

**From teacher in charge of reading to literacy leader – what
is the role of the literacy leader?**

An in-depth qualitative study of two literacy leaders.

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Whakataukī

Ui mai koe ahau he aha te mea nui o te ao?

Māku e kī atu

He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata!

Ask me what is the greatest thing in the world?

I will reply,

It is people, it is people, it is people!

Kia mahi tahi tātou, kia ako tahi tātou

Ka tae ki te pae tawhiti

By working together and learning together

we can all achieve.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study has been to provide a rich description of the role of the literacy leader in two primary schools. Through this study I was seeking to identify what the role of the literacy leader is and how this role is enacted. The role has been described from the perspectives of the literacy leader, a principal and five members of two school's teaching staff. The desire to better understand the role of the literacy leader is important to those in the role and those they interact with. This is particularly so for those in my position as a professional developer, working alongside both a school and its literacy leader as they undertake in-depth literacy professional development.

Literacy leaders have assumed greater responsibilities within schools since the 1999 Literacy Taskforce report which suggested a range of initiatives to better support literacy learners in New Zealand. Since this report there has been a governmental priority on literacy as a foundation learning area. Interest in literacy success for all stems from both international and national assessment knowledge. This information highlights the strength of New Zealand students in literacy but also identifies a group of students who do not perform well and continue to underachieve in literacy into adulthood. This underachievement limits the opportunities they have as adults for employment and participation in society.

There has been no formalised role description for literacy leaders or how they might enact this role. The purpose of this study therefore has been to identify the role and how it is enacted. The literacy leader role has been analysed from multiple perspectives. Participant observation and in-depth interviewing have provided a rich picture of the role and how it is enacted. It is from these insights that some clarity has been gained about the characteristics of the role, how it is interpreted by the participants and then enacted by the two leaders. The findings indicate the role identified by those participating in this study and the reality of how it is enacted, are closely matched.

The tasks of a literacy leader are complex and their dual role of classroom teacher and literacy leader adds to this complexity as they manage both positions simultaneously. This study identified that being a literacy leader requires a central focus on improved student achievement. It requires literacy leaders to provide strong leadership in literacy professional development/learning. This study also suggests that literacy leaders are seen as learning partners during the in-depth literacy professional development/learning focus where all involved are learners. The final role they play is in supporting the development of a collaborative professional learning community where all of the learning occurs.

It raises issues and questions for those who interact with the literacy leader both within the school and those outside the school in how they can support them in this role. It also surfaces the need for schools and professional developers to address how the structures they are operating within can be reorganised to afford the time needed to be effective in this role. Finally when schools, advisers and Ministry of Education enter into a partnership of learning openly demonstrating that each will learn from the other, then capacity is built across all levels of the education system in meeting the goals of improved student outcomes.

Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to provide a rich description of the role of the literacy leader in two primary schools. Through this study I was seeking to identify what the role of the literacy leader is and how this role is enacted. The role has been described from the perspectives of the literacy leader, a principal and five members, of two school's teaching staff. The desire to better understand the role of the literacy leader is important to those in the role, those they are interacting with particularly those in my position as a professional developer, working alongside both a school and its literacy leader as they undertake in-depth literacy professional development.

My interest in the literacy leader role has evolved from my work as both the literacy team leader and literacy adviser. I first tried to understand this role better in 2004, when a colleague and I drew together a group of literacy leaders from those schools where we were involved in leading literacy professional development. We decided to support these leaders with further professional development on their role. Our experiences from working with these leaders were that there were two areas where they needed the greatest support. The first was their leadership capability and the second their pedagogical content knowledge in literacy. The choice of these two areas of foci was informed only by our experience at that time, not by any formal data gathering exercise. In undertaking this study it has provided an opportunity to check these assumptions about literacy leadership and in that process to identify what the role is recognised as being from multiple perspectives and then how in reality it is enacted.

In this study therefore I have a dual lens, that of the researcher but also that of the professional development adviser. From my observations previous to this research, I believed that the in-school literacy leader is central in influencing the effectiveness of literacy learning within the school setting. It was my intention therefore, through this research project, to listen to, observe closely two literacy leaders and to critically

reflect on my assumptions around this leadership role seeking to clarify the role and how it is enacted.

In this chapter I address the historical context in literacy and where the notion of literacy leader emerged. I also outline how the role has not been clearly defined up until this point and this has created difficulties for those in positions who are supporting those in the literacy leader role.

Historical context

The importance placed on the role of the literacy leader has emerged as literacy achievement in schools continues to undergo close scrutiny by educators and policy makers (MOE, 2000). This scrutiny reflects the high interest in literacy achievement levels as well as an increased expectation of the schooling system to ensure all students achieve in literacy. Recent international test results PISA, Programme for International Assessment, 2000 and PIRLS, Progress in international literacy study, 2005/6) indicate New Zealand students perform very well in reading in comparison with other countries but have disparities in scores between different ethnic groups and a wide performance range between highest and lowest scores. This focus on literacy achievement has developed as a result of the international focus on investigating and promoting effective teacher practice. The research work of Hattie (2002), Ministry of Education (2003), and Bishop (2004) has contributed to this international focus with an increasing expectation of student achievement and teacher performance. Darling Hammond (2000) argues that the most powerful way to improve student achievement is to foster quality and excellence in teaching.

This world wide trend saw the introduction of a 'literacy hour' in British schools in the late 1990's and a 'No Child Left Behind' policy of the United States government (US Department of Education, 2001). These were two of the higher profile literacy initiatives promoted by countries that have traditionally influenced New Zealand education policy. These initiatives occurred as a result of a perceived fall in literacy levels across nations, (Limbrick, Parkhill & Smith, 2005) the connection between being literate and the ability to contribute in a functional way to the economy of wider

society (Ministry of Education, MOE, 2007e) and the changing nature of school populations (MOE, 2005b).

New Zealand is regarded as having always displayed a high interest in literacy teaching and learning. Earlier government initiatives saw such professional development/learning projects for teachers as ERIC (Early Reading In-service Course, MOE, 1977) and LARIC (Later Reading In-service Course, MOE, 1985) that reflected this interest and focus. These earlier projects focussed on teacher professional development projects in an effort to improve teaching and therefore learning. The expectation that improved student outcomes would result from improved teacher practice, was never corroborated at the time by any formal gathering of appropriate student achievement data that would show shift as a result of the professional development/learning teachers had undertaken. Today such professional development/learning initiatives would not be deemed successful unless there was an explicit link between the professional development/learning and improved student outcomes Ministry of Education (2003).

The increased focus on student achievement data and the urge to address the underachievement of certain sub groups resulted in close analysis of both national and international literacy test results. The IEA (The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Reading Literacy Study) 2000, the International Adult Literacy Survey, 2007 and the New Zealand NEMP (National Education Monitoring Project 1997, 2001, 2005 Reading) results were scrutinised to determine what student achievement patterns were evident in this country.

The findings from the international tests showed that overall New Zealand students perform well above the international average in literacy achievement but it highlighted that as a country we had the widest spread of student scores from the highest achievers to the lowest achievers, and a discrepancy in scores between the performance of Maori and Pasifika (the student group whose origins are from the different Pacific Island countries) students, and other students in this country. There was also evidence that the greatest range of scores was between classes within the same school not between schools. The national NEMP (2004) reading results supported these international literacy findings in showing there were twenty percent

of students below expected bands for decoding and comprehension and a further ten percent were of particular concern.

In the following sections I set out the influence the Literacy Taskforce had on the establishment of the literacy leader position. I outline how the newly envisaged role required teachers in the traditional role of teacher in charge of reading to assume different responsibilities. Finally I address the role that those in Professional development have to help build the capacity of those in the literacy leader role.

Literacy Taskforce

The New Zealand government's response to these results was to set up a Literacy Taskforce in 1998. This taskforce were given the responsibility of recommending actions that would not only address these identified variances in student performance but also support improvement in students' literacy levels overall. There were thirteen recommendations outlined in the Literacy Taskforce report. The recommendations covered a range of initiatives including changes to the National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2000) reflecting the importance of literacy teaching in the early years, a description of what constituted best practice in the teaching of literacy and the introduction of a range of resources for teachers including assessment tools. All the recommendations were designed to support teachers in providing high quality literacy programmes in their classrooms which in turn would lift overall student achievement performance.

Specifically two of these recommendations focussed on the leadership roles within schools. The first was that of the Principal's role in leading a school professionally, "as professional leader (the Principal) should have a thorough understanding of how learners learn as well as the ways in which the school should be organised and the teachers supported to achieve the best results possible" (MOE, 1999, p. 20). The report suggests that appropriate materials and opportunities be provided for principals to allow them to update their understanding of literacy learning.

The second was the importance of the role of the *literacy leader* in a school in raising literacy achievement. The intention was to develop the role of literacy leader who would be

a teacher or teachers with expertise in literacy learning having responsibility to provide guidance and support in classrooms as well as in the staff meetings that are part of the regular professional development of teachers. To do this, literacy leaders need a thorough understanding of best practice, including the theoretical ideas that underpin best practice and their evolving status. (MOE, 1999, p. 22)

The report suggests that support and advice be provided to develop literacy leadership in schools and that this support be best provided through a nationally co-ordinated service.

Literacy Leadership

For those who had fulfilled the traditional role of ‘teacher in charge of reading’ this new expectation of the role was dramatically different to the position they presently held. Previous responsibilities included mainly administrative tasks such as organising the reading book room, deciding the reading book budget allocation and other organisational tasks. These aspects had minor importance in the newly envisaged role. At this point it seemed a difficulty arose and this has been expressed by colleagues, locally and nationally, that the teachers’ undertaking this new role were unsure of what the role entailed. For those interacting and working with literacy leaders, principals, teaching staff and professional developers, there seemed to be this same lack of clarity around role expectations. It also became obvious that many of those who were ‘teachers in charge of reading’ did not have the knowledge and skills to become a newly envisaged literacy leader.

In recognition of this, the Ministry of Education in 2001, acknowledging the role had changed, developed a contract around Literacy Leadership which was tendered to Learning Media (MOE, 2000). This professional development contract focussed on improving principals and literacy leaders’ literacy knowledge which, in turn, would improve the quality of literacy teaching across schools. It was a ‘flow down’ or ‘drip effect’ model with a focus on school principals as literacy leaders alongside identified literacy leaders within each school. The aim of the project was improving “the principals and literacy leaders understandings of effective practice in literacy so that they, in turn, could assist teachers with aspects of their practice” (MOE, 2003b, p. 57).

The project also stated that “literacy leaders have a newly envisaged role to provide expert leadership in this curriculum area” (MOE, 2003b, p. 57). What this Literacy Leadership initiative did not define was the actual components of this newly envisaged role. The evaluation report findings for this project reflect this, indicating that there were differing interpretations of the role of the literacy leader and this had created confusion amongst participants leading to an overall lack of clarity in the role.

The aim of this research therefore, has been to explore the perspectives of both literacy leaders and those who interact with them in the primary school setting in order to better understand what the role involves. Exploration and understanding of this role will support both those who interact with the literacy leader and the literacy leader themselves. An in-depth look at this role will help in developing some common understandings and expectations of what responsibilities those in the position have and how these can be enacted thus answering the research questions – what is the role of the literacy leader and how is it enacted and what can those in an advisers position do to best support those in the role?

Literacy professional development/learning

In my work as an adviser, when a school undertakes in-depth professional development in literacy, the literacy leader has an important role. The in-depth literacy professional development/learning model, is based on the premise that the school’s literacy leader will take responsibility for literacy leadership within the school both while the adviser is present and then when the adviser is no longer working with the school in an in-depth way. The literacy leader role therefore has significance in sustaining gains that are made during literacy professional development/learning. The role of the adviser is to build the skills of the literacy leader so that they can continue the focus on improved student outcomes in literacy achievement through effective literacy teaching and learning across their school. In doing this it meets the original intent of the literacy taskforce recommendation, that a school’s literacy leader should provide guidance and support in classrooms as well as staff professional development in literacy.

The exploration of the literacy leader role has been in two schools. The findings and subsequent learning from this exploration will be beneficial to the wider school community as they grapple with supporting those in the role and achieving improved student outcomes. The identification of the characteristics of the literacy leader role enables those responsible for them to offer both support and guidance as they undertake the role. As both adviser and researcher I am convinced of the importance of this role and how it contributes to improved literacy outcomes in schools. As an adviser I have an important role in professionally supporting those in the literacy leader role resulting in improved literacy teaching practices and improved student outcomes. It is only when this occurs that New Zealand can hope to address those disparities national and international testing in literacy has exposed in this country.

This chapter has highlighted the need for a focus on this role and placed that within a national and worldwide perspective on literacy achievement. Further chapters build on this initial picture with chapter two highlighting the literature relevant to this study. Chapter three outlines the research methodology employed in this study and why qualitative research methodology is best suited to answer the research questions of what is the role of the literacy leader, how the role is enacted and how professional developers can best support those in the role. Chapters four and five define how the role has been described in two schools and how it has been enacted by those in the role and those working alongside them. Chapter six discusses the findings of the identified characteristics of a literacy leader and how a professional developer can support them in this role. Chapter seven concludes this study, suggesting what the findings will mean for literacy leaders, the professionals within the school they teach in and those they interact with in this role.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, in recent years literacy leaders in primary schools have had increasing demands placed on them. To understand the literacy leader role and the characteristics of this role it is necessary to understand those factors that influence the position, those in the position and those they interact with. To professionally lead literacy in a school in 2008 encompasses a much greater array of capabilities than that of earlier times in New Zealand (Ministry of Education 2003b). My study has found that literacy leaders are required to operate at a level beyond that of classroom teacher and into that of school leadership, literacy expert, mentor/coach and leader of the in-school professional learning community. All of this is expected to be accomplished with a high degree of what Robinson (2007) calls relational capabilities.

Further investigation and understanding of this role contributes to and builds on the relatively limited knowledge base around the position at present. It also informs the work of those in the role and those they work with both inside and outside the school setting. It provides the opportunity to better target the professional support needed to develop these leaders while a school undergoes in-depth professional development/learning in literacy. The likelihood of both improved teacher practice and student outcomes, including a continued focus on improvement in literacy beyond the year/s of in-depth professional development/learning is dependent on the skill and expertise of those in the literacy leader role and this can vary from one school to another.

Literacy leadership like literacy learning is shaped by social and cultural practices and happens within socio-cultural contexts (Douglas, 2008; MOE, 2005b). It was

important therefore that the two literacy leaders were observed in their own schools as I sought to understand

- what is the role of the literacy leader?
- what is it that they do to enact the role while undertaking literacy in-depth PDL (Professional Development/Learning)?
- how can understanding this role mean better support by a literacy adviser?

The understanding gained from the participants in answering these questions is supplemented by knowledge about literacy learning, school leadership, professional development and professional learning communities.

Literacy learning and knowledge

New Zealand adopted the pathway Ontario, Canada (Fullan, 2006) had chosen in their literacy teaching reforms for better outcomes for students. In seeking to improve literacy teaching for all and particularly for those students who are at risk of underachieving a system wide approach, from governmental level through to student outcome has been taken. This focus is of particular importance for the two sub groups over represented in the student at risk category group, Māori and Pasifika students (Flockton and Crooks, 2005; Phillips, McNaughton and McDonald, 2002). The Ministry of Education charges both schools and professional developers to address the achievement needs of these student groups. This is done through school's yearly target setting which is submitted to the local MOE offices and through contractual obligations for professional developers.

Literacy learning begins in the early years of a child's life within their own family situation (Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph, 2003; Pressley, 2001; Wyllie, 2002). This may continue in a formal way in an early childhood setting if a child attends these, (Makin and Diaz, 2002), or for all children in schooling between ages five and six. Children will have many pathways to literacy learning (Clay, 2001; McNaughton, 2003), and these pathways will be impacted on, by those early teachers in the school setting. Stanovich (1986) claims a child who begins to make less progress than their age equivalent counterparts will progressively continue to fall below their peers as

they progress through their schooling years. Stanovich (1986) refers to this as the Matthew effect where the ‘poor get poorer.’

Following *the literacy taskforce report* in 1999, and Alton-Lee’s *Best evidence synthesis for quality teaching* (2003), the Ministry of Education’s literacy and numeracy strategy has focussed on the teacher as the major lever in improving student outcomes. Both literacy handbooks for primary teachers, *Effective Literacy Practice Years 1 – 4*, *Effective Literacy Practice Years 5 – 8* (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2006b) were written with the expectation that the teacher would make this difference for learners. Unlike handbooks of the past which were based on the characteristics of the child as a literacy learner, these two were based on the actions the teacher takes to ensure each student is a successful literacy learner.

Timperley and Parr (2006), as researchers for the Literacy Professional Development Project, sought to investigate the degree to which teacher literacy knowledge impacted on the effectiveness of teaching and then in turn student learning. Shulman (1987, as cited in Segall, 2004) first advocated a need to explore the relationship between general pedagogy knowledge and knowledge of subject matter using the term *pedagogical content knowledge*. He argued that this was a missing paradigm of teaching, in that teachers needed to have a particular sort of content knowledge relating to how best to teach the content knowledge. Timperley and Parr (2006) discovered there was a significant correlation between teacher pedagogical content knowledge and student progress in writing and where there was little improvement in student progress the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge needed strengthening.

In an effort to increase the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, the Ministry of Education has undertaken a number of initiatives. The teacher handbooks described above, publications such as videos of effective practice (MOE, 2005a), teacher notes to accompany school journals (MOE, 1994 - 2008) and more recently a document entitled *The Literacy Learning Progressions* (MOE, 2007c) which isolates those skills students need at specific year levels to meet the demands of the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Teacher support has been given through documentation to help facilitate the development of teacher pedagogical content knowledge. The difficulty remains however in achieving sufficient depth of literacy knowledge to make a difference to

teaching practice (Timperley & Parr 2006). It is the repeated opportunities to learn with someone with appropriate expertise and to practice that are most likely to bring about increased pedagogical content knowledge.

The school literacy leader has a role to play in providing these repeated learning opportunities suggested above. This is only possible however if they themselves have this knowledge to share. Effective literacy leaders need to also be able to identify the level of literacy and pedagogical knowledge of each staff member in their school. They then need to be skilled enough to know how to improve this pedagogical content knowledge of each staff member.

Leadership

The educational reforms of 1989 following the *Picot Report (Picot, 1988)* saw schools become self governing entities, governed by a school Board of Trustees. The implication of such a change meant that leadership roles within schools became more expansive in the tasks to be undertaken, none more so than for those in principal positions. Traditionally schools had a local education board that carried out many of the administrative tasks they now discovered had become part of their jobs. As principals grappled with the newer responsibilities of property maintenance, personnel, finances as well as teaching and learning, some of the emphasis on the latter was compromised.

At the time of the formation of the Literacy Task Force in 1998, some concern was expressed about the imbalance between a focus on learning and a focus on the day-to-day management of a school. Both the literacy taskforce and those responsible for schools moved to redress this balance. The school planning and reporting requirements (MOE, 2001) were introduced requiring a stronger focus on student achievement and as a result, teaching and learning in schools. The national administration guidelines stated that schools were to focus on literacy and numeracy from years 1-10, especially in years 1-4. This focus continues to this day, with an ongoing requirement for schools outlined in the National Administration Guidelines (MOE, 2001) to show improvement in student achievement as a result of effective teaching and learning within the school.

The leadership goal is no longer to develop a vision, build a good school-community relationship, or to manage the school or department efficiently. The new goal requires leaders to do all those things in a manner that improves teaching and learning (Robinson, 2004, p. 40).

This return to a focus on teaching and learning required schools and school leaders to address this. To enable this to happen some sought a redefinition of the role of a school leader or leaders. Hargreaves and Fink (2004) suggest there is a requirement for a new type of school leader/leaders, those who could lead and sustain change in schools as they move forward to meet the learning needs of student in the 21st century. The term they used for this leadership was 'sustainable leaders.' Other terms used for this change in type of leadership are 'adaptive leadership, (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004); distributed leadership, (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2003) and balanced leadership, (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Although a variety of terms are used to describe this leadership, there is general consensus that schools need a greater number of leaders than in the past. School leaders need to understand the challenges and complexities of learning, change and improvement. They also need to know the actions needed to improve student outcomes.

To meet these increasing leadership demands there is a recognised need to build leadership capacity in each school not just at principal level but at all levels of a school (Fullen, 2005, Hargreaves & Fink, 2004 and Heifetz & Linsky, 2004;). This is endorsed by the English National Council of School Leadership (NCSL, 2001) who state they have been influenced by such writers as Hallinger and Heck (1996) who have a view that school leadership and its effect must extend beyond principalship and permeate the whole school community. This is supported in the programmes offered from the centre, focussing on leading from the middle. The programmes are designed to help build middle leader effectiveness. Crowther, Kagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) take this changed view of leadership even further, suggesting that alongside these leaders there are also teacher leaders, who are essential to school success because only then will there be a collective purpose and effort by all in bringing about the necessary teaching and learning changes for improved student outcomes.

This has a direct impact on the role of the literacy leader, a role and responsibility usually assumed by a teacher within the school. The Literacy Taskforce (1999) intimated this changing role when they stated, “The taskforce would prefer that government funds to support literacy learning be used to develop teachers’ expertise, for example, through the development of literacy leaders...” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 28).

The taskforce then outlined other responsibilities it thought a literacy leader should have; expertise in literacy learning, responsibility to provide guidance and support in classrooms and in staff meetings and the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy programmes at classroom level and for that group of students needing additional support. This was a dramatic shift away from the traditional ‘teacher in charge of reading’ role.

The Literacy Leadership contract (Learning Media, 2001) was the first literacy professional development/learning contract in New Zealand that had a focus on literacy leadership. The contract’s intent was to devise ways to best support people in the literacy leader role. In the evaluation of the contract (Timperley, 2003) reported the role as being unclear and therefore not necessarily achieving the desired outcome. Teacher participants in this evaluation reported the literacy leader role in both positive and negative ways. The negatives were the passive role literacy leaders had taken in many schools and their failure to develop teachers’ professional knowledge. This continued lack of clarity around the literacy leader role as identified in this contract was still difficult for those in the role. Literacy leaders needed to know what was expected of them, as did those in the school and beyond so they would then know how best to support them.

Professional Development/Learning for improved student outcomes

The New Zealand Ministry of Education invests a large amount of money into improving literacy teaching and learning. As has always been the case there is pressure from governments of the day to prove that they are getting value for money for professional development/learning (Guskey, 2002). Shifts in outcomes to show

improved student achievement and teacher practice is an expected result of professional development today (Guskey, 2002; Timperley & Parr, 2004). In the past the evaluation of professional development/learning focussed on teacher evaluation as a way of gauging its success. During the 2000's however the focus has instead been on an increase in student outcomes as a result of any professional development/learning focus.

The Ministry of Education invests in a range of ways to bring about this desired outcome for students and teachers. They fund and have done for a long period of time, the Teacher Support Services contract (MOE, 2007). This contract is delivered through local universities and provides literacy advisers/facilitators to work in primary schools with a focus on improved student achievement particularly for those groups of students considered at risk of underachievement. A more recent, shorter term literacy professional development initiative is the Literacy Professional Development project (Learning Media, 2003), an initiative that commenced in 2004 and has now extended until 2009. This project is school based, and like the Teacher Support Services contract is focussed on student outcomes through improving teacher practices and has a focus on developing the leadership of literacy leaders. Further support is offered through specialised literacy interventions. These are Reading Recovery (Ministry of Education, 2008) a daily teaching programme for those students who are performing at the lowest levels in a school at age six. The second intervention is resource teachers of literacy (RT: Lits, MOE, 2003) who teach those students who are the lowest achievers in years four to eight in a school. Investment in these initiatives supports the English statement in the NZ curriculum (MOE, 2007d) "Literacy in English gives students access to the understanding, knowledge, and skills they need to participate fully in the social, cultural, political and economic life of New Zealand and the wider world" (p. 18).

Professional development/learning opportunities have had a long history of being delivered away from a school base and in one off sessions where the expert told the teachers what to do and how to do it (Fullan, 2001; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Poskitt, 2001). Professional development today however is usually school based, situated within a school's professional learning community. This acknowledges that as new learning is constructed, the people in the setting are key variables in developing the

social constructs of the setting and the interactions that take place within that setting. Crotty (1998) states “when we describe something, we are, in the normal course of events, reporting how something is seen and reacted to, and thereby meaningfully constructed, within a given community or set of communities” (p. 64).

Professional development/learning today is expected to reflect that expressed in the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), teachers need to be inquirers into their own practice. Inquiry is central to their professional learning/development, where they identify a problem of their own practice and with support try out different solutions to this problem (Cordingley, 2003; Earl and Katz, 2002; Reid, 2004). Inquiry into practice is considered more likely to address the diverse nature of students today with their diverse needs (Alton-Lee, 2003). It also personalises the professional learning of each teacher allowing fellow teachers to support each other as they seek ways of responding to their colleagues problems of practice within their learning community.

Burr (1995) notes the importance of the interactions in these communities and suggests that each discourse engaged in, provides an opportunity to bring different aspects into focus, raise different issues for discussion and then influence what is done in response. School based learning communities offer the opportunities for teachers as learners to change, adapt or alter their practice by having opportunities to discuss, think about, try out, and hone new practices within their own setting (DuFour, 2004; Guskey 2002; Lieberman, 1995; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Successful professional development/learning requires differing degrees of change for success and it cannot be assumed that because people have learned it will inevitably link to improvement in practice and student outcomes. The degrees of change are described by Elmore (1996); Heifetz and Linsky (2002); Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003); Spillane et al. (2002) in different ways but each outlines similar understandings of change. Change that requires a change in belief, assumptions and routines of practice is more difficult than making minor changes to practice but it is those changes in belief that are most likely to bring about sustainable change that will endure over time.

Fullan (2006) describes the change process as having three defined stages, that of initiation, implementation and continuation. To successfully initiate change there is a requirement to move people and resources towards the established goal.

Implementing change requires those involved to develop the expected practices that would be evidenced as a result of the change and continuation is where the changes have become embedded in practice and will continue beyond any specific structural supports used to initiate and implement the changes. This process needs to be explicitly understood by those implementing changes namely the adviser working with the school, the literacy leader and the teachers involved.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional development providers offer external leadership within a school community while the school is undertaking professional development/learning in literacy. In this study the literacy leader has been identified as having a role in providing internal leadership to the school professional learning community. Both the professional development provider and the literacy leader have a role in creating and contributing to the conditions necessary for this to happen.

The following characteristics have been identified as central to a professional learning community; shared values and vision, collective responsibility for students learning, collaboration, individual and collective professional learning, reflective professional inquiry, openness, networks and partnerships, inclusive membership and mutual trust, respect and support (MOE, 2006c; NCSL, 2003). The existence of a professional learning community does not necessarily translate into improved teachers' practice with resulting improved student performance but it seems that it contributes to this likelihood. In a successful professional learning community (Timperley & Parr, 2004) leadership within that community is important to its success.

Integral to the professional learning community are professional learning conversations helping to build relationships between the participants of the community and in turn enabling them to engage in discussions where difficult questions around practice can be surfaced and discussed (Robinson and Lai, 2006). Professional conversations provide the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their

practice resulting in new knowledge which can be used to improve teaching practice. Annan, Lai and Robinson (2003) note that the impact of learning talk requires a balance between teacher led reflection and expert support. It also requires teachers to take ownership of their contribution to student outcomes. Professional learning conversations, like teachers undertaking professional learning in a professional learning community, take both time to develop and external support to develop them. This raises the issue of the availability of both the time required to engage in the conversations and the external support available to the school community.

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) in the *Best evidence synthesis of professional development/learning* identify and attempt to explain what is happening between professional learning opportunities, impact on teaching practice and subsequent impact on student achievement. Professional learning is an iterative process involving cueing and retrieving prior knowledge, awareness of new information/skills and integrating these into current values and belief systems. This creates dissonance in a teacher's current belief system which is eventually resolved by the teacher repositioning and reconstructing their current values and beliefs. Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) support this assertion about the complexity of professional learning and suggest that teachers have to question, unlearn and discard much of their current, deeply rooted understandings of teaching, learning and subject matter.

Advisers and literacy leaders are partners in the development of new knowledge while a school is undertaking professional development/learning in literacy. Research literature highlights the interdependence of professional development/learning opportunities, professional learning communities, leadership and literacy learning knowledge. It seems then that literacy leaders need to have extensive literacy knowledge and leadership skills when supporting their school professional development/learning in literacy. The research literature also suggests that professional learning communities provide the support necessary within the school to achieve improved teacher practice and student outcomes. It is important then to know what the literacy leader's role is in these communities and how they can be supported in that role.

In the next chapter I outline the methodology used in this study to investigate the role of the literacy leader. The methodology chosen reflects my desire to understand the literacy leader role and how it is enacted from the perspectives of those in the role, those working alongside them and those providing professional support. When the position becomes clearly defined there is an increased likelihood that professional development opportunities will meet the needs of those in the role.

Chapter Three

Methodology and sources of data

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study and the reasons for the choices made in the research design. The chapter is divided into sections which address the theoretical orientations, the rationale for qualitative research, research design, data techniques, ethical considerations, validity, reliability and data analysis.

Theoretical orientations

Educational research is acknowledged as being under the broad category of social science research as it focuses on people, organisations and interactions. It has central to its purpose the improvement of teaching and learning with the aim of improving systems and practices Mutch (2005). In this research project therefore the central purpose is to understand the role of the literacy leader from multiple perspectives with the aim of improving the practices of those in the literacy leader position and those that work alongside them in this endeavour.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007); Silverman (2001) and Taylor and Bogdan (1998) outline how qualitative research involves a sociological discovery. This generally happens through finding out about people's lives from the people themselves – listening to how people experience their lives and frame their worlds, working inductively rather than deductively. To work inductively is to enter the field of research without setting out to prove or disprove a research question. Instead it is to collect information from research participants, bring differing sources of information together and to gain some understanding about the question being investigated, from the participants' perspectives.

I therefore observed and listened to the participants in this project. I was interested in their interpretations and perceptions of what they were doing from their point of view and in relation to the social context where this occurred, the school setting. The

constructivist's view is that meaning is not discovered but constructed together. This research project occurred in an educational setting and so the cultural, social rules of this setting influenced what was found in the setting. Crotty (1998) states that no object can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it and nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its object. He goes on to say that experiences do not constitute a sphere of subjective reality separate from, and in contrast to, the objective realm of the external world but in fact each of these elements works together resulting in the way people operate the way they do, in a particular setting. Qualitative research therefore is the most appropriate tool for answering the questions what is the role of the literacy leader and how do they enact it.

Rationale for qualitative research

Qualitative research is concerned with description through the participant's eyes and the researcher seeks to find the meanings attached to what has been described. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Burns (1997) and Nuttall (2000) suggest that the qualitative researcher is required to immerse themselves in the world of those they are studying, gather evidence that will reveal qualities of life and bring meaning to their actions that will reflect the multiple realities of specific educational settings from participant's perspectives.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative research as,

... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that the qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

Mutch (2005) and Taylor and Bogdan (1998) note that a qualitative account contains people's definitions, constructions and perspectives and has no absolute claim to scientific proof or to being the only version of the way things are. Although there may be parallels with other cases the researcher is not setting out to generalise the findings to a broader population. In this research study I sought to understand those in the study from their own frames of reference and experience reality as they experienced it. From this knowledge new understandings can hopefully emerge and will help me to decide how I can better support those people carrying out the literacy leader responsibilities.

Qualitative research unlike quantitative research does not require large numbers to validate findings in a research project. In this study I used purposeful sampling, selecting two known schools and their literacy leaders as the focus for this research. The questions that I sought responses to were:

- ❖ what is the role of the literacy leader and how do they enact this role?
- ❖ what are the implications for me in my position as literacy adviser?

The design of my study limited the choice of schools I could undertake research in. The schools needed to have literacy advisers working in them in an *in-depth* way. In-depth means either a one or two year focus on improving literacy teaching and thereby student outcomes. The adviser spends a considerable amount of time in these schools and helps to lead the professional development/learning of the staff. Student achievement data, teacher data and leadership data is collected and analysed and is used to develop the action plan for teacher learning in that school. The adviser helps to develop the ability of teachers to enquire into their own practice and to respond to the specific learning needs of their students. In choosing these schools I sought to use schools that had approached the delivery of professional development/learning in similar ways which was the case in these two schools. The similarity of professional development/learning approach reduced the chance of approach being a variable to what has been described.

The choice of participant observation with field notes, in-depth interviews, analytical memos and the development of identifiable themes from these served to increase the validity of respondents' responses to the research questions. Each of the research

methods employed and used in conjunction with the others increased the reliability of what was described. This is known as triangulation (Bogdan and Taylor, 1998).

The settings

Two schools were selected to participate in my research project. As my study occurred while I was working in full time employment there was a need to include the research fieldwork as part of my job. This limited the choice of schools to approach. The first school approached was a school that I had been involved in working with and the other was a school that a fellow adviser was working with. Both schools Boards of Trustees, Principals, staff and literacy leaders agreed to be involved.

Red School (a pseudonym) is an eight teacher school, with a non teaching principal, a deputy principal, an assistant principal and the remaining six teachers, one of whom is the literacy leader. It is a higher decile school with a decile 9 rating. Deciles are attributed on the basis of socio-economic factors gleaned from the election enrolment information for those living in the school's area. It has been described in the most recent ERO (Education Review Office, 2006) report as being a school that is meeting well the needs of its students and community, but needing to address student achievement across more areas than just maths and reading. Hence this school's rationale for their writing professional development/learning focus. It is also reported that the school principal gives this school strong professional leadership.

Blue School although similar in decile rating to Red School, decile 7, is smaller in size having five teachers, a non teaching principal, a deputy principal and the remaining four teachers one of whom is the literacy leader. During the time of this study the principal of this school was on sick leave and the teachers and school community had to deal with the release of a generally negative ERO report (ERO 2007). The report stated that it did not have confidence in the principal's ability to meet the desired ERO school recommendations indicated in the report. It did however highlight the work of the literacy leader and the adviser during the year as the only positive outcome since their previous visit. This report was the continuation of a series of discretionary reviews, usually yearly, as a result of not meeting recommendations from previous visits.

Despite the similarity in decile rating of the two schools there was enough variance in school performance as outlined by the ERO reports to alleviate some anxiety over their similarities. The positive factors resulting from the decision to research two similar sized schools were the opportunity it provided to compare the findings in similar sized schools.

Using two known school settings removed the difficulty of accessing settings for the research but at the same time created a risk in that it could change the dynamics of an already established relationship with a school. In Red School the staff identified with me in the role of professional developer leading the in-depth literacy professional development in that school. Researchers Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), and Taylor and Bogdan (1998) support the notion that there can be a risk when the setting is a known one. Therefore it was important to keep those involved in the research informed and answer any questions as they arise. This difficulty of dual roles, researcher and adviser, became less of an issue during the latter part of 2007 as I was on sabbatical leave as an adviser and therefore became primarily a researcher. This probably did not change the teachers' perception of me as an adviser but put the relationship on a more informal basis. As Taylor and Bogdan (1998) note, familiarity can also be an advantage in that the participants are more likely to act naturally in front of those they know than those they do not know. It did offer me the opportunity to check whether the dual role was adversely affecting the data I was gathering. Blue School, the other research school, I was unknown as either adviser or researcher before the beginning of my data collection. The data gathered from both settings suggested that this was not an issue.

During the data collection phase of this research process I kept the participants informed and discussed my early thoughts about my observations and interviews. Where further interviews were involved I related my reflections from previous interviews and asked for their reflections. Reflection has been important in developing the messages that have evolved from this research. Loughran (1996) states reflection is an important human activity that allows people to recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. The questions that this study sought to answer were not evaluative but instead sought an understanding of the literacy leader role.

This research therefore was not about making judgements on the effectiveness of the literacy leader role but about describing how the role is undertaken. The participants' involvement in viewing and discussing the information as it was collected lead to the construction of new meanings for both parties.

Writing up my observations and interviews into a results chapter was also shared with the two literacy leader participants and I actively sought their feedback on what I had written up in this research. It was interesting to note that both participants continued the reflective practices I had witnessed while they were part of the data collecting phase in this study. They shared further reflections with me as a result of the chapters they had read and supported more strongly than originally, the importance of the reader understanding the complexity of tasks they were undertaking as both literacy leader and classroom teacher.

Data Collection

In seeking to understand the role of the literacy leader and how the role was enacted I employed the data collecting methods of qualitative research that I believed would be most appropriate to examining the 'truths' of the literacy leader role. I was mindful of what Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state about the researcher's primary goal, being to add to knowledge, not to pass judgement on the setting. Participant observation allowed me to spend considerable time over an eight week period being present in the school sites, seeing in a natural way what they believed the literacy leader role was and how it was enacted. This observation was supported by in-depth interviewing which allowed me to follow up on some of the questions and hunches I had as a result of observations and conversations I had heard or was involved in.

My extensive field notes helped me to revisit what I had seen and to make sense of this. These data gathering methods and analysis of data were further supported by the analytical memos I wrote capturing my thoughts and feelings as I observed or reread some of the notes I had made. The literacy leaders also supplied me with the written documentation they had engaged their teachers with and this added to the picture I was gaining from my other data sources. All of these methods of data collection allowed me to construct meaning from the participant's perspectives about the role of

the literacy leader and how it is enacted. It has also provided me with insight into how in my position of professional developer I can better support those in the role.

Participant observation

The purpose of participant observation is to ensure the observer does not pre-determine the outcomes of what is happening around them but instead records what is happening, as it happens. The purpose is to understand a particular phenomenon, the role of the literacy leader and how it is enacted, how those in the position are negotiating the meaning of what they do in their every day place of work, the school. I therefore used participant observation in this research project as the main data gathering source.

The observations have occurred in both formal and informal settings. Formal settings have included professional development/learning staff meetings, the literacy leader leading providing feedback from classroom observations, syndicate meetings and individual requests for support. Informal settings have included individual informal inquiries of the literacy leader, staffroom conversations and conversations between staff members and staff members and the researcher at other times. What I observed I have recorded as field notes. The observations provided the opportunity to observe first hand the reality of the answer to the research question – how is the literacy leader role enacted?

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) comment that field notes consist of two types of material. Firstly the descriptive aspect requires the researcher to record all details relating to the setting, people, actions and conversations. Secondly the reflective aspects, which are the researcher's subjective recording of speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices. Field notes were recorded by hand at the time of the observation and were recorded digitally. I recorded the details of the environment, the people, actions seen, conversations heard in the setting where the observation occurred. I also wrote notes, comments, thoughts as I hand recorded and then again in the digital recording of these notes. It is from this initial note taking that ideas for themes began and these then developed further when I continuously returned to my printed notes and added further thoughts, hunches and comments to these. The idea of

hierarchical leadership versus literacy leadership discussed in chapter five and six, evolved from this continual return to recorded notes.

In-depth interviewing

A further data gathering method in this project was that of in-depth, semi structured interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Minichiello, Aroni, Timewall and Alexander (1990), Silverman (2001) , and Taylor & Bogdan (1998) state that the in-depth interview allows the interviewer to learn how people construct their realities – how they view, define and experience the world. The interviews were conducted at the school site and teachers were released from their classroom responsibilities so that they could focus on the interview. This however did not stop some interruptions during two of the interviews. As a means of ensuring that respondents had time to think about what I would be asking, the broad questions were emailed to everyone at least two days in advance.

The questions asked as part of these interviews were semi structured and were designed to explore each participants understanding of the literacy leader role. Such questions allowed people to tell me about things that were important to them and the meanings they attached to these things.

Some of the questions asked were:

- I'd like to know more about your literacy leader role. Would you tell me about some of the things you think are important in this role and could you cite some examples of what you are saying?
- Can you tell me about what you see as the role of the literacy leader and can you cite some examples of that?

The initial interviews provided the information to base further interviews on. The questions in the following rounds of interviews were more specific and related to the information gathered from the first or previous interviews. These successive interviews allowed the participants to reflect on what they had said previously. The framing of subsequent interview questions revealed some of my initial thoughts I'd had following earlier interviews and this offered them the opportunity to respond to these earlier ideas of mine.

- You have stated in a previous interview that you feel.... Can you please tell me more about this?
- ... was a word you used often when you talked about the literacy leader role. I would like to explore that a little more with you. What have you found when this happens? Can you talk me through that please?

In seeking feedback from the participants there was the opportunity to clarify, change or elaborate on anything that was recorded.

Interviews were recorded by digital recorder as participants were interviewed and the digital recordings were transcribed for me. The transcription process took much longer than I expected and was performed by someone who had little knowledge of the context within which I was operating so required a considerable amount of correcting. Although finding this process one I hadn't expected to encounter, it was in fact a useful process in the long term, as it increased my interaction with the interview material and helped to clarify much of what was recorded. Another important opportunity the digital recorder offered me, which proved useful when the transcribing took longer than expected, was being able to play these back regularly on my computer, giving me multiple opportunities to listen and to help develop my thinking about what messages were in these recordings.

I used analytical memos at various stages within the data gathering process and beyond as I developed themes from what I had both observed and heard in interviews. I carried a notebook and my digital recorder with me during the time of this study as many of my thoughts occurred while undertaking other activities and I would hurriedly record these either in the notebook or on the digital recorder so these would not be lost. Once I had the transcripts I again began writing notes/memos on these. Analytical memos helped me throughout this study to collect my thoughts, to identify emergent themes and to help me as the researcher to stand back from what I had seen and heard and think about what it was that I was learning.

Document analysis

One way that qualitative research can deal with the issue of validity is to use multiple sources of data. The main forms of data in this study have already been outlined. In

addition to these data gathering methods the notes, emails, newsletters, presentations, that were created by the literacy leaders during the time of the study have been used to support the analysis of the field notes from the participant observation and in-depth interviews. These added depth, supported or discounted other data. These included such written documentation as minutes from staff and syndicate meetings, memos sent out to staff, planning formats for writing, reports to Boards of Trustees, planning for community evenings, general feedback on classroom observations, teacher goal setting sheets and formats for writing conferences. These added richness to the picture of the literacy leader role and also indicated the degree to which the role was continued when I was not present in the school. In terms of sustainability of new learning this is very important.

Data Analysis

Data analysis has been a continuous process throughout this research project. Qualitative research requires the researcher to examine each piece of data as it is gathered and reflect on what has been said or witnessed and think about how to make sense of this data. As Bogdan and Taylor (1998) and Mutch (2005) indicate, analysing data can be the most difficult aspect of this type of research as it requires the researcher to employ a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising rather than following a mechanical or technical process. I have needed to identify concepts, propositions and ideas about literacy leaders as I have experienced what is said, heard, acted out in their settings. By doing this I have known what to focus on in a deeper way and been able to ask more directive questions in interviews and have been able to follow up on leads and hunches as they have occurred.

The data has been read, reread and listened to so that I, the researcher knew it intimately. It is from this familiarity with the data, that emerging themes have become apparent. Coding was the initial method of identifying key words or themes from the data. The codes were then grouped together to identify what emerging themes had been apparent. This process was carried out by physically writing these on strips of paper that I then grouped and regrouped on a large surface looking for those ideas that went together and those that seemed to be outliers. The data has been consistently revisited to see the relationship between different pieces of data. Discrepant data has

been identified and used to modify, enlarge or restrict the explanations that have been arrived at increasing the reliability of the interpretations that have emerged. In writing up this research I have chosen quotes from the data gathered to support the understanding and explanation of the role of the literacy leader and those they interact with.

Ethical considerations

When qualitative research is undertaken there is seldom an occasion that ethical issues are not to the forefront of the researcher's mind. Neuman, (1997, p. 443) states, "A researcher's personal moral code is the strongest defence against unethical behaviour...ethical research depends on the integrity of the individual researcher and his or her values."

I used a range of strategies to ensure that ethical matters had due consideration. Ethical permission for this study was granted by the University of Canterbury, College of Education Ethics Committee.

Permission to carry out this study was sought from the two schools Board of Trustees (see Appendix A) in the first instance as it would not be possible to undertake research within the school setting without the consent of the governing body of the school. Once granted I then approached the two literacy leaders, three teachers in Red School, two teachers in Blue School and the Principals of both schools. All of these volunteers were given information sheets (see Appendix B) about the research and had time to decide whether they wished to be involved. All teachers agreed. The Principal of Blue School, although returning the signed Board of Trustees form as the principal, did not return the permission form for his personal involvement as he had taken sick leave and would be away from the school for the time of this study. All of these participants were volunteers and all signed formal agreements to participate (see Appendix C). Their right to withdraw at any point in this project was clearly stated on the permission form.

Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Privacy for interviewing was maintained by interviewing separately each participant in the research project. As the information sheet for this research outlined anonymity could not be promised because of the size of the settings but all information provided to the researcher was treated confidentially. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants and their school. Access to the writing of the information obtained through this study has been accessible to all participants for their comment.

Validity

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) state that qualitative research accepts that there is something to be learned in all settings and groups and is designed to ensure there is a close fit between the data that is gathered and what is seen and done. The researcher is able to gain first hand knowledge through observing people, listening to them talk and looking at the documents they produce. The validity of such research is in the ability of others to replicate the research process, the inclusion of multiple sources of data to generate information, multiple participant perspectives in the research process and the extended length of time when the research is carried out.

Qualitative research is unlike quantitative research where researchers rely on a structured research process which involves the quantification of data across a greater number of participants and the ability to transfer the findings across a greater number of situations. The qualitative researcher does not claim that what is described in their research report will be indicative of all people in the same setting and have general transferability, instead it relies on the reader to ask the question to what extent can I relate what is in this study to my own situation (Burns 1997). A qualitative research report does need to clearly state however the researcher's position in the research and demonstrate how they have connected the findings from their different data sources.

Although this research was centred in only two schools with two literacy leaders, one principal and five other teachers involved, the bringing together of what was observed, heard and read suggested that the data gathered this way contained similar messages about the role of the literacy leader, how the role was enacted across the two

settings. The multiple data sets do then allow some claims around the characteristics of the role of the literacy leader, the enactment of the role and the implications for the professional developer.

Chapter Four

A day in the life of the literacy leader – teaching, leading, reflecting, managing and supporting.

Introduction

In the next two chapters I present the findings of my study. In this first chapter I describe a typical day in the life of the two literacy leaders. This provides a context for the discussion of the themes I take up in the next chapter. To construct this chapter I focussed on the field notes from my participant observations. I am not attempting to construct an exact replica of their day. Rather I want to give a feel for what the teachers juggle, and how they teach, as well as attempt to manage and lead in any one day.

I begin with a description of a typical day for the literacy leaders in this research project. I think it is important to understand how these two literacy leaders manage a day at school in the capacity of both teacher and literacy leader. This day typifies what these two literacy leaders were required to do in their dual role of classroom teacher and literacy leader. Quick changes in thinking and actions are required by literacy leaders as they switch from classroom teacher to school literacy leader and back again within minutes and sometimes seconds of each other. This will provide a rich description of the context for the study, in particular the findings in the next chapter.

To understand the reality of those in the literacy leader position within the school there is a need to understand how the dual roles of literacy leader and teacher are enacted. This chapter is an account of what happened as I observed these leaders.

8:00 – 8:30 am

For most teachers the day begins long before any child walks through a classroom door. In fact Ann was apologetic the day I arrived in her classroom at 8:00 am that she hadn't been at school that long and should have been there earlier. I know that Ann would regularly still be at school at 6:00 pm on any given school day and then take

school work home with her. Although I settle back to observe Ann, she seems to be relishing the opportunity to have someone to talk to and regularly draws me into conversations and reflections on the topics she obviously wants to discuss. My presence is allowing her to engage in critical reflection (Brookfield 1995).

As Ann prepares herself for the day's teaching the topics that are discussed range from teachers applying for jobs, student learning pathways, the restructuring of maths groups in her area of the school, some philosophical discussion around spelling programmes, how the junior teachers have excused themselves from certain professional development activities because they believe teaching at their level of the school is different, and finally the release of the ERO report which the literacy leader believes will have a negative impact on both the community and the staff. As she is also staff representative on the Board of Trustees, this will also need her attention, time and energy, alongside the other board members to create a way forward for this school.

It is during this short part of the day that I first witness the overlap of the dual roles of literacy leader and teacher as Ann's thinking and conversation continually alternates between both.

It is now 8:30 am, the bell rings and the students arrive!

8:30 – 9:00 am

With the students arrival there is another flurry of conversations around a variety of topics. Some parents join their children in the classroom and they also engage in conversations with the teacher. The teacher is required at these times to wear many hats – teach to those who are requesting help, offer advice to the parent who is seeking a way of supporting their child, listen to those who have problems beyond the classroom, act for those who want to be shown how to do something, ensure the money for lunches is collected, instruct a child to put something on the computer and amongst this prepare both themselves and the equipment they need to effectively teach for the rest of the day.

Again the dual role of literacy leader and teacher crosses. A teacher from the senior syndicate enters the room and has some questions about how the writing samples will be moderated this time. After some discussion she leaves the room with a clear view of what is expected.

9:00 am – 10:30 am

The session between 9:00 am and morning break is focussed on maths and physical education. The usual checking of attendance at school is undertaken and the names of those not present are forwarded to the school secretary to follow up. There is also some checking by the teacher about the student portfolios. She reminds those students who haven't returned these to school that they will need to bring them back tomorrow. The teaching of maths becomes the focus again and is done in groups. The teacher consecutively teaches two groups while other groups are engaged in maths activities. The teacher while focusing on the groups in front is constantly checking the other groups are on task.

It is at this point that the second interruption of the day occurs – a child from the senior school is collecting the sausage sizzle money and orders. This requires a quick check by the teacher with the whole class that these have all been ordered and then a prompt return to the requirements of the maths group being taught. I observe that during this maths time students are focussed on tasks set and require little management of behaviour.

The final part of this morning's session is physical education and moving outside to conduct their fitness activities is met with enthusiasm. At 10:30 am students are released to have morning tea. This should also be the same for teachers but because Ann is released from class in the next block of teaching time, in her role as literacy leader, she needs to organise herself for the literacy observations she will be undertaking with two staff members.

10:30 – 10:50 am

The banter in the staffroom indicates the teachers are in high spirits today as we get a cup of coffee and find somewhere to sit. The conversation begins with generalised exchanges between staff until a staff member asks Ann to clarify the moderating process for marking students writing scripts. Ann responds to this request outlining the process the team will go through. This question seems to prompt a raft of comments related to the literacy professional development focus on writing. A typical comment is this one from a teacher who teaches Year 5. She remarks,

I didn't think I could use a modelling book and then I visited Ann's class and saw how she was using it and saw the benefits of it so now I use one all the time.

The teacher that Ann is observing has been on duty so returns to the staffroom when the bell rings, to check with Ann the time she will be coming to her room. Ann reassures her that she can take the first ten minutes to get herself organised before the observation will begin. Ann also comments that,

It will allow me time to shift my head too, before going into the classroom.

In the preceding two hours and twenty minutes, before Ann has formally begun any observations as literacy leader, she has already acted in this role a number of times. She has made the shift from classroom focus to a teacher professional learning focus within quite short time frames.

11:00 am – 11:45 am

As we walk to the teacher's room Ann engages in a conversation about the marking of the writing scripts across Years 4 – 8. She is concerned that one set of scripts seem to be marked much higher than any other teachers. She sees her role as checking these scripts against the others so that she can be reassured there is consistency across the school. She makes the comment,

We did moderate (ensure there is consistency against the writing matrix, in allocating levels to the pieces of writing) together but I just want to check that they are a true reflection of the levels that have been allocated.

She adds another quick comment about the student voice interviews for one class.

They knew what the success criteria were so they could clearly articulate this when I asked them what they were learning about.

We enter Emily, the Year 5 teacher's classroom ready for the observation. The observation criteria are those identified by research as the elements that lead to effective literacy teaching. These are used by advisers in all schools as a measure of teacher capacity in literacy at the beginning of the professional learning/development and again at the end. The first aspect of the criteria is around the intent of the learning and how this is constructed by teachers and students together. The second aspect is the links that are made during the teaching to students' prior knowledge, particularly their literacy, cultural and world knowledge. The third aspect is how students are responded to, the feedback they receive and the level of language they are engaged in learning. The fourth aspect is how teachers provide students with the opportunities to think about their own thinking and how they teach the strategies needed for students to become proficient readers and writers. The final aspect is the teacher's ability to cater for the diverse needs of the learners in their classroom. These diverse needs can be differing rates of literacy progress, cultural, ethnic, linguistic diversity, knowledge and experience and ways of learning.

The first point that Ann picks up on is the child working with a teacher's aide. She makes a quiet aside to me that she will need to discuss this with the teacher as the child is obviously trying to join in with the rest of the class but keeps being drawn back to the separate work he is undertaking. She ponders as to how this fits with catering for diverse needs and if so should this child not always be included in class learning.

Ann makes notes about something else she would like to discuss with the teacher, the importance of 'think alouds,' that is Emily making explicit what she is thinking as she teaches aspects of writing. Ann then comments to me,

This teacher's next steps are letting the kids have more control.

She also acknowledges to me the positive shift in practice of this teacher over the year and some of the teaching practices she now employs successfully in her teaching. She writes this down to tell the teacher in the follow up discussion. The observation continues and Ann writes substantive notes which will inform the discussion she will have with this teacher later.

As the observation draws to a close I ask Ann what students she will interview about their learning following this teaching session. She has identified a student whose vocabulary is very extensive, one that seems disengaged in the learning and another who struggles with writing. This information will help to get a picture of how these students understand the learning from this session and give a real sense of how catering for diversity is being met.

The interviews are conducted in Emily's class. Ann is interviewing students to check their understanding of what they are learning in writing at the moment, why they need to learn to write, how their teacher helps them with writing and what they like and dislike about writing. The responses by students are used in discussion with the teacher about their lesson. The comments that students make can add to the comments that Ann will make as the observer. Students responses help to understand that teaching may be occurring but student learning may not be related to what is taught. Ann writes her final notes for discussion with Emily and we move to the second teacher to be observed.

11:45 – 12:30 pm

As we walk to the next classroom Ann discusses some of the feedback she will be giving the teacher. The next teacher is new to teaching and Ann is excited about the teaching she has seen and heard in this classroom before.

Ann notes the classroom environment first and the prominence of writing related material in the classroom which she jots down on the observation schedule. The learning intention on the whiteboard, the quantity of student writing around the classroom walls, readily available writing tools on a writing table, lists of word banks for students to access, individual whiteboards for students to work on as they are taught, examples of quality texts for students to compare their work against or to get ideas from.

As the lesson proceeds Ann writes many notes to discuss with the teacher later. She observes, 'I don't do enough of this in my own classroom', as she notes a group of students comparing their writing to the example on the wall to check how they are going. It seems as we observe together that Ann is finding the opportunity to discuss what she is seeing with me, to be a valuable way of reflecting on her own practice and the practice of others. It is apparent that the role of the 'outside expert,' in this case the adviser, in offering their own reflections and ideas is beneficial to this literacy leader. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) identify the outside expert as one of the supports associated with effectiveness in processing new understandings.

This observation continues in much the same way as with the previous teacher. Ann notes the effective practices she can see evidence of in this classroom. She also notes those points that will need further discussion and development for each teacher. The interviewing of individual students also continues. As do the reflective conversations she engages me in.

At the end of this session she discusses a time to meet with this teacher. It will not be in the lunch hour as this teacher is away from the school but the following morning before school is agreed upon. I note with interest that although being released as the literacy leader to do the observation she has not been released to offer feedback to the teacher. This highlights I believe the rhetoric of how a school is going to support the professional learning and then the reality of what really happens in the every day situation of a school.

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Although it is the lunch hour now, eating lunch will not be possible for another half hour as Ann is feeding back from her teaching observation of the first teacher for the first half hour. This is not unusual practice for literacy leaders to use their lunch hour to do their 'job.' Both the literacy leaders in this study had to do this on a regular basis. The release time enabling Ann to undertake the literacy leadership role was agreed to at the beginning of the year. However the reality of this happening rarely occurred. Neither did the release of classroom teachers for these discussions with the literacy leader.

This feedback session involves reflection from both Emily and Ann about the teaching of writing and the shifts that have made during this year of professional learning. Ann asks a number of questions of Emily getting her to elaborate on the way she organises her class for writing. The conversation gradually moves from Ann asking questions to more of a two way conversation between two classroom teachers engaged in a professional dialogue. Ann comments "I respect and admire the way you haven't dumbed down anything with these students – you had that discussion around plagiarism expecting them to understand what was being discussed." Lyn responds by asking Ann how she introduces this idea to her class commenting "Your students are younger so how do you do this?" The conversation continues around what each teacher has found successful and useful when teaching writing with their classes. The literacy leader has quietly become teacher and learner demonstrating that in the literacy leader position, you are both leader and learner.

The conversation finishes and Ann has the opportunity to have a short break before her afternoon's teaching commences at 1:30 pm.

1:30 – 3:00 pm

This afternoon her class are engaged for a sustained time painting. Ann has reminded them of the techniques they can use to paint a 'kiwi' scene and has used a model to show her students what it might look like when finished. I observe that Ann's teaching practice for art and see that it encompasses the same effective practices she

uses for literacy teaching; modelling, scaffolding, explicit teaching, expectations of quality work, supports for those who are finding it difficult, a clear learning intent and feedback on this intent.

Ann finishes the afternoon by reading a chapter from the book she is reading her class. When the bell rings Ann releases her students to go home. For most teachers the time Ann has now, at the end of the teaching aspect of the day, would be used for reflecting on the day's teaching and preparing for the new teaching day tomorrow. For Ann and the staff of this school this will not be the case. She is responsible for leading the staff meeting today about literacy.

3:15 – 4:30 pm

The staff meeting commences at 3:15 pm and is being held in the staff work area. The session begins with reviewing the results from the second set of writing assessments. This elicits from the literacy leader such comments as 'Wow, look at the results of these, give yourselves a pat on the back', 'You have done a really good job of explicit teaching to get these results.' There is a high level of satisfaction amongst the staff at the results of the assessment in writing. Jess comments "and to think that I used to think that five year olds couldn't write different text types." Lynda says, "I can't believe how much better these are than those ones we did at the start of the year."

The second agenda item is the focus of the staff's teaching in writing this term. The literacy leader accepts that staff may not yet be fully immersed in the topic and offers some support with ideas. This is followed by a discussion on the professional learning that has occurred to date in the school. The members of this staff are open in discussing the merits of aspects they have been engaged in. There is a lot of discussion about the opportunity to visit each others' classrooms and see each other teaching as well as having the literacy leader observe their teaching and give them feedback. They all expressed how they had become more collegial in their approach to teaching and now shared ways of teaching and planning which hadn't been evident before. There is a lot of discussion on several aspects of teaching that they now identify as being important, basing their teaching on student data, feedback for next

learning, having an overview of Years 1 – 8 writing expectations and knowing better what they need to teach.

Throughout this meeting there is shared dialogue around literacy teaching. The literacy leader leads the staff through these discussions and offers her professional advice and experience to the staff as it is required. From observation I can see this is valued input from the literacy leader. This is further confirmed by the staff's appreciative comments at the end of the session "thanks Ann for your passion behind the writing focus." "You have driven it and I speak for everyone here when I say that." They acknowledge the literacy leader has been the driving force behind the literacy professional learning in the school and they are looking to her for leadership in this area.

The staff meeting finished, the literacy leader now returns to her classroom to prepare for teaching tomorrow. This will probably not be for long as the role switching that has occurred throughout the day seems to have taken its toll on Ann and she is looking very tired. She will probably end up doing what she has said before, packing her gear up and taking it home to do. This seemed to be a recurring pattern of behaviour for the two literacy leaders. Unable to fit in what needed to be done during the school day, they regularly take home what is not done and do this in the evening at home.

Summary

The multiple roles of literacy leaders serve to reinforce that being a teacher is both complex and challenging. Nuthall (2007) notes the complexity of teaching and learning. He suggests that the teaching that produces most learning in students varies from day to day, from class to class and from time to time in the same class. The role of the two literacy leaders now encompasses not only the responsibility of teaching children but also now leading the professional learning of the adults in the school. These two leaders did not have management positions within their school and were not receiving financial remuneration for the position of literacy leader. They were instead driven by the desired outcome to see student achievement in writing (which was the aspect of focus for both schools) improve and increasing the effectiveness of

teaching practice. Pam, the literacy leader from Blue school commented on this student focus by saying “It’s about how our writing progress is going in the classroom and just to raise the achievement of the children.”

What also transpired over time and as reported earlier in this chapter, was that neither literacy leader reported adequate release time from their own teaching duties to allow the focus on leadership they felt was necessary to be a successful school literacy leader.

The hard thing I had to do was the role of literacy leader on top of my teaching load. I had to keep compartmentalising the literacy leader part and then take most of that work home to do.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School

As an observer I witnessed the occasions where the two literacy leaders struggled with the multiplicity of their tasks as both classroom teacher and literacy leader. They seemed caught in the dilemma of trying to be successful in both positions and yet feeling that to do this was trying to achieve the impossible. This would seem in direct contrast to those conditions Lieberman (2005); MOE (2006d); Stoll and Earl (2003); Southworth (2004) acknowledge as being important if deep learning and change is to result from professional development and learning. They argue that deep learning, resulting in changes to teaching, needs time for those involved to think about, read about, argue about new ideas and new directions, if a long term sustainable change is to occur and improved student outcomes are achieved as a result.

This day in the life of a literacy leader captures the complexity of the role. Literacy leaders need a diverse range of skills to undertake the role. They also need to be highly organised to manage these diverse tasks and have the capacity to switch quickly from the role of classroom teacher to literacy leader. Both were committed teachers with a passion for literacy, a desire to improve student outcomes in their school and leadership qualities that supported the leadership of this curriculum area. Their energy and enthusiasm for the work they were doing and the management of a

complex array of tasks would lead them to at some stage ask a question about level of the support they were receiving in this position.

Chapter Five

Literacy, learning and leading

Introduction

Having the responsibility of literacy leader requires literacy leaders to have the capacity to switch quickly from classroom teacher role to literacy leader role and vice versa within minutes of each other. The examination of the daily routine of the literacy leader in the previous chapter highlights the complexity of the role they have undertaken. It also highlights a number of expectations of the role of literacy leader and provides insight into a typical day of someone in this position. This description helps to answer the research question ‘What is the role of the literacy leader and how is the role enacted’

This chapter will feature on those themes identified from the research participants’ interviews. These will provide further insight into how to answer the question what is the role of the literacy leader and how is this enacted. The ideas presented in this chapter will be supported by participant quotes and will be linked to the related research. The findings will be grouped under the key headings of student learning, learning for all, learning together and leading the learning.

Student Learning

The reason for educator professional development/learning is to ensure that students learn. Alton-Lee (2003) and Hattie (2002) identified that the quality of teaching has a direct effect on student outcomes ranging from 16 – 59% variance. It follows therefore that to improve student outcomes a commitment is needed from teachers to improve their practice. In my study this was the key focus of the work of the two literacy leaders and their schools. Comments from all of the participants in my study support this focus.

It (student achievement) was the back bone to everything, that was our main focus from the very start and what we could do to raise achievement.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School

It's the same as any leadership role and so the ultimate outcome has got to be improved learning outcomes for the children, so having that as the key thing underpinning everything else.

To ensure in their day to day teaching that their objective when delivering their literacy lessons, is to ensure children succeed in their writing practices.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

John, the principal of Red school also relayed what he thought the role of the literacy leader was:

... to use key data to analyse the teaching needs and practices, be absolutely honest and objective about where we are in our achievement and then provide pathways for teachers and children to improve outcomes.

I would expect the literacy leader to work with the leadership team and staff to set effective goals around annual student achievement targets and provide guidance and leadership as to how we might achieve those outcomes. Their job would be to come up with a year's plan about how we are going to improve outcomes.

Liz and Lyn as classroom teachers also supported this focus on student outcomes.

The ultimate outcome has to be improved learning outcomes so having that as underpinning everything else is really important.

By analysing the writing I got a good break down of what each child could and couldn't do and then we could see from the results where our children were when you compared them to the national norms and we found out some students were below what was expected.

A focus and improvement in student outcomes in writing was the expected result of professional development/learning by those interviewed in this study.

Learning for all

My study demonstrates that learning went beyond student learning and to a focus on learning for all (Fullan, 2006). The interview responses and the observations in the field support this wider focus. It was about the literacy leaders, the teachers, the principal and the advisers learning.

The teachers in this study valued their literacy leader being knowledgeable and being seen to be a learner.

We are all learners and that needs to show through. My knowledge is not complete, I am a learner also.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

... not always feeling like they(literacy leaders) are the gurus and know it all... constant modelling as a leader I am learning, I am not the person who knows it all.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

... needs also to be on a learning journey his or herself because they have got to know that there is always new stuff coming out around ... literacy and language learning and just being open to learning and then guiding the staff to areas where they can also learn.

Sally, Teacher, Blue School.

Literacy leaders' commitment to their own learning is essential if they to support others in their learning. This is even more important if as Timperley and Parr (2006) argue there is a link between the teachers' level of pedagogical content knowledge and student achievement levels.

Similarly teachers in my study recognised the importance of building their own literacy knowledge. They have attributed much of this new learning to what they have

learnt from their literacy leader. Timperley et al. (2007) identified that literacy leaders are looked to, to provide the knowledge that other staff do not have.

She needs to have the knowledge and the ability to analyse and interpret the results from the samples. So they also need to be data literate and have a wealth of knowledge around children's literature, authors and different stories to share.

Jane, Red School.

Our literacy leader is obviously a person you can go to if we need help in either a formal or informal situation. I can say I have a problem and she is more than happy to help.

Sally, Blue School.

Our literacy leader has a real guidance role in guiding the staff to areas where they can learn or providing models or suggesting where we can go to see a model of good practice...

Lyn, Red School.

McDowell, Cameron, Dingle, Gilmore and Macgibbon (2007) support this assertion that literacy leaders require greater knowledge than the teachers they work with.

Much of the learning in a professional development/learning focus is as a result of engaging in reflective practice (Barnett, O'Mahony & Matthews 2004). Reflection was considered an integral aspect of professional development/learning when participants in this study were interviewed. Members of both schools commented on the ability of their literacy leaders to reflect on their own practice and on the practice of others. The principal's reflection on his practice is seen in this comment.

I have only just learnt this recently, about what authentic distributed leadership is, so give the leader the right to lead, not just task delegation give them full responsibility and empowerment to get out and lead in that area.

John, Principal, Red School.

A teacher from Blue School reflects on the process of classroom observations and the follow up discussion.

In the second observation we sat down together and worked through the structure to reflect on, rather than saying what went well, I was asked how did you meet the learning needs of these students? So it's giving a focus to reflect on otherwise it is really broad and I feel it can be quite daunting.

Liz, Teacher, Blue School.

Interviews with literacy leaders are punctuated with reflections on their leadership roles.

I didn't follow up that the data was used in planning and I should have done that... I don't know how I could have done it, I would have to be lot more involved in the planning process and I guess I didn't want to go down that path of reviewing people's planning... maybe that's something that needs to be looked at next year now.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

The following comments were made after a discussion with a literacy leader who was having difficulty in shifting the teaching practice of one member of staff.

So I think I need to learn how to ask. I am slowly getting there but still feel I am a bit wordy still, but slowly learn to get to ask questions and make them reflect back on what they are actually doing themselves. Check what their assumptions are and why they might work this way.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

This same literacy leader identified the role I had played as the adviser in aiding her self reflection.

I have led other things at school but not in a role that I have had to interact with the staff in a certain manner, its quite a steep learning curve and that's great, I guess there are two things, one is that in certain respects how you

worked with me, modelled how I should work with staff and that you asked me questions, made me think about things, explain them...

It was just being able to talk about some of the ideas... a bit like a mentor really ... just ask if you are on the right track... it is the advice and guidance as well as the expertise that makes the literacy job easier.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

She also realised that this leadership opportunity and the learning that had developed as a result had opened her eyes to other leadership possibilities hence the new position she had won at another school.

I am really pleased I put my hand up for it (the literacy leadership role), it made me really passionate about a whole heap of aspects at school and as soon as you start thinking about how to lead in one area you start seeing other areas you can offer something to, hence my new job, so it has opened my eyes to all the things I can do.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

Learning occurred for all participants in my study. Teachers, literacy leaders, principal and adviser had engaged in stepping back from their experiences, examined them carefully for meaning and identified the changes in practice needed as a result of this reflection (Schön, 1990). In the process of reflecting they were able to share a mutual understanding that they were all learners. As I observed and listened I too learnt how I could better support those in the school.

Learning Together

Supporting learning for all is the result of the collaboration and cooperation that developed as a result of the professional development/learning focus. In Blue School prior to the literacy professional development/learning, the staff had not been used to working collaboratively as this teacher comment reflects.

Before everyone did their own thing whereas now we are all working together collaboratively.

Sally, Blue School.

The literacy leader of the same school also commented,

I think previously we had all gone about doing our own things in the classroom... there were lots of positives within individuals work but the fact was that no one was actually talking about or having the confidence to talk about what they were doing ... and how we might move forward and share some of those ideas.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

The teachers and principal in this study credited the literacy leaders with helping develop this collaborative aspect of each school. They created opportunities to share across the school – research readings, ways of teaching, planning, literature, resources, strategies for teaching diverse learners and successes with their teaching. There were also opportunities for teachers to observe each other teaching, to reflect, to be observed teaching by the literacy leader, receive feedback on their teaching, be challenged about aspects of their teaching practice, to focus on goals that would improve their teaching practice, to focus on what they wanted their students to achieve and to maintain their focus on improving student outcomes.

I just think how much easier it has been being a teacher coming into a school with such a strong literacy leader, having someone there ... someone I can talk to.

Liz, Teacher, Blue School.

We were able to observe at different levels to what we taught so that we have a better understanding of those levels. We are getting better at doing that and becoming more critical. Our literacy leader has encouraged that.

Sally, Teacher, Blue School.

Coming to my room and doing the observations I found really valuable because it made sure I was putting into practice what I had said I would be doing.

Vicki, Teacher, Red School.

The commitment by both leaders to collaboration is threaded throughout their comments and those of their staff. What was also integral to developing collaborative relationships was the focus on teachers inquiring into their own practice. The teachers and literacy leaders acknowledge the importance of this to the literacy leader role.

I value the collegiality of being able to pop through the door or sit in the work room and use her as a sounding board. I can ask – where will I go next? What would you do?

Liz, Teacher, Blue School.

I've got this problem, I can't move this child (academically) I keep doing this, has anyone got anything they can contribute and share? I am always amazed by that, people have always got something - you could try that or that works... you go away with something that's helpful.

Vicki, Teacher, Red School.

This second teacher comment alludes to the professional learning conversations that occurred in the two schools (Robinson & Lai, 2004). As the observer, I witnessed challenging talk and saw how it got beneath what teachers were saying, challenging their assumptions and beliefs about teaching.

In the latter part of the year the staff of Red School were agreeing to what they believed were the 'not negotiables' of teacher practice in writing in their school. These would be used as a bench mark for teaching practice and for the induction of new staff. The aim of this exercise was to get consistency of teacher practice across the school. A teacher suggested that one idea put forward was actually negotiable which prompted much discussion as to why she thought this, her rationale for saying it and her thinking behind the comment. For ten minutes there were alternate exchanges between this teacher and the remaining staff. During this time the teacher's

thinking was explored and eventually an agreement reached about the placement of the idea.

Pam the literacy leader in Blue School acknowledges how learning conversations have lead to increased collegiality in her school.

We would have conversations as we passed through the resource room, somebody might say “I am really excited about this and this is what happened.” We would all chip in, so it became part of our every day conversations, so it heightened the awareness of what we were looking for or aiming for.

This building of collaboration however does not exist independently to the people in leadership positions as the following participant comments indicate.

The staff feel that they need to trust you and that you will listen to them and not act as though you know it all.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

They also need to have people skills, they have to be approachable, be able to work together with everyone. They need to be respected and have knowledge and skills in the literacy area. When they have these things and ask us to do something we are happy to do anything they ask and do it.

Sally, Teacher, Blue School.

Relationship building is key for a literacy leader - to build the relationship with trust, so the teachers feel that they can be reflected on and they are not going to be jumped on but they are actually going to be provided support to improve their practice.

John, Principal, Red School.

A relationship built on trust is important to all of these participants (Barth, 2001, Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, Villani, 1996, and Wignall, cited in Hord, 1997). Robinson (2007) highlights the importance of relational trust, particularly when the

expectation of improved student outcomes is to result from professional development/learning. In her school leadership synthesis she identifies a strong statistical link between gains in relational trust and gains in academic outcomes.

Collaboration was recognised as important to the two school communities in this study and the staff involved valued the collaboration that had evolved as a result of the literacy focus. They also acknowledged the part literacy leaders had in helping to build these collaborative relationships. Kohm (2002) supports collaboration and states it is a way of bringing people together to inquire, advocate and examine issues through dialogue, so that these issues can be looked at, through multiple perspectives, before decisions are made.

Leading the Learning

The fourth major finding from participant interviews, positions the literacy leader in a central role of school leadership while leading literacy professional development/learning. The principal of Red School makes these comments about his expectation of his literacy leader.

I suppose one of the first things, and I have only just realised this recently, is about what distributed leadership is, so give the leader the right to lead not just task delegation. Give them full responsibility and empowerment to get out and lead in that area...given a budget, ... time, ... access to information, ...systems, ...for a literacy leader to see beyond the classroom and say this is what our school is aiming for.

John, Principal, Red School.

He also went on to say that literacy leaders needed to be genuinely included in the design of the professional learning, particularly setting up what was needed, to work towards the literacy vision for the school. This suggests that from his principal position he is passing the curriculum responsibility to his literacy leader, and thus distributing the school leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Marzano and McNulty, 2003 and Southworth, 2003).

I was quite nervous about it (leading literacy), I loved literacy so wanted to do it but I wasn't entirely sure I could manage the leadership side and like I still have lots of learning to do but I think this has made me think about an awful lot beyond literacy, like relationships to staff and dynamics and how that works and how as a literacy leader you have an impact on that.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

Part of the leadership responsibility for literacy highlights the place of shared goals (Hord, 1997; Eaker, DuFour & Burnette, 2002 and Stevens and Stewart, 2005). Literacy leaders saw themselves as having a place in establishing these goals and keeping a focus on them throughout the professional development/learning.

For a literacy leader I see that person lining up the staff with a direction to go in and having an overall idea of how we are going to get there.

Pam, Literacy leader, Blue School.

If you want to see anything happening in a classroom of value (referring to the focus on student writing) it needs to be forefront in people's heads consistently and that's your job to put it there.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

The principal of Red School and the other teachers in this study support this focus on goals. They articulated the need and importance of a literacy leader who knew where the professional learning was heading and had realistic goals established with them as to how they were going to get there.

I would expect the literacy leader to work with the leadership team and staff to set effective goals around student achievement targets and provide guidance and leadership as to how we might achieve those outcomes...

They see themselves as a leader not someone who has been called in afterwards as sort of an after thought but a key person in setting our targets and working towards our vision as a school.

John, Principal, Red School.

I see it as someone who sets a clear path, in the distance they know what the goals are and they will be the ones that keep us going in the right direction... having a clear purpose and setting the goals.

Teacher, Blue School.

One of Robinson's (2007) five key leadership practices is setting, communicating and monitoring learning goals, standards and expectations and she identifies this focus as having a powerful effect on student outcomes.

The focus on goals did not always pervade the work of all teachers in the schools as this comment reflects.

Probably for our syndicate I think it would have been really good if she (the literacy leader) had come to our syndicate meetings, because there was quite a big block with the junior syndicate about what could and couldn't be done. It would have consolidated what we had heard and you wouldn't be able to walk away and say it is not going to work.

Teacher, Red School.

Bringing the school community together focussed on the same goals helps to sustain the changes made during professional development/learning. Both literacy leaders commented on sustaining the gains they had made during the year of professional development/learning (O'Connell, English & Baretta 2008).

I am just thinking about next year I just hope that I will be able to have the same impact and input even although writing isn't a major focus next year. The most frustrating thing for me would be that all of the work we have done together and the work I have put in this year starts to fall away a little.

Pam, Literacy Leader, Blue School.

Seriously it is going to be an issue to sustain it next year. I have already put it in my recommendation to the Board (Board of Trustees) that to sustain it for next year the literacy leader will need release time.

Anna, Literacy Leader, Red School.

Literacy leaders are identified as having a role to play in the leading and learning of a literacy professional development initiative and a continued role in focussing on literacy. This chapter built on the ideas presented in chapter four. It has drawn the themes particularly from the in-depth interviewing in this study. The first theme of student outcomes was seen by the participants as being central to the professional development/learning. The focus on learning was wider than student outcomes and spread across all of those people involved in professional development/learning focus. This wide learning was supported by the collaborative community that evolved during the time of the professional development/learning focus. Finally it was the literacy leader who was recognised as the leader of this learning.

Chapter Six

Discussion of findings and the implications for practice

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I described a typical day in the life of a literacy leader and examined the role of the literacy leader, focussing in chapter four on the complexity of the teacher who is both teacher and literacy leader. This has raised issues in regards to recognition of the literacy leader role, the time to manage the position and the importance of the place of reflection. In chapter five the areas highlighted are the centrality of student outcomes in the literacy leader role, their place in the learning that occurs for all, the collaboration that learning together requires and their role in leading the learning. All of these findings help to answer the question about what the role of the literacy leader is and how it is enacted. In this chapter I briefly restate my methodological approach and summarise the two findings chapter's. I then discuss them in relation to the literature. I also consider the limitations of my study. Finally, I discuss what I have learned from the project and the implications for my practice.

In this study I deliberately chose two schools who were undergoing in-depth literacy professional development/learning as this would inform my practice as an adviser supporting those teachers in the literacy leader position. The National Administration guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2000) require all schools to focus on literacy. Literacy learning, now known within the Ministry of Education's national office as a foundation learning area (Ministry of Education, 2007e) means all schools will need to maintain a focus on student achievement in this area. This is the case whether or not the school is involved in an in-depth literacy professional development/learning. The literacy leader has a role in helping to maintain this focus and continuing the focus on improved student outcomes. Perhaps the findings from my study will be useful to other literacy leaders, including those not involved in professional development/learning, as well as for advisers supporting professional development/learning.

The findings outlined in both this chapter and the previous chapter have been drawn out by using the qualitative research methods of participant observation and in-depth

interviewing. These research methods allowed me to observe and hear what is seen and done in a particular setting, in this case two schools over a three month period. The longer term positioning within the setting where the research participants work on a daily basis, minimises reactions to the researcher and allows the researcher to capture the reality of the setting over time. As the participant researcher I was therefore able to record impressions I gained, conversations and comments I heard and the participant behaviour I observed, as they undertook their daily events and activities. It was important to ensure I was capturing the views of all the participants. I recorded the views in different ways, field notes, analytical memos, informal jottings and a notebook and these were then supported by in-depth interviewing which allowed me as the researcher to question and thereby increase my understanding of the participants within their own setting. This ensures the data gathered is comprehensive enough to allow others to reproduce the analysis I have undertaken (Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

Qualitative research methods have their critics and are criticised on the basis that this type of research could be subjective and is lacking in the quantifiable measures that are part of survey and experimentation research. Critics also suggest there is a risk in being in the field that the researcher themselves may begin to act as the participants do as a result of being in the group. The in-depth nature of qualitative research and the number of interviews and observations undertaken over a longer period of time helps to alleviate this criticism. It also allows the researcher to determine what is happening for a participant through a participant's own eyes (Bogdan & Biklen 2007).

I begin the discussion of findings in this chapter by focussing on the professional learning community. The ongoing analysis of data in my study suggests that professional learning communities are linked with the role of the literacy leader and how they enact that role.

The professional learning community

In the discussion of my findings I identify how the characteristics of the role of literacy leader parallel those of a professional learning community. I then relate this to the research literature. The characteristics of the professional learning community

encapsulate those characteristics identified in my study as being central to the literacy leader role and how it is enacted. Du Four and Eaker (1998), Fullan (2005), Stoll et al. (2005) and Wenger (1998) all identify professional learning community characteristics as a focus on learning, collaboration within and outside the community, shared values and vision and reflective practice alongside the relational trust that that allows the community to operate effectively. Central to this professional learning community is the commitment to sustaining new learning by increasing the capacity of those in the community.

Hargreaves (2003) states,

Professional learning communities add contrast to culture. They put a premium on teachers working together but also insist that this joint work consistently focuses on improving teaching and learning, and uses evidence and data as a basis for informing classroom improvement efforts and solving whole school problems.

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My study supports the premise that the literacy leader has an important role in leading their literacy professional development/learning within their professional learning community. The existence of a professional learning community does not necessarily translate into improved teachers practice with resulting improved student performance but it seems that it contributes to this likelihood. In a successful professional learning community leadership within that community is important to its success (Timperley & Parr, 2004).

Student outcomes

To understand the effectiveness of professional development/learning we need to make a connection to improved student outcomes (Fullen 2006; Timperley 2007; Guskey 2003; Reeves, 2006 and Robinson, 2007). Indeed current Ministry contracts for Teacher Support Services insist on this focus. The literacy leaders in this study seemed pivotal in achieving this aim.

The primary literacy unpublished milestone three report, furnished as part of the reporting requirements for the Ministry of Education, Teacher Support Services contract, reports that of the twelve hundred writing students in Years 4 - 8 in 2007, there was an average shift in student achievement of one hundred points (as measured by the norm referenced AsTTle writing assessment tool, Ministry of Education, 2006a) for each year level. The students, teachers and literacy leaders of these two schools were part of this cohort and paralleled this shift. The size of the shift in achievement was on average, at least two years progress gained in six months between starting and end points during the 2007 school year. The achievement of the two study schools exemplifies the assertion that improved student outcomes are the expected result of a literacy professional development focus. My study indicates that the literacy leader within a school setting is instrumental in helping to bring about these outcomes.

My study also suggests that a shared vision of improved student outcomes in writing by teachers, literacy leaders and the principal in the study is important as an underlying assumption as to the purpose of the professional development/learning focus.

The results above exemplify that a student achievement focus can be successfully attained with the support of the literacy leader. Timperley et al. (2007) states that student artefacts, for example test results, help to ground professional discussions within a professional learning community and in turn lead to the change in teacher practice required to achieve these successful student outcomes. The literacy leaders in Blue and Red School were identified from both observation and interview as being looked to maintain and support this focus on improved student outcomes. This then became the underpinning focus for their literacy leader as they led their in-school professional development/learning within their professional learning community

Learning for all

The literacy leaders in my study were identified from the other participants in the study, as learners but also had a key role in supporting the learning of all.

Barth (2001) states that the underlying purpose of a community of learners is to have a culture of learning and that all those within the community have a focus on learning,

continuing to learn and supporting the learning of others. While Fullan (2006) concurs with this understanding of learning, he suggests that it spreads to a wider audience than just the school audience. Fullan (2006) argues that learning spreads across the system also, whereby all involved in education feel a collective responsibility to ensure that all students progress and achieve.

In my study the observations and comments of teachers and literacy leaders support the assertions of learning happening across the education system and suggest that outside helpers bring additional knowledge and expertise to the professional community as they focus on improved student learning. The adviser in this case is the person who brings much of this additional research, ideas into the community and the contacts that provide teachers with opportunities to see their teaching in a different way. Literacy leaders and advisers need to demonstrate that they learn from each other, that they are bringing their best knowledge and practices to those they are working with and that the wider networks they belong to can help to inform the practice of those they are working with (Guskey, 2000).

Learning therefore occurs at many levels. At the level of the principal it involves learning to understand what distributed leadership means. At literacy leader level it implies leading other teachers and in developing pedagogical content knowledge to support teachers. At teacher level it requires learning what teaching strategies work best for students in a class, and at student level building an understanding of the strategies needed to become a proficient reader and writer. At professional development level, the adviser is learning how to best support those in literacy leadership positions and other teachers in the school.

Learning in these schools was evident in the reflections captured while I was in the school. Loughran (1996) states that reflection is a process applied in puzzling situations to help the learner make better sense of the information they have and to encourage viewing problems from different perspectives. In the context of professional learning/development, the practices of reflection and inquiry into your own practice are important for teachers in changing their practice to better meet the needs of students (Reid, 2004; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003). During the observation and interviews of literacy leaders, reflection was an activity they consistently engaged in.

Reflection is assisted by ongoing professional learning conversations (Annan, Lai & Robinson, 2003; Robertson, 2005; Robinson & Lai, 2006) which occur in professional learning communities and enable staff to engage in discussions where difficult questions around practice can be surfaced and discussed. Earl and Katz (2002); Reid (2004); Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003) argue there is considerable evidence in inquiry literature of the importance of establishing cultures of inquiry in schools through reflection. Reid also suggests that this inquiry reaches beyond the school level to that of local and national education offices. Reeves (2006) further suggests that the teacher practice of reflecting and changing what they are doing to better meet the needs of their students is a built in accountability process for better learning outcomes.

Cultures of inquiry do not exist in isolation to the community within the school and are dependent on strong relationships of trust amongst the members. They are also dependent on a community that values each others' knowledge and expertise and a community that has collegial relationships which encourage a sharing in the process of learning. Literacy leaders, teachers and principals who engage in in-depth professional development/learning undergo a change process that requires them to shift their current thinking and practice in relation to what they have learnt in the professional learning process (Robinson, 2007; Timperley, Fung, Wilson & Barrar, 2007).

In the *Best Evidence Synthesis of Professional Development/Learning*, Timperley et al. (2007) identify the three processes teachers engage in when undertaking new learning. These are cueing and retrieving prior knowledge, developing an awareness of new information and the creation of dissonance as a result of the new knowledge. If these processes are engaged in then the new knowledge is likely to become the basis of new practice. Elmore (2003); Fullan (2001) and Spillane et al. (2002) claim that dissonance must be accommodated in all professional learning at all levels of education. Accommodating dissonance is vital to reinterpreting one's beliefs and changing these beliefs to enable improved teaching practice with improved student outcomes as a result.

Learning Together

DuFour (2004) and Routman (2002) argue that while many forms of collaboration occur in schools, it is only when the collaboration focuses on teachers working together to analyse and improve their classroom practice in a systematic way that powerful collaboration occurs. The findings of my study are consistent with DuFour's (2004) findings, showing that the literacy leaders in both schools were recognised as contributing to the schools' collaborative focus of improved student outcomes and teacher practices.

DuFour (2004) further states that schools must be organised in teams where everyone focuses on student learning. This is where the size of the school has a direct effect on the school's capacity to develop these effective learning communities and in fact did effect what happened in one of the research schools. Blue School as a five teacher school was not structurally organised into teams within the school but instead operated as one team across the school. Red School however had a teaching staff of eight and was separated into two teams, Years 1 – 4 and Years 5 – 8. The literacy leader of this school and other teachers expressed some concern that as the literacy leader was not the leader of either team, this affected her capacity to influence what happened within teams when they met separately.

To achieve collaboration in the professional learning community the literacy leader, principal and adviser need to address the issue of hierarchical leadership within the school. How can this be aligned to support the distributed leadership of the literacy leader, should the literacy leader not hold a position of responsibility? Hierarchical leadership refers to those teachers appointed to positions of responsibility as deputy and assistant principals and any other school positions with management units. These positions have status within the school, remuneration for the responsibility and titles for the position held. A literacy leader, as was the case in my two study schools, is often a teacher who does not hold one of these positions and therefore does not have the status as such in the school community. The school's structure then has the potential to impede and impact on the effectiveness of their literacy leadership work as was identified in Red School. The recent contract negotiations for the primary

teachers collective (NZEI, 2007) may lead to addressing this in some way now that more management units have been allocated to primary schools. This will however be dependent on how these are allocated within schools.

Collaboration is more likely to occur if the members of the learning community are focussed on the same goals. Timperley et al. (2007) highlights the importance of professional learning/development activities being aligned with the goals of the development. When the professional learning/development activities are aligned to the goals, those teachers who may not have been engaged so deeply with the professional development/learning, begin to align themselves with these goals.

Timperley, Parr and Higginson (2003) in their evaluation of the Ministry of Education literacy leader initiative noted that unless the goals of the professional learning/development were shared and understood, it was unlikely they would be achieved. This issue was highlighted in the Ministry's 2003 report on this project when they realised that the focus of the initiative was not clearly understood by the facilitators, literacy leaders and teachers. Although those observed and interviewed in my research project appeared to be aligned in their understanding of the purpose of the literacy professional development/learning there were occasions when what was happening in practice suggested otherwise.

If we want those teachers who are undertaking professional development/learning to understand and share the goals of the development/learning then they must know what the goals are and see these reflected in all of the professional learning/development activities they undertake. This study suggests that the literacy leaders must focus on these agreed goals and use their leadership skills to ensure that they are the focus for all participating.

Leaders of Learning

Leadership is a characteristic identified as pivotal to the literacy leader role. Caldwell, 2003 p. 26 (as cited in Robertson, 2005, p. 40) states "Educational leadership refers to a capacity to nurture a learning community." Gunter (2001) argues that leadership is not a set of behaviours and tasks but is a relationship with a focus on teaching and

learning. The findings of my study confirm that the literacy leader plays an important role in leading their literacy professional learning community.

The issue raised is, to what degree schools and advisers plan and support the notion of an effective professional learning community with the literacy leader in the leadership role. It seems that a focus of the professional development/learning must be on increasing literacy leaders' capability to lead a professional learning community. In my study, I observed literacy leaders given the leadership opportunity without any planned approach to building their leadership capacity, should they accept that responsibility. An assumption seemed to be made that they would have the knowledge and capabilities to lead without additional support. It seems then that a planned approach to developing the literacy leader in the role of leading the professional development/learning would increase the likelihood of meeting the desired outcomes of both improved student outcomes and improved teaching practices. It would also suggest that the gains made during in-depth literacy professional development have an improved chance of being sustained (O'Connell, Timperley & Parr 2008).

The increased leadership capability resulting from being given specific leadership development as a literacy leader would help to build leadership capacity across a school and then across the wider educational community. This in fact happened during the course of this study when the literacy leader in one of the research schools won a new curriculum leadership position in another school. It wasn't until this appointment that this literacy leader acknowledged that she had in fact developed leadership skills and attributes while leading the in-depth literacy professional development/learning.

Literacy leadership in schools therefore has the potential to build leadership capacity in schools and the wider educational community. Leadership needs to be supported by those within the school and those external to the school to help build this professional capability. When the leadership role is acknowledged as important, given the time accorded to carry it out and has clearly defined responsibilities, those in the role and those interacting with them professionally, can better support them. In the next section I discuss how my study has enabled me to reflect on and address what I need to do to better support the literacy leader in their role.

Implications for my practice

As the professional development adviser I have a role in ensuring that the characteristics identified here as essential to the literacy leader role are central to the planning and contracting of all schools in in-depth literacy professional development. The ways of developing each of these characteristics needs to be explicitly stated in any action plan. This does not suggest it is the sole responsibility of the professional developer to support the development of these characteristics. Rather the professional developer has a responsibility to devise a collaborative plan that incorporates both the professional development adviser and the school management team in acting to support and build this capability.

Through developing a collaborative plan a coherent picture for improved student learning long term can emerge. At the same time the support needed for individuals can be clearly identified ensuring those in supporting roles can address the learning needs of everyone. It is from this coherence that Fullen (2006), Robinson (2007) and Timperley (2007) believe that educational change can be sustained in the longer term. The involvement in professional development/learning will not then be seen as a 'project' or 'programme' to be undertaken at a given time and considered 'done' at the end. Rather it would mean continuous improvement for students and professionals in the learning community who can use this process to achieve and sustain better student outcomes across all curriculum areas.

My study recognised the importance of the professional learning community and how the leadership of this community contributed to successful outcomes for students. This indicates that in future work as an adviser an increased emphasis is needed on developing both the professional learning community and the literacy leadership skills within each school community. Sustaining the improved practice of literacy leaders will also help build the leadership capability not only in literacy but across the educational community. This is supported by the findings of the *Evaluation of the Literacy Professional Development Project* where McDowell et al. (2007) highlighted the value of supporting the on-going development of literacy leaders' knowledge and skills to lead literacy development.

My report identifies another area that needs addressing, that is ensuring sufficient time is allocated for literacy leaders to undertake their responsibilities and for teachers and literacy leaders to reflect on their own practices. Inquiry involves educators in testing their habitual practices and assumptions and checking their effectiveness. It would seem then that reflective practices (Barnett, O'Mahony & Matthews 2004) need to be an integral part of literacy leaders', teachers', advisers' and professional learning community practice. It would also suggest that the time and opportunity to reflect needs to be allocated in a formal way during the professional learning/development process if the status and importance of reflection is to be recognised.

A further way of developing reflective, inquiring practice is to ensure the literacy leader and adviser undertakes a mentoring role to those in the professional learning community. Salzman (2002) outlines the three defining aspects of those in a mentoring role; being lifelong learner, a reflective educator who facilitates learning and role models in interactions with others. Mentoring then supports the assertion that reflective practice and inquiry into practice are essential to building a culture of inquiry within a school

As an adviser there is also the opportunity to help further develop the relationship of trust required in a professional learning community. A culture of inquiry is unlikely to develop if a relationship of trust is not evident (Robinson 2007). From adviser level through to teacher level a learning culture must be evident where the members of the learning community openly admit they are all learners as they did in this study. Admission to all of being a learner helps to build relational trust and increases the opportunities for deep dialogue to develop, as professionals seek answers for their problems of practice (Robinson & Lai, 2007). This openness of everyone learning together increases the likelihood of these practices becoming embedded within the literacy leaders practice and as a result the schools culture of inquiry.

Alignment amongst teams of teachers within schools also needs addressing. Those in hierarchical leadership positions in schools need to have clearly defined roles in supporting the schools literacy action plan. In in-depth schools this can be addressed when the adviser negotiates the in-depth literacy professional development action plan

for that school, however this does not address what happens in those schools who are not engaged in in-depth work. If there is a shared understanding of how the leadership of literacy will impact on a team within the school, it seems more likely that the shared values and vision will be reinforced and student outcomes will be achieved.

The implication for my practice as the adviser is to ensure this alignment underpins all of my work and the literacy leaders work in the school. Meaning the professional learning/development activities must model how the link is made to the overarching professional development/learning goals and how this is made explicit to the participants. The activities must also (Parr & Timperley, 2006) allow for multiple and iterative approaches to learning key concepts and ideas. As a professional developer there is a need to model for and mentor literacy leaders as they assume responsibility for working to attain their school's goals.

My study suggests that there are identified characteristics of the literacy leader role. These are leading within the professional learning community, learning together and for all involved in the professional development/learning underpinned by an expectation of improved student outcomes as a result. It also suggests that the assumption I had as the literacy team leader back in 2004 that there was a need to address the role of the literacy leader by forming small groups of literacy leaders and to address their pedagogical content knowledge and leadership skills was not ill founded.

When all parties involved in a professional development/learning focus are aware of the expectations and needs of literacy leaders and plan to address these then those in the role and those they interact with will be better able to perform the role. This heightened awareness will also mean that the complexity of the role may be better addressed and supported by adequate time to undertake the tasks and a genuine valuing of what these leaders have to offer.

Suggestions for future research

It was not my intention in this research study to generalise across all literacy leaders and professional development/learning situations but to think of the transferability of what has been learnt into other situations (Krueger & Casey 2000). The small number of participants and schools limits any claim to what has been found in this study as being representative of all literacy leaders across our region or New Zealand. Further focus on this role in other research projects would help to develop the ideas presented here and would suggest whether or not there was corroboration with the findings of this study. The link between literacy leaders and the professional learning community also needs further examination and can be part of my focus as I continue in the role of literacy professional developer working in-depth with schools.

It would be expected that those wishing to use these findings would consider the methodology, processes, audience and findings and from here decide whether this would inform the situation they were working in. The observations and interviews have been insightful and valuable in building the picture of how two literacy leaders operate within their school context to bring about both improved student achievement and teaching practices, through their literacy leader role.

What is learned during a process such as this can then be used to inform thinking in other settings and where relevant across other professional developers. Learning across all systems means the Ministry of Education can also be expected to reflect on what is happening within the system addressing where needed at policy level. It is from this knowledge that it can then be said to be a system response (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). Finally when schools, advisers and Ministry of Education enter into a partnership of learning openly demonstrating that each will learn from the other, then capacity is built across all levels of the education system in meeting the goals of improved student outcomes.

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Appendix A



School Consent Form

Our school, _____
consents to participate in the project, 'From teacher in charge of reading to literacy leader – what is the role of the literacy leader?'

We have read and understood the information provided to us concerning the research project and what will be required of the school, principal, literacy leader and teacher participants in this project.

We understand that the information that we provide to the researcher will be treated as confidential but that anonymity cannot be promised because of the size of the settings and because this research is based within the school settings of each participant. The researcher will employ ways of ensuring staff have access to what has been seen, heard or written.

We understand our participation in the project is voluntary and that we may withdraw from the project at any time without incurring any penalty.

Name of Principal: _____

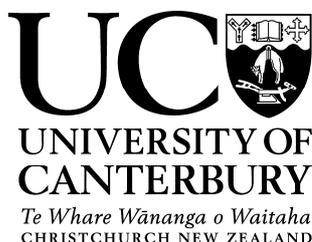
Signature: _____

Name of Board of Trustees representative:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B



Masters Dissertation: From Teacher in Charge of Reading to Literacy Leader – what is the role of the literacy leader?

Information Sheet for Principals, Literacy Leaders, Teachers and Advisers

I am a Master of Teaching and Learning student with the University of Canterbury and am undertaking my dissertation to complete this qualification. I am working under the supervision of Dr Missy Morton, Principal Lecturer and MTchLn Research Coordinator, College of Education, University of Canterbury and Faye Parkhill, Senior Lecturer, School of Literacies and Arts Education, College of Education, University of Canterbury. The College of Education, University of Canterbury has given academic approval for this research project.

My research project is called 'From teacher in charge of reading to literacy leader – what is the role of the literacy leader?' and is a descriptive research project that seeks to explore the role of the literacy leader and how it is enacted in a primary school setting. It will be explored from the perspectives of the literacy leader, the principal of the school, a selection of teachers in that same school and the literacy adviser that works in these schools. I wish to describe and understand the role within the school setting from the perspectives of those participating in the project. What I learn from this study will better enable me to shape my own practice as a professional developer in supporting those teachers in the role of the literacy leader.

Teachers, principals and literacy leaders will be asked to engage in both unstructured and structured interviews to explore their view of the literacy leader role as they have experienced it. There will also be observations of the literacy leader in action within the school, interacting in different ways with colleagues. This research is focussing on the literacy leader's role within schools who are undertaking in-depth professional development in literacy.

No findings that could identify any individual or the school will be published. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. What is said to the researcher will be treated as confidential but anonymity cannot be promised because of the size of the settings and because this research is based within the school settings of each participant. The researcher will employ ways of ensuring the participants can view the

transcripts of both interviews and notes taken during observations to ensure accurate records of any recorded data. When this research project is finished some of the material may be used for publication or presentations to interested groups.

To ensure the safety of participant information I will be keeping all information in a locked filing cabinet in my home and will be the only person who will have access to it. Participation in the research project is voluntary and any participant can withdraw at any time. Copies of this research will be provided for individual participants and the school.

The College of Education, University of Canterbury ethics committee has reviewed and approved this study.

The University of Canterbury requires that all participants be informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to:

The Chair
Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education,
University of Canterbury,
Christchurch

Phone: 343 9606

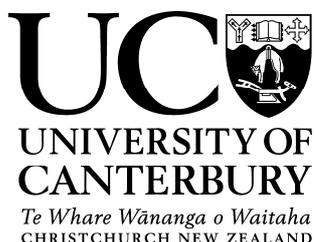
Please sign the permission form included with this information sheet and return to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Chris Henderson
MTchLn student
UC Education Plus
155 Montreal Street
Christchurch

Phone: 03 349 1383

Appendix C



Declaration of Consent

I consent to participate in the project, 'From teacher in charge of reading to literacy leader – what is the role of the literacy leader?'

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the research project and what will be required of me as a participant in this project.

I understand that the information I provide to the researcher will be treated as confidential but that anonymity cannot be promised because of the size of the settings and because this research is based within the school settings of each participant. The researcher will employ ways of ensuring I have access to what has been seen, heard or written and may ask for items to be removed.

I understand that my participation in the project is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without incurring any penalty.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____