cultural events. Parents can also collaborate with schools in establishing and running homework programmes as well as making contributions to their children's learning during parent and teacher meetings.

Activities which parents can be involved in outside the school

Under the current policy, parents can also be involved in other activities outside the school which can be of great benefit to their children's education. These include joining parent groups, such as New Zealand Parent Teachers Association (NZPTA) which is the body representing parents to government about issues affecting parents. Its objectives are to support parental involvement in schools, inform parents of news and issues in education, and present parent issues to government (see <http://www.nzpta.org.nz/objectives.html>).

Other activities that parents may be involved with outside school include maintaining the two-way communication with their children's schools and supporting children in their homes. The two-way communication between parents and schools is essential for maintaining parents' relationships with staff and teachers. It also enables parents to remain informed about their children's academic performance, attendance and when important activities are scheduled. These include parent and teacher interviews, graduation ceremonies, and meetings about disciplinary issues.

How the system presents information to parents in New Zealand about the education system, individual schools and their children

Because collaboration between parents and school is a two-way process, the degree to which parents and schools can collaborate together is dependent on the extent to which parents can access adequate information about the system, information about a particular school and information about their children's learning. In New Zealand there are a number of channels through which parents can receive information;

Information about the education system

Information about the education system is presented to parents in the form of booklets, for example "The New Zealand Education System: An overview" and on websites such as www.minedu.govt.nz, www.ero.govt.nz, www.nzqa.govt.nz and www.tec.govt.nz.

Parents can also receive other information from the Ministry of Education concerning policy and legislation which is transmitted through websites, booklets and publications. The Ministry's corporate websites provide information on policy and implementation to parents and it has links to edCentre (www.edcentre.govt.nz), Te Kete Ipurangi – the Online Learning Centre (www.tki.org.nz) and Education Counts (www.minedu.govt.nz).

The edCentre is a portal providing online information on the New Zealand education system to parents (MOE, 2002). This portal has been jointly created by several education agencies to provide useful information to individuals, families and their children to help them achieve their educational goals.

The wide range of information on the edCentre covers the whole education sector (early childhood, compulsory and tertiary). It informs its users of services, support and information available from ERO, MOE, the National Library of New Zealand, the New Zealand Teachers' Council and the Tertiary Education Commission. The edCentre provides information from 28 websites which are managed by these agencies. The edCentre contains hints on the type of questions parents can ask their children's teachers during parent-teacher interviews. It also explains the assessment methods used by schools, for example, asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) and NCEA (MOE, 2007d).

Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) has information designed for parents which gives insight into how parents can work in partnership with schools. The TKI site has links to a number of sites of interest to parents and can be accessed by selecting the audience, for example, parents/caregivers. Parents can view information covering the New Zealand curriculum statement for the seven learning areas which are the base for teaching and learning core subjects in New Zealand schools.

As part of its commitment to supporting families to collaborate with schools, the Ministry has published booklets entitled "Families Learning Together" in eight languages, including Somali, which presents information how parents can support their children at home. There are also pamphlets on National Standards – "How Well is My Child Doing" in refugee families' languages which are intended to assist parents understand how their children are performing. A pamphlet about NCEA, although it is English also contains information about NCEA. The Ministry developed a DVD on New Zealand schooling in Somali and explains how parents can be involved in their children's learning at school and home. There are also other booklets such as "Feed the Mind", which all provide information to parents on the different ways they can support their children.

Information about individual schools

Information about individual schools and their programmes is transmitted to parents through school websites, prospectuses, billboards, schools' orientation meetings and ERO reports.

The ERO website provides annual reports from each school, visited by ERO officials. The reports explain how schools' policies and programmes are contributing to students' achievement and are meeting the curriculum guidelines, Government policies and its priorities for education. This information is critical for parents when making decisions about choosing the right schools for their children.

A key shortcoming of the ERO report is that it does not seek parents' perspectives in its review exercise. In other words, parents are not asked to give their views about how the school is meeting their children's needs. Another shortcoming of the ERO reporting system is that, although the information is made available to parents on ERO and schools' websites, there is no mechanism in place to assist parents who do not have the language ability to understand or access ERO.

Information about individual students

In the current policy, information on individual students is presented to parents by way of parent-teacher meetings, school and NCEA reports, school notices, telephone, email and face-to-face meetings with teachers or with the school management. Information about career pathways and tips for parents on how they can support their children's learning is presented in different formats, and both in booklets and on websites such as career services, school and tertiary education providers' websites (universities and polytechnics websites).

How the MOE provides support for schools to promote parent - school collaboration

In addition to the range of resources developed by the Ministry and other education institutions to provide information to parents, the MOE has developed "The Refugee Handbook" (MOE, 2008), which gives guidelines to schools on how to support and integrate refugee students and their families into the system. "The Refugee Handbook" presents useful information to schools about: how to welcome refugee students into schools, and best practices on managing the process of enrolment, placement and monitoring refugee students' performance in schools. The book also gives suggestions to schools regarding how to plan and deliver teaching programmes for refugee students, the use of bilingual workers in schools and supporting refugees in transition points. In terms of the Ministry's funding policy, schools with refugee students can apply for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) to set-up English language support for refugee students with limited English language. The amount of funding individual student is entitled is dependent on the

length of time each student has been in the country and the level of English. Table 3.4 explains the present funding refugee students receive.

Table 3.4 ESOL funding levels for refugee students

\$1,067 (GST exclusive) per student each year in their first two years at primary and intermediate schools (Years 1–8)
\$1,600(GST exclusive) per students each year in their first two years at secondary schools (Years 9–10)
\$534 (GST exclusive) per students each year in their third, fourth and fifth years at secondary schools (Years 11–13)
\$712 (GST exclusive) per students each year in their third, fourth and fifth years at secondary schools (Years 11–13)

Students who reach the National ESOL cohort (112) score are not eligible for funding, despite some families of students in this category lacking the English and academic skills required to collaborate.

Schools with significant numbers of refugee students have access to another contestable funding resource (Refugee Flexible Funding) that they can employ to transmit information to parents. Schools can use this funding to employ bilingual support people who speak the home language of families. The bilingual workers are based in schools and are employed to make communication flow between parents and schools easier for both (MOE, 2003). However, the bilingual funding is not an on-going funding and is reserved mostly for schools with significant numbers of refugee students. It is important to note that schools cannot use the refugee funding for English language programmes for parents and transport. The limited amount of ESOL funding that schools receive suggests that most schools, especially those with a limited number of refugee students are likely to struggle to find the funding required to support refugee families.

Although no assessment or evaluation is being done to determine the effectiveness of the bilingual workers and their impacts on parent–school communication, a major component of their roles is to empower families. This is to be achieved by assisting families to access information easily about the school and the performance of their children and also to assist families and teachers during parent-teacher interviews.

There is also another initiative called the Home and School Partnerships programme, which is intended to foster parent–school relationships. The Home and School Partnership is

different from other initiatives because it brings cultural perspectives into the partnership between the home and the school. Its aim is to support and further the existing human resources in the community. Its philosophy is based on the notion that parents and families have the greatest influence on the learning outcomes of children. It acknowledges and values the efforts that parents are already putting into their children's education (MOE, 2003).

The home and school partnership programmes bring in selected parents and trains them on how they can help their children in their home languages, focusing on talking, listening, reading, writing and counting. Schools running this programme employ bilingual people from the local community who play active roles in the training of parents. Key topics covered during the training are extending children's language experience, and developing and maintaining effective home routines (MOE, 2003). The problem with the policy which this programme is based on is that it allows only a handful of selected schools to be supported because the funding is not sufficient.

3.3.2 Analysis of the MOE commitment to promoting parent - school collaboration

It can be seen that although the collaboration between parents and school is an officially recognised priority at the policy level, it appears that its practical application lacks both clear vision and targeted adequate resourcing. The evidence is that Ministry has no specific policy defining the planning, implementation and evaluation of parent - school collaboration and any dedicated and sustainable funding to schools to promote parent - school collaboration. This also suggests that that there is an expectation in the current policy setting that refugee parents can collaborate with schools in an equal term with mainstream hence there is no dedicated support which schools can employ to empower refugee parents.

Based on the existing literature, New Zealand has a large volume of high quality information. However, the effectiveness of existing information is undermined by several factors. The first of these is that the available information is fragmented and spread out among different websites (MOE website, school websites, ERO website, NZQA website, Career Services website and the Correspondence School website) while there is no single existing site for parents which pools together information held by other websites. Secondly, seeking information from these different websites requires parents to have knowledge about the institution and its work, access to a computer with an internet connection and a reasonable level of computer knowledge. Thirdly, the English used in these websites is too

difficult for some parents to understand, especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

The deficiency in the system discussed above suggests that the current channels employed by the Ministry to transmit information to parents do not benefit all parents equally. Parents from refugee backgrounds appear to have limited access to the existing information compared with mainstream parents, although the mainstream parents can also be faced with difficulties in accessing and interpreting some of the information presented to them.

In addition to these, the Ministry's policies on parent - school collaboration seem to be influenced and shift with the political ideology of the party in government. For instance, while the Team-Up website and the supporting materials was produced under the last Labour Government, the current National government introduced the National Standards as a substitute because they were the National party election policy. The Team-Up promotional materials used to provide information to parents about how they can support their children throughout the learning process. It informed parents about the mental development process of children and how they react to different challenges in life. The site provided other useful tips to parents including the activities that parents can do at home, outside the home and in the schools, depending on the age and education level of their children.

Team-Up had links to other sites which provide more information about NCEA and how it works and subject choice. The site explains school policies, stand-downs, suspension and exclusion, complaint procedures and how to help children with their homework.

The National standards material titled "How Well is My Child Doing" which replaced the Team-Up provides general information on children's performance in literacy and numeracy based on the National Standards. The National Standards were said to be part of the Government policy for empowering parents and schools to better support students who were not achieving in school. However, for refugee families the National Standard policy appears ineffective in bringing about any meaningful improvement in collaboration between refugee parents and schools.

On the other hands, while the current government has been using enabling parents to know more of their children's learning and support them at home as the excuse for introducing the National Standards, the governments' introduction of league table suggests that the

Government's intention for developing the National Standards policy was to promote competition.

Beyond that, the Government has cut funding that was vital for empowering refugee parents to support their children's education. This includes funding for childcare, which is critical for mothers with pre-school age children. The funding cut to English language programmes has also created an indirect hindrance to parents' ability to support schools.

National Standards are a Government-led initiative to increase literacy and numeracy across all ages. However, the standards do not adequately cover students who begin below the standards through their language status and this problem is exacerbated by the restrictions on funding for ESOL and parent programmes to assist refugee students and their families.

National standard league tables also can lead to schools not taking on refugee students as it may reflect on their 'league table positions'.

3.4 Theory of Parental- School Collaboration

3.4.1 Background to the concept of parent - school collaboration

Parental involvement in children's education is an activity that has been practised by every society throughout human history. Parents are the first educators and trainers of their children, regardless of culture and civilisation. It is generally agreed and acknowledged by all societies that parental involvement in their children's education not only improves a child's learning, but also shapes his/her social well-being.

The concept is popular in different civilisations, but its focus and approach have significantly changed to match the developmental stage of each society. The role of parents in pre-industrial society was limited to teaching children important ideas and practical skills that they needed to maintain their livelihoods. In modern society, parents continue to retain the responsibility for moulding their children and instructing them on "tribal or community ethics to enable society to exist and perpetuate" (Thomas, 1998, p. 209).

The literature on this topic shows that parents started to play a greater role in formal education in Greek and Roman society, as a result of the work of philosophers such as Plato (427–347 B.C.), Aristotle (384–323 B.C.), Cicero (106–43 B.C.), and Polybius (204–122 B.C.). This was also the period when formal schools became popular because of the influence of philosophers who strongly believed and advocated that educating children and

parents was in the best interest of the state. Their role also increased the demand for education (Fuller & Marxen, 1998). Later, the increased demand for formal schools increased the demand for parental contribution, particularly when it became impractical for schools alone to meet the academic and social development needs of children without the support of their parents.

An increased understanding of the value of the parental contribution to education encouraged the Greeks to formulate rules and regulations governing the ways that parents and schools could co-operate in supporting education. The Greeks put a huge effort into encouraging parents to engage in education, because children were considered to be sustainers and maintainers of their culture; these were roles that children could perform only if parents were to pass on their knowledge to them.

As the demands for parental involvement increased, academics started to produce information to help parents improve their skills and knowledge about supporting their children's development. For example, in *The Republic* (as cited in Berger, 1991) Plato advised parents that what children hear from them and other adults influences the formation of their character:

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we shall wish them to have when they are grown up? We cannot. (p. 210)

Parental involvement as a concept became more popular and attracted greater interest in Western society during the 17th century, when philosophers revealed the numerous benefits that accrued from parents engaging in their children's education and developed new ideas about how parents could best contribute to child development. For example, works of John Amos Comenius (1593–1670) and John Locke (1632–1704) increased our understanding of parental responsibility, and their work promoted the idea of parents engaging with their children at a younger age to shape their future:

It is the nature of everything that comes into being, that while tender it is easily bent and formed, but that, when it has grown hard, it is not easy to alter. Wax, when soft, can be easily fashioned and shaped; when hard it cracks readily (Comenius, 1967, p. 58).

One of the key messages that Locke gave to parents was “you must do nothing before him, which you would not have him imitate” (Locke, 1989, p. 113). Locke also advanced the idea that children are influenced by what they learn from teachers and parents, suggesting that “children’s minds are like ‘clean slates’ (tabula rasa) on which parents and teachers could write what students need to learn” (Fuller & Marxen, 1998, p. 15).

Works by Rousseau (1712–1778) and Pestalozzi (1747–1827) revealed that there are numerous benefits that children gain from a good upbringing. They promoted elements of child advocacy by encouraging societies to uphold children’s rights and create opportunities for children to live in a peaceful environment. This is a concept that is widely employed by contemporary children’s rights movements. Of particular interest is Rousseau’s advice to mothers to “cultivate, water, the young plant before it dies. Its fruits will one day be your delight...plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education” (J. J. Rousseau, 1979, p. 38).

Somali parents’ approach to parent-school collaboration may differ from that of modern Western society, because they are from a traditional background and because of their experience of dealing with the Somali education system, which has significant differences in the roles of parents.

3.4.2 The benefits linked with parent - school collaboration

There are numerous works focusing on the topic of parent - school collaboration that affirm the advantages of parental involvement in educational practice (Hobbs et al., 1984; Laosa, 1983).

More in-depth explanations of the correlation between parent - school collaboration and educational outcomes were provided by Christenson and Hurlley (1997) and McCarthy (2000). They suggested that greater parent - school collaboration contributes “improved academic performance, higher test scores, more positive attitudes towards a high homework completion rate, fewer placements in special education, greater academic perseverance, low dropout rates and fewer suspensions” (see Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005, p. 466).

Other studies show a strong correlation between parent - school collaboration and educational outcomes. The principle outcome is improved academic achievement (see Becher, 1984; Benson, Medrich, & Buckley, 1980; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Henderson, 1989), but there are also associated positive outcomes such as:

- an improved student sense of well-being (Cochran, 1987);
- improved student school attendance (Haynes et al., 1989);
- improved student and parent perceptions of the classroom and school climate (Haynes et al., 1989);
- positive student attitudes and behaviour (Becher, 1984);
- increased student readiness to do homework (Rich, 1988);
- increased student time spent with parents (Rich, 1988);
- better student grades (Henderson et al., 1986);
- higher educational aspirations among students and parents (McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969); and
- increased parental satisfaction with teachers (Epstein, 1984; Rich, 1989).

In addition to these outcomes, parent - school collaboration has been linked to outcomes such as “lower rates of retention in lower grade classes, lower dropout rates; higher on-time school graduation rates, and high rates of participation in advanced courses” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 105).

Leuder (2000) asserted that one of the key benefits of parent - school collaboration is the greater chance of detecting a student’s special needs, since children spend more than three-quarters of their time with their parents, and parents have an in-depth knowledge of the specific needs of their children.

Also explaining the value of the parent - school collaboration, Swap (1993) argued that:

The home–school partnership is no longer a luxury. There is an urgent need for schools to find ways to support the success of all our children. One element that we know contributes to more successful children and more successful schools across all populations is parent involvement in children’s education. When our focus is on improving the achievement of children at academic risk, partnership with families is not just useful; it is crucial.

Moreover, schools and children are not the only beneficiaries of partnership. When families and educators work collaboratively, both experience new learning and an important new source of support. (p. 1).

Haynes and Ben-Avie (1996) found other positive outcomes for not only teachers and parents, but also for schools and communities. One positive outcome for teachers was that an increased exposure to and knowledge of the circumstances that students and their families are living through enables the teachers to gain an in-depth knowledge of the students' specific needs (Haynes & Ben-Avie, 1996). This knowledge motivates teachers to provide additional support for empowering parents to support their children both at home and at school. Improved relationships with parents give teachers greater efficacy and increased self-esteem, which contributes to an improved classroom environment.

Parents who become actively involved with teachers and schools also achieve the motivation to further their own education, and in addition, they become a part of the school community.

By empowering parents to advocate for their children's academic and social support, schools benefit by getting new ideas and initiatives that can bring about improved school performance. Comer and Haynes (1991) clarified the benefits that schools can obtain from building effective home-school collaboration, when they suggested that:

Parents' involvement in their children's education can add value to their schools' programmes by bringing in their insights and knowledge which enhance the professional skills of school staff leading to strengthening the effectiveness of school's academic and social programmes. (p. 271)

They further pointed out that since "parents and schools each represent a different institution and both have great influence on the development of the children the best outcome could be achieved when the two are working together as stakeholders" (Comer & Haynes, 1991, p. 276).

Improved collaboration between schools and communities creates a force for student support, whereby parents are a catalyst for positive changes. Epstein (1996) suggested that home-school collaboration should be incorporated and treated as a key component of the normal programme of schools. "Along with curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and staff development, a program of school-family-community connection is now viewed as one of

the components of school organisation that may help to promote student learning and success in school” (Epstein, 1996, p. 210).

The literature suggests that a student’s academic and social development is not only linked to the quality of teaching, but also to the quality of support provided at home, and the links between the school and home programmes.

Epstein (1996) strongly argued that neither schools nor families alone are capable of doing the task of “educating and socialising children and preparing them for life” (p. 210).

Epstein’s work revealed that “students are advantaged or disadvantaged by the economic and educational resources and guidance offered by families, and students are advantaged or disadvantaged by the quality of their experience in schools” (Epstein, 1996, p. 210). She went further though, pointing out that schools, families, and communities have shared responsibility with the same level of influence.

Whether the parent–school collaboration could be applied to families from low socio-economic backgrounds has received some attention in the literature. For example, Epstein’s work on parental involvement in education suggested that the concept of home–school collaboration is relevant to all parents regardless of their background and economic level. Epstein (1990) maintained that “the evidence suggests that school policies and teacher practices are more important than race, parent education, family size, marital status, and even grade level in determining whether parents continue to be part of their children’s education” (p.210).

However, other authors disagree. The researchers argue that parent–school collaboration varies according to ethnicity and other factors related to the “socio-economic background, parental education, family structure, school characteristic and practices, teacher practices, and age of child” (Roopnarine, Krishna Kumar, Metindogan, & Evans, 2006, p. 239).

While researchers agree about the benefits of parental input, they also agree that the outcome is dependent on the school’s approach to engaging with families and their children, including their commitment of resources and policies to develop and implement the concept. Some researchers have suggested that a school’s commitment to parent - school collaboration should be employed as the tool to determine if schools are concerned about their students’ achievement. For example, Epstein, (1995) stated that:

The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of the children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognise their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students. (p. 701)

Furthermore, some academics have suggested that schools should develop home–school partnership programmes as a strategy to strengthen the entire school community. For example, Epstein (1995, p. 71) argued that “when parents, teachers, students and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work” .

3.5 Models of parent–school collaboration

Research supporting the idea of parent–school collaboration gained impetus after the 1960s, when studies on parental involvement revealed numerous new benefits that children can gain from their parents engaging in their education (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). As a result, researchers were motivated to introduce and apply a variety of models of home–school collaboration, and some of those remain popular. Their development occurred at different times, and Ravn (2005) classified the models according to the period when they became popular. The models described by Ravn are: the compensation, participation, shared responsibility, and redistributed responsibility models. A separate classification by Hornby (2000), described the “protective, expert, transmission, curriculum-enrichment, consumer, and partnership models” (p. 20), which progressively involve more parental participation.

3.5.1 How the various models of parent–school collaboration apply to the New Zealand education system

This subsection describes the various models of parent–school interaction and how they apply to the New Zealand educational system.

Ravn's models of parent–school interaction (Ravn, 2005)

The compensation model

This model emerged in the 1960s and is based on the premise that it is the role of schools to compensate for parents who lack the skills and resources crucial to supporting their child's education. The model places parents in the position of co-educator and emphasises that children's education is influenced by factors related to a parents' social, cultural and emotional experiences. However, it does not recognise differences in culture, or socio-economic circumstances between families, and it is poor on communication. As such, it has little relevance to the New Zealand education system.

The consensus model

This consensus model, which was popular in the 1970s, originated from a consensus between parents, teachers and schools, and promotes communication between schools and parents. Although this model does promote communication, like the Compensation Model, it too does not acknowledge cultural or socio-economic differences, so it also has little relevance for education in New Zealand.

The participation model

The participation model gained prominence in the 1980s and was popular for the way in which it encouraged parents to actively participate in decisions about their child's education. It also encourages parents to be involved in specific activities that make positive contributions to education. Therefore, it acknowledges the role of parents in their children's education, which is important in the New Zealand education system, but although it recognises that role, it does not provide the process for it to occur. It also fails to recognise cultural differences between families.

The shared responsibility model

The shared responsibility model became popular in the 1990s and is rooted in Epstein's curriculum enrichment model, which emphasises the value of creating greater connection between families, schools, and the wider community. This model places a great emphasis on the role of parents. Therefore, it also has some relevance to the New Zealand system, but in doing so it ignores the special skills of teachers, and also expects all parents to have an equal level of experience, knowledge and skill.

The redistributed responsibility model

This model has been popular over the last decade, and it is the most commonly applied model in New Zealand. Its key tenets include setting separate tasks and roles for parents and teachers, and it suggests that parents be involved in specific activities that have the most positive impact on education. Schools applying this model develop their home-school policies in a context where parents are charged with the responsibility of maintaining the child's material and cultural well-being. However, it also does not recognise the differing backgrounds of parents, and there is a lack of guidance for schools on its implementation.

Hornby's models of parent-teacher interaction

The work of Ravn, Leuder and others was built-upon by Hornby (2000) in the development of a number of further models, which are described here.

Protective model

The protective model, which was first developed by Swap (1993), is more concerned with avoiding conflicts between parents and teachers, and therefore draws a clear segregation of responsibilities between the role of parents and that of teachers. The model suggests that the parental role be restricted to ensuring that children attend school in a timely fashion and with the appropriate equipment, to the extent that parental involvement is actively discouraged, believing that it has the potential to harm students' learning (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). Education is solely the role of the school. Therefore, this model is quite remote from the process of education in New Zealand.

Expert model

The expert model, which originated from the work of Cunningham and Davis (1985), treats teachers as specialists in education and child development, while relegating parental involvement to lesser importance. This model argues that teachers are responsible for making decisions about children's education and the role of parents is to receive the information and guidelines sent to them by teachers.

Hornby identified some major shortcomings of this model: firstly, it encourages parents to be dependent and passive. Secondly, it discourages teachers from having effective communication with parents, so that parents fail to access important information relating to the problems and potentials that their child may have. Lastly, because of this lack of

communication, teachers are ignorant of circumstances that parents face in their own home environment which influence the child's performances. A lack of meaningful communication between parents and teachers can result in parents losing faith and trust in their children's teachers and can seriously harm parent-school collaboration. In addition, teachers can have difficulty meeting the needs of children from differing cultures.

As for the Protective Model, the Expert Model is foreign to New Zealand, but in contrast, the Somali education system fits somewhere between the protective and expert models. It especially bears similarity to the latter, in that teachers are seen as experts and Government officials, whose opinion should not be questioned. In addition, in some cases teachers are also agents for the internal security agency, so they tend to be viewed with suspicion or even fear by parents.

Transmission model

The transmission model, which originated from the work of Swap (1993 in Hornby, 2000), encourages parents to take part in activities that can help the school to improve student outcomes. The model is employed by teachers who believe in their own professionalism and expertise, but at the same time recognise that parents can make a significant contribution to their children's learning. Teachers who apply this model have high expectations of parents, and believe that their teaching can be more effective if they transmit their knowledge and expertise to parents. The key strength of this model is that teachers consider parents to be active participants in decision making, so parental inputs are welcomed and addressed. That aspect of this model is incorporated, at least to some extent, for example in the board of trustees, in the New Zealand education system.

However, Hornby alluded to a point which he warns is a danger associated with this model; that teachers may treat all parents equally and expect all parents to become a resource from which children can get support, whereas some parents may be unable to meet that expectation. His comment is very applicable to parents from non-English-speaking countries who do not have the language ability to help their children, and the high expectation placed on them may turn out to be unrealistic; not only because of the language gap, but also because of issues associated with their differing culture and socio-economic status. This situation applies to New Zealand.

Curriculum-enrichment model

The curriculum-enrichment model (Swap, 1993) encourages greater parental involvement in that it perceives parents to be capable of enriching the school curriculum. Hornby suggested that this model works best for parents from minority groups, since it encourages teachers to seek parental contributions according to their religion, values, beliefs and cultures, in a way that enables the school to deliver a curriculum that is in harmony with those. Its limitation is that it demands that teachers learn more from parents, which could be rather daunting for some parents. It also puts an additional workload on teachers, who have to develop an understanding and knowledge of the cultures and values of their students. It requires a national policy that acknowledges the extra workload and resources that are required, and provides for those. Aspects of this model are alluded to in part in the “Tomorrow’s Schools” reforms, but they are not necessarily provided for in practice.

Consumer model

Contrary to the curriculum enrichment model, the consumer model (Cunningham and Davis, 1985) treats parents as consumers of the services offered by educational institutions. Teachers play the role of consultant, so they are expected to provide parents with information and advice about the selection and use of resources. Hornby argued that this model can be professionally harmful as it takes the professional teaching role away from teachers, while parents are charged with certain responsibilities that teachers used to perform. In addition, it makes no provision for families who cannot provide the required level of support. This model is similar to that which is employed in Somalia. However, it bears little resemblance to the situation in New Zealand under the current policy of national standards, in which parents are expected to receive information about their children’s level of achievement and are expected to assist with improving any underachievement, without allowing for the parents’ own abilities.

Partnership model

The partnership model of Hornby is considered to be the most appropriate model of interaction between teachers and parents, because “teachers are viewed as experts on education and parents are viewed as experts on their children” (Hornby, 2000, p. 20). Important aspect of this model is the emphasis placed on “two-way communication; mutual

support; joint decision- making; and enhancement of learning at school and at home” (Hornby, 2000, p. 20).

This model also puts more emphasis on parents and teachers working together as experts sharing knowledge and experience to help students leave school with positive attitudes and recognised qualifications, and in this respect it is similar to Ravn’s Shared Responsibility Model. The literature suggests the model works well if it is approached by teachers and parents as a team and each stakeholder is accorded the respect they deserve. For example, teachers are respected because of their professionalism, and parents are respected because of their experience and knowledge of their children. A sense of team spirit occurs if both school and parents feel that they are being listened to and give due consideration to each other’s views and contributions. However, it requires additional resources for schools, for teachers to be trained to work with parents of different cultures, and for parents to be up-skilled; especially those with limited English. The boards of trustees in the New Zealand system are an example of teachers and parents working together in the New Zealand education system.

The literature (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008) showed that a revised model of the partnership model was introduced in New Zealand designed to focus on different purposes from the objectives of the general model of partnerships described in the literature. The revised model, which is commonly known as the Home-School Partnership-Literacy model has particular focus on involving parents in children’s literacy. A programme based on this model was originally designed for Pasifika families to discuss literacy messages in the Pasifika parents’ language, but was later extended to other families from Non-English Speaking families. A total of 40 families from six regions across New Zealand were involved in the programme in 2006 and another 40 families in 2007 (Bull, et al., 2008). The weakness of this model was it was more concerned with involving parents in children’s literacy and numeracy and paid less attention to other aspects of partnerships defined in the literature. A report prepared for the Ministry of Education on the effectiveness of the model concluded that the most striking component from a review of this programme was the lack of direct evidence of a relationship between home-school partnerships and improved student achievement (Bull, Brooking and Campbell, 2008, p 10). In my opinion this model has some merits, but some modifications need to be made to make it more effective for refugee families.

Other research developed a number of methods that parents could apply to support their children. Berger's work, which emerged in the early 1990s, proposed five levels of parental involvement in education, ranging from passive to active involvement, with each level having a different outcome. The lowest level sees the parent as a supporter of the educational goals of the school, then as a liaison between home and school to support homework, increasing when the parent is a school volunteer or paid employee, becoming a decision maker, and at the highest level, being an active partner and educational leader at home and at school (Berger 1991, p. 21).

A major shortcoming of Berger's work is that he treated parents as a homogenous group, without differentiating between their cultures, experiences and capabilities; all of which are factors having an influence on the extent to which parents can render the necessary support to their children.

Although Berger was concerned more with parents' roles and he discussed the different levels at which parents interact with schools, Greenwood and Hickman advanced his work by explaining the different ways that teachers - particularly elementary school teachers - interact with parents. Their work became popular almost at the same time as Berger's, but with more emphasis on parent-teacher interaction. They presented six types of parental interaction with teachers. These were the parent as audience, volunteer, paraprofessional, teacher of their own child, learner, and decision-maker (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991, p. 279).

Their work was advanced by Epstein's (1987, 2001) research, which explained the different ways that parents can engage with schools and the outcome sought from each model, and defines specific roles within Ravn's Shared Responsibility Model. Table 3.5 outlines the six major types of interaction proposed by Epstein, which together form her overlapping spheres of Influence Model.

Table 3.5 Overlapping spheres of involvement model

Type	Focus
Type 1–Parenting	Helping all families to establish home environment to support children as students.
Type 2–Communication	Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programmes and their students’ progress.
Type 3–Volunteering	Recruit and organize parental help and support to contribute to school activities that support schools and children’s learning.
Type 4–Learning at home	Providing information and ideas to families about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
Type 5–Decision making	Include parents in school decisions by setting up parent leaders and representatives.
Type 6–Collaborating with the community	Identify and integrate resources and service from the community to strengthen programs family practice, and student learning and development.

Sources: Epstein (1987, 2001, cited in Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003, p. 146)

A common weakness of these models is that the specific needs of refugee families from traditional schooling systems have not been acknowledged and therefore fail explain how schools can address the exceptional challenges refugee parents face in navigating their way in the schooling system in the developed western countries.

Home-school Partnerships- Literacy Model

This is the widely publicised model of partnerships in New Zealand. The model was designed to support the Ministry’s efforts to enhance children’s literacy and numeracy. Its intention was to increase parents’ understanding about their children’s learning and to help them understand how they can contribute to this. A programme based on it has been carried out in selected schools targeting a small number of families in each school. The programme covers topics on familiarising parents with the curriculum, assessments and how parents can contribute in their children’s learning using their first language. The weaknesses in this programme are; firstly, the emphasis is entirely on parents’ involvement in literacy and numeracy, so there is no emphasis placed on the other aspects of parent - school collaboration described in the literature. Secondly, the programme is one-off and is not integrated into the school system, so it is not built into the school development plan.

Thirdly, because it is a project contracted to external providers, there is no mechanism for future sustainability after the completion of the contract funding. Fourthly, because it is parent-focused there is less focus placed on up-skilling of teachers, so there is less chance of the programme contributing to a two-way collaboration.

The model has some merits, especially by increasing the participating parents' understanding of their children's literacy and numeracy learning. However, it has the risk of not creating effective collaboration between parent and schools unless some modifications are made to its objective, contents, and scope. Further, because the programme is designed for only families from low socio-economic backgrounds, such as Māori, Pasifika, and refugees, it has the potential to delay refugee families' integration into the school community.

3.6 Conclusions

The chapter presented information on the New Zealand educational system, and how the system has evolved over the years, with a particular focus on the 1989 education reforms. The chapter also discussed sources through which New Zealand parents can currently receive information about the education system and individual schools.

In addition, it discussed parent- school collaboration, introduced the various models of parent-school collaboration, and it explained how they relate to the New Zealand education system. A combination of Hornby's curriculum-enrichment and the partnership models, and Ravn's participation and shared-responsibility models seem to best describe the New Zealand education system. This thesis will later examine how well the system fits with the framework of those models, and how they facilitate interaction between schools and Somali refugee parents.

Based on the available information and the methods employed by schools and the educational institutions to pass information to parents, it is highly likely that the system is not keeping pace with the rapidly changing New Zealand society with respect to culture, language, and socio-economic conditions.

Chapter 4 will discuss the methodology employed for this research, and the processes for selecting participants, conducting interviews, and analysing the respondents' feedback.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three discussed the international literature on parent - school collaboration and its associated benefits. The chapter also presented the ideologies underpinning the 1989 reformation of the education system, how schools are governed, and the curriculum of teaching in New Zealand. The various models of parent- school collaboration and how they apply to the New Zealand education system were also discussed.

This chapter covers the main methodological issues that underpinned the choice of research methods in this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the reasons for choosing qualitative methods to collect the data needed for this research. It then discusses the process followed by the researcher to identify and access the participants, the procedures for collecting and analysing the collected data, and follow on with a discussion of validity and reliability, ethics, the researcher's role, and research limitations. The research was carried out in Christchurch, New Zealand between 2005 and 2011. The researcher was employed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. He is a Somali former refugee, whose role in the ministry is to ensure that educational policy responds to the needs of refugee students and their families. He is also a parent of school-age children and is a leader in the Somali community.

The main questions that this research aims to investigate are:

I: How do the refugee families' experiences in the home country, the refugee flight process and the experiences in the refugee camps impact on communication and collaboration between refugee families and the schools in their host community?

II: Given the refugee families' language, culture and experiences, how compatible are the schools' policies and systems for parent - school collaboration

III: What model/models of parent - school collaboration best suit refugee families?

To respond to the research questions it was deemed necessary to look objectively into five broad areas: the parents' pre-refugee profiles (education, lifestyle, gender issues); the parents' experiences of the war in Somalia and in the flight process; the experiences in the refugee camps; their resettlement experiences in New Zealand (the support provided and the

constraints faced in accessing essential services for resettlement); and schools' policies and practices for communicating and collaborating with refugee families and the existing constraints. The literature shows that refugees' prior experiences in their home country, in the flight process and in the refugee camps, and the level of support that they receive in the resettlement country can influence their ability to cope with the challenges of dealing with the system in the new country, and this is recognised by the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2002), the European Council for Refugees in Exile (ECRE, 1998) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR, 1998).

The finding from the families' experiences mentioned above, the literature review on parent - school collaboration, and the New Zealand education system will form the basis for the discussion chapter.

It was felt that this information could be obtained best by the use of qualitative (narrative) research methods, which involved: interviews (individual and focus groups), direct observations, and written documents. There is strong consensus among researchers in the refugee field that qualitative methods are the most preferred method for conducting research that involves participants from a refugee background (Kadari, 2009). This is because scholars are concerned that the quantitative approach "fails to take account of people's unique ability to interpret their experiences, construct their own meanings and act on these" (Burns, 1994, p. 10). This implies that the qualitative method is capable of better facilitating the process of collecting data, and can depict a clear picture of the perspectives of refugee parents about their experiences and relationships with schools. Burns (2000) asserts that qualitative research that involves observational and unstructured interviews with participants is the only method capable of giving the researcher adequate information about participants' experiences.

Furthermore, since the Somali parents are from an oral society background, and most of the participating parents have limited writing and reading skills even in their own language, it was believed that qualitative narrative research methods would provide greater flexibility, and allow participants to freely reflect on their past experience and their relationship with schools. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) warn researchers against employing quantitative methods for studies involving participants with limited literacy, as it is the case with Somali participants. This makes narrative methods the most suitable for this research.

Besides this, because of the diversity within the participating Somali parents based on differences in their gender, education, and language level, it was essential that the method employed granted the researcher the flexibility to conduct interviews in a semi-structured or informal manner, so that the parents could explain in-depth their past experiences, the difficulties they are going through in the resettlement process, their relationship with schools, and the challenges they face. Maykut and Morehouse (1999) argued that qualitative research puts greater emphasis on examining people's words and actions in ways which can reveal the circumstance which the participants are living through, and the impacts of the experiences they went through during their life (Maykut & Morehouse, 1999).

Another advantage associated with the qualitative methodology is its flexibility and openness to changes, which give the researcher the opportunity to code collected data and to regularly revise the data throughout the different stages of the research processes. It has been asserted by Davidson and Tolich (1999) that in qualitative research, "the coding is on-going [and] changeable" (p. 158). Therefore, such flexibility also gave me as a researcher the opportunity to continually review data on an on-going basis throughout the process of the research. It also gives the researcher some control over the research process. This kind of flexibility can, as well, have the potential to minimise power imbalance between the researcher and participants over the course of the interview process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1999). One of the strengths of qualitative research is the dynamics that develop between the researcher and the participants resulting from the relationship developed with the participants.

Padgett (1998, p. 7) also presented six key reasons for choosing the qualitative methods which are relevant to this research. Table 4.1 provides these reasons.

Table 4.1 Reasons for choosing the qualitative methods

	Reasons for choosing qualitative methods	Explaining why these reasons are relevant to this research
1	<p>You want to explore a topic about which little is known.</p> <p>Using qualitative methods as a frontier during the initial exploratory stage of a research (after which “hard” science takes over).</p>	<p>Little is known about the experiences refugees have undergone in their home country, in the flight journey and the refugee camps. There also limited understanding about how the current policies in schools are able to respond well to the needs of refugees in their communication and collaboration with schools.</p>
2	<p>You are pursuing a topic of sensitivity and emotional depth.</p> <p>Using qualitative methods and researching topics that require empathy and understanding. Using a standardized survey or questionnaire may seem insensitive or inappropriate.</p>	<p>Asking refugees about the experiences they went through in their home country (both opportunities and misfortunes) can be a sensitive issue and can trigger the past trauma. This issue requires empathy and understanding from researchers to pay close attention to participants’ backgrounds and avoid asking inappropriate questions.</p>
3	<p>You wish to capture ‘lived experiences’ from the perspectives of those who live it and create meaning from it.</p> <p>When the researcher seeks to ‘understand,’ by capturing the participants’ point of view, rather than seeking to explain from the perspective of an outsider.</p>	<p>This research aims to explore the Somali refugee parents’ opinions about their lifetime experiences and the culture and religion they bring with them to New Zealand and whether schools’ policies are working well in their communication and collaboration with schools. The research also aims to gather information from school staff about their perceptions about communicating and collaborating with Somali parents.</p>
4	<p>You wish to study the outcomes of programmes and interventions.</p> <p>Qualitative methods are useful in evaluating programmes and services. Qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other by providing in-depth understanding of how interventions succeed or fail.</p>	<p>The reach aims to explore how the policies and systems in schools are responding well to the Somali parents, based on their cultural, religious background and refugee experience.</p>
5	<p>You are a quantitative researcher who has reached an impasse in data collection or in explaining findings.</p> <p>Quantitative researcher may resort to qualitative methods to explain findings that cannot be explained through quantitative methods.</p>	<p>Not relevant to this research</p>

Reasons for choosing qualitative methods	Explaining why these reasons are relevant to this research
<p>6 You are seeking to merge activism with research.</p> <p>Action or participatory research can be used in fighting oppression or social injustice. Those who are studied maintain substantial control over the study from start to finish.</p>	<p>Being a refugee implies experience of injustice displacement and other forms of human rights violation. Also as a minority and being culturally, religious and linguistically different from the dominant culture in New Zealand, refugees have the potential to become marginalized and alienated from the system. To enable participants to maintain substantial cover control were given ample opportunity to guide the study.</p>

4.2 Narrative

The principle qualitative method that was employed in this research was the “narrative approach” which allowed participants to provide their perspectives and perception on how their experiences in Somalia, in the refugee camps and in New Zealand are impacting on their abilities to communicate and collaborate with schools. Observation was also used to a small degree, primarily to validate the narrative data.

Padgett, (2008, p. 34) argues that “Narrative approaches (NA) have tremendous intuitive appeal given their emphasis on the power of the spoken word”. The advantage of employing the narrative approach is well documented in the literature. For example, Pavlish (2007) asserted that narrative analysis permits participants to provide their perspectives and interpretations of their own realities. She also asserted that “narrative offers data that have already been interpreted by the narrator before the researcher even reaches the data analysis phase” (2007, p. 29). However, she went on to cite Riessman (1993), who stated that “...there is no *one* method here...and we can go about systematically interpreting their interpretations.” Therefore, the narrative method can have a broad definition.

The narrative approach appears to have particular benefits for marginalised groups, such as refugees. For example, Chase (2005, p. 669) argued that “for some people, the act of narrating is a significant event itself [and] facilitates positive” empowerment. Furthermore, “the strength of qualitative research is studying how people, through their narratives and experience give meaning to their health and lives within their social and cultural contexts” (Groleau, Zelkowitz, & Cabral, 2009, p. 417).

However, to make participants' narrative more accurate, Atkinson (2002, cited in Pavlish, 2007 p. 29) presented three key guidelines for researchers who wish to employ narrative methods. First, "the researcher should not judge or analyse [a] storyteller but, should instead, focus on establishing connections and examining the personal relevance of each story, second, the life story can stand independently in offering insight into the human experience and, third, each story reveals something about life"

On the other hand, I was mindful of the experiences of loss, impoverishment, and torture that some participants are likely to have gone through and become distressed by narrating their past experiences. Therefore, it was important for me as a researcher to come up with a process which allowed me to obtain the necessary information about the participants' experiences while at the same time avoiding sensitive questions. So I had to avoid asking participants deep questions that could bring up past negative memories, for example, asking participants about their family members who were killed in the war in Somalia. This also makes the "narrative approach" most relevant because it is an approach that has the potential to actively engage processes of autonomous voice.

The narrative approach was very useful in this research situation because the focus was on exploring the participants' experiences chronologically, starting from the home country to the experience of dealing with teachers and schools in New Zealand. Therefore, to capture the relevant information about the participants' journey in a thematic order, it was extremely important to allow participants to present their views and opinions in their own terms and at their own pace. While other methods might be just as capable, Atkinson (1998) asserts that the narrative method can help to develop key themes that may have an effect on participants' lives and their aspirations.

4.3 Methods

The topic for this research required me to look into the lifetime experiences of the families. This involved exploring any constraints and barriers families may have faced in Somalia, in the refugee camps, and in New Zealand (including experience with schools) and whether past constraints are currently affecting the communication and collaboration between families and schools. Exploring families' past experiences and their current relationships with schools was deemed critical to determining the appropriate model of parent- school collaboration for Somali parents. To generate information which can provide insight into these factors, the research has gathered information from the following sources; focus

groups with interactive activities and discussion, individual in-depth interviews, document review and observational methods. These approaches to data-gathering were chosen because they permit the participants to use their own language, thereby helping to stimulate discussions. They were particularly valuable, given the disparity in the participants' experiences and their capabilities. Such diversity in education and language skills and the Somali oral cultural background necessitated the research being conducted using informal, unstructured interviews. This gave the researcher the freedom to allow the interviewees to simply talk (Walsh, 1996), when they might have been uncomfortable filling in a written questionnaire, or even incapable of doing so. In this respect, the focus groups were particularly useful as participants could discuss their experience in depth while building on the judgments and comments made by others in the group. Also, the focus group discussion was deemed important to the researcher as participants can “probe each other’s reasons for holding a certain view” (Bryman, 2001, p. 338). This helps the participants to articulate more on the topics which are of interest to the researcher, which generated further discussions. He adds that since obtaining the perspectives of participants is the basis for conducting qualitative research, focus group participants have the advantage of bringing to the surface issues which are of interest to the participant (Bryman, 2001).

This also benefits the researcher because as facilitator the researcher can keep the discussion focused on the topics which are of interest to the research. Because the participants are all Somalis, when asked to reflect on the questions that the interviewer poses, they will be able to easily hear and understand each other’s responses. It can also assist with inspiring the other participants within the focus group to articulate more on their experience with schools and they may even talk beyond their personal experience and comment on issues affecting the wider families as they hear the comments made by the other people in the group.

The processes for selecting and engaging participants

Schools (principals and teachers)

There are 26 schools in Christchurch which currently have Somali students enrolled, with a total of 66 students, although just two of those schools have 28 of the students on their roll. Those two schools are the ones which were involved in this study. Of the two schools, one is a high school (referred to as School B) and one a primary school (referred to as School A), which gave a range of student’s ages and perspectives from the two types of school. As well as that, these schools were chosen because of the length of time the schools had been dealing with Somali families and the schools’ willingness to partake in the research project.

These criteria were chosen from anecdotal data in conjunction with material from ERO reports and ESOL database. The relevance of the length of time a school has dealt with Somali children and the number of children on the school role is that schools' greater dealing with refugees is likely to have increased their understanding of the refugees' special needs. In addition, the higher the number of refugee children, the greater the funding that is available so that these schools are more likely to have programmes in place which cater specifically for those students and their families. Schools with only small numbers of refugee children or who had only recent experience with them were excluded because they were unlikely to have programmes in place, and the staff were unlikely to have an understanding of cultural and refugee experiences. The process for engaging with the two schools started with initial contact with the principals to clarify the nature of the research, its objectives, the procedures to be utilised and their rights as participants. This was done by means of an information sheet. The information sheet also contained a clause informing the participants that the research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury and it also contained the names and contacts of the researcher's supervisors. Verbal explanation was used to make more clarification where needed.

Factors around teachers' involvement, from the perspective of time and personal commitments, were addressed. An adequate time frame was allowed for the principals to decide whether they wished for their schools and thus their teachers and students, to be involved in the project. Assurance was given to the principals that the identities of their schools, participating teachers and the students would not be revealed in the final report.

Fifteen teachers were involved, consisting of six primary and nine secondary. The teachers were all currently engaged as teachers of Somali children within ESOL and mainstream classes. The process for identifying teachers started once permission was obtained from the principals for the schools to be engaged in the project. First a list of all teachers with Somali pupils currently in their classes was compiled. Then the teachers were individually contacted to obtain their acceptance to participate in the project. The teachers were informed how the research was to be undertaken and their rights as participants by means of an information sheet. Table 4.2 provides characteristic of participating teachers.

Table 4.2 The characteristics of teachers in the two schools

Respondent	Gender	Age	No. of yrs teaching		Experience of working with Somali families	
			Years	Months	Years	Months
The characteristics of teachers in the primary school.						
1	F	37	15		2	
2	F	23		9		9
3	F	31	11		3	
4	F	36	20 +		5	
5	F	28		6		6
6	F	Not given	Not given			8
The characteristics of teachers in the high school.						
1	F	58	23		15	4
2	F	51	20		2	3
3	F	64	33		15	
4	F	36	20 +		5	
5	F	24		6		6
6	F	Not given	Not given			
7	M	24	1.5			8
8	F	45-50	20		2	
9	F	45	22			

Families

Participating parents comprised of a sample of 15 parents (8 mothers and 7 fathers) who took part in the individual interviews and 25 (six of them also in the individual interviews) parents in the focus group (i.e., 34 individuals in total). Six parents who took part in the individual interviews also took part in an observational component of the research. Their selection started with the holding of two meetings for the community leaders (one for the men and one for the women). These meetings were important in clarifying the research

objectives, obtaining community-wide support and to conduct the study in an inclusive manner. After the meeting with the community leaders, contacts with the individual families started with an initial contact with the head of the family, according to Somali culture the male, or the mother in the case of solo parent families with absent fathers.

To address cultural issues, the assistance of a Somali female was sought to contact the female-headed households. With two-parent families a decision was to be reached either whether one or both parents would be involved. An arrangement was made via the female assistant before visiting the female heads of household. The parents were also asked to give permission for their children to participate in the project.

All participants in the research were advised of the nature of the research, its objectives, how the research was to be undertaken and their rights as participants by means of an information sheet. A Somali translation of the information sheet was provided for the participating parents whose English language was limited. Additional verbal explanation was provided for all participating parents and students where necessary. A consent form accompanying the information sheet was provided to all participants and was also translated into Somali for the parents. The Somali version of the information sheet informed the participants that the research was approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. The names and contacts of the supervisors for the researcher were also provided in the information sheet.

The criteria for selecting parents included being Somali, having children in the participating schools and agreeing to participate in the project. The priority was to involve all Somali families who had children in the two participating schools; however, other Somali families who have children in other schools were also allowed to take part in the focus groups. The latter families were allowed into the focus groups to gain the perceptions held by the wider Somali community. The people who accepted the invitation to participate were a broad cross-section of the Somali community. The 15 parents who took part in the individual interviews arrived in New Zealand between 1997 and 2005. Three of the families arrived under the UNHCR Refugee Quota Programme; seven out of the 15 families came under the Humanitarian Family Reunification programme, four under the family-sponsored category and one was in the asylum seeker. In terms of their marital status, 10 out of the 15 families have both the father and mother in New Zealand; four are solo-mothers and one is a solo father family.

Students

The students in the research were 15 in number; all were attending the secondary school. The criterion for selecting participating students was based on age, length of time they had been in New Zealand and their willingness to participate in the study. The intention was to involve any student who had been in the country for more than six months.

While opportunity was given to all Somali children in the high school to participate, a number of students did not take part in the research. This was because either their parents/guardians declined to give permission or the students themselves have declined to participate. The primary school pupils were not interviewed because they were thought too young to make informed comments about the relationship between their parents and their teachers.

Seven out of the 15 participating students were in ESOL when their interviews were done. The remaining eight were in mainstream classes (one year nine, one in year 10, two in year 11, three in year 12, and one in year 13). In terms of their gender, three were male, seven were female and the remaining five did not disclose their gender. The length of time the students have been in the present school also ranged from six months to four years. Four of the students had come directly from Somalia and had no previous formal schooling except Madrassa (Islamic classes) teaching. Three had come to the school with three years of primary schooling in New Zealand and two had full primary schooling but had no early childhood education. One of the students had come from Kenya and had received seven years of primary schooling before coming to New Zealand and enrolling in the present school.

4.4 The Process for Conducting Interviews

When deciding on the choice of procedures for conducting interviews consideration was given to the circumstances of the participants involved in the research. This included the workloads of teachers and principals, parents' literacy level and the parents' previous participation in research projects. Participants' culture and religious beliefs were taken into consideration both in the planning and conducting of interviews. These included conducting separate interviews for the male and female participants. Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 731) suggest that "it is important to take into account particular issues involved in conducting research with refugee women, including language/translation issues, the impact

of the research on the marginalised participants and their communities, cultural appropriateness and the purpose of the research”.

In all cases, consent forms were signed by participants and their confidentiality was assured. The consent forms allowed participants the freedom to withdraw from participating in case they decided to do so at any point during the process (see Appendices D and E).

4.5 Individual Interviews with Parents

In accordance with the strong suggestion of Walsh (1996, in Ibrahim, 2004, p. 7–8) for researchers conducting qualitative interviews, the procedure outlined below was adhered to throughout the interview process.

- Researcher self-introduction: introducing the research; giving explanatory comments about the purpose of the research and seeking participants’ consent regarding the use of tape recordings and the taking of notes.
- Warm up: asking ice-breaking questions and avoiding threatening language.
- Main body of the interview: start by asking simple questions, while leaving to the end the complicated ones.
- Cool off using simple questions to ease any tension that may have emerged.
- Closure remark to expressing appreciation.

The questions asked of parents during the individual interviews queried them about their experiences: prior to becoming refugees; during the civil war in Somalia; during the flight process; in the first country of origin; during migration and resettlement in New Zealand, and with schools in New Zealand. The emphasis was on their experiences in dealing with schools, since this was a focus of the study.

In this study, the researcher was familiar to the participants, so the interview process started with respondents being given a verbal briefing about the purpose of the research, the process of the interview and participants’ rights to confidentiality. Aside from the verbal briefing, participants were given information sheets and consent forms to sign before taking part in any interviews. The information sheet contained the contacts and details of the researcher’s supervisors. A translated Somali version of the information and consent form was made available for respondents who could not read English.

Particular effort was made to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a non-threatening way. This included explaining to the participants that the research has no connection with my role in the Ministry of Education. The participants (both parents and students) were informed that they will not be disadvantaged by declining to participate, abstaining from talking or withdrawing entirely from any stage of the research.

The relevant data were collected from parents in the form of questionnaires, notes-taking and tape recordings which were later transcribed for analysis. The topics in the questionnaires were organised along themes which covered a range of topics which were felt important in responding to the research question. The topics covered the parents' pre-refugee experience (lifestyle, education and employment) and the constraints that they experienced; their experience in the war, in the flight process and their impacts on the participants' dealing with schools. The experiences in New Zealand were centred on the participants' resettlement experience and the constraints that they experienced. Peräkylä (2005, p. 870), argues that with interviews "the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people's subjective experience and attitudes".

The interviews about the experience with schools were more to do with the expectation of parents, how they identify schools for their children, what information they were asked and provided during interviews and the methods used by schools for engaging with parents after enrolment and the constraints encountered.

The interviews were conducted in a simple Somali language while minimising the use of jargon. Additional verbal explanation was also used to clarify points when necessary. The use of leading questions was also minimised during the interviews and discussion processes.

This was useful for allowing the discussions to flow freely during the interviews. In some cases, follow-up phone calls were made to contact participants whose responses required further elaboration and respondents whose comments prompted new ideas which were of interest to the researcher.

The individual interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, except two participants who requested their interviews to be conducted inside the mosque. To meet the participants' request, the interviews were conducted in a separate room in the mosque arranged by the mosque management. The interviews with the remaining 12 families were conducted in their homes on the weekend's because this was the only time both fathers and

mothers were available. This decision was taken because it was felt inappropriate to conduct interviews with mothers when the fathers were not at home. The participants appeared more comfortable with the interviews being conducted in their homes, although sometimes there were visitors and children who distracted the participants' attention. Sometimes I (researcher) had to remind the participants the point the discussion stopped before the interruption. Also, sometimes we had to eat some snacks and soft drinks provided by participants before commencing interviews. The researcher had to accept such offers because declining them could be considered inappropriate in the Somali cultural protocol.

Some participants (4) were uneasy with the use of a recording for their interviews, so the researcher had to employ note-taking in order to capture the participants' opinions.

4.6 Focus Group Discussion

As indicated earlier, because of the written language limitations of some of the Somali community members, the focus group interviews were felt to be particularly important in helping the researcher to get insight into the views held by the wider members of the community about their relationship with schools. They were particularly helpful for obtaining information about families' experiences which could be barriers or supports to the processes of integration and building effective collaboration with schools.

The work of Merton et al. (1956, in Bryman, 2001) suggests that focus groups are useful for researchers interested in exploring the views commonly held by people in the group. The role of the researcher in the discussion was confined to acting as facilitator and guiding the discussions to focus on the research topics with minimal intrusions.

The interviews with focus groups were conducted in the refugee and migrant centre. This venue for the interviews was selected, based upon its provision of quietness, easy accessibility, relaxation and comfort and culturally appropriateness. Two focus groups were conducted; one was for the female participants and one was for the male participants. There were 10 female participants in the female-only focus group and 15 men in the men-only group. The male focus group discussion lasted for about three hours, while the female focus group discussion was only two hours.

The focus groups' discussion started with a prayer recited by the highest Islamic scholar or oldest person in the group. The decision to appoint such person was left to the group. This was followed by the researcher informing the participants about their rights before engaging

in any discussion, as for the individual interviews. This included abstaining from taking part in any of the discussion which they felt uncomfortable with and requesting the tape recorder to be turned off if they did not want recording to continue when it was their turn to talk. The researcher also informed participants that there will be a presentation on the findings on the key themes before the research was published to those who wished as an opportunity to give feedback. The participants were informed that they may be contacted by the researcher in case clarification was needed during the transcript and analysis of the data.

In the focus group discussion, the facilitator (researcher) helped the participants to agree on ground rules before any discussion was initiated. This was done to avoid any domination within the group. The following ground rules were set:

- To talk one at a time.
- No interruption.
- No criticising of comments made by any member.
- To keep confidential anything mentioned or discussed within the group.
- Each speaker should mention his/her name before speaking so that the researcher can know who said what; however, those who wished not to mention their names could do so.
- Do not talk about somebody else's experiences, unless the identity of the person is concealed.

Personal questions were avoided during the focus group interviews and generic questions were used instead. The discussion of any personal experiences was avoided, unless it was believed to be an issue for the entire community. Prompts were used to sustain the dialogue and encourage the participants to elaborate on the contents of the topics. Consideration was given to gaining familiarity and rapport with the participants.

Any gesture to indicate approval or disapproval of comments made by participants was avoided too. However, in some cases comments such as "I see" or "What else?" and "Can you elaborate more on that point?" were used to stimulate the topics most interesting to the researcher. These comments were employed as a barrier-breakdown tool, especially with participants who appeared too shy to express their opinions.

The discussions were conducted in a manner that encouraged the parent participants to articulate more on their experiences and the way in which they had responded to the various constraints they have faced during their dealings with schools.

The focus group discussions were centred on themes which were explicitly important to the research question. Examples of topics discussed in the focus group are:

1. How do the experiences in Somalia, the war in Somalia and the experiences in the refugee camps affect families' resettlement in New Zealand?
2. What challenges do families experience in the resettlement process in New Zealand?
3. How do Somali parents choose schools for their children?
4. Who do parents first meet with at the school?
5. What information are parents asked and what is given parents when enrolling their children?
6. What information are parents given about the schools?
7. How do schools keep parents informed of their children's performance after enrolment?
8. What barriers do parents experience when communicating and collaborating with schools?

4.7 Students' Interviews

The students' interview process started with the researcher's verbal briefing about the purpose of the research, the process of the interview and participants' rights to confidentiality. Aside from the verbal briefing, the participating students were given information sheets and consent forms signed by their parents before taking part in any interviews. A translated Somali version of the information and consent form was made available for respondents who could not read English.

The interviews were conducted in a separate and quiet area in the high school library. A total of 15 interviews were conducted. Most of the interviews lasted for less than an hour. The interviews with students were conducted in English and Somali for student participants whose language ability was not adequate to independently respond to questionnaires.

Their interviews were focused on existing relationships between their parents and teachers and their effectiveness. Examples of the questions the students were asked include:

1. Please explain how your class teacher/s and principal communicate with your parents? For example through school notices, verbal message, telephone
2. What role do you play in this communication?
3. How often do your teacher/s or principal conduct face- to-face meeting with your parents?
4. Do you also take part in these meetings and if so what is your role?
5. How important do you feel are teacher and parents interviews?
6. Who helps your parents with translation in the interviews in case they need it?
7. How important is this for you?
8. Are you bothered by or comfortable with your parents' increased communication with the school?

4.8 Principals

Limited time was committed to explaining the aims of the objectives of the research during the interviews with the principals because they were already informed of the research.

However, both principals were given an overview of the themes upon which the interviews were centred and their rights as respondents. Consent forms and an information sheet were also provided to each principal as standard procedures. The actual interviews started after signing the consent forms.

The interviews with both principals were conducted in their offices and lasted for almost 1.5 hour each. Subsequent contact was made with one of the principals to clarify more on a topic which the researcher needed further clarifications during the transcript. The interviews with principals covered topics on school policies, methods of communication employed by the school to engage with parents and existing barriers. The principals were asked whether they have a policy covering parent - school collaboration, and if so, to explain the contents, whether staff have a copy, and whether it is covered during staff induction. They were also asked whether families receive a copy, and if so, in what language/languages, as well as how they gather feedback from parents about the effectiveness of family collaboration initiatives.

4.9 Teachers

Interviews with individual teachers started with the researcher expressing his gratitude to the teacher for agreeing to take part in the study, despite their tight schedules. A verbal explanation of the research objectives and the key areas which the interviews will focus on were explained to the teachers. An information sheet about the research and a consent form was given to each teacher before any interview was conducted. The participants' right to withdraw from the study was also stressed as part of the briefing process.

Most interviews with teachers were conducted in their classrooms, except four which were conducted in the staff rooms. These interviews covered the methods they employ for communication with the Somali parents, and any barrier blocking collaboration between parents and schools from the perspectives of the teachers. Teachers were asked what their expectations of Somali parents are, the types of communication they use to engage with parents, whether it differs for Somali parents, and what they consider to be the main issues for Somali families in their school.

4.10 Observational Method

Observation was a minor aspect of the methodology, and was used to gauge the interaction taking place between parents and teachers in parent/teacher interviews. A total of six observations (two in the primary school and four in the high school) were conducted to ascertain the process and how parent and teacher interviews were conducted. The observations were important in shedding more light on how well parents and teachers were engaging and the extent to which the process was working, and to some extent they were used as a validation of the data collected using the narrative method.

After gaining consent both from parents and teachers, the researcher observed the interactions between the teacher and parents during the conduct of parent-teacher interviews. Prior to the interview researcher ensured that all parties (including the students) were clear about the role of the researcher, and they signed a consent form. The researcher remained silent during the interview.

4.11 Documents

The documents (school policies, school reports, school notices and school brochures) were analysed to ascertain the methods of communication employed by schools and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of Somali families.

4.12 Data Analysis

The data analysis was on-going, commencing with revision of notes and audio tape recording taken from the field which were later analysed according to the topics in the questionnaires. Gay (1996, p. 227) argues that qualitative researchers “look for categories, patterns, and themes which [can] facilitate a coherent synthesis of the data”. Braun and Clark (2006, p. 79) defined thematic data analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. They argue that thematic data analysis has both flexibility and an ability to provide information which is both rich and relevant to the research.

The approach I followed for the analysis of the data was looking for patterns from the transcripts of the audio tapes and the notes I took from the interviews and discussions. Sometimes I went back to participants when I needed more clarification.

Then, as proposed by Padgett (2008), I opted to analysis the data on topic areas along the participants’ experiences in a chronological manner:

1. the experiences in Somalia (education, employment and rural/urban lifestyle),
2. the flight process,
3. the experience in the refugee camps (life in the camps and challenges),
4. the journey to New Zealand,
5. the arrival at, and experience in, the Auckland refugee centre at Mangere,
6. the experience in resettling in Christchurch, and
7. the experiences of communicating and collaborating with schools (the families’ perspectives on their communication and collaboration with parents and the constraints they faced).

There are also sub-themes in each of these themes; for example, the last theme on the experience of dealings with schools had the three sub-themes of; families’ expectations and experiences during the enrolment and post-enrolment periods, the methods employed by schools for communication and collaboration, their effectiveness and the barriers faced by parents and schools. The data were analysed along the topics, the main themes and the sub-themes.

After writing the transcript, subsequent separate meetings were arranged with six individual participants to ask them about the validity of the notes and any important information not captured or that which was not relevant and needed to be removed.

As with the focus groups, two information-sharing meetings were held; one for the male and one for the female participants following the transcription of data. The aims of the meetings were to bring together participants to give their opinions about the accuracy of information captured from notes taken from the focus group discussion. The intention was to provide participants and the researcher the opportunity to go through the transcripts together so that the researcher and parents can address any gaps in the data. The process was useful in preserving important information which could be lost in the translation from Somali to English. It was an opportunity to expand on topics which parents thought to be emphasised more.

4.13 Validity and Reliability

Libarkin and Kurziel (2002) strongly advocated for researchers to establish the validity and reliability of their qualitative research in order to make their research appeal to other researchers. Libarkin and Kudziel (2002, p. 197) presented four criteria that researchers can employ to measure the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Table 4.3 explains these three criteria.

Table 4.3 Four criteria to measure the validity and reliability of qualitative research

Credibility	The participants themselves can verify interpretations made about their attitudes and opinions as well as inferred causal relationships
Transferability	The ability to apply conclusions to other settings depends strongly upon the investigator's ability to document the setting of the original study, giving subsequent researchers an opportunity to identify all of the variables inherent to that context. The final decision about the transferability of a study, however, ultimately falls on the shoulders of future researchers and is outside the control of the original investigator.
Dependability	The reliability of a study depends upon three factors: repeatability, stability over time, and similarity between measures. However, it can be argued that reliability can almost never be achieved, as subjects will certainly change over time and identical data can never be collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Conformability	In qualitative research, the investigator must be able to demonstrate that interpretations are free of subjectivity, and that potential biases have been controlled. Keeping careful records, including original notes, transcriptions, and analyses will allow other researchers an opportunity to review the interpretation process.
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Padgett (1998, p. 190), suggested that “as data collection segues into analysis and interpretation, qualitative researchers may seek verification of preliminary findings by going back to the study participants”. Padgett also indicated that researchers can use their participants to establish the validity and reliability of their research. This method was employed for this research. I conducted this process by contacting 6 participants and requested their support in establishing the validity of the key themes highlighted in the findings. Three of the participants had reasonable English; therefore the lists of the themes were given to them in written English. However, the remaining three participants were given a verbal explanation of the themes in Somali by the researchers. The six participants were selected because of their involvement in the individual and focus groups discussions. The participants confirmed to the researcher these findings were in harmony with the issues raised by the participants in the focus groups. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that going back to participants to verify the finding can be an important approach for overcoming researcher bias and can be a key method for sustaining the relationship between the participants and the researcher. It is also a method of empowering participants because it is a process of shifting power to the participants. It allowed participants’ ownership of the research and it can also help to build trust and confidence between participants and the researcher.

4.14 Ethics

In designing and conducting interviews, I was cautious of the fact that participating refugee parents were likely to “have lived through pre-migration, traumatic life events of organised violence, loss, persecution, and forced separation, and might thus experience heightened distress when narrating their life histories of trauma and grief (Haene, Grietens, & Verschueren, 2010, p. 1665). Therefore, a desire to avoid invoking past trauma was a decisive factor in the choice of the narrative approach. The decision to use the semi-structured interviews was specifically intended to minimise such risks of triggering past trauma. Narrative researchers have concluded that the act of participants narrating about their past experiences can be part of the process of psychological recovery (Haene, Grietens & Verschueren, 2010; Chase, 2005).

Seeking guidance from supervisors throughout the period of the research was also critical in avoiding any risk factor. Confidentiality of information was emphasised to those who took part.

Participants were given the right to confidentiality. Any information identifying individuals, families or organisations is kept in a lock filing cabinet and kept by the researcher and will be destroyed after seven years. Anonymity of participants was assured by renaming them and their schools; thus, the final report did not contain any information that could give identification of individuals and organisations or their locations. Some data had to be left out because it made the participants identifiable. This decision was taken in close consultation with my supervisors.

Some interviews involved tape recordings which were used only after obtaining acceptance from the participants. The tape was held by the researcher in a locker accessible only to the researcher until completion of the report. The tape will then be destroyed after ten years. Approval was received from the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee prior to conducting the interviews with participants.

4.15 Researcher's Role

My desire to carry out this study was influenced by several factors. Firstly, my experience as both a former refugee and a father of school-age children, coupled with my dealings with refugee families, highlighted the need for carrying out the research. Secondly, the findings of my dissertation (for the master's degree in Development Studies) on refugee resettlement in Christchurch highlighted education as an area of resettlement with unmet needs. Thirdly, my involvement in the refugee fields both prior to, and post-arrival in New Zealand, together with my ambition to work with refugees in the future, are among the motivating factors of my desire to undertake this study. This has sentimental value for me because I was helped by others when I was in need of help. Finally, it is my belief that education is a key to development and that if education is provided to poor communities it will make differences in their development.

All the above factors highlighted the need for carrying out this research, but they also make me an ideal candidate to undertake it. In addition to those, I have a wide knowledge of Somali culture, the Islamic religion and experience of circumstances in refugee flight. Being a parent and an employee of the Ministry of Education gave me greater understanding of

refugee issues. Halabi's work (2005) with refugees found that researchers who are part of the participants are better positioned to carry out interviews with refugees compared to researchers who are strangers to the participants.

However, I am also aware that those factors also create some potential for bias. For example, my employment by the Ministry of Education might bias me in the Ministry's favour, and I might have preconceived notions attributable to my experience as a refugee, compared with someone looking in from the outside. As researcher I am aware of the fact that refugee researchers can be partisan when exploring 'the experiences, causes and consequences of the displacement is done with implicit or explicit intent to influence the development of better policies and programmes on the part of governments, non-governmental (Dona, 2007, p. 210).

To counter any such potential bias, and any attributable to my ethnicity or gender, I seriously considered those factors when I was deciding on the interview questions, identifying participants, conducting interviews and in the analysis and reporting on the data. I consider that I have managed this issue reasonably well with the assistance of my supervisors, who provided me with regular advice about how I could recognise and avoid bias in designing the questions, the answers, the selection of participants and presenting the findings. In particular, I paid special consideration to participants' cultural, religious and language needs throughout the processes of the research. One of the measures taken was recruiting a Somali female research assistant, translating the research questions into Somali and conducting interviews in Somali.

Maximum effort was put into making sure that the participants had understood the research objectives, their rights to confidentiality and their ability to withdraw from the research at any point.

4.16 Limitations

As indicated in the participants' description some of the participants were not proficient enough to express their views in English, so the researcher had to translate the transcript into Somali. Because some Somali special expressions do not exist in English, it was not always possible to make a direct translation, which may have the potential for some meanings to be lost in the translation. To address this, it was sometimes necessary for the researcher to go back to the participants to seek their clarification. In addition, four

members of the parent focus groups declined to have their interviews recorded on tape when they were individually-interviewed. This meant that their views had to be recorded in note form only and could not be checked against a recording.

During the focus group discussion some of the elders, who had the respect of group, and other vocal people dominated the discussion. Differences in the focus groups participants' age and level of education also may have caused some participants to feel too shy to express their opinions in front of other participants. This meant that the researcher sometimes had to intervene to allow the more passive members to have a turn. Side-tracking from the issues under discussion sometimes also necessitated the researcher's intervention.

The fact that the researcher was both Somali and male and an elder may have made some female participants feel too shy to speak about their personal experiences. The researcher's role with the Ministry of Education may be a factor that could affect the participating teachers' and principals' opinions about the existing communication and collaboration between their schools and parents. It may also have affected teachers' and principals' ability to express their perception of the Ministry's approach to promoting parent - school collaboration. To reduce the impact of this power differences, I Shared information about my own experiences and constantly reminded the participants that they could withdraw at any point.

Given the busy schedule of participating parents, teachers and principals, time was a constraint. Therefore, in some situations, it was difficult to follow up meetings with participants. In addition, some parents expressed reservations in allowing their children to be interviewed, and some teachers appeared to be less forthcoming when it came to articulating the perceived possible shortcomings of the parents. It may be that this was because the researcher was Somali, and the teachers felt uneasy about making any negative comments about Somali parents with a view that such comments could hurt the researcher's feelings.

There was a limited number of participating schools in this study, and participating parents were all from one cultural group. This narrowness is acknowledged and this study urges caution in generalising its findings beyond the context from which the data were gathered.

4.17 Conclusions

This chapter has provided background to the research methodology applied to this study, the reasons for choosing the qualitative methods, and the processes followed to identify, engage participants, and collect and analyse the relevant data for the study. The narrative method used in this study proved appropriate because it allowed the participants, who are from an oral society, to present their life-time experiences and the impacts of those on their interaction with schools, in their own words and on their own terms.

Chapter 5 will present findings on participants' pre-arrival experiences and the challenges faced.

Chapter 5: Refugees' Pre-settlement Experiences

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on participants' experiences in the home country, the flight journey, and in the first countries of refuge. It comprises three sections the first of which presents the findings on the participants' education and lifestyle in Somalia. The next section discusses families' experiences in the war and in the flight journey. Finally, the third section examines the experiences in the refugee camps. The impacts of the findings on parent-school collaboration are then discussed in the context of the literature on refugee resettlement and parent - school relationships described in Chapter three.

5.2 Participants Education and Lifestyles in Somalia

Although the focus of this study is on parent-school collaboration, it was felt necessary to take into account the existing differences in personal profiles (age, gender, rural vs urban lifestyle, language, education level) of participants, in line with the UNHCR best practice guidelines (UNHCR, 2002), with particular focus on the following factors.

5.2.1 Disparity in the level of education obtained in Somalia

The level of education obtained in Somalia is an area of disparity between the Somali community and mainstream New Zealand and also between the Somali families. This study clearly illustrated an existing diversity in participants' pre-refugee education. The vast majority of the participants did not come with any previous schooling and this is a factor which can affect the communication and collaboration between parents and schools.

The participants believed their limited education stems from the restricted opportunities for learning in Somalia, where education is one of the least developed sectors in the country. Somalia is one of the least developed countries in the world (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996), which in turn makes it one of the countries in the African continent with the least-resourced education system.

Even during the British and Italian colonial periods education was not a priority, despite the constructive role education plays in advancing social development, and also despite the fact that one of the justifications for colonialism was to develop non-industrialised societies (Ghosh, 1994).

Similarly, Somali education remained undeveloped during the post-independence governments. As a result, Somalia had low literacy rates until 1974, when the Somali language became the official spoken and written script of Somalia. Even after the writing of Somali language and education being made compulsory, only 6 per cent of the Somali population attended high school in the 1980s (DeLancey et al., 1988).

The participants believed that, aside from the successive governments' limited commitment to education, the low school enrolment in Somalia was the result of the large nomadic population of the country who usually did not enrol their children in schools because of their lifestyle. Parents' experience of restricted access to education has profound negative consequences on parent - school collaboration because of the strong relationship between parents' education and their relationship with schools. Apart from increasing opportunities for accessing information, education appears to allow parents to understand the system and support their children.

The findings of this study indicate parents with no previous education find it difficult to participate in decisions about their children's career choice, researching information about schools. They also become disadvantaged since they cannot avail themselves of the information presented to the wider New Zealand public about the effectiveness and quality of the programmes in particular schools, such as ERO reports. Families in this situation are also incapable of advocating for their children, as they do not understand the regulations and the policies in schools. This finding supports research carried out in the USA by Rah, Choi, & Nguyen (2009) involving Hmong refugee families. Their work found that refugees from less developed countries arrive with no formal education and find it difficult to understand the unfamiliar schooling system in the USA, which restricts their ability to engage with schools. However, on the other hand, even though a higher qualification was found to be beneficial to refugees in the resettlement process, the findings also indicated refugees who arrived with a high qualification and had found no meaningful employment become susceptible to stress due to the loss of status. This finding supports Nguyen's (1989) argument, which suggests that refugees who arrived with higher qualifications to the hosting country are susceptible to mental health issues upon failing to achieve the expectations of the receiving country (Nguyen, 1989). Therefore, it is important that school leaders take into account the different experiences which parents have lived through or are currently living through. Hornby (2000) asserted that parents with no history of collaborating with schools consider the education of children as schools' responsibility and therefore, exercise less

collaboration with schools. Chapter 6 will discuss the impacts of this factor on the communication and collaboration between parents and schools.

5.2.2 Gender differences in education level in Somalia

As noted in Chapter 1, Somalia is a patriarchal society, where there is a broad gender disparity. This is evident than in the level of education between the genders. The findings show that most of the Somali parents in this research programme came with limited education when they first arrived in New Zealand, but that women generally had less education than men. Table 5.1 shows the gap between the education level of the male and female participants in this research.

Table 5.1 Education levels of participating parents

Gender	No formal schooling	Primary	Secondary	University graduate
Male	2	2	1	2
Female	5	2	1	0
Total	7	4	2	2

Of the eight female respondents in this study, five had had no formal schooling in Somalia.

In terms of language proficiency, women also appear to be behind men in the number of spoken languages other than Somali. For example, while four of the men can speak at least three other languages, only two of the women are able to speak one language other than Somali. Table 5.2 shows the languages which the 15 respondents can speak with confidence.

Table 5.2 The languages spoken by respondents

Language	Gender	
	Female	Male
Somali	8	7
Arabic	1	3
English	0	3
Italian	1	2
Swahili	0	1
Russian	0	1

According to the participants, education is more difficult for rural communities, because they are mobile. Children from a rural background could get education either by staying with an extended family living in the cities or by enrolling in a boarding school. However, they stated that the boarding schools were not ideal options for rural communities, as they were limited in number, were expensive, and were only in the big cities. The findings of this study suggest that children in rural areas also missed out on education because of the importance of their work responsibilities to their families' survival. For example, four parents in this study who have not had schooling in Somalia stated that as with any other children in a rural context, their parents could not enrol them in schools because they were needed to assist their family in cultivating the farm, fetching water and looking after the livestock. Three of the participants said they moved to cities after their arranged marriage to men already living in the city.

Apart from formal education, women were also behind men in Islamic education. For example, all of the men in the study were able to read and write the Koran, while none of the women could. There were also culturally-rooted restrictions regarding education, imposed upon girls.

5.2.3 Other gender differences

As well as education, gender imbalances were also evident in the areas of spoken languages, previous work experience obtained in Somalia and the English skills obtained in New Zealand. Less than one-third of mothers spoke a second language (Arabic or Italian), when they arrived in New Zealand. In contrast, with the exception of one, all of the fathers spoke other languages (English, Arabic, Italian, Swahili and Russian). In fact, three of the fathers spoke as many as three languages. The impacts from these experiences will be presented in Chapter 6.

The data showed that parent different work experiences in Somalia are another area of gender disparity between the fathers and mothers. While only one-third of mothers had previous work experience, more than half of the fathers had work experience in Somalia. The fathers' previous work was mostly to do with business, politicians (up to Ministerial responsibility), school inspection and financial management. Currently, the majority of the fathers are unemployed and the few who are employed are taxi drivers or factory workers, with the exception of two who are part-time bilingual workers.

In Somalia, the mothers, on the other hand, were mainly engaged in professions, such as primary school teaching and clerical roles. Also, with regard to the mothers, with the exception of three (two part-time week-end employees in the same factory and one part-time bilingual worker in a school), the rest of the mothers are unemployed. Previous work experience is vital for the refugees, as lack of previous experience can diminish their ability to compete in New Zealand’s tight employment environment.

5.2.4 Urban-rural lifestyle

The data on the lifestyle of respondents show even more diversity among the participants. Although 10 of the 15 participants were born in a rural setting, only one was a nomad before becoming a refugee. The primary reasons given for moving to urban centres were marriage to a spouse living in the city, staying with extended family, or because they came to the urban centre as part of government-sponsored resettlement programmes after their livestock perished from famine and drought. Table 5.3 shows the lifestyles of participants before becoming refugees.

Table 5.3 Lifestyles of participating parents

Gender		Place of birth		Pre-refugee place of dwelling before becoming refugee	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Gender	Total				
Man	7	4	3	–	7
Woman	8	5	3	2	6
Total	15	10	5	2	13

The rural factor of diversity can be a pronounced liability in the resettlement process, and is a factor identified in this study to have an effect on parent - school collaboration. Generally, those Somali refugees from rural backgrounds have limited knowledge of urban life and face major obstacles in understanding the system in New Zealand and collaborating with schools.

The findings of this research suggest that families from rural backgrounds also face particular challenges with the education system. The participants stated they have had little

or no experience of an education culture, such as studying towards a career choice; they have no skills to enhance a child's learning and are less able to mentor their children. Also, their lack of understanding towards learning makes their home environments less conducive to learning. This implies that parents from rural background find more difficult to collaborate with schools because of their limited understanding of how schools operate, the concept of parent - school collaboration. It also implies that because they are both socially and economically advantaged, refugees in the urban, educated group may provide more support to their children's education compared to economically-disadvantaged families from rural backgrounds. Eccles and Harold (1996, p. 8) asserted that parents' past experience with schools "undoubtedly affect parents' attitudes and interest toward involvement in their children's schools and teachers"

This finding is also consistent with Rutter's (2004) work with Somali refugees in the UK, which found existing class differences in the Somali community based on prior occupation and social class (Rutter, 2004).

Aside from its negative impacts on parent - school collaboration, the rural factor also influences the resettlement process. In contrast, those refugees who have experienced a more urban lifestyle, who had a reasonable standard of living, who had already obtained a qualification, or had had a position of some standing, feel more empowered and thus feel more motivated to restore what they lost in becoming a refugee. Refugees from rural origins experience the additional challenge of adapting to urban life. Campbell's (2006) work which contends that refugees from urban backgrounds have more chance of enjoying a better lifestyle in the host country than those from a rural one, because of an ability to tap into the resources of that country, which affords greater opportunity to integrate economically into the host community.

5.2.5 Experiences of the War in Somalia and in the Flight to the First Country of Refuge

The participants' migration journey shows the process of moving from the home country to another country (such as New Zealand) involved a series of phases which included: early conflict outbreak phase; internal displacement; the flight planning phase; and the actual flight journey and entry into the first country of refuge (Kenya or Ethiopia). Keller's (1975, cited in Stein, 1980) work grouped these chronological processes as follows: Perception of a threat; deciding to flee; the period of extreme danger; flight; reaching safety; camp

behaviour; repatriation; settlement or resettlement; the early and late stages of resettlement; adjustment and acculturation; and finally residual stages and changes in behaviour caused by the experience (p. 3). The next two sections describe the experiences of the participants in this research during the flight and refugee parts of this process.

When the respondents were asked to comment on the circumstances they faced during the war in Somalia and in the journey to Kenya and Ethiopia to escape from their country, all respondents (15) reported experiencing a degree of hardship and trauma. Some of the families also went through internal migration within Somalia prior to fleeing from their country.

When responding to the question about hardships that the families experienced during the refugee journey, their responses depicted considerable differences. Although the participants described the entire refugee process as extremely anguishing for all groups, the women, children and the elderly were clearly described as the most traumatised. However, women suffer the most in almost all the flight cycle:

Refugee women, at every stage of their flight, are vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Sexual harassment, rape and abduction are common violations. A woman who is unable to feed, shelter and clothe herself and her children is often forced into prostitution, or is subject to other abuse. Women are at risk from ‘helpers’ such as camp guards, camp officials, other refugees and sometimes even their own families. Their special need for protection may be recognised too late by international organisations or even go unrecognised (MOH, 2001, p. 6).

That is supported by Hosin’s (2001) work, which argued: “Women carry a disproportionate share of the problems during displacement. They become fully responsible for children, are exposed to the experience of rape and sexual abuse, and perhaps carry new roles following breakdown in family and community structures” (p. 142). The current research also found that women appear to have experienced much higher human rights violation during the war than men. These violations included rape by warring clan militias, who were targeting women from opposing clans for revenge.

The hardships experienced by women during the flight process are illustrated by the following examples. One woman outlined the experience of her 28-day-long journey from Mogadishu to Jigjiga in Ethiopia as follows:

There was no man [father] in the family as he was killed four months before. The reason I decided to leave was because many young girls from our neighbourhood were raped in those days, so I feared that my two sisters may be raped as well. We had no cash money in our house so I sold my jewellery and my husband's land for very cheap prices. I did not take any food for the young baby because all the shops and pharmacies were closed. We travelled for 28 days because sometimes we could only travel for less than 10 Km for the whole day. We were attacked by bandits several times during the journey and they took away any cash, jewellery and food we were carrying. Two people were also killed and several others were wounded as a result of the attacks. I was keeping my new-born daughter on my lap for the entire journey without stretching because there was no space in the truck. I can still feel the pain I sustained from that journey in my abdomen until today.

When she was asked to explain further the difficulties she went through, she said she started her experience when she was giving birth to the daughter with whom she fled, stating:

I started to feel the labour pain at around 3.00 am in the morning. There was fighting going on in our area which closed the roads to the Benadir Hospital [Mogadishu's main women's hospital]. There were no landline telephones operating because the main station was looted and cell phones were not popular in those days in Somalia. I started to fear for my life when the labour pain got worse, and I started to feel the symptoms of high blood pressure which I was already taking medicine for. My husband was not there as he was killed four months before; luckily my mother and father were present and managed to find a traditional birth attendant. The traditional birth attendant wanted to use unsterilized instruments to operate on me but I insisted that she wait to see if I could give birth naturally. After long labour pain and with no medicine including pain killers, I finally gave birth with Allah's help. There were no clean instruments to cut the placenta so she had to use a razorblade. Also there were no medicines for stopping the blood but luckily I did not bleed heavily.

Another respondent explained the experience of her refugee journey as follows:

We left Mogadishu on a lorry and arrived in Beledweyne [a town in southern Somalia] which is about 240 km away from Mogadishu and 90 km to the Ethiopian border. Although the initial agreement was to take us to the Jigjiga refugee camp, the truck driver ordered the passengers to disembark after we left Beledweyne about 80

km in the middle of nowhere. He could not drive any further because of recent fighting between his clan and one of the clans that live along the route to Jigjiga. He also refused to give us back the money we paid. He used his two armed security guards to force the passengers to disembark. They shot one of the passengers who resisted his order. We were in the open hot sun without food and water for three days until another truck came and took the passengers who had money.

Beside their personal encounters, the respondents also reported the experiences of other Somali refugees. For example, one respondent reported the dreadful situation faced by a mother when she was escaping with her five children. The tragic story of the family started when the lorry on which the family was travelling broke down between Somalia and Ethiopia. After several days of no food and water, three of the children died without any formal burial. The mother, who was anguished by the starvation of her two remaining children, decided to do anything within her power in order to save her children's lives. After exhausting any other means of assisting her starving children, she inserted a sharp object into her leg's vein in order to give the blood to the children. Unfortunately, the mother herself was weak and starving and passed away immediately, leaving only one child surviving, from the entire family. The father, who was missing when the family fled, later found his only surviving child and immediately had a complete mental and physical breakdown after hearing the sad news about his family.

There was a strong feeling among the focus group female participants that women who went through these experiences also remain untreated in New Zealand, because they cannot explain their health problems to health officials because of their limited English and for fear of disclosing their experiences to the interpreters, who are mostly men. This factor can have negative consequences on parent-school collaboration because women in this situation can live with a lifetime of shame, guilt and trauma. Consequently, women may withdraw themselves from social activities due to their feeling of a sense of guilt. The participants referred to a Somali woman who used to live in Christchurch and did not want to associate with the Somali community. The participants believed she was avoiding the members of the community because there are people who were aware of the several experiences of rape which the woman went through in the refugee camp.

There are other dreadful experiences reflected in the participants' personal accounts, including several involving incidences of artillery shells falling on their building in the

middle of the night killing entire families, and in one instance, destroying a Madarasa (Islamic school). One respondent told the harrowing story of her extended family; while fleeing by boat from Kismayo, their boat sank in the sea between Kenya and Somalia killing the entire family of 18. Some respondents had many other stories to tell, but could not because of the trauma that would be triggered by recalling them.

As well as gender differences, the data on participants' experiences showed that the families underwent different levels of hardship in the war in Somalia, depending on their level of resources before the war. The most vulnerable families experienced greater difficulties because they had no food stocks or cash, and therefore could not afford to protect themselves when the war broke out, but families of senior government officials and wealthy businessmen experienced less difficulty. Their ability to anticipate and assess the conflict in the home country and their financial ability, helped these well-off families to depart safely early in the conflict. Conversely, because families from rural backgrounds and urban working classes were already vulnerable and impoverished before the war, they experienced more suffering during the flight process. They suffered more because their flight involved travelling on foot for several weeks through hostile territories with minimal food, water and medicine. This finding supports those of Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, & Frater-Mathieson, (2004), who found that the impacts from refugee experiences affect families differently, depending on their social, economic and human resources.

The negative experiences from these processes can influence parent - school collaboration. For example, at the family level, the psychological reactions accumulated from these processes impact on the family practices and parents' ability to support their children's learning (Akhtar, 1999, and Berry, 2003, both cited in Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein, & Nauck, 2009). Also, Williams (2010, p. 42) asserted that "the refugee parenting experience is in part functioning within contexts of pre-flight, flight and migration contexts" (Williams, 2010). His argument is also consistent with the ecological systems theory of Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein, & Nauck (2009), which suggests that resettlement outcomes are governed by the interactions between the individuals and the environments through which the refugees have lived in their lifetime.

The war and the flight process resulted in the dislocation of families. This included separating spouses and children from their partners and parents, which also appears to have affected parent-school relationships. For example, the participants related instances of

children in Christchurch who had come with family friends after being separated from their own families during the war. The relationship between the children and their carers broke down once the children reached adolescence and left the families. As a consequence, their carers fear a backlash from the authorities if children disclose their true relationship with the families, and that is a further factor undermining parents' relationship with schools. One participant explained situations where a family was not engaging with the school when the school contacted them about behaviour issues concerning the children they had enrolled.

Since Somalia is rated as one of the least-developed countries in the world (UNDP, 1999) and has had no government for the last two decades, most families arriving in New Zealand have lived through poor living conditions for decades prior to coming to New Zealand. This point is backed up by the results of research conducted by Carroll (2004) with Somali refugees in London, the findings of which could also apply to Somalis in New Zealand. The research concluded that the great majority of Somali participants reported having mental health problems in Somalia even before their refugee flight. Almost 99% of participants reported going through experiences of trauma linked with the death of family members, relatives or friends.

Besides living with poverty and in impoverished conditions for decades, most Somalis experienced fear, intimidation and other situations of trauma as the former Somali security forces applied intimidation and persecution measures against any Somali family suspected of having affiliation to the insurgents fighting the government forces. The Somali National Security Service and the Intelligence wing of the army made heavy use of different methods of torture that result in long-lasting trauma. For example, severe beating, submersion of suspects in sea water at night and the use of electric shock to extract information from detainees.

Many Somalis have experienced further severe human rights violations since the removal of the dictatorial regime in 1991. The continuing inter-clan warfare in Somalia since 1991 has resulted in massive killing, abductions, rapes and looting of properties which is likely to have had profound consequences for people's mental health.

The WHO (World Health Organisation, ND, p. 2) asserts that:

Traumatic experiences such as killing, material loss, torture and sexual violence, harsh detention and uprooting, all affect people's behaviour for generations. Life in

overcrowded camps, deprivation, uncertainty over the future, disruption of community and social support networks leads to psychosocial dysfunctioning.

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MOH, 2001, p. 67), forty-seven per cent of the refugees coming to New Zealand have been exposed to severe trauma-related experiences. These findings indicate that, regardless of the initial profile, a significant number of refugees have gone through cycles of past trauma prior to the flight process and these are likely to undermine people's abilities to cope with the challenges linked with resettlement.

5.2.6 Experiences in the Refugee Camps

In response to the question about their life in the refugee camps, the respondents who lived in the Kenyan and Ethiopian camps described severe over-crowding and a lack of shelter as among the major problems. It was stated that most refugee camps were established in semi-arid areas and the small surrounding forests were quickly cleared by the refugees for both construction and charcoal to be sold in the markets for cash. Figure 5.1 shows a typical camp in Kenya.



Figure 5.1 A typical refugee camp in Kenya

Note: Reproduced with permission from HararDheere refugee camps.

Because there were limited building materials for houses, the refugees in the camps often constructed huts from cartons, old clothes and tins emptied of cooking oil (Figures 5.2 and 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Typical huts in a refugee camp

Note: Reproduced with permission from IFO refugee camp officials.

The refugees relied on open fires for cooking, and the materials from which the huts were constructed could easily burn; therefore, there were frequent outbreaks of fire in the camps, which sometimes made the entire refugee population homeless.

Also, because of the poor material used to construct the camp huts, they collapsed frequently under strong winds or flooded during the rainy season. One of the respondents who had lived in a camp stated: “we used to stay awake all night when there was rain to stop the flood water from washing away the huts”.

The respondents repeatedly identified the scarcity of water and food as among the major difficulties faced in the refugee camps. One of the respondents said: “Water was a very expensive commodity in the camp. There was only one water tanker to provide water for a whole camp of 300,000 people. The luckiest families got 20 litres of water per day for both cooking and family hygiene.” Women and children may travel long distances to collect water. Young children’s labour became crucial to support the families by fetching water when the adults went out to find food.

Food remained forever scarce and was dependent on the number of people registered on the family's food card. The cards were managed by local UNHCR staff and camp committees who were often corrupt, so only those who had money to bribe them were able to get cards. Obtaining the cards was dehumanising as the refugees had to join long queues before dawn in order to see the food committee, and sometimes they might not get to see it for several weeks.

Even those who obtained cards sometimes could not get food because of its shortage. The families who had food cards were entitled to three kilograms of maize, three kilograms of wheat flour or beans and 1 cup of cooking oil per person for 15 days. However, the refugees got only fractions of these, and sometimes missed out after standing in long queues for many hours. It was the women and the weak that most frequently missed out on food rations, as they could not resist the tussle and struggle involved in the food distribution process. One woman stated that: "people lose any sense of dignity when they are hungry. Sometimes a man would carry a bag of maize which was intended for several families on his back, running over women, including some wearing the *"asay"* (a cloth worn by women in the first three months following the death of their husband).

Food earmarked for the refugees was often sold to local business dealers, who then re-sold the same food on to the refugees on the black market. The high scale of corruption in the camp was not limited to the food cards. There was similar corruption to even get registered in the refugee camp in the first place, so families who missed out on cards were forced to buy food from the black market at a higher price.

Although the general lifestyle of the refugees in the camps was agonising, differing degrees of hardship occurred in the camps, just as they did during the flight process. Families with relatives or friends living overseas lived in better conditions because their family members or friends sent money. Also, those who arrived with some assets lived a better lifestyle than the families without them.

The lack of water and sanitation contributed to the prevalence of cholera and other water-borne diseases, and disease containment was complicated because of the limited number of doctors working in the refugee camps. Many refugees had to travel to cities in Kenya or Ethiopia to obtain medical prescriptions. However, those who could not afford to travel had to rely on traditional healing methods.

Most families had no reliable source of earning income, because of high unemployment in the camps; therefore, the above activities were important for augmenting families' livelihoods. The high unemployment situation in the refugee camps was in part exacerbated by the Kenyan and Ethiopian Governments' policies. They would not grant work permits, and they put restrictions on the movements of refugees, which meant that most of the jobs in the refugee camps, including the interpretation jobs, were taken up by Kenyans and Ethiopians.

It was reported that even qualified refugees who got teaching and medical jobs in the refugee camps were paid a fraction of the salaries of Kenyan-born employees. The participants reported that there was limited number of schools operating in the camps which were unable to support the large refugee population. Even those few established schools were ill-equipped, without proper shelter and learning for teachers. Figure 5.3 shows the condition in the classrooms in the refugee camp.



Figure 5.3 A classroom in Dadab refugee camp

Reproduced with permission from Dadab Education office

As during the flight process, the families' condition of life in the first country (including the camps) is also determined by the level of resources they bring with them and the assets they left behind in the home country. The assets left in the home country played a critical role in a families' condition of life in the camps. This is because the capital funds generated from the sale of those assets, such as land, houses and farms, become an important support for families to establish businesses in the refugee camps and in the cities of the first host countries. Their resources allowed them better access to education, health and enjoy a better lifestyle.

Because of the better living conditions they enjoyed in the first country they arrive in New Zealand more empowered, they had better chance of integrating with host community and collaborate with schools. On the other hand, the most vulnerable families, who were mostly the female-headed households, experienced the most hardships. For example, female-headed households missed out on food distribution, because women cannot so easily withstand the competition and the struggle involved. These families experienced insecurity, overcrowding, poor shelter, lack of employment, restricted movement, lack of educational opportunities, scarcity of water and poor health; all of which exacerbate the past vulnerabilities and deprivations which families arrived with at the camps. They arrive in New Zealand feeling powerless and vulnerable, and are less able to collaborate with schools.

Opportunities for refugees to engage in income-earning activities were made impractical because of insecurity, which restricted the freedom of movement of refugees, particularly females. While women and girls generally engaged in most income-earning activities in the camps, such as fetching water and collecting firewood which were sold in the market for cash, they could not carry out such activities because of the constant threat of rape (Abdi, 2005).

In terms of education, there were limited opportunities in the camps for adults of either gender to enhance their education. Also, there were too few schools operating in the camps, and many children could not attend these because of the limited number of classrooms. Many children could also not attend classes because their labour was so critical to providing family sustenance.

The findings in this study showed that refugee parents' experience in the refugee camps and in the first countries of refuge can pose negative impacts in parent - school collaboration.

For example, the long-term dependence on food handouts, the humiliating experience faced in the camps and the diminished self-worth results in refugees adopting a dependency culture. Such a culture can also have negative consequences in refugee parents' collaboration with schools. The culture of dependency inherited from the refugee camps and lack of prior involvement in important decisions on community development and civic participation diminishes any prospect for refugees to engage actively in the decision-making process in schools in New Zealand.

The literature outlines the negative experiences which are associated with the refugee process. These include the exposure to "poverty, malnutrition, disruption of cultural norms, beliefs and practice, loss of social supports, an erosion of family structure and community systems (Jack, 2000).

After arriving in the second country of refuge, the situations of deprivation, marginalisation and humiliation experienced in the camps become more complex due to the uncertainty of their fate, their children's future and concerns about the well-being of their immediate family members left behind, which causes long lasting pain. Traumatization for the family continues with the bad news from the country of origin. People from the same country can be perceived as a threat. Guilt associated with leaving family behind disrupts emotional recovery for all family members (The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2002, p. 21). Insecurity and the fear linked with the processing of the asylum application, and the difficulties involved in processing their family reunification applications also presents new trauma. The stress caused by the difficulties of settling in the new country (e.g., new language, habits and culture) and the unwelcoming environment of the country of resettlement (Charapi & Mesthenneos, 1998) also trigger past trauma. Furthermore, as most refugees are on low incomes and at the same time responsible for sustaining the livelihoods of their family members in the refugee camps or in the country of origin, this financial pressure exacerbates their trauma (Carroll, 2004). In addition, past research on refugee resettlement found that while in the refugee camps waiting for their travel documents, and post-arrival in New Zealand, many refugees develop an idealistic image of a New Zealand that will meet all their spiritual, cultural, educational and physical needs (Ibrahim, 2004). Their failure to reconcile the original expectation against the reality in the new country causes new trauma, aggravating the trauma sustained in the country of origin, during the flight and in the refugee camps.

The existing literature on mental health touches on contributing factors of trauma; however, one of the shortcomings of most concepts of mental health is that they have been developed by Western scholars, so they do not necessarily link with the different cultural practices of new migrants like Somalis. As a result, some concepts and methods that might work well in Western countries do not always work with them. Traditional Somali beliefs around mental health diseases are based on the view that mental health diseases are caused by “*Jin*” or a spirit (see Elmi, 1999; B. Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye, & Yates, 2004). So, since the *Jin* is also mentioned in the Koran (see verses *Baqara, Jin, Hamin* of the Koran), people resort to reciting the Koran on the spirit-imposed victim (see *Baqara, Mumin, Jin* and *Ikhlas*). There are also other rituals; for example, *Saar* or *Mingis*; used to combat spirit or *Jin* widely practised by traditional spiritual healers that people consider to have specialised expertise in the treatment of *Jin*-related illnesses. The *Saar* and *Mingis* ceremonies involve the use of fragrances and perfumes with the victims performing dancing and eating specific foods which the spirits inside them demand in order to free the victim. However, it is worth mentioning that these cultural rituals are not encouraged in Islamic teaching.

Differences also exist in terms of how Somalis describe mental health disorder and the gravity of the illness. Depending on the severity, there are terms such as *Murugo, Wali* or *Walbahaar* and *Tiiranyo* that are widely used to describe mental health-related illnesses. These terms may describe similar conditions of mental health disorders but are described differently in different regions. Despite different regions of Somalia applying different names and practicing different methods of treating the illness, the use of the Koran recitation to drive away the evil spirit remains a common practice.

Because of the stigma around mental health (see B. Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye, & Yates, 2004) and the limited mental health resources in Somalia, mental health patients receive less support and may even become outcasts in the community. People with severe or more acute mental health problems are chained or tied to keep them in isolation for fear of them causing harm to others and to themselves. In addition, there are beliefs that mental health patients do not achieve full recovery. There is a Somali proverb (*Dhimirtagay tam kumawadanoqdo*) that implies people diagnosed with mental health sickness will never fully regain their mental stability. As a result of the stigma, most Somalis do not disclose information about their mental health to other members of their community, and in many cases, not even to their close family (Elmi, 1999).

5.3 Conclusions

The discussion in this chapter showed that despite Somali refugees sharing the same culture, language, and religious beliefs, they are not from the same background. Significant disparities exist based on social class, gender, urban/rural lifestyle, previous education, spoken languages and work experience, all of which contribute to significant differences in people's coping abilities in resettlement.

The data in this chapter relating to the experience in Somalia and in the countries of first refuge indicate that there are significant gender-related disparities. The data also showed restricted opportunities for empowerment and education because of Somalia's underdevelopment situation. Furthermore, there appears to be a correlation between families' economic status prior to the war and the level of hardships experienced during the war, in the flight journey and in the first country of refuge.

The information gathered for this study revealed that the refugee journey commences in the home country or indeed a region within a home country. The decision to flee starts when a person or family deem it absolutely necessary to abandon their home area, usually due to famine, war, or discrimination based on affiliation (clan/tribe, religion, race etc.). The findings also confirm that the process of fleeing from the home country to the first country of refuge is both costly and dangerous. Because of this, families who were impoverished before the war cannot afford to leave their home country or reach a neighbouring country. A key requirement of becoming a refugee is to cross an international border.

The findings indicate that the countries of first refuge are ill-equipped to cope adequately with refugee intakes, which has the effect of refugees ending up very poor living conditions. Refugees in the camps experience insecurity, acute shortages of food and water, and have poor sanitation and limited access to education. The findings showed that although the first country of refuge may be a signatory to the refugee convention, refugees do not necessarily get permit status to allow them access to education, health, employment, and to move freely. The lack of a permit also limits any opportunities for employment and activities for earning a living in the camps, which makes families completely dependent on aid handouts. A complete dependence on handouts contributes to family inadequacy, which negatively impacts on families' abilities, motivation, and confidence to integrate and build a new future in the receiving society.

Therefore, it is critical that policy makers, resettlement provider and school leaders with refugee families take into account the pre-resettlement and refugee camp experiences as they have a negative effect on refugee parents' ability to care for their children.

The issues raised in this chapter will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6: Migration and Resettlement Experiences in New Zealand

Having examined in chapter 5 the experiences of families in Somalia before and during the war as well as their experiences in the flight process and in the refugee camps, this chapter considers their experiences in the migration process, their initial resettlement, and integration into New Zealand. This chapter also discusses how these experiences influenced parent-school collaboration, highlighting some of the challenges and difficulties that confronted the families. It begins by presenting the findings on the immigration categories under which the families were granted residence in New Zealand and the support they received in Auckland's Mangere Refugee Reception Centre and in Christchurch, and discussing how those influenced their resettlement. Then it raises other aspects of the families' experiences in the resettlement process in New Zealand and the challenges they faced.

6.1 Families' Experience of Migration to New Zealand

The respondents arrived in New Zealand between 1997 and 2004. They were granted resettlement under several migration programmes, which included the refugee quota, humanitarian family reunification, family-sponsored and asylum-seeker categories. Table 6.1 shows a breakdown of the immigration categories by which the families obtained residence in New Zealand.

Table 6.1 Immigration categories of families

Refugee quota programme	Humanitarian family reunification	Family-sponsored	Asylum seeker
3	7	4	1

The three participants in the refugee quota programme were selected through UNHCR under the women-at-risk programme. Five of the seven participants in the humanitarian family reunification programme are also women, sponsored by their siblings in New Zealand, and the remaining two are males who were also sponsored by their siblings living in Christchurch and Auckland.

Three of the four parents in the family-sponsored programme had lived in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Somalia since 1991 and came to Kenya only after their visas were sent from New Zealand. The fourth respondent lived in Nairobi for almost 10 years before coming to New Zealand, and was running his own business. The one asylum seeker respondent left Somalia before the civil war and came to New Zealand after his application for refugee status was declined in another country.

Ten of the respondents in the study had refugee status in Kenya and Ethiopia, although three were not living in any refugee camp. The other seven were living in the refugee camps for between 8 and 12 years before they left for New Zealand.

6.1.1 Support provided after arrival

The findings on the support provided to the families show the level of support was dependent on the type of immigration category under which the families were granted acceptance to New Zealand. The families who arrived under the quota category appeared to have received more support compared with those in the family reunification category.

Quota refugees

The participants who arrived under the quota category reported that their costs of travelling from Kenya and Ethiopia to New Zealand were paid for by the New Zealand Government, and that they were accompanied by New Zealand immigration officials on their journey to New Zealand. After their arrival, the participants spent six weeks in Auckland's Mangere Refugee Reception Centre. During this time they received permanent residence status and an orientation about aspects of New Zealand life, which were translated into Somali. The orientation programmes also covered topics about the New Zealand welfare system and the education system. The participants received intensive medical, dental and psychological assessments, as well as trauma counselling during this six-week period. The school-aged children were also assessed to determine their level of social and academic needs (see Appendix N for samples of the assessment reports which were sent to the children's schools).

Family-sponsored, humanitarian family reunification and asylum seeker

The responses provided by the participants in these categories demonstrated that the majority of them were from similar backgrounds and had similar vulnerability levels as the families in the Quota Refugee Category. However, despite the similarities in their needs, the

Quota Refugee respondents were provided with a different level of support by the Government of New Zealand. The disparities in support began with the journey from Kenya and Ethiopia. Their cost of travelling from Kenya and Ethiopia was not covered by the New Zealand government and no officials from New Zealand accompanied them on their journey.

The substantial disparities between the families in the Refugee Quota Programme, and the Family Reunification and other categories, are reflected in the social welfare benefits, health and education support that they were given. Table 6.2 indicates the differences in support.

Table 6.2 Differences in support provided between quota refugees and other categories of refugee

Quota refugee	Humanitarian family reunification, family-sponsored and asylum-seeker categories
The cost of travelling was for paid by the New Zealand government and the refugees were escorted from Kenya and Ethiopia by New Zealand immigration officials.	Their travel costs were paid by their sponsors and they were not accompanied by New Zealand officials.
They were received by NZIS staff at Auckland airport and were received by the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) staff at Christchurch airport.	Were only received by their families already living in Christchurch.
They were provided free medical, dental and psychological check-ups.	They were given a free medical but no psychological nor dental service.
Trauma counselling was provided at Mangere.	No trauma counselling support.
The children's education level and special needs were assessed and report sent to their prospective schools in Christchurch.	The children were assessed only by their new schools. Special needs were not assessed on their arrival.
Adult's previous qualifications and English levels were assessed for free.	Respondent were required to pay for the assessments.
Orientation was given about aspects of life in New Zealand and the support refugees could get from agencies.	No orientation/information was given.
Tertiary students could obtain student loans and student allowances immediately upon arrival.	They had to wait for two years before they could get student loans and allowances. They were eligible for emergency unemployment benefits.

Quota refugee	Humanitarian family reunification, family-sponsored and asylum-seeker categories
They were allowed to sponsor families immediately after arrival under the Refugee family reunification.	They had to wait for two years and had to get a job offer before they could sponsor their relatives.
They were eligible for \$1,200 resettlement grant per family, \$100 per child and \$800 recoverable loan.	They were not eligible for any these grants.
They were assigned to volunteers for six months.	No volunteer assistance.

6.1.2 Experience in the Initial Resettlement Phase

The data in this study showed that the categories in which refugees arrive in New Zealand are important for parent - school collaboration, because support for new refugees is governed by specific policies and institutional arrangements depending on the immigration policy under which they were accepted into New Zealand.

It appears that additional support has been given to the quota refugee category, which creates disparity between the families in the quota and others in the family reunification and asylum-seeker categories. Although families in the quota and family reunification categories were living in the same refugee camps and had gone through similar experiences in their lifetimes, there are specific policies and institutions which provide additional initial support to quota refugees upon their arrival, whereas people in the family reunification category do not receive this.

Another disparity between the two categories is that the New Zealand Government pays the costs of travel for quota refugees to New Zealand, English language and orientation programmes, health screening and mental health support during the first six weeks following their arrival in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, whereas family reunification refugees do not receive any of this support. Furthermore, the quota refugees are entitled to social work support through the Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand (RSANZ). This non-governmental organisation (NGO) is contracted by the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) to provide social work support to refugees for the first six months following their arrival in New Zealand. RSANZ assists families in their initial enrolment in schools and advocates for children on behalf of their parents. They also assist families with understanding the New Zealand system, including the education system and to

how to work with schools. Also, the policy allows quota refugees state housing immediately upon their arrival in Christchurch, a non-recoverable grant of \$1,200 and a further recoverable grant of \$800. These funds are intended to help the quota refugees purchase school uniforms; bedding, essential appliances and provide transport for attending English classes to help them get established in the communities.

The disparity between the quota and family reunification categories impacts negatively on parent - school collaboration since families who sponsor and bring their families under the family reunification programme are required to support them for two years. The extra financial burden which the new members put on the families already in New Zealand also affects the families' abilities to pay for the costs associated with their children's schools, buy transport and rent suitable accommodation.

6.2 The Experience in the Resettlement Process and its Impacts on Parent - school collaboration

This thesis argues that the responsiveness of refugee policies in the receiving country is an important determinant of parents' readiness to collaborate with schools. Responsive policies are important in compensating for the disparities within the refugee and between refugee families and the families from their host community. Because of their social, cultural and linguistic differences and past experience of hardships, refugees from backgrounds similar to the Somali one experience exceptional difficulties in coping with the barriers and challenges in the resettlement process and in collaborating with schools. Most of the challenges appear to be linked to factors related to the constraints experienced in the home country, in the flight journey and in the first country of refuge as well as the existing social, cultural and linguistic differences between Somalia and New Zealand, which is an industrialised and western country. Some of the major challenges experienced by the participants are: racist/hostile reception from the host community, Gender disparity, experience of English language acquisition problems, housing problems, the absence of support systems in the Somalian community and unemployment. There were also problems with; fear of their children assimilating in the host community culture (losing their culture and religion), financial hardships, culture shock problems, cold weather and diminished status.

While each one of these factors has its own individual impact, it is also important to take into account the interconnectedness of these factors, which aggravates the magnitude of

their impacts. The following section describes some of the issues, and outlines how each factor affects the resettlement process and parent - school collaboration.

6.2.1 Discrimination Problems

Several respondents in the study stated that they were faced with racial prejudice when they arrived in Christchurch, which occurred in many different arenas: street racism, neighbourhood racism, school-based racism, housing and institutional racism. This in many ways diminished their feeling a sense of belonging in their new community and the Somali refugees' integration process.

The respondents reported experiencing racism from their neighbours. One of the respondents stated that she was physically attacked by her neighbour's dog (believing that the dog acted upon the neighbour's instructions). This occurred several times when she and her children were leaving or entering the house. The woman could not complain to the police because of her poor English and for fear that the neighbour might instigate more attacks against her family. The situation forced the respondent to move from the street where she was living to another street, where many Somali families were living. Some participants also confirmed that they were refraining from engaging with their neighbours because of their unreceptive attitudes.

School-based racism was identified by respondents as one aspect of the racial discrimination they experienced. Four respondents reported that their children were being bullied at school and were sometimes physically abused on account of their race. Some of the parents stated that although the Somali children were in actual fact the real victims, they ended up being punished by the teachers, because their poor English meant that they could not explain their situation. On the other hand, New Zealand children were the first to complain to the teachers and shifted the blame on to the Somali children, which led to many Somali children being tagged with bad behaviour labels by their teachers.

One of the respondents described a situation her daughter experienced at school:

Because my daughter was constantly harassed, my sponsor had to visit the school. The teachers were telling the sponsor that my daughter was too aggressive and might be suspended because of her bad behaviour. In fact, the reason she was aggressive was that she didn't know enough English to protect herself. Therefore, she resorted to using physical means to protect herself.

Two respondents said they were concerned with institutional discrimination, which they described as somewhat embedded in the system. While expanding on this point, one of the respondents stated “there are bad people in every society, but it is worse when those who are expected to enforce the law [referring to the police] and to provide equal protection to all segments of society are seen to discriminate against some people because of their race”.

The respondent added “it is even more disturbing when the law makers [referring to the MP Winston Peters], who are expected to set the example for an inclusive society are making negative statements targeting a particular ethnicity in the parliament – which would be a direct endorsement of racial discrimination at the highest level”. The respondents also were grateful to the former Mayor of Christchurch and the former Minister of Immigration for supporting the community when Winston Peters made negative comments in Parliament about the Somali community.

Two of the eight male respondents believed that the police sometimes were not fair in their handling of complaints about racial discrimination. One respondent described his personal experience with the police after he complained to them several times about constant abuse he experienced from his neighbour, which he believed was motivated by racism. He stated that when he reported this complaint to the police, the advice he was given was to move to another house before the police had even spoken with the neighbour.

The respondents also reported experiences of racially-motivated discrimination from the New Zealand customs at Christchurch Airport. Three respondents said they were handpicked by the customs officials each time they returned to Christchurch from overseas visits. A male respondent explained his experiences with the customs in the following words:

I was handpicked from the many people in the long queue by the custom officials on two occasions I was returning from Africa and was taken to a room where I was questioned and my luggage extraordinarily checked. I was held for more than two hours and when nothing was found, they asked how I obtained the money I purchased my ticket with.

One respondent also reported that an elderly Somali woman who returned from Africa was held at Christchurch airport for several hours (until she collapsed and was taken to the

hospital), because she did not speak English and there was no interpreter. He elaborated by saying;

We [Somalis] do not mind going through the normal security screening processes, but it is really frustrating and heart-breaking when you become the subject of a racial profiling exercise in your own country. I was proud of carrying the New Zealand passport because of the level of respect I received from the custom officials in Dubai and Nairobi, but I was really sad when I was treated differently from the rest of the passengers in the same plane, including those travelling on foreign passports. It made me doubt whether my passport was different from the other New Zealanders' returning home.

However, the same respondent reported receiving more favourable treatment from the custom officials in Auckland. He said "I was not separated from the rest and in fact the custom official told me 'welcome back home', which really meant a lot me".

Racism was stated by three respondents as one of the barriers to housing. A respondent in the individual interviews reported an experience she believed was racially-motivated. The respondent saw a property for rent in the paper and when she rang the landlord, was told that the property was already rented. However, the same property was advertised in the paper the following week. When her New Zealand sponsor rang the landlord directly, she was told that the house was available if she wanted to rent it. However, when the sponsor explained that the property was for a Somali family, the landlord declined, adding that he did not want a Somali family because he believed they had different cultural living conditions in their country and could spoil his house. He finally agreed to rent it to the Somali family after the sponsor threatened to report him to the Human Rights Office. Interestingly, after many years of dealing with Somalis, the same landlord now has three Somali families living in his properties.

Although the participants did not openly state it, the experience of racism also appeared to affect parent-school collaboration. For example, several parents (mostly mothers), stated they were fearful of walking in the streets due to the fear of street attacks (including bottle throwing from passing cars) or insults, and expressed that they were too intimidated to access communal facilities, such as libraries and public transport. For example, some participants in the focus group reported that they warned their children against catching buses from the bus exchange in the city because they feared for their children's safety. This

finding supports McBrien's (2005) work, which found fear caused by racial attacks and intimidation prevented Muslims in the U.K. from participating in school-based activities. This finding does support other academics' work, such as Ladson-Bikings and Tate (2000, in Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009) who contend that parents' race has more influence on parent - school collaboration than income, status, or education. These scholars argue that race has greater impacts for parents from minority cultures because collaboration of parents from minority cultures can be affected by their race since they can be subjected to racial discrimination from the dominant culture, which diminishes their confidence and motivation. The experience of racism has profound negative consequences on the integration of refugees, while also affecting their mental wellbeing and mental health (Berry, 1997; Rutter, 2004).

This finding suggests that officials in city councils, central government departments, school staff and individuals within the host community need to be educated to develop and enhance their understanding of why refugees exist; why the New Zealand government hosts refugees; and how best the community can contribute to refugee settlement. The training of school staff can help them understand what support refugee families require in the resettlement process and to collaborate well with schools. It would help officials to understand more about how their policies and services can support families of different cultural, religious and language backgrounds.

6.2.2 Education Problems

The majority of the respondents (six female and two male) reported that there were shortcomings in the system regarding early childhood education (ECE), compulsory level education, and provision of English education for adults. These educational gaps, especially the lack of English language tuition, were said to be affecting the successful integration both of the children and their parents.

6.2.3 Parents' limited English proficiency

The study findings highlighted that limited (or a lack of) English proficiency can be an impediment to both resettlement and parent - school collaboration. Chapter 7 will deal with the issues with respect to parent-school collaboration, so only those associated with resettlement will be discussed here.

The study demonstrated that refugees who come with minimal English proficiency face more difficulties and fail to meet their expectations in New Zealand because they seem to be disadvantaged by their inability to access information or articulate their needs, which in turn excludes them from the opportunities in the receiving country. This also causes them to lag behind in the achievement of their own expectations. In contrast, those who come with a reasonable level of English are more empowered, enjoying the ability to plan, implement and evaluate their resettlement goals, and thus having a better chance to achieve their resettlement goals in a shorter timeframe.

The literature on resettlement stresses that a lack of, or lower English proficiency, hinder resettlement because it can be an impediment to accessing information, securing employment and building networks in the host community (Nicassion, 1983). Because it is seen as a strong determinant of resettlement, language acquisition is being used by several resettlement countries, such as Canada, Finland, USA, Netherlands and Norway as the key measure of refugee integration (UNHCR, 1997).

In New Zealand also, English language acquisition plays an important role in refugee resettlement and integration, which is why English language capability is one of the goals of the New Zealand Settlement Strategy (NZIS, 2004). The other six goals in the settlement strategy are: “Feeling welcome and accepted; being in the right job; being housed well; knowing how to access information and services and understanding the New Zealand way of life and knowing that you are contributing to it” (NZIS, 2004, p. 15).

6.2.4 The experience of gender disparity in the resettlement process

The findings in this study showed that in addition to the common problems faced by refugees, women appear to experience additional problems because of their gender, and also suggest that the initial experience of gender disparity sustained by women in the home country is maintained after their arrival in New Zealand. This can be seen in women’s access to English language training, access to employment, and their workload around the house. The majority of the women in the survey had been in New Zealand for more than 5 years and yet they still struggled with conversational English. The study found that a number of factors delayed women’s acquisition of the English language. These include a lack of childcare support and transport, the expectation of domestic work at home, and no appropriate programmes and support in English language schools. The existing English programmes were described as being inappropriate because there are limited part-time or

evening classes that women can attend during their free time. Several women, especially those with pre-school-age children, reported that full-time English courses were not appropriate in their family circumstance as that would require them to be on the student allowance which would lead to a reduction in their income. Instead, some of the women are at present attending crèche programmes where they receive only 4 hours of English tuition per week. There are also others who receive only 2 hours of home-tutor support through volunteers.

Four out of the seven female respondents believed a lack of well-structured adult classes geared to the female respondents' circumstances was a problem for women refugees. The respondents confirmed that women with pre-school-aged children had the highest need to learn English, but most of them were not able to attend any formal English courses because they had to stay at home with the children. The registered childcare centres were too expensive, and kindergartens were not a preferred option either. This was because their English classes finished at 12.00, but they were expected to pick up their children before 11.30 or pay a penalty fee of \$10 for lateness.

This finding supports previous research about the resettlement of Somali refugees in Toronto which also found that youth become more fluent in English than their parents and therefore run the Somali households, resulting in "role-reversal" (Reitsma, 2001, p. 15). Also, a lack of, or limited English skills are strongly linked to what Portes and Rumbant (2001) have described as dissonant acculturation, which occurs when children pick up the host community language faster than their parents.

6.2.5 Parents' workload

Another area with a significant gender disparity was the workload around the house. For example, all the female respondents in the focus group discussions said that domestic workloads have increased since they came to New Zealand, and four of them identified the increased workload at home as a contributing factor to the high unemployment rate among the women. There is also a correlation between the size of the family and the rate of unemployment among women. Women with many children at home are said to be less likely to find jobs than those with older children. Three of the female respondents also believed their men were part of the problem, because they do not want to look after the young children if the mothers are working. One respondent said; "they still have in their mind, the old Somali men's attitude which sees looking after the children as a role which is

exclusively for the women”. The women were also concerned about the lack of support from men in helping them with activities around the homes.

The findings of this study suggest that the gaps identified between the fathers and mothers are a direct reflection of the substantial gender disparity between boys and girls in Somalia, and Somalia’s patriarchal society. The findings also indicate that, because Somalia is a strongly patriarchal society, the Somali culture sets a separate role for fathers and mothers in relation to mentoring their children. For example, girls are mentored to become successful housewives as this is considered a mother’s role; while training boys on livelihood-earning and leadership skills is seen as a father’s responsibility.

These traditional Somali parenting practices still appear to have a bearing on the tasks performed by Somali parents in New Zealand, including the children’s education. It appears that Somali fathers in New Zealand still have more responsibilities towards supporting sons rather than daughters. Mothers, on the other hand, continue to maintain responsibility for shaping their daughters. For example, the data on communication between parents and the high school indicates the school’s contacts with parents about boys’ behaviour were with the fathers.

The situation of Somali women’s workload appears to have increased in New Zealand due to the absence of support from extended families. Although the problem of workload affects all Somali women, it is more serious for solo mothers, especially those with many children. The literature suggests that single parents experience a larger workload because they take up unfamiliar tasks in the families (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003).

6.2.6 Unemployment, diminished status, and financial hardship

Women were over-represented both in unemployment numbers and low job status in the pre-refugee era, and they remained behind men in employment rate in New Zealand. Table 6.3 shows the pre-refugee employment status of the respondents, while Table 6.4 shows their current status.

Table 6.3 Pre-refugee employment status of respondents

Profession	Gender	
	Female	Male
Unemployed	3	1
Accountant	1	0
Immigration officer	1	0
Military officer (Colonel)	0	1
Provincial commissioner	0	1
Embassy staff	0	1
Business	0	1
Student	2	1
Security officer	0	1
Personal assistant to a minister	1	0

Table 6.4 Current employment states of respondents

Profession	Gender	
	Female	Male
Unemployed	6	1
Taxi driver	0	4
Freezing work	0	2
Teacher aid	1	1
Total	7	8

When the respondents were asked what factors have played a role in their current unemployment situation, a number were presented as barriers. These included religion, a lack of recognised qualifications, low English proficiency and discrimination.

6.2.7 Religious factors

Two of the male respondents left their jobs after they were refused break time to perform their prayers. Another reported that he left his job because he could not get time off to attend the Friday prayer at the mosque, which is obligatory for Muslim men.

The respondent also reported that his brother felt compelled to leave his factory job after he was asked to chop pork meat. [Islam forbids the consumption and contact with pork]. A number of women stated that they have been told on several occasions by their New Zealand friends that they are less likely to get jobs because of the veil they wear.

6.2.8 Lack of recognised qualifications

Two female and three male respondents said that the qualifications they came with to New Zealand were not helping them to get jobs. Although the respondents are highly qualified, they are still struggling to find jobs because their qualifications are not recognised by NZQA. For example, one of the respondents with two degrees remains driving a taxi because his qualifications are not recognised.

6.2.9 Low English proficiency

The majority of the respondents (five female and three male), cited this as one of the barriers preventing them from finding jobs. Two of the male respondents said it was a factor that encourages many refugees to choose jobs that require limited English such as a freezing worker and taxi driver.

6.2.10 Discrimination

This was a factor the respondents strongly believed was contributing to their situation of high unemployment. They reported situations where another highly qualified migrant from India, after failing to find jobs, changed his name to a New Zealand one, and his address from Linwood to Sumner, and was soon invited for an interview and found a good job.

6.2.11 Diminished status

Seven (two female and five male) respondents stated they were feeling depressed because of their diminished employment status. Some of the respondents were in senior positions of power (ministerial PA, provincial commissioner, immigration official, teachers, and director of a big business firm) when the war broke out, and are at present either unemployed or driving a taxi. These participants are finding their diminished status painful and stressful.

Living on the benefit exacerbated their stress levels. One respondent highlighted his situation as follows:

If you look at the makeup of the people in the Somali community, you will find they were from different social classes in Somalia; however, everybody is now in the same social class in New Zealand. Although I hate to put myself above anyone, yet, I sometimes feel humiliated to be in the same queue [in WINZ's office] with the people over whom I was the Provincial Commissioner.

Another respondent who was a school inspector in Somalia and is a taxi driver at present said "I sometimes called the refugee experience '*dad sime*' or 'the equaliser' because people are now in the same status".

6.2.12 Financial hardship

Ten respondents believed that financial hardship was a major problem affecting many aspects of their families' lives, and they stated that the welfare benefit was their main source of income. These respondents also use their benefit to support their relatives in Somalia, causing heavy financial pressure.

When the respondents were asked what mechanisms they employed to cope with the financial pressure, they came up with a list of strategies. Table 6.5 shows the strategies respondents were employing to cope with financial hardship.

Table 6.5 Strategies used by families to cope with financial hardship

Strategy employed	Number of respondents (out of 15 participants)
Cutting down costs on food, clothing and heating	15
Renting cheap properties	8
Borrowing/loan from WINZ and friends	6
Applying for the Mayor's welfare fund, Salvation Army food bank	5
Working extra shifts	4
Employing a traditional saving mechanism (<i>ayuuto</i>)	6

Financial pressure is one of the factors playing a major role in family breakdowns. The husband and wife each have an obligation to support their individual extended families. Because it is usually the men who work, the wives expect them to support both families equally and if the husband cannot live up to this financial responsibility, then the wife may prefer to break up her family in order to become a solo mother and get her own income.

Four of the females and two males are involved in *ayuuto* or ‘merry going round as a mechanism for saving’. *Ayuuto* is a Somali traditional saving system where a group of people join up and put together money on a weekly basis. The money is then given to one of the members every week in rotation. The amount of money saved varies with the financial position of each member. Although the saving was highly valued, it was reported to add financial pressure on the families while also affecting the families’ lifestyles, including children’s living conditions. The money being saved from this scheme is currently being used to buy cars, clothing and for sending back to families in Africa.

6.2.13 Housing

According to respondents, the availability of suitable houses for large-size families was among problems they faced. The families had to live in overcrowded houses, as there were few four or five bedroom houses with Housing New Zealand, and most private landlords were reluctant to rent their properties to large-sized families. Besides the overcrowding, the properties they rented were old and damp and were not suitable for asthmatics. The respondents also expressed concern about some landlords who did not refund their bond, despite no damage being done to their properties, and the properties being well-cleaned when they were vacated. They could not report their grievances to the Tenancies Service or Community Law Centre because they were not familiar with the services of those organisations.

In addition to inadequate housing, this study found a number of reasons for this transience. These included seeking greater proximity to the mosques, to other Somali families, single-sex schools, and to move into bigger housing. This high mobility of Somali families was found to have a similar adverse effect on families in the UK (Demie, Lewis, & McLean, 2007). In New Zealand, a study conducted by ERO (2009) asserted schools found it difficult to engage and build relationships with transient parents because parents provide no alternative contact addresses where schools can contact them. To overcome the housing problems, it is important that efficient advanced planning should be carried out before

refugees have arrived in their final destination city to ensure appropriate accommodation is being available for newly arrived refugees. Housing New Zealand and local authorities should consider purchasing or constructing housing for large families.

6.2.14 Cultural differences

Five respondents in the study acknowledged experiencing cultural shock after they arrived in Christchurch. They stated that having no previous experience of dealing with Westerners was a key contributing factor and was more seriously affecting the families from a rural background. Even for the families from an urban setting, the changing role of the families in New Zealand was a significant cultural shock, especially for the men. Traditionally, men made major decisions, including issues concerning the family income, so it was a shock for them when the officials from WINZ deposited the families' income benefit in the women's bank accounts when they arrived. Most of the men saw this as a direct attack on their authority in the family and believed it was aimed at undermining men's status in the family.

6.2.15 Problems with losing Somali culture and Islamic religion

The parents in the study appeared very nervous about their children losing the Somali culture and Islamic religion, and this is causing relationship breakdowns between parents and their teenage children. The parents described the boys from female-headed families as assimilating and adopting negative aspects of Western culture. In contrast, the girls were described as more loyal to their parents and were maintaining well both Somali culture and Islamic values. It was also reported that parents have used some safeguards, which included taking their children to a weekend class at the mosque and encouraging the observation of Islamic ethics. Some parents also sent their children back to Africa and the Middle East to learn the Koran and to get cultural rehabilitation. The concept of rehabilitating children is widely known in Somali as '*ubadtoosin*' which implies straightening the children. When the parents were asked about the symptoms that can signal to them that their children were going astray from their culture, they said: disobeying parents, wearing baggy jeans, ear piercing, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, dating, and truancy from school.

In addition to shaping the Somali families' daily lives, the Islamic teaching plays an important role in parents' expectations of their children and their decisions about their children's education. Somali parents put great effort into encouraging their children to observe Islamic values and maintain the Somali culture because Islam commands children

to care for their parents, especially when they are elderly; thus perceiving their children as an investment which they can draw on during their retirement (Sporton & Valentine, ND).

Islam also appears to have other indirect implications. For example, the majority of female participants in the focus group believed they were a target for racist insults because of their Islamic dress and they believe that their Islamic dress was a barrier to their employment. This finding is in agreement with a study carried out by Sales and Gregory (1998), which found that highly qualified Somali women in Britain with highly sought-after skills were unemployed because of discrimination based on their dress. In New Zealand, there is research (P. Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, & Guerin, 2003; P. Guerin & Guerin, 2007), which showed that Muslim women's distinctive clothing can make them more vulnerable to racism, including experiencing on-going insults in the street by others.

On the other hand, despite Somali families' strong adherence to the Islamic teaching and expecting their children's schools to be responsive to their cultural needs, schools are finding difficulties in meeting the religious needs of Somali parents, because of the secular provision of the New Zealand 1989 Education Act. For example, the former Minister of Education, the Hon. Trevor Mallard condemned Hagley Community College in Christchurch for building a prayer facility for the Muslim students (the Press, 4/3/ 2004). The Minister condemned the school's decision believing that its action was in conflict with the secular provision of the Education Act 1989; although the principal on the other hand was convinced his school's decision to build the prayer facility was consistent with the Bill of Rights (the Press, 6/3 /2004).

In the New Zealand context, assimilation of new migrants at all levels in the receiving society was considered to be the solution to attainment of resettlement goals. Consequently, the assimilation concept became the key guiding principle and a widely-applied concept in the formulation and implementation of New Zealand immigration selection and resettlement policies. For example, New Zealand immigration policy in the mid-1950s encouraged immigrants from Great Britain because they were seen as being capable of easily assimilating (Rabel & Brooking, 1995). Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) assert that, in Australia, assimilation, from a policy point of view, was the solution to all problems related to resettlement:

Essentially, successful settlement was the achievement of invisibility by the immigrant. Not only was it required that immigrants assimilate totally at linguistic

and other cultural levels but it also required that neither immigrants as a whole (sic), nor individual 'national groups', should remain visible in the sense of having special needs beyond the initial period of arrival. (Morrissey, et al., 1991, p. 25)

While this could well apply to New Zealand, Morrissey et al. point out that:

Successful settlement was to be the achievement by immigrants of 'normal' Australian standards of living and their adoption of 'normal' Australian cultural practices. The means by which this was to be achieved was by their own, and very largely unassisted, efforts. (Morrissey, Mitchell & Rutherford, 1991, p. 25)

The assimilation approach as a driving factor of immigration policies in terms of selection and settling of migrants has encouraged institutional discrimination in New Zealand. This is because it discouraged the selection of migrants from cultures which were deemed not able to easily assimilate or blend into the New Zealand culture. Because of the emphasis on assimilation, the policy favoured migrants from Britain and Europe who were seen to assimilate easily. Such discrimination is acknowledged in a circular or policy paper produced by the Department of External Affairs in 1953:

Our immigration policy is based firmly on the principle that we are, and intend to remain, a country of European development. It is inevitably discriminatory against Asians, indeed against all persons who are not wholly of European race and colour. Whereas we have done much to encourage immigration from Europe, we do everything to discourage it from Asia (Brooking, 1995).

While assimilation was the preferred approach of resettlement in many countries, marked philosophical shifts took place in the resettlement field in the late twentieth century when assimilation as a concept started to lose its emphasis and people started casting doubt on its appropriateness in resettlement. As a consequence, the emphasis on resettlement started to move away from assimilation to integration. Resettling countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States, where it was found to be unrealistic to foster resettlement and settlement through the assimilation approach, promoted the shift.

Morrissey, Mitchell and Rutherford (1991) identified three reasons that resulted in assimilation losing its popularity, and why its appropriateness was questioned in Australia. This applies equally well to New Zealand:

Firstly, significant groups of migrants failed to assimilate both socially and economically, while there was a negative view linked with the refugee experience which many from the host society saw as a cost burden on the host community. Secondly, many migrants failed to meet the demands linked with assimilation which they considered were dehumanising. Finally, institutional changes rather than policy became inevitable to meet the demands of assimilation.

6.2.16 Lack of support in the Somali community

The majority of the respondents reported that there was limited support received by the families from the Somali community. This was linked to a limited number of interpreters in the wider community and a lack of unity among the Somalis in Christchurch. The early intakes of Somali refugees were mainly women with no previous education, who subsequently sponsored their families, who also came with no education. Besides the limited human resources in the community, the 1990s and early 2000s was a period when there were tribal wars in Somalia and the Christchurch Somali community was divided along clan lines, which prevented it from establishing programmes to jointly address their needs.

The female respondents believed that the men were responsible for the divisions in the Christchurch Somali community. This was well-described in the words of a female participant in the interviews, who stated that “we fled from home because of the conflicts between the men, and here they are again creating further problems for us”. The female respondents believed that, despite the fact that the men are living in New Zealand, they still maintain loyalty to their clans from Somalia, which is why they still follow closely the clan politics there. It was reported that the men have established a meeting place (a house) in Christchurch where they spend most of their time talking about the politics in Somalia.

The female respondents raised concerns about the men’s limited commitment to their families and children. The situation facing the women is best described in Somali slang, as “*agoon noole*”, implying the orphans of living fathers, according to a female respondent.

Some of the men in the study also agreed with the women’s views, believing strongly that the women are taking more responsibility for their families’ wellbeing than the men.

Interestingly, whilst the majority of the women are concerned about their workload and lack of support, many women strongly adhered to stereotypical gender roles and described

certain household tasks as inappropriate and demeaning for men. One of the respondents explained her view on this as follows:

I am not supportive of the arguments of some women who want their men to engage in certain activities like cooking, cleaning and babysitting because this shows a bad image of me as woman or mother [sic]. We are in New Zealand but that does not mean we should act like the New Zealand because what makes us different from other people is our culture and religion, and if we do not safeguard we are not survive as Somalis. However, I have no problem with the men doing other tasks like lawn mowing and dropping and picking up the children from schools [sic].

In contrast, another female respondent's view supported a changing role for Somali men. To illustrate this she said "*raga maxay guriga ugu yaalin haddii dowlada ay bixinysa biilka*" (what benefit do men bring to the family if the government is providing the sustenance for the families).

The findings in this study showed that support from refugee families' own communities is more critical for families who cannot provide academic support to their children or build effective collaboration with schools. For instance, some families in this study reported receiving different kinds of support from their own Somali community. Most of this support was in the form of interpreting, childcare and transport, which allowed some families to attend parent-teacher interviews. Some families who were new to the city also received support from their community during children's enrolment into schools. Parents also reported receiving support from the weekend Madawaska programme in the mosque, which is run by the Somali community, which the parents described as helpful, especially for the families who cannot teach their children the Koran. In addition, the participants reported receiving spiritual support from the religious leaders in the community which was also very useful, especially when a member passed away and when families were grieving, or when a member was sick and a blessing was required.

On the other hand, this factor can also become a barrier when the families' community cannot offer much-needed support to its members. For example, the families in this study reported receiving less academic support for their children from the Somali community because of the few resourceful people in it. Most of the Somali refugees are women who came under the UN Humanitarian women at-risk category (P. Guerin, et al., 2003; P. Guerin

& Guerin, 2007), which is perhaps why there are not many educated people in the community.

The participants in the focus group indicated that there is a particular shortage of resourceful women, so single mothers often have no role models in the wider Somali community from whom they can seek advice and consult with about their issues. The study also found that Somali women are disadvantaged by the limited number of female interpreters, because women are embarrassed to use male interpreters, including when in consultation with doctors.

6.3 Conclusion

Chapter 6 presented the findings on the families' experiences in the pre- and post-arrival stages. The data on families' experiences in New Zealand showed that they experienced further hardships in New Zealand as a consequence of mismatches between families' special needs and the policies and services designed for resettlement.

The chapter discussed the challenges experienced by families in New Zealand and their impacts on parent - school collaboration. The data in this study highlight that Somali refugees experience significant challenges in their resettlement process and collaboration with secular schools in Western developed countries, because refugees are often from traditional and less-developed countries and English is not their first language.

Refugees arrive in New Zealand without any prior knowledge of New Zealand. This lack of prior knowledge and information of the destination country makes their initial resettlement a challenging experience for most refugees. It is also worth mentioning that the women refugees' degree of vulnerability and marginalisation experienced in the refugee and resettlement processes is compounded by a past of culturally-rooted discrimination sustained in Somalia. Due to the strong Somali patriarchal society, most women arrived with limited education, limited English language skills, and limited work experience, and therefore struggled most to cope with the resettlement process.

The data further show that the extent of the effects caused by the hardships experienced in the resettlement process and in dealing with schools can be aggravated or minimised by other factors related to the individual refugee, the refugee's own community, and the host community (especially the resettlement and school policy factors, which influence refugee resettlement and parent-school collaboration).

The individual-related factor relates to the level of hardship that the individual refugee or family went through in their home country, in the flight process and in the refugee camps, and the resources that the individual brings to New Zealand. Examples of the resources the individual or the family brings may include their previous education, English language expertise, work experience and past exposure to a culture or system similar to the one in New Zealand.

Previous experience with the Western culture is critical, because participants who lived in urban Somalia or in Western countries before coming to New Zealand are found to adjust to life in New Zealand with less difficulty, compared with those who had never lived in a Western country or an urban environment.

The factor related to the refugees' own community refers to the amount of resources in the community that can render extra support to the families, especially the vulnerable members of that community. The support from the community can also be a positive source of extra support for schools and families, helping them to enhance their collaboration; the educated members of the community can become role models and mentors for single-parent families and youth, especially those from female-headed families.

The host community factor pertains to the receptiveness of the host community members and the responsiveness of their policy on refugee resettlement. There is convincing evidence showing that key resettlement policies governing refugees' access to education, health, welfare, housing, family reunification, employment and existing ethnic relations play a key role in the refugee resettlement outcomes, while also determining the collaboration between parents and schools.

Although there are initial costs linked with the resettlement of refugees, this does not translate to refugees being a burden on New Zealand in the long term. This is because refugees make political, cultural and economic contributions to New Zealand which outweigh the resettlement costs. For example, New Zealand's acceptance of refugees on an annual basis makes a significant contribution to lifting New Zealand's international reputation, branding it as a philanthropic nation and a key player in global crises. Perhaps more significantly, refugees make significant contributions to New Zealand's cultural diversity and labour market. However, their economic contribution is to a large extent dependent upon their receiving a good education. Therefore, this thesis argues that refugee

resettlement should not be perceived as a burden or drain on the New Zealand economy, but instead as an investment exercise, in which education plays an important role.

Chapter 7 will provide the findings on the families' experiences in dealing with schools from the perspectives of the parents, students, and school staff. The chapter will also explore the policies and systems used by schools to communicate and collaborate with refugee families, their effectiveness, and potential barriers hindering the communication and collaboration between refugee families and their children's schools. Finally, it will also present a new model of parent - school collaboration that suits Somali parents, with suggestions for implementing the proposed model.

Chapter 7: Refugee Family-School Interactions, Barriers to Interaction, and Models of Interaction for Refugees

Chapter 6 discussed participants' experiences of the resettlement process and the associated challenges. This chapter examines their expectations of schools and their experiences in communicating with their children's schools. The first of three sections in this chapter outline participants' expectations of schools and explores the factors that influenced their choice of schools, and the parents' experiences with schools during the enrolment processes. Section two focuses on the experiences of parents engaging with schools after enrolment and the effectiveness of schools' policies for communication and collaboration with parents. The third section discusses barriers to successful home-school communication and collaboration.

The focus of each section in this chapter is the following question:

To what extent and what ways are the policies and systems for parent - school collaboration compatible or clashing with the families' language, culture and experiences?

This chapter also addresses the final research question about the suitability of various parent-school collaboration models for refugee families. To do so, the chapter discusses the type and quality of information collected or passed on to the families in the initial process of enrolling their children, and the families' subsequent experience of communicating and collaborating with schools. It also outlines existing barriers at the school and at the national or Ministry level. Based on its critique of element of existing of models parent-school collaboration, this chapter argues that there is a need for an alternative model of parent-school collaboration. The chapter concludes proposing a new model of parent -school collaboration that would suit the Somali refugee community and makes suggestions for implementing this model.

7.1 Section 1: The Families' Expectations When Choosing Schools and the Realities

7.1.1 Expectations about the New Zealand education system

Regardless of their previous educational background and lifestyle, all parents in this study held high expectations for their children's success in the New Zealand education system.

The majority of participants in the individual and focus group also described lack of access to education in Somalia as one of their key reasons for fleeing. Despite noting educational success as a high priority, the preservation of Somali and Islamic cultures was equally valued. A female respondent in the individual interviews stated:

I strongly wanted my children to obtain tertiary qualifications, but I also wanted them to hold on to the Islamic values and the Somali culture, because I believed their qualification will not be helpful for me as a parent if they [the children] did not live as Somalis [Somali culture] in New Zealand [sic].

Several other participants' comments revealed that these high educational expectations appear largely driven by the Somali culture, which considers educational success an important asset for both the children and their families. According to the respondents' views, Somali parents generally perceive children as a support they can call upon when they retire. This was reflected in the following comment from a female respondent:

I have no reliable future other than my children. I do not want to end up living in a rest home like the New Zealand elderly people, and I want to be looked after by my children and grandchildren. However, I do not think this can be something you can expect from children who have grown up in New Zealand".

Although the parents perceived education as an investment, they also treated it as a factor which improves a family's status in the community, especially if the children were specialised in a profession that held a high status in Somalia, such as medical doctors.

Although family prestige was a factor, some parents' responses about the career choice for their children showed a desire to return to Somalia as a factor they took into account when choosing a career pathway for their children. Ten of the parents preferred their children to obtain medical and engineering degrees because they believed the children could find good employment in Somalia or in the Gulf countries. However, there were also another three respondents who wanted their children to become qualified in plumbing, electrical and panel-beating trades in order to set up their own businesses in New Zealand.

Generally, the female respondents showed more interest in their children's educational achievement than the male respondents. This seemed to stem from existing competition between families, which was made clear from the comments of several female respondents'.

One said, “I do not want my children to be left behind when other mothers’ children are achieving well”.

Another respondent described the families whose children failed to obtain good quality qualifications from New Zealand [sic] as the biggest losers because they will not have any qualification to take back to Somalia.

When the respondents were asked about how well their expectations were being met, there were considerable differences between the satisfaction levels of the parents with children at the Primary School (School A) compared with the parents of children in School B.

Generally, more than half the parents in School A deemed their expectations to be highly met, especially regarding academic achievement; there were however, three who believed their children were behind their age groups, particularly in maths and written English. One of the parents believed that the reason the children were not achieving well was because School A was not committing sufficient time to student learning and was spending excessive time on education outside the classroom. This participant, who was a former teacher in Somalia, also felt the lack of textbooks for children’s revision at home was among the factors delaying children’s learning.

In contrast to the parents in School A, the School B parents held lower expectations of achievement levels. Interestingly, the indicators the respondents in School A used as a measure of these expectations are different from those used by parents in School B. The main difference here lies in parents’ adoption of academic achievement as a benchmark of success in School A, while the parents in School B adopted cultural and religious retention as their standard. For example, the widening cultural gap between the parents and their children, which has been related to increased conflicts in families, is a factor to consider when evaluating success of students. Two parents in School B said their expectation of educational achievement was low at this school because their children were not performing well academically and they were losing their cultural and religious values (this appears particularly true for male adolescents). The parents linked the low academic achievement of children with any pre-existing education gaps the Somali children arrived with, and the subsequent limited support the children were offered by their families and schools. Absence of mentoring support in both the schools and their homes was mentioned by parents as a possible contributing factor of boys’ underachievement.

The New Zealand secular education system was described as another factor contributing to parental perception of underachievement. A male respondent described this as follows:

In Somalia, schools were responsible for the education of the child and the social and spiritual development of the children. However, in the New Zealand context, huge effort is put into the academic development and limited emphasis on the social and spiritual aspects of children's development.

Differing (and at times contradictory) parenting practices between the New Zealand and Somali cultures can result in confusion and family discord. For example, whereas physical punishment is a regular practice in Somali families, it is now illegal in New Zealand. While explaining the traditional Somalia parenting style, one of the respondents stated, "the traditional Somali parents used to pass knowledge to their children through the 'do as I say' method and the consequence for children not following that instruction was physical punishment" [sic]. This illustrates the significant differences between the parenting styles of the Somali and New Zealand cultures.

7.1.2 Parents' experiences of choosing schools for their children

The overwhelming majority of the participants in the study believed the Somali families who had lived in New Zealand for a longer time enrolled their primary and secondary age children at their local schools. Whilst all newly-arrived families enrol their primary aged children in their local schools, most secondary-aged children were enrolled at School B, including children living outside the School B zone. According to the parents, the Refugee Services sponsors managed the enrolments of quota refugee children; therefore, parents had no role in deciding the schools. Unlike the families who came under the Quota Programme, the Family Reunification participants were assisted by their extended families and the children were enrolled in the local school. However, some high school-age children in the Family Reunification Scheme were enrolled in School B after their enrolments were declined by the local schools. The local high schools convinced the families that School B had better programmes for refugees than they could offer. One participant who works with several schools as a bilingual worker said sometimes high schools are reluctant to enrol refugee students because they consider them a strain on their school resources as they have to set up new supports for them.

The participants thought that newly arrived parents initially accept sending their children to a school far away from their home if they were convinced the school had suitable programmes for refugees and the school had an inclusive environment. However, they would prefer to send their children to schools in their own neighbourhood in the long run.

7.1.3 Motives for choosing schools

Several factors were identified by the respondents as playing important roles in parents' decisions to enrol their children in their current schools. The majority of the respondents (25 out of 35) said the inclusiveness and cultural diversity of the school were the main reasons for choosing the current schools. Three respondents also said costs of (or lack of) uniforms and the travelling distance to the school were among the several key factors they took into account when choosing schools. One female respondent explained the reason she enrolled her children in their present school was as follows: "At first, I wanted to enrol my two children in School X [the nearest school]. However, I changed my mind and enrolled them in their current school when I found out the costs of uniforms and stationery were more than \$7,000" [sic].

The availability of prayer space and the presence of other Somali adults with children in School B were key factors in their decision to choose it. One respondent stated, "I brought my children [two] to this school [School B] so they could be watched over by several [Somali adults] eyes" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

The provision of free bus passes offered to the refugee students in School B and adult ESOL programmes running in the school were also factors three families had considered when enrolling their children. Having the adults and children all going to the same school was considered a cheaper option than children and parents going to different schools. The parents also felt that going to the same school as their children would allow them to keep a close eye on their children in school. Another mother confirmed enrolling their two children in the present school after hearing about several incidences of bullying and racism instigated against former Somali students in her local high school. The participant explained her reasons thus: "I enrolled my two sons in the current school because students in the former school used to call Fatuma's sons by racist names like Osama and maybe they finally dropped out of school because of their dislike for attending school" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Other families stated they had

chosen School B because they thought it was inclusive and supportive for Muslim children due to the ethnic makeup of its students.

Sometimes the children enrolled themselves in schools without their parents' knowledge. For example, two families in the focus group reported that their children had enrolled themselves in their current schools.

While explaining how the children's enrolment had occurred, one of the children's mothers said two of her daughters and another Somali female student had transferred to the present school without their parents' knowledge. The parents became aware of their daughters' enrolment in the current school only after one of the families received a phone call from a bilingual worker in the school. The mothers said, "When I asked the girls why they had transferred from their former school (a girls' school) to the mixed school, they explained that there were subjects they wanted to enrol in which the previous school did not offer." While still wondering about how the children got transferred to the new school, she said "I am still wondering how the children were allowed to enrol in the new school and why the new school did not ask for my permission as a parent when the girls were working on the transfer" (Focus group member, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Some other participants reported other girls transferring from the single sex school because of its strict discipline. The participants in the individual and focus group put forward several reasons which they described motivated them to enrol their children in the current schools. Table 7.1 below explains the factors that influenced parents to enrol their children in their current schools.

Table 7.1 Factors influencing parents enrolling their children in their current schools

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school's level of cultural tolerance, especially availability of prayer space in the school2. Cost of travelling to school3. No uniform requirement which suited families in terms of costs and allowing girls to wear the prescribed dress in the Islamic dress code)4. Presence of other Somali children in the schools5. Somali bilingual workers in the schools6. Living in the school zones7. Homework Centre operating in the school8. The background knowledge of the school, the teachers and the range of subjects taught in the school9. The schools' level of multiculturalism and receptivity to other cultures (population of children from NESB)10. Children from an extended family or friends in the school11. Presence of Somali adults in the school12. Knowing former Somalian students from the school who passed their NCEA and enrolled in university

7.1.4 Parents' experiences of obtaining information about schools prior to enrolment

When the participants were asked about their main sources for obtaining information about the schools, they identified their New Zealand sponsors, Somali friends and their children as their main sources. Only two respondents sought information from websites, including the schools' websites, ERO and the Ministry of Education. Key reasons for not seeking information from the latter sources included a lack of computers at home, limited English and computer illiteracy.

One of the respondents who had no computer skills stated; "how can I find information from a computer which I cannot [do not know how to] even start". There were also two parents who searched information from the high school website but never visited any other websites including the ERO, Careers and MOE websites. Apart from these two participants, the rest of the parents in School B were not familiar with schools' brochures. This includes parents who had had children in the schools for three to four years. The majority of parents appeared to have made no informed decision about their children's career. For example, only two male respondents had read the schools' brochures and had engaged with their

children when choosing Year 12 and 13 subjects. Although these two respondents were able to read and write well in English, they felt the school subject/course information book was too difficult to understand because it was not in plain English and the subjects and courses were abbreviated. There was consensus among the nine respondents in this school that they had limited involvement in school meetings. Only two respondents reported attending their children's graduation ceremonies and school orientation nights. No parent reported receiving any school contact subsequent to any failure to attend any important meetings/events. This situation has likely exacerbated any misconception and miscommunication.

7.1.5 Parents' experience with schools when enrolling (Who the parents met with at the school, what information they asked about their children and what information they were given about the school)

When the parents were asked who they met with at the school when enrolling their children and what information was sought regarding their children, their responses showed significant differences between the schools in the study (the primary School A and secondary School B). The responses of the participants in both schools are explained below.

The Primary school (School A): There was unanimous agreement in the responses from the parents in School A that they were welcomed into the school by the principal. The majority of the parents (five out of six) also met with their children's classroom teachers and spent three hours with their children in the classrooms on the first day at school. This was intended to give parents the opportunity to know their children's classrooms and become acquainted with their children's teachers. It was also an opportunity for teachers to explain to parents what the children were being taught in the class, the work the children were expected to complete at home (homework) and how parents could provide feedback to the teachers about children's homework. In response to the question of what information the parents were given about the school, all parents (six) said an information booklet containing the names and photos of teachers, timetable and available support was given to individual families. More general information was also provided on general processes, school expectations and rules and formal means of parent-school communication and feedback. Families who were likely to experience difficulties with understanding their children's reports were given the option to seek help from a Somali bilingual worker in the school. Some of the respondents recalled the hospitality and warm welcome they received from the school principal. One of the parents described her views in the following words;

The warm welcome and hospitality given to us was beyond what we expected from any school principal. The principal and teachers were kind and sympathetic compared to the principals and teachers in both Somalia and Kenya. She [the principal] said to us ‘welcome to our school and we are pleased to have you in our school. If you or your children experience any problem in our school please come to me directly or the teachers. X [the Somali bilingual aid] is working in our school and always be there for you if you needed help’.

Another respondent said “the principal said to us that we were welcome to meet with her and the teachers any time we needed”.

The female respondents felt the principal was more kind and willing to help because she was a female. For example, one of the respondents stated “the principal was a female so she was obviously kind and, because she was a woman, I had no reservation about explaining my circumstances to her, like when I did not have money for camp”.

The high school (School B).The data from the participants in School B provides a contrasting picture to School A. Unlike School A, the majority of the parents (six out of nine) were met by the head of the ESOL Department or enrolment staff instead of the principal. Whilst three families received interpreter assistance from their children or other family members, the rest were assisted by a Somali bilingual worker provided by the school. The six respondents reported being questioned about their children’s previous education, spoken languages and any special needs the school should be informed about.

Several respondents, (six) in this school, believed a reasonable amount of information was collected about the children’s backgrounds. They suggested however, that there was no information collected from parents regarding their previous education levels, spoken languages and other important factors that could have an impact on children’s learning. Although the parents were given the opportunity, the majority did not ask questions. One of the respondents described her silence as a result of her state of confusion and lack of confidence in the first weeks of her arrival in the country. The respondent explained her feelings in the following words, “What questions could we ask when we were in complete shock and confusion with the whole environment. We were in shock for several weeks when we arrived”.

7.1.6 Discussion on the expectations and realities of choosing schools

This study found that the process of parents enrolling their children in schools can be a useful opportunity for schools to build the trust and confidence of parents. The evidence in this study also showed that since collaboration is a two-way process, the amount and quality of information collected and passed to parents in this process can give parents an indication of how much schools value the collaboration with parents.

The data on the families' experiences of the process when enrolling their children show that the information collected by the two schools did not go beyond seeking to establish details of children's previous education, their special needs, and eligibility for domestic education. Other information collected was intended to determine the number of children in the families, and key emergency contacts for the school.

The parents' feedback showed that the school did not seek information about parents' previous education, language abilities, experience of working with schools in Somalia, or the refugee camps. The schools also did not seek information about the families' refugee experience, or any existing conditions in the families which they may have acquired from that experience.

Similarly, no information was collected about the negative experiences which the families may be going through currently in New Zealand which are likely to affect their ability to participate in school-based activities or curriculum related activities, support their children's learning, and general parenting in New Zealand. For example, none of the parents were asked about their work schedule, ability to access private transport, and the availability of computers and suitable learning space in their homes.

The literature on parent - school collaboration has documented the correlation between parent - school collaboration and factors related to the family such as "income, parents' education level, ethnic background, marital status, parents' age and sex, number of children, parents' working status" (Eccles & Harold, 1996, p. 6). Eccles and Harold found that better-educated parents have a greater involvement in children's education, both at home and at school. Also, their work found that parents in employment are engaged more in children's education at home, but less at school (Eccles & Harold, 1996).

The limited emphasis which was placed on ascertaining parents' education levels, language abilities, and their preparedness to collaborate with the school about their children's learning

confirms important facts about these schools. Firstly, because the schools did not seek the information which could have helped them to have a clear understanding of the circumstances in the families, it implies that there are no clear plans and programmes for empowering their most vulnerable families.

Secondly, the fact that these schools did not seek information about the resources in the families and other possible sources of support for vulnerable families, it is likely that the model of parent - school collaboration followed by this school is influenced by the protective model, which does not acknowledge parents' involvement in curriculum activities. It could also be that the staff are not aware of these possible influences on children's education. As parent-school collaboration is a partnership between parents and schools, it is essential that schools have a clear understanding of the circumstances in the families. This allows schools to develop clear plans and programmes for empowering their most vulnerable families.

With regard to the information presented to the families during the enrolment process, the data in this study showed significant differences between the two schools in relation to the amount and quality of information passed to the parents. The data from the parents, teachers, and a review of the documents (enrolment information pack) from the high school, showed that limited information was passed to the families about the school's structure, policies, and the methods of communication used to keep parents informed of their children's performance. No information at all was passed to the parents about the disciplinary system and the methods for assessing children's learning progress, nor about the legal basis for discipline in New Zealand. Also, no information was given to parents about the school's format for conducting parent and teacher interviews and the methods for communicating to parents about their children's progress.

The parents also received no information about how schools are governed, not even the important differences between the functions of the principal and the school Board of Trustees.

Despite being presented with limited information in the enrolment process, most of the parents did not ask for clarification from the staff about the policies, programmes, and methods of communication used by the high school. This may have been due to cultural shock and the fear that families experience in the early stages of their arrival in the new country. Richman (2000) asserted that "a good induction process is a two-way interchange

between the school, and the parents and the child, which includes gathering information about the child, and parents; describing school policies and procedure; and encouraging parents to become involved in the school” (cited in Hamilton & Moore, 2004, p. 90).

Interestingly, none of the parents in this high school met with the principal during the enrolment; instead the parents’ dealings were only with the staff in the enrolment and ESOL departments.

In contrast to the high school, the data about the primary school showed that more information was presented to parents during the enrolment process, and unlike the high school principal, the parents in the primary school were welcomed by the principal into the school when enrolling their children. At the initial meeting with the families, the principal explained to the parents the school policies, methods for keeping parents informed of their children’s performance and the support which parents could obtain from the school. The parents in this school (the primary school) also had the advantage of touring the school and meeting with their children’s teachers as part of the enrolment procedures. The initial meeting between the teachers and the families provided teachers with the opportunity to explain to parents how they can support their children with their homework and provide feedback to teachers. The meeting with teachers also gave parents the opportunity to explain to teachers any concerns they had about their children’s learning and their special needs. Interestingly, the participating mothers in the primary school appeared more confident to engage with the female principal in the primary school than the male principal in the high school. Paradoxically the limited information presented to parents is diametrically opposite to some teachers’ expectations of parents. For example, the feedback from the teachers in the two schools about their expectations of parents suggests their expectations of parents do not match with the limited information passed to parents and their limited English and knowledge of the system of education in New Zealand.

It is likely that the unrealistic expectations held by some teachers is based on their assumption that parents are already informed (through their experience with schools in Somalia) about their roles in their children’s education, and are familiar with the system. It is also likely that teachers’ unrealistic expectations may have been partly shaped by schools failure to conduct an accurate assessment on parents’ linguistic abilities and their general knowledge in the enrolment process. This also demonstrates that the amount and quality of information collected from parents in the enrolment stage is a key to how well schools can

obtain insight into the circumstances in the families and make informed decisions about individual families.

Assessments done on parents' entry profiles are exceptionally helpful for principals to assess how well their schools are prepared and resourced to meet the special needs of the families identified from the initial assessment done in the enrolment process.

Beyond that, the quality of information presented to parents during the enrolment process similarly benefits parents, by allowing them to know more about the school, its programmes, the schools' expectations of parents, and the methods of communication to be used to maintain effective two-way collaboration between parents and the schools. Their increased knowledge of schools' policies also enhances their chances of dealing with schools more efficiently and advocating for their children's needs.

7.2 Section 2: Parents' experience of engaging with schools after enrolment

7.2.1 Experience of school-home communication

The schools initiated most of the contact with parents. The few contacts initiated by the parents were about complaints against children's bullying at school. The primary schools' methods of communicating with parents were through telephone, home visits – which were mostly conducted by bilingual workers (only two schools), parent-teacher interviews, progress reports, positive reinforcement cards, school newsletters and children's learning logs. All written information was sent to the families via their children while sometimes school staff contacted parents if no feedback had been received from them.

The parents also maintained informal communication with primary school classroom teachers through notebook feedback which children brought home for the parents to sign. The notebook was intended to confirm to teachers that children have done their homework at home and also to keep parents informed of the topics children are studying in the class. Phone calls were also widely used by the primary schools' staff to contact parents when the children were not at school. The primary schools also invited parents regularly on a personal basis to attend school-based activities such as cultural performances and international days. These events were publicised to parents through the schools' newsletters while further telephone contacts were made with parents who did not respond. The participants described attending the school-based activities as empowering because they became more familiar

with the school's environment and became acquainted with other parents from their school community.

The participants' feedback indicated more families had attended children's goal-setting meetings with the primary schools than with the high schools. The environment in the primary schools was also described as more welcoming than the high schools. They also believed the primary school teachers and principals were generally easier to approach than those of the high schools.

The participants in the individual interviews and focus group all confirmed that their main sources for receiving information from high schools was through progress reports, NCEA results, parent interviews, telephone calls and letters. Apart from interviews and telephone calls, the rest of the information was delivered to the families by mail. However, there were doubts expressed about the frequency and timing of progress reports being sent to the families. Twelve out of 40 participants believed the high schools usually sent one progress report in the middle of the year and one NCEA result at the end of year, while the rest of the participants were not confident to make any estimate.

When the participants were asked whether they had contacted schools when students' reports and interview notices were not received, all of the participants except for one confirmed they had not contacted schools even when no reports were received for an entire year. This was reinforced by one participant's comment: "I do not ask schools about reports or interview notices if we do not receive them because I just assume everything is going well [for the children], because the schools would have contacted me if there was something not going right for the children" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

The participants' comments strongly suggested that children were their main links with schools. This was reinforced by an explanation provided by one participant, who stated:

We [the families] normally depend on the children for everything to do with the schools, including information about when interviews are to be held or when the reports are sent. But because some children do not want their parents to meet with their teachers, they do not bring interview notices to their parents. Some children even intercept the reports and other correspondences before parents have seen them" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Although children were generally described as being unreliable in passing information to parents, the primary aged children were considered more positive and enthusiastic about passing information to their parents than were high school students. Conversely, although the high school students were reluctant and reserved about passing information to their parents and teachers, girls were thought to be more positive and showed more interest than boys. One female participant, who was also supported by other female participants, stated that: “The reason girls are excelling over boys everywhere is because Allah is punishing the boys and parents for their past discrimination against girls” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Most of the face-to-face contact between parents and the high school were at parent-teacher interviews, or were associated with behavioural issues and academic-related issues, including career-planning pathways. All of the contacts were between parents and teachers, the students’ manager, the associate principal and the principal. The contacts with the principal, and the associate principal were predominantly related to behaviour. The contacts with the students’ manager were related to absence, lateness and for other disciplinary reasons, including fighting and misuse of school internet accounts. Interestingly, some parents believed their dealings with teachers started to decline as their children grew older. For example, phone contacts from teachers and written communication (school newsletters and notices) from schools started to diminish gradually when the children reached intermediate age. Even in the high schools, the participants reported they received more correspondence from the junior high school teachers than the senior high school teachers.

Feedback suggested that bilingual workers played a key role in communication between the schools and families. Most of the phone calls from the families were directed to Somali bilingual workers provided by the schools. The parents contacted the bilingual worker when seeking explanation about children’s progress, especially the children whose parents were concerned about their attendance and academic development. Although most participants were positive about the bilingual worker, two of the students were against the school’s use of the bilingual worker as the link between their parents and the school. The students believed the bilingual worker was often a source of conflict between the students, their teachers, and their parents. These students reported that the bilingual worker usually passes false information to both the parents and the school in order to win their support while getting students into trouble. Two of the students stated that although the bilingual worker

was not always right, both teachers and parents had more confidence in him than them; therefore any accusation he made against the children was considered to be true.

In terms of gender, mothers have more contacts with primary schools than fathers, because they meet the teachers in the morning when they take their children to school and in the afternoon when they pick up their children. Fathers appear to have more contact with secondary schools than with primary schools. One reason may be the schools' tendency to contact fathers first when they have behavioural issues with secondary school-aged children.

7.2.2 The families' perceptions of the effectiveness of communication used in school-home communication

Families' experiences of parent-teacher interviews

The parents presented differing opinions regarding the effectiveness of parent-teacher interviews and other forms of written communication. They were explicitly uneasy with the practice of using children to pass information on parent-teacher interviews to parents. Their view on this was because although schools may send notices to the families, the children do not pass them on to the parents, especially when the children know their teachers will give negative feedback to parents about their performance. One of the respondents said:

My son does not always inform me when parent-teacher interviews dates are because he does not want me to meet with his teachers and when I ask him, he tells me there are no parent-teacher interviews this term because the teachers are busy with marking tests.

There were also six families who received interview notices but did not arrange any appointments with teachers. This was explained in the experience of one participant who stated:

Because I did not understand that I was required to arrange a time with each teacher, I went to the school without any appointment with the teachers. The reason I did that was because no one had explained it to me beforehand and I was of the view that the teachers would call parents according to the children's class register. So, I stood in front of the interview room waiting for my name to be called. But this did not happen, so, after waiting for 2 hours for my name to be called and fasting [during the fasting month of Muslims], I asked my daughter to ask her teacher when we were going to be seen. The teacher asked the daughter if we had arranged a time with her,

and when we responded 'no', she replied with remorse that it was not possible for her to see us because other parents had booked the remaining time with her. Since this experience, I have not attended any more parent-teacher interviews (personal communication, August 20, 2007).

There were also general concerns about how interviews were conducted; this was described as intimidating. It included standing in front of the interview rooms while waiting to see teachers, and conducting the interviews in open spaces in front of other teachers and parents. This was more difficult for families in the high school as each child has several teachers which the parents had to meet. It became even more complicated for families who had several children in high school all at different levels. The whole process was described as more intimidating for female participants, because of their easily distinguishable clothes and limited English. Even with their limited English, some respondents resisted using a bilingual worker. One respondent explained her resistance in the following words:

An interpreter [bilingual worker] is good but sometimes you do not want other people to know about your families' problems. Every parent wants their child to be the best so it's humiliating to speak to somebody else about your children's problem. This also puts shame on your face.

This may have encouraged some parents to rely on their children as translators, despite them also feeling humiliated and patronised by this. Such humiliating experiences are likely to diminish their collaboration with teachers.

Also, several parents who met with teachers for interviews did not ask any questions about their children's performance which may be because of their limited English, for cultural reasons (respect for teachers), shyness and limited understanding of the parent-teacher interview process.

More than half (28) of participants felt an interview's effectiveness was dependent on the parents' level of English and level of understanding of the school system. Some (15) believed Somali parents, including those who were educated, were putting less emphasis on attending parent/teacher interviews, and they linked this with the limited understanding among Somali parents of its benefits to children's learning.

Despite the ineffectiveness of interviews being linked to parents' English levels and understanding of the system, some participants, including those with limited English, were

also resistant to using their children as interpreters in the parent-teacher interviews. They felt that using children as interpreters did not work, especially if the interview was with the same children's teachers. One participant in the group explained her experience when she used her children as interpreters:

Because I did not know my children's teachers either physically or by their names, I had to take the children in order to show me their teachers. They were not happy with my meeting with their teachers, and when they could not stop me, they kept reminding me to remain silent during the meeting. They told me several times on the way to the school 'mum, please do not speak to the teachers because you will be ashamed because of your poor English language'. They were constantly hitting their feet against my feet throughout the meeting with teachers to indicate to me that I should stop talking. The teachers put a lot of praise on the children, maybe because the children were present, and they never wanted to hurt their feelings. Sometimes, one of the teachers asked my son 'Is that not right Mohamed?' I think the teachers would have painted a different picture if the children were not present and the schools had provided a bilingual worker (Focus group participant, 13/03/08).

The use of older siblings in universities in interviews was considered more effective than using the children themselves. Although the participants were not in favour of parents using children as interpreters, there were also others who were even cynical of using other interpreters outside their families. This was because they believed it brought shame on their families if others got to know about their children's issues, especially if the feedback from teachers was likely to be negative. Also some (two) said they avoided seeking assistance from the bilingual workers in school because they believed the bilingual workers were not maintaining families' privacy. One of the participants explained her feelings as follows:

One time I was approached by Mohamed [a Somali bilingual worker] while I was in the class and several other Somali women were with me. While he was still on the doorstep, he started to yell 'Halima the teachers are becoming fed up with your sons. Ali was stood down several times before and he fought with another student again today. Why are you not doing something about your children's behaviour instead of gossiping in other women's homes?' I was belittled by his comments and was lost for any word to respond to him. At last, I reluctantly told him that I will do something; however, I could not stop crying when I got home. Sometimes I asked

myself, would this man really have done this to you if your children's dad was alive. Since this experience, I decided not to seek any help from any interpreter (Focus group participant, personal communication, March 12, 2008).

It was obvious from the respondents' comments that written communication was the least desired method of receiving information from schools. Their resentment to written communication was due to most written communication (school newsletters, all notices, student progress reports and attendance records) being passed to the families through the children who, in most cases, do not pass them on to the parents. The parents also do not check children's school bags for any information sent from school. This was confirmed by a comment from a female participant in the individual interview who stated "I do not always check my children's school bags unless I am told by the school that there is important information for me".

Participants' views of the effectiveness of the various methods of school-home communication are summarised in Table 7.2

Table 7.2 Individual participants' views about the effectiveness of methods

Method	Participants' opinions (out of 15)			
	Working very well	Working well	Sometimes working	Not working at all
School newsletter		3	5	7
School notices		2	3	10
Student report	1	2	4	8
Telephone	4	6	2	3
Parent-teacher interviews		3	3	9
School attendance report	2	8	2	3

Apart from the problem with delivery, the participants also expressed other concerns which they experienced with written communication. These are discussed below.

School newsletters: Several participants (seven) felt that the school newsletter was not an appropriate method for passing on information about children's performance to parents.

They said that most parents lacked both English and the knowledge of the education system which are vital for understanding important topics in the newsletters. Also, while the newsletters are in English and the topics are unfamiliar, there are no on-going translations to assist families, especially those with limited English, to understand the key messages / information in the newsletters.

On the other hand, there were three participants who believed the newsletter was helping them to understand the learning areas the school was focusing on. Parents said they became aware of these after they saw the names and photos of children congratulated in the school newsletters. The parents said after seeing other children's photos, they were encouraged to put more effort into their children's learning. One of the participants said:

Sometimes the newsletter has photos of children in the school that did well in some learning areas, and when I see the photos of these children I ask my daughter when she is going to get her photo published in the newsletter. I also promised to give a good reward if her name or photo was put in the newsletter.

School notices: The school newsletters and notices are sent via the children's bags, hoping the children will pass them on to their parents. However, the parents' responses suggest that this is mostly not the case, especially when there were no follow-up contacts from the school staff. The parents stated that the only notices that children are likely to show to parents are those concerning camping and field trips, because the children are keen to get money so they are not left behind in the school when the rest of their class goes on field trips.

The pressure which the children put on their parents is also reported to have detrimental effects resulting in children withholding information they were supposed to pass on. One of the female respondents explained this as follows:

They [parents] sometimes get papers two times a week asking for money for different things while the government is telling people schools are free. Although they [schools] may not think the amount is that much, but for a single mother with several children in different levels, \$5 to \$10 every week is a lot of money. Sometimes I tell the children not bring me any more letters about money because it makes me mad. However, I also realised the children feel ashamed of going to

school without the money, so I find them hanging around the house and they do not want to go to school until I give them the money.

Some parents' reaction to the school notices which the children bring home may be the reason why children are not passing on notices from school.

Student progress reports: Slightly more than half of the participants (eight out of 15) in the individual interview believed student progress reports were not working well for most parents. However, there were four who thought the reports could work well for parents if translation and additional verbal explanations were provided by teachers. There were two among these four participants who preferred teachers' explanations with help from an interpreter because they saw translated information was sometimes inaccurate and thus misleading to families.

Another participant's concerns with the progress report were, although the achievement level of students was shown, there were no recommendations given to parents about what they could do to address the areas of teachers' concern described in the children's reports. One of the respondents explained his views as follows:

It is a good thing to get feedback from teachers, but it [the report] does not help parents much if there are no suggestions about what they [parents] could do to help the children in the areas which the report noted they are weak at" The respondent added "take the example of seeing a doctor and saying you are not well but prescribing no medicine for treating the pain. This is similar to the information we are getting from the student progress reports.

Another respondent stated:

The reports usually start with a lot of praise for the child and then say small comments about their weaknesses. The respondent said this people (New Zealanders) are polite people and they avoid upsetting anyone, which may be the reason the teachers do not talk a lot about children's weaknesses.

Some respondents also believed the students' reports were too complicated for parents to understand. One parent, a former teacher in Somalia, felt the reports could benefit only those parents who had knowledge of the curriculum, because they could understand how their children are performing in comparison to their age groups.

7.2.3 Parents' experience of helping their children's education outside school

The participants in both individual and focus group interviews reported a variety of other ways in which they were engaging in their children's education, which are described in this section.

Helping children to do their homework: All of the participants in the individual interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that they were encouraging their children to do their homework. Several of the participants reported taking their children to the homework centre at the high school because they could not help their children with homework or had no computers at home. Another reason for taking children to the homework centre was the lack of quiet space in the homes where children could study and do their homework. A number of the participants stated that their children were using their bedrooms (sitting on the beds) for studying.

Nine participants in the individual interviews reported that they were supervising the children while they were working on their homework or reading the Koran at home. This included turning off the TV and encouraging children to concentrate more on their work. Three participants reported that sometimes children mislead their parents, informing them that they have no homework when in fact they have. One of the parents became aware that her son had homework after she was contacted by the teacher.

Parents also reported taking their children to the Madarasa (Islamic education class) at the mosque every weekend. The weekend Madarasa sessions cost the families \$5 per child per week. The parents also purchased school resources, computers and internet connections to assist students with their research. Further, the parents reported providing mentoring and guidance to their children. For example, all of the mothers reported mentoring their daughters on household management and maintaining the Somali cultural norm and Islamic values to prepare them for motherhood roles.

7.2.4 Students' perspectives (School B)

Students' perspectives on the importance of contact between teachers and parents to their education

The students presented differing views about how important they felt the contact between their parents and teachers was to their education. Four out of the 15 students believed that contact was not so important to their education. Two students considered contact between

parents and teachers was only important to students who were not doing well in their education. One of the students asserted, "Learning is between teachers and students, so it is not important to involve parents, especially when students are in senior high school" (Student interview, personal communication, April 2, 2008). Another student stated, "I do not see why the teachers need to meet with my parents because I can be responsible for my learning" (Student interview, personal communication; original in English, March 10, 2008). Another student (one) felt contact between parents and teachers was not of benefit to every student. This student stated "it is not important to every student and is only helpful to students who are not motivated" (Student interview, April 15, 2008).

When the students were asked whether or not they were bothered by contact between their parents and teachers, four out of the 15 students said they were unhappy if their teachers did not give positive feedback to parents about how they were performing. Another student was convinced that contacts between parents and teachers sometimes created problems between parents and their children, which led to children becoming opposed to parents' communicating with their teachers. This student said, "Sometimes meetings between parents and teachers only create problems for students. Sometimes parents just punish their child because the teachers have said the student is not performing well and this puts you off inviting your parents to these meetings." (Student in interview, personal communication, original response in English, June 11, 2008).

Three other students' responses included "Do not really mind," "Yeah", "No and kind of" (Students in individual interview, personal communication, August 12, 2008). Another student also stated, "I am not comfortable with my mum coming to the school, because I feel a bit ashamed, as others may think she is checking on me" (Student in individual interview, personal communication, July 23, 2008).

Three stated they were not bothered by contacts between their parents and teachers, considering it very important to their education. One student stated that keeping parents informed of how their children are performing at school built their confidence and interest in supporting their children. Another student described parents' contact with teachers as an opportunity to get rewards from parents; "I do not really mind because I usually get something from mum if the teachers say positive things about me" (Student in individual interview, personal communication, June 13, 2008). Another one only responded, "Yeah" (Student in individual interview, personal communication June 23, 2008).

Students' perspectives on how teachers and the principal communicate with their parents

The responses gathered from the interviews with students in the study supported the findings of surveying the parents in both individual interviews and the focus group. The entire 15 students in the study have all confirmed that their classroom teachers and principal mainly rely on telephone, email and letters to communicate with parents. Three students also said that their class deans and the principal invited parents, when necessary, through a Somali bilingual worker based in the school.

Support the students have received from their parents, teachers and the Somali community

Most of the students stated that they were supported by their parents in a variety of ways. This included parents who could not provide academic support because of their limited language and education in general. The support parents provided was in the form of advice and in inspiring their children to succeed in their learning. A senior student in School B said, "My parents always give me the best advice and always remind me of good discipline" (a student in individual interviews, direct communication, original in both Somali and English, 07/06/08). Another student explained the support she was provided by her parents as follows: "My parents always tell me to put my education first, because I have to be able to enjoy the success afterwards. What drives me every day is the fear of disappointing my parents" (student in individual interview, direct communication, 19/05/08).

When the students were asked about how their parents could support them better in their education, one responded as follows:

Parents could advise, encourage and motivate their children and express to them how proud they are of them. They can also be involved and become aware of everything about their children, especially their schoolwork, homework, their teachers, and the subjects they like or dislike etc., because this gives the parents an indication of their child's progress (direct communication, May 2008).

Another student said:

Parents should also take their children to the library and provide home tutors if they can afford [it], and talk to their school teachers to keep up with their kids' progress. The kids are never too young to know the importance of education so they should

teach them from a young age that only education guarantees success in life (direct communication, June 2008).

The participating students also felt it was critical for parents to establish a good relationship with their children. One participating student suggested:

Parents should be involved in their kid's lives as much as possible and establish a good relationship with their children's teachers and schools. Parents should do family activities with their children in order to build effective relationships with their children and pass on their values to the children. Building relationships with children is important because kids here think more like kiwis than Somalis so they might find it hard to understand why they cannot do everything their non-Somali friends do. Therefore, it is up to the parents to make their kids understand their religion and culture and at the same time be flexible as we are not in Somalia. Also, when teenagers make mistakes, do not judge and hold their mistakes against them, but encourage them and show them how they can come back from whatever they did (student interview, direct communication, 9/5/08).

Another student said: "It is important that parents know how to encourage their children, however, this will not be enough if the rest of the community is not doing the same (direct communication, June 2008).

One student felt parents were holding unrealistic expectations about their children. The student stated,

I am okay with my parents exerting pressure on me to succeed; however, parents also need to understand that we [children] cannot become mature before going through the teenage lifecycle. In my own experience, sometimes, my father says to me 'I was a responsible person when I was your age. I used to look after our entire camels.' But what he does not realise is that, I am still a teenager and he is expecting me to think and act like him (direct communication, July 2008).

Students' role in the communication between parents and the school

The overwhelming majority of the parents (30) reported that students played a critical role in all communication between parents and schools. This view was also supported by students. Eight of the 15 students reported their roles were to pass correspondences and

messages to their parents. Six also reported helping their parents with translation of school notices and progress reports, in addition to facilitating the general communication with the school. One of the students stated, “I normally read to mum any letter sent from the school and I also help her if she wants to talk to someone in the school” (student in individual interview, direct communication; original response was in English, 09/04/08). Another student stated, “I am between the school and my mum, and I help each of them if there is important information that needs to be passed to the other” (student interview, direct communication, 14/03/08).

Apart from assisting parents, sometimes students attended parent-teacher interviews in order to defend themselves in case their teachers made negative comments about their performance. One of the students stated, “I just sit listening to what is being said, defending myself where possible” (student individual interview, direct communication; original response was in English 25/04/08). Another student also said, “Yeah, listen well to the teachers in case they mention something that can get me into trouble (student in individual interview, direct communication, 29/03/08).

7.2.5 Schools’ Perspectives (Principals and Teachers)

Teachers’ beliefs about communication and collaboration between schools (A and B) and Somali parents

On the whole, there were no significant differences among the beliefs of teachers in both schools. Almost all the teachers who responded and the two principals, showed strong willingness to engage with parents. All 15 teachers believed that communication and collaboration with parents were critical to children’s educational achievement and social development. A teacher from the primary school (A) asserted that communication and collaboration between parents and teachers “provides psychological support to students in addition to educational achievement” (primary school teacher interview, direct communication, original response in English 21/2/08). Another teacher from the high school (B) also stated that “positive partnerships between home and school will enable students to achieve much better than if there is a poor relationship” (high school teacher interview, direct communication, original response in English 11/3/08). A similar view was also expressed by another teacher from the primary school (A): “parents and families need to be fully engaged in their children’s education because the involvement, interest and values that are placed or ingrained in the child have a huge impact on the child’s achievement”

(primary teacher interview, direct communication, original interviews was in English, 25/7/07).

Review of the schools' policy documents further suggested that the schools had strong beliefs in enhancing communication and collaboration with parents. School A's document showed that the school was aiming to provide families with opportunities to reinforce their learning in a home setting (School A document, cited on 12/12/09). School B's "Engagement Plan" also showed the school believed in "empowering families ... to make a difference to their children's learning" (School B Annual report, 2006, p. 7).

School staff perspectives on the policies and systems in schools for communication/ collaboration with parents

The two principals' feedback indicated that both schools had parent-school engagement strategies within the curriculum (reporting to parents). However, only School B was able to provide its strategy in writing. A description of the objectives of the strategies in both schools follows.

Primary school (A) policy objectives: School A underwent a change of principals during the research period, and while the former principal had confirmed that the school had a written strategy, the current principal could not provide the policy in writing. However, the principal explained the objective of the strategy was to empower families to make a difference to their children's learning. The strategy was first developed in 2005, but no input was sought from parents because it was assumed parents' perspectives could be incorporated via the BOT. Although the school could not provide its strategy in writing, a review of its documents revealed the school was committed to enhancing communication with parents. Articles in different issues of the school's newsletter showed that the school was placing strong emphasis on motivating families to engage in their children's learning and link classroom activities with activities at home.

The principal's responses further confirmed that no training was given to parents and the school staff about the implementation of the policy. Also, the content of the strategy was not covered in staff induction and had not been distributed to parents and staff since the strategy was developed. Moreover, the principal indicated that no formal evaluation had been done since the strategy was developed, except an anecdotal survey conducted on parents' attendance at school events and parent-teacher interviews to assess the efficiency of the

policy. However, despite the fact that no formal evaluation being done, the principal was confident that the strategy was working well.

High school (B) policy objectives: In contrast to School A, School B had a written strategy showing the activities that the school was planning to accomplish to promote parent–school collaboration. When the principal was asked whether parents were involved in the preparation of the policy, the response was “only through the BOT” (principal interview, direct communication, 29/3/07). The principal’s comment further suggested that the refugee parents had no input in the development of the strategy as there were no parents from refugee backgrounds on the school’s BOT.

The objective of the school strategy was to “empower families to make a difference to themselves and their children’s lives” (School B Annual report, 2006, p. 2). The strategy showed six types of successful families, which also underpinned its principles. The types of families outlined in the strategy were as follows:

- Families who were aware and informed of their children’s learning opportunities and pathways;
- Families who were able to provide home environments that promote learning;
- Families who were kept informed of their children’s learning at school;
- Families who were equipped with the skills to advocate for their children; and
- Families who were able to celebrate their children’s achievements at school (School B annual report, 2006).

A director was made responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.

It was also evident from the principal’s response that the strategy was not distributed to staff and nor was it covered in inductions for new staff. Similarly, the strategy was not distributed to the families, except an explanation in a condensed, user-friendly version, which was included in the information booklet. The booklet, which was entirely in English, was included only in the enrolment pack of junior students. The principal, however, suggested that teachers talked to parents on enrolment and throughout the year about how they could be involved with their children’s education.

Similarly to the other school (A), no formal evaluation was done to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. However, a survey was conducted with parents to gauge their feelings about

the school as a whole. It was reported that there was no response to this survey from the refugee communities (including the Somali families). The principal believed that the lack of response from these families was a direct result of refugee parents' limited English proficiency.

The methods used by schools for school-home communication.

All the participating teachers and principals described the methods used for school-home communication as follows: home visits by bilingual workers, telephone conversation, sending letters via children and by mail, parent-teacher interviews, and email (which only one teacher was using).

Ten participating teachers (seven from School A and three from School B) and the two principals, all believed that the bilingual support worker (liaison worker) was the most efficient means for communicating with parents. Both schools were relying heavily on the Somali bilingual workers, especially when serious issues developed and the schools were in need of urgent parental attention.

The teachers and the principal in School A confirmed their general school-home communication was enhanced by the Somali bilingual worker. The school reported the bilingual worker was helping the school with translating and explaining the weekly school newsletter, teacher interviews, and information about camps, trips and school activities to parents who could not understand English or could not read the Somali language. The principal stated that the bilingual worker was also the focal point for the families in the school, and was assisting families to connect with other families and teachers through a cultural club set up by the school. She described the cultural club as a forum where parents could discuss school-wide issues with the principal on an informal basis. The principal was confident that the bilingual worker was contributing to other positive outcomes: student achievement, children's and parents' increased pride in the Somali language and culture, greater involvement of parents within the school and more positive relationships formed among Somali parents and other parents in the school. The principal reported that the bilingual worker was helpful to parents who wanted to respond to teachers who had contacted them. She also said the bilingual worker helped parents who wanted to know more about their children's attendance and performance in the class.

The School B principal stated that the methods used for home-school communication included telephone (by bilingual worker), school notices, attendance report, progress reports and school newsletters. All correspondence was sent to the families in English. The principal also confirmed that the bilingual worker attended all interviews with the Somali parents and facilitated most discussion between class teachers and parents. The principal described the discussions as valuable for both sides. However, this situation was not observed in parent-teacher interviews during 2006, 2007 and 2008 of the study. In fact, the bilingual worker was not present at any of the interviews conducted in the above three years of this study. On the other hand, review of the bilingual worker's job descriptions showed the bilingual workers in both schools were responsible for assisting schools to provide social and emotional support to students and cultural information to the school staff. In addition, they were expected to facilitate school-home and home-school communication.

Some teachers in the high school appeared to be unsure of the role of the bilingual worker. One of these teachers stated that some teachers were not aware of the existence of the bilingual worker because his role had not been publicised widely to the school staff when he was recruited. This teacher thought it was possible that some teachers knew of the bilingual worker but were assuming the support was only for students and teachers in the ESOL Department. This teacher was unsure whether he could access the bilingual worker during parent-teacher interviews because they were conducted outside normal school hours.

7.2.6 School administrators and teachers' impressions of Somali parents' communication and collaboration with schools

The school administrators and teachers' impressions of parents' involvement in children's learning was analysed and categorised along five key themes. These included: involvement in home-school communication, involvement in home-based activities, involvement in school-based activities, involvement in school decision-making, and the support that schools are providing to parents to develop their capacity to help their children.

Involvement in home-school communication

Twelve teachers confirmed that they had less communication and collaboration with Somali parents than other parents. This situation appeared to be the result of parental lack of confidence due to poor English and a limited understanding of the New Zealand education system.

Only five out of the 15 teachers stated that their communication with Somali parents was similar to that of other parents. However, they said the bilingual worker was their main link with families, especially those who could not respond to written and verbal communication. One of the teachers in the primary school described the level of communication with families as follows; “it [communication] is fantastic but only because of the bilingual worker” (teacher interview, direct communication, original response in English 9/6/08). This teacher’s comment was reinforced by another teacher in School A who also said;

We are fortunate to have a Somali liaison person who can access the parents anytime we have concerns. Our liaison worker also translates in interviews, etc.,[so our] contact is equal to that of the non-Somali community (teacher interviews, direct communication, 15/10/08).

Other teachers’ responses also indicated that there was limited direct parent-teacher communication because most of the contacts were carried out through the bilingual workers.

The critical role the bilingual worker played was highlighted by another teacher from the primary school who also asserted that;

We are lucky enough to have a bilingual liaison person to improve the gap between home and school. Our bilingual person is able to speak to parents on the school’s behalf, whether it be [sic] academic or social issues; she interprets at interviews.

However, there were instances where some parents contacted the high school teachers and Deans with the help of their children and friends. Two teachers reported that they sometimes received emails and a note book from a family requesting them to sign the notebook daily to inform the family how their child was performing in class. The family decided to use the notebook reporting system because of their son’s frequent absence and poor concentration in class. (primary teacher interview, direct communication, 21/9/09).

Staff impressions of Somali parents’ involvement in school-based activities

The principals and teachers in the two participating schools expressed differing opinions about the level of Somali parents’ involvements in school activities. Generally, the primary school teachers and principal reported more parental involvement in school-based activities compared with the high school. The primary school staff found Somali parents interested

and confident and therefore likely to engage in school-based activities. This was not the case in the high school.

More views expressed by participants in both schools about the Somali parents' involvement in school activities are explained in the following sections.

School A (primary school): The principal of the primary school believed that Somali parents were involved in most of the school activities in recent years. She linked the improved parental involvement to the presence of the bilingual worker in the school. She said that the bilingual worker's support helped to improve parents' beliefs and understanding about the significance of attending school activities. In this school, parental involvement had significantly improved over the last few years because the school managed to remove a language barrier which was preventing both the parents and the school from having effective collaboration. On the whole, the improved home-school communication was reported to have resulted in improved parental knowledge and understanding of the school system. Therefore, more parents attended school events such as interviews, swimming sports, cross country, athletics sports, and numeracy and literacy sessions at the school.

A similar opinion was expressed by another teacher in the same school who said;

The Somali families also came to our school assemblies on a regular basis. This increases the visibility of these families as part of our school community. As these families have become more comfortable in the school environment, they have been more involved in school trips. We recently held a whole school picnic at Spencer Park where many parents came. It was a very successful day, and because the Somali women realised what a great free facility this is, [Halima] is organising a picnic there over the school holidays" (ESOL teacher, December 2009).

This teacher believed that the visibility of the Somali parents in the school was highlighted by parents regularly attending school assemblies, sports days, professional development days, school trips, and volunteering as parent helpers. This teacher's opinion suggested that the improved involvement of the parents resulted from an improved three-way (parent-teacher-bilingual worker) communication in the school, which helped parents seek clarification on issues or express concerns to the school.

Another teacher in the same school also confirmed that the bilingual worker was having a direct influence on increased parent involvement. The teacher stated; "more Somali parents

seem to be taking a greater interest in their children's learning, and Halima [the bilingual worker] has been instrumental in setting an example in this regard, and supporting the parents at school" (primary teacher interview direct communication, 29/3/07).

Apart from the language gap, many teachers noted that financial difficulty in most families was a barrier preventing Somali parents from supporting their children. One of the teachers stated; "it is hard to get academic support from families who lack finance or extra money to buy a good school bag, books and petrol when income for a family is limited" (direct quotation, teacher in school 21/2.07)

School B (high school): The School B principal stated that all the Somali parents were showing interest in their children's educational success. However, the majority of them came to New Zealand with no formal schooling, and this lack of education was a factor preventing parents from becoming involved in school-based activities. In addition, the principal was convinced that some parents and other family members were likely to have experienced a number of traumatic experiences during the Somali war. He believed that these factors were likely to pose negative impacts on families' motivation and confidence to come to school. The principal thought that parents who went through such traumatic experiences required additional support to recover and prepare them for the task of supporting their children. Parental lack of confidence to connect with schools came up several times throughout the discussion with teachers and principals. A teacher in the high school explained her perception about parental lack of confidences as follows: "most Somali parents are illiterate in English and may struggle to understand information or help their children with homework and because of their lack of English they have no confidence to come and ask for help at school" (teacher interview, direct communication, 11/8/08).

Another teacher in the same school expressed the view that refugee parents are likely to feel too intimidated to approach teachers even if their English level was reasonable, because they may feel different and powerless. The feeling of powerlessness was likely to become more complicated for parents with limited English. A combination of teacher's beliefs, parents' limited English proficiency and lack of understanding of the system, appeared to have a bearing on teacher expectations of Somali parents. For example, only two teachers were expecting parents to support their children's learning. One teacher who taught Somali children for several years, said; "parents probably need to try hard to encourage their children to do well and to encourage them to follow the school rules and system although

they have not been formally educated” (teacher interview, direct communication, original communication in English).

None of the teachers in the high school was able to report on significant school-based activity where parents were involved. However the principal said several mothers brought their children to the homework programme in the high school. He also stated that other parents attended the annual international day celebration, HSP training and BOT training for refugee parents. The international day celebration was attended by several families and students from across the school. The Somali parents and their children who took part in this celebration displayed Somali traditional costumes and Somali food.

Staff impressions of parents’ involvement in school decision-making

The principals in both schools reported that no Somali parents were involved in the decision-making process of their two schools. This includes both joining BOTs and taking part in planning meetings.

Although there were no parents on the schools’ BOT, the high school principal said three parents received training on BOT functions in 2007. However, no one from those trained was later co-opted onto any school BOT. He stated parents would have a higher chance of getting co-opted if they had some of the skills needed by the school, such as accounting and legal skills. However, in this school, there were three other Somali mothers who were on a parents’ committee which was formed to provide input on the operation of the school’s homework centre. This committee was originally planned to meet with the school administrators once every term to give feedback on the effectiveness of the homework centre. The committee was formed in 2005 but has not been active since 2007. However, a senior official in the school indicated recently that the school was intending to reinstate the committee.

The principal of School A also reported that no Somali parents were on the school BOT and that no parents from the Somali community attended school planning meetings. Neither principal could confirm whether or not the parents in their schools took part in the BOT election.

Staff impressions of the school support available for parents

Despite the issues identified in the previous section, the teachers and the principals in the two schools confirmed certain initiatives have been taken in their two schools to improve

parental knowledge and English. However, their responses showed significant differences in the level of support available in each school.

Support for parents in School A: Most of the support provided to the families in School A was in the form of group discussions with the principal and information sharing sessions with the bilingual worker. The principal reported that such discussions were part of school's goal of increasing the understanding of parents about pastoral care issues, relationships, children's learning needs and barriers to children's learning. Many discussions were facilitated by the bilingual worker.

Other forms of support were also provided to the families when the bilingual worker visited them at home. These included assisting families understand how they could support their children with reading books at home and give feedback to teachers about whether children were getting their homework done at home. During these visits, parents were shown the areas of learning that the school wanted children to focus on more at home and how they could assist children to work towards their individual learning goals or Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.).

Support provided to Somali parents in the high school (B): The review of School B's annual report showed that this school had plans to continue several initiatives for the refugee families. These initiatives involved raising parent awareness about children's learning and career pathways. This programme would aim to include parents in the decision about their children's career. The school had already established a Home-School Partnership (HSP) programme in 2007 to help parents gain greater understanding about how to support their children's education. The Home-School Partnership training was attended by a total of six Somali parents, including one parent who was trained as a lead parent. The review of the HSP training manual showed that this training was designed to increase parental understanding of the system and how parents can assist their children at home. All parents involved completed six sessions covering topics on how they could support their children at home and at school. Examples of the topics covered were: you are your child's best teacher, you have the skills and knowledge to help your child learn and grow and it is important to use your first language at home (HSP training manual). The programme was a one-off, because the Ministry of Education did not give the school funding to repeat the programme.

Another programme running in School B was a family literacy programme for refugee families. This programme was built on the concept of educating the entire family (adults and

primary- and secondary-age children). It focused more on equipping parents with knowledge about the New Zealand education system and how to develop realistic expectations of their children. The principal stated that an integral part of the programme was to develop parent confidence to attend parent-teacher interviews and equip them with the skills to support their children's learning. The adult programme runs twice weekly and covers sessions on English, sewing, and cooking.

7.2.7 Discussion on the effectiveness of the policies and systems in schools for parent - school collaboration from the perspectives of families and school staff

This study showed that most of the methods of communication used by the two schools in this study were not appropriate for the Somali families involved. They take no account of the experiences the families went through in their home country and in New Zealand.

Because the methods were not based on the families' actual needs, they did not work well either for parents or the schools. The findings from the individual, focus group participants and teachers' feedback suggest that this criticism applies to written communications in the form of school newsletters, notices and reports about students' performance. All of this communication was written in complex English and was sent to parents via their children, who often failed to pass them on to parents.

The data also showed that information sent by mail does not always get to the parents, because families change their address frequently without informing schools. Sometimes children also intercept the mail to avoid it getting into the hands of parents.

Information presented through websites also appears not to be working well for families who tend to have no computers or lack the necessary skills for searching information on the internet. The parents' responses also highlighted that limited support was offered to them, especially from the high schools, to clarify written communication. The parents and the teachers in the high school confirmed that no mechanisms were in place in the high school to ascertain whether parents had even received correspondence let alone understood the messages presented to them. It is also clear that telephone contacts and attendance reports were preferred over other methods which were being used. The attendance report was felt to be effective, because it was in a simple format and most families found it easy to understand.

The data also reveal that parent-teacher interviews, which are an important method for keeping parents informed of their children's performance, are ineffective because the ways

they are timetabled, presented to parents and implemented are too complicated and confusing for them. There were concerns expressed about schools not adhering to the interview schedule, which results in the process taking longer than parents had planned for; this puts off many parents, especially those working and those who have other children at home. Similar concerns were expressed by parents about the difficulty of meeting several teachers who are not necessarily in the same meeting room in a very tight schedule. Another factor about which the participants expressed concerns was the environment in the high school, which they felt was intimidating and confusing for parents of minority cultures. The parents stated they were too shy to queue in front of interviews and talk to their children's teachers in the presence of other parents in the same room who are also waiting to see teachers. This suggests the processes under which parent and teacher interviews are conducted lack sufficient privacy.

The data on families' experiences of communicating and collaborating with schools shows significant differences between the primary and the high school. Largely, the parents in this study indicated that they had more collaboration with the primary school than they had with the high school. Important differences between the high school and the primary school which the parents deemed was contributing to the differences in these two schools' collaboration with parents include accessibility of the principal in the primary school and the frequent home visits by the bilingual worker in this school.

The primary school maintains communications with families about their children's performances through the children's learning logbooks, positive reinforcement cards, school newsletters, school notices and parent-teacher interviews. The staff in this school and the parents reported employing the bilingual worker to clarify written correspondence, including children's reports. On the other hand, although bilingual worker support was the preferred option for this school and parents to maintain communication, there were concerns expressed about the ethical conduct of some of the bilingual workers. Inability to maintain family privacy remains the key reason why some families were reluctant to use bilingual workers. This suggests the need to train bilingual workers to the same standards and ethics as professional interpreters. The principal in this school conducts face-to-face meetings with parents from time to time with the help of a bilingual worker. In other, exceptional circumstances, the bilingual worker also visited the families. These visits were mostly carried out when no response was received from parents about requests for consent to

school trips and when important general information was passed to parents and not responded to.

Furthermore, feedback from the staff in the high school showed no policies and procedures in place in this school to identify families who are not engaging well (e.g., those not attending parent-teacher interviews) and to confirm whether school reports and other important correspondence are reaching homes. Unlike the primary school, the high school conducts no follow-up to ascertain whether parents have problems with understanding the messages presented to them. Such follow-ups are exceptionally important for schools to update family contacts, since refugee families are transient and change their addresses frequently. For example, a family in the study reported changing their children's schools three times within a period of six months due to changes of addresses. On the other hand, the parents did not establish any contact with the schools to follow up when reports were not received. It is likely that parents assumed schools had nothing negative to report in those instances.

The high school engages with parents via students' reports, NCEA results (for years 11 to 13), and parent-teacher interviews to inform parents about children's academic achievements. General correspondence is used to inform parents about disciplinary decisions, such as stand-downs, suspension, exclusion and attendance reports. Telephone contact is also used occasionally when serious behavioural problems develop, requiring the attention of parents. Parents in the high school also obtained results for NCEA external assessment from the NZQA website (through their children) and by mail. Unfortunately, many parents reported they did not read their children's reports and instead relied on the information provided by their children. In contrast with the primary school, the parents in the high school reported limited contact with the principal, except when invited explicitly to meet to discuss problems relating to their children's misconduct. These findings suggest that this high school is not making special provisions for the families from a refugee background and is not taking into account the situation of refugee families' vulnerability based on their limited English, lack of knowledge of the education system in New Zealand and their cultural differences.

The findings also indicate that children are key players in the two-way communication between parents and schools. However, the parents were convinced that a child's role in the communication between parents and school became less with the children's age

development, because children become resistant to their parents meeting with their teachers after reaching their teens.

The work of Blendinger & Snipes (1993, pp. 6–7) in the USA asserted that effective communication with families entails “communicating with parents about their children’s learning, the school’s programme, and the importance of the curriculum of the home”. Their work also suggested specific activities to be carried out, including; regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences in the fall and the spring; teacher/principal letters and notes regularly sent home; good news calls from the school informing parents that their child was recognised for something well done; student recognition messages such as “happy- grams”. Positive-message postcards, and special occasion cards, home visits by teachers and/or community liaison aids; and parent handbooks with general information such as school standards, course of study, grading practices were also recommended

7.2.8 Section 3: Barriers to effective parent-school communication and collaboration

The literature shows that the vital role of parents in the education of children is well acknowledged, at least at the political level in New Zealand, and has been for the past several decades. Research evidence also indicates that there are correlations between effective communication and collaboration between parents and schools and the greater positive impact on children’s learning outcome (MOE, 2005).

There were several factors identified in the previous section as hindrances to the parents’ relationships with the schools, which were categorised as follows: school-related barriers, national educational policy barriers, parent-related barriers, and student-related barriers. They are discussed in greater depth in this section.

School-related factors

The barriers experienced in this category include: difficulty engaging with high school teachers, difficulty at parent-teacher interviews, difficulty understanding the sophisticated management structures in the high schools and teachers’ low expectation of refugee parents, difficulty with the intimidating environment in the high schools, ambiguous information presented to parents regarding progress and NCEA results, the low cultural awareness of school staff, teacher workload, lack of acknowledgement of refugees’ special needs in school policies, and the fact that communication and collaboration between parents and schools is not tailored to refugee families.

The difficulty of engaging with teachers

The majority of the parents in the focus group believed parents were experiencing a great deal of difficulty engaging with high school teachers and principals. Face-to-face meetings were found to be challenging, even when the participants visited the schools. In addition, getting teachers on the phone was an equally major challenge. However, one participant who was a bilingual worker believed the reason for these problems was because frequently parents visit the schools during school hours when the teachers are teaching. He also believed most often parents do not check with school staff to find out when teachers may have free time to meet them. Although telephone contact was difficult, some participants felt it was easier to get a response from teachers if a message was left on their phones or with the main school reception. Furthermore, the participants said that the high school principals were difficult to reach and parents were able to meet them only when the principals had invited them. Such invitations were usually received only when the principals wanted to inform parents about the disciplinary actions the school was about to take for a child's misbehaviour.

Teachers had similar views. One teacher from the high school believed the policies and the methods of communication in high schools in general were not responding well to the information needs of either schools or families, and in particular families from non-English speaking backgrounds. The teacher argued that information presented to parents at present is too complex for most parents to understand. The teacher felt it was not realistic to expect parents to respond or act on information which they do not understand.

Another teacher from the same school expressed strong feelings about the existing communication and collaboration problems as follows:

They do not work well for either party (or for the children). Communication on educational progress is VERY ineffective. This is the same for almost all minority groups. The old cliché about rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic applies to most of the parent reporting systems reviews that I have experienced. Teachers are periodically made aware of the problems, become concerned, but then fail to restructure their systems in any lasting and meaningful way. Most teachers interpret their failure to improve things as being because parents are unwilling to “meet them half way in an educational partnership” or even because they are disinterested (teacher interview, direct communication, original response in English 23/9/08).

The teacher was supported by another teacher in the high school who also argued that BOTs in most schools are not treating parent–school collaboration as a priority. This teacher was of the view that the thrust of high school communication with parents was only on complying with the Education Act requirement and achieving positive reports from ERO. The teacher maintained that low quality and limited information presented to parents was a cause of passive participation from parents. The teacher said,

BOTs are fully occupied with compliance matters as ERO finds ways to validate its existence. The usual consequence is that the social aspects of uniform, correct gear, homework, “manners” . . . , timekeeping, conformity, etc., dominate the communications and thus the relationship. When this is added to the menagerie of documents that secondary schools call “reports” [refugee] parents are usually left feeling one or all of the following; guilty, inadequate, uneducated, a nuisance, mercenary, or alien (teacher interview, direct communication, original response in English 1/10/08)

The same teacher also said that the quality and amount of information presented to parents indicates the significance and status schools attach to parent–school relationships.

It was obvious from other participant’s views that high school’s communication and collaboration with parents were more to do with managing student behaviour than academic outcomes. One of the teachers said:

Teachers frequently seek avenues to communicate home when they perceive pupils as “misbehaving” or being “non-cooperative” in other ways e.g., attendance, lack of equipment, incorrect uniform, incomplete/late homework, and so on. The level of contact on these matters can be quite high, thus setting up an enduring negative relationship between the school and home (teacher interview, direct communication, 20/9/08).

Two teachers felt schools could enhance parent–school collaboration if the focus was shifted from dealing with behaviour to planning learning outcomes, and that such a change of focus would require schools to adopt a personalised approach in all their dealings with families. These participants were convinced that applying such a strategy would assist schools to tailor their communication with each family according to their circumstances, and that more face to face informal meetings with teachers would suit refugee parents instead of

formal meetings because meeting teachers formally was likely off-putting for refugee parents.

Another teacher in School B also indicated parents were likely to meet with teachers if meetings were scheduled at a convenient time for each family, rather than holding interviews only in the evening, which does not suit every family.

Difficulties around parent-teacher interviews

All 25 participating parents considered that parent-teacher interviews were an important venue for parents to become informed of their children's learning and to get to know their children's teachers. However, the participants were also rather critical of the format in which parent-teacher interviews were conducted. Most of the participants described the interview process as too intimidating. One of the participants, who was strongly supported by others in the group, said: "The long queues outside each meeting room and the many people standing over you while you are talking to the teachers is truly intimidating" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Some participants believed that being Somali parents with limited English, a strong accent, and distinctive cultural clothes made them feel different and therefore too nervous to speak to teachers, especially in the presence of several other unfamiliar faces in the same room. Furthermore, the participants reported the format in which parent-teacher interviews were conducted provided no provision for bilingual support to families who needed such assistance. One of the participants asserted: "Because I cannot speak English, I usually ask the children what the teacher has said after we come out of the meeting, but only Allah knows whether the children usually tell me the truth" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Because it was difficult to meet teachers face-to-face, several parents who missed their interviews said they had difficulty in rescheduling another interview. The participants were all unsure whether schools had policies that required teachers to reschedule interviews with families not attending the regular parent-teacher interviews. One of the participants informed the rest that schools were not obliged to reschedule interviews. Consequently, another participant suggested that the Government consider putting in place procedures and policies that require schools to reschedule interviews and follow-up when important correspondence, such as progress reports and attendance record sheets are sent to families. This participant believed a follow-up policy would help schools ascertain whether families

had received reports and faced any difficulties understanding the message. The participant believed such follow-up would also present schools with an opportunity to advise parents how they could contribute to their children's learning.

A participant in the group felt teachers needed to consider parents' academic and English language backgrounds during parent-teacher interviews. The participants felt it would have been less stressful for parents and even interpreters to understand and communicate with teachers if they spoke slowly and did not use complicated words. In addition, the overwhelming majority of participants believed teachers should recommend to parents the type of support that their children needed to address their learning weaknesses.

Apart from the parent-teacher interview format, most of the participants strongly believed the time allocated to each family during parent-teacher interviews was too short. This was of greater concern to the families with several children in a high school, especially when their children were not all in the same class. A participant with three children (year 9, 10 and 12) described the difficulties she faced:

I was intending to see all my three children's teachers, but it was difficult to meet with about seven teachers in three different buildings. I was also reluctant to meet with only one child's teachers, as this would have upset the other children.

Therefore, I decided to see only the year nine teachers because she was the youngest in the family (Focus group participant, personal communication, March 12, 2008).

Two other participants also expressed concerns about the interview-scheduling procedures. These participants stated that although every parent is usually asked to choose the time that suits best, teachers frequently do not follow the interview schedule according to the time parents have put as their preference. For example, one participant had her appointment set for 6.30 pm and was met by teachers at 8.00 pm, which was a hardship because the interview was held during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan (during this period Muslims are to eat or drink only after sunset), and she had fasted all day.

Difficulty in understanding the sophisticated management structure in the high schools

With the exception of one, the participants were confused with the management arrangement in the high schools in New Zealand. Because there is no official in these schools designated and known to the families as their key contact, the families have no clarity around their immediate contact person. The parents favoured a designated person as

their contact in the high school, because some parents felt it was difficult to build an efficient relationship with the several staff members who are responsible for different areas in the school.

Parents were particularly unsure of the roles and responsibilities of Principals, Deputy Principals, and Deans. One of the participants stated that the structures in the New Zealand high schools are significantly different from the Somali high schools, which have only a Principal, Assistant Principal and a number of form masters.

The participants' responses also showed a lack of familiarity with BOTs, PPTA and their roles, and the processes by which they are elected or appointed. For example, only two participants, including one who works for School B, knew that BOTs were in charge of schools in New Zealand.

Teachers' low expectations of refugee parents

The participants' responses suggested sometimes teachers have low expectations of refugee children and the capability of their parents to support their children's learning. This was seen by some participants as a factor contributing to the passive attitude of teachers towards engaging with refugee parents. This negative view was also thought to influence the amount of information presented to parents, especially during parent-teacher interviews. One participant who works with schools as a bilingual worker believed some teachers intentionally avoided engaging with parents to avoid embarrassing them if they couldn't express themselves well in English. This attitude of teachers was explicitly clear to several participants through experiences at their children's schools. A solo mother in the group reported she was invited to the school by her children's Dean and asked to sign for the removal of her two children from school. The mother said: "The Dean told me that my sons will never achieve anything from school even if they stayed here for another 20 years. The Dean suggested the best option for the boys was to not waste their time in school and to look for work instead" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Another participant in the group said: "Maybe the school wanted to get rid of the boys in order to avoid their achievement data making the school look bad academically" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Interestingly, although the Dean had told the mother that her sons will never achieve any credits, even if they were to stay in the school for another 20 years, one of the sons achieved eight credits in one subject within the following two weeks of the meeting with the mother.

Another female respondent reported that she was contacted by her daughter's school and was told school was not the right place for her daughter because she had low intellectual functioning. The mother, who was dismayed by the school's comments, insisted her daughter had no intellectual problems, because she had already memorised almost half of the Koran by heart. The mother reported her daughter's education improved significantly after she engaged a private tutor for her for two terms and enrolled her in a different school which she believed was more accepting than the first. The mother also reported that the daughter is currently a third year psychology student at the University of Canterbury.

Another participant in the group also reported a similar situation involving his son. The son, who was in Year 12, wanted to sit for NCEA level two in science in order to study Health Science in University. However, he was discouraged by the Head of the ESOL Department, who argued that his son could not achieve his expectation of sitting for the NCEA exam as he was not strong at written English. However, despite the teacher's pressure, he enrolled in Year 12 NCEA subjects and obtained good grades which gave him admission into Otago University. The participant reported that his son is at present doing a Master's Degree in Public Health after completing his Bachelor of Science at Otago University.

From this investigation, teacher attitudes were identified as the most significant barrier in the communication and collaboration between parents and schools.

The responses from the participants in the high school showed lower teacher expectation regarding refugee parent ability to support their children's learning. This low expectation was also thought to limit parent-school collaboration. A teacher in the high school said that, sometimes schools avoid engaging with new migrant parents, assuming that parents cannot contribute to their children's learning because of their poor English and limited knowledge of the school system. This participant highlighted that some teachers treat the task of engaging with parents as additional to their normal role of teaching children. This was explicitly clear from a comment made by an experienced teacher in the high school;

Schools generally do not do a good job of keeping parents of new migrants informed. This is usually based on a stereotypical belief that the parents "do not understand" the NZ education system, a "teaching culture" resistance to "yet another task", and a common belief that their job is "to teach", and not to deal with parents directly" (high school teacher interview, direct communication, 2010/08).

The opinion held by several teachers in the high school suggested teachers' attitude of using the same mode of communication for all parents, despite their language background and circumstances in their families was a barrier to effective relationships. One of these participants was strongly against the attitude of teachers who relied heavily on written communication for all their dealings with NESB parents, like the Somalis. The teacher believed that written communication was likely to put parents off from engaging with teachers due to their limited English. The participant explained his view as follows: "Most teachers consider that they have done their job when their Eurocentric formal written reports have gone home. The subsequent parents' evenings are also quite formal (and thus potentially intimidating/confusing for parents)" (teacher interview, direct communication, 12/11/08).

Intimidating school environments

Two teachers in the high school maintained that the environment in high schools in general is unfriendly and unwelcoming to families from minority groups. The participants thought the unfriendly environment was likely to intimidate new migrant families.

Another teacher in the high school expressed similar concerns about the environment in some high schools. This teacher suggested that it was important that principals commit to creating welcoming environments which allow refugee parents feel included in their child's school. This participant added that the initial impression parents make on their first visit to the school can have a huge influence on their confidence and trust to build relationships with the school. The teacher affirmed that parents were likely to feel a sense of belonging in the school community if their country's flag, photos of other parents and students from their own culture were displayed in the school foyer and the enrolment office. This teacher said such displays can inform parents how much the school values diversity. He added that creating inclusive environments in schools not only benefits parents but the school as well. An unsafe school environment can have a negative consequence on the children's learning. For example, "refugee students in the school are likely to be perceived as different from some of their peers, which can lead to problems, particularly between boys" (Teacher interview 13/3/08).

Another teacher stated that a school's attitude towards cultural diversity can be used as a measure of how much the school cares about their different learners and associated families.

This teacher asserted that schools could do the job of engaging with parents if their policies and the environment were responsive to all the families that make up the school community.

While responding to a question about the responsiveness of the high school communication to Somali families, a participant in the high school stated;

My observations are that few secondary schools make any special effort to cater for the ethnic diversity of their pupils' parents. The dominant school culture still says "we give you the opportunity to communicate with us; it is over to you to take it" (teacher interview, direct communication, original response was in English, 13/7/08).

The participating parents in this study relayed a sense of fear from the environment in the high schools. Interestingly, although the parents stated they were fearful of the environment in the high school, none of the parents reported the experience of racially- motivated insults in their children's schools. Therefore, it is likely that parents' fear is caused by other factors. The first of these is parents' physical and dress differences, which make them look different and stand out from the rest of the school community. The fear and shyness experienced by Somali parents in Christchurch schools has been highlighted by Humpage's (2009) work. She concludes, for example, that:

While Christchurch may be a 'safe haven' from the persecution or hunger they faced before arriving, school is not a 'culturally safe' space for [a] Somali refugee. Somali parents' distrust of such environments, due to their cultural and physical differences, is likely to have several negative impacts on their involvement with schools (p. 1).

Humpage's findings suggested that an intimidating environment in schools has the potential to exacerbate the experience of trauma, fear, insecurity and hate that refugees went through in the pre-arrival phases of their migration to New Zealand.

The second factor is the parents' inability to communicate well in English and their different accent, which makes them feel vulnerable (they cannot stand up for themselves) and are less confident to associate with other people outside their culture.

The third factor is parents' experience of racism outside the school, especially street racism, which caused parents to feel less safe to go out and also to perceive the host community as hostile. Some participants reported racially abusive behaviour and insults, which were

directed at them around bus stops, in the streets and in shopping malls by passers-by. The participants' experiences of street racism are supported by the feedback from a New Zealander of European origin, who took part in research carried out with the Somali community in Wellington (Bond, 2001, p. 106), who made the following remarks which confirm the street racism the Somali refugees are experiencing. He stated "I heard a group of hoons once yell 'Get your black asses back to Africa' to a small group of Somali".

The fourth factor is children's experiences with their teachers and peers in their schools, which was found to have some bearing on parents' perception of the schools. For example, some parents in the study were convinced that their children's schools were unsafe because their children had experienced racism and discrimination from both their peers and their teachers. Therefore, the participants were in favour of schools, especially the high schools, introducing programmes to promote cultural diversity and multiculturalism as a measure to decry negative and racial prejudice against children of refugee background. However, some parents' opinions seem to be based on their personal experience with schools, which they thought were a reflection of unwelcoming attitudes of schools.

The participants felt that schools needed to encourage teachers to change their negative view of refugee students and their parents, because some teachers generalise about refugees, feeling that all refugee students cannot achieve any qualification due to the education gap. Negative views held about parents' abilities appear to result in schools sometimes not bothering contacting parents, especially when children are struggling academically, because they believe refugee parents cannot provide any support given their low English language proficiency.

Ambiguous information presented to parents in reports and NCEA

The vast majority of participating parents (22) felt NCEA and progress reports were too complicated for Somali parents to understand. Despite this difficulty, most schools do not provide training around NCEA and other assessment tools which schools use for measuring students' achievements. Even parents with competent spoken English found the method and language employed in NCEA results too ambiguous to understand. For example, only three participants indicated some understanding of achievement, merit and excellence. Similarly, the participants were convinced that the current format in which progress reports and test results are presented to parents do not indicate to parents the areas in which their children are under-performing. While basing his views on his experience with education in Somalia,

one of the participants said: “In Somalia, school reports were able to show parents the marks students have obtained in each subject and the child’s ranking in the class. However, unlike the Somali schools, the school reports in New Zealand do not provide such detailed information to parents” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

The low cultural awareness of school staff

The majority of participants in the focus groups had the feeling that schools needed to do more to improve the cultural awareness of their staff in order to create culturally- inclusive environments. Specific concerns were expressed about the lack of prayer spaces in most schools and the lack of Halal food in school cafeterias. There were also concerns about schools that conduct parent-teacher interviews during the month of Ramadan where the interview appointments coincide with the breaking of fasting and when women are preparing the family meals. The participants believed scheduling interviews during Ramadan is an indication of the schools’ insensitivity towards the cultural needs of Somali families.

The study found that school staffs’ cultural awareness plays an important role in the planning and execution of parent - school collaboration, especially in schools where the families are from different cultural backgrounds. This is because in some societies, like the Somali one, family structures and parents’ attitudes towards their children’s education are formed by their cultures. Furthermore, there are important cultural norms within the Somali and Islamic cultures which school staff need to take into account in the planning of parent - school collaboration activities, as failure to do so, can have profound negative consequences. For example, the employment of bilingual workers who are mostly men whose roles involve working with all parents can isolate mothers from the collaboration process because face-to-face contacts between two adults of different genders is not permitted in the Islamic culture.

Also, the scheduling of parent-teacher interviews in the month of Ramadan (the Muslim fasting month) which some parents in the high school reported was one of the reasons they did not take part in parent and teacher interviews, also attests to the lack of cultural awareness of the staff in this school. These findings suggest the need to incorporate cultural competency courses in teachers’ training programmes to increase their understanding of different families’ values and cultures. This argument is supported by the findings from

research carried out by ERO (2008), which found that some parents in New Zealand schools are not engaging well with schools because of teachers' attitudes acting as barriers to parent - school collaboration. Other research in the USA also concluded "teachers are usually the first and sometimes the only contact that parents have with the school system. Their attitudes and behaviours convey to parents whether or not they are welcome and helpful allies in children's education" (Smith, 1998).

In the New Zealand context, a school staff's cultural sensitivity is a critical factor for parent - school collaboration, because of the considerable cultural diversity and differing beliefs and values of the families that schools in New Zealand have to accommodate. Currently, there are 162 different ethnic groups from 160 different countries of birth, speaking 114 different languages in New Zealand schools (MOE, 2010). This demonstrates the urgent need for teachers and other school personnel to become sensitive to the cultures and values of different families that schools have to collaborate with. This increasing diversity of families also presents challenges to the Ministry of Education in making the system responsive to the needs of all families and to help them to achieve their aspirations in New Zealand.

It is not clear on the basis of the existing literature, whether New Zealand teachers are actually taught strategies to build teams with refugee parents. Epstein and Becker's (1982, in Swap, 1993) work involving 3,700 elementary teachers in 600 schools in the USA concluded that most teachers, although being aware of the benefits of connecting with parents, lacked the skills to establish home-school partnerships. She identified this as a gap linked with teacher training institutions not providing courses and programmes that teach the advantages of parental involvement and prepare teachers to implement meaningful home-school partnership programmes, and this might also apply in New Zealand.

Teacher workload

Four teachers in the high school were convinced that teacher workload was a barrier to achieving effective communication and collaboration between parents and schools. These participants believed that the workload was a barrier because teachers reported they had limited time to meet with parents face-to-face during schools hours. One of the teachers said she relied only on written communication in all her dealings with parents due to workload. This teacher said;

I usually rely on the clear and informative reports I write, because I am busy most of the day and evenings. The only other time I can meet a parent is on the interview nights, unless, a parent has made an arrangement with me outside school hours (teacher interview, direct communication 19/9/07).

The high school holds an English class for adults in the evening several nights a week. One of the teachers reported that she sometimes had to meet parents at the adult class if they did not come to the interviews (teacher interview, 11/10/08).

The teachers' opinion on their workload is supported by the opinion of some parents, who reported that they found it difficult to approach teachers, even if the parents visited the school, or to get them on the phone, as they are teaching most of the time. This finding on teachers' workloads is similar to that found by Blendinger and Snipes (1993, p. 3) work in the USA which concluded that "because of the extra time and energy required, teachers in Mississippi and elsewhere are reluctant to involve parents in their children's schooling".

Lack of acknowledgement of refugees' special needs in school policies

This study showed that the schools in this study have no policy specifically designed to promote refugee parents' collaboration with schools. Instead, the schools appear to have a common policy which does not recognise the differences between refugee parents and mainstream parents. This implies that the schools have general expectations of all parents and are not taking into account the Somali refugee families' linguistic disparity, their knowledge gap of the system and the past hardships that they have experienced as refugees and in New Zealand. This suggests that schools are not encouraging parents to contribute to the curriculum. It also implies that the schools are practising the expert and the Protective models of parent - school collaboration. In schools where these models are applied, teachers are considered as the only experts for children's social and educational development. Parents' collaboration enjoys lower status because the parents' role is being limited to be bringing children to school on time and with the correct school gear (Hornby, 2000, 2010; Swap, 1993).

Consequently, most of the policies used by these schools are not encouraging refugee parent - school collaboration and they fail to acknowledge the special needs of refugee families. This also resulted in the schools not developing a framework and guidelines, upon which the families from non-English-speaking backgrounds can be supported and empowered,

especially those who are at risk of alienation. In this sense, refugee parents are instead forced to function alongside the families from the mainstream community, despite the disparities between the two groups.

The schools' loyalty to the protective and expert models may have encouraged the staff in the high school not to make any special arrangements, such as bilingual support for the parents during the enrolment process.

Most importantly, the allegiance to the protective and expert models may have contributed to a lack of indicators and benchmarks upon which the school's relationship and collaboration with families can be measured, reviewed and evaluated in these schools. Constant assessment and evaluation of policies and programmes are critical for schools with refugee families, because the policies may work well for most mainstream (European) parents as they enjoy the luxury of understanding the system better than the refugee families. This gives many mainstream parents the confidence to challenge schools about the programmes offered, if they are deemed as not meeting their children's needs. By contrast, very few parents from refugee families are capable of effective advocacy.

This is also in agreement with the work of Dardar who provided insight into how disadvantaged families may become more excluded. He argued that "often parents are instrumentalised and forced into conformity with schooling practices that perpetuate not only their exclusion, but also cultural genocide" (Dardar, 2006, p. x).

This further suggests that the policies and the programmes in these schools are based on the protective and expert models or at least are designed for middle class white families; refugee families are likely to remain alienated from the system, which remains dominated by ethnocentric assumptions. These assumptions may continue to contribute to a breakdown in the relationship between refugee families and schools. In New Zealand, schools are increasingly supporting families who are linguistically and culturally different from the mainstream; therefore it is important that schools have policies that recognise and take into account the differences in the families that make up the school community. Eccles and Harold (1996) asserted that school policies and teachers' practices are important determinants of parent - school collaboration.

Communication and collaboration between parents and schools not tailored to refugee families

Similar to the policy areas discussed above, the study found that schools are not acknowledging the refugee families' special needs for all their communications and dealings with parents. For example, most of the available information is in English, which the majority of the Somali parents do not understand well. Other information is on websites, which is also difficult for refugee parents to access due to their low English language proficiency, low computer skills, limited access to computers and the high cost of the internet, which most families cannot afford.

Parent and teacher interviews, which are another important method for keeping parents aware of their children's performance, also appear to be less effective for the refugee parents. The participating parents' feedback gave the impression that the processes for planning and the format in which interviews are conducted are inappropriate for refugee families. The participants gave varieties of reasons as to why these processes are not working well for them. Firstly, information about parent and teacher interviews and the schedule of meetings are passed to the parents via their children, who are unlikely to pass it on to their parents, especially if the feedback from their teachers is likely to be not positive. Secondly, the parent-teacher interview notices and schedules are all in English, which parents with limited English cannot understand. For example, some parents were unsure whether or not their children's schools were expecting them to respond to the interview notice and to indicate a preferred time for meeting with teachers. Thirdly, the format upon which interviews are conducted was also found to be inappropriate for the parents from minority cultures, because parents felt intimidated by standing in queues alongside mainstream parents because of their different dressing and physical appearance. Furthermore, most parents in the study reported finding difficulties in communicating with teachers in the presence of other parents and teachers in the same room, also because of their limited English, and foreign accent. This finding supports the findings from the literature which confirms that parents from minority cultures lack the confidence to communicate with school personnel and advocate for their children's interests (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2005).

The parents' feedback showed a strong desire for schools to consider arranging separate meetings with refugee parents, since most parents are not confident enough to discuss issues with teachers in the presence of other parents. They also indicated that inviting parents into

schools more often in order to meet with teachers and become familiar with the school environment and the staff is another mechanism which schools can use to build Somali parents' confidence. This was considered as a way to build parents' confidence.

Furthermore, schools may consider allocating more time to parents during interviews, as five minutes are not sufficient to discuss issues. Some of the participants felt it is important that schools and teachers are taking into account that most Somali parents will struggle to hear the teachers' feedback and to express their issues in just five or ten minutes. The participants also suggested teachers who are performing parent and teacher interviews with Somali parents to understand that most Somali parents do not have the confidence to speak English, especially in the presence of other New Zealand-born parents. The feedback from the participants suggested that Somali parents are not generally good at asking teachers questions during the parent and teacher interviews. As well as the language barrier, this was linked to the Somali culture, which considers it rude to ask a teacher why the child is not performing well because it is considered disrespectful to the teacher's profession. Conducting frequent face-to-face meetings with classroom teachers may be a favourable solution to the problems experienced by parents during parent and teacher interviews.

The findings in this study also suggest that refugee parents need more concentrated workshops on the education system and information regarding where to obtain resources for their children, in addition to improving their own English levels.

National educational policy barriers

The findings of this study showed that while the Ministry of Education promotes parent - school collaboration, the ministry also employs a hands-off position when it comes to the facilitation of the relationship between parents and schools. The ministry has taken this hands-off approach because it sees schools as self-governing and its role as a statutory one which is about supporting schools to comply with the 1989 Act and its amendments. These discrepancies appear to have depletive effects on parent - school collaboration. However, under the 1989 Act, parents still have the ability to contact the Ministry to advocate on behalf of their children and their interaction with schools.

There are specific initiatives developed by the MOE, such as the "The School Improvement Strategy (MOE, 2005) which acknowledges that "families and whānau play a variety of powerful roles in the learning and development of children" (MOE, 2005, p. 32). The New Zealand curriculum (MOE, 2007e) provided additional opportunities for schools and parents

to collaborate more together. It enabled schools to design a curriculum specific to their context and collaborate more with parents and communities in children's learning. Also the Ministry of Education has promoted parent - school collaboration as one of its three strategic priorities for lifting students' achievement. This priority area states that children's educational achievements are nurtured by collaboration between parents and schools. Despite the willingness shown at the national level, the findings in this study showed the practical implementation of parent - school collaboration is weak at the school level.

The inconsistency between the significance attached to the concept at the policy level and how it is prioritised and implemented at school level is clearer from the findings from the review of 233 schools in New Zealand (Hornby, 2010) which showed several weaknesses regarding how parent - school collaboration is planned and implemented at the school level. The review made recommendations to "nearly three-quarters of the schools to improve engagement with parents; about a quarter of schools to improve learning partnerships with parents; another quarter to develop strategies to engage parents not actively involved; and around a further quarter to improve the quality of engagement with parents from a wide range of ethnic groups" (Hornby, 2010, p. 498).

The mismatches are found to be affecting several areas which are important for parent - school collaboration. They include those which are discussed below.

The absence of standardised policy and guidelines to inform schools on how to employ an inclusive approach in parent - school collaboration programmes

The findings in this study suggest that the MOE developed no standardised policy and guidelines to help schools in the planning, implementation and monitoring of their parent - school collaboration programmes. Because there are no guidelines, there appear to be inconsistencies in how schools currently plan and implement their parent - school collaboration programmes. For example, although schools are currently required to involve communities in the school planning process, there are no standardised formats or policy guidelines which schools can follow to ensure their consultations with parents are conducted in an inclusive manner.

The lack of clear guidelines on how to carry out inclusive consultations seems to have resulted in schools relying solely on the information they obtain from the mainstream privileged families, who are usually more vocal and resourced to advocate for their children's educational needs. A consequence of this is that the needs of the least-empowered

families, such as refugees, whose special needs are not presented at consultations, become hidden from schools and the Ministry of Education. The fact that refugee parents are less resourced to advocate for their children and are not represented on school BOTs also makes their needs more hidden from the authorities. This can result in refugee families' needs not being reflected in priority areas for schools.

The problems resulting from the absence of clear guidelines and policy frameworks at the national level also appear to cause disparity in parents' participation in school decision making. Despite the intention behind the creation of BOTs being to promote equity and increase access to decision-making of schools to all communities, the findings from the literature in this study showed that all communities in New Zealand schools do not have an equal level of communication and participation in the decision-making process. For example, relevant data (www.educationcounts.govt.nz) showed the disparity between immigrants and the mainstream communities' representation on school BOT. These data show that 86.6 percent of the BOT members in Christchurch are Pakeha/European, compared with only 3.5 percent for ethnic communities . This finding is consistent with the finding from previous research by Wylie (1999, in Biddulph et al., 2003), which found that parents in New Zealand had more collaboration with schools before the 1989 education reform. Wylie's research showed that parents' involvement in school-based activities declined from 21 to 11 percent and participation in school functions and meetings declined also by 50 per cent (from 51 to 25 per cent). It is likely that the collaboration between schools and parents declined after the reform because of the strong competition involved in the BOT's election process. It may be likely that the migrant (including refugee) families' participation in BOT membership declined as they felt they could not compete with parents from the mainstream community. Also, refugee and migrants' participation in the BOT election process may be delayed by their limited access to information about it. For example, some parents may find it difficult to understand the election brochures and BOT candidates' profiles, and therefore choose not to participate in the election process.

Monolingual and mono-cultural resources for parents

The Ministry of Education has developed resources and publicised parent and school relationship materials pertinent to both parents and schools. However, it is worth mentioning that most information available to parents is mono-lingual, mono-cultural and makes no consideration for the increasing diversity of New Zealand families. Furthermore, most of the information is on websites. This practice has the potential to alienate NESB

families from the school system, although some handbooks have been translated into several languages.

It is now clear that although schools may value collaboration with refugee parents, the current methods of communication and collaboration practices which they are using are not working well for either families or schools. It is also clear that the methods are designed for the dominant Pakeha culture, which is why they do not work well for all families. This implies that the Ministry of Education is not acknowledging the growing diversity of families in New Zealand schools and its implications for parent - school collaboration. To make the system match with the increasing diversity and respond well to all families, the Ministry should first change its mind-set from mono-cultural philosophy to a multi-cultural one. The first step towards achieving this should be to promote multiculturalism at the policy level and the development of robust policy which encourages schools to make parent - school collaboration a priority in their strategic plan.

Lack of specific funding for schools to promote parent - school collaboration

The high school principal expressed a grave concern about the lack of funding available in schools to enhance parent–school collaboration. He argued that it is imperative that schools are provided with funding which can be used primarily for helping NESB parents understand the system and improve their English because their numbers are increasing. The principal’s view was also reflected in an application submitted by School B to the MOE;

Without targeted support, language differences, cultural differences, gender-specific issues, pre-settlement experiences, and the upheaval of resettlement in New Zealand, these families face significant barriers to achieving successful outcomes within the NZ education system and New Zealand society” (School document, 2009).

The principal was more concerned about the uncertainty around the funding for the bilingual worker, whom he described as critical for the school’s communication with Somali families. The bilingual worker is at present funded from an additional source within the Ministry of Education on a temporary basis. The challenge the school was facing over the uncertainty of funding was described in another School B document:

The biggest threat to the refugee programme is the lack of secured funding in the medium- to long-term. The lack of secure funding creates uncertainty and also

diverts time away from the vital services and project delivery” (School B performance report, 2009).

The literature on school administration in New Zealand shows a range of policies, legislative guidelines and strategies which have been developed over time which show the willingness to promote parent - school collaboration. The measures taken at the national level include; the formulation of the National Administration Guidelines (NAG), which made reporting to parents a legislative requirement and the creation of school Boards of Trustees and the introduction of school charters which were also intended to be mechanisms for promoting parent - school collaboration. The development of Schooling Strategy (MOE, 2005) was one of the measures taken to improve parent - school collaboration in the education system. It was particularly designed to raise the understanding of school leaders about the contributions that parents and schools can make to school performance.

Despite the many years of willingness to introduce the concept in the system, the findings in this study showed mismatches between how parent - school collaboration is publicised at the political level and how it is practically operationalised in schools. The existing mismatches appear to have contributed to several barriers at school and the ministry or political levels which are found to hinder parent - school collaboration.

The parents and staff in this study expressed the view that the lack of resources in schools, such as money for childcare when meeting with teachers was hindering their efforts and desires to promote home-school collaboration. Schools experience financial difficulties with employing and retaining bilingual workers to assist them with their two-way communication with parents. A similar problem also exists with the funding required to conduct workshops to up-skill parents.

The teachers and principals’ opinions are supported by a subsequent follow-up by the researcher, which found that the two schools in this study no longer have Somali bilingual workers because of funding cuts by the MOE. The cuts in funding also prevented the high school from maintaining the Home-School Partnership –Literacy training which the school conducted in 2009 for selected parents, despite the fact that the programme was well-received by the teachers and the parents who took part.

Limited resources in schools have been identified as a barrier to communication and collaboration between schools and Somali refugee parents in other countries. For example,

research carried out with Somali parents and schools in Canada found the absence of bilingual workers in schools was hindering parents' communication with schools (Mahamed, 2010).

The schools in this study reported that their efforts to collaborate with parents are also hindered by a lack of funding in other ways. This included funding for teacher release time and for hiring interpreters to assist schools conduct home visits and extra face-to-face meetings with parents who have not attended normal interviews.

Teachers' training programmes

Another area of mismatch between the government's goal for parent - school collaboration and how it is practically implemented lies in the limited recognition given to the concept in teachers' training. Although the concept is acknowledged both locally and overseas and is being seen as a significant factor for lifting children's education, there is no policy in New Zealand requiring teacher training institutions to include parent - school collaboration in courses for teachers' education programmes (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

The research in this field has confirmed that training teachers on how to build effective communication and collaboration with parents is a precondition for effective parent - school collaboration (Epstein, 2001; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Therefore, because of the many disparities within the refugee background families, and between the refugee and the mainstream New Zealand families, it is essential that teachers, especially new graduates are given additional training on how to identify vulnerable families and design suitable support which takes into account the cultural, religious, language and gender perspectives of refugee families.

Training and support to build the capacity of less capable parents

Another area of mismatch is the ministry and schools' commitment to empowering vulnerable families. As presented in the previous chapter, many refugee parents arrive in New Zealand without previous education and any knowledge of the system of schooling and the curriculum. The data in the study also demonstrated that refugee mothers experience additional hardships in collaborating with schools as a consequence of the gender disparity sustained in pre- and post-arrival experiences which are affecting their ability to collaborate with schools. For that reason, many families require additional support to compensate for the past constraints and the hardships they may be going through in New Zealand. Epstein

and Sanders' (2000) work confirmed that families with limited education and low income can only collaborate if schools put in place additional programs to improve their situations.

The data in this study showed that currently there is limited training and support in schools to build the capacity of vulnerable families and equip them with the skills they need to communicate and collaborate effectively with schools. The limited support in schools for parents may be a reflection of the tendency for schools to focus on one-way communication (from school to the families) at the expenses of the communication from home-to-school.

Parent-related factors

The factors in this category identified as impediments included: parents' lack of formal education, parents' low English proficiency, parents' misconception and limited understanding of the New Zealand secular education, a lack of involvement in school-based activities, a lack of involvement in BOT elections, the Somali oral tradition, financial hardships in the families, work load appointments that conflict with school working hours, a lack of transport, housing problems and the high mobility of families.

Parents' lack of prior formal schooling

The two principals and the majority of the teachers confirmed that most of the Somali adults and children came with no formal schooling prior to arriving in New Zealand. The principal in the high school stated that lack of prior learning was holding back parents in relation to working with schools. The principal also maintained that the traumatic experiences some parents and children have personally faced in the Somali war can have profound negative consequences on their collaboration with schools. He believed that the hardship most parents suffered as refugees was likely to be aggravated by the challenge of bringing up children between the Somali traditional culture and the New Zealand Western culture. This challenge was also considered a potential barrier to parent-school relationships.

Lower English proficiency of parents

Associated with the lack of formal education was low English language proficiency among the parents. A significant number (12) said low English proficiency prevented them from both understanding written communication and having one-on-one contacts with teachers. This was a factor which forced many parents to rely on their children to translate school reports, notices and sometimes even act as interpreters in parent-teacher interviews. However, it is becoming clear that some children are not giving parents a correct translation.

For example, one student was asked by her mother to translate a letter from her school. The letter was concerning the girl's suspension from school, but she misled her mother, telling her that the letter was sent to inform her that she (the daughter) obtained the highest score in her class and was given one week's holiday in recognition of her hard work. The mother was so proud of her daughter's achievement that she put the letter on her wall and borrowed money and sent the daughter to Australia for a holiday. She only realised the truth about the letter when a member of her community visited her home and explained the letter.

Limited English proficiency of parents was also a factor that two of the participating teachers believed was obstructing parent–school collaboration. They believed it to be a barrier because some teachers were intentionally avoiding face-to-face and telephone contact with the Somali parents. It was thought teachers find face-to-face and telephone conversations intimidating or embarrassing for parents with limited English. Consequently, some teachers avoid this type of contact. For example, one of the teachers stated, “meeting teachers may be scary for parents or may put them off, so I only rely on written reports” (teacher interview, direct communication”, 12/9/08). The fear of embarrassing parents may be the reason most teachers were relying on the bilingual worker for all their oral face-to-face and telephone contact with Somali parents.

The difficulties expressed by the parents in this study appear to support previous studies with Somali parents which also found that low English language proficiency of Somali parents is a barrier affecting the collaboration between schools and Somali refugees in other countries. For example, in the USA, low English has been found to prevent Somali parents from supporting their children (Abebe et al., 2003). Other research (Demie, Lewis, & Mclean, 2007) carried out in the UK also found that “many [Somali] parents with English language barriers do not attend parents' evenings and school meetings” (p. 26). This led the schools in the UK with Somali parents who had limited English to initiate new strategies to support the Somali families. For example, the frequency of students' progress reports was increased to every term and one-to-one goal setting meetings with Somali parents was also introduced. In addition, family literacy, adult education classes and parenting courses were organised to equip parents with the skills they needed to help their children and build their trust and confidence with schools. Research conducted in the USA (Rah, Choi, & Nguyen, 2009) involving Hmong families found language barrier was a key factor contributing to communication breakdown between parents and schools.

Parents' misconception and limited understanding about New Zealand secular education

The feedback from the parents demonstrated that the majority have limited understanding and have huge misconceptions about the education system in New Zealand because of their limited English. Their comments showed huge concerns, held by most of them, about the education system. Because they cannot understand the curriculum and school information, some parents believe that some of the programmes in schools, such as health education, are contrary to the Islamic moral values and the Somali culture. For example, one of the participants was curious that health education was encouraging children to engage in relationships outside of marriage. In addition, other participants were against teachers involving young children in discussions concerning sex. This appeared to be due to the taboo around sex in the Somali culture. The taboo associated with this area was evident from the limited contribution made by the female participants in the group during the discussion of this topic. However, the misconception around health education was highlighted by one female participant in the individual interviews who stated:

We are people whose attitudes and behaviours have to be in line with our religion. What I am told about what the schools are teaching in Health Education lessons is contradictory to both our religion and culture. Culturally and religiously, it is morally wrong to talk to young children about relationships and anything that promotes relationships outside marriage, which is something we always warn our children against.

It was also clear from the participants' comments that poor communication presented to Somali parents on this topic reinforced the existing concerns. Interestingly, whilst schools are required to consult with parents on Health Education every 18 months, all the participants in the focus group reported receiving no information whatsoever. How this communication breaks down is unclear and certainly may have been because the Somali children simply did not bring the letters home. One participant said children may be concerned that parents might be upset by the content of the Health Education curriculum (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

A commitment to retaining their culture and the Islamic values is the reason why the Somali families are preventing their children from participating in other activities, such as dancing, swimming and school camping. This also implies that withdrawing children from these

activities is part of the strategies that Somali parents employ to resist assimilation. The findings of this study support the finding in research carried out in Wellington (Bond, 2001, p. 150), which demonstrated that “religion can contribute to the level of alienation felt in a refugee community, if the religion of the refugee is different to that of the host society”. The parents’ strong desire to maintain the Somali culture and Islamic values is evident from the comment from a parent in the focus group who stated “we would prefer tighter boundaries in schools to prevent our children from any negative influence from other adolescent groups” (direct communication focus group participant, 2/6/08).

The parents held similar concerns about teachers’ roles in the conflicts between parents and their children. While the prevalence of conflicts and relationship breakdowns between parents and teenage boys was a major concern, there were also some participants who believed that teachers were, to a degree, exacerbating family conflicts. Some of the participants believed that teachers were encouraging children to call 111 if they were not happy with their parents.

Some of the participants’ comments indicated how some children were taking advantage of their parents’ limited knowledge of the system and poor English. One female participant reported that her son had threatened to call the police if she did not buy him \$150.00 sports shoes. The mother, who initially bought \$30.00 sports shoes, was forced to borrow money from friends to buy him the shoes he wanted. She was later told by the school principal that the son had no right to make such a demand and police would never prosecute a parent for such reasons.

Another solo mother in the group said:

The Government is part of the problem because they send conflicting messages to parents and their children. The Government holds parents responsible for their children’s unaccepted behaviour while on the other hand telling children to call the police if they are not happy with their parents. Look, I cannot even reprimand my son when he comes home as late as 3.00 a.m., as he might call the police or leave home because he believes the government will give him money (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Another parent in the focus group said: “We parents feel our hands are tightly tied by the authorities, so we cannot put any pressure on our children even when they refuse to do their

school work or make their own beds” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). The participants’ responses suggested they have limited knowledge about the New Zealand way of parenting. One of the parents said: “We have no knowledge of the New Zealand way of managing youth and if we go back to use our traditional way, which is the only parenting skill we have, we will be in trouble with the law” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

The majority of the parents in the focus group also showed limited knowledge of how the education system works in New Zealand and the roles schools expect of them as parents. Their experience in Somalia appeared to shape both their expectations of the system and the role they can play. Moreover, their comments showed Islamic religion and the Somali culture play a significant part in their expectations of children and perceptions regarding educational outcomes. For example, their understanding of educational achievement appeared to have broader meaning compared with how it is defined in New Zealand. The participants believed educational outcome does not imply solely obtaining qualifications for pursuing employment opportunities. Instead, they considered educational achievement also encompassed children gaining cultural and religious competencies which the Somali parents perceive as critical to living a successful life. This was evident from a comment made by a focus group participant who stated: “In Somalia, schools were responsible for the entire development of the children which is why the Ministry of Education was called ‘The Ministry of Education and Upbringing’” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). Another respondent also explained her view about the existing differences between the (Somali and New Zealand) societies’ approach to children’s education.

In Somalia, education was a societal responsibility and children were looked after by all the society. Any adult, who saw a child engaged in a negative social activity, had the right to discipline the child. Also, any adult who saw a child on the street during school hours had an obligation to tell the child to go to school. The support from the wider society was a valuable support for parents as, for example, extended relatives sometimes used to perform mediation between parents and their children in case their relationships went astray. This included talking to the parents if they felt he/she was not handling the child well. Similarly, they could talk to the child and even punish them if the child was believed to be going against the will of the parents (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Another respondent added:

In Somalia, parents' first role was to ensure children were taught the Koran before they were enrolled in a formal school. Parents' responsibility in formal schooling was limited to feeding the child, buying books and uniforms. The only time a parent could meet with teachers was when the school reported the child had broken the school rules several times (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 12, 2008).

The participants showed limited understanding of the New Zealand curriculum. For example, most of them were not aware that children of the same age could be placed in the same class yet could work at different curriculum levels. One participant, who was a former teacher in Somalia, said:

Why is it students are allowed to progress to a higher class level if they have not passed the current year examination?" The respondent said "fail is fail and pass is pass, so how can a student progress to higher standard if [he or she] has not passed the annual examination for that year (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

The entire group of participants similarly indicated that they had no knowledge of the disciplinary systems in schools. There was also a feeling among families that the negative social behaviour of children was the consequence of a lack of appropriate disciplinary system in schools. While explaining the differences between the two disciplinary systems of Somalian schools and New Zealand schools, another participant stated:

In Somalia there was suspension and stand-down, but no exclusion so parents and school used to work hard together around difficult children. Teachers also had more authority. Parents and teachers could work together more easily because teachers had authority in the class and were respected even more than parents. Here in New Zealand, teachers don't seem to have any authority over students. Teachers can only give detention to students or chase them from school. Some of the students who do not want to learn enjoy being chased from school because it is what they want. Parents get the blame when things go wrong and they also get arrested if they try to discipline their children. When is the system right? (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

Some believed the negative social behaviour of children is the consequence of a lack of strong discipline in schools and lack of respect for teachers. Their perception about the disciplinary systems in New Zealand schools may be based on their experience with schools in Somalia and the Madarassa (Islamic schools) where corporal punishment was used to deal with students' inappropriate behaviours. Their response regarding limited understanding of the system in New Zealand may well be the reason they appear unsure whether schools have disciplinary systems other than stand-downs, suspension and exclusions. One of the parents who took part in the individual interview believes that stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions are not effective disciplinary methods to manage students' behaviour. When she was asked why these methods were not effective she replied:

In reality, stand- down, suspension and exclusion punish parents only because they may be forced to stay home with the children and not to go to work. Also, because children have more access to money, cars, drugs, this will only give them more time to engage in these activities, which makes their behaviour situation even worse.

While commenting on suspension and exclusion, another parent stated:

We believe schools and teachers are second to parents when it comes to shaping the child's future. Therefore, it is not a sensible solution for schools to exclude students as it is not a sensible thing for parents to tell their children to leave home when they do something wrong. Also, for some children who are not keen to study, suspension or exclusion is a dream come true.

The above comment suggests that the Somali parents may be in favour of other forms of punishments instead of stand-down, suspension and exclusion. It also suggests parents are not unaware that corporal punishment is illegal in New Zealand. Somali parents are more concerned with their children's behaviour because they believe there is a correlation between children's behaviour, students' success and achievement of parents' expectations. For example, if the parents find it difficult to deal with the behaviour of their children, they are likely to lose hope about their children's success and therefore disengage from schools instead of cooperating.

The misunderstandings also attest the minimal information presented to parents about the education system in New Zealand. Similar misunderstanding also exists about how parents with limited English language and general education can support their children's learning,

especially the contributions that parents can make at home. For example, some parents in the individual and focus groups interviews constantly brought up their limited English language skills as barriers preventing them from supporting their children. It appeared that some parents were not aware that one of the ways they could support their children at home is to set a specific time for children to work on their homework and revise their school work.

Consistent with Eccles and Harold 1996, this study found that parents' lack of familiarity and knowledge of the system and curriculum can be a negative factor on parent - school collaboration. This may cause particular problems for parents with limited education or sufficient English to understanding and make good use of progress reports.

Lack of parental involvement in school-based activities

Beyond the difficulties with home-school communication, parents with limited English language or with no formal education are too shy and less confident to be involved in curriculum and other school-based activities. For example, one of the respondents was asked why she did not take part as a volunteer in school-based activities. She responded "what am I going to say to the people in the school when the only English [words] I know are, how you are ... what is your name, where did you come from Shall I use my hands (sign language) to explain what I say?"

This finding is consistent with Rutter's (2004) research with Somali parents in the UK which found the stigma of being illiterate and unable to communicate with schools and support their children's education was a factor that delayed Somali parents' involvement in their children's education. This finding is also consistent with other research conducted in Australia, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Degni, Pontinen, & Molsa, 2006; Omar, 2005; Scott, 2001) which identified families, parents' language and education gaps among the factors affecting the achievement of Somali students in those countries. In addition, this issue was highlighted in a study of Asian migrants in the USA; Bhattacharya (2000, in Rah, Choi, & Nguyen, 2009), which found that shyness caused by an inability to speak English was the dominant cause of parents' failure to attend parent and teacher interviews.

Poor English hinders participation in BOT elections

In a similar manner, limited English has been identified as a barrier preventing parents from participating in the decision-making process of their local schools. This includes preventing

them from both standing for BOTs elections and electing the BOT members. The data suggests that the majority of the participants in the focus groups were not even familiar with how BOTs are elected and hence did not participate in BOT elections. Significant numbers of the parents were convinced that schools were governed by the Ministry of Education. It is likely that participants' views are based on their experiences with schools in Somalia, which were managed by the Ministry of Education.

As outlined earlier, BOT are responsible for implementing the curriculum, appointing of school staff and the management of school finances. Because these functions require high levels of skill and understanding about education and the system, and specialised expertise in legal matters and finance, many refugee parents may be considered unqualified to be even co-opted to the board.

Somali oral cultural background

One aspect of Somali culture is that it is an oral culture which heavily relies on oral communication. Therefore, parents, including those with reasonable English language proficiency, are not in favour of written communication. Because of this strong reliance on oral communication, most parents do not retain or maintain correspondence from their children's schools. The parents are more likely to misplace school correspondence before they may have even read the contents. Also, because maintaining diaries and records of schedules of events is not part of the Somali culture, parents mostly forget the date when important school events are scheduled to take place, e.g., parent and teacher interviews, graduation and information nights.

Financial hardship in the families

The parents demonstrated that there is a direct correlation between the limited financial and human resources in their families, and their passivity in engaging with schools. Big families face financial constraints and these undermine their collaboration with schools. For example, two parents stated that the reason they did not attend parent-teacher interviews was because they had not paid their children's school fees for books. One of the parents stated "I could not even visit the school to report to the principal when my daughter was bullied by other girls because I felt too embarrassed to meet the principal who had sent me several notices advising me to pay off my children's accounts" (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 12, 2008). Another three parents also stated that they did not allow their children to participate in school field trips and school camps because they

could not afford the costs involved and were too shy to tell the school that they had no money. A further two parents also said that they “stopped their children from going because they could not get items which the school had asked the children to bring to the camp” (Focus group participant, personal communication, August 13, 2008). The statements of these parents are supported by an experience at one school with Somali families. The school sent a notice to parents informing them about a school camp which included a list of required camp items and associated costs. Following no reply and with the school camp pending, the principal sent a Somali bilingual worker to contact the families to find out why they were not sending their children to the camp. The families indicated that while they were not against their children attending the camp, they simply could not afford the costs involved. When the principal was informed of the parents’ situation, an arrangement for easy payment was reached with the families while the school donated the sleeping bags, rain coats and other items. This allowed the parents to send their children to the camp (Bilingual worker in the focus group, personal communication, August 13, 2008).

While financial hardship was a problem affecting all families, it was reported to have a more profound effect on solo mothers; in particular those with many children attending school. It was reported to be more challenging for families when the children are at different levels and come home with different homework which requires more space and computers in the house. Families with children attending different schools also do not qualify for family discounts for school donations and NCEA fees.

Workload and appointments that conflict with working hours

A heavy workload, especially for female parents, is acknowledged as a potential barrier hindering parents’ engagement with schools. The situation of women’s workload increased significantly in their New Zealand homes due to their men’s failure to contribute to household tasks. This is in spite of men no longer remaining the primary bread winners for their families. This finding is in line with disparity in household responsibility found in Sales and Gregory’s (1998) study of the Somali refugees in Britain. Their study found that while men were supportive of their wives public work, “they had not changed the gendered division of labour in the household” (p. 17). This resulted in women considering their roles chiefly to be around the house (Sales & Gregory, 1998). Most of the mothers in the individual and focus group interviews stated that they find it difficult to attend parent and teacher interviews which are scheduled after school, this being the time when mothers are busy with many competing tasks at home. Mothers also find it difficult to meet teachers and

other staff during schools hours because they are either at home with pre-school-age children or are attending English classes.

The teachers also said that parental workload was affecting their relationship with parents. Most parents were either working or attending courses during school hours, and thus they had no free time to meet with teachers during school hours. Since parents were not at home during working hours, teachers found it easier to leave messages about their children on their home phones. A teacher in the high school stated “I leave messages on the parents’ home phones because the parents are either at work or at schools when I am at school” (teacher interview, direct communication, 14/9/08). However, one of the teachers believed leaving telephone messages on home phones was not a preferred option because most parents do not call back when a message was left for them.

The male parents who were working on evening shifts, especially those working double shifts and taxi drivers, also reported similar difficulties in attending school events, including interviews, as they are either sleeping or working during the evenings when most meetings and interviews are conducted. It appears that most working parents are spending less time with children at home and this can result in these parents knowing less about their children’s daily experiences at school. It can also affect the communication between schools and parents since most often these parents may not get to see the correspondence from schools.

Interestingly, despite their workloads, mothers appear to have more contacts with primary schools than fathers. One of the reasons for this is because they meet teachers in the morning when they bring their children to school and in the afternoon when they take their children from school. Fathers appear to have more contact with secondary schools than primary schools and this may be due the high school’s tendency to first contact fathers when they have behavioural issues with secondary-age children.

Lack of transport

Apart from the workload, transport was found to be critical for mothers wishing to attend parent-teacher interviews. Mothers with a full driving license and a reasonable level of English and a car appear more likely to participate than those without. However, the study found that Somali parents’ strong allegiance to Islam and the Somali culture is affecting Somali parents’ collaboration with schools in an indirect manner as well as directly. Four parents in the focus group reported that a lack of transport was among the reasons they did

not attend parent-teacher interviews, but they also stated that they could not buy cars on hire purchase due to the interest involved in the loan which is prohibited in Islam.

Housing problems and high mobility of families

The study found that overcrowding in the families affects the quality of collaboration between parents and schools. Families who live in overcrowded homes complained about the lack of space for learning in the home and the distraction this can cause to learning. This factor impacts on parent - school collaboration because children who live in overcrowded homes do not get space to study and do their homework, thus affecting children's educational achievement and their relationship with teachers. This finding is in agreement with research carried out in the UK, which found that poor housing conditions are a major cause of underachievement in Somali children in London schools (Demie et al., 2007).

The high mobility of refugee (Somali) families may have an adverse effect on parent-school collaboration and both the children's and parents' ability to develop friendships and integrate more successfully. This transience, especially of those not living in state housing, implies that families may have to change their children's schools frequently, in spite of these adverse effects. Families' frequent change of addresses may also contribute to families not receiving some written communications from schools normally sent by post – for example letters about student attendance. Furthermore, Somali families did not notify the post office to get their mail redirected when they change address, because they were not aware that they could. In addition, none of the participants had their names listed in the phone book. Their reasons for not putting their names in the telephone book were: to avoid becoming targets of racism and gangs, living in rental property on fixed term contracts, and a desire to change their telephone providers.

Student-related factors

The parents widely acknowledged that students were sometimes an impediment to their relationships with schools. Several participants reported that their children were not passing on school reports and interview notices because they were opposed to their parents contacting teachers, especially if they thought the reports and the meetings with teachers would be unfavourable. It was also reported that students occasionally intercepted mail to their parents from school.

The parents also reported incidents where children had written letters on behalf of their parents to the schools, thereby passing on false information. In one case, a woman explained that her daughter wrote a letter to school while pretending that the letter was from her. In the letter, the daughter requested the school to allow her to come late to school daily because her mother was sick and she was required to help around the house. The mother became aware of her daughter's deception after her older son in the university saw the daughter's attendance report and contacted the school.

Some participants' comments suggested children were sometimes the main cause of their parents' mistrust of the school and the poor relationship between parents and teachers. For example, two of the participants believed their children were given detentions and stand-downs because their teachers were taking sides with other children in the school who were bullying their children. The parents arrived at this conclusion by solely relying on the information presented to them by their children.

Some children also took advantage of their parents' limited English language skills. This included manipulating information to their benefit when interpreting for their parents during meetings with school staff and translating correspondence to their parents. Researchers have previously described children picking up the host community language faster than their parents as a risk factor because it diminishes parents' capabilities and skills to guide and support their children's upbringing (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, cited in Greenman & Xie, 2005).

The participants brought up stories of families where children have put themselves in charge of their families while taking advantage of their parents' limited English. This was more common with teenage boys from female-headed households than those from households which are headed by men. Some families were reported to be no longer in a position to exercise any parental authority over teenage children whom they originally sponsored to New Zealand as their biological children. These children had lost their biological parents in the war in Somalia and fled with their current families, who were either friends or distant relatives. Some of the older teenagers left the families they arrived with and live in flats and are therefore no longer under their care. However, neither parents nor teenagers can disclose their relationship breakdown to the authorities, including schools, as they fear the consequences of the authorities knowing that they are unrelated. It was also reported that some parents cannot control these informally-adopted children. Some of the children even

hold the families to ransom knowing that they could be in trouble for lying to the immigration department.

It is clear from the feedback from some teachers, parents and students that children are more likely to cause a communication breakdown between schools and their families if the teachers' feedback is not in a child's favour. For example, four out of the 15 students in this study said they were unhappy if their teachers did not give positive feedback to their parents about their school performance, because their parents sometimes used corporal punishment if negative feedback was received from teachers. This implies that children are likely to facilitate the collaboration between their parents and teachers/schools, when they are engaged, performing well and expect that their teachers will provide positive feedback to their parents.

In addition to causing communication breakdowns, children can affect the collaboration between parents and teachers in other ways. This includes branding a negative picture to parents about the receptiveness of their schools and their teachers, leading to parents holding a negative opinion about the school. For example, some parents in the study were of the opinion that some of their children's teachers were racist and so were intentionally failing their children. The parents formed this misguided perception toward teachers by simply relying on the information they obtained from their children. On the other hand, children also appeared to influence teachers' expectations of parents in relation to parents' ability to engage with teachers. This also suggests that children can create potential mistrust and misguided perceptions between parents and school staff, which are harmful to the collaboration process. This finding supports Epstein's (2001) finding, which asserted that the level of influence children have on their parents is equivalent to the level of influence that parents have on their children. She also asserted that children are key agents in parent - school collaboration and should therefore be treated as an active partner in the planning process. A similar situation of communication gaps between Somali parents and schools also exists in the U.K. Two secondary schools in Lambeth have developed mentoring programmes for the Somali parents to assist in bridging the gap between the Somali parents and schools (Demie, Lewis, & McLean, 2008).

7.3 Section 4: What Model/Models of Parent - school collaboration Suit the Refugee Parents and Schools?

To respond to the question of what models of parent - school collaboration best suit the refugee families, it was essential to reflect and define the problems that needed to be tackled to achieve effective collaboration between parents and schools.

7.3.1 Defining the problem

In the previous chapter it was found that the refugee families in this study were generally deprived and marginalised in a variety of ways when they arrived in New Zealand. Their state of marginalisation is the consequence of the difficulties the families went through in Somalia, during the flight process and in the refugee camps.

These findings also revealed that the families experienced further hardships in the resettlement and integration process because the system was not well responsive to their special needs. This is chiefly due to Somali refugees' linguistic, cultural and religious differences from mainstream New Zealanders, and also the absence of ethnically responsive resettlement policies resulting in mismatches between the available services and perceived needs of refugees.

In the previous chapter it was found that the families experienced further challenges in dealing with the education system; especially in the communication and collaboration with schools because schools do not recognise and take into account the differences between the refugee-background families and the mainstream families in all their dealings with families. The data showed that school staff are holding general expectations of all parents and are hence paying less attention to the disparity between refugee parents and mainstream parents. The staff are assuming that their systems of communication with parents (school memos, student progress reports, reinforcement cards, notices about teacher interviews and other general school correspondence) can inform all parents, when in fact the methods are not working well for refugee parents. Similarly, although schools may send progress reports to families that indicate the area of weakness in a child's learning there is no advice given to parents about what support they can offer to their child and how to rectify the weaknesses noted in the reports.

There is a similar difficulty resulting from unfriendly environments in schools caused by limited support for cultural diversity, which presents barriers and weakens the effectiveness of the communication and collaboration between the schools and the Somali families.

The limited support in schools for cultural diversity identified in this study is in agreement with Humpage's (2009) work, which found the environments in schools in Christchurch unresponsive to the culture and values of Somali refugees. The literature in New Zealand (Harker & McConnochie, 1985) also found the monoculture-dominated system in New Zealand education was disadvantaging families who are culturally, religious and linguistically different from the dominant Pakeha culture.

In reviewing the documents and the feedback from the staff in the participating schools, it was seen that there is a need for a major shift in school leaders' beliefs about the outcomes sought from the collaboration between parents and schools. This is because the data gathered from this study suggest that schools' collaboration with refugee parents is more to do with attending parent and teacher interviews, attending student graduation ceremonies, international days and attending disciplinary meetings. This confirmed that these schools are attaching less significance to the other benefits which the concept offers to teachers, schools leaders and the school community. It is also an indication of the schools' allegiance to the protective model (Swap, 1993) and the expert model (Cunningham & Davis, 1985) of parent - school collaboration. The protective model advocates for the role of parents to be restricted to ensuring that children attend school in a timely fashion and with the appropriate equipment. The expert model also treats teachers as specialists in children's education. In addition, both models consider parents as recipients of information and allow limited opportunities to prepare parents for their responsibility of communicating and collaborating with schools (Hornby, 2000, 2010).

7.3.2 An alternative model

The evidence reviewed in this study showed that it is essential to identify and introduce an alternative model of parent - school collaboration to the current model which is being used by schools. It is also critical that the new model is one that encourages all stakeholders, parents, students, school staff and communities to play an active role in the planning and implementation of parent - school collaboration. Beyond that, there is a significant body of research (Airini, 1998; Biddulph, et al., 2003; Bishop, 2003) in New Zealand, which calls

for an alternative approach of parent - school collaboration in which key stakeholders can share their knowledge and expertise on children's learning.

7.3.3 The process followed to identify the alternative model of parent - school collaboration

To identify the alternative model of parent - school collaboration which best suits the refugee families and can respond to the barrier factors discussed in the previous chapters, it was necessary to assess the weaknesses and strengths of the models presented in the previous chapter in relation to their responsiveness to the refugee families' needs. Table 7.3 provides an assessment on the weaknesses and the strengths of the current models, as well as introducing a proposed new model.

Table 7.3 Assessment of the weaknesses and strengths of the current models and the proposed new model

Model	Weaknesses and strengths in responding to refugee parents
The compensation model.	Places parents in the position of co-educator. It does not recognise differences in culture, or socio-economic circumstances between families, and it is poor on communication. As such, it has little relevance to the New Zealand education system.
The consensus model.	It encourages communication, but it does not acknowledge cultural or socio-economic differences, so it also has little relevance for education in New Zealand.
The participation model.	It encourages parents to be involved in specific activities that make positive contributions to education. But it does not provide the process for it to occur. It also fails to recognise cultural differences between families.
The shared responsibility model.	This model places an emphasis on the role of parents. But it ignores the special skills of teachers, and also expects all parents to have an equal level of experience, knowledge and skill.
The redistributed responsibility model.	Parents are charged with the responsibility of maintaining the child's material and cultural well-being. However, it also does not recognise the differing backgrounds of parents, and there is a lack of guidance for schools on its implementation.
Protective model.	Believes that students' education is solely the role of the school. Therefore, this model is quite remote from the process of education in New Zealand.

Model	Weaknesses and strengths in responding to refugee parents
Expert model.	Treats teachers as specialists in education and child development. It encourages parents to be dependent and passive. Secondly, it discourages teachers from having effective communication with parents.
Transmission model.	Teachers have high expectations of parents, and believe that their teaching can be more effective if they transmit their knowledge and expertise to parents. There is limited support for vulnerable parents because parents are treated equally.
Curriculum-enrichment model.	It perceives parents to be capable of enriching the school curriculum. It requires a national policy that acknowledges the extra workload and resources that are required, and provides for those.
Consumer model.	It takes the professional teaching role away from teachers, while parents are charged with certain responsibilities that teachers used to perform. It makes no provision for families who cannot provide the required level of support.
Partnership model.	Considers teachers as experts on children's education, while parents are viewed as experts on their children. It requires additional resources for schools, for teachers to be trained to work with parents of different cultures, and for parents to be up-skilled; especially those with limited English
Overlapping spheres (Epstein, 1987, 2001)	Encourages interaction between school, home and community as one, with the child as the focus of involvement.

In the search for an alternative model of parent - school collaboration, the crucial factor taken into account was to identify a model that can respond to refugee needs while ensuring that its principles are compatible with the New Zealand curriculum. In the refugee family context, parents have gone through negative experiences in the pre-arrival period and additional hardships in the resettlement process, so the ideal model has to be one which encourages opportunities for empowering parents and teachers to mutually collaborate on all aspects of children's learning. Consideration had to be given to the model's receptiveness and support for teachers and the entire school staff to develop deep appreciation for understanding families' cultures and the environment in their homes to improve their teaching practices.

The proposed new model: The empowerment model

From the variety of the models discussed in Chapter 3, this thesis proposes a combination of the partnership model (Hornby, 2000), and the overlapping spheres of influence model

(Epstein, 1996, 2001) as the best suited model for describing interaction between Somali refugee families and New Zealand schools. Chapter Three provides explanations of the key tenets of these models. The review of the literature in this study showed that an abridged model of home-school partnership (home-school partnership- literacy model (HSP-LM) has been promoted by the Ministry of Education and introduced into selected schools in New Zealand. However, this abridged model (partnership-literacy model) appears not to conform with the principles and objectives of the model of partnership discussed in the literature. The main differences between the two models lie in the later partnership-literacy model putting a strong emphasis on parents' involvement in children's literacy learning, while paying less attention to other aspects of parent - school collaboration. The partnership-literacy model was originally designed for families from a Pasifika background, but was later extended to some refugee families. The HSP-LM focuses on running training sessions for parents in their first languages in their schools to improve parents' literacy and the best approaches to contribute to their children's literacy at home. Although the partnership-literacy model in New Zealand has some merits for refugee families, it is not entirely relevant because it is only focused on literacy. Therefore, significant modifications have to be done to enhance its objectives and contents to make it conform with the principles and objectives of the partnership model defined in the literature. The aspects of the partnership models described in the literature that are not included in the partnership-literacy model promoted in New Zealand are; parenting: (Epstein, 1996), two-way – communication (Epstein, 1996, 2001; Hornby, 2000), decision making (Epstein, 1996, 2001; Hornby, 2000) and collaboration (Epstein, 1996, 2001; Hornby, 2000).

Therefore, the proposed empowerment model of parent - school collaboration for refugee families was chosen on the basis of its receptiveness to; programmes for building parents' understanding of the system of education and their roles in their children's education (Epstein, 1996, 2001), and English language skills, promoting two-way communication to share information about children's learning and concerns (Epstein, 1996, 2001, Hornby, 2000, 2011), supporting home-based learning and helping parents to support their children with homework, reinforcing curriculum activities and creating a learning environment at home (Epstein, 1996, 2001), encouraging active participation in decision-making (Epstein, 1996, 2001; Hornby, 2000) and collaborating with communities (refugees' own community, school community, the business community; Epstein, 1996, 2000).

The key tenets of the empowerment model

The principles of the empowerment model are built on the notion that parent - school collaboration can be successful when teachers and parents are both empowered. It also believes students benefit most from the empowerment of their parents.

Some of the tenets of the proposed empowerment model have previously been incorporated in Victory Village, which is a collaborative venture between Victory Primary School and Victory Community Health Centre, and it is promoted as an ideal model for low socio-economic families by the Families' Commission (Stuart, 2010). Victory is a low socio-economic suburb in the south of Nelson City with a mixed-ethnic community, and Victory Primary is a decile-3 school (Stuart, 2010). The community health centre is located on the school campus along with social services such as WINZ and a childcare centre. There is a social worker on site 2 days a week. School facilities include a home-school partnership programme, a homework academy for refugee students between the ages of 5 to 14 years, before and after school care, an OSCAR programme, and a dedicated family centre space to enable new New Zealanders to take part in a beginning English programme. Community facilities fall into three categories: one-to-one facilities, community centre programmes and community events.

The advantages of the model

This thesis argues that the proposed empowerment model of parent - school collaboration promotes building the cultural competency of teachers and school staff, and makes schools value cultural diversity and ensures that their policies, structures and teaching are tailored to the specific needs of families. The model also advocates empowering parents to build their capacity for communicating and collaborating with schools about their children's learning. The model is currently un-tested, so this is a theoretical discussion, but it has the following potential key advantages for schools, refugee parents, and children from mainstream families.

The advantages to schools: The advantages for schools include improving their cultural competency and developing their ability to design curriculum that reflects and takes into account refugee children's past experiences, and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Besides enhancing teaching quality, teachers can also become inclusive in their communication and collaboration with families of different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, teachers' increased understanding of families' cultures and values takes away

any fear of dealing with families who are culturally, religiously, and linguistically different from mainstream families.

The advantages for principals, deans, and heads of departments include becoming more familiar with the socio-economic disparities in the school community. This makes staff more committed to addressing any inequality and disparity between the refugee families and the mainstream families.

School staffs' increased understanding about the refugee families' culture and past experiences motivates them to establish new policies, systems, and opportunities for communicating and collaborating with the most marginalised refugee families who are likely to be at risk of alienation. These include making school structures and methods of communication and collaboration more responsive to the special needs of refugee families.

Because the model encourages schools to employ an inclusive approach in their communication and collaboration practices, this gives schools better chances of obtaining information and input from different perspectives, and to attract additional resources from the different families of the school community. In a similar manner, Stuart (2010) found that a degree of reciprocity occurs at Victory Village; as people are helped, so they in turn tend to help others.

School community: Among the advantages for the school community is the enhanced ethnic relations between the refugee and mainstream families, which help to reduce the racism and prejudice caused by ignorance about different cultures.

Refugee parents: As demonstrated by the findings in this study, many refugee parents have experienced numerous hardships in their home country, in the flight journey, in the refugee camps, and in the resettlement process in New Zealand. Therefore, the empowerment model promotes the concept of schools taking ownership for empowering their learner's parents and prepares them to actively participate in children's learning and school affairs.

The model also encourages a respectful, multicultural environment in schools and the breakdown of barriers posed by language and cultural differences. It encourages schools to become a hub where other mainstream service providers, such as WINZ, MSD, New Zealand Police, and NZIS can attend and explain their policies to refugee families, especially female-headed households who may struggle to find information about individual agencies' policies. This is the situation at Victory Village, where organisations such as

Budget Advice, Community Law, Community Police, Plunket, WINZ and a social worker are present on campus, along with health services.

Students from mainstream families: In addition to improved academic achievements, the application of the model would also result in mainstream students' increased interaction with students from a variety of ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds. This also prepares mainstream students to develop respect and appreciate cultural differences and allows them to deal with people of other cultures without any fear of cultural incompetency. Refugee and other NESB students also become capable of functioning effectively within their own culture while respecting other cultures.

Factors that are preconditions for a responsive Empowerment Model

Based on the data in this study, any model of partnership intended for refugee families must be built on mutual cooperation and has to have the flexibility to respond to the needs of refugees presented in the previous chapters. The findings in this study suggest several factors which appear to be preconditions of effective partnership with refugee families. These factors are; principals' committed leadership and support; shared goals between students, their parents and teachers; an inclusive school environment; school policies and guidelines that recognise and consider parent - school collaboration as a key component of their school improvement strategy and adequate resources to support schools and families to carry out effective collaboration. The influences of these factors on the parent - school collaboration process are discussed in the following sections with reference to the new proposed empowerment model.

Principals' committed leadership and support

The findings in this study revealed that principals' leadership and support play a critical role in the successful implementation of parent - school collaboration. This is because New Zealand schools are self-managed and principals have autonomy in how they prioritise their resources and programmes; Principals also have the freedom to develop policies and structures to respond to the needs of their communities (MOE, 2008).

The data gathered from the participating parents, teachers and a review of schools' documents all suggest that parent - school collaboration practices yield more positive outcomes when principals are directly involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their schools' parent - school collaboration activities. In addition, data

showed that optimum outcomes can be achieved from the collaboration between parents and schools when principals are able to demonstrate to the rest of their school staff that collaboration with parents is a key component of their schools' values and is an area of priority for schools.

Besides that, the findings also demonstrated that schools can be in danger of reinforcing the alienation that refugee families may be already experiencing in New Zealand, unless there are systems in schools to monitor the responsiveness of schools' communication methods with families, especially the most at-risk families. It is also clear from the views expressed by parents and school personnel that such alienations can be addressed when there are mechanisms in schools to identify and support families who do not have the capacity to collaborate with schools and the collaboration process is managed through an integrated approach by principals. An integrated approach refers to the process of conducting an on-going review of the communication with families and providing additional support to those who are lacking the necessary skills and time to collaborate with schools. It involves regularly reviewing school personnel collaboration practices with families and improving any area of weakness. The key roles of principals in the parent - school collaboration process can be put into the following categories.

Meeting and welcoming families on initial enrolment

Principals' involvement starts with meeting parents on their initial enrolment and on an on-going basis thereafter to inform families how their contributions are appreciated by the school. Principals' initial meeting with families can be an opportunity for both the family and the school personnel to get to know each other. Swap's (1993) work argues that the extent to which parents are likely to be involved in their children's education is reliant on how well parents feel that their contributions are being valued, and experience for themselves the positive changes that their contribution is making to their children's education. She adds that parents are likely to withhold their support when they feel that the school is not appreciative of their work, or when their support is given a low status by the school. This point emphasises the important role of principals in building the confidence of families, especially those from minority cultures who may not be familiar with the benefits of their involvement in their children's education. Furthermore, because a relationship is built on trust, principals' initial contact with parents can be important for refugee parents because it enhances their confidence and trust to engage with school staff. For example, the participating parents who took part in the individual interviews indicated that the warm

reception they received from the primary school (School A) principal on their first day of enrolment, and subsequent contacts, gave them the confidence to approach the principal and discuss any concerns they had about their children's learning. This finding supports the work of Walker, Shenker and Hoover-Dempsey (2010, p. 7) which asserted that "of critical importance is a commitment by the principal to establish and maintain trusting, respectful, responsive communication between school personnel and parents".

On-going meetings with families after enrolment

The findings also suggested that principals' on-going meetings with families are essential for the schools to learn more about the conditions in the families and their special needs, and identify any barrier hindering parents' collaboration with schools. Principals' on-going meetings with families are critical to the collaboration between schools and refugee parents, since marginalised refugee parents are likely to be invisible to school staff and can result in their problems remaining unresolved. On the other hand, the study showed schools are likely to devise solutions for families' special needs when the realities in their homes are exposed to senior staff, especially school principals. For example, the principal of the primary school (School A) in this study raised funds to support families who could not afford the costs of sending their children to school camps. This support was put in place when the principal became aware that the reasons several parents were not allowing their children to school camps was because they could not afford the costs. The feedback from the principal of this school also points out that when the principal found out that Somali parents were not allowing their children to attend school camps because they were unsure of the availability of Halal food and sleeping arrangements for their children, the school started to provide Halal food and a space for children to perform their prayers during the school camp. The school also took some Somali parents to the school camp site to show them the sleeping arrangements for the children, and a Somali bilingual worker was requested to accompany the children to the camp as a way of building parents' confidence. This school also engaged a Somali bilingual worker to translate school correspondences and to explain to parents the contents of their children's reports after the principal found out that most of the parents were struggling to understand the school correspondence. This suggests that principals' personal involvement in different phases of the parent - school collaboration process offers more benefits to families who have less capacity to collaborate with schools. It supports Epstein's (1987) work, which suggests that principals who delegate the task of

connecting with families to their administrative staff and teachers are at risk of alienating the most vulnerable families.

The development of structures, policies and guidelines to promote parent - school collaboration

Other key roles of principals in this process which also benefit families from minority cultures include the development of structures, policies and guidelines that can create inclusive environments, where parents of minority cultures can feel a sense of welcome. Principals can create such an environment by ensuring that the task of building effective relationships with parents is not the role of a particular staff member, but instead is built into every staff job description and is taken into account in staff performance appraisals and staff appointments. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence noted that the structure in schools, the quality of the planning, and how parent - school collaboration-related activities are constantly reviewed, all play a vital role in developing positive collaboration between the different parties (Epstein, 1987).

Research carried out by the New Zealand Education Review Office (ERO, 2008) noted that the quality of collaboration between parents and schools is contingent upon principals' beliefs and attitudes towards the benefits of building relationships with parents. The literature (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009) also revealed pronounced differences in principals' beliefs and attitudes. These differences determine the outcomes which are to be achieved from parent - school collaboration, while also shaping the extent to which principals care about the success of their parent - school collaboration. It appears that principals' attitude and perception about the role of parents in the education of their children is a determining factor for school staff attitudes and perceptions about collaborating with families.

Educating school personnel and mainstream parents about the refugee families' culture and experiences

The data in this study suggest that educating school staff and the mainstream families is a precondition for parent - school collaboration success because it helps to overcome any ethnocentric-deficit view that staff and mainstream families may have about refugee parents. The feedback from teachers and parents in the individual interviews demonstrated that school staff's degree of understanding about the backgrounds and the specific

challenges that refugees have faced in the refugee process and in New Zealand determines their responsiveness to the needs of those families.

This study showed that the high school in this study was not currently accommodating the special needs of refugee families, because of a misconception and stereotypical belief held by the school personnel. The data from teachers' feedback showed that most teachers were convinced that parents were not capable of supporting their children because of their limited knowledge of the system and low English proficiency. Such negative beliefs also appear to impose a negative impact on the existing collaboration between parents and this school, because it can lower the motivational support from teachers and may result in the risk of the families believing that they are not expected to make any contribution to their children's learning. Parents' limited English can thus be used by both parents and teachers as an excuse for withholding their support to parent - school collaboration.

Shared goals between students, their parents and teachers

Results from this study showed that shared goals between students, their parents and teachers are essential for parent - school collaboration. The data suggest that good interpersonal relationships between children, teachers and parents are essential for effective parent and school relationships. The study consistently showed that children are important players in the relationship between parents and schools. For example, just over half (8 out of the 15) students in this study reported their role in the collaboration between their parents and their schools was to pass correspondence and messages between their parent and their schools. In addition to transmitting general information, a significant portion of the students (6 out of 15) also reported helping their parents with translation of school notices and progress reports.

This supports Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein, 1987, 2001), which argues that parents, children, teachers and communities each perform different services in the collaboration process. Epstein asserts that because there are overlaps in their roles, the best outcomes can be achieved when all players understand their distinctive roles and are able to develop shared goals and defined responsibilities which are clear to all parties. Table 7.4 shows an outline of a parent - school collaboration plan.

Table 7.4 School plan to support parent - school collaboration

Activity	Goal/objectives	Designated responsible person/persons	Resources	Timeline

School policies and guidelines that prioritise parent - school collaboration as a key component of the school improvement strategy`

Like any other programme, the partnership approach requires effective policy and guidelines to manage accurately planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

Therefore, it can be more successful when it is embedded in the school strategic plan and is considered by every staff member as an important priority area for the school which all staff will be assessed on in their performance appraisal. Schools should have a parent - school collaboration policy which encourages the process of collaborating with families to start from the time when parents are enrolling their children. The policy should suggest to the schools' staff how to use the enrolment process as an opportunity to learn more about refugee parents' lifetime experiences. By collecting parents' profiles at the enrolment point, schools can identify early on the most vulnerable families and plan to accommodate these people. This includes parents with limited English and single parents who will struggle to access the information in English or in many cases not attend meetings because of circumstances in their families. This information must be shared with teachers to help them understand the circumstances in their learners' families.

Once at-risk families have been identified, the school policy must provide guidelines on how to develop plans and initiatives to empower at-risk families, so that they do not become alienated from the system. For example, they may suggest that teachers make more frequent face-to-face contacts with parents in this category. Also, since vulnerable families can be confronted with different hurdles which can stop them from attending interviews, the policy should encourage teachers to create opportunities for subsequent interviews with parents who fail to attend the normal interviews. The venues for such meetings and interviews must be non-threatening for the refugee parents and be easily accessible.

Schools with refugee and NESB families should consider developing policies which suggest how to accommodate different religious occasions with the least disruption to children's learning.

Because children can be influenced by their parents' attitudes, schools' policies on cultural diversity should explain how to educate mainstream parents on cultural diversity and encourage them to take responsibility for promoting multicultural principles in their families.

A designated senior staff member to oversee and coordinate the planning and implementation of parent - school collaboration

Because of the challenges involved, the implementation of the parent - school collaboration strategy discussed above must be overseen by a senior staff member who is sympathetic to the concept and has good cross-cultural and refugee understanding. The role of parent - school collaboration programmes coordinator must be part of the school structure and should be widely known to the families. The coordinator should work alongside teachers to develop collaboration plans for individual families, while taking into account differences in families' circumstances. The designated coordinator should also be assigned for overseeing the processes of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the methods used by their schools to collaborate with refugee families.

Victory Village has a Centre Co-ordinator (Stuart, 2010) who acts as a go-between between members of the community and the various service providers. A similar position, known as a "navigator", is provided for within the Whanau Ora model (Turia, 2010). Whanau Ora is a structure whereby social services are provided according to Maori cultural values. The role of the navigator is as a case manager who looks at all of a family's issues and tries to deal with them in a unified way.

Clarified roles to parents, students and teachers early rather than surprise

The feedback from most participants in this study indicated that most parents are not familiar with their roles in their children's education and the expectations of schools. Also, given that parent - school collaboration is a collaborative process, the responsibility of parents in communication and collaboration with schools has to be delineated and treated as a formal contract between the family and the school. To avoid any sudden surprise, parents must be informed properly that they are important stakeholders in the children's learning process and that the school appreciates their contributions (Swap, 1993).

Two-way communication

An important aspect of parent - school collaboration is to improve teachers' effective teaching and school governance. Therefore, the focus of the communication with parents should not be only concerned with discussing problems with parents. Instead, the communication should be two-way and an on-going process with the focus on sharing knowledge and ideas on how to enhance children's education, as well as devising solutions for emerging problems. The data in this study showed that the communication process can be affected when more emphasis is placed on contacting parents only when there are problems.

Adequate resources to promote parent - school collaboration

In addition to developing key policies, managing the process and educating the school personnel, allocating resources to teachers and parents is essential to the smooth implementation of parent - school collaboration. For example, the high school (B) reported receiving funding from at least five different sources in order to maintain the operation of the family literacy programme for refugee families. A programme like this increases staff workload because of the additional time spent on proposal and report writing in addition to the time spent on monitoring and evaluating those programmes to meet funders' requirements. This fact also implies that only school that believe empowering families contributes positively to school performance are likely to invest their time in running the programmes to sustain their parent - school collaboration initiatives. These findings are consistent with the arguments which suggest that senior staff are important players in parent and school relationships because "sustainable improvements in school, family and community relationship require continuous, active, and well-informed leadership that emphasizes meeting parent, teacher, and student needs over time" (Griffith, 2001; Haynes, et al., 1989; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005, p. 115). Other literature (Epstein, 1987, in Swap, 1993) also suggests that the absence of administrative leadership can be a potential hindrance to the successful outcome of home-school programmes.

Effective interagency approach to build the capacities of families

From the perspective of the families experiences discussed in the previous chapters, refugee families have different types and levels of needs which schools alone cannot tackle, so schools must link up with other resettlement agencies whose services can improve families' capacities. For example, since employment, housing, English and access to affordable

childcare can indirectly influence parent - school collaboration, schools must link with other agencies that provide these services to refugees. The findings from the high school in this study showed that linking with English language providers and the city council enabled the school to set up a family literacy programme which provided English language, sewing and cooking sessions to refugee mothers. In addition to building parents' English language skills, the family literacy programme allowed the school to run BOT and home-school partnership training for the parents. A home-school partnership programme is one of the programmes run at the Victory Village.

Create an inclusive environment in schools

The feedback from the parents in this study indicated that refugee parents can easily be intimidated by the environment in school; therefore, it is critical that schools take measures to create an inclusive school environment which shows refugee families that they are welcomed in the school and are part of the school community. An inclusive environment can be created by using signs and symbols which represent the different families' cultures and home countries. To overcome the problem of refugee parents' intimidation, schools should schedule frequent separate meetings with refugee parents to obtain their input and familiarise families to the school environment. Refugee parents can be encouraged to become part of the school parents by organising meetings for sharing information about school's expectation of parents, school routines, disciplinary systems and the importance of completing homework and how to provide feedback to teachers. Such meetings also provide opportunities for school leaders to obtain refugee parents' perspectives, since they are less likely to attend school planning meetings. Schools may also build refugee parents' confidence by buddying them up with other parents who are sympathetic and willing to support refugee parents.

Schools can also create inclusive environments by making sure there is appropriate space for children to perform their prayers, ensuring the availability of Halal food in the school cafeteria and permitting alteration to the school uniform to accommodate the Islamic dress requirement. Schools should identify and acknowledge the key Islamic occasions in the planning process. For example, planning parent and teacher interviews should be avoided during the Ramadan.

Positive ethnic relations between the refugee community and the host community

One of the most significant findings is that negative relationships between the host community and refugee families can be detrimental to the collaboration between parents and their children's schools. The families in this study reported the experience of racism when applying for employment, renting properties and walking in the street. Women reported experiencing exceptional racism due to their distinctive dress. The study found that the experience of street racism can make parents intimidated by school environments and thus weaken their confidence to visit schools and attend parent and teacher interviews. Aside from their personal experiences, parents' confidence can also be affected by the racism which their children may experience in their schools and on the streets.

Because schools are the main venue in which refugee parents and other parents meet, schools should put effort into cultivating positive ethnic relations and bridging the cultural differences between the two groups. The study further found that an effective relationship can be developed between the refugee families and the mainstream families when schools involve the refugee parents in the school programmes alongside parents from the mainstream community, in for example, international days. This is illustrated by, a review of documents obtained from School B, which stated:

The programme [international day] improved the cross-cultural understanding between all cultures in the school for positive community relations in a culturally-diverse school. The programme supported participants from refugee backgrounds to build their capacity and networks to identify the advantages that their culture brings them and to use these to their advantage (Document review, 5/11/10).

Similar sentiment was echoed by a School A official who stated that more Somali parents were involved in school events and the home-school partnership programme alongside other parents. This informal network created between refugee families and other mainstream families through involvement with school programmes, appears to create positive relationships between the Somali families and other families from the mainstream community. For example, at least two mothers in the study reported establishing close relationships with two New Zealand families from the same school who were hosted by the Somalis during the major Islamic holidays. The local families also reciprocated the hospitality for the Somalis during their holidays. It is becoming increasingly clear that this interaction between the refugee parents and other families from the mainstream community

is creating additional support for the refugee families. Such support includes helping refugee families with job searching and helping them to understand the New Zealand way of life, which is consistent with findings from the literature illustrating that when social capital in the community is increased it provides extra support to the disadvantaged families. Sam Redding (www.minedu.govt.nz accessed on 20/1/08:27) argues that: “When the families of children in a school associate with one another, social capital is increased, children are watched over by a large number of caring [adults] and parents share standards, norms and the experiences of child-rearing” (p. 27).

Empower vulnerable families through information about school programmes, career and family literacy programmes

The main argument in this thesis is that most Somali families are vulnerable because of the hardships they went through as refugees and in Somalia, which is a less-developed country. Further economic hardships, discrimination, poor housing, and restricted access to labour markets and English language training in New Zealand exacerbated their situation. These experiences of disempowerment impact on parent - school collaboration in a variety of ways. For example, the study found that the high vulnerability of Somali families, especially the female-headed families caused teachers and school staff to develop a deficit perception about Somali parents’ readiness to collaborate with schools. Some teachers deem that the parents are too vulnerable and less empowered to support their children and meet schools’ expectations. Because of their deficit perception, some teachers became too nervous and not confident to initiate any direct dialogue and interaction with parents. Instead, the teachers prefer using bilingual workers as their communication brokers.

The problem associated with relying too much on the bilingual workers is that those workers are employed on fixed-term contracts; therefore, the communication line between parents and the school staff breaks down when these bilingual contracts terminate. The bilingual workers are employed on fixed terms because their funding is not on-going and is available only to schools with refugee children who are at risk of educational failure.

The findings from the programmes in the high schools in this study showed that, aside from developing parents’ literacy skills, family literacy programmes can lift parents and school collaboration. These sessions could focus on the education system in New Zealand, how schools work, the rights and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children, how to create a home environment which supports learning and the different career options

in New Zealand. The literacy teachers can also introduce to learners topics such as the disciplinary systems in schools and the law regarding discipline in New Zealand, how to act and make the most of parent and teacher interviews, and the role of parents in children's learning processes. Family literacy programmes can yield better results when the individual parent's learning goal is aligned with the needs identified from the assessment done in the enrolment process.

The feedback from the high school also showed that parents were empowered by the career planning programme which that school implemented to increase parents' understanding of different career pathways, and the increased understanding that arose from it equipped parents with important information for making sound decisions about their children's education, such as choosing the right subjects and giving their children the right advice about an appropriate career pathway. Similar feedback from the parents showed that their increased links with their children's teachers is a source of empowerment, because parents become aware of their children's abilities and interests. This increased understanding assists parents to provide the right support for the children at home. For example, some parents in this study reported engaging private tutors for their children after they were informed by teachers that their children were struggling in some subjects. Hamilton & Moore (2004) stressed that parents' education programmes are an essential part of parent - school collaboration. For that reason, he suggested that schools put in place mechanisms to teach refugee parents the language of the host community.

Conduct monitoring and evaluation on the effectiveness of the communication and collaboration between the school and families

The purpose of monitoring and evaluating the collaboration between parents and schools is to help schools identify their types of communication with families, identify existing shortcomings and any problems they cause to the overall school performance. Refugee parents may not respond well to survey questionnaires, so on-going meetings should be held with different families to assess and discuss how parents are satisfied with the methods of communication and identify any factor likely to hinder the collaboration process. Because of the many factors that can affect schools' communication and collaboration with families, the evaluation exercise should not be confined to assessing the effectiveness of the methods of communication but should instead cover all aspects of schools' practices. Table 7.5 explains areas that should be covered in the monitoring and evaluation of parent - school collaborations.

Table 7.5 Areas schools should cover in monitoring parent–school collaboration

Vision	Yes/No
Does the school have stated and widely agreed vision to promote communication and collaboration with families?	
Does the vision encapsulate the NEG, NAG, Human Rights in Education and ethnic responsiveness perspectives?	
Staff	
Does the school have professional development for all staff in home and school collaboration and cultural competency and working with bilingual workers?	
Students	
Does the school have effective programme for promoting ethnic relations to support the integration between refugee students and their families’ integration with other families and students’ from the host community?	
Does the school have policies for anti-bullying and racism and how are these practiced?	
Families	
Does the ethnic make-up of school BOT represent the different ethnic groups in the school?	
Does the school use the enrolment process to gather adequate information on parents’ formal education, English language proficiency, understandings of the system and the circumstance in their families?	
Is the above information shared with the classroom teachers?	
Does the school have a process for assessing the effectiveness of the communication with individual families?	
Do teachers have access to appropriate interpreters?	
Are all families given access to additional support to understand their children’s report and examination results?	
Curriculum and teaching	
Are resources and materials that teachers are employing reflecting on Human rights perspectives and the experiences and learning styles of a diversity of learners.	

7.4 Conclusions

This chapter presented the families’ experiences of dealing with schools. It looked at the families’ experience in the initial enrolment, and how the systems and policies in schools responded to the communication and collaboration between the families and schools after enrolment. The chapter presented key barriers and challenges confronted by families and

schools in their collaboration process, and proposed a new model of parent - school collaboration suggesting how schools can practically implement the model.

Many barriers to effective communication and collaboration were noted. These included factors during enrolment when schools failed to collect information on families' refugee experiences or any condition they may have experienced as a result, or on negative experiences in New Zealand likely to affect their ability to participate in their children's learning. It noted that schools provided little or no information about methods for assessing children's learning progress, about the disciplinary system, or about school governance. However, most parents did not ask for clarification on these matters. In addition, teachers tended to have unrealistic expectations of parents.

Bilingual workers were the preferred method of communication in the primary school. In the high school, reports, NCEA results, parent-teacher interviews, general correspondence, and telephone calls were used as communication methods. Children were key players in two-way communication, but at times they could be obstructive.

The failure of schools to recognise refugees' special needs hindered collaboration. Schools tended to practise the expert and protective models of parent-school collaboration, which did not suit refugee families, and the communication methods, especially parent-teacher interviews, were not working well. Issues associated with the poor effectiveness of communication included refugees' poor English comprehension, a lack of cultural awareness by teachers, the complicated structure in the high school, high teacher workload, an intimidating environment in the high school, a lack of national policy guidelines and lack of specific funding for parent-school collaboration, as well as limited recognition of the need for parent-school collaboration in teacher training.

The empowerment model of parent - school collaboration proposed in this thesis considers collaboration between parents and schools as multi-dimensional and broad-based, with a prime focus on building mutual collaboration and responding to schools' and parents' needs. The proposed model encourages schools with children of refugee families to employ an individualised approach in the planning and implementation of parent-school collaboration. The model also advocates for schools to treat parents as true educators and partners in the education of children, thereby encouraging school personnel to increase their understanding of the refugee families. The model suggests the following dimensions as the framework for effective collaboration: developing a shared vision and goal between parents and teachers;

removing barriers to two-way communication and collaboration; linking school-based and home-based learning so they can complement each other; encouraging parents to participate in school decision-making; encouraging parental involvement in school-based activities; and empowering teachers and parents to increase their skills to carry out mutual communication and collaboration. This study is grounded in established theoretical frameworks and the empowerment model that is proposed would, therefore, be worth considering when addressing the challenges of improving education for other refugee communities and in other contexts.

Victory Village in Nelson is an example where collaboration and communication have been achieved by empowering families. The venture has been highly successful; as well as achieving positive health, social and recreational outcomes, the educational statistics for Victory Primary School are impressive. Between 2000 and 2009, literacy increased from 57% of the national average to 88%, numeracy from 55% to 89%, the attendance rate from 87% to 94.5%, and the annual family turnover rate has dropped from 56% to about 12% (Stuart, 2010). The school has gone from having high levels of stand-down and truancy to none, and referrals to CYFS have dropped. Stuart considered that his research could not show a causal effect between the work at Victory Village and these outcomes, but he stated that "...participants [in the research] were very positive about the difference that Victory Village was making, and the data were encouraging". Of course, the bulk of the students at Victory Primary School are not refugees. Nevertheless, its educational results illustrate what outcomes might be achieved given the right conditions, in which the school has become a hub for support programmes to empower refugee and other disadvantaged parents and their children.

Chapter 8 provides the overall conclusions for the study, recommendations, the study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Summary of findings

Chapter 7 discussed the respondent families' experiences of communicating and collaborating with schools and the challenges confronted by the parents and schools in the collaboration process. The chapter presented barriers to effective communication and collaboration, and identified causative factors. It also presented an analysis of the current models of parent - school collaboration, including their limitations and strengths in relation to their responsiveness to refugee needs. Finally, the chapter proposed a new model of parent - school collaboration that schools could follow to carry out effective communication and collaboration with refugee parents.

This conclusion summarises the findings and presents recommendations, considers the limitations of this study, and makes suggestions for future research.

This thesis is a detailed study of the communication and collaboration between Somali refugee families and their children's schools. It presents research that takes account of the impacts of refugee families' pre- and post-arrival experiences as well as the policies in schools.

The study extensively investigated the families' experiences of migrating and resettling in New Zealand, and the responsiveness of the communication practices and policies in schools to the families' needs. These areas were investigated by face-to-face interviews and other forms of data gathering, followed by an analysis of the data. Theories of resettlement, assimilation, integration, trauma, and parent - school collaboration provided the theoretical framework for the discussion in the study.

The information gathered for this study showed that despite all Somali refugees originating from the same country and sharing the same culture, language, and religious beliefs, there are significant differences among the refugees themselves based on social class, gender, urban/rural lifestyle, previous education, spoken languages, and work experience. All these contribute to significant differences in how people cope and respond to the challenges experienced in the resettlement process, and in communication and collaboration with schools.

The study found that the Somali refugee families were generally deprived and marginalised when they arrived in New Zealand. Their state of marginalisation was the consequence of the state of impoverishment and deprivation that the families went through in Somalia and the subsequent hardships experienced in the flight process and in the refugee camps. The adversities from these experiences were heightened by new challenges that the families experienced in New Zealand because the resettlement services and the support for refugees were not well prepared to respond to their special needs. The areas of resettlement that were of major concern to the families were accessing education, employment, health, and housing, and dealing with prejudice from the host community. Women experienced additional hardships in the resettlement process because of the gender disparity they have sustained from the home country (Somalia) and because New Zealand's resettlement policies and support for refugees do not acknowledge and accommodate the special needs of refugee women.

The refugees' limited educational background, and particularly their generally poor conversational and written English, were found to be major barriers to parents' communication with teachers, participation in school decision-making and becoming involved in other school-based activities. There was a lack of English language training tailored to the refugees' particular needs.

Parents with limited English also experienced further problems of overcoming the difficulty of helping their children to maintain the Somali cultural heritage in the secular culture of New Zealand society. The problems result from children integrating faster than their parents, as they learned the New Zealand host community language faster than their parents. This was found to cause communication breakdowns between the children and their parents; to diminish parents' abilities to guide and support their children; and can also result in communication barriers between parents and schools when the students misrepresent their teacher or school.

The study demonstrated that families who were too vulnerable to support their children and collaborate with schools received limited support from their children's schools. There is strong evidence showing that despite Somali families having cultural, linguistic, and financial barriers to overcome, teachers and principals do not fully understand, acknowledge or accommodate the existing differences between the Somali families and mainstream New Zealand families. As a result of the absence of targeted policy and support service for

Somali refugee families in schools, there is a significant clash between New Zealand's secular state education system and the cultural, language, and socio-economic circumstances of Somali families. Therefore, the most vulnerable refugee families miss out on crucial information that hinders their participation in school decision-making and alienate them from other forms of communication and collaboration practices with their children's schools.

The lack of a targeted policy and support in schools for refugee parents was also hindering the two-way communication and collaboration between the refugee parents and their children's schools. This was found to have disadvantages for both teachers and the Somali parents. It disadvantaged teachers by weakening their effective teaching since teachers cannot gain increased understanding and knowledge about their refugee learners' past social, emotional and educational experiences. Parents also become disadvantaged because they cannot learn about the values and expectations of their children's schools or the available support and learning programmes in schools.

A key barrier to schools' collaboration with Somali families identified in this study, is the schools' limited understanding of and importance attached to such collaboration. The schools are simply not treating parent - school collaboration as a crucial component of school development programmes and this is why schools' communication with parents tends to occur only when students break the school regulations. In these situations, the parents are invited to school only to get informed of the actions the school has already decided to take. Such approaches have the effect of obstructing voluntary participation by refugee parents, since parents are only called upon in unconstructive circumstances and to hear bad news about their children. They are, therefore, made to feel embarrassed to meet staff and they become threatened by the environment in the school.

The limited emphasis and significance that the schools are attaching to communication and collaboration with refugee parents can be partly linked to the absence of national policies and guidelines that define the scope, goals and objectives that are to be achieved from the collaboration with families. The absence of national policy was also found to be a decisive factor for schools not developing specific policies and support for communication and collaboration with refugee parents. The existing policy gap in this area also contributes to schools and the Ministry of Education putting minimal effort into building the professional skills of school leaders and teachers on how to plan and implement approaches to parent -

school collaboration that can respond to the needs of the increasingly diverse range of New Zealand families. This study showed that there are needs for professional development supports for teachers on how to plan and implement communication and collaboration with families whose cultural, linguistic, educational, religious or socio-economic backgrounds are different from those of the teachers. Furthermore, because there is no professional development in this area, teachers appear to be unfamiliar with or unconfident about how best to communicate with and encourage the participation of families from minority cultures.

To address the concerns identified in this study, this thesis presented a new model of parent - school collaboration that can better respond to the special needs of marginalised refugee parents so that they can achieve their children's aspiration in New Zealand education without relinquishing their Somali and Islamic identity.

The new empowerment model is a combination of Hornby's partnership model and Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model. To succeed, it requires a commitment from school principals, on-going meetings with families after enrolment, the development of structures, policies and guidelines to promote collaboration, and shared goals between students, their parents, and teachers. It is also necessary that school policies and guidelines prioritise parent-school collaboration, that there is a designated staff member to oversee it, that the roles of participants are summarised early on, that there is two-way communication, adequate resources, an inclusive school environment, and positive ethnic relationships, that vulnerable families are empowered, and that the effectiveness of communication and collaboration is monitored. There is a model for this concept in New Zealand, although it does not cater exclusively for refugees, and the Victory Village in Nelson has many of those processes in place. Key features of relevance to the empowerment model that in place at Victory include: an on-site co-ordinator and the provision of on-site child-care facilities where ESOL learners may leave their children during lessons.

The empowerment model of parent - school collaboration proposed in this thesis considers collaboration between parents and schools as multi-dimensional and broad-based. A prime focus of the model is building mutual collaboration and responding to schools' and parents' needs.

Because families vary based on education, culture, language, religion, marital status, work schedule and income, the proposed model encourages schools to employ an individualised

approach in the planning and implementation of parent - school collaboration that involves refugee families. The model also advocates for schools to treat parents as true educators and partners in the education of children, thereby encouraging school personnel to increase their understanding of the circumstance in their children's families. The model suggests the following dimensions as the framework for effective collaboration.

Developing shared vision and goal: As equal partners in children's education, parents and teachers should develop a shared vision and goal.

Identifying and removing barriers: Removing barriers to the two-way communication and collaboration between parents and schools.

Establishing links: Linking school-based and home-based learning, so both can complement each other.

Active participation in school decision-making: Encouraging parents to participate in school decision-making.

Volunteering: Encouraging parental involvement in school-based activities.

Empowerment: Empowering teachers and parents to increase their skills to carry out mutual communication and collaboration.

There are a number of complex issues to overcome before there can be effective communication and collaboration between refugee families and their children's schools. However, as seen at Victory Village in Nelson, the implementation of the proposed empowerment model would go a long way towards that goal by making the school the hub for refugee support programmes and a source of support to empower the least-empowered families.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Recommendations for central government and local government on the resettlement of refugees

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made to the central government and schools to address the challenges experienced by refugees in the resettlement and integration processes in New Zealand. In making these recommendations, it is acknowledged that there are budgetary and other restrictions which must be considered

before they can be implemented. Therefore, these recommendations should be considered as the ideal scenario.

Central and local government departments and agencies should develop strategies and policies that are ethnically responsive, resettlement orientated and linked to the resettlement strategy. The MOE, DOL and MSD should take measures to ensure their policies on refugee resettlement are compatible with refugees' priority needs because failure to do so can be a recipe for the alienation and exclusion of refugees. Any mismatch between resettlement services and the perceived needs of refugees can have the potential to reinforce the disparity and loss of opportunities that refugees have experienced in their lifetime. Attention should also be given to addressing the effects of the gender disparity experienced in the home country and the refugee camp, and the additional workload that women are experiencing in New Zealand. For example, English language lessons could be provided during hours that better suit their routine, such as when children are at school, and/or providing more childcare support.

The government sector needs to ensure that multi-stakeholder needs are taken into account and better represented when developing policies and interventions. It is also imperative that the voices of refugees are heard and that they are a significant player in determining their own futures.

In addition to the above, access to English learning is critical for both resettlement and parent - school collaboration. Therefore, it is important that English language competency should be considered fundamental to housing issues, shopping, education, employment, social interaction and societal participation rather than focusing more on courses with employment outcomes that many refugees, especially women, cannot access.

It is also important that English learning opportunities are provided to all refugees and funded adequately to ensure that whatever English language profile a newcomer has, their acquisition needs can be met. Authorities must comprehend that money spent on language development for refugees is an investment not a cost, as all stakeholders benefit from such an approach. Without comprehensive, logical, relevant English language packages designed accurately for a range of learner profiles, refugees remain marginalised in the new society.

The important role of first language maintenance should also be acknowledged and treated as critical to integration. Bilingual tutors should be trained and adequately resourced to help

nurture refugees' first language and to help children maintain their cultural and language identity.

Teachers' education at the university needs to incorporate courses on the benefits of meaningful parent–school interactions, and how those can be achieved.

8.2.2 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

Since the quality of schools can be best judged by the effectiveness of their communication and collaboration programmes, and leadership comes from the top, the Ministry should create systems that can inform parents about the amount and quality of communication and collaboration individual schools have with parents. For example, the Ministry should encourage ERO to make parent - school collaboration a priority for ERO in their visits to schools and to make their findings publicly available to assist parents to make informed decisions when choosing schools for their children. ERO's areas of investigation should focus more on: the amount of information collected and passed to parents during enrolment; the process for identifying and empowering vulnerable families; methods for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the communication practices with families; and the inclusiveness of the school environment. The ERO investigation should look into what systems are in place for encouraging refugee and NESB parents to take an active role in school planning meetings and BOT elections.

The Ministry should develop policies for parent–school collaboration, and establish guidelines for planning, implementing and monitoring parent–school collaboration.

Schools appear to be willing to instigate a number of measures to improve parent–school collaboration, but in many cases they are hamstrung by a lack of resources. A key barrier for schools to establish effective parent - school collaboration is teachers' workload. Therefore, a possible mechanism for addressing this situation of teachers' workload is for the Ministry of Education to allocate extra funding to schools that can be used for teacher release time to allow additional face-to-face interviews with parents.

Schools can also use such special funding for hiring bilingual workers who can assist schools with translation, interpreting and home visits, as well as up-skilling parents. Alternatively, if such a bilingual worker (preferably a female) could be hired by the MOE, and be available for schools to draw upon as required, it would remove the need for that service to be duplicated across a number of schools and it would make the position more

secure. The bilingual worker or workers should be selected in part for their discretion, so that parents can be assured that discussions will be treated in confidence.

Workshops to train refugee parents in important aspects of education in New Zealand life should be run, or funded by, the MOE. These should cover such topics as:

- the education system in New Zealand;
- the role of Boards of Trustees;
- the rights and responsibilities of parents in children's education;
- the role of parents in the learning process;
- making the most of parent-teacher interviews;
- creating a home environment for learning;
- the disciplinary system in schools;
- the law regarding discipline in New Zealand;
- where to obtain resources for children;
- career options; and
- how to improve their own English.

8.2.3 Recommendations for schools for the planning, implementation and evaluation of parent - school collaboration for refugee families

Since enrolment is the parents' first contact with schools, the process should be treated as the official agreement of partnership between parents and schools. Because families can be more open and eager to receive new information and ideas about their children's new school, principals should use their initial meeting with families as an opportunity to welcome families into the school and provide them with information about school programmes, the support available to the families, key school policies and a calendar of key school activities and how parents can get involved. A formal agreement should be reached with families on the methods of communication that can be conveniently used by families and the school personnel to collaborate with each other. Principals can also emphasise to the families the important role they can play in their children's education and how their collaboration is valued by the school. The discussion with parents must stress that the school expects all parents, including those with no formal education or English, to team up with teachers in the education of their children. Parents with limited education should be

informed that they can support their children's learning by creating a good environment in the home, setting aside a time where possible and a place for learning and encouraging children to speak their first language in the home. Such parents should be encouraged to seek the support of bilingual workers and other parents of the same community to enable them to engage with their children's teachers and overcome the feeling of inadequacy to approach school staff. Parents should also be informed about the school's expectations, how the two-way communication between the family and school can be carried out, its frequency, and the support that parents can access from the school. This information should be presented to parents in their first language, along with the information pack that parents receive in the enrolment process. The process should be used as an opportunity to know about the resources in the families and the circumstance they are going through in order to determine the right support.

Because there are differences in the resources in the families and parents' abilities to communicate and collaborate with schools, schools should put mechanisms and procedures in place to assess how and whether the methods and strategies used for the communication and collaboration with parents are working well for different families. One of the mechanisms schools may consider putting in place is to develop procedures to ascertain whether parents have received school correspondence, and understood the contents. Also, given parents' limited English language proficiency and considering that Somalis stem from an oral society that may contribute to many parents not bothering to read school notices or school reports, frequent face-to-face meetings may be the best approach to keep the Somali parents abreast of issues affecting their children's learning.

For the purpose of monitoring, teachers should be required to maintain records of all their communications with individual parents. The records should indicate the type of communication that teachers had with parents, the reason why the contact was made, who initiated the contact, the decision adopted from the meeting and whether any follow-up is required. Results of this exercise should be shared with families and a joint agreement should be reached with individual families about how to address any area of weakness highlighted in the evaluation.

This study has shown that, critical to the success of parent - school collaboration, is teachers' professional ability to become familiar with the circumstances in the families and to gain the confidence and trust of parents. Therefore, professional development for teachers

must focus on how to understand more about parents' past experiences and the challenges they are going through currently in their home and any difficulty they are experiencing with the school. Because of the background that the refugee parents come from, teachers should be encouraged to write correspondence to parents in plain English and to avoid using jargon and acronyms in their communication with parents. This also applies to verbal communication. Progress reports should explain and advise parents not only of the areas of weakness but also inform parents how they can rectify the areas of shortcoming noted in the reports and the sources from which parents can seek help.

Other specific areas where schools can assist with parent–school collaboration include:

- having a programme to promote cultural diversity;
- creating an inclusive environment by the use of familiar signs and symbols;
- identifying and acknowledging important Islamic dates and avoiding interviews at such times;
- buddying parents up with willing and sympathetic mainstream parents;
- providing prayer space, Halal food in the cafeteria, and allowing alterations to the school uniform to incorporate the Islamic dress code;
- programming regular face-to-face meetings between parents and teachers;
- ensuring that school–parent collaboration is embedded in the school strategic plan;
- ensuring that building effective relationships is in every job description and taken into account in staff appraisals;
- regularly reviewing school–parent collaboration practices; and
- in high schools, having a designated contact person as the first point of contact.

8.3 Recommendations for future research

Research must be undertaken to study cultural non-adjustment and impacts that affect educational achievement in reference to refugee students. Further research also needs to be carried out to determine how New Zealand as a resettlement country is fulfilling its commitment to the UNHCR Convention, in the reception and resettlement of refugees.

Future research should identify whether the current communication and collaboration practices employed by New Zealand schools are working well for other parents from the mainstream community.

The data in this study indicate that maintaining the Islamic religion and Somali culture are critical aspects of Somali parents' expectations of their children's education. However, it is not clear the extent to which such expectations can clash with New Zealand secular education. Therefore, future research could identify how schools can help families to achieve such expectations in the context of secular education.

The feedback from both staff and the parents in this study showed that parents and school staff are strongly relying on the bilingual worker for their two-way communication. Therefore, future research could consider whether there are ways of making this position more effective, including ways to avoid the possibility of patterns of dependence.

To understand how the proposed model in this thesis might work for families of different cultures also requires additional research. Therefore, it is suggested that researchers test the model with refugee families and other families, to assess its effectiveness.

The diversity of learners attending New Zealand schools has increased since the education reform. However, it is not clear whether this issue has been given due consideration in the education policy. Therefore, there is a need for research to determine how the New Zealand secular education system is responding to the cultures and religious needs of families of differing religious and linguistic backgrounds.

Appendix A: Information sheet for individual interviews

I am currently undertaking a PhD thesis titled: From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

This thesis aims to respond to the following questions:

I: How do the refugee families' experiences in the home country, the refugee flight process and the experiences in the refugee camps impact on communication and collaboration between refugee families and the schools in their host community?

II: Given the refugee families' language, culture and experiences, how compatible are the schools' policies and systems for parent - school collaboration

III: What model/models of parent - school collaboration best suit refugee families?

It is being supervised by Dr Mick Grimley and David Small of School of Education studies and Human Development University of Canterbury.

In order to complete this research, it is necessary that I conduct interviews with people from the Somali community, pupils, Teachers and school administrators.

Research Objectives

My research area is around Somali families and schools engagement. I am particularly interested in looking at families' pre and post arrival experiences, and the experiences with schools, with particular focus on some key areas that include:

The expectations of Somali parents from New Zealand schools

The policies and methods used by schools for the communication with refugee parents

Whether the current processes and procedures employed by schools are working well for families in terms of providing a supportive environment for parents to become involved?

Barriers preventing refugee parents from actively engaging with their children's education

What support or interventions are schools providing to help empower these community/families to become active partners for children's education

This is academic research and therefore, any information collected would not be used any purpose other the study.

The process for conducting this research will consist of a semi-structured interviews and tape recording. Discussion covering the related topic will also take place.

As a participant you have the right to:

Choose not to take part in the interview

Choose not to answer any specific question

Withdraw from the research at any time

Request audiotape to be turned off

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me on:

Tel: 03 3643346 or email. hhi12@uclive.ac.nz

Further information can be sought from:

Dr. David Small on (03) 364 2268 or David. small@canterbury.ac.nz

and Dr Mick Grimley on (03) 364 2987/8117 or Michael.grimley@canterbury.ac.nz

University of Canterbury School of Education and Human Development

Thank you for reading this information and I would appreciate your signing of this statement if you agree to be part of the consultation process.

University of Canterbury Ethics Committee has approved this research

Appendix B: Statement to be signed by the interviewee

I have read the consent and understand the nature of the study

I know that I may withdraw from the study at any time

I understand the university's human ethics committee has approved this study

Signed by Interviewee _____ Date _____

Researcher _____

Appendix C: Information sheet for students

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

AssallamuAlleikum/Hello

I would like you to be part of my research which looks at how Somali parents and schools are working together to help students in their education. I am interested in talking to you and other students about what you think about how parents and schools are communicating with each other and how important their communication is for you as student.

Being part of this research means that you can pull out at any time, as well as taking back anything you might have said before. You may also refuse to answer any question that you may feel uncomfortable to answering. Agreeing to take part in this research also means that I may write about what you say, but I will not mention your name or the name of school and teacher so that other people cannot tell that it is you.

Your parents/guardians will be told about this research, and they will be asked to sign a form before you take part.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

Mahadsanid

Hassan Haji Ibrahim

Tel: 3643346 Work

Tel 03 3382510 Home

Email: hhi12@uclive.ac.nz

Appendix D: Consent form for students

I have read the information sheet about this project, and I agree to take part. I know that my name will not be used when this research is written up, and people who read the research will not be able to recognize me.

I understand what I have to do if I agree to take part in the research, and I understand that I can pull out from the research any time, and take back anything that I have said.

Name (Please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix E: Letter to parents/caregivers

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

Dear parent/caregivers

As part of my work towards the completion of a PhD with the University of Canterbury, I am currently undertaking research looking into how does the Somali refugee families' experience in Somalia, the refugee flight process and the experience in the refugee camps impact on their communication and collaboration with their children's schools. I am particularly interested in looking at the methods employed by teachers, school administrators and parents to work collaboratively to tackle issues affecting students' education.

In order to meet the requirements of this research, it is essential for me to interview your child about the helpfulness of your (parent/caregiver) relationship and involvement with his/her teacher/school. The children will be asked to respond to short questionnaire relating to their experience in the communication between the school and the family. These questionnaires will be handled in a manner ensuring the confidentiality of participating children. The final report will not have any identifiable name that may give the identity of respondents.

It is also necessary for me to observe how Parents and teachers/schools administrators interact with each other during information sharing meetings and parent interviews.

I wish to ensure the confidential nature of information collected as part of this research. Teachers, parents and students taking part in this research will not be identified by name in the final report of this research.

If you wish to contact me to discuss any issue related to this research please contact me at:

03 3643346 Work

email: hhi12@uclive.nz

Thank you,

Appendix F: Consent to agreeing to participate in researcher observation in parent- teacher interview

Thank you for reading this information sheet and I would appreciate your signing of this consent statement if you agree me to observe in parent-teacher interview

I have read the information sheet; I understand the nature of the research and my rights

I know that I may withdraw from the research at any time

I understand the University of Canterbury Human Ethics committee has approved this research

Signed by Interviewee _____ Date _____

Researcher _____

Appendix G: Information sheet for focus groups

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

Introduction

Hello. My name is Hassan Haji Ibrahim. I am currently undertaking a PhD thesis titled “Talking to each other”: A study on the communication and collaboration between schools and Somali families in Christchurch, New Zealand.” It is being supervised by Dr Mick Grimley and David Small of School of Education University of Canterbury.

I am particularly interested in examining

Whether the current processes and procedures employed by schools to collaborate with parents are working well for families and schools in terms of providing useful information and a supportive environment for parents to become involved in school decision making in their children’s education.

The expectations of Somali parents from New Zealand schools

The expectations of schools from Somali parents

Barriers preventing parents and schools from actively collaborating about children’s education

What support or intervention should be provided to help empower these community/families to become active partners for children’s education?

In order to complete this research, it is necessary that I conduct interviews with parents, teachers, principals and students. I would be very grateful if you would agree to participate in a focus group discussion for my research for about an hour.

Your Rights:

As a participant you the right to:

Choose not to take part in the focus group

Choose not to answer any specific question

Withdraw from the research at any time

Anything you say is confidential and you are guaranteed individual anonymity

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way from participating or not participating in this research, and in particular it will not affect your relationship or your child's relationship with the school in any way.

Any information collected will only be used for the purpose of this research, any subsequent publications or seminars, and no other purpose

Please Note: You are responsible to keep anything said in the group confidential.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact my supervisors:

Dr Mick Grimley

Tel 03 3642987/8117 email: Michael.grimley@canterbury.ac.nz

Dr David Small

Tel: 03 3642268 email d.small@canterbury.ac.nz

If you wish to contact me to discuss any issues related to this research please contact me 03 3644436 or email: hhi12@uclive.ac.nz

Appendix H: Letter to principals

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

To. The principal

Dear

As part of my work towards the completion of a PhD the University of Canterbury, I am currently undertaking research into how schools and Somali families are collaborating to support Somali students. I am particularly interested in looking at the methods and approaches employed by schools to keep parents involved in their children's education and their beliefs about the contribution of parents in children's education.

As part of this research I would like to undertake a case study with a sample of teachers, using questionnaires, interviews and observations during parents evening at school and parent teacher interviews. Part of the observation process would involve attending parents' interviews and observation on how teachers and parents interact during the interview process. I would observe how parents participate in these meetings. Some children would also be asked to respond to simple questions to gather their views on how the communication between the families and schools is meeting their needs.

I would also like to interview you as a principal to assist in understanding how school leaders see existing links with parents and the policy and procedures the school is following to motivate parents involvement.

Any interview with participating teachers will be conducted at a mutually convenient time.

The information gathered from this research and the identity of teachers and schools will be kept confidential. It is likely that part of this data will be included in my dissertation; however, the identity of participating teachers and students will not be divulged in any way.

If you have any question related to this research please contact me on 03 3643346.

Email: hhi12@uclive.ac.nz

Further information can be sought from my supervisors on the following contacts:

Dr Mick Grimley

Tel 03 3642987/8117 email: Michael.grimley@canterbury.ac.nz
Dr David Small Tel: 03 3642268 email d.small@canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix I: Questions for parents in individual interviews

Project title: From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

The experience in Somalia

Pre refugee Experience

Gender: male () female ()

What language/s did you speak, write and read in Somalia?

What qualification/s did you attain in Somalia?

If you attained no qualification in Somalia, what are the barriers that had stopped from obtaining qualifications?

Please explain your pre-refugee lifestyle in Somalia

Have you had children in the schools in Somalia?

What was your role in your children's education in Somalia?

What methods did you use to communicate and collaborate with your children's schools in Somalia?

The experiences during the war in Somalia

Please tell me something about your experiences of the war in Somalia

How did you manage the difficulties of the war?

The experiences in flight process

Please explain your experience of the flight from Somalia to the first country?

The experiences in the 1st Country of refugee

Please tell me something about your life in the refugee camp?

How did manage to survive in the camp

The experiences in the migration and resettlement in New Zealand

When and under what immigration category did you come to New Zealand and

Please tell me something about your Journey to New Zealand?

What support did you receive when you first arrived?

What are the main difficulties you experienced in the resettlement in New Zealand?

The experiences with schools

What were your expectations of New Zealand schools regarding your children's education?

How long have your children been with the current school?

What factors influenced your decision to enrol your children in their current school?

How did you get the information about the current school?

Please tell me something about your experiences of the current school during the enrolment process. For example, who you met, what information were you asked about your family and what information were you given about the school, including its programme, policies and supports for parents

What do you see as the biggest problem/s that schools must deal with to help more communication and collaboration with your child's teachers and school?

How did you got know first about the importance of your role in your child's learning?

From your personal viewpoint, what are the schools expectations of you as a parent?

How is this different from the role you used to play in Somalia?

Do you feel supported by schools to accomplish your role as parent?

How do you personally communicate and collaborate with your children's school

What source (s) of information do you rely on most to find out information about your child's performance at school and activities happening at school?

What is your opinion on how well the current system of communication and collaboration used by schools are working for you?

What could you consider is/are the reasons the methods are not working?

Do you believe about the friendliness of the environment in your local

What do you feel is the most welcoming and what do you consider is unwelcoming

Appendix J: Questions for principals

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

- 1) Does your school have a policy for collaborating with parents?
- 2) If you have responded yes, what are the objectives and expected outcomes of this policy?
- 3) How would you describe the effectiveness of the policy?
- 4) Do all your staff have a copy of the policy? Yes () No ()
- 5) Is the policy content covered in induction for new staff? Yes () No ()
- 6) Do all families have a copy of the policy?
- 7) What else do you do to help parents understanding of the policy?
- 8) What do you do to ensure parents understanding of the policy?
- 9) Do you provide training or resources help the staff to plan and implement the policy?
- 10) In What language/languages is the policy available?
- 11) Who is responsible for ensuring the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policy?
- 12) What tools do you employ to monitor the implementation of the policy by teachers and parents?
- 14) Were parents involved in the preparation of the policy?
- 15) What are your perceptions regarding the responsiveness of your parents to your school family engagement policy?
- 16) Do you recognize difference of dealing with women as oppose to men headed households Yes () No ()
- 17) Do you put particular efforts to engage with female who are heads of their households?
- 18) Under what circumstances do you produce bilingual newsletter for Somali Parents?

19) Do you have provision for transport, childcare and refreshments for parents to attend school forums and meetings?

20) How do you gather feedback from parents about the effectiveness of your family engagement initiatives?

21) Do you have procedures for helping parents understand their children's academic progress? Yes () No () Please explain

22) Do teachers involve parents in helping teachers with the setting of students' academic goals?

23) Do Career Advisers involve parents in students career planning?

Appendix K: Questions for teachers

From warzone to Godzone: towards a new model of communication and collaboration between schools and refugee families.

Gender: Female () Male ()

Age

No. of years teaching

Subject taught

What do you think are the main issues facing Somali parents in the communication and collaboration with teachers and officials in your school?

What are the challenges facing teachers at your school about communicating with Somali parents?

Do you have more or less contacts with Somali parents compared with others

Why

Do you use different method of communication?

What methods of communication do you employ to engage with parents?

How well are the methods working?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

Appendix L: Questionnaire for students

1. Please explain how your class teacher/s, principal communicate with your parents?
For example through school notices, verbal message, telephone
2. What role you play in this communication
3. How often do your teacher/s, principals conduct face to face meeting
4. Do you also take part in these meetings and if so what is your role
5. How important do you feel is teacher and parents in interviews
6. Who helps your parents with translation in the interviews in case they need?
7. How important is this for you
8. Are you bothered by or comfortable with your parents increased communication with the school?

Appendix M: Focus groups

1. How do the experiences in Somalia, the war in Somalia and the experiences in the refugee camps affect families' resettlement in New Zealand?
2. What challenges do families experience in the resettlement process in New Zealand?
3. How do Somali parents choose schools for their children?
4. Who do parents first meet with at the school?
5. What information are parents asked and what is given parents when enrolling their children?
6. What information are parents given about the schools?
7. How do schools keep parents informed of their children's performance after enrolment?
8. What barriers do parents experience when communicating and collaborating with schools?

Appendix N: Sample of an assessment report



Centre for Refugee Education Student Report Primary Section

Surname:

First Name(s):

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Nationality:

Language(s):

First Language Literacy:

Parent(s): **Mother:**
 Father:

Reference:

Arrival:

Destination:

Previous schooling:

English literacy level:

Recommended class level:

Teacher(s):

Please note

This student is a quota refugee who spent approximately six weeks in an induction class at the Mangere Resettlement Centre.

Quota refugees may qualify for additional funding from the Ministry of Education.

Centre for Refugee Education
Mangere Refugee Reception Centre
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9367

Part 2: Student Progress

Content: has completed a six week introductory course at the AUT Centre for Refugee Education in Mangere, Auckland.

The content included an introduction to:

- the alphabet
- classroom objects and actions
- greetings
- family
- body and clothing
- food
- transport
- daily routines and weather
- language of numeracy
- numeracy concepts including money, measurement, shapes, colours and time
- rules and routines of the classroom
- cultural identity
- living in New Zealand
- personal hygiene
- using computers
- art, music and dance
- physical education
- Auckland bus trip
- library visit
- attending a powhiri
- ukulele classes

Listening:

usually listens actively and is learning to understand classroom instructions and recognise everyday vocabulary.

Speaking:

is the only Arabic speaker in class, and is quite hesitant to speak in front of others. However, when encouraged she generally can answer questions correctly and contribute to the class conversation. She is able to initiate simple conversation and make requests for classroom and everyday objects.

Reading:

enjoys looking at books, listening to stories and whole-class reading activities. She can recognise many sight words and uses phonics to decode unfamiliar words. She is able to read simple texts fluently and is working on English pronunciation of letters and blends.

Writing:

writes neatly and legibly with a developed writing style. She can copy sentences including punctuation and spacing accurately and is able to compose simple sentences.

Numeracy:

can complete simple addition and subtraction equations and is learning carrying and renaming with two and three digit numbers. She can recite numbers to 100 and name them out of sequence. can identify most colours and basic shapes and knows simple time and currency language. She is learning times tables and working on computational speed.

Strengths, abilities and achievements:

has settled in well to school routines and is always helpful and polite. She has missed some classes for medical reasons and this slowed her progress a little. has a quietly confident personality, and works well with other students. She takes care with her work and likes to complete tasks to a high standard. She has enjoyed computers, puzzles, games and developmental activities.

Key Competencies:

Managing Self

- Works independently
- Attendance and punctuality are improving

Participating and contributing

- Participates in all classroom activities
- Needs encouragement to answer questions and join conversations

Thinking and communicating

- Uses classroom clues to complete tasks
- Listens actively
- Is beginning to use problem-solving strategies
- Is developing literacy skills to assist in everyday communication

Relating to others

- Is developing group skills
- Inclusive of others, helps others

Recommendation:

That _____ be given the support of an ESOL trained teacher in order to acquire the required English language skills and be able to reach her full academic potential.

Teacher:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix O: Information and consent form in Somali

Ku Mudane/Marwo

Waxaan kula socodsiinayaa in aan ku gudajiro darasaad shahadad PhD oo cinwaankeedu yahay xirirka isgaarsinta iyo wadashaqaynta ka dhaxeeyso waalidinta Soomaaliyeed iyo dugsiyada ay dhigtaan caruurtooda ee magaalada Christchurch ee wadanka New Zealand.

Waxaan si gaar si gaar ah u daneeynaya in aan hubiyo hababka isgaarsiinta ay adeegsadaan musuuliyiinta dugsiyada wadashaqaynta waalidinta.

Si aan u dhameystiro daraasadkaan waxaa lagama maarman ah in aan xog wareysi kala yeesho ilmahaaga aragtidooda ku saabsan muhimada ay wadashaqaynta waalidka iyo dusiga uu leedahay horumarint tayada waxbarashadooda.

Waxaa lagu balanqaadaya in la xafidi doono xogta laga aruuriyo ilmahaaga, lana maldihi doono magacooda iyo dugsiyada ay dhigtaan si aan loo aqoosan. Haddii aad u bahato waxaad igala soo xiriri karta;

03 3643346

Email:hassan.ibrahim@minedu.govt.nz

Mahadsanid

Xasan Haji Ibrahim

Appendix P: Ethics Approval



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2005/79

2 September 2005

Hassan Haji Ibrahim
Education
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Hassan Haji Ibrahim

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "A Study on Collaboration between New Zealand based Somali Families and their Children's Schools: The Impact on Pupil's Emotional, social and Academic Needs." has been considered and approved.

Yours sincerely

pp 

Dr Alison Loveridge
Chair, Human Ethics Committee

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