

**Te reo o te ākonga me ngā whakapono o te  
kaiako**

**Student voice and teachers' beliefs**

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Bruce Ellison

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## **Abstract**

The beliefs that teachers have about teaching and learning have an influence on the practices that teachers implement. This is particularly relevant, although not exclusively, to teaching practices that meet the needs of Māori students in our bicultural learning environments of New Zealand. There is a growing amount of research to support the use of student voice data, the benefits of which can be seen at a school level, at the classroom teacher level as well as for the individual students themselves.

This research project focused on exploring the impact of students sharing their thoughts and opinions about their learning, (i.e.: student voice data) on influencing teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. In doing so it explores effective facilitation of this process in a bicultural learning environment. In particular it investigates the potential of a combination of specific tools, notably student focus groups and coaching conversations with teachers to influence teachers' beliefs.

This study took place in two low decile schools in Christchurch. It involved focus groups of Māori and non-Māori primary-aged students, alongside teacher reflective interviews being conducted on repeated visits. Its findings identified approaches for accessing authentic student voice in a bicultural learning environment. The thoughts and opinions shared by Māori students highlighted a focus on their own learning as well as celebrating their culture. Teachers reacted to student voice by making connections to their classroom programmes, and by accepting or dismissing more provocative statements. These reactions by teachers helped emphasize the most helpful methods for reflecting on this data. Their reflections, used alongside a specially designed 'Teacher Belief Gathering Tool', ascertained that teachers' beliefs were both reaffirmed and changed through guided reflection and coaching conversations on student voice data. Teachers' knowledge of effective teaching and learning, their motivation for changing their teaching practices, as well as witnessing success were all considerable factors in teachers changing their beliefs.

**Key words; student voice, student agency, teachers' beliefs, culturally responsive practice, coaching conversations, provocative statements, teachers' reactions, teacher reflection, deficit thinking, respect.**

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Chapter outline

### Framing Question:

- Why explore the link between student voice and teacher's beliefs in a bicultural learning environment?

This chapter gives an overview of the research project, before outlining the structure and information included in this thesis. It begins by introducing the concepts associated with student voice, teachers' beliefs, culturally responsive teaching practice and teacher reflective practices. In doing so it identifies theoretical links between them. It continues by exploring how the interest in this investigation evolved, before introducing the focus and guiding questions of this study. An overview of the research design and overall thesis conclude this chapter.

## 1.2 Rationale

A period of great change in education is being demanded and witnessed around the world (Constantinescu, 2013; Coombs, 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Popescu & Crenicean, 2012). In New Zealand there is much public interest and discussion on the educational reforms that are taking place (Bolstad, Gilbert, & McDowall, 2012; Naysmith, 2011; Pope, 2013). Educational research and educational professionals within the field have an important voice in this debate. Discussions on effective pedagogy, best practices of teaching and learning, have been sharply focused on raising student achievement. This focus has naturally extended to the aim of raising the professional practice of teachers, encouraging schools to ensure they are also developing the practice of the professionals who work within them. Educational research in adult learning is playing a pivotal role in guiding schools' professional development of teachers.

A common theme emerging amongst researchers is that effective teachers take an active interest in what their students perceive of their teaching (Fraser, 2008; Nuthall, 2007). They judge a lesson or unit's success not on their own teaching but on what the students are learning. Fraser (2008) argues that:

Teachers who make the effort to see learning from the students' perspectives maximize their chances of making both explicit and intuitive connections to their students' learning. (p. 50)

These students' perspectives are shaped by the rich variety of prior learning experiences that they bring to their classrooms. Responding to the diversity of learners, their prior experiences and cultural backgrounds are key challenges for teachers (Alton-Lee, 2003; Fraser, 2008; Nuthall, 2007). A culturally responsive approach to teaching is identified by Gay (2010) and Taylor and Sobel (2011) as an approach to empowering and raising academic success amongst ethnically diverse students by validating and valuing students' cultural identities. As noted by Taylor and Sobel (2011):

Teachers' cultural perspectives and belief systems have a significant impact on their instructional delivery and decisions. (p. 5)

This raises the importance of acknowledging and understanding teachers' belief systems in any professional learning process. In any such process, reflecting on current practice is a logical starting point. Reflecting through the lens of their students' perspectives is therefore more likely to help teachers make the important connections with their students' learning. Such reflections are enhanced when incorporated into professional learning discussions with colleagues (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). These discussions not only help the teacher acquire new knowledge about teaching and learning, but can also help or challenge them to articulate and justify their existing understandings.

Dialogue can challenge learners to identify and clarify their personal beliefs, values and actions when they work alongside colleagues in real or simulated situations. (Lovett, 2002, p. 74)

Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning can have a large influence on the decisions they make and the actions they take in a classroom (Crux, 1989; Fives & Buehl, 2011; Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak, & Egan, 2002). Teachers' beliefs are therefore a critical factor to consider in any professional development initiative that aims to change teachers' practice. A theoretical link can now be drawn to the importance of teachers reflecting on students' perspectives through dialogue with their teaching colleagues, and the influence that such a practice could have on teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

### **1.3 Evolution of this research project**

Currently I am the deputy principal of a medium sized, urban primary school. Prior to taking up this role this year I was a deputy principal at another similar and nearby school. In my previous role I was part of a leadership team, responsible for ensuring the quality of learning that the students received from their teachers. It was in this capacity that I first began exploring student voice and its use in coaching teachers as they investigated the effectiveness of their practice, as part of their teacher appraisal.

In recent years, the model of teacher appraisal at my school changed from one of teachers needing to prove their competence to one focusing on teachers improving their competence. This was achieved through teachers participating in mini action research projects, implementing and investigating the effectiveness of certain teaching programmes in their classrooms, known as 'Teaching as Inquiry' projects (Ministry of Education, 2007). Coaching relationships were introduced to support teachers with their investigations into their classroom practice. A coach typically followed a process of acquiring data from the teacher's classroom practice, and using questioning skills to help the teacher reflect and think more deeply about this data and the implications for their inquiry. The data could include observations of classroom activities, focusing on students or teachers or both, students' work, or students' thoughts and opinions. I noticed that teachers were opting to reflect on student voice data more than the other types of data available to them. This, along with my interest in raising Māori student achievement, sparked my interest in

finding out how effective student voice data could be as a tool for improving teaching and learning, particularly in our bicultural learning environments.

#### **1.4 Research objective**

This research project was designed to investigate the combination of specific tools and the potential use of these to influence teachers' beliefs. More specifically it was focused on finding out if students sharing their thoughts and opinions about their learning, or student voice data, could influence their teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and how to best facilitate this in a bicultural learning environment.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

The main question that guided this research project was:

In what ways are teachers' beliefs influenced by student voice in a bicultural environment?

This was supported by the following supplementary questions:

- 1      How do you develop and gather quality authentic student voice?
- 2      What considerations are needed in order to gather and reflect on quality authentic student voice from Māori learners?
- 3      What processes do teachers use to reflect on student voice?
- 4      How does student voice change teachers' beliefs?

#### **1.6 Research overview**

This research was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm and subjective epistemology. Knowledge is gained through human interpretations and perspectives (Snape & Spencer, 2003) and there can be multiple understandings ensuring the importance of co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and research participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This theoretical influence is relevant to this study because it supports the point that knowledge is not only derived from

observable actions and events, but also from human interpretations or perspectives of these.

Consistent with these theoretical perspectives, this qualitative study employed the principles of several research methodologies: action research, phenomenology and Kaupapa Māori research. Action research methodological approaches were utilized during the study as I, the researcher, was an active participant. Also the research was cyclical and there was a desire to improve the learning for all participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Somekh, 1995). Phenomenological approaches allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of how the teachers were experiencing and processing the student voice data (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Flick, 2009). A Kaupapa Māori research approach was vital to ensure that Māori knowledge, values and world view were brought to this research (Cram, 2001; Jones, 2012; Smith, 1999; Tolich, 2002).

As a participant researcher, I led the process of gathering student voice data from whānau groups of Māori students and groups of Non-Māori students, and sharing the transcripts of these focus groups and their semi-structured interviews with their teachers. Reflective interviews were conducted to discuss the teachers' interpretations and responses to the student voice data during the research. A specific tool was designed to help teachers discuss their beliefs about teaching and learning and this was used at the beginning and end of the data collection period.

Data analysis was guided by a thematic analysis approach where all student and teacher transcripts were coded, followed by identifying patterns amongst the codes and then grouping of these codes into common themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Charmaz, 2006; Flick, 2009; Gibbs, 2007; Walter, 2010).

A number of ethical considerations were needed to ensure the emotional and cultural safety of all participants. A strong emphasis on positive relationships was at the heart of Kaupapa Māori research methodology, where being respectful and humble were paramount (Smith, 2012). These practices were supported by the five

ethical principles of Davidson and Tolich (1998): do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoiding deceit, and confidentiality and anonymity.

## **1.7 Thesis overview**

This thesis is organized into two sections. The first section includes three chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction by briefly outlining the rationale and evolution of this research project. The focus and guiding questions of this study are introduced before outlining the research design including its methodology. Chapter 2 provides a critical review of literature, examining teacher beliefs, student voice, culturally responsive pedagogy and teacher reflection, which were the focus areas of this study. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology. In this chapter the qualitative approaches of action research, phenomenology and Kaupapa Māori methods are discussed, participants described, research design outlined, data collection and analysis procedures identified, and ethical considerations are explored, before the issue of credibility is examined.

The second section of this thesis outlines and discusses the findings before deriving relevant conclusions. This section is presented in four chapters. The key findings that emerged from the analysis are introduced, notably: sources of teachers' beliefs (Chapter 4), student voice processes (Chapter 5), teacher reactions and reflections (Chapter 6) and the influence of student voice on teachers' beliefs (Chapter 7). During Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 there is a focus on culturally responsive practices in relation to the findings. As these findings are explored they are also discussed alongside similar research in these areas. Chapter 8 reviews the significance of the study, summarises the findings and examines the major themes, before discussing the study's limitations. It concludes by considering the implications of the findings for teaching and leadership practice, as well as recommendations for future research. References and appendices follow the final chapter.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Chapter outline

Framing Question:

- What is already known about student voice and teachers' beliefs in a bicultural learning environment?

This chapter gives an overview of current research in the areas of: teacher beliefs, student voice, culturally responsive practice, and teacher reflection. It begins with an explanation of how teacher beliefs function and the factors that influence teacher beliefs are explored. Research on using student voice is then discussed, notably the benefits and challenges of using student voice, before outlining how to gather authentic student voice data. Common results from research involving student voice are also shared. Culturally responsive practices are investigated in relation to a bicultural learning environment, including a focus on effective teaching for Māori learners, and then common results from research involving Māori student voice are shared. Teachers' reactions to student voice are noted, which introduces a section on teacher reflection, and in turn links into the use of coaching conversations as a tool to help improve teacher reflections.

### 2.2 Teacher beliefs

An understanding of personal belief systems is a complex field. When investigating the link between student voice and teachers' beliefs it was important that there was some background knowledge of how teachers' beliefs are constructed, the link between them and a teacher's practice, and how this applies to changing teacher beliefs.

#### 2.2.1 Importance of teachers' beliefs

Decisions and actions that we take as individuals are influenced by our beliefs. Our personal beliefs are the best predictors of the decisions we make and actions we

take (Bandura, 1986; Haney et al., 2002; Pajares, 1992). Teachers' beliefs therefore have a large influence on students' learning. Teachers make many decisions about the learning programmes they implement so that they best align with their own personal beliefs about teaching and learning. These decisions include altering the curriculum (Haney et al., 2002) or the strategies, reasons and content (Devine, Fahie, & McGillicuddy, 2013) that they deliver.

### **2.2.2 What are teachers' beliefs?**

It comes as little surprise that teachers' beliefs are referred to as complex in nature, and not aligning to one viewpoint alone (Gipps, McCallum, & Brown, 1999).

Following an in-depth analysis of research, Fives and Buehl concluded that "teachers' beliefs could be framed to include beliefs about (a) self, (b) context or environment, (c) content or knowledge, (d) specific teaching practices, (e) teaching approach, and (f) students" (2011, p. 472). Research into teachers' beliefs about their ability as teachers or their 'self' shows that there is a corresponding correlation between teachers' views of their own teaching ability and the learning goals that they expect of the children they teach (Allinder, 1994; Erdem & Demirel, 2007; Fives & Buehl, 2008). Fives and Buehl (2011) also mention that this belief of themselves and their abilities as teachers influences the effort, the likelihood to take immediate action and the perseverance towards achieving the learning goals they set.

While teachers' beliefs are broad and varied, reflecting the diversity of teachers and their individual experiences, Devine et al. (2013) identified five common factors from their study of teachers' beliefs about 'good teaching': "Passion for teaching and learning, Social and moral dimension, Reflective practitioner, Effective planning and management of learning, Love for children" (p. 92). These categories represent an overview of teachers' beliefs about effective teaching. Understanding how these categories and the beliefs within them operate is critical to any discussion on changing teachers' beliefs.

### **2.2.3 How teachers' beliefs impact learning**

Understanding how teacher beliefs function is an important factor when considering

the influence that student voice may have on them. Fives and Buehl (2011) outline a three-step process in the role of teacher beliefs. Firstly beliefs act as filters, helping a teacher interpret new information and its relevance. Secondly teacher beliefs provide a framework for decision making, defining the problem. Then thirdly, teacher beliefs act as a guide for action. This description of the functions of teacher beliefs shows a process of sharpening to a point, starting with the bigger picture of interpretation and working down to the sharp end of action. This process is similar to that highlighted by Clark and Peterson (1986) who indicate that teacher's beliefs act as a tool to highlight and make sense of classroom experiences and decide on any actions to take.

When acting as a filter, teachers' beliefs filter the plethora of actions, events and interactions that occur in the classroom. This filtering process allows the teacher to decide what information is valuable enough for them to process further. When the teacher has recognized the information as worth processing, the guide function helps the teacher define the problem or issue to be resolved. Once the issue or concept is defined the teachers' belief systems act as a guide for any action or intent to act. Teachers' beliefs about their own abilities have an influence on decisions and actions they take during this stage of the process. Figure 19.1 below gives a visual overview of beliefs acting as filters, frames and guides (Fives & Buehl, 2011, p. 478).

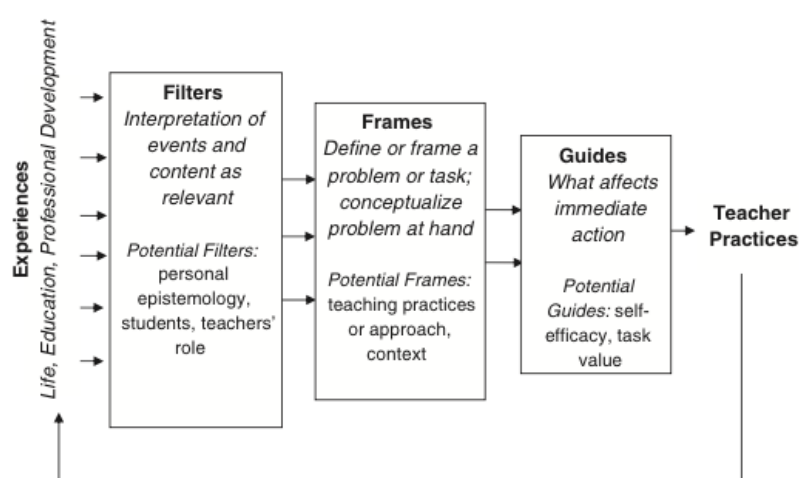


FIGURE 19.1. Beliefs act as filters, frames, or guides.

Teachers do not associate with any one particular belief system or belief statement; they do in fact hold a range of convictions relating to effective teaching practice (Gipps et al., 1999). The range of beliefs that teachers identify with can compete with one another for attention, priority and action (Fives & Buehl, 2011).

#### **2.2.4 Teachers' beliefs and links to practice**

Each teacher possesses their own opinions and convictions about what is possible and the best approaches to help students learn. There has been a lot of discussion and investigation into whether and how these beliefs might be related to practice. Crux (1989) indicated that teachers' beliefs do dictate their practice. Teachers will make decisions and act according to their beliefs. This viewpoint is supported by Haney et al. (2002) and Fives and Buehl (2011) who state that "Almost any published work in this area suggest some link to classroom practices" (p. 480). Wilcox-Herzog (2002) however argue that results of other studies mean that the "relationship between beliefs and actions is unclear" (p. 83). Ernest (1989) notes that when beliefs are interwoven with theories of child development and knowledge about teaching and learning there is likely to be more alignment between a teacher's beliefs and their practice. Leung (2012) notes that when a teacher's beliefs align with their practice, there are improved educational outcomes for students.

Devine et al. (2013) offer an explanation for the uncertain link between beliefs and practice by suggesting that this link is not always a linear one. Beliefs can compete with each other, and in doing so become a hindrance to good practice.

Environmental factors can also have a large influence on whether and by how much a teacher's beliefs will influence their practice. Beliefs and practice can be at odds as a result of a school's culture and the relationships within it. Directions from school leaders, collaboration with fellow teachers, desires of parents and reactions from students can all place explicit or implicit pressure on the levels to which teachers enact their beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). Adhering to national policy decisions such as curriculum design, assessment and reporting requirements, availability of technology and other resources can also restrict or direct teachers practising what they believe (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Gipps et al., 1999).

Recent research has also highlighted the effect that deficit thinking by teachers for children from lower socio-economic areas and minority ethnic groups can have. This thinking results in a more traditional teaching delivery of less challenging content (Devine et al., 2013). As noted earlier, Fives and Buehl (2011) mention that teachers' beliefs about their own capabilities when faced with problems impacts on their motivation and perseverance, which then impacts on their practice.

### **2.2.5 Influences on beliefs**

If we understand that a link, with competing factors, operates between teachers' beliefs and their practice, it is important to learn what influences teachers' beliefs so that they can be broadened or shaped in a way that benefits all children's learning. Bandura (1997) explains that there are four ways that self-efficacy beliefs can be changed or strengthened: through experiencing positive results, observing positive results, emotional connections, or through convincing arguments. Fives and Buehl (2011) also note "Evidence has suggested that teachers' beliefs change over time and in response to specific experiences" (p. 490). These specific experiences need to create surprise and be sufficiently inconsistent with a teacher's original beliefs so that the experiences cannot be incorporated into the original beliefs (Timperley, 2005; Timperley & Robinson, 2001).

The link between beliefs and practice is itself not one directional. While teachers' beliefs have an influence on their practice, their practice can also influence their beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Haney et al., 2002). The outcomes of actions that teachers take can reaffirm or in some cases reconstruct the beliefs they have about teaching and learning. It has also been shown that knowledge and beliefs are interwoven. Professional development opportunities have been reported to lead to changes in beliefs (Timperley & Robinson, 2001). These changes are more likely if the experiences allow opportunities to practise and reflect with appropriate support in place (Lovett, 2002). Other factors identified as having a positive influence on belief changes are being task or strategy focused and building an accepted mode of operating within the group (Fives & Buehl, 2011).

In order for a teacher's beliefs to change they need to be confronted with new information in such a way that it challenges their current views (Axelrod, 1973; Timperley & Robinson, 2001). Two studies have shown how the use of data was used successfully as a tool to confront teachers' beliefs about students' underachievement (Timperley, 2005; Timperley & Robinson, 2001). In both these cases an expert, either outside of the school or a senior school leader, helped challenge the teacher's deficit thinking and develop a more agentic thinking approach through discussion and probing questions. Devine et al. (2013) mention that this deficit thinking is more prominent in teachers when working with children from low socio-economic backgrounds or children of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Teachers' beliefs are influenced when teachers are confronted by experiences that are not easily aligned with or explained by their current beliefs. Typically these experiences include the daily interactions in the classroom, discussions with colleagues, and analysing assessment data. Another experience that is becoming more prevalent in some schools is gathering and using student voice data.

### **2.3 Culturally responsive pedagogy**

Culturally responsive teaching practices have been highlighted by recent research as a means of addressing the inequality in educational outcomes for students of different ethnicities (Griner & Stewart, 2013). Students' cultural identities are embraced in a culturally responsive approach to teaching and learning, through teachers' communication, expectations, and lesson content reflecting and respecting the aspirations and traditions of ethnically diverse learners in the classroom (Berryman & Bishop, 2006; Gay, 2010; Taylor & Sobel, 2011). In New Zealand, Māori are the indigenous culture or tangata whenua, and Māori students, in terms of numbers are a minority group. Some Māori students are achieving great success but as a group Māori students are overrepresented in academic underachievement (Ministry of Education, 2013; Jahnke, 2012; Smith, 2000).

### **2.3.1 Locating bicultural perspectives in education**

The Treaty of Waitangi is a founding New Zealand document that was signed by representatives of the British crown and most Māori chiefs. Its principles and guidelines facilitated an agreement that allowed a government to be created. The treaty principles underpin both school governance and classroom teaching practices: through National Education Guidelines (NEGs), National Administration Guidelines (NAGs), the New Zealand curriculum and the Māori education strategy Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013 – 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2013, 2014; Patara, 2012). The New Zealand curriculum states, “The curriculum acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand” (Ministry of Education, 2007 p.9). Teachers need to meet these obligations through ensuring they are providing the best learning experiences and environment for Māori learners. This is often referred to as ensuring “Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori” (Ministry of Education, 2013 p.12).

### **2.3.2 What does effective teaching for Māori learners look like?**

The progress of Māori learners has been a priority for the Ministry of Education and schools in recent years. Significant research has identified school and classroom approaches that lead to greater learning achievement results amongst Māori learners (Berryman & Bishop, 2006; Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter, & Clapham, 2012).

Hattie (2012) indicates that a positive relationship between student and teacher is a key element in achieving learning success. An integral part of this relationship is that the student knows “that the teacher understands him or her” (2012, p.141). For Māori learners this means teachers understand, recognize and use elements of their culture, both visible (such as language, customs, artefacts, and art) and invisible (values, morals, processes et cetera), to ensure there is a strong teacher - student relationship (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Macfarlane, 2004; Nuthall, 2007). Bishop & Glynn state that “we need to create contexts where to be Māori is to be normal; where Māori cultural identities are valued, valid and legitimate; in other words where Māori children can be themselves” (2003, p. 169).

Teachers' attitudes towards students and the expectations they have of them also have a great influence on their achievement. Hattie refers to this as the trust component in a student-centred teacher, that is "students seeing that the teacher believes in them – especially when they are struggling" (Hattie, 2012, p. 141). Bishop and Berryman raise the crucial point that teachers' "deficit thinking" (2009, p. 29), that is teachers thinking of their students as being deficient in some way, has a hugely detrimental effect on both the teacher-student relationship as well as a student's willingness to strive for success. Such perceived deficiencies could be related to personal attributes, family or cultural factors. By contrast, "agentic thinking" (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 29) involves teachers valuing children's experiences and seeing their relevance in the classroom learning environment, being pro-active in solving problems and believing every student can achieve.

Agentic thinking was fundamental to the creation of learning contexts in classrooms where young Māori people are able to be themselves as Māori: where Māori students' humour was acceptable, where students could care for and learn with each other, where being different was acceptable and where the power of Māori students' own self-determination was fundamental to classroom relations and interactions. (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 29)

It is towards the agentic thinking end of this continuum, where being Māori is viewed as a strength that Bishop and Berryman want teachers to be operating. To help teachers use Māori students' strengths in their teaching, several researchers have identified teaching strategies that promote Māori student achievement. For this study, where teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning in a bicultural environment are being investigated, it is important to understand the key research and Ministry of Education strategies for improving Māori student achievement.

Bishop and Berryman (2009) identified five actions that effective teachers undertake in raising the achievement of Māori learners. These are referred to as the "Effective Teaching Profile". The Ministry of Education (2013) outlines its strategy to make a significant difference for Māori students' achievement in education in the



publication 'Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success' (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Cornelius-White (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on student-centred teaching. This was further analysed by Hattie (2012) and he outlined four elements of student-centred teaching. The Effective Teaching Profile, Ka Hikitia and student centred teaching are compared in Table 2.3.2 below.

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Table 2.3.2 – A brief analysis of recognised teaching approaches for Māori learners.

<b>Brief Analysis of Recognised Teaching Approaches for Māori Learners</b>		
Effective Teaching Profile	Student-Centred Teacher	The Guiding Principles of Ka Hikitia
Bishop & Berryman (2009)	Hattie (2012)	Ministry of Education (2013)
		<b>Treaty of Waitangi</b>
<b>Manaakitanga</b> Caring for students as Māori and acknowledging their mana	<b>Warmth: the foundational contributor</b> Acceptance, affection, unconditional respect, and positive regard for students.	<b>Identity, language and culture count</b> Students do better in education when what and how they learn reflects and positively reinforces where they come from, what they value and what they already know.
<b>Mana Motuhake</b> Caring for the performance of Māori students	<b>Trust: the optimistic and high expectations contributor</b> Students seeing that the teacher believes in them	<b>Māori potential approach</b> All Māori students have the potential to excel and be successful
<b>Ngā whakapiringatanga</b> Creating a secure, well-managed learning environment	<b>Positive relationships: the contributors together</b> Student knowing that the teacher understands him or her.	<b>Productive Partnerships</b> Understanding that Māori children and students are connected to whānau
<b>Kotahitanga</b> Teachers and students reflecting together on student achievement in order to move forward collaboratively		
<b>Wānanga</b> Engaging in effective learning interactions with Māori students	<b>Empathy: the ‘get to know students’ contributor</b> Teachers standing in the shoes of the student and seeing his or her perspective of the learning	<b>Ako – a two-way teaching and learning process</b> A learning relationship where the educator is also learning from the students and where educators’ practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and effective.
<b>Ako</b> To learn as well as to teach – using a range of teaching strategies		

## **2.4 Student voice**

Researchers have used a range of vocabulary to describe student voice but there are some common themes that emerge. Student voice could be as engaged as students having direct involvement in decisions about their learning, or more simply as students having the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions about their learning experiences. Having a genuine say involves teachers giving more attention to students' views and involving them in the decision making process (Broadhead, 1996; Rogers, 2005; Tait & Martin, 2007). There is a growing amount of research to support the use of student voice data, the benefits of which can be seen at a school level, at the classroom teacher level as well as for the individual students themselves.

### **2.4.1 Benefits of student voice**

Gaining the perspectives of the children in the classes we teach has benefits for the schools, the teachers and of course the students who share their voice. It has been identified as an important tool for school improvement and change (Broadhead, 1996; Cook-Sather, 2011; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004).

Being aware of the “what and how” children are learning allows teachers to be more effective in their planning and preparation (Hamilton, 2006; Hipkins, 2010). Cook-Sather (2011) notes that engaging in student voice discussions influences teachers' learning and practice. Teachers also become more aware of children's true capabilities (Hamilton, 2006) and become re-invigorated for teaching itself through utilising student voice (Broadhead, 1996; Hamilton, 2006).

The relationship between teacher and student is improved through the teacher's use of student voice (Bragg & Manchester, 2012). When students are consulted about their thoughts and feelings they feel they are being treated with greater respect (Bragg, 2001), and including students is a crucial component in creating a collaborative learning relationship (Ministry of Education, 2013). In relation to the use of student voice, Bragg and Fielding (2003) refer to teachers and students working side by side to modify culture and practices. This leads to the acquisition of

negotiation, cooperation and communication skills that are critical in learning about citizenship (Ranson, 2000; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

Hattie (2012) explains that students need to be engaged in their learning for it to be effective. Whenever students' opinions are genuinely sought and acted upon they are more likely to display a positive attitude towards their learning (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This is true in our ever-changing world where students are growing up confident users of technology (Prensky, 2005). It is also an important consideration for children who are at risk of disengaging (MacBeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003; Smyth, 2006).

Having input into and a level of control over the direction of their own learning is empowering for students. Cook-Sather (2011) mentions that this empowerment leads to students developing more agency as learners. Student voice has the power to change students' perceptions of themselves and therefore their potential (Bragg & Manchester, 2012; Cook-Sather, 2011; MacBeath, 2006). Students' self-worth is increased, as are their effort and focus for learning (Hamilton, 2006).

#### **2.4.2 Challenges with student voice**

There are a number of challenges that have arisen as the popularity of collaborating with students about their learning and school life has increased. The practice of actively involving students in decisions about their learning involves redefining the power in school relationships (Bragg & Manchester, 2012). Teachers are also experiencing extra pressures of a crowded curriculum and narrowing focus on assessment and reporting, which impacts on their ability to use student voice.

A tension of power (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007) is created when using students' thoughts and opinions, as the traditional teacher and student relationship is challenged through genuine engagement of student voice. Some teachers are concerned student voice will undermine their role as the teacher or act as another way for leaders to criticise what they practise or believe. The act of

teaching involves a range of complexities that children are not able to fully understand (McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005). Teachers who value their role of expert and see it as their responsibility to impart knowledge upon their students are more threatened by the use of student voice than those teachers who view learning as co-constructed between teacher and student. There is also the concern amongst some teachers that children will not take the process seriously (Bragg, 2001). Grace (1995) writes that such an argument is designed to maintain the power of adults in the school and classroom.

As ever increasing demands are placed on schools and teachers in relation to curriculum and academic achievements, teachers and school leaders become very protective of their time. There is a risk that any consultation with students to seek student voice will be superficial (Hamilton, 2006; MacBeath, Myers, & Demetriou, 2001) or that students will be listened to but any real actions will not be followed up (Crane, 2004 as cited in Hamilton, 2006). The nature of teaching means that teachers are conversing with students regularly in an informal manner, and some teachers consider that these forms of consultation will suffice (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Bragg (2001) argues that with the current result-based pressures in education, schools are less likely to take the time needed to listen to the student voices that confront their current beliefs and practices. Yet these are the precise voices that most need to be heard (MacBeath, 2006).

#### **2.4.3 Gathering student voice**

Acquiring authentic and quality student voice is a challenging undertaking, requiring patience, skill and an open mind from teachers who are aware of how their own view-points impact on their understanding of their students' views. Children need to feel relaxed and that they can fully trust the professionalism and genuine intent of the person(s) eliciting their viewpoints (MacBeath et al., 2001). Children may need help recognising and articulating their views, which means teachers need to be aware of and use learning-centred vocabulary and establish a classroom

environment that encourages reflective and critical thinking (MacBeath et al., 2001; Tait & Martin, 2007).

During the preparation phase of gathering student voice data, there are a number of decisions made that impact on the quality of data collected. One of the key decisions is selecting how this data is to be collected. MacBeath et al. (2003) mention that this decision should be made with the guiding principles of “economy and power” (p. 13). Economy refers to the ease with which the collection tool can be implemented and power refers to the insights that could be gleaned from the data collected. When selecting from the range of questionnaire, writing, talking or art based tools (MacBeath et al., 2003) the aim is to gather the most useful and powerful data with the least distraction and inconvenience. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) identified in their research the use of an intermediary as an effective approach to maximising the power while minimising the economy during the process of gathering student voice data.

Once the tool has been chosen, attention turns to selecting the students to approach. For some tools such as simple and short surveys, the whole class, year group or school might be involved, but for approaches that involve discussion and interaction this will prove too time consuming and a smaller sample of students from the wider cohort is more appropriate. Such a sample works best when the sample of voices best reflects all the students in the cohort including gender, ethnicity, abilities, levels of engagement and importantly including students who are trusted by other pupils (MacBeath et al., 2003; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Topics that are discussed need to be relevant to both students and teachers. The greater the influence students have over what (and how) they are consulted, the better the information being gleaned (MacBeath et al., 2003; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

During the process of collecting the thoughts and opinions of students it is important that they feel that they can trust the process, and that they can trust the people collecting their responses and the people that will be analysing them. This occurs

when the objectives and process, including selection of students and topics as well as what will happen to their responses, are clearly explained to them (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Students need to feel that they are not being judged and that their teachers are genuinely interested in what they have to say (MacBeath et al., 2003; MacBeath et al., 2001).

It is important for the students involved that the process doesn't stop once their opinions have been sought. Trust is built when students are debriefed as to any key messages and actions that were taken from their responses. By consulting with students you have engaged in a new level of relationship and this needs to be respected or disillusionment and distrust will follow making any future attempts at the gathering of student voice fraught (MacBeath et al., 2003). This new relationship is respected when actions are taken from their student voice, and these actions are explicitly visible or explicitly explained to the students involved.

The table below is a summary of the requirements to establish authentic voice (Hattie, 2012; MacBeath et al., 2003; MacBeath et al., 2001; Mitra, 2006; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; Tait & Martin, 2007).

*Table 2.4.3 How is authentic student voice developed?*

<b>How is authentic student voice developed?</b>	
<b>Preparation Phase</b>	<p>Why are you gathering student voice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is your reference point, come back to this to check you're on track?</li> </ul> <p>How will it be carried out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools (survey, interviews, focus group)</li> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Students (representative, trusted by peers, range of voices including gender, ethnicity and engagement levels)</li> </ul> <p>What will be asked?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific or general</li> <li>• Open or closed questions</li> <li>• Direct (what environment helps you learn the most?), Prompted (Looking at these photos of different learning spaces, what environment would you like to learn in?) or Mediated (Can you draw your ideal learning environment and then tell me about it)</li> </ul>

	<p>Be aware that if asked for alternative ways of doing things, students will refer to things they have done or seen</p> <p>Developing authentic student voice can range from teacher directed through to student initiated.</p>
<b>Gathering Phase</b>	<p>Be Explicit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the purpose of engaging students' views, reasons students were selected, focus of the inquiry, and what will happen to what students say</li> </ul> <p>Be Genuine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that you are engaged in the student voice process for the right reasons, the reasons that were articulated to the students</li> </ul> <p>Be Engaging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start with a 'hot' topic that they can easily talk about, e.g. what they like about being in their class?</li> <li>Follow up with a mini topic question, e.g. tell me about what you are doing in writing at the moment.</li> </ul> <p>Be Reassuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remind students that their thoughts and opinions matter, and that there are no negative consequences if they their thoughts and opinions are not what school leaders and teachers want to hear</li> </ul> <p>Be Non-Judgemental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refrain from making positive or negative comments about students' points of view, especially agreeing or disagreeing with their statements</li> </ul> <p>Be sure to feedback what you've heard to clarify your understanding</p>
<b>Follow-up Phase</b>	<p>Feedback to students about the discussions that followed their sharing and any decisions or actions that took (or will take) place.</p> <p>Keep promises, both explicitly said or implicitly inferred from this new relationship that has been created.</p>
<b>Important Climate Characteristics in Developing Authentic Student Voice</b>	
<p>Be open to learning and change</p> <p>Actively reflect</p> <p>Promote thinking</p> <p>Practice trusting and respectful relationships</p> <p>Build common vocabulary to allow everyone to explore their thinking and learning</p>	

#### 2.4.4 Student voice research

Over recent years there has been a number of research projects involved with eliciting the thoughts and opinions of students about their learning. While these



studies were conducted in a range of countries, school types and included a range of ethnicities, ages, gender and socio-economic backgrounds amongst the participating students, there were some common themes to emerge. Contrary to common fears amongst teachers, of students airing their grievances and commenting on personalities, students consulted about their thoughts and opinions focused on their learning and how this could be improved (Hattie, 2012). Students shared their appreciation for teachers who used concise and familiar language in their explanations and who acknowledged their individual differences within the larger class group. Student voice research indicates that students learnt best when actively involved in tasks that linked new information with what they were familiar with inside and outside the classroom. Students also desired greater autonomy and independence and valued working and learning collaboratively (McIntyre et al., 2005). In another study students shared their desire to better understand what teachers meant by 'good work' and for assessment to better support their learning. They shared the importance of friendships in supporting learning and building self-esteem and the influence that their perceptions of themselves as learners, the relationships they have with teachers and the relevance of the subject material impact the motivation they have for learning (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004).

#### **2.4.5 Student voice research with Māori learners**

Berryman and Bishop (2006) interviewed two groups of Year nine and Year ten Māori learners, engaged and non-engaged students across six schools. Both groups identified positive relationships with their teachers as an important factor in their motivation for learning. The teachers that "they respected most were well informed about Māori life or let Māori students be Māori" (p. 76). They also both referred to a desire for teachers to have high expectations of them as learners and provide encouragement and support to achieve these. Learning through co-operative lessons with high levels of interaction and discussions amongst students and the teacher were identified as beneficial. The students also mentioned a desire to have some choice and input into their school life, including both their learning and systems around behaviour and discipline.

Research involving the student voice of a Māori learner, at primary school level, conducted by Macfarlane (2004) also identified that the teachers they admired held high expectations for them and showed great care and support for all other learners as well. They also recognized the teacher's skills of explaining things clearly and making their learning interesting.

Ka Awatea: An iwi case study of Māori students' success (Macfarlane, Webber, Cookson-Cox, & McRae, 2014), a research project that looked at successful high school Māori learners in the Te Arawa iwi, included a wealth of student voice data. In this data the students identified that they were motivated to succeed in order to achieve a good life for themselves as well as being in a position to give back to their whānau and iwi. The teachers they connected with best were those who helped motivate and guide their learning and showed the students they believed in them by never letting up on their expectations. The students also acknowledged that being able to identify with their culture gave them great strength and pride. Their wellbeing was also enhanced through involvement in physical activity and strong relationships with friends and whānau (Macfarlane et al., 2014). A positive relationship between teacher and student is identified by Hattie (2012) as occurring when a student knows that their teacher really understands them. Such understanding is derived from teachers reflecting on the many interactions they have with their students.

#### **2.4.6 Links of recognized approaches for Māori learners and student voice**

Concepts of wānanga, ako and empathy (Table 2.3.2) have strong links with student voice. Bishop and Berryman (2009) in their discussion on wānanga mention that students "would like opportunities to share (their good ideas) with teachers and their peers in ways that would help them have a say in the direction of lessons and their learning" (2009, p. 31). This is an indication that students want to be involved in decisions that affect their learning: and that they see this as integral to their success as learners. Ka Hikitia indicates that seeking the perspectives of Māori students, as well as their whānau, hapū and iwi, is an important process in ensuring culturally responsive practices are employed in the classroom and kura / school. The learning

relationship is also one where the educator is both teaching students as well as learning from them (Education, 2013). Hattie (2012) outlined four elements of student-centred teaching: warmth, trust, positive relationships and empathy (see table 2.4.2). While the study focused on student-centred learning for all learners, not any particular ethnicity, there are a number of similarities with the research findings of Bishop and Berryman (2009) and 'The guiding principles of Ka Hikitia' (Education, 2013). Empathy, one of the elements, requires teachers to understand and see learning from the perspective of their students. Student voice provides teachers the opportunity to inquire and learn about their students' perspectives on learning.

## **2.5 Teacher reflection**

Reflecting on teachers' own practice is an important step in improving their teaching practice. Learning how the reflection of student voice can be maximized begins with recognizing how teachers may react to such data, before understanding how teachers best reflect and then utilising specific approaches that are known to improve the reflection process.

### **2.5.1 How do teachers react?**

People react to different situations and stimuli in a range of ways. According to Flutter and Rudduck (2004), teachers often react positively to the idea of consulting students, seeing it as an opportunity to learn alongside them. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) noted that there have been occasions where teachers have felt threatened by the process of gathering student voice data, and this has led to teachers objecting to the practice, or student voice has led to arguments amongst staff.

McIntyre et al. (2005) noted that teachers generally reacted very positively to student voice data. When reflecting on the student voice data, teachers first decided whether the student's thoughts were valid by checking how it fitted against the teacher's perception of classroom life. If the teacher recognised the validity of the student's views, the teacher then considered the student's ideas against questions of practicality of implementation and the range of students who would benefit from

them. McIntyre et al. (2005) also noted that the student ideas that teachers implemented were ideas that teachers had already used or thought about using.

When confronted with student success, Clark and Peterson (1986) noted that teachers can react by taking the credit for these successes and termed this 'ego-enhancing or self-serving'. Alternatively they could react by giving the students the credit for their successes, which Clark and Peterson (1986) termed 'counter-defensive'. An 'ego-enhancing' response to student failure would be to blame the student, whereas a 'counter-defensive' response to this same failure by the student would be for the teacher to accept responsibility.

### **2.5.2 Promoting teacher reflection**

Reflection is a critical process for teachers to raise awareness of their practices (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002; Russell, 1993). Lovett (2002) mentions that the outcome of this reflection process is for teachers to either confirm or confront their practice, and that it can instigate change in these practices. Russell (1993) cautions that reflection is a process that is more involved than merely asking and exploring what we do. Absolum (2006) refers to 'active reflection' as a process of closing any gaps that may be highlighted between ideal practice and the real practice that is identified through the reflection process. Deeper reflection has been shown to occur when teachers interact with colleagues (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). These interactions according to Harris (2002) are about working with colleagues to make greater sense of practice, and need to include opportunities for dialogue and questioning of one another's work with the sole purpose of improving student learning. Lovett (2002) explains that dialogue plays two roles; it allows us to articulate our viewpoints as well as having them challenged, thereby seeing them from a different perspective. Evidence is a critical element in the reflection process as it serves to confront and make explicit what has occurred in the classroom. Its use can guide the critical eye of both the teacher and their professional colleague(s) to the areas that may need attention (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002). Speck and Knipe (2005) also mention that teachers are more likely to commit to professional development initiatives when its aims are realistic and they see it as important to

their own growth. Learning conversations between colleagues can be hugely beneficial in this reflection process.

### **2.5.3 Coaching conversations**

A coaching conversation is a discussion whereby a coach uses questioning strategies and listening skills to facilitate a deeper level of reflection. In this approach, a coach facilitates the learning process with another teacher. This person is not the expert in the relationship, but a collaborator and partner who can foster a teacher's deeper reflection that results in more significant learning (Cheliotas & Reilly, 2010; Rhodes, Stokes, & Hampton, 2004; Robertson, 2004). The role of a coach is like that of a mentor, who builds trusting relationships based on mutual respect with teachers they work with through a series of one to one meetings (Tolhurst, 2006). However, unlike a mentor, a coach will not freely give advice or hints and will instead rely on his or her questioning skills to encourage the learner to come up with their own answers and questions. A coaching conversation is purposeful, with the coach having given the content and direction some thought beforehand. It is focused on the learner (or in this case the teacher), and the strengths they have and the challenges they face, and its purpose is to initiate thinking leading to personal growth and change (Cheliotas & Reilly, 2012). During a coaching conversation, a coach effectively uses a range of question types, shows committed listening and builds a positive learning-based relationship where the focus is on the teacher setting his or her own wonderings and realising his or her own learning (Cheliotas & Reilly, 2010; Helman, 2006; Tolhurst, 2006). Whenever possible a coach will refrain from giving judgments or any advice and opinions as this undermines the teacher's own reflections and confidence in their own abilities (Cheliotas & Reilly, 2010).

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter outlined current research in teacher beliefs, student voice, culturally responsive teaching practice, and teacher reflection. Students' learning experiences in a classroom are influenced by the beliefs that their teachers have about teaching and learning. Many decisions that teachers make about learning content and teaching strategies are made to align with their beliefs (Devine et al., 2013; Haney et

al., 2002). A teacher's knowledge of teaching and learning principles are interwoven with their beliefs. A teacher's practice and their beliefs are also linked, with both being able to influence the other (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Haney et al., 2002). Specific experiences, especially those that are confronting, can change teachers' beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Timperley, 2005; Timperley & Robinson, 2001).

Culturally responsive teaching practices occur when teachers' communication, expectations, and lesson content reflect and respect the aspirations and traditions of ethnically diverse students (Berryman & Bishop, 2006; Gay, 2010; Taylor & Sobel, 2011). For Māori learners this means teachers understand, recognise, and use elements of their culture to ensure there is a strong teacher – student relationship (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Macfarlane, 2004; Nuthall, 2007).

Gathering students' thoughts and opinions can influence teachers' own learning (Sather, 2011). Student voice makes teachers more aware of their students' true capabilities and also allows teachers to be more effective in their planning and preparation (Hamilton, 2006; Hipkins, 2010). There are a number of important factors to consider in gathering authentic student voice. One such key factor is that the children trust the process and the intentions of the people involved (MacBeath et al., 2001; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

Reflection is a critical process for teachers to raise awareness of their practices (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002; Russell, 1993). Often when teachers participate in coaching conversations they reflect more deeply on their practice (Cheliotes & Reilly, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2004; Robertson, 2004). Using evidence is beneficial in the reflection process as it can help guide the teacher and coach to cast a critical eye over a specific part of the teacher's practice (Absolum, 2006; Harris, 2002). Student voice can be used as a source of evidence for teachers to reflect on their practice.

In this chapter, theoretical links have been made between student voice, coaching conversations, and teachers' beliefs. In Chapter 3 Methodology, a process for exploring this theoretical link in a bicultural learning environment is outlined.

## Chapter 3:Methodology

### 3.1 Chapter outline

Framing Question:

- What research approaches were chosen to investigate the link between student voice and teachers' beliefs in a bicultural learning environment?
- How were the research project implemented and the results analysed?

This chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives that act as frameworks for the study. An interpretivist paradigm, subjective epistemology, and relativist ontology are discussed as philosophical and theoretical guides to this research project. A qualitative research design is then outlined involving action research, Kaupapa Māori research, and phenomenological research methodologies. Details of purposive, boosted, and quota sampling techniques, as well as data collection tools of semi-structured and focus group interviews are discussed. Following this, a thematic analysis approach is reviewed, involving phases of data coding in order to identify themes from the research data. This chapter concludes with a reflection on the ethical considerations that were made before exploring the overall credibility of the research and its findings.

### 3.2 Research paradigm

A paradigm is referred to as the theoretical influences behind a study. It is a worldly view of how knowledge is acquired. Morgan (2009), as cited in Teddlie and Tasakkori (2009), defines paradigm "as systems of beliefs and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and the methods they use to study them." (p. 20). This study is influenced by an interpretivist paradigm, centred on the premise that "knowledge of the world is based on understanding which arises from thinking about what happens to us" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 6). Knowledge is not

only derived from observable actions and events but also from human interpretations or perspectives of these.

In research we also need to identify two key philosophical belief systems that guide the theoretical influences involved, importantly: “who can be a knower [epistemology] ... what can be known and how” [ontology] (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). Crotty (1998) states that epistemology is about “how we know what we know” (p. 8). An interpretivist paradigm is guided by a subjective epistemology, which is the notion that “there are multiple truths regarding the social world” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 282). The act of gathering knowledge is not impartial, and co-construction between the researcher and researched is necessary (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Ontology according to Crotty (1998) is concerned with “the nature of existence” (p. 10). In the case of social research it “is a philosophical belief system about the nature of social reality” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). This research is guided by a relativist ontology where “there are multiple realities” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21). These different realities occur through the meanings and understandings from different experiences and interactions that we all have. Theoretical perspectives, epistemologies and ontologies tend to be intertwined (Crotty, 1998) and so a subjective epistemology, relativist ontology and interpretive paradigm combine to become the philosophical and theoretical guides to this qualitative research project.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research is associated with meaning making and is an approach to research that was born out of an interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research allows for an in depth discussion and understanding of the experiences of the research participants (Mutch, 2005). Biklen and Bogdan (1992) add that qualitative research is “concerned with understanding behaviour from the subject’s own frame of reference” (p. 2). Qualitative research involves the research design being embedded in the research itself and its steps applied simultaneously. Quantitative research however involves the design dictating the research and sequence of its steps. With



qualitative research moving backwards and forwards between the different levels of the research process, the research design needs to be flexible to accommodate the many changes that will occur (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell states that:

To design a qualitative study, you can't just develop (or borrow) a logical strategy in advance and then implement it faithfully. You need, to a substantial extent, to construct and reconstruct your research design.  
(2005, p. 3)

The research design for this study developed considerably as the research project progressed. This will be elaborated on in Subsection 3.3 Research Design and its subcategories below.

### **3.3 Research Design**

A research design refers to the procedural approaches that guide the researcher as they collect data. The design of this research project included specific methodological approaches and sampling strategies. In this project there was no one methodology that guided the research, but instead a combination of approaches, all contributing important elements to the final design. In order to explain the research methodology that was implemented, it is important to share the evolution that took place in the development of this 'hybrid' model and in doing so the key attributes that were utilised will be uncovered.

#### **3.3.1 Action research**

While the choice of paradigm signals the orientation of the research project, the choice of research methodology outlines the framework that will be used to conduct the investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2013). An action research strategy was first identified as best suiting this project. This approach allowed the researcher to be an active participant, to take on the role of a critical friend and help implement change during the research process (Somekh, 1995). Action research seeks not only to understand a situation but also to improve it (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). This desire to improve the learning for teachers and students is a key value for this researcher.

Action research is a collaborative process involving the researcher and participant, in this case the individual classroom teachers. It involves a cyclical process of identifying and clarifying a problem to be investigated, instigating a process to gather and review information before implementing and then reviewing the effect of the action (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Stringer, 2008).

### **3.3.2 Challenges in implementation**

While the intention of the research was to adopt an action research methodological approach, as the study progressed it became apparent to me that this was not being implemented in its purest form. I think there are two reasons this occurred. The first reason is the complexity of the research itself, and the second is the relationship that was negotiated, or not negotiated, with the teachers involved. On one layer this research was aimed at helping teachers with their own 'Teaching as Inquiry' investigations. 'Teaching as Inquiry' refers to the practice of teachers investigating the impact of a specific teaching practice on the learning of a targeted group of students (Ministry of Education, 2007). I aimed to become a coach or critical friend supporting their action research projects in the classroom, specifically helping gather student voice data to reflect on. Above this cyclical research happening at the classroom level it was intended to have a more longitudinal research design, aimed at finding out the influence that student voice had on teachers' beliefs about teaching. When the research got underway it became apparent that the project was not going to follow this path. Being guided by the teachers, we chose to gather student voice data that was not necessarily aligned with the teachers' 'Teaching as Inquiry' investigation. Furthermore, the timing of the research did not necessarily align with the teachers' own investigations and crucially we were not reflecting on any actions that were implemented but instead we sought student voice on other topics or problems to develop a broader understanding of students' views.

While the goals of the research remained, that is to work collaboratively, to help implement change and to work in a cyclical approach, the key fact that the teachers were either not implementing a particular action, or reflecting specifically on this

action meant that I was now not strictly following an action research methodology. I was now focused more on gaining an understanding of teachers' perceptions of the student voice data, and so another methodological approach was needed.

### **3.3.3 Phenomenological methodology**

As the research progressed it became evident that the focus was more and more on gaining an understanding of how teachers were experiencing and processing the student voice data. This focus aligns with a phenomenological methodology which "is concerned with understanding people's subjective experiences" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 283). I was interested in teachers' reactions to a particular phenomenon; in this instance the thoughts and opinions of their students. I was seeking to identify the commonalities among the different teacher's perceptions. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) state "the phenomenologist is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference" (p. 2). According to Flick (2009) phenomenological considerations are part of a larger theoretical perspective of 'Interpretive Interactionism' (p. 58).

### **3.3.4 Kaupapa Māori research methodology**

A Kaupapa Māori research approach was also utilized to ensure that Māori knowledge and world-view was brought to the research. This approach undoubtedly helped provide the most culturally authentic results for the study. While Kaupapa Māori research is identified by Cram (2001) as research that is "by Māori, for Māori" (p. 38), non-Māori researchers can still support the ideals of Kaupapa Māori research through their actions (Jones, 2012; Tolich, 2002). Kaupapa Māori approaches were implemented to ensure the cultural safety of participants and the cultural integrity of the findings. The research set out to make a positive difference for Māori learners, a critical feature of Kaupapa Māori research. The act of giving Māori learners a voice is aimed at increasing their own self-determination, an underlying goal of the Kaupapa Māori paradigm. Another feature of Kaupapa Māori research is that "researchers have to share their 'control' of research and seek to maximize the participation and the interest of Māori" (Smith, 1999, p. 191). This was facilitated when I clarified the key points that I had inferred with the Māori children, and then

on their next meeting, summarising the discussion that the teacher and I had about the student voice data and sharing any outcomes that resulted. Another feature of Kaupapa Māori methodology was to invite all Māori learners to participate in the research as a group. This reflected a whānau approach. The data collection process was discussed with members of the University of Canterbury Te Rū Rangahau (Māori Research Lab) and results were discussed with Dr Angus Macfarlane and Dr Tracy Rohan of the University of Canterbury Māori Research Advisory Group. The ability to gather the views and interpretations of well-respected Kaupapa Māori researchers was invaluable.

### **3.4 Research context**

Several sampling strategies were implemented in this research project. Firstly the schools approached to participate were chosen because they were located in low decile (low socio-economic) areas, included children in the target age ranges of 7 to 13 years of age and also included a significant number of Māori students. This process of selection, where the schools were chosen because of their characteristics, is known as purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Mutch, 2005). The initial approach to the participant school and teachers is a crucial phase in action research methodology (Wicks & Reason, 2009). The relationship between the researcher and participants, impacts on the quality of data that can be obtained. In the current study, professional connections helped facilitate the initial contact with both schools. Within these schools the teachers were given an outline of the research project and details of what would be expected of them. They were then invited to participate in the study. In one setting, the deputy principal then approached teachers that she thought would be a good fit for the aims of the research. In the other setting all teachers agreed to participate, and the level of involvement by them in the study was determined by the time available to complete the project. The decisions here again represent purposive sampling.

All the children in the teachers' classes were introduced to the research project, initially through a discussion led by their teacher and myself, and then by information letters for themselves (Appendix 1) and their parents/caregivers

(Appendix 3). They were invited to participate in the research project by completing a consent form themselves (Appendix 2) and their parents completed a separate consent form (Appendix 4). All Māori children who expressed an interest in the study were involved in focus group discussions. For this research project it was very important to hear the voices of Māori students so this approach was selected to ensure no-one was excluded, a whānau approach in a Kaupapa Māori research methodology (Smith, 2012). This approach aligns with Cohen et al. (2007) and their explanation of a boosted sample where it is used “in order to include those who may otherwise be excluded from, or under-represented” (p. 115). For the non-Māori focus groups a process of quota sampling, where “the sample strives to represent significant characteristics (strata) of the wider population” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 114), was used. The teacher’s selected the sample including representation of gender, race (non-Māori) and attitudes towards learning.

#### **3.4.1 Participant selection**

This study took place in two schools, School A and School B. School A is a decile 2 state co-educational primary school with 271 students. This urban school is located in a predominantly residential area with parks and a city cemetery nearby. At the time of the study the school role included 25% Māori students.

School B is a decile 3 state co-educational school with 448 students, including intermediate-aged students. This urban school is situated in an industrial and residential area and is also located near a large shopping complex. At the time of the study the school role included 30% Māori students.

In School A, three teachers were involved in this research project. There were two student focus groups (one Māori whānau group and one non-Māori focus group) from each of these classes. The ages of the students ranged from seven years in the youngest class to eleven years of age in the oldest class. There were twenty-five student participants from School A.

In School B, five teachers were involved in the research project. Two of these teachers did not participate beyond the initial Teacher Belief Interview. There were two student focus groups (one Māori whānau group and one non-Māori focus group) made up of students across the three participant teachers' classrooms. The student participants from School B were all from the same year level and included eleven and twelve year olds. There were thirteen student participants from School B.

### **3.5 Data collection**

Collecting data is a fundamental process in any research undertaking. The selection of tools for collecting data in this research project was guided by the research methodologies. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the best tool to gather data from teachers. A specific tool was also developed to help teachers articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning and another reflection tool was developed to help teachers reflect on the student voice data. Focus group and whānau group interviews were selected as the best tool to gather student voice data.

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

Interviews were chosen as a key data-gathering tool in this research project. The purpose of the research study was to gain an insight into the teachers' beliefs about teaching, the influence of these beliefs on their classroom practice and the teachers' interpretations of the views of the students in their classes. Interviews allowed the researcher to gain a more intimate and richer understanding of the teachers' points of view as opposed to using other data gathering tools (Cohen et al., 2007). It also allowed for interpretation and knowledge to be co-constructed between the researcher and teachers involved (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kvale, 1996). Other advantages of using interviews over other tools such as surveys, questionnaires and observations included being able to rephrase questions when the teacher needed further clarification as well as allowing for a stronger relationship to develop between the researcher and the teachers involved. This in turn led to greater trust and teachers revealing more personal and contentious viewpoints. Interviews however proved to be more time consuming than other data gathering tools may have been (Mutch, 2005) and the speed of the research project as a whole was

impacted by working around teachers' very busy and at times stressful roles and responsibilities. Because of the collaboration involved during an interview, the data gathering process is open to an interviewer's beliefs influencing the responses of the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2007). This is especially true in this research project where the researcher looked to ask questions that confronted or challenged the teachers' views.

Semi-structured interviews, where a key set of questions are prepared but flexibility in how they are implemented as well as an allowance to digress or dig deeper into certain responses (Cohen et al., 2007; Mutch, 2005) was selected as the best interview approach to follow. Having a framework for the discussions gave the researcher confidence that the relevance of the data collected would be maximised while the flexibility allowed the researcher and teacher the opportunity to explore topics that were raised in more depth. Flick (2006) mentions that the semi-structured interview is more likely to allow interviewees, in this case the teachers, to express their viewpoints than in a more structured interview or questionnaire. The flexibility also helped build a professional relationship between the researcher and teacher, exploring concepts that were important to both and in doing so building trust and adding further depth to the research data.

Interviews were scheduled at times and conducted in locations that best suited the teachers. Stringer (2008) explains that this is an important step in establishing relationships of trust as "behaviour and talk are greatly influenced by the environment in which they occur" (p. 57). Before each interview began, permission was sought from the teacher for the interviews to be recorded. The interviews were then recorded on the researcher's iPhone using the Quick Voice app. Time before and after each interview was used to chat informally with the teacher, predominantly about teaching related matters, and this helped build a rapport and also helped the researcher gain an insight into the goings on in the school and therefore helped place some context on the events discussed in the interviews.

### **3.5.2 Questions**

Questions play a lead role in any interview. Glesne (2006) states that “the data you get are only as good as the questions you ask” (p. 86) so it was important to ask good questions. A ‘grand tour’ question, a broad opening question on the topic, was used to help encourage the teachers to reflect and talk openly. This was followed up by ‘mini-tour’ questions, which elicited more detail or further explanation (Glesne, 2006; Stringer, 2008). Flick (2006) describes three types of interview questions. Open questions, where the teacher answers based on the knowledge they can connect with at the time, were used when beginning to explore a concept. Theory driven or hypothesis directed questions, where I offered my assumption or summary and the teacher chooses to accept or reject these views, were used to both clarify my understanding and to probe for a deeper reflection by the teacher. Confrontational questions, where I purposely asked questions that challenged a teacher’s viewpoint or offered an alternative, were strategically used in order to get the teachers to critically re-examine their assumptions, practices or beliefs.

### **3.5.3 Listening**

The success of interview questions, no matter how well designed, relies on the ability of the interviewer to listen. Listening involves more than simply hearing the words that are spoken. It is important to also hear ‘how’ it is said as well as what is not said. Kvale (1996) refers to this as being sensitive during the interview. This aligns closely with key skills utilised in coaching conversations. Cheliotis and Reilly (2010) talk about committed listening, listening “not only to the words expressed but also to underlying emotions and body language. In other words you listen to the essence of the conversation” (p. 30). Such an approach to listening helped the researcher build relational trust, gain a deeper insight into the teachers’ experiences and viewpoints and be aware when to probe further and when to pull back from a topic. Cohen et al. (2007) stress the importance of the interviewer being non-judgmental. While this was certainly the intention at the outset of collecting data, in reality this proved difficult at times. As I, the researcher, was a teacher myself, the absence of any positive comments made some teachers uneasy. Some teachers sought feedback from the researcher on different topics during their conversations.

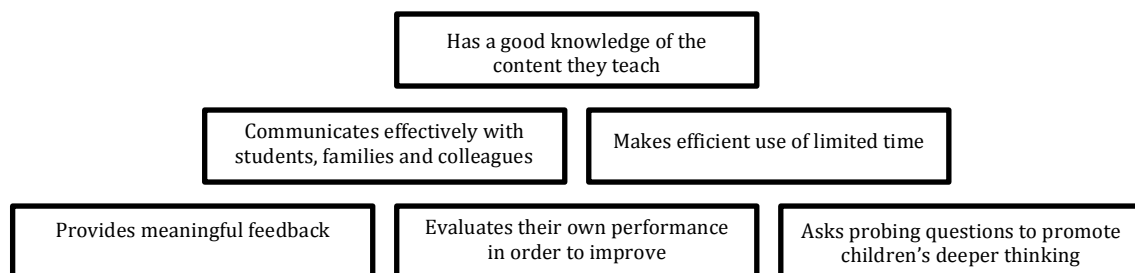


At all times, as the researcher, I aimed to establish and maintain a professional relationship built on trust.

### 3.5.4 Teacher belief data gathering tool

In order to help ascertain teachers' beliefs about teaching, a specific tool was designed and implemented during the initial teacher belief interview and final teacher reflection interview. The tool helped teachers prioritise their beliefs about teaching and learning, and offered a starting point for me, as the researcher, to ask more probing questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participant teachers' views on effective teaching.

Firstly participants were asked, "In your view, what makes someone a good teacher?" Mini-tour questions or prompts were then used to explore the initial responses further. Following this they were asked to read thirty-five statements (Appendix 9) that completed the sentence starter 'A good teacher is'. These statements were derived and refined from research and respected academics, and their origin is discussed below. Once the teacher had read the statements, he or she was then asked to choose the dozen or so statements that he or she most strongly agreed with. Placing these identified statements in a pyramid formation further refined the hierarchy of the teacher's beliefs. The statement the teacher most strongly agreed with was placed at the top, the teacher's next two prioritised statements were placed on the second level, the next three prioritised statements were placed on the third level and so on. Refer to the diagram below:



Once the pyramid of statements was completed teachers were asked to explain their choices. This explanation allowed for a richer insight into each teacher's beliefs and

allowed an understanding of the teacher's values and worldview to be explored. Teachers were then given the opportunity to create their own statement if they felt some of their beliefs were not already included.

The use of 'A good teacher is' sentence starter was utilised by Devine et al. (2013). This study along with other research and literature (Airini, 1999; Hellner, 2006; Tucker, Stronge, & Hindman, 2004) provided over seventy initial statements. This extensive list was refined through trials with teachers outside of the participant group as well as a trial and consultation with educational experts Dr Chris Jansen, Dr Barry Brooker and Professor Angus Macfarlane. With their help the number of statements was reduced, wording refined and new statements created to ensure a balance of beliefs was catered for.

### **3.5.5 Student group interviews**

Group interviews were chosen as the best tool for gathering the student voice data. MacBeath et al. (2003) talk about economy and power as two important principles when selecting tools to gather the views and opinions of students. "Economy is about simplicity, accessibility and ease of use ... powerful, that is, capable of generating insights which deepen understanding and inform practice" (p. 13). Group interviews involve a small number of participants who are brought together and guided through a discussion on a topic or question by a moderator or facilitator. This process allows for a range of viewpoints to be heard in a comparatively shorter time period than one-on-one interviews (Flick, 2009). Kvale explains that "the aim of the focus group is not to reach a consensus about, or solution to, the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue" (2007, p. 72). The interaction and discussion generated by bringing several people together with their own unique perspectives can lead to richer or fuller data being gathered (Flick, 2009; Kvale, 2007). As MacBeath et al. (2001) explain, having a few of your peers with you in a group interview can be less intimidating than meeting for an individual interview. Being considerate of children's feelings was an important consideration in choosing to use group interviews. The more spontaneous and enthusiastic discussions can however make transcribing the interviews more difficult (Kvale, 2007). The influence

of the peer group can also have a negative effect, where some children's voices cannot be heard over the more articulate or forceful children, or some children may not wish to share some of their views in front of their peers, for fear of upsetting them or being embarrassed.

Two groups of students from each class or year group were involved in this research project. This allowed for bi-cultural perspectives to be explored. The first group (or ropu) consisted of children whose parents had identified their child as Māori when enrolling at the school. The act of giving Māori learners a voice through their own group interviews was aimed at increasing their own self-determination, an underlying goal of the Kaupapa Māori paradigm. All Māori children who wanted to be a part of the focus group were included, reflecting a whānau approach, another important element of Kaupapa Māori research methodology.

The teachers chose the second group from those children who gave their informed consent. Involving teachers in determining the makeup of the group acknowledged their expertise and helped to build trust in the researcher and the process. The teachers were asked to choose a group that they felt best reflected the makeup of their class or year group, considering gender, ethnicity and motivation levels towards learning. Above all it needed to be a group that would best represent all the students from their class or year group and be one that was trusted by their peers and respected by the teachers (MacBeath et al., 2003; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

Restrictions on the availability of free space meant the group interviews took place in a number of locations including outside, in a classroom when the class was not using it, in an office when the teacher was not using it and in cloak bays. The children were always consulted on the location of the interviews.

### **3.5.6 Group interview procedure**

Each group interview began with reading the same whakatauki or short Māori proverb (Appendix 10), which aligned with the aim of the research project. Following this the group went over a set of rules for the discussion, which were aligned with

the schools' value of respect (Appendix 11). Permission from the children to record the discussion on the researcher's iPhone was then sought. The previous focus group interview was briefly revisited and any discussion or action from the teacher was discussed. It was important that children saw that their previous contributions were valued and how they may have already been or were going to impact their classroom learning in the future (MacBeath et al., 2003; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Following this update, the topic or main question that had been co-constructed between the teacher and researcher was introduced. Glesne (2006) mentions that a "discussion relies on interaction within the group, stimulated by the researcher's question" (p. 102). The best way to stimulate discussion is by using what Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) term a 'hot topic', something that the children have a high interest in exploring. At the conclusion of each focus group I summarized the key discussion points to see if they had been understood as the children had intended them. Permission was then sought from the students for those discussion points and the transcript of the discussion to be shared with their teacher.

### **3.5.7 Student voice teacher reflection questions**

Specific reflective questions (Appendix 12) were developed to help teachers reflect on the student voice data, especially in relation to their beliefs about teaching. The questions were largely derived from Fives and Buehl's (2011) three step process in the role of teacher beliefs on teacher practices: Filters (identifying the important messages), Frames (linking the messages to their teaching practice) and Guides (proposing what action might be taken). For the purposes of this study there was no expectation to carry out any identified actions. A teacher's beliefs about his or her own abilities are identified as an important factor in implementing any change (Fives and Buehl, 2011; Ford, 1992; Haney et al., 2002). Earlier versions of the reflection guide included questions relating to the teachers' self-efficacy but these were removed in order to keep the interview to time and to avoid any possible undue stress on teachers. The teachers often brought up these questions during their interviews without prompting.

The teachers were given a copy of the reflection questions when they were sent the transcripts of the student voice focus groups. These reflection questions then formed the framework for a semi-structured interview about the student voice data and their own practices and beliefs.

### **3.5.8 Transcription of Data**

Glesne (2006) refers to the importance of transcribing all interviews as soon after the interview as possible. I transcribed all interviews and on most occasions returned the complete transcripts of the student focus group and whānau group interviews to teachers within a week. Carrying out this task allowed the researcher to reflect further on the discussion that had taken place, refine the interview process and techniques used, as well as formulate ideas and themes to pursue in future interviews. The transcripts of the student group interviews along with the teacher belief and reflection interviews provided a wealth of information. To best understand this rich data a process of data analysis was needed.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves making meaning from the vast quantity of information that a researcher collects. In this research study the information included student voice data, in the form of whānau group and focus group interview transcripts, teachers' reflections in the form of transcribed interviews, and my anecdotal researcher notes. An approach known as thematic analysis involving coding strategies was used to identify themes from the vast amount of research data that was collected.

### **3.6.1 Thematic analysis**

A process of inductive thematic analysis was selected as the best method of eliciting findings from the research data. Thematic analysis is a process whereby the researcher immerses themselves in the data in such a way as to elicit themes from it (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Walter, 2010). Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). It is a process that relies heavily on the personal skills and abilities of the researcher (Mutch, 2005) and is therefore very subjective in its approach.

A key advantage for using thematic analysis in this study was the flexibility the method offered. It can be applied across a wide range of methodologies, across a wide range of data types and sizes and across a wide range of research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). While other analysis approaches were considered very closely, in particular Grounded Theory and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), ultimately it was the adaptability and independence of thematic analysis to work across a variety of methodologies that proved advantageous in this study. The analysis approach used in this research project was similar to the open and axial coding of grounded theory but this study did not employ a key grounded theory methodology of theoretical sampling, a process where the collection of data ceases when no relevant new information is being found (Flick, 2009; Walter, 2010). Like IPA, the analysis of this research was focused on the participants reflecting on their experiences and how they made sense of those experiences from an insider 'empathetic' and outsider 'critical' viewpoint. However, unlike IPA, the research questions in this study moved beyond those just about experiences and the analysis also moved beyond an overly descriptive method (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

### **3.6.2 Thematic analysis implementation**

Analysis began with the first collection of data. The process of transcription, while tedious, proved to be a valuable way to familiarise myself with and begin to understand the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the research progressed I looked for patterns or items of interest in the data. Notes were made of these items, observations of the research process, and participants' behaviours or interesting data. Some of these notes helped guide follow-up discussions with the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, by keeping a close eye on the data, ideas that arose from it could be tested out in subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2006).

### **3.6.3 Coding**

After transcribing the interviews the resulting transcripts were imported into NVivo, a computer program designed to assist the researcher with his or her analysis. The

process of coding is referred to by Gibbs (2007) as “a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it” (p. 38). The texts were read closely and segments, words, lines or phrases of significance were given a label or code (Mutch, 2005). It is important when using an inductive approach to coding, as was used in this research project, that the researcher clears his or her mind and begins with no preconceptions of what the data will reveal. Grounded theorists refer to this as initial or open coding, perhaps a reference to keeping an open mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Gibbs, 2007).

A second phase involves comparing similar and different codes, passages and cases with each other (Mutch, 2005). From this comparison, categories and hierarchies of similar codes emerged. Grounded theorists refer to developing these connections as axial coding. (Charmaz, 2006; Gibbs, 2007).

#### **3.6.4 Constant comparison**

Thematic analysis is not a linear process; rather it involves continually moving between the data as a whole, the data as categories and the data as individual pieces of code. This reflexive process of going back and forth between similar and different coded data items and categories in order to make comparisons is a key feature of developing and verifying the claims that are made in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Walter, 2010).

#### **3.6.5 Theme**

The aim of grouping the codes, and therefore the data, in this way is to develop some patterns and meaning from them and in doing so answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Walter (2010) refers to this point as the ‘emergence’ of a theme from the data, while Charmaz (2006) thinks of this as a theme being ‘constructed’ from the data. Themes move beyond the categorisation of data and begin to explain and interpret the questions the researcher is asking (Walter, 2010).

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The well-being of research participants needs to be at the forefront of the research during the entirety of the project. This is achieved through applying careful ethical considerations. This section firstly outlines the importance of ethical considerations, especially from a cultural perspective, before exploring the implications of a relationship approach to ethics. This research project is then critiqued against five principles that Davidson and Tolich (1998) determined show ethical conduct in social research. These are: do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoiding deceit, and confidentiality and anonymity.

Mutch (2005) writes that “if you treat your participants with consideration, fairness and respect, you’ll end up acting ethically” (2005, p. 78). While this seems an entirely reasonable and straightforward proposition, when working with people as research subjects, especially children, the task becomes more complex. Respecting and protecting the rights of participants in this study was paramount. When working with tangata whenua, special consideration needs to be given to behaviours that respect participants’ cultural values and beliefs. Smith (2012) outlines a number of sayings that “reflect just some of the values that are placed on the way we behave” (p. 124). The importance of relationships can be found at the heart of these sayings.

Relationships were an integral feature of this research project. O’Neill (2008) discusses the importance of considering relationships in an educational research setting when he states, “requirements for communicative action within a framework of moral and practical inquiry suggest that relationships are central to educational research” (p. 57). Most ethical considerations in a Kaupapa Māori research methodology are based around relationships. In the current study, both the well-being of participants and the acquiring of honest data were based around the establishment of positive professional relationships. “Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for the people)” (Smith, 2012, p. 124) is an important saying that this researcher endeavoured to uphold at all times. Support in the way of reflecting and discussing the research with colleagues who are knowledgeable in Kaupapa Māori methodology was sought. This can be articulated through Smith’s saying “Titiro,



whakarongo ... korero (look, listen ... speak)" (Smith, 2012, p. 124). I acknowledge that there was, and will always be, a lot to be learnt, and that observing others, listening to wise voices and then asking questions was the best approach to learning these lessons. In an example of this learning, this research project is critiqued below against the five ethical principles listed by Davidson and Tolich (1998): do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoiding deceit, and confidentiality and anonymity.

### **3.7.1 Do no harm**

The loss of a child's or teacher's self-esteem and increased anxiety and stress levels are possible harm that could result from this research (Cullen, 2005; Snook, 2003). I have a lot of experience working with children and adults, looking out for their emotional and psychological well-being. One of Smith's sayings "Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (Do not trample over the *mana* of people)" (2012, p. 124) is very applicable here.

At the beginning of any data gathering time I checked how the participants were feeling, both in a general sense and in relation to the research project. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without any adverse consequence. Kvale (1996) also mentions the idea that participants can become engrossed in an interview situation and reveal information that they may later regret. At the conclusion of each student group discussion I paraphrased what was mentioned, confirmed that this was an accurate representation, and that they were happy for this to be used or communicated. Davidson and Tolich (1998) point out that the most important part of avoiding harm is the sensitivity and judgement of the researcher. Cullen (2005) goes further by bringing up the important point that it may become necessary to act in a way that puts the aims of the research in jeopardy in order to protect the children and teachers involved in it.

The well-being of teacher participants needed to be considered throughout the research. There was the potential for student voice data to challenge their

perceptions of their classroom practice. All discussions of student voice data were handled with care in a non-judgemental manner. Smith's saying, "Kia mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge)" was very relevant here. As the researcher, I positioned myself as a colleague, a fellow teacher, who wanted to learn alongside the participants, and aimed to be humble throughout.

### **3.7.2 Voluntary participation**

A face-to-face meeting with school leaders and then teachers was instigated early on to discuss the research proposal. This is mentioned by Mutch as an important ethical consideration of "permission" (2005, p. 78), and Smith mentions the term "Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face)" (2012, p. 124) as a behaviour expectation placed on researchers involved with indigenous participants. It was important that the people who were chosen to become involved in this research were able to choose freely to become participants (Mutch, 2005). Teacher and student participants freely chose whether to participate or not in this study. This invitation was extended in person and in writing. With student participants, the teacher and I made the initial approach. Particular care needed to be taken so that children did not feel any pressure, even subtle. Children often want to please their teacher so it was important to take care to avoid encouraging this phenomenon (Cullen, 2005).

### **3.7.3 Informed consent**

Informed consent can be defined as ensuring the participants are aware of the purpose and nature of the research (Alton-Lee, 2001). Teachers and children were invited to participate in the research after being fully informed of the purpose, process and use of their information. In the children's case this took place through a letter, which I read to them, followed by an opportunity to ask questions that were answered by the students' classroom teacher and me. A copy of the letter was then sent home for parents to read. Signed consent was sought from both the child and their parent(s)/guardian(s). Cullen (2005) noted that when working with children we must consider the difference between "informed" consent and "educated" consent. It is my belief that the combination of a letter read to the class, discussion in class

and then at home with parents ensured that children were giving “educated” consent.

Informed consent was gained from teacher participants through the use of a letter outlining the research intention and process, and an opportunity to discuss the project to clarify the purpose and extent of the study. This was followed by a signed response acknowledging they agreed to participate. All participants were able to withdraw from the research project without fear of any negative consequences.

#### **3.7.4 Avoid deceit**

Research participants cannot be deliberately misled and the act of doing so is so serious that it would put the continuation of the project in jeopardy (Davidson & Tolich, 1998). Extreme care was taken to ensure there was no coercion of participants. I was open and honest about the research at all times. During the final interview, teacher participants’ thoughts and feelings on the research process were sought.

#### **3.7.5 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Anonymity is the process whereby the researcher does not know from whom different responses originated. In this research the very nature of the study was to get to know the beliefs of the teacher participants so their anonymity was not possible. This placed more emphasis on complying with doing no harm. Although I was aware of who the responses originated from, I chose not to publish this information, thus ensuring confidentiality of the responses (Davidson & Tolich, 1998). Although it is possible to collect student voice data anonymously, it was decided that in this study it would be collected via small focus groups, a process that meant anonymity was not possible. To ensure the confidentiality of student voice responses I did not share the identity of individual students’ comments with their teachers. Pseudonyms are used in the results and discussion chapter so that individual teachers, students and their schools are not identified. In some instances I have neglected mentioning details which could possibly identify participants or institutions (Davidson & Tolich, 1998). All data provided by participants will be

stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Canterbury or at my own residence until five years after the completion of this study when it will be safely destroyed.

The physical, emotional, psychological and cultural safety of all participants was the highest priority during the research and steps were taken to ensure this safety was a higher priority than the completion or quality of the research findings.

### **3.8 Credibility**

In qualitative research there are two key considerations when deciding on the credibility of a particular study: trustworthiness and transferability. Trustworthiness occurs when the researcher has clearly explained the processes, decisions and ethical considerations that were undertaken at all stages of the research (Mutch, 2005). Transferability occurs when the settings, participants and contexts are described in sufficient detail (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Ultimately the decision of trustworthiness and transferability rests with the reader. In the case of trustworthiness the reader will decide if they can “trust your process and believe your findings” (Mutch, 2005, p. 114). In the case of transferability, the reader will decide if there is enough information so they “can evaluate the potential for applying the results to other contexts or participants” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 282).

This research project included several key steps to improve the level of trustworthiness and transferability. Several sources of data were used; six teachers from two different schools, between two and four interviews conducted with each of these teachers and eight different focus groups of children used during the data collection phase. Two distinct phases of coding were implemented over an extended period of time. These factors are often referred to as the triangulation of data (Flick, 2009). During the teacher interviews and focus group interviews I constantly used paraphrasing questions, where I would summarise my hearing of their responses in order to clarify my understanding. This questioning approach is a form of member checking, whereby the researcher checks their interpretations with the subjects (Flick, 2009). During the research project I also met regularly with several respected researchers who were not directly involved in the research. This approach whereby

fellow researchers can challenge and guide the research project is referred to as peer debriefing (Flick, 2009). The steps outlined above and implemented during the research design, data collection, analysis, and writing up of the findings have given this study a high degree of trustworthiness and credibility.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter began by outlining the theoretical perspectives of interpretivist paradigm, subjective epistemology, and relativist ontology, that acted as frameworks for the study. In this qualitative study, elements from three research methodologies were used. The study followed a cyclical framework as found in action research. As the research evolved it became clearer that the focus was more on gaining an understanding of how teachers were experiencing and processing the student voice data, aligning the study with a phenomenological methodology. A Kaupapa Māori research approach was also utilised to ensure that Māori knowledge and world-view was brought to the research. Purposive, boosted and quota sampling techniques were used to work with thirty-eight primary and intermediate aged students and eight teachers across two low-decile urban schools.

A wealth of data was collected from teachers using semi-structured interviews, and from Māori students (whānau groups) and non-Māori students using student focus groups. A specific 'Teacher Belief Gathering Tool' was specifically developed and used as well as key reflective questions with teachers. A process of inductive thematic analysis, involving coding and constant comparison, was used to elicit findings in the form of themes from the transcribed interviews and my anecdotal observations.

Ensuring all relationships between the participants and me were built on respect was an overarching ethical guide to this study (Mutch, 2005; Smith, 2012). Specific ethical principles of do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoiding deceit, and confidentiality (Davidson & Tolich, 1998) were implemented alongside a number of sayings (Smith, 2012) to ensure that participants' cultural values and beliefs were respected. The clear explanations of the process, decisions and ethical

considerations, as well as detailed description of the settings, participants and contexts ensure this study has a high degree of trustworthiness and transferability, therefore giving it credibility (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Mutch, 2005). After implementing the steps outlined above, Section 2 shares and discusses the resultant findings.

## Section 2

This section first presents the themes identified from this research project before discussing the conclusions that answer the initial research question:

In what ways are teachers' beliefs influenced by student voice in a bicultural environment?

And the supplementary questions:

1. How do you develop and gather quality student voice?
2. What considerations are needed in order to gather and reflect on quality authentic student voice from Māori learners?
3. What processes do teachers use to reflect on student voice?
4. How does student voice change teachers' beliefs?

The themes are presented in four chapters: teacher beliefs, student voice, teacher reflection, and the influence of student voice on teachers' beliefs. Each of these chapters includes links to bicultural learning environments, with the first two, teacher beliefs and student voice, including specific findings under focus headings. The themes are first presented in table form before being elaborated on further. These themes are also discussed alongside other relevant research, which was introduced in the literature review chapter of this thesis. In the final chapter, the key findings are brought together and practical implications are explored.

## Chapter 4: Teacher Beliefs - Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Chapter outline

Framing Questions:

- What do teachers recognise as influencing their beliefs?
- What are teachers' beliefs about culturally responsive practice and what factors influence their ability to implement these?

This chapter explores the sources of teachers' beliefs as the participant teachers have identified them. In particular, key factors are recognised and then explored in more detail by making links to current research. Teachers also identified factors that influenced their ability to implement culturally responsive practices, so this chapter gives insight into the second part of research question 2:

What considerations are needed in order to (gather and) reflect on authentic / quality student voice from Māori learners?

Further in the chapter the importance of the sources of teachers' beliefs will be discussed in relation to the influence of student voice data on teachers' beliefs. This chapter therefore also gives some background information for the discussion of Research Question 4:

How does student voice change teachers' beliefs?

### 4.2 Sources of teachers' beliefs

During the initial teacher interviews, teachers were asked to share their beliefs about teaching and learning by responding to the sentence starter: 'A good teacher ...'. While discussing their beliefs, teachers, unprompted by any direct questions, shared where they thought these beliefs had originated from. An understanding of



the origin of teachers' beliefs is an important consideration in the discussion of the influence of student voice on these beliefs.

Three factors were identified as important influences on teachers' beliefs. These factors, a description and example are outlined below in Table 4.2, and following this they are explained in more detail.

Table 4.2: Factor, definition and example of *Sources of Teacher Beliefs*

Factor	Description	Example
School-wide focus	An approach that the school as a whole embraces and works on developing together	"We talk a lot about this, this is about the (school philosophy) Kaiako 1
Knowledge acquisition	Gaining knowledge, skills and confidence through professional development	"This is really important, it is so important and it's cos I'm doing my languages course (University post graduate paper) at the moment" Kaiako 8
Connecting with a message	Relating with a key message or good practice from someone they hold in high regard	"Before I went into teaching I spent a lot of time observing in my father's classroom and the syndicate that he worked in and just seeing the differences on you know, how the teachers that put looking at a family (approach) in the classroom above the learning." Kaiako 4

#### 4.2.1 School-wide focus

Fives and Buehl (2011) and Wilcox-Herzog (2002) mention that directions from school leaders and collaborating with fellow teachers are elements that can put pressure on teachers enacting their beliefs. This pressure could be in the form of guiding a school wide focus. At School A, all three teachers spoke during the first and subsequent interviews of their school-wide philosophy. This philosophy was articulated through the importance of listening.

*...the ability to listen because through listening then taking what you've heard and then being able to build on that, be it programmes of work ... get an understanding of the children's capabilities ... build on the children's interests and build programmes through that, so I think that pretty much listening is key. (Kaiako 2)*

Another teacher referred to this belief being imbedded in the approach that their school took in designing their curriculum:

*That came out of our (school philosophy) very strongly. (Kaiako 1)*

Fives and Buehl (2011) and Gipps, et al. (1999) also mentioned the curriculum as an influence on the implementation of teachers' beliefs. The participant teachers explained that by imbedding a belief into the school's approach to teaching and learning, it had created a lot of meaningful dialogue between staff members as they came to a common understanding.

*We talk a lot about this, this is about the (school philosophy). (Kaiako 1)*

According to Fives and Buehl (2011) and Wilcox-Herzog (2002), dialogue, through collaborating with colleagues, often plays an influential role in constricting the implementation of a teacher's beliefs. The findings in this study also suggest that it plays an influential role in constructing the teacher's beliefs themselves.

Teachers in School A, when reflecting on their teaching practice, look to understand how they can utilise the school philosophy to better effect in their classroom.

*... because there is not a whole heap of literature around the senior end of the (school philosophy) though I guess we are taking the principles and sort of thinking about those and how they can show through your programme, For me a big aspect of that was the flexible learning approach, the fact it's individualised ... they are also having a bit of a choice over what, but a real choice over where and how. (Kaiako 3)*

This reflection shows how the school focus is connected with beliefs about child development and knowledge of teaching and learning. According to Ernest (1989), when these factors are present there is likely to be a stronger link between beliefs and practice. From the discussions with participant teachers in School A it was clear that the school wide philosophy had a strong influence on their beliefs. This influence was directed through the school-wide focus, and developed in the many discussions and reflections the teachers had with colleagues about the learning environment and the programmes that operated within it. In order to develop their beliefs in this way, teachers needed to acquire a certain amount of knowledge.

#### 4.2.2 Knowledge acquisition

Several teachers referred in some way to their acquisition of knowledge having an influence on their beliefs. Historically, attending professional development, either at the school or through outside providers, has been a widely used mode of acquiring professional knowledge in New Zealand. When the teacher participants were asked about their beliefs, several teachers, without being prompted, identified links between their beliefs and the professional development they were undertaking. The quotes below refer to professional development led by the Ministry of Education that focused on raising the achievement of Pasifika students, and a postgraduate course in students' language development through the local University.

*All the Pasifika stuff I'm doing at the moment is based around their identity. (Kaiako 1)*

*...this is really important, it is so important and it's cos I'm doing my languages course at the moment. (Kaiako 8)*

Knowledge about teaching and learning is not just limited to attending workshops or participating in courses, but it can be acquired in a range of different ways and as one teacher explains, it is not just the responsibility of the school, but also of the individual teacher.

*Part of being a learner is personal professional development, not just what your school would offer you. I think you need to be proactive with bettering yourself and challenging your own programme. (Kaiako 3)*

Some participant teachers mentioned implementing a change in their classroom programme or routine and then assessing the success of this change as a powerful influence on their beliefs. One participant teacher succinctly shared this by stating that:

*I'd say seeing it working has been the best thing. (Kaiako 1)*

This is consistent with Bandura (1997) who mentioned that beliefs can be strengthened or changed through experiencing positive results. Participant teachers

also noted that changing schools and experiencing working in a different community could reinforce the importance of some beliefs while highlighting the importance of other beliefs:

*... my beliefs about what a good teacher has changed ... I do really believe that they do need to have high expectations of their learners, that's really important, no matter what decile they come from. So I came from a high decile school and (now I have) come here. Even though their families are, you know, low socio-economic I'm not going to treat them (the students) any different because they can still give me those expectations. (Kaiako 8)*

Through the experience of changing schools, this teacher has maintained her strong belief that setting high expectations of students is an important contributor to student achievement. This teacher also noted the importance of other practices and her associated beliefs that had been highlighted to them through the experience of changing schools.

*I've never had to reinforce culture, when you look after each other and teamwork and these small skills, (as much as) this year. Just culture and actually caring, making them care about each other, show empathy, because then the learning is easy, because they've got the expectation and the routines. (Kaiako 8)*

By teaching in a new community this teacher, while previously being aware of class culture, now believes much more strongly in the significance of creating a culture where students care about each other and can work productively together. Devine et al. (2013) mention that environmental factors, such as a school and its community, have an influence on teachers implementing their beliefs. This study shows that the environment can also influence the beliefs themselves. This influence on beliefs is strengthened when a teacher can connect with the messages of the new school and community.

#### **4.2.3 Connecting with a message**

Another important factor that was identified as being influential in developing teachers' beliefs is that of being able to connect with the message that others are

sharing. This connection can be made through listening to an expert speak about important features of a topic that the teacher is interested in learning more about.

*One of the women running it (a professional development workshop) who was also a parent said that when her son was at school they said 'he's doing well' and she read into it 'for a brown boy' because she knew he wasn't doing well at school at all, he was coasting, he was lazy as, he was doing absolutely nothing but their expectation was, ah he's Pasifika, he's not going to do much, and I think that really encouraged me to give feedback to these children. (Kaiako 1)*

After listening to this expert at the workshop, this participant teacher's belief about setting high expectations for all children was strengthened to the point where she decided to take action. Another participant teacher shared their experience of observing other teachers and how this had influenced their beliefs.

*Before I went into teaching I spent a lot of time observing in my father's classroom and the syndicate that he worked in and just seeing the differences on you know the teachers that put looking at a family (approach) in the classroom above the learning, the learning followed whereas the people that who were focused on the high expectations all the time didn't always have every child or student achieve because they didn't have that community. (Kaiako 4)*

This participant teacher acknowledged that her belief in the importance of building a positive learning community originated from observing this in action. This is consistent with Bandura (1997) who notes that observing positive results in action can change or strengthen beliefs. A commonality with both these participant teachers was the high regard they had for the teacher presenting the workshop or the teacher being observed in the classroom.

#### **4.2.4            Respect**

It should be noted that in all three factors, school wide focus, knowledge acquisition and connecting with a message, respect plays an important role. One teacher spoke after the recording had finished about her commitment to, and the learning she was experiencing, in her postgraduate studies. The messages that teachers connected

with were delivered or modelled by educators that they had respect for. Knowledge was acquired from a course or institution that they held in high regard and/or was delivered by a person whom they also hold in high regard. In developing or being part of a school-wide focus teachers are engaged in discussions with colleagues whose skills and knowledge they have a high level of admiration for. Respect plays an important role in influencing teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Respect is also an important element in our classrooms, especially when we seek to raise the achievement of our Māori students, and it is an important component in culturally responsive practice.

#### **4.3 Factors that support culturally responsive practices**

This study set out to investigate the influence of student voice within a bicultural learning environment. Through reading current literature including the voices of Māori learners captured by other researchers, and then listening to the voices of Māori learners interviewed in this study, it became clear to me that a truly bicultural environment is one that embraces culturally responsive practices. In this section the factors that support the implementation of such practices, as shared by some of the teachers in this study are outlined.

As the interview cycle with the teacher participants progressed, the teachers began to discuss the importance of culture in their classrooms. Often these discussions were brought about through the reflection on the Māori student voice data, and teachers shared deeper insights into their beliefs as the discussions progressed. Table 4.3, shown below, outlines three factors that teachers identified as supporting culturally responsive practices, as well as a description and an example. These factors are then presented in more detail.

Table 4.3 Factors, definitions and examples of *Factors that support culturally responsive practice*

Factor	Description	Example
Displaying some proximity to Te Ao Māori	The Māori world view has significant prominence in a teacher's belief system.	"I just don't want this (Proximity to Te Ao Māori) off there because this is really important, it is so important and it's cos I'm doing my languages course at the moment I'm just realizing that if we forget this we're forgetting identity and beliefs so we can't forget this." Kaiako 8
Knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori	Having a good understanding of tikanga Māori and feeling that they can use it confidently in the classroom.	"I think it's important to teach te reo Māori, I specialized in Māori so that's important." Kaiako 8
Direction from the Ministry of Education	Schools and teachers are guided to include elements of Māori language and culture through legislation, curriculum and review requirements.	"I also feel like it's a requirement so I keep doing it." Kaiako 3

#### 4.3.1 Displaying some proximity to Te Ao Māori

During the teacher belief interview the teacher participants were asked to select the ten or twelve statements, from thirty-five provided to them, that they most associated with 'a good teacher'. The card 'displays some proximity to Te Ao Māori' was included in this collection of thirty-five statements. Two teachers selected this statement as being of significant importance to them and explained why.

*I'm actually doing a course in learning languages and you know Māori and being Māori, multi-cultural is really strong with me so my philosophy is about identity, engaging students, making connections with their whānau. I think it's important to teach te reo Māori. (Kaiako 8)*

A third teacher referred to it while they were reading the statements.

*That's important (displays some proximity to Te Ao Māori) but I wouldn't put it as high as what you want. (Kaiako 7)*

This raised the issue of perceived hidden agendas. This participant teacher believed that I, as the researcher, and this research project had a predetermined outcome or motive. For me this comment highlighted the need and challenge involved with building trusting relationships. I too have

beliefs about teaching and learning, and while every effort was made not to share these during my interviews with the participant teachers, my actions would no doubt be judged. By introducing myself to the students with a brief mihi (traditional Māori introduction) it may have come across to this particular teacher that I had knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori

#### **4.3.2 Knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori**

The two teachers who identified the importance of understanding a Māori world view (Te Ao Māori) also explained the importance of having a knowledge of te reo, and using te reo in the classroom.

*I think it's important to teach te reo Māori, I specialized in Māori so that's important. (Kaiako 8)*

*I liked the fact that what we do in class came through, the te reo and stuff that we do do in class, that was cool. (Kaiako 2)*

The use of te reo Māori was an active way for these teachers to show the importance they placed on tikanga Māori. They not only believed in the importance of using the language, but they felt confident to use and teach with it in the classroom. Bishop and Glynn (2003) acknowledge the importance of tikanga Māori in the classroom as it shows Māori cultural identities are valued. This is also an approach that is supported by educational policy in New Zealand.

#### **4.3.3 Direction from the Ministry of Education**

Legislative policy was indicated as a factor influencing their use of culturally responsive practices through curriculum, assessment and teacher appraisal requirements.

*But I know that, definitely part of our standards, through the teachers' council (NZTC: New Zealand Teachers' Council) is to, you know you've got to be, through the bi-cultural nature of New Zealand. (Kaiako 3)*

*Yeah and I mean it's part of the curriculum. (Kaiako 3)*



Implementing more culturally responsive practices is supported by national educational policies, as outlined previously in Subcategory 2.3.1 *Locating bicultural perspectives in education*. Along with these policies, a teacher's confidence with tikanga Māori and their belief in the importance of Te Ao Māori were also identified as factors that promoted culturally responsive practices. During the research project the participant teachers also shared the challenges they faced with regards to implementing more culturally responsive practices.

#### 4.4 Factors that challenge culturally responsive practices

Teachers also shared their thoughts on factors that they thought limited their ability or inclination to promote culturally responsive teaching practices in their classroom. Table 4.4, outlines five factors that teachers identified as challenging the implementation of culturally responsive practices. These factors are then expanded on further.

Table 4.4 Factors, description and examples of *Factors that challenge culturally responsive practice*

Factor	Description	Example
Multiculturalism	The importance of Māori culture getting lost amongst the multiple cultures that are represented within the classroom.	"We've also got other (cultures) ... so it's interesting, I think it's real beneficial to have kids from different backgrounds ... or even the understanding of diversity here, you know because we do have quite a few, a mix." Kaiako 3
Low numbers of Māori students	The importance of Māori culture getting lost amongst the underrepresentation within the classroom.	"Bits of it will, bits of it won't because I have, I only have um three Māori boys in my class and that's it, so it's hard for me to take a lot from that one, cos the demographic of my class doesn't match, which is a shame." Kaiako 4
Lack of knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori	Not having a good understanding of tikanga Māori and not feeling that they can use it confidently in the classroom.	"I guess it's harder to teach in the same way because there's not much knowledge that I (have)." Kaiako 3
Negative parental reactions	Negative reactions from parents to the inclusion of culturally responsive practices.	"The mum came in and said I don't want my boy learning this Māori stuff." Kaiako 3
Overcrowded curriculum and assessment requirements	Pressures to teach a number of topics and curriculum areas and focus on ensuring children meet literacy and numeracy targets.	"I should be doing more te reo, but it's just, it's totally the programme." Kaiako 3

#### 4.4.1 Multiculturalism

During discussions of student voice data, one teacher often referred to the range of cultures in their classroom and the influence and pressure they felt this had on implementing more learning of te reo Māori in the classroom.

*...we've also got other (students), like X, he's from Afghanistan but he's quite open to talk about his culture so that's interesting listening to him as well and, especially the religion thing because it's so, he's keen to talk about it, he's happy to share, you know about what they believe and all sorts so it's yeah, it's interesting. I think it's real beneficial to have kids from different backgrounds... or even the understanding of diversity here, you know because we do have quite a few, a mix. (Kaiako 3)*

The multi-cultural makeup of this classroom was raised in further reflections when considering implementing more te reo Māori in the classroom.

*I find that also having kids from other countries as well, Afghanistan and Indonesia and things, I guess I don't know, I guess they all, I don't know. (Kaiako 3)*

*There's that multi-cultural perspective. (Researcher)*

*Yeah there is, and I mean I love learning about, having them share about their culture as well. (Kaiako 3)*

From these quotes we can see that this participant teacher, while acknowledging the importance of tikanga and te reo Māori in the classroom, sees that the inclusion of more te reo Māori in the classroom would come at the expense of being inclusive of other children who are of non-Māori and non-NZ European descent. This aligns with Devine et al. (2013) who mention that beliefs can compete with each other. Bishop and Glynn (2003) note that focusing only on Māori students or students from minority ethnicities would further marginalise these groups. Pakeha students and their cultural identities need to be included in these discussions as well. Other participant teachers raised the cultural makeup of classes as well, specifically, the lower numbers of Māori students as being a challenging factor.

#### **4.4.2 Low numbers of Māori students**

A few teachers raised the fact that they had small numbers of Māori students in their own classes. Others pondered the classes that had low numbers of or no Māori students, and the implications that this could have for implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

*Schools with just pakeha kids and then thinking about teaching te reo and stuff, it's like well, I think that they would be so disconnected. (Kaiako 3)*

When asked about the influence of the student voice data shared by the whānau group, and the influence that it would have on their teaching practice, one teacher referred to the low number of Māori students that were in her class and how this impacted on what she would take away from it.

*Does that have any influence on your teaching practice at all?  
(Researcher)*

*Bits of it will, bits of it won't because I have, I only have three Māori boys in my class and that's it, so it's hard for me to take a lot from that one, because the demographic of my class doesn't match, which is a shame... but it does mean that with those three boys I've got a better idea of what I'm doing with them. (Kaiako 4)*

Clearly having low numbers of Māori students was a challenging factor in the motivation for some teachers to implement more culturally responsive practices. This assertion is challenged by Bishop and Glynn (2003) who argue that “addressing the educational needs of Māori children will also benefit other children” (p. 132). This raises the discussion of whether gaining knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori is reserved for Māori students only.

#### **4.4.3 Lack of knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori**

A teacher's ability and confidence with te Reo and tikanga Māori had an influence on the frequency that it would be included in their classroom programmes. One participant teacher acknowledged that his own knowledge of te reo was a factor.

*I definitely know some classes do a lot more around teaching Māori than others. I guess I don't. I guess I do more work around Māori culture (like our study of) Maui's kites ... I can let my te reo programme itself slip a bit, it needs to be, I guess it's harder to teach in the same way because there's no, um, there's not as much knowledge of the oral language that I (have, and) it needs to be more directed I guess, more teacher-directed in some way. (Kaiako 3)*

This teacher also reflected on one of the comments from their whānau group when they were expressing frustration with having the same cultural units rolled out each year. This teacher identified that resources for popular topics are more readily available to help support teachers.

*So like in so and so's class you'd learn about I don't know Matariki, then like this year you'll learn about it, next year you'll learn about it... (Tamaiti 15)*

*I guess that again might come down to teachers feeling like we need some celebration or something to learn about the culture... yeah Matariki might be one of those things that, resources get sent around don't they. (Kaiako 3)*

From these comments we can see that a teacher's lack of knowledge and confidence in te reo Māori is a challenging factor in the implementation of more culturally responsive practices in the classroom. While teachers are key decision makers in the activities that operate within a classroom, parents also have an indirect influence.

#### **4.4.4 Negative parental reactions**

One teacher mentioned the pressures and expectations from parents during reflective discussions. They didn't mention that this puts them off using elements of Māori culture in their teaching, but by bringing it up in discussion it shows that they are still aware of this experience and the possibility that it could occur again.

*I don't know whether it's still in the back of my mind that, and this is silly, that I had a mum, a couple of years ago who was, who when I was teaching te reo in the class ... and the mum came in and said 'I don't want my boy learning this Māori stuff'. So it was awkward because we were doing a big unit, it was art as well and a bit of language and doing*

*some geometric patterns, but she was absolutely opposed to it because of her own family history. (Kaiako 3)*

This comment shows that negative reactions by parents, and perhaps by the wider community that schools are part of, can be a limiting factor in the implementation of culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Fives and Buehl (2011) and Wilcox-Herzog (2002) note that environmental factors, such as the response of parents, can limit teachers from implementing learning practices that are aligned with their beliefs. Parents, along with education policy makers and school leaders, also have expectations about which parts of a crowded curriculum will receive more attention in the classroom.

#### **4.4.5 Overcrowding curriculum and assessment requirements**

Pressures to cover a number of curriculum areas as well as meet legislated standards of achievement in literacy and numeracy was articulated by one teacher as being a factor in the amount of time that was available for the teaching of te reo and tikanga Māori.

*I know that Māori language is important to have some understanding of te reo and things, but I still, it's a balancing thing, between how important it is to have an understanding of (te reo), when you could have a good, good activities around English and then activities around te reo. (Kaiako 3)*

*(Te reo and tikanga Māori) it's still something that I should probably be, yeah, should be doing more te reo, but that's just, it's totally the programme. (Kaiako 3)*

Facing external pressures to meet certain student achievement results in literacy and numeracy, results in teachers feeling pressured to include more of these curriculum areas in the daily programme. This is felt by some teachers to limit their ability to include more culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Fives and Buehl (2011) and Gipps, et al. (1999) note that assessment and curriculum pressures can restrict teachers practicing what they believe. A teacher's lack of confidence and knowledge of te reo Māori was also identified as a factor that limited their ability to include more culturally responsive practices. Low numbers of Māori students and a

range of ethnicities in classrooms, as well as negative parental reactions, were also identified as factors that reduced teachers' motivation to focus on culturally responsive practices.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter explored the sources of teachers' beliefs as the participant teachers identified them and links were made to other research in this area. Having a school-wide focus, acquiring knowledge about teaching and learning, and connecting with a message were all identified as factors that have influenced teachers' beliefs. Respect played a role in all of these factors influencing teachers' beliefs, either by the teachers respecting those people championing the school-wide focus, leading the professional development and sharing the message, or the teachers respected the focus, knowledge, or message itself.

Teachers identified that displaying some proximity to Te Ao Māori (Māori world-view), having some knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori, as well as the direction from the Ministry of Education were all factors that supported them to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. The teachers also identified that multiculturalism, low numbers of Māori students, a lack of knowledge and confidence in tikanga Māori, negative reactions from parents, and an overcrowded curriculum and assessment requirements all limited their ability or inclination to promote culturally responsive teaching practices in their classroom. In Chapter 5: Student Voice – Findings and Discussion, some of the thoughts and opinions of Māori students are shared after a reflection on the process of acquiring authentic student voice.

## Chapter 5: Student Voice - Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Chapter Outline

Framing Questions:

- What are students' thoughts and opinions on their learning?
- What processes best help students share their thoughts and opinions on their learning?

This chapter outlines some of the thoughts and opinions that students have shared about their learning experiences. Elements of the process used to gather this data are explored as well as the lessons that were learnt along the way. This chapter therefore gives insight into Research Question 1:

How do you develop and gather authentic / quality student voice?

This chapter also focuses on the Māori student voice data gained from the whānau group interviews. Common themes about culture and learning that emerged are shared in this chapter. This chapter is also relevant to the discussion around the first part of Research Question 2:

What considerations are needed in order to gather (and reflect on) authentic / quality student voice from Māori learners?

### 5.2 Reflecting on the process – what worked and what did not?

During the literature review, some of the benefits of gaining the thoughts and opinions of students were explored. These ranged from students becoming more engaged in their learning (MacBeath et al., 2003; Prensky, 2005; Smyth, 2006; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) through to school-wide changes in an identified area (Broadhead, 1996; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004). In an attempt to

realise these benefits, several factors that influenced the quality of student voice data were introduced. These factors were critical to gathering authentic messages from students, messages that were also meaningful and useful for those teachers who were seeking the students' voice in the first place. The results that are shared in this section first outline and then elaborate on the important factors that this research uncovered as being critical in gathering authentic and quality student voice, particularly in a New Zealand context.

Four key factors were identified as being critical to the gathering of quality and authentic student voice data in this study. The four factors and a brief description are outlined in Table 5.2 and following this they are elaborated on in more detail.

Table 5.2: Factors and description for *Gathering authentic and quality student voice*

Factor	Description
Developing trust	Building a relationship with the students where they genuinely believe that the interview facilitator and teachers have the students' best interests at heart.
Whānau group approach	Inviting and including all Māori students to share their voice as a group.
Use of an external facilitator	Having the focus group interviews directed by someone removed from the classroom or school environment.
Discussing topics relevant to the children	The conversations that are discussed in the focus group interviews are interesting, relevant and understood by the students.

### 5.2.1 Developing trust

Throughout the process of gathering the thoughts and opinions of students, the importance of trust was continually reinforced to me. Students explicitly and implicitly showed me that this was a critical factor for them to feel comfortable sharing their views. Care was taken to ensure that the participant students were comfortable with the research process by ensuring the interviews were conducted in a friendly and informal manner, with the aim of making the students feel relaxed (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). Building trust was further achieved through a process whereby I would constantly share and check information with the students. Rudduck



and McIntyre (2007) identified that if students had a clear understanding of the reasons for their selection as well as of the aim of the consultation process, they are more likely to invest themselves more fully in the discussions. The information that I shared with the students included why they had been selected to participate in the focus group interviews.

*Thank you for agreeing to help me with my research project. You have been chosen to be a part of this focus group because your teacher felt as a group you represent the range of students and ideas in your class.*  
(Researcher)

Six focus groups met with me on three occasions. On the second and third occasions that we met, I shared with them a brief summary of the discussion that their teacher and I had as we reflected on the previous student focus group interview transcripts, and any points of interest or decisions that might have been made.

*So if you remember last time we talked about being Māori here at (School A).* (Researcher)

*Yeah.* (Tamaiti 14)

*And, some of the things that came out for me and that (Kaiako 3) and I talked about was that te reo was something that was important and that family was important.* (Researcher)

*Whānau.* (Tamaiti 14)

*Whānau, āe, and, your culture, so you mentioned carving and you especially mentioned kapa haka. We talked about that for a wee while, so (Kaiako 3) on reading that went and had a chat with your principal to try and see where it was going on there, I don't know where you've got to with that.* (Researcher)

*It's been in the newspaper apparently.* (Tamaiti 15)

My sharing such information gave the students an insight into what was happening with the thoughts and opinions that they were giving, which helped the students trust my motivations as an external researcher and further trust the reactions of their kaiako/teachers. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) mention the importance of students

being able to trust the process and the people involved. Giving the students a follow-up to their views demonstrates that the adults listening to their views are genuinely interested, an important point that was also mentioned by MacBeath et al. (2003). Supporting the role of sharing information was a continual process of checking information and permission.

The process of checking permission occurred at the beginning and at the conclusion of each focus group interview. At the beginning of each focus group interview I asked permission to record the interview. At first it was common for a few students to object or appear apprehensive about this. I explained that I was the only one that would listen to the interviews, and that it would help me to write down the conversations in order to share them with their teacher afterwards. On each occasion children were relieved that it was only me listening to the recording and gave permission for the interview to be recorded. I repeated this process at the beginning of each focus group interview and as trust was built, permission was quickly given. On one occasion, in the interests of saving time, I made the mistake of starting the recording on my iPhone before asking for permission. Once permission was given I was then challenged by one of the tamaiti /students who noticed that I did not activate the recording after permission was given, as they were expecting. After apologising and offering to rewind the recording and start again, which the student said wasn't necessary, the focus group interview continued, including being recorded. This incident highlighted how the students were continuously judging my words and actions in order to determine the level of trust they would bestow.

Checking permission also took place at the end of each focus group interview, when I would recap the discussion, and then ask the students if I could share a transcript of the conversation with their teachers. In every case this was given, although on one occasion the students asked for a part of the discussion not to be shared with the teacher. This section related to a side discussion that was not the focus of the interview. It is my opinion that they did not want their teacher to know that they had digressed off task for a few minutes.

Checking my understanding of what the students were sharing served two important roles. Firstly it was critical in gaining a clearer picture of what the students were communicating to me, and secondly it demonstrated to the children that I genuinely wanted to understand their points of view. This process of checking occurred regularly during the focus group interviews as this example demonstrates:

*The only thing that is difficult for me is when you ... have to do your password and you send it up to your media gallery. (Tamaiti 13)*

*Is it remembering your password that is tricky? (Researcher)*

*Nah, it's just annoying. (Tamaiti 13)*

By clarifying this student's message, I learnt that the task of entering their password was frustrating for them, as opposed to being difficult, which had been my first impression. The process of checking also occurred at the end of each focus group interview. I summarised my recollection of the main points that were discussed, checking that I had understood the main points before seeking permission to share and discuss these points with their teachers.

*Thank you guys, I've learnt a lot about writing just talking to you all now. I've learnt about using strong verbs and adjectives, I learnt how (Researcher)*

*Direct speech. (Tamaiti 12)*

*Yeah, direct speech as well. I learnt how important the star writer is for you and having that as a goal. I learnt how you share your writing and how that helps, so there are lots of things that I've learnt and will take away.*

*When you be a star writer ... (Tamaiti 11)*

From the example above Tamaiti 12 interjected to ensure that I included a concept that was important to them in the context of the discussion, and then this summary sparked an idea that Tamaiti 11 thought was an important part of the topic being discussed.

Clarifying my understanding of the students' responses was also involved in ensuring greater credibility in the data that I was gathering. This process is often referred to as 'member checking', in other words checking my understanding with the participant members of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Flick, 2009). Being open and transparent through constantly sharing and checking was also integral to building trust with all focus groups. This applied to both those focus groups with Māori students and those with non-Māori students. There were also some factors that helped build trust when I was working specifically with the Māori student focus groups, or whānau groups.

### **5.2.2 Whānau group approach**

A whānau group approach involved allowing all Māori students from a particular class or year group, who indicated they would like to participate, the opportunity to do so as a group. This is the same approach that Bishop and Berryman (2009) utilised while gathering student voice data from Māori high school students. While whānau literally means family, it is referred to in this context as a group brought together for a common purpose, and who aim to develop relationships and practices which are similar to those in a traditional whānau. The establishment of whānau-type relationships helps develop the commitment and connectedness of those involved (Bishop & Glynn, 2003). For one student, being included in this whānau group was a revelation.

*I didn't know I was Māori. (Tamaiti 10)*

This revelation sparked a conversation at home where Tamaiti 10 was able to learn more about his cultural heritage. The whānau group approach allowed the students to feel supported by their cultural peers so they could articulate what it meant to be Māori.

*I'm lucky that I am Māori. (Tamaiti 9)*

At the beginning of every focus group interview we started by sharing a whakatauki (Māori proverb) (Appendix 10). This whakatauki captured the purpose of the research project and helped guide our focus group discussions. Beginning with a whakatauki helped show the Māori students that their culture was valued and important. One group showed how important this was to them by discussing where they had used this whakatauki before. Other groups showed they appreciated reading the whakatauki by joining in the act of reading it and sharing their translation of it.

The quality of student voice data received from the whānau group discussions highlights the value of this approach. The importance of whānau (family), te reo (the language), performance, art and stories in the students' cultural identity was discovered. Māori students expressed the desire to learn, to have their culture valued, to have leadership opportunities, to have positive learning-based relationships with their kaiako (teachers), to have a well-managed learning environment, to be taught in ways that help them learn and to be challenged. Māori students also shared the challenges of the cultural world around them and the expectations that are placed on them because they are Māori. I do not believe Māori students would have openly shared as many valuable insights into their personal and cultural beliefs if they were not participating in a whānau group approach.

### **5.2.3 Use of an external facilitator**

There were several advantages to having someone other than the classroom teacher facilitate the focus group interviews. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) noted that using an intermediary was a successful method of increasing the impact while reducing the effort needed to collect student voice data. Conducting focus group interviews took considerable time, but as an external facilitator I was able to conduct them without encroaching on teachers' valuable teaching or planning time. During the interviews themselves it was important to have no restrictive time pressures. This relaxed approach gave the students a sense that their thoughts and opinions were valuable; that they were worth waiting for and not rushing. MacBeath et al. (2001) also mentioned the importance of children needing to feel relaxed.

Another major advantage of using an external facilitator is the detachment and objectivity provided. The students, especially younger students, are likely to want to please their teachers by saying what they think their teachers want to hear, as was indicated by a few participant teachers.

*I probably wouldn't have been able to hear those (views). (Kaiako 3)*

*I know that if I asked them these questions that it would be completely skewed by them wanting to please me, you know, anticipating what I want. (Kaiako 2)*

There were some challenges associated with being an external facilitator. One teacher mentioned that they were worried that I wouldn't understand some of the classroom strategies and processes that the children were talking about.

*When they were trying to articulate what they were doing I was thinking, I wonder if Bruce actually can picture what they do. (Kaiako 2)*

While it was not the case in this instance, there were times in other focus group interviews where I needed to keep asking the students questions until I understood. There were also times where it was not until the reflective interviews with the participant teachers that I gained clarity about what was being discussed by the student participants. Conducting several focus group interviews with the students certainly helped me gain a clearer and deeper understanding of the concepts that students discussed and ultimately their thoughts and opinions.

A second challenge arose around the accuracy of the data that the focus group interviews were generating. On one occasion the teacher participants mentioned that the students' discussions were incomprehensible.

*I was like some of these, what are they even talking about? (Kaiako 2)*

And on another the teacher participant mentioned that the student's comments were not accurate.

*What was your initial reaction there? (Researcher)*

*That they are lying! (Kaiako 1)*

On both occasions, further questioning on my part as the researcher allowed the participant teachers to explore the information a little more deeply and by discussing the transcripts together we were able to formulate some understanding and meaning from it. This will be discussed further in the Teacher Reflection segment of this Findings and Discussion chapter. Ensuring the usefulness of the student voice data raises another key finding, the use of discussion topics that are relevant to and comprehensible by the students.

#### **5.2.4            Discussing topics relevant to the children**

MacBeath et al. (2003) mention that it is important to find a topic that will stimulate discussion amongst the students. The participant teachers and the researcher decided the topics that were discussed during the student focus groups. The topics were chosen after considering the teachers', and in some cases my own, areas of curiosity, and were mutually agreed upon. The topics reflected questions that both the teacher and researcher wanted some insight into. As the research progressed it became clearer that the topic being discussed during the student focus group interviews had an influence on the quality of student voice data elicited. Focusing on the students' feelings, classroom learning programmes, and what they did or did not enjoy provided a treasure trove of information. At the beginning of the first focus group interviews I asked the groups "What do you enjoy about being in Room X or Year Y?" This proved to be a very engaging question and produced a number of enthusiastic responses from the students. The question "What is it like to be Māori at this school?" was another to generate emotive responses reflecting both positive and negative feelings.

Another topic that encouraged the students to talk freely and openly was when students were asked to explain how they learn. This could be asked of a particular curriculum area, for example their writing, a particular task, for example Sepio art, or a particular approach to learning, for example students planning their own weekly timetables. Students had concrete experiences that they could recall and then, either instinctively or with further probing questions from me, elaborated on their thoughts and opinions about this approach or learning task.

Some topics proved difficult to discuss and as a result produced limited or inaccurate student voice data. Such topics typically involved more abstract thinking or language that the children were not familiar with. One such discussion with a younger focus group was directed towards the students' thoughts about their ability to be involved in whole class discussions. Despite using several strategies such as allowing wait time, rephrasing the question, generating some recollection of whole class discussions, the students' vague responses showed me that they had a limited understanding of the concept or vocabulary. When I asked one group to what extent would Te Reo Māori help them get employment in the future, their responses reminded me that they are limited by their own experiences to date, and that this line of questioning would not elicit any meaningful new information. On another occasion I asked one focus group of students to individually rate their motivation to learn on a scale of 1 to 5. For one child, the concept of identifying, transferring and then articulating their motivation levels in such a way proved very difficult.

*What number would you choose to represent how motivated you are to learn? (Researcher)*

*4 or 5. (Tamaiti 8)*

*60. (Tamaiti 7)*

*So it's got to be between 1 and 5, so it's got to be 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. (Researcher)*

*Um. (Tamaiti 7)*

*5. (Tamaiti 8)*



*1. (Tamaiti 7)*

*Why do you say 1? (Researcher)*

*Cos that's my favourite number, and ... (Tamaiti 7)*

The discussion above highlights the importance of students understanding the question or topic that they are discussing; which relies on the questioner choosing questions and topics that will be more easily understood, and phrasing the questions in such a way that the participant students fully understand what is asked of them. As a researcher I constantly reflected both during and after the focus group interviews, thinking about the quality of insight that the students were sharing or had just shared and thinking of strategies to ensure deeper insights could be gained. There were a number of valuable insights gained in the focus group interviews with Māori students.

### **5.3 Focus on te reo o ngā ākonga - cultural identity of Māori students**

As a result of utilising elements of a Kaupapa Māori methodology, including using a whānau group approach to gather student voice data from Māori students, this study uncovered a number of important findings around the thoughts and opinions that Māori students have about their learning. These findings have been grouped into three key areas: cultural identity, students' aspirations, and challenges. Each key area will have the themes displayed and described in a table followed by a more detailed explanation.

Four whānau groups across two schools participated in this study. Each whānau group consisted of students from the same class or year group. The youngest whānau group included seven and eight year old students, while the oldest whānau group included eleven and twelve year old students.

With the youngest whānau group, identifying or clarifying their identity as Māori took place at the beginning of the first two focus group interviews. Some students expressed pride in being Māori as a simple statement:

*I'm Māori. (Tamaiti 12)*

*So am I. (Tamaiti 14)*

While another student expressed how they felt to be Māori:

*I'm lucky that I am Māori. (Tamaiti 16)*

Other discussions that the students initiated in this and another whānau group was around exploring their 'level' of Māori as the following conversation from the youngest whānau group demonstrates.

*Are you Māori? (Tamaiti 12)*

*Yes. (Tamaiti 10)*

*You're half Māori. (Tamaiti 13)*

And another conversation during the focus group interview with the second youngest whānau group.

*Are you Māori? (Tamaiti 6)*

*Na, I'm half. (Tamaiti 5)*

Both these conversations highlight how Māori students, particularly the younger students in this study, are coming to learn about and articulate their cultural identity.

Valuing students' cultural identity is critical in any attempt to connect with Māori students and engage them in school life (Berryman & Bishop, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 2003). Māori students in a study by Berryman and Bishop (2006) explained that they respected the teachers who had an understanding of Māori culture or who allowed them to be Māori. Māori students identified five factors as being important to their

cultural identity. These factors, a description and example are outlined below in Table 5.3, and then explained in more detail.

Table 5.3 Factors, description and examples of *Important factors in students' cultural identity*.

Factor	Description	Example
Te Reo in cultural identity	The importance te reo Māori (Māori language) to students who identify as Māori.	"I just like the language and the culture behind it." Tamaiti 1
Whānau in cultural identity	The importance of whānau (family) to students who identify as Māori.	"And pretty much my whole family is Māori." Tamaiti 13
Performances in cultural identity	The importance of cultural performances to students who identify as Māori.	"The dances, they're exciting, even when people are watching them." Tamaiti 2
Art in cultural identity	The importance of art to students who identify as Māori.	"Because I try and find stuff that is Māori and draw it..." Tamaiti 14
Stories in cultural identity	The importance of legends and myths to students who identify as Māori.	"We can read Māori books at school like Tangaroa the god of the sea ..." Tamaiti 14

### 5.3.1 Te reo in cultural identity

In every whānau group discussion, te reo (Māori language) was one of the first points of cultural identity to be referred to. Bishop and Berryman (2009) identify modes of communication as an important but often unseen element of cultural identity. Students shared different reasons as to why te reo was important to them, with one student directly acknowledging the link between te reo and Māori culture.

*I just like the language and the culture behind it. (Tamaiti 1)*

Several students expressed their enjoyment in being able to speak in te reo, and two acknowledged the fact that they could communicate in te reo while others could not as a source of personal pride.

*It's fun cos I can (speak te reo). (Tamaiti 1)*

*... because people that aren't Māori, they can't understand when you're talking Māori. (Tamaiti 9)*

Another student shared the enjoyment they had in being able to communicate with their teacher in te reo.

*You get to share it, because when the teacher does the roll we can say 'kei te manahau, kei te ngawewe, kei te ngenge, or kei te makariri or kei te pai or pouri'. (Tamaiti 11)*

*Pouri is sad. (Tamaiti 13)*

The students in the all these conversations spoke with a sense of pride and enthusiasm for te reo. Another two students explained to me the importance of te reo for themselves and their whānau.

*My mum and dad wanted me to learn heaps of Māori so I would be good and when we go up to meet my dad's family and that so we can speak Māori to each other. (Tamaiti 24)*

*So you can speak in Māori? (Researcher)*

*My mum can. (Tamaiti 24)*

And another student also mentioned the role a whānau member plays in their use of te reo.

*My sister makes me talk it (te reo). (Tamaiti 1)*

From the two conversations above, it can be seen that while I have identified and separated out the key factors that students express in identifying as Māori, these factors are in fact interlinked with one another. In the conversations above the importance of te reo Māori is interlinked with the importance of whānau.

### **5.3.2 Whānau in cultural identity**

The importance of whānau (family) was identified through the students spontaneously mentioning whānau connections during the focus group discussions. One student commented about other whānau that were at the same school:

*My cousins are here at school, X and Y are Māori. (Tamaiti 17)*

While another student made reference to their whānau as sharing the same cultural identity:

*And pretty much my whole family is Māori. (Tamaiti 13)*

Some students also commented to me outside of the recorded discussion, that their siblings were involved in my research project as well, as their siblings were in another whānau group that had participated in a focus group interview. Macfarlane et al. (2014) noted from Māori high school student voice data, that these participant students also felt that the support of their whānau was vital to their success in school and contributed to a positive self-belief. Making whānau proud was identified by Berryman and Bishop (2006) and Macfarlane et al. (2014) as a highly motivating factor for Māori students to be successful at school. In this study two students also mentioned whānau when they were describing the importance of performances in their cultural identity.

### **5.3.3 Performances in cultural identity**

Cultural performances, in particular performing kapa haka were mentioned by students as something that they liked to be involved in, as both performers and spectators. Two students shared the link that these performances provide with their whānau as they talked of older whānau members being involved in kapa haka groups.

*I like being Māori because my aunty does kapa haka and I can learn more from her when she does Māori and learn more when she does the show ... and she's got some poi at her house, so I can try to learn some kapa haka. (Tamaiti 12)*

*... kapa haka championships and my sister's boyfriend's brother and sister went up north cos they're in X's school's kapa haka group. (Tamaiti 1)*

One student shared that being Māori gave them permission to be involved in Māori cultural performances.

*It means that we can do the haka, cos we're Māori. (Tamaiti 13)*

Several students commented on the sheer joy they get from being involved in kapa haka performances.

*The dances, they're exciting, even when people are watching them.  
(Tamaiti 2)*

*(performing and watching kapa haka) It's real fun. (Tamaiti 11)*

Like their enjoyment of cultural performances, students also shared their enthusiasm for expressing their culture through art.

#### **5.3.4 Art in cultural identity**

Students talked about the significance of specific art pieces to them. One boy talked about a carved tiki that belonged to the whānau.

*I have one of those koru necklaces ... it looks like some kind of Māori person, but it's my father's. (Tamaiti 23)*

Several students talked about the enjoyment they got from drawing symbols and pictures that recognized their Māori culture.

*I try and find stuff that is Māori and draw it and try to write it. (Tamaiti 14)*

*I like doing the Māori art because you can do lots of designs and that and it doesn't matter if it goes wrong, well it's, at least you are doing your best at it. (Tamaiti 34)*

The examples above show how Māori students valued being able to share their creativity through their culture. This creativity was also recognized through reading and listening to stories of cultural significance.

### 5.3.5 Stories in cultural identity

Students commented on how they liked to read stories about their Māori culture. They expressed a sense of pride and cultural connectedness in the conversation below.

*We can read Māori books at school like Tangaroa, the god of the sea, cos that's got a tekoteko in it and tekoteko are Māori. (Tamaiti 14)*

*Can you tell me what a tekoteko is? (Researcher)*

*It's something that stands, it's a wooden thing up on a meeting house like this. (Tamaiti 14)*

*Nice and straight and proud. (Tamaiti 11)*

*It's Te Manuhuri on top of the house. (Tamaiti 13)*

The fact that several students participated with such enthusiasm in this discussion illustrates the keenness they had for learning about their culture, and the role that stories play in this learning.

Māori students in this study expressed a desire to both learn and express their cultural identity. Macfarlane et al. (2014) noted that by identifying with and maintaining strength in their Māori culture, students had a greater sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. This study identified some important factors in Māori students' cultural identity. These factors allowed opportunities for Māori students to both learn about and express this identity. For example, te reo involved both learning the language and the culture behind it as well as allowing an opportunity for Māori students to express their cultural identity through the act of communicating in the language of their culture. The important factors, while being significant contributors to students' cultural identity in themselves, also acted to support other important factors in promoting a student's cultural identity. For example, whānau, while being mentioned by student participants as an important factor in itself, it also played a significant role in promoting other factors such as te

reo and performance, which in turn allowed the students to communicate and share their cultural connectedness with their whānau.

#### 5.4 Aspirations of Māori students

The previous section explored how Māori participant students shared their desires to learn about and express their cultural identity. Māori participant students expressed seven desires or aspirations as being important to their learning experiences. These desires, a description and an example are outlined below in Table 5.4, and then explained in more detail.

Table 5.4 Desires, description and examples of *Important desires for Māori students in their learning experiences*.

Desire	Description	Example
To learn	The desire to gain new skills and knowledge.	"The reason I like reading is cos I get a lot of learning" Tamaiti 13
To have their Māori culture seen as important	To have their Māori culture acknowledged, supported and celebrated.	"She (Māori kaumātua) would just like come around and talk to you and stuff and then she'd start teaching you Māori as well ..." Tamaiti 2
To have leadership opportunities	The desire to use their mana to help support the development of others.	"We got to be kind of leaders to the little kids and we could teach them heaps." Tamaiti 29
To have positive learning based relationships	The desire to have positive learning experiences based on positive relationships with their teachers.	"They treat us like they want to be treated ..." Tamaiti 25
To have a well-managed learning environment	The desire to have a learning environment that promotes and allows them to maximise their learning.	"It's hard for me to concentrate when other people are like, when other people are talking out loud." Tamaiti 25
To be taught in ways that help them learn	The desire to be taught in a way that suits their own learning preferences and utilises tools to enhance this learning.	"I like how we know how to use things that we weren't allowed to do in other classrooms like Bookcreator and Drawingpad." Tamaiti 13
To be challenged	The desire for themselves and others to have high expectations of their abilities	"It's like challenging and fun, it's like both combined together that makes it more challenging and you just have fun." Tamaiti 25

##### 5.4.1 To learn

Māori students communicated on several occasions their desire to learn something new. The comments below show how the desire to learn comes from the students' enjoyment for acquiring new skills and knowledge.



*The reason I like reading is cos I get a lot of learning, more words and get to read cool new books. (Tamaiti 12)*

*...like science and you learn different things. (Tamaiti 25)*

Another Māori student shared how the desire to learn new skills and knowledge came from a focus on pursuing bigger goals in the future.

*We actually like learning and maybe there might be some subjects that we actually like from when we were little to now and then that means we'll get a good grade and we have like a good opportunity to be what we want to be when we're adults. (Tamaiti 25)*

The comments above show that the Māori student participants in this study held both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning. This finding is similar to that of Macfarlane et al. (2014) who noted successful Māori students expressed a clear motivation for doing well at school. In this study the Māori participant students also expressed the importance of Māori culture in this learning.

#### **5.4.2 To have their Māori culture seen as important**

While the Important factors in students' cultural identity were outlined earlier in this chapter (Table 5.3.1), concepts associated with Māori culture shone through when Māori student participants discussed their learning desires. Often these desires were identified while they recalled learning experiences that they valued as this conversation demonstrates.

*There used to be this Māori teacher who just came around telling everyone about ... (Tamaiti 2)*

*And she painted your face. (Tamaiti 1)*

*Oh yeah, and she would just come around and talk to you and stuff and then like she'd start teaching you all Māori as well. (Tamaiti 1)*

*Has that happened while you've been in the senior school? (Researcher)*

*No cos she's left. (Tamaiti 2)*

*Would you like to do more of that type of thing? (Researcher)*

*Yeah, that was really fun. (Tamaiti 2)*

Another comment by a Māori student shows a learning experience that he wanted to value but found challenging, both in its content and the discouragement from the teacher.

*We had this poem in our book and it was Māori and Ms Y didn't want us to read it because it was Māori and I tried to give it a go but I only got a couple of words right so it's kind of hard to learn new stuff. (Tamaiti 12)*

A common theme identified across these conversations was that the Māori student participants recognised the importance of their culture being supported and celebrated. This was highlighted to them when this practice wasn't there, for whatever reason. This desire to have their Māori culture recognized and valued was also a major finding of earlier research by Berryman and Bishop (2006). Cultural factors played another role in allowing Māori student participants the opportunity to take on leadership opportunities.

#### **5.4.3 To have leadership opportunities**

Māori students in the older whānau group spoke of the importance of having leadership opportunities. Two students reflected on their time at primary school and the leadership roles they had there and the feelings that these generated.

*It was really good because we got to be kind of leaders to the little kids and we could teach them heaps. (Tamaiti 29)*

*Yeah like little kids were looking up to us so that's what we were doing (being leaders). (Tamaiti 25)*

The above conversation highlights the pride that these students took in their roles as leaders. Neither student mentioned that they were bestowed any official leadership titles, or in fact that they sought to have these. They did however express the satisfaction they gained from helping others and setting an example for others to

look up to. Further on in the discussion another student in this whānau group spoke of her desire to help others.

*Oh actually I'd like that where you could end up helping people if they don't know or are stuck, if they would like anything to do with cultural studies or Māori. (Tamaiti 30)*

The quote above reiterates the desire to help others, which was also articulated in the earlier conversation. Tamaiti 30 also shares her desire to help other children with their understanding of cultural concepts and in particular Māori culture. This comment also has strong links with the desire of the students in the whānau groups to have their Māori culture seen as important, through sharing and celebrating it.

The desire to have leadership opportunities was expressed through wanting to help others and wanting others to look up to them. These desires are symbolic of positive relationships, which they also expressed as being an important desire, particularly the relationships that they as Māori students have with their teachers.

#### **5.4.4 To have positive learning-based relationships with their teachers**

Student participants in the older whānau focus group experienced a number of different teachers for different subject areas. This meant that they were well placed to comment on teaching styles that they found most beneficial. One factor that came through in the discussion was their desire to have a positive relationship with their teachers, a relationship that was based on the student's learning needs.

Students in the whānau focus group shared where they felt positive relationships with teachers did and did not exist. The comment below shows a student in the whānau focus group commenting on a practice that she didn't like.

*We don't get much warnings until it's a referral. (Tamaiti 28)*

This comment refers to the tension that is created when a teacher is trying to redirect a student's behaviour. Tamaiti 28 expressed the desire to be given more

opportunity and support to change her behaviour to one that was more favourable with the teacher, before being sent to a more senior teacher.

Another student spoke of a teacher that they had a positive relationship with.

*The teacher's just really happy and cheerful most of the time. It's easy stuff to learn because the class learns it pretty fast ... and you get to use stuff during your journey at this school. (Tamaiti 27)*

This student directly mentions the teacher's positive attributes (happy and cheerful) and they indirectly mention the way the teacher structures the lesson and content so that students experience success and that this content is useful to the students in the future.

Another two students spoke in general terms of how the teachers at their current school treated them with greater respect.

*You're not treated like babies like back at primary school. Like you're treated like you're adults eh? (Tamaiti 25)*

*Yeah. They treat us like they want to be treated, and respectfully and that and then we give that back to them. (Tamaiti 26)*

The comments above highlight the Māori student participants' desire to be treated with respect and how they then in turn are more respectful towards their teachers. Similar findings were identified by Berryman and Bishop (2006) and Macfarlane et al. (2014) who noted that a lot of students appreciated those teachers who believed in them, and communicated a lot with them, guiding and praising their efforts. In this study the role of the teacher was also discussed indirectly by the students in the whānau group, in relation to the Māori participant students' desire for a well-managed learning environment.

#### 5.4.5 To have a well-managed learning environment

Having an environment where students feel safe and able to focus on thinking about and exploring concepts is important in enabling learning to take place. The Māori student participants recognised that they liked to work both individually and co-operatively as both approaches supported their learning at different times. The comment below helps elaborate on why the Māori participant students prefer to work individually.

*Working singly if it's hard for me to concentrate when other people are like, when other people are talking out loud. (Tamaiti 25)*

In contrast, other students' comments below show how working collaboratively supports their learning.

*I like working in groups because you've got people to talk to like if you really don't know a question or if you're stuck on it someone can help you with it. (Tamaiti 29)*

*Especially if it's someone who is at your rate and stuff and level of learning, and it helps if you are doing the same task. You can both help each other. (Tamaiti 27)*

These comments share how the Māori participant students appreciate learning collaboratively, especially if they are working with someone of similar ability where they can seek support from that person. Working co-operatively in groups was also a strong request from students in the study by Berryman and Bishop (2006). The comment below illustrates how learning individually and collaboratively are both desirable.

*I like both of them (learning individually and collaboratively) because sometimes if I get put with someone I don't want to work with them cos sometimes they want to get you off task, they'll try and pull you away from the learning you are trying to do. (Tamaiti 1)*

All these comments show us how the whānau focus group members like to have a structure and environment in the classroom that supports their learning, either

through reducing the noise and distractions, or by allowing opportunities to have support. Having a well-managed learning environment involves encouraging and directing students' behaviours so that they are focused on their own learning and the learning needs of others. Some whānau focus group members brought up the strategies that were in place to manage their behaviours.

*Kids are still quite young and they still think like clumsy and that, and like they get a yellow card and they are like who cares and they end up getting a referral and they end up thinking about it just then and they know what they have done (is) wrong. (Tamaiti 25)*

From the comments in this section we can see that the Māori participant students in this study have a desire for a well-managed learning environment where the strategies to redirect the unwanted behaviours of some students are effective, and therefore reduce the distractions on the Māori participant students' own learning. Students in the study by Berryman and Bishop (2006) identified a desire to be involved in formulating behaviour management systems. The whānau focus groups also described a range of teaching and learning approaches that they felt helped their learning.

#### **5.4.6 To be taught in ways that helps learning**

Māori students in all the whānau focus groups shared a range of teaching approaches that helped them with their learning. A major factor that the participant students mentioned was that of having practical tasks, where students were creating something or participating in an experience. The comment below refers to the use of technology in their learning.

*I like how we know how to use things that we weren't allowed to do in the other classrooms like Bookcreator and Drawingpad. (Tamaiti 13)*

Another student shared how they enjoyed practical construction tasks in their inquiry topic studies.

*It's fun because we get to make like our kite inquiry. Other classes don't really make stuff that's for your topic. (Tamaiti 1)*

These examples show how important it is for the students in the whānau focus groups to have practical elements in their learning where they can apply their knowledge in a creative way and then reflect on its effectiveness. Berryman and Bishop (2006) also noted that students enjoyed learning through open discussions and activities. Another important component in the learning of Māori participant students involved in this study was being challenged.

#### **5.4.7 To be challenged**

A desire to be challenged and the enjoyment that the Māori participant students received from being challenged was expressed in focus group discussions with the two older whānau groups. Sometimes this sentiment was expressed, as a frustration they were experiencing when they felt there was a lack of appropriate challenge for their learning. In one such discussion the students were talking about their kapa haka experience, and the frustration at not being challenged by having something new to learn or a new role to play.

*... they don't even do it properly ... (Tamaiti 1)*

*... like everyone who went for the year before knew it (haka) already and were like, they were basically really good at it but, yeah, and then people just get bored, like some people just go (leave), and (then) others go. (Tamaiti 2)*

Frustration was also expressed in relation to the lack of new learning content when studying taha Māori (things Māori).

*... every time you go into a new classroom the teacher brings up the same (Māori) subject you had in the last class. It's so boring. (Tamaiti 2)*

In other whānau group discussions the Māori participant students expressed the enjoyment of and reward they received from being challenged. The discussion below shows the students' reactions to the sports training they are involved in.

*Sports, it's more competitive, it's harder but with (younger) sports you don't really do anything, you just play. (Tamaiti 28)*

*The reason I agree with the sports one is because I remember at (younger levels) it was just about having fun, now ... it's more about winning sometimes or having a good game. (Tamaiti 30)*

*Yeah, it's like challenging and fun, it's like both combined together that makes it more challenging and you just have fun. (Tamaiti 25)*

This conversation emphasises how the participants found being challenged while still having fun as being very beneficial to their learning about sports and becoming better at them. The whānau group saw competition as a healthy challenge. Students in the study by Berryman and Bishop (2006) mentioned a desire for all Māori students to be pushed or challenged by their teachers.

In this section we have explored how the Māori participant students expressed several desires and aspirations that they have for their learning. They expressed a desire to learn, and that this desire to learn be supported by strong relationships with their kaiako (teachers) as well as by well-managed learning environments. They like to be challenged and taught in ways that help them to learn, and when appropriate they appreciate being able to help others through leadership roles. Most importantly they expressed a desire to have their culture acknowledged, supported and celebrated.

### **5.5 Challenges identified by Māori students**

The previous section explored how Māori participant students shared desires and aspirations they have for their learning in general. Māori participant students also expressed factors relating to their culture and identity that they found challenging.

Māori students identified two factors as challenging the enjoyment of their learning experiences. These factors, a description and an example are outlined below in Table 5.5, and then explained in more detail.



Table 5.5 Factors, description and examples of *Challenges for Māori students in their learning experiences*.

Factor	Description	Example
Expectations because of being Māori	Pressures that Māori children feel having to live up to other people's expectations.	"...people will notice that I'm Māori and then just like if they're Māori too they will just like speak random words and I can't talk Māori so I don't know anything." Tamaiti 2
View of the cultural world around them	Experiences of being a minority culture.	"Awkward when there is all these palangi's around and they're just going, like what?" Tamaiti 1

### 5.5.1 Expectations because of being Māori

When discussing what it is like to be Māori at their school, the Māori students in one whānau group identified some experiences that they found challenging. The first challenge they identified was the pressure of expectation that they felt from other Māori and non-Māori people they met. One student expressed a reluctance to share her cultural identity on occasions, as she was afraid of being embarrassed:

*Sometimes I don't like to share it just cos sometimes I'm worried that they'll make fun of you, (they will) just say "Why you don't talk some?" and I'm saying "I can't". (Tamaiti 2)*

This student came back to her limited knowledge of te reo and how she felt when discussing her culture with others:

*Like embarrassed to say that you don't know any words when people think that you do. (Tamaiti 2)*

While this student identified how the expectations of others had a negative influence on her willingness to share her cultural identity, the discussion also turned to how the whānau group felt around other cultures.

### 5.5.2 View of cultural world around them

When a whānau group was asked what it was like to be Māori at their school, one student expressed with strong emotion his feeling of being uncomfortable around people that didn't understand his cultural heritage.

*Awkward when there is all these palangi's around and they're just going, like what? (Tamaiti 1)*

The discussion then focused on clarifying what was meant by 'palangi'.

*More than just full English or full Kiwi. (Tamaiti 2)*

*Full Kiwi? (Researcher)*

*Like full Kiwi (demonstrating a large bird). (Tamaiti 1)*

*No, they're not like connected to any other language or anything just like. (Tamaiti 2)*

*European. (Tamaiti 1)*

This discussion showed an insight into how the whānau group members viewed their identity as Māori as being different than that of 'full-kiwi'. It also highlights the importance that language and culture have in their cultural identity and the challenge they feel when European New Zealanders don't understand this importance.

This section has highlighted two factors that a whānau group expressed as challenging for them in their learning environment. They felt challenged by the expectations of others, as well as by the lack of understanding that others showed towards their cultural identity.

## 5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter reflected on the process of gathering authentic student voice data. The four factors that were identified as being critical to gathering quality and authentic student voice data included developing trust, using a whānau group approach, the

use of an external facilitator, and discussing topics that were relevant to the children. Considerable links between these factors and other research were discussed.

Following this student voice reflection, this chapter shared and discussed the number of important findings made through Māori student participants sharing their thoughts and opinions about their learning. Māori student participants spoke overwhelmingly with pride about their Māori cultural identity, and identified: te reo (Māori language), whānau (family), performances, art and stories as important factors in connecting with their cultural identity. Māori student participants also expressed that they wanted: to learn, to have their Māori culture seen as important, to have leadership opportunities, to have positive learning based relationships with their teachers, to have a well-managed learning environment, to be taught in ways that help them learn, and to be challenged. Following these aspirations, two challenges for Māori students in their learning experiences were shared and discussed: expectations that were put on them because they are Māori, and the view of the cultural world around them.

In Chapter 6: Teacher Reflection – Findings and Discussion, teachers' reactions to the student voice data from both Māori and non-Māori students are explored. Factors that supported and challenged the process of teachers' reflecting on this data are also identified.

## Chapter 6: Teacher Reflection - Findings and Discussion

### 6.1 Chapter outline

Framing Questions:

- How can the process of teacher reflection be used to best utilise student voice?
- How can the process of teacher reflection support and encourage culturally responsive teaching practice?

This Findings and Discussion chapter explores the process of teachers reflecting on the student voice data. Teachers' reactions to the student voice data, both initial and following coaching conversations, are analysed. Following this, elements of the process used to reflect on this data and the lessons that were learnt along the way are discussed. These discussions include confronting the more provocative statements that arose from the student voice data. This chapter therefore gives insight into Research Question 3:

What processes do teachers use to reflect on student voice?

### 6.2 Teacher reactions to student voice data

While each teacher responded differently to their student voice data, there were some similarities however in how teachers reacted. There are advantages for those people who are supporting teachers reflecting on student voice data if they have an understanding of how teachers are likely to react.

This research project identified that teachers reflect on student voice data through two stages. The two stages and their sub-stages are outlined below in Table 6.2 and then elaborated on in more detail.

Table 6.2: Stages and sub-stages for *Teachers reflecting on student voice data*

Stage	Sub stages
Making links with the classroom programme	Teachers highlight parts of the programme that are working, look to validate the choices they have made, and identify choices that they should make in the future.
Confronting provocative statements	Teachers explain, justify or disagree with contentious statements before further reflecting and then deciding whether to accept or dismiss the statements.

### 6.2.1 Making links with the classroom programme

Often the initial reaction of teachers to the student voice data was to look for the positive elements of their classroom programme. One teacher explained how he was looking for some validation of the pedagogical choices he had made.

*I liked how, I guess I was looking for (support of) some of the things that I had chosen to do that were outside of the traditional programme.  
(Kaiako 3)*

Another teacher referred to the choices they had made to include games in their learning programme and they felt the student voice data supported that decision.

*It was cool to see that they enjoy doing things like maths games, that they do see learning in it, rather than ooh we get to do a game, they still see it as learning things when we play these games and that was cool.  
(Kaiako 4)*

Another teacher placed a lot of emphasis on her literacy programme and she mentioned how the student voice data validated the effort that was put into this, and also reinforced future decisions in this area.

*I like that they like what we're reading, that was really cool, that they actually hope that we're going to read *The Twits* next. That's good, we do a lot of work around those books so that shows it's working. (Kaiako 1)*

When another teacher was reflecting on the student voice data about her writing programme she made some links between the students' comments, which helped identify the most successful parts, in order to replicate these in the future.

*The parts of the writing that they pulled out that they obviously enjoyed were definitely ones where they had some kind of experience first, like the stick art, the, you know it wasn't just abstract kind of writing, it was stuff that we had, like the marshmallow stuff, all of those things that came out were, the nowhere box, the monster, they'd all created, experienced, done and then done some writing regarding it. (Kaiako 2)*

These examples demonstrate how teachers used the student voice data to validate the decisions that they had made. Teachers identified the effective elements of their learning programmes and then acknowledged an intention of continuing with these practices. Clark and Peterson (1986) mention that teachers often give themselves credit for the successes of their students, terming this practice 'ego-enhancing or self-serving'. While there are some similarities in the reaction of participant teachers to student voice and that of teachers' self-serving reactions to a student's success, the reaction of participant teachers in this study was one of identifying choices they had made, validating their implementation and guiding such decisions in the future. The success for the participant teachers was in seeing the children enjoying and valuing their learning experiences. The discussions were free flowing when reflecting on the positive comments that students made in the student voice data. However not all the comments that students made were perceived by their teachers as being positive.

### **6.2.2 Confronting provocative statements**

Typically when confronted by provocative statements, teachers responded in one of two ways. Teachers either accepted or dismissed the points that were raised. If a statement was accepted, the teachers would then decide whether it was of enough significance for them to act on, or to store the comment for future reference. One comment about the lack of time for a reading activity prompted the teacher to discuss the issue with the class in order to work out a solution:

*They mentioned about the Readers' Café, one group being a lot bigger than the others, so I looked at that and we did discuss Readers' Café (as a class) on Friday. (Kaiako 3)*

If the teachers did not have a solution to an identified problem they acknowledged the need for action but deferred making any decisions about what that might be.

*The fact that they've said 'you get a yellow card and they're like who cares, and they get another one and they say who cares and then they end up getting a referral' so that tells me that the system isn't working, so that's something I need to go back and address because there's no point having a system that the kids don't see any fair in. (Kaiako 4)*

This comment shows that the teacher saw the students' statement as being of some significance to their programme, in this case the behaviour management procedures, but they had not yet identified a course of action to pursue. Sometimes the course of action might be to seek further thoughts and opinions from the students. On some occasions the teachers accepted the students' statements but chose not to follow them up as they went against their own thoughts and opinions on how the classroom programme should operate. One example of this was when a few students raised an issue of wanting more fitness during the day.

*It definitely brought up that fitness issue but I don't know if I've got any further in my mind. (Kaiako 3)*

Later in the reflective discussion this teacher went on to mention the time constraints of the day and the pressure of an overcrowded curriculum and that fitness wasn't as a high priority for him as it was for those students.

*It's a balancing thing I think, it is a balancing act for how you use your time and space that you have ... there's so much that I want to do, but (I can't). (Kaiako 3)*

While the wishes of extra fitness time were listened to and accepted by the teacher, ultimately the teacher felt they could not be acted upon. Other provocative

comments were not acted upon because the teacher dismissed their value or importance.

When dismissing a provocative statement, teachers typically responded in one of two ways. They either explained or justified the comment, or they disagreed with the comment entirely. These reactions occurred either individually or sequentially, and in either order. The example below is of a teacher explaining a student's comment about how he felt they did not have enough group time in maths.

*Maybe part of the reason is on the board when I write the timetable for the day ... I often just leave it as numeracy. (Kaiako 3)*

After initially explaining how the student may have come to hold that particular view, the teacher's thinking moved on to professionally disagree with the student's statement.

*Ok, I was surprised that one had said their maths group hadn't seen me, so I don't know where that had come from. It felt like they, I mean I think they have enough time with me. (Kaiako 3)*

On other occasions teachers would disagree and then dismiss the statement outright. Below is a response to a statement from the focus group where a student shared that they were scared of older children in the school.

*That is not what we expected because that is not what they had told us, so it's interesting to see when they're put in different contexts with different people that they'll tell you something completely out there. (Kaiako 4)*

This student voice data was not consistent with the views and opinions that students had previously shared with the teacher, raising the importance of gathering accurate student voice data to reflect on. It showed that students' thoughts and opinions can change over time and also highlighted the student voices that teachers chose to hear. By attributing the controversial statements to factors other than themselves, teachers are responding to student voice in a similar way to that which Clark and



Peterson (1986) identified as 'ego-enhancing' in teachers' reactions to students' failures.

Teachers' reactions of accepting, by acting upon or storing the comments for later, or of dismissing, by explaining or disagreeing with the comments, were an important part of the process of reflecting on the student voice data. There were a number of parts in the reflection process that helped teachers come to the decisions that they did.

### **6.3 Process of teachers reflecting on student voice – what worked and what did not**

After each student focus group interview the teachers were given a complete transcript of the discussion. The process of teachers reflecting on this student voice data involved a follow up conversation between the participant teachers and me. The lessons gleaned from this process of reflection are discussed in this section of the results.

Four key factors were identified as being critical to teachers effectively reflecting on student voice data in this study. The four factors and a brief description are outlined below in Table 6.3 and then elaborated on in more detail.

Table 6.3: Factors and description for *Teachers effectively reflecting on student voice data*

Factor	Description
Begins at the planning stage	Identifying a key area of teaching and learning practice to inquire into will help guide the reflection process.
Role of a coach	The use of a respected colleague who uses questioning techniques and strategies to help the teacher reflect on the student voice data and its implications for their teaching strategies and classroom programmes of learning.
Importance of building trust and respect	Having the focus group interviews directed by someone removed from the classroom or school environment.
Teacher being open to new learning	The degree to which the teacher is able and willing to be critically self-reflective.

### 6.3.1 Begins at the planning stage

The reflective process began at the very first meeting I had with the teacher, and the most successful student voice and reflection cycles involved careful planning at these and subsequent meetings. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) stress ‘the importance of preparing the ground’ by ensuring that everyone has a clear understanding of the process and sees it as a benefit to themselves and the school. Successful outcomes in this study were the result of determining clear goals from the student voice and reflection process, agreeing on a clear focus for the student group discussions, and developing a clear understanding of each other’s needs in order to get the best possible outcome from the reflection process.

The best outcomes from the reflection process occurred when the teacher and I both had a clear understanding of what the teacher wanted to learn more about from their students. One teacher had a specific objective to learn more about the children’s experiences of using eLearning tools (iPads and computers) in the classroom. That clear goal led to some invaluable reflection.

*It really came through to me how they were really focused on apps but not the learning that was happening on the apps, so it was very much what app they will be using, (it was about the) end product. (Kaiako 2)*

This reflection was so valuable to the teacher that they chose to share it with other teachers, in the professional development sessions that they led.

*Because I do lots of ICT presentations about what we do with ICT (eLearning) and things, I’ve used some of what they said and you know this is what has come through in these student voice surveys. (Kaiako 2)*

There were occasions when the planning was not as clear and focused as it could have been, where the goals of the student voice data gathering and reflection process did not align with the student cohort being interviewed and the time period that was available. This resulted in that teacher not finding out what they had hoped to from the student voice data.

*My biggest question; is, 'Why do the ones who don't want to learn don't?' It doesn't really tell me because they're not the ones in there probably. (Kaiako 5)*

This shows that the goals of this teacher were not met due to the type of students involved in the focus group discussions and the time available did not allow for the discussion to focus on deeper issues of personal motivation. Clearer planning could have more closely aligned the teacher's goals and the student voice data gathering process, and in doing so achieved a more desirable reflective process for the teacher. MacBeath et al. (2003) noted that the students being consulted needed to match the agenda of the inquiry. The planning phase is one of the ways that an external facilitator supported the reflection process. The external facilitator was also able to take on the role of a coach during the reflective discussions.

### **6.3.2 Role of a coach**

Timperley and Robinson (2001) identified the presence of an external facilitator as one of the supporting conditions that led to changes in teachers' beliefs. In this study having a coach to help guide the teachers' reflection proved a key factor in achieving quality learning from the reflection process. The primary role of the coach during the reflection process was to ask questions in order to get the teacher(s) to think more deeply about the student voice data and its links with their teaching. This deeper thinking was achieved through using a variety of different question types and questioning strategies. Presupposition questions, where the facilitator uses some existing knowledge to direct the teacher's thinking, proved effective in establishing a clear focus for the student group discussions.

*So you are looking to raise Pasifika student achievement this year. What have you learnt already about raising the achievement of Pasifika students? (Researcher)*

*So far we've been focusing on the importance of parents and families in Pacific students learning. (Kaiako 1)*

*What information from the students would help you develop an understanding of the parents' and families' roles in their children's learning? (Researcher)*

*I'd like to know more about the values and beliefs at home and if they're different to here at school how we can include them at school, yeah and their expectations. (Kaiako 1)*

By directing the discussion to focus on what the teacher knew about Pasifika student achievement, we were able to set a specific focus for the student voice data.

Cheliotis and Reilly (2010) refer to 'expressing positive intent', where the coach uses language to positively influence the feelings and thinking of the teacher. The conversation above showed this positive intent by assuming the teacher would have been proactive in learning about Pasifika student achievement. Asking 'Have you learnt anything about...?' would have conveyed a negative message to the teacher, that I had low expectations of their personal learning. On other occasions when my questioning was more open-ended, the result was less focus for the interview.

*What would you like to learn from this focus group? (Researcher)*

*Thinking of who is in that group, they are all a little reserved, so it would be good to know if they feel they can contribute to class discussions. (Kaiako 2)*

Another example demonstrates how a more open ended question resulted in surface levels of reflection by the teacher.

*What did you make from the transcript? (Researcher)*

*It's fun trying to figure out which child has made which response. (Kaiako 4)*

Another type of question that helped the teacher reflect at a deeper level was the use of paraphrasing questions. These questions involved me summarising a teacher's response in my own words in an attempt to clarify that I had fully understood their response.

*I'm sensing a bit of a conflict for you in that you've picked up on that (fitness) is important for the children but then how to make it fit without*

*detracting from the other parts that are important to you, especially the morning programme. Is this a fair observation? (Researcher)*

By clarifying my understanding I allowed the teacher to further reflect on the points being discussed. As well as this I also gained a clearer understanding of the teacher's viewpoint and ensuring our thoughts were aligned (Cheliotis & Reilly, 2012). It is also a valuable process for improving the credibility of the research outcomes.

As a coach in the reflection process there were also two questioning strategies worth noting for the role they played in supporting teachers' reflections. The first was being a patient questioner. This patience was shown through a generous use of wait time, which refers to the length of time after a question is asked before rephrasing it, in an attempt to initiate a response from the teacher. Cheliotis and Reilly (2012) note that a committed listener is silent while the teacher reflects on the question. I also refrained from interjecting if a teacher's response appeared to digress from the direction I was hoping to take the conversation, instead waiting until there was a natural place to redirect the reflection. Another key time that patience was exercised was when the students had made a provocative statement. While I was very keen to discuss these points with the teacher it was important to exercise restraint, and allow the teacher to come to these points when they were ready to discuss them, which they invariably did.

On the rare occasions that these provocative statements were not coming up naturally in the reflective conversation, I chose to highlight the statements in order to illicit a response. This took the form of either using a probing question to highlight a particular quote, a questioning technique mentioned by Helman (2006), or by sharing my own interpretations of the themes that came out of the student voice data. By expressing my viewpoint the teacher was then able to articulate their thoughts and opinions of my interpretations. Paraphrasing questions, as mentioned by Cheliotis and Reilly (2012) and Helman (2006), were then used to help the teacher hear back what they had been explaining and for me to gain confirmation of my understanding. These provocative statements could be revisited with further

probing questions if I felt the teacher was avoiding the statement, or revisited in later debriefs to ascertain if their views had changed over time. The key factor in my ability to share my thoughts and opinions and to use a more direct line of questioning was based on my ability to build trust and rapport with the teachers involved.

### **6.3.3 Importance of building trust and respect**

Building the trust of teachers, in myself as well as in the student voice reflection process, was identified early on in the research project as a critical factor to any success that the project would achieve. Building rapport is identified as a key element to successful coaching relationship (Cheliotis & Reilly, 2010; Tolhurst, 2006). Trust is integral to any relationship, especially when involving teachers with student voice data (MacBeath et al., 2001; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). While before doing this research I worked in education, I had had no relationship with the participant teachers involved. The teachers, although interested in what I was trying to investigate, were naturally apprehensive about the research project, and about me. Because of the short data collection time period it was important that every interaction was used as an opportunity to build trust.

Specific steps that were taken to help build trust included: acknowledging teachers' workloads by meeting at times and places that best suited them, wherever possible meeting face to face to discuss things, seeking permission to take an audio recording before each interview commenced, and not discussing the interviews or comments teachers made outside of that interview. It was my aim for the interviews to take on the flavour of a professional dialogue between respected colleagues where students' learning was a joint focus. During these interviews it was important that I was non-judgmental, that I did not make either positive or negative comments on the actions or responses that the teachers made. I demonstrated being non-judgmental by transcribing the student focus group interviews word for word, before forwarding them on to the teacher(s). In this way I was not placing any bias or interpretation on the students' messages. Actively listening to teachers' responses and showing a genuine interest in their articulated thoughts was another key factor in building

trust. While not specifically designed with the intention of building trust, by beginning the research process with a focus on the teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and learning, I was able to show teachers my genuine interest in their opinions, an important ingredient in developing a trusting relationship. As the relationships developed I was able to learn more and more about the teachers' beliefs and they became more open to new learning.

#### **6.3.4 Teachers being open to new learning**

The three previous factors of reflecting on student voice, the role of a coach, beginning at the planning stage, and building trust and respect were all largely directed by me as I took on the role of respected colleague and coach. However the teachers themselves have arguably the largest influence on the process of reflecting on student voice. A teacher's attitude towards his or her own learning played an influential role in the reflection process.

Teachers expressed their general openness to new learning during their belief interview. Most teachers identified either the statements 'Grows their understanding of young people and how they learn' or 'Takes risks and experiments in teaching' as statements that they identify with more strongly in their initial belief interview. Both these statements have associations with being open to new learning. A number of teachers also identified 'Values and respects students' opinions' or talked extensively about actively listening to students. These statements have associations with valuing student voice data. A few teachers identified 'Evaluates their own performance in order to improve'. This statement is associated with being critically self-reflective. There was no direct correlation between the belief interview statements and a teacher's openness to new learning but there were some observable points of interest from the discussions. Most notable of these was the reactions teachers made to the student voice data.

As explained in category 6.2 *Teachers' Reactions To Student Voice Data*, teachers chose to accept or dismiss the students' viewpoints. By accepting the statements, the teachers either acted upon these or stored them for future action and decisions.

By dismissing the statements, teachers either explained reasons for the students' comments or the teachers chose to disagree with the statements. Sometimes they initially disagreed with the statement before rethinking their position. In this example the teacher has reflected on the statement from a student's perspective.

*It's never, never, ever would I say write fast and neat. Although perhaps if I am giving feedback I may say I had trouble reading it. Yeah perhaps that's where they get fast and neat. (Kaiako 2)*

It is natural to react defensively when you are confronted with a statement that you feel challenges how well you are doing your job. By attempting to explore the origin of the comment or rethinking their viewpoint after initially disagreeing, the teachers were showing a willingness to reflect on their roles in the student's comment. This critical self-reflection demonstrated being open to new learning. This openness to new learning was not a fixed entity but instead fluctuated depending on the topics that were raised by the student voice data. Topics that were raised by the teacher as something that they were interested in learning more about from their students were more often brought up for discussion by the teacher and also evoked a deeper level of critical self-reflection on the part of the teachers. Being open to new learning was also connected to the levels of trust that the teachers had in me and in the research process. With some teachers it became evident that they were more critically self-reflective as the research progressed. With any process of professional collaboration some challenges were encountered along the way.

#### **6.4 Challenges and limitations of the reflection process**

While there were a number of successful outcomes from the process of teachers reflecting on student voice data, there were also some challenges. Two key factors were identified as limiting the overall impact of teachers reflecting on student voice data in this study. These two factors and a brief description are outlined below in Table 6.4 and then elaborated on in more detail.



Table 6.4: Factors and description for *Limitations of teachers reflecting on student voice data*

Factor	Description
Overcoming previous models of professional development	Previous models of teacher professional development involved teachers being passive recipients of feedback and advice from 'expert teachers'. This process did not encourage teachers to critically reflect on their teaching beliefs and practice.
Role of teacher's knowledge of teaching and learning	Teachers use their knowledge of teaching and learning to help them critically reflect on their teaching practice.

#### 6.4.1 Overcoming previous models of professional development

Traditionally, in New Zealand schools, observations by a school leader were used as a tool to identify strengths and weaknesses of a teacher's practice and in doing so outline things that the teacher should strive to improve. In this model the teacher relied on the school leader to critically evaluate their performance. As a result teachers could become reliant on the feedback they received and were less inclined to develop their own critical self-reflection skills. One teacher mentioned this when they were articulating the importance of actively seeking and applying feedback on their own teaching by referring to the role that a school leader plays in their professional development.

*I am particularly lucky getting to work with (school leader's name), I get amazing feedback, on the positives and the (next) learning steps. (Kaiako 4)*

This process can also have the effect of limiting how open and honest teachers are with the school leaders who are observing them. This reluctance to share is counterproductive in a coaching relationship. The coaching relationship relies on the coach using questions to help a teacher reflect on their practice, identifying areas to work on from the evidence, which in the case of this research project was the student voice data. The ability to identify the areas to adapt and improve relies on teachers having a good knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices.

#### **6.4.2 Role of teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning**

During the process of teachers reflecting on the student voice data I became aware that on some occasions the teachers' own knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices was limiting the success of the process. Timperley and Robinson (2001) identified that teachers' knowledge of alternative teaching practices was another supporting condition for teachers to change their beliefs. One teacher acknowledged his lack of knowledge of te reo Māori and that this was a hindrance to developing more classroom learning activities in this area.

*There's not as much knowledge of the oral language that I (have), it needs to be more directed I guess, more teacher-directed in some way, how I'd set it up? (Kaiako 3)*

This teacher was acknowledging that his understanding of te reo Māori was a constraining factor in utilising this in the classroom. What they may have failed to realise, and I failed to point out, was that the desire of the students for more te reo at school had more to do with raising the mana (respect) of tikanga Māori in the school. This mana is given through valuing the students' identities as Māori and their culture, as well as te reo Māori, which is mentioned in Ka Hikitia (2013). A greater understanding of Ka Hikitia (2013) or the Effective Teaching Profile created by Bishop and Berryman (2009) would have helped this teacher more easily and effectively derive some direction from the student voice data.

#### **6.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced and discussed teachers' initial reactions to the student voice data as well as their reactions during coaching conversations. Predominantly teachers' initial reactions were to make links with their classroom programmes. Often they looked for positive links as they sought some validation of the pedagogical or instructional choices they had made. When confronted by provocative statements teachers either accepted or dismissed the points that were raised. Accepted statements were then analysed for their significance, and/or their alignment with the teacher's beliefs, before being acted upon.

A number of factors were identified as being important for teachers to effectively reflect on student voice data. The first factor began at the planning stage by identifying key areas of teaching practice to focus on. Other factors included the role of a coach to facilitate the reflection process, the importance of building trust and respect, as well as teachers being open to new learning. One challenge in the process was overcoming previous models of professional development, where teachers have become accustomed to being passive recipients of feedback as opposed to active critical reflectors. Another challenge involved the role of teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning limiting their choice of alternative practices, or reflection criteria when they critically reflect on their current practices. In Chapter 7: Influence of Student Voice on Teachers' Beliefs – Findings and Discussion, the impact that this reflection process, the use of student voice data and coaching conversations, has had on teachers' beliefs are shared and discussed.

## Chapter 7: Influence of Student Voice on Teachers' Beliefs - Findings and Discussion

### 7.1 Chapter outline

Framing Questions:

- What changes to teachers' beliefs occurred from reflecting on the thoughts and opinions of the students they taught?

This final Results and Discussion chapter explores how teachers beliefs were influenced after reflecting on student voice data. The ways that teachers' beliefs were changed are detailed, before the conditions that led these teachers to change their beliefs are highlighted. This chapter therefore gives insight into Research Question 4:

How does student voice change teachers' beliefs?

### 7.2 Reflecting on student voice reaffirms teacher beliefs

At the conclusion of the data-gathering phase of this research project, teachers were asked if their beliefs had changed. Overwhelmingly, the teacher participants responded that their beliefs had been reaffirmed. One teacher acknowledged that the process of gathering and reflecting on student voice data had been reassuring for them.

*It helps you reassure to yourself of what you're doing and the benefits of it and having the kids see the benefits of it as well of course, has been reassuring. (Kaiako 3)*

Another teacher mentioned that they felt their beliefs had not changed, but rather that they had been reinforced through the process of reflecting on student voice

data as well as spending more time with the students and getting to know them better.

*I don't think my beliefs have changed. No don't think so, because a lot of these guys, we've learnt a lot about these guys since I did that and a lot of these guys just need that security and trust in relationships because they don't get it anywhere else, so I think it's even more important to be caring and keep that communication going because they don't get it anywhere else. (Kaiako 5)*

Another teacher mentioned that through the student voice data they now had more motivation to pursue a style of teaching that they had wanted to develop but had felt restricted by Ministry of Education guidelines.

*I've always wanted to do more inquiry kind of maths rather than just the general, you know, the numeracy project and I've found that quite hard ... that is something that I have always had in the back of my head, that I would like professional development on ... so that's made me think even more that they really do enjoy maths. It's a big part of the day for them ... so I'd love to do more PD on that. (Kaiako 1)*

The student voice data highlighted to this teacher the importance of mathematics for the students, and the sense of self-worth they received from it. By reaffirming this teacher's beliefs about using an inquiry or project-based learning approach to mathematics it gave them more conviction to acquire the knowledge in order to confidently teach in this way.

There are three possible reasons for teachers seeing this process as reaffirming. The first is that the process genuinely did strengthen previously held beliefs of teachers. The student voice data provided the teachers with insights from their students that aligned with the teacher's own beliefs of effective teaching and learning, or the process of reflection acted to promote the teacher's previously held beliefs. One teacher acknowledged that the process of reflecting on student voice data had challenged their beliefs, but that ultimately they had not changed their original viewpoints.

*Have your beliefs been challenged in any way through this student voice process? (Researcher)*

*Around the Māori thing probably, about the (teaching of te reo Māori), would have been nice to have a larger group of them. I guess those couple of comments when they um, yeah about the relationships, about the Pasifika having more of a voice possibly ... just to keep challenging how I'm teaching te reo. (Kaiako 3)*

This teacher acknowledged that the reflection process made them think about their Māori learners, the relationships and mana (respect and profile) they have, as well as the use of te reo Māori in the classroom. While ultimately this teacher's beliefs had not changed, the reflection process challenged their thinking in the area of Māori student achievement.

The second possible reason for teachers seeing this process as reaffirming their beliefs is that it is hard to witness incremental changes. The area of personal beliefs is so broad and complex and the act of witnessing changes in one's own beliefs is limited to large or significant changes. One teacher initially commented that their beliefs hadn't changed.

*I don't think so, maybe affirming. (Kaiako 2)*

*So in what way have your beliefs been affirmed? (Researcher)*

*Just made me think cool, what's happening I think is good and they are kind of saying that it is too, so we must all be on the same page, kind of thing, there hasn't been anything that I thought gosh, ok that's not cool, that's not the way that I would, yeah everything has been, wow, great, cool, yeah. (Kaiako 2)*

This teacher mentioned that the student voice data showed the similar viewpoints that they as the teacher had about the teaching and learning that was occurring in the classroom. The teacher mentioned a lack of anything that shocked or alarmed them from the student voice data. Because the student voice data was not confrontational and the reflection process focused on smaller scale changes to teaching practices, beliefs were probably less easy to identify. And because teachers

are constantly thinking about and reflecting on their decisions in their day-to-day role as facilitators of learning in the classroom, it is harder for them to witness and be aware of the continual small changes that occur over time.

The third possible reason for teachers seeing this process as reaffirming of their beliefs is that they are reluctant to acknowledge changes in their beliefs about teaching and learning. Acknowledging changes could be seen as implying that their previous views were not as beneficial as their newly held beliefs.

All teachers mentioned that the process of reflecting on student voice had reaffirmed their beliefs about teaching and learning in some way. They were reassured about the vision for their learning environment, reassured about the key role they feel they play in a student's education or reassured of a direction they have been wanting to explore further. For a number of participant teachers, when their beliefs were explored a little more deeply there were areas of significant change.

### **7.3 Reflecting on student voice changes teacher beliefs**

The beliefs of some teachers about teaching and learning did change in some way during the process of reflecting on student voice data. These changes included some teachers adapting the approaches they were taking with their current students' learning, which then led to changes in beliefs, and some teachers realigned their priorities of good teaching.

Through analysing student voice data, one teacher and I were able to identify some factors that motivated what the teacher described as "a tough group to crack." The focus group interviews with this group of students were directed at finding out their opinions of topic studies and the importance of the students selecting the topic. What we found out was that students' initiating the topics was not as important to them as practical activities being included and a sense of purpose in the learning project.

*I did like that you got to the bottom of, you know you analysed that they like doing and they definitely do, and we've had some really fun times, they're painting that table over there and they're really enjoying that, and I've had more fun with them, whereas in the first two terms it was all really hard work. (Kaiako 1)*

*By 'fun things' you mean? (Researcher)*

*Creative, painting that table, designing it, giving them more leadership roles ... I can pick out children who are artistic and not necessarily academic so that's been really cool. (Kaiako 1)*

From reflecting on the student voice data, the teacher was able to implement some learning tasks that were more practical, had greater ownership by the students and had a real purpose or outcome, in this example a redecorated table for the classroom. Collaboration, leadership, and problem solving skills were all at the fore of this learning task. Seeing the success of this approach to teaching with this particular class influenced the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning. When this teacher completed the beliefs about teaching and learning tool in their final reflective interview, where they prioritised a set of statements to the sentence starter 'A good teacher', they identified 'Builds a positive learning community' as significantly important to them. At the beginning of this research project, the importance of building a positive learning community did not make their shortlist of twelve statements.

Another teacher commented on some changes that had happened since the student voice data was first collected. This teacher shared some discussions that the students had had with them. One student confronted the teacher with a provocative statement insinuating that the teacher was more likely to punish students of Māori descent. Other students made a request to have more Māori culture in their classroom. From this informal student voice the teacher made some changes to his classroom programme.

*Since you've done this we've had a much more bicultural focus in the classroom, so we start each morning with karakia (prayer) and waiata (song) and part of it is because the kids have signalled they wanted that,*



*they get that when they have the Māori class, why can't we have it here as well? And it's actually been quite good. (Kaiako 6)*

From acting on the requests of the students this teacher has implemented more culturally responsive practices into his daily classroom routines. The teacher commented that the atmosphere and behaviours in the classroom have improved considerably through this and other initiatives. He also went on to mention that the student voice data reassured him of the direction he was taking.

*To an extent it's affirming what I already thought, and where I've been moving anyway, for me, when I think of the Ministry's (MOE) Ka Hikitia, Māori success as Māori, that's something that I'm quite keen on pushing so there's simple things like I do teach (the class) next door and I teach them ukulele and the song I'm teaching them is the waiata that we do in our class in the morning, and part of it is why wouldn't we? This (student voice transcript) is quite affirming for me that we're on the right track. (Kaiako 6)*

It could be argued that teachers' actions, when given freedom to make their own choices, are the best indicators of their beliefs. If this is the case then by choosing to teach the waiata to the class next door and acknowledging the importance of Ka Hikitia, this teacher was 'displaying some proximity to Te Ao Māori'. There was no mention of culturally responsive practice in the initial belief interview with this teacher.

One teacher initially explained that her beliefs about teaching and learning had been affirmed and explained that the student voice data showed that she and her students had similar opinions about the learning experiences.

*I don't think so, maybe affirming. (Kaiako 2)*

After completing the 'Teacher belief tool' during her final reflective interview, she acknowledged that after the process of reflecting on student voice data she was placing far greater importance on a different set of belief statements. At the conclusion of the reflection process this teacher prioritised 'Engages students in

learning' as being the most important statement of a good teacher, whereas it had not featured in the initial belief interview:

*The one that I've got at the top isn't even on this list (initial belief interview). (Kaiako 2)*

*Why do you think that one (engages students in learning) has come up now? (Researcher)*

*Oh, because my thinking is that's kind of what we're here for isn't it, engaging in learning. (Kaiako 2)*

Asked about the link with this statement and the process of reflecting on student voice data this teacher acknowledged that it has influenced her beliefs.

*Perhaps it has because it makes you reflect on how you are engaging them in their learning, because so much of what they are saying is about what we're doing in class and obviously the things that have come through strongly are when they are engaged with their learning. (Kaiako 2)*

For this teacher, another statement that received much more prominence after reflecting on student voice data was about the expectations that teachers have for students' learning, or more specifically 'Sets high expectations for children's learning achievements'. When reflecting on the greater priority this statement was now given the teacher mentioned that:

*Perhaps it is the fact that, hearing what they're saying and, that they are listening and thinking about the expectations for their learning in class and really we are trying to (raise student achievement). (Kaiako 2)*

For this teacher the process of reflecting on the student voice data had highlighted the importance of students being engaged in their learning and that the students were fully absorbing the goals that the teacher had for their students' learning.

For these teachers the process of reflecting on student voice data, both formally through the research project and informally through class discussions, has led them to prioritising a belief that they previously did not recognise as being so important. The process of teachers reflecting on student voice data has proven to change some teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. These changes in the teachers' beliefs occurred by either introducing a belief that was not previously indicated as a priority or by significantly raising the importance of another belief.

#### **7.4 Chapter summary**

This final Results and Discussion chapter explored how teachers' beliefs were influenced after reflecting on student voice data. Teachers' beliefs were both reaffirmed and changed through the process of reflecting on students' thoughts and opinions. Affirming teachers' beliefs did not mean that their practices would not change, as reflecting on student voice data provided the motivation for a teacher to pursue a style of teaching that they had previously felt restricted from using.

Changes in teachers' beliefs occurred after they implemented alternative teaching practices and saw them succeed. In other cases the student voice data highlighted their students' capabilities and therefore the importance of and desire to set higher expectations for their learning. Identifying a specific need, either before or during student voice reflection process, was a key factor in teachers' beliefs being changed. Another key factor was the teachers' knowledge of effective teaching practices to meet this need. A third factor was the success that teachers witnessed from changing their approach to teaching and learning.

In Chapter 8: Conclusions, these factors for changing teachers' beliefs, along with other findings from this study, are synthesised in order to identify implications for teachers and school leaders, as well as future researchers in this area.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

### 8.1 Chapter outline

Framing Questions:

- What are the key findings of this thesis?
- What are the implications of these findings for teacher and school development, and future research?

This final chapter is a summary of this research project's findings and a synthesis of key links to relevant research. The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers' beliefs are influenced by student voice in a bicultural learning environment. It also explored how student voice data could be used as a tool for school leaders to facilitate teachers reflecting on their individual beliefs about teaching and learning.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the study's design. The second part summarises the key findings under the headings teacher beliefs, accessing student voice, and impact on teachers. The final part of this chapter discusses the limitations of this study before outlining the future considerations and opportunities that the findings of this research provide.

### 8.2 Research review

Through combining research methodology elements from Kaupapa Māori, phenomenology, and action research, this study investigated how a process of gathering student voice data from Māori (whānau group) and non-Māori student focus groups and then assisting teachers' reflections through coaching conversations, influenced the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

This study took place in two schools, with data collected from eight teachers and forty-four students from Year 3 to Year 7 classes. A specific 'Teacher Belief Data Gathering Tool' was used to identify teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Student focus group interviews were conducted and transcribed in order to gather and share student voice data. These were followed by semi-structured reflective interviews with the students' teachers, where coaching conversations were utilised to help teachers reflect on the student voice data. The coding and analysis of the research data, including all transcribed interviews, was guided by a thematic analysis approach in order to identify themes. These themes were then grouped and formed the key findings of this research project.

### **8.3 Teacher beliefs**

Understanding the origins of teachers' beliefs allows us to gain an insight into the conditions that need to be present if we are to influence teachers' beliefs. This study identified three sources of teachers' beliefs:

- school wide focus
- knowledge acquisition
- connecting with a message.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, *direction from school leaders* as well as the dialogue and collaboration teachers have with each other can put pressure on teachers enacting their beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). Such direction and collaboration was identified by teachers in this study as a contributing factor to the development of their beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers also identified *acquiring knowledge* as an important element in the development of their beliefs. This knowledge was gained through witnessing successful teaching strategies in their own and other teachers' classrooms as well as through reading research and listening to experts. When teachers' beliefs are closely intertwined with knowledge of effective teaching practices there is an increased likelihood that their practice will be more closely aligned with their beliefs (Ernest, 1989). Teachers also identified the act of *connecting with a message* as a strong factor in developing their beliefs. A linking factor in the three sources was the role played by the value of *respect*.

This study also explored the influences on teachers' beliefs in relation to the bicultural learning environments that teachers operate in. Factors that support and challenge culturally responsive teaching practices were identified. Figure 8.3 below outlines the sources of teachers' beliefs and identifies the links that they have with factors that support and challenge culturally responsive practices.

Figure 8.3 *Sources of teacher beliefs and their relationship with culturally responsive teaching practices*

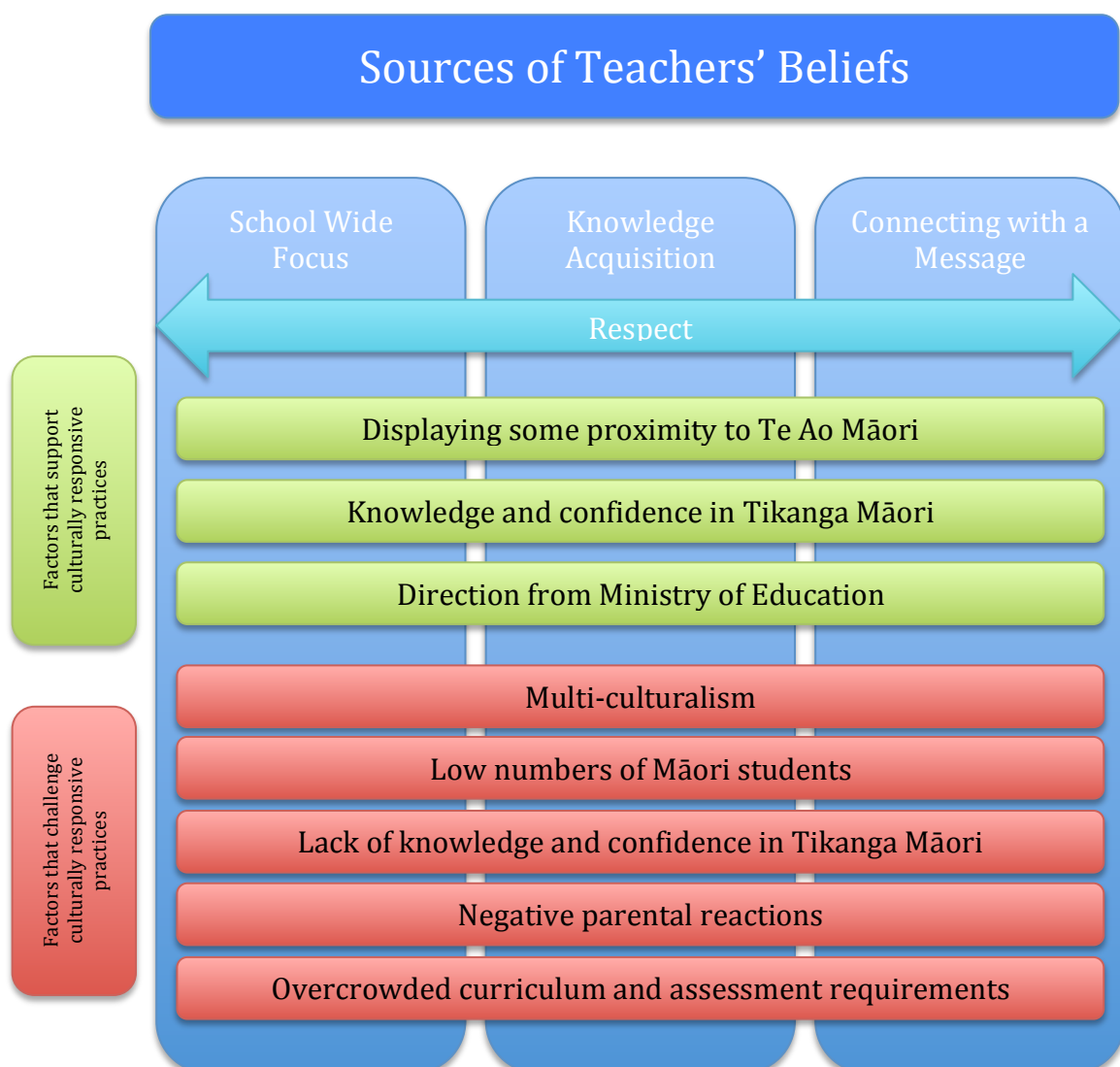


Figure 8.3, displayed above, shows how the sources of teachers' beliefs, *school wide focus, knowledge acquisition and connecting with a message*, can support culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers in this study who identified strongly with the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices all indicated that their beliefs were supported by the focus of the school, and/or the personal and professional knowledge they had acquired over time, and/or the connection they had made with key messages from other educators or experts. All three factors that support culturally responsive teaching practices, (*displaying some proximity to Te Ao Māori, knowledge and confidence in Tikanga Māori, and direction from the Ministry of Education*) are supported by or are supportive of the three identified sources of teachers' beliefs.

Similarly the factors that challenge culturally responsive teaching practices, (*multi-culturalism, low numbers of Māori students, lack of knowledge and confidence with Tikanga Māori, negative parental reactions, and overcrowded curriculum and assessment requirements*), were influenced by the three sources of teachers' beliefs. Teachers who more readily identified the challenges of culturally responsive teaching practices acknowledged the need for more knowledge in this area, or were noticeably not connecting with the key messages of such an approach, or it was not as high a priority for the school as other teaching and learning focuses.

#### **8.4 Accessing student voice**

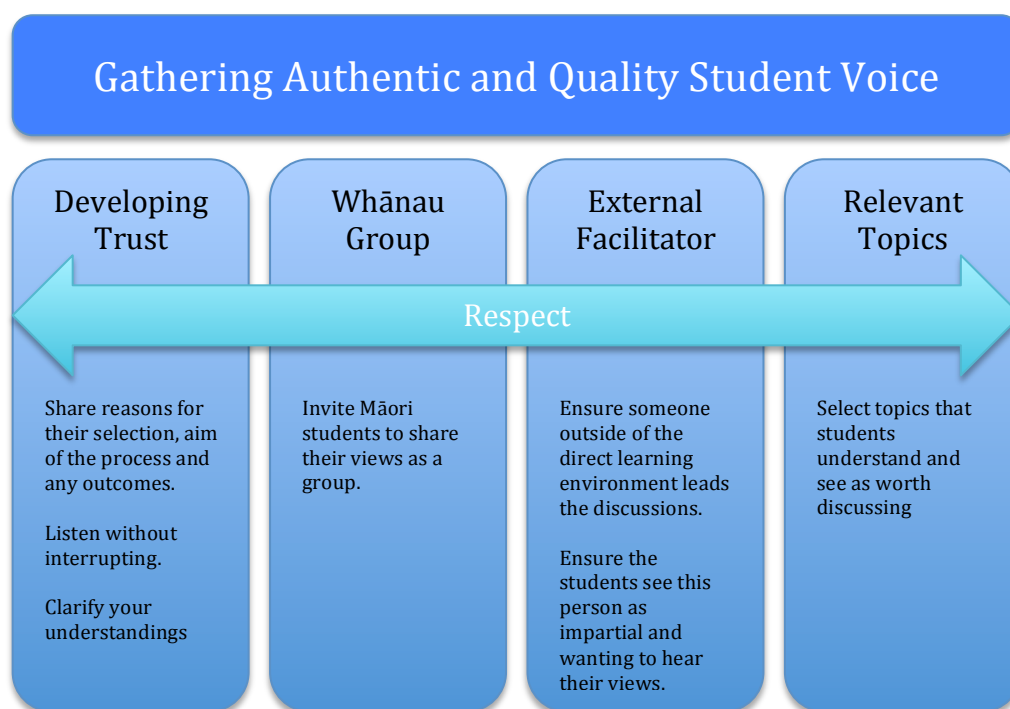
The quality and authenticity of student voice has a direct impact on the possible outcomes of engaging in such data. It is important that educators can gather the genuine thoughts and opinions from a fair representation of students, that is a group of students who represent the gender, ethnicity and both engaged and less engaged students as can be found in the whole class/year group. The larger cohort must trust that the smaller focus group is representative of all the views. By engaging in student voice inquiries in this way, the adult / student relationship in schools is strengthened. Findings from this research outline that such a process is best developed over time, and through a repeated process where the purpose, process and outcomes are

explicitly shared with students. This study identified four key factors that contributed to the acquisition of quality, authentic, and significant student voice data:

- developing trust
- using a whānau group approach
- using an external facilitator
- discussing topics relevant to the children

These factors are represented and key points identified in the figure below.

Figure 8.4 *Gathering authentic and quality student voice*



The process of gathering student voice data is best viewed as a long-term project as opposed to a single one-off event. By viewing it in this way, *trust* by students of the person and process can be built. The facilitator can engage in a process of sharing and checking, sharing the unseen elements of the process, and checking that they have the students' permission. The facilitator can demonstrate their trustworthiness



through actively listening to students' views, before checking that they have understood correctly.

By inviting Māori students to share their thoughts and opinions as part of a *whānau group*, where they can support each other and their cultural identity, we are more likely to hear Māori students' authentic voice. This is a valuable process, even when the topics are not specific to Māori culture or concepts. This process helps build trust and it helps students to see that the school values them as students and as Māori students.

It is best if the students see the *facilitator* as someone who is not directly implicated, either positively or negatively, by the students' views. In this way the students are less likely to want to 'please' by saying what they think the teacher wants to hear. This does mean that the external facilitator has the responsibility to check they have understood the students' message, as they may not be fully aware of the learning activities and environment that the students are referring to. The process of sharing and checking is relevant here also, the facilitator sharing what they think they have heard and checking that the students intended the message to be taken in that way.

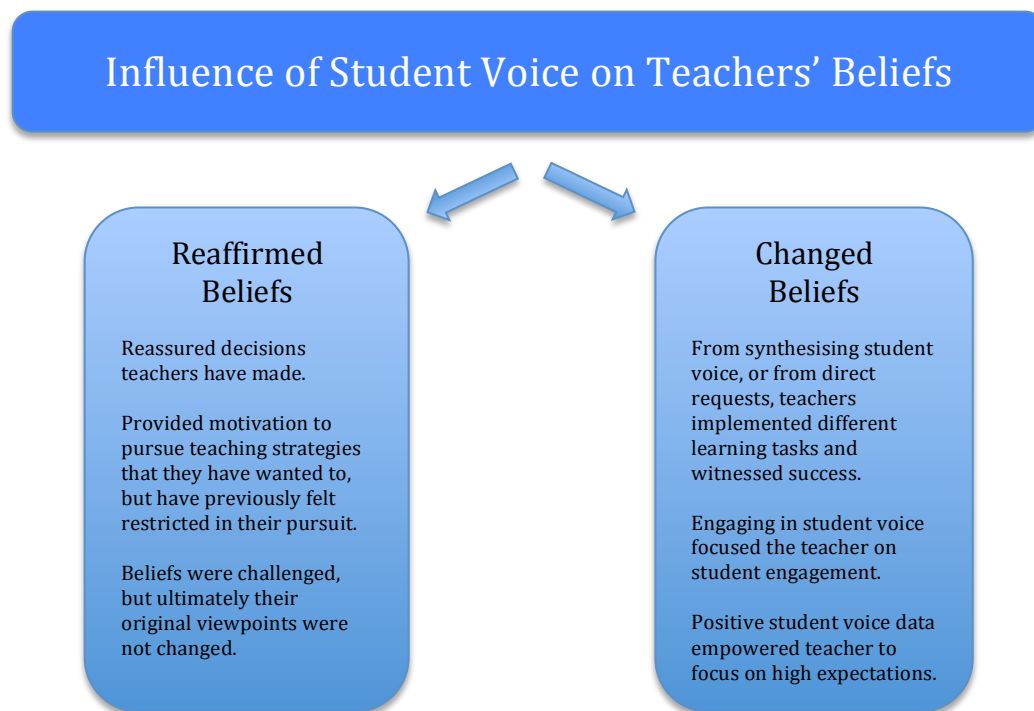
*Topics* discussed in any interviews with students need to be easily understood as well as very relevant to the students in order for them to be engaged in the process. Ultimately it will be the students who decide how relevant the topic is to them. Some focus group sessions will lead to more useful discussion than others, so by repeatedly engaging in gathering student voice, facilitators and teachers will become aware of topics that are relevant and fully understood by the students.

### **8.5 Links between student voice and teachers' beliefs**

Reflecting on student voice data was facilitated through engaging in coaching conversations. These coaching conversations involved the researcher using questions, reflective listening and highlighting sections of the student focus group transcripts. This process was repeated after every student focus group and at the conclusion of the study. At this time the teachers were asked to reflect on how their

beliefs had changed as well as participating in the teacher belief-gathering tool. This study revealed that teachers' beliefs were either reaffirmed or changed in several ways. Figure 8.5 below shows how student voice has influenced teachers' beliefs.

Figure 8.5 *Influence of student voice on Teachers' beliefs*



Teachers instinctively looked at the student voice data in a way that sought to reaffirm the key decisions about the learning programmes that they had implemented. This approach often led teachers to see student voice as reinforcing their beliefs. Such reinforcement did not preclude teachers from wanting to make changes as it empowered some to follow a teaching style that they had wanted to for some time, but had felt restricted from doing so. Coaching conversations provided a vehicle to safely challenge teachers' beliefs and in some cases these discussions also helped the teacher reaffirm their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Teachers' beliefs were changed by student voice in a number of ways. When students' thoughts and opinions were analysed and then synthesised into key

messages about learning, teachers were open to changing their practice. Similarly when students shared their thoughts and opinions through direct requests, teachers were open to changing their practice. In both these scenarios, teachers witnessed success in the form of increased student engagement and a greater sense of community within the classroom. Seeing these new practices succeed led teachers to change their beliefs about teaching and learning. Student voice also influenced teachers' beliefs as the process of collecting and reflecting on students' opinions led teachers to take a heightened interest in students' engagement in learning. As teachers became aware of the degree that students were absorbing their key messages, the teachers became empowered to set even higher expectations for their students' learning.

Knowledge of effective teaching practices played a role in all the cases of teachers' beliefs being changed by reflecting on student voice data. This knowledge was either brought up by the teachers in their reflections, or contributed by the coach (researcher) while analysing and synthesising students' responses. A second key factor in teachers' beliefs changing was the importance of teachers identifying a motivation to change. This motivation may have been present before the student voice data was collected, and therefore was a focus of the discussions with students, or the motivation was identified from the student voice data itself.

The reverse relationship, where teachers' beliefs influenced how student voice data was reflected upon, was also uncovered. If teachers agreed with the accuracy of the student voice data, the significance of the data and how closely it aligned with teachers' beliefs became critical in deciding whether to act on this information or not. The closer the students' thoughts and opinions were to their teachers' beliefs, the more likely it was that teachers would choose to act on these. Coaching conversations allowed teachers to revisit these student comments and reflect more deeply on them.

## **8.6 Limitations of this research project**

The findings outlined in the previous section and implications discussed in the next section of this concluding chapter (and in previous chapters of this study) should be considered in light of two limiting factors. The first limitation arises from me, as a pakeha or non-Māori researcher, seeking to gain the thoughts and opinions of Māori students through a Kaupapa Māori methodological approach to the research. As noted by Cram (2001) in chapter 3, Kaupapa Māori research is essentially “by Māori, for Māori” (p. 38). Jones (2012) states that non-Māori researchers can still support the ideals of Kaupapa Māori research through their actions. To ensure these actions are culturally appropriate, Tolich (2002) suggests that non-Māori researchers need to become more aware not only of a Māori world view but also of their own cultural background and reflect on the impact that this has on their research. During the majority of my time undertaking this research project, I was based at Te Rū Rangahau, the Māori Research Laboratory at the University of Canterbury. It was in this environment, surrounded by a supportive Māori culture that I became acutely aware of my own pakeha cultural differences. I am very grateful to my whānau (colleagues and kaumātua) in Te Rū Rangahau for the many discussions and reflections, which have led to a lot of personal growth.

The second limitation of this study results from the sampling strategies that were implemented. The use of purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2007; Mutch, 2013) means that the schools and participant teachers are not representative of the general population of New Zealand schools or New Zealand school teachers. The schools chosen were medium sized urban schools in low socio-economic areas, and were selected because of the professional relationships that I had with leaders within the school. The participant teachers were selected from their willingness to participate in the research project. This fact implies that they have a willingness to explore their teaching practices, a fact that may or may not be representative of all New Zealand teachers. The participant students in this research were selected from a boosted and quota sample (Cohen et al., 2007) and aimed to represent the views of Māori and non-Māori learners, and students from other ethnicities, both boys and girls, as well as engaged and non-engaged learners. Student participation was voluntary and the

willingness to participate was below fifty per cent in each teacher's class. This may have resulted in not all intended groups being represented as well as possible. It needs to be noted that the boosted sampling technique for Māori learners led to greater than fifty per cent participation.

Ultimately the reader will decide the impact of these limitations, and how transferable the results of this study are to other teaching environments. From the specific description of the contexts, detailed account of the methodology, and vivid explanation of the findings, others will judge the trustworthiness of the results and the generalizability of the implications to other teaching settings. Burns (1994) refers to this process as reader generalizability. It is my belief that the comprehensive review of literature and detailed outline of the methodology earlier in this thesis helps to support the findings that have emerged, and that these findings could be transferred with some confidence or small adaptations to a number of different school environments. The most significant opportunity I see for these findings to be used is by school leaders as they seek to implement changes in teaching and learning practices at their schools.

## **8.7 Significance of this research project and future considerations**

This research project, investigating the ways teachers' beliefs are influenced by student voice in a bicultural environment, has significant implications for both future research and future practical implication in schools. While there have been some studies conducted in New Zealand utilising student voice (Berryman & Bishop, 2006; Macfarlane et al., 2014), the majority of investigation into how educators should gather student voice data has been conducted in England (MacBeath, 2006; MacBeath et al., 2003; MacBeath et al., 2001; Noyes, 2005; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Further studies in this area could help identify more features for gathering authentic student voice in New Zealand contexts, particularly focusing on non-Māori researchers gathering authentic student voice from Māori students. The area of teacher beliefs, in particular in relation to culturally responsive teaching practices, is another area that would benefit from further research, building on the findings developed in this research project. Finally there is

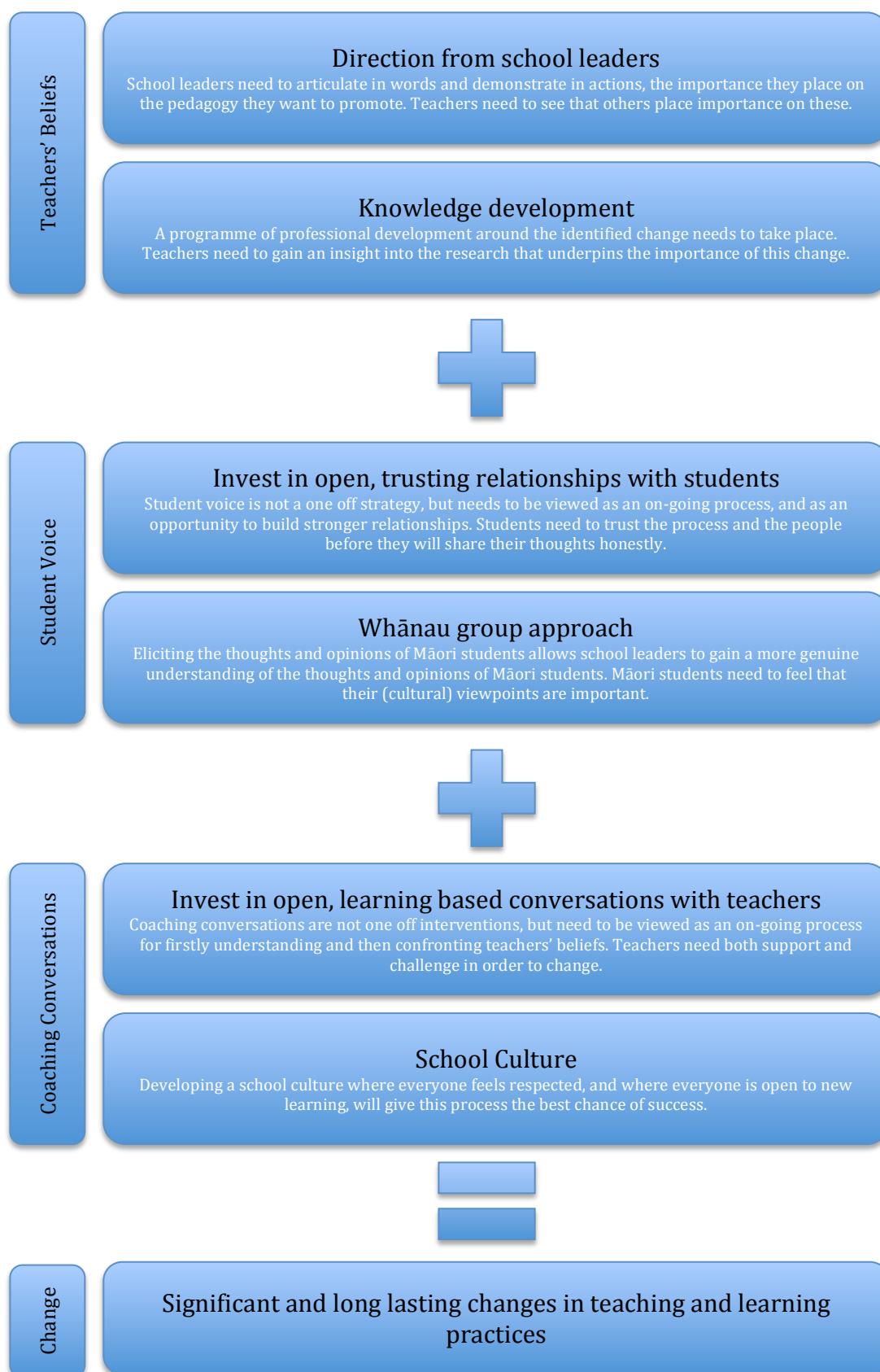
an opportunity to further explore the use of teachers reflecting on student voice in a variety of different contexts and with a broadened sample of teacher and student participants.

The practical implications from this research are significant. With the move in New Zealand to teach in 'Modern Learning Environments' and the adoption of 'Modern Learning Pedagogies' to maximise these environments, there is a large need to engage with student voice. Student voice is at the heart of a two-way teaching and learning process (Ako) between the student and teacher. It is by engaging with student voice that teachers will be able to stand in the shoes of their students and see the learning from their perspectives. Both student voice and teacher beliefs need to be considered and embraced as we engage in considerable changes to both teaching and learning approaches and environments.

#### **8.8 What opportunities arise from this research for school leaders?**

The findings from this research project have significant benefits for school leaders who are seeking to implement change in their schools. Significant and long lasting transformation occurs when teachers buy into the school's vision of change. In essence teachers believe that the change is both necessary and beneficial. Acknowledging and understanding teachers' beliefs before engaging in a process of reflecting on student voice data through coaching conversations has proven to influence teachers' beliefs. When this process is complemented by other findings from this research project, a formula for school leaders to follow is developed.

Figure 8.8 *A formula for using student voice to influence teachers' beliefs and implement change in schools*



One source of teachers' beliefs is by identifying with a key message. When school leaders articulate and demonstrate their views on teaching and learning processes they wish to focus on, there is likely to be increased discussion amongst teachers about these processes. Increasing the number of conversations also increases the opportunity for teachers to identify with the message. Knowledge of teaching and learning also plays an important role in supporting the development of teachers' beliefs. Teachers have a desire to understand why they should adjust their belief structure to accommodate a new belief about effective teaching and learning.

This study has identified that student voice can play an important role in influencing teachers' beliefs. The thoughts and opinions of students allow teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and the decisions they have made. The effectiveness of this process begins with gathering quality and authentic student voice data which relies heavily on open and trusting relationships between students, teachers and school leaders. Using an external facilitator, someone removed from the daily classroom contact with students, is beneficial. Also helping this process is an agreed and articulated focus on improving students' learning, and discussing topics that are both relevant to and understood by students. The use of a whānau group approach with Māori students is very important, regardless of whether the change focuses on culturally responsive teaching practices or another element of effective teaching and learning. Acknowledging the unique cultural viewpoints of Māori students helps engage this important group of learners in the proposed school changes.

Coaching conversations help teachers to reflect more deeply on student voice data and the links this may have on the teacher's own beliefs about teaching and learning. Many teachers' initial reaction to student voice data is to look to reaffirm the decisions they have made, and therefore reaffirm their beliefs about teaching and learning. When the student voice data is counter to their beliefs, teachers are likely to dismiss the data as not being accurate or relevant to their current situation. Coaching conversations allow specific student comments or trends to be highlighted and the more provocative student voice statements to be confronted. If this process



is conducted in a respectful manner, teachers will be more open about sharing their beliefs and will be more open to new learning.

The formula above visually represents how understanding the origins of teachers' beliefs and reflecting on student voice through coaching conversations can lead to significant and long lasting change in a school's approach to teaching and learning. All the steps outlined above support each other in this process of influencing teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

## **8.9 Conclusion**

This study, *In what ways are teachers' beliefs influenced by student voice in a bicultural learning environment?* has identified how student voice can influence teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The findings show that teachers' beliefs can be reaffirmed as well as changed through reflecting on student voice in coaching conversations. By further delving into the themes of this research, considerable findings have been identified.

Approaches for accessing authentic student voice in a bicultural learning environment were identified. The thoughts and opinions shared by Māori students highlighted a desire to improve their learning as well as have their culture celebrated. Teachers reacted to student voice by making connections to their classroom programmes, and by accepting or dismissing more provocative statements. If the accepted statements were considered significant and aligned with the teacher's own beliefs they were likely to be acted on. Teachers' knowledge of effective teaching and learning, their motivation for changing their teaching practices, as well as witnessing success were all considerable factors in teachers changing their beliefs.

There is potential for further research in the areas of student voice, teacher beliefs, teacher reflections, and culturally responsive practice to build on the findings outlined in this study. The greatest potential is in the practical applications for teachers and school leaders who look to implement changes in the teaching and

learning practices at their schools. These applications can lead to developing more culturally responsive teaching practices as well as developing other areas of teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs have a significant influence on students' learning experiences. Utilising student voice offers students an opportunity to influence their teachers' beliefs, beliefs that ultimately guide the experiences they will receive.

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Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

EDEM 691  
Masters of Education Thesis



Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

## Information Sheet for Students

My name is Bruce Ellison and I'm doing a project at the university. I am going to work with your teacher to help them understand your views about your learning.

I am interested in your thoughts and opinions about your learning; what helps you, what you enjoy about it and any other ideas you may have about it. You will be asked to fill in a form and write some things about your learning. Sometimes I might talk to you individually or as part of a small group. I will then share this with your teacher so that they can help your learning even more. In the group discussions you will be asked to treat what is shared in confidence, which means you will not share it with anyone else. Your identity will be kept secret when your information is shared with your teacher and my research supervisors. These discussions will take place on three occasions and involve half an hour of your time on each visit.

The findings of the project will be published. In the written report you will be given a code name so that no-one will know your real name, your teacher's name or the schools name. Your teacher can choose to receive a copy of the report. Your parents can choose to receive a summary of the report if they wish. You can also receive a short summary if you want to.

I would like to invite you to be a part of this study. Your teacher has also been asked to help. You do not have to be involved and if you choose not to be, no one will mind. If you have any questions, you can talk to your teacher or to me. If you change your mind about being in the project, that's fine too. All you or your parents/whānau/caregiver have to do is to tell your teacher or me.

Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Bruce Ellison

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

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Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

## Student Consent Form

My teacher has told me about your project.

I have talked with my parents about it.

I know that any information collected from me will be shared with my teacher and the researcher's supervisors. I know that when my information is shared no one will know that it came from me. The information will be stored away in a locked cabinet. I know that my name, my teacher's name or the name of the school will not be used in the project. I know that the findings of the research project will be published. My teacher will receive a copy of the finished project. My parents/whānau/caregivers can also receive a small report of the project. I understand that if I tick 'yes' at the bottom of this form, I will receive a short report as well.

I understand that I can change my mind about being in this project and no-one will mind.

I know that if I have any questions I can ask my parents/whānau/caregiver or my teacher.

I know that it is my choice whether to take part or not in this study.

I agree to take part in this study.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to receive a short report Yes / No (please circle)

Please return this completed form to your teacher by Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**[Note: The parents/caregivers will also receive a full information sheet and will be required to complete a consent form as well before the child can take part in this research.]**



## Appendix 3

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: [bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

EDEM 691  
Masters of Education Thesis  
Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs



### Information Sheet for Parents

My name is Bruce Ellison and I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Canterbury. I am working with your child's teacher to investigate how student views (a student's thoughts and opinions about their learning) influences a teacher's beliefs about teaching. I am also interested in how this applies in a bicultural learning environment.

I would like to invite your child to participate in my research project. If you agree to them taking part they will be asked to complete some short written tasks. I may also talk to them about their learning, what helps them, what they enjoy about it and any other ideas they may have about it. These discussions might be conducted individually or as part of a small group. One of these groups will include children who identify themselves as Māori. I will then share this information with your child's teacher so that they can help your child's learning even more. I will ask all children involved in group discussions to treat what is shared in confidence. Elements of kaupapa Māori research methodology will be used in order to respect the mana of everyone involved. This process will take up thirty minutes of your child's time and will be repeated three times.

There is a small chance that your child may feel anxious or stressed during the study. If this is the case please talk to me, or your child's teacher about it, so we can work out a solution. It is my intention to make sure this study will be helpful to your child's learning. Please note that your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If they do participate, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If they withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable. I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. The data may be shared with my supervisors or other advisors as well as fellow research participants. Care will be taken to keep your child's data anonymous at all times. All the data will be securely stored in password-protected facilities and locked storage. I will be the only person to have access to it. It will then be destroyed after five years.

I will take care to ensure your child's anonymity in publications of the findings. The results of this study will be published as part of a completed Masters of Education thesis. Results may also be reported in journals or in conference presentations. You are welcome to receive a short summary of the project and its findings. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisors (Chris Jansen – [chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz) or Dr Barry Brooker – [barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz)). This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study you may address any complaints to The chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you agree for your child to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to your child's classroom teacher in the envelope provided by Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Thank you for considering your child's participation in this research.

Bruce Ellison

## Appendix 4

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

EDEM 691  
Masters of Education Thesis



Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

### Parent Consent Form

I have been given an information sheet about this project.

I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions my child provides will be kept confidential to my child's teacher, the researcher and their supervisors, and that any published or reported results will not identify my child, their teacher or the school.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and in password protected electronic form for five years before being destroyed.

I understand that the findings of the study will be reported in a thesis and may be included in other articles. I understand that my child's anonymity will be maintained. I understand that if I include my email address on this consent form, I will be sent a copy of the report.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher (details above) or the research supervisors (Chris Jansen and Barry Brooker). If I have any complaints I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below I agree to my child participating in this research project.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

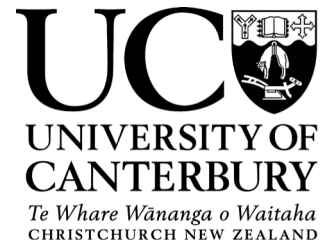
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form to your child's teacher in the envelope provided by Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

## Appendix 5

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: [bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014



### Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

#### Information Sheet for Teachers

My name is Bruce Ellison and I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Canterbury. Thank you for showing an interest in my research project. I am investigating the link between student voice (student's thoughts and opinions about their learning) and teacher's beliefs in a bicultural learning environment. The research involves obtaining and then discussing quality and authentic student voice in relation to your professional inquiry.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. If you agree to take part you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in an informal interview about your teaching beliefs. This will take place at the beginning and end of the research project and should take approximately 20 – 30 minutes.
- Work with the researcher to gather student voice data from appropriate children, including two focus groups; children who identify as Māori and children who identify as non-Māori. Elements of kaupapa Māori research methodology will be used in order to respect the mana of everyone involved.
- Meet with the researcher on two or three separate occasions to discuss the student voice data. These discussions are aimed at helping your professional inquiries. This will take approximately 20 minutes every 3 weeks for ten weeks.
- Meet after the data-gathering period to reflect on the initial findings. Your viewpoints and insight into the results is highly valued.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to you, provided this is practically achievable. There is the chance that you may feel anxious or stressed during the study. If this is the case please talk to me about it so we can work out a solution. It is my intention to make sure this study will be helpful to you and your teaching.

I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. The data may be shared with my supervisors or other advisors as well as fellow research participants. Care will be taken to keep your data anonymous at all times. All the data will be securely stored in password-protected facilities and locked storage. I will be the only person to have access to it. It will then be destroyed after five years. I will also take care to ensure your anonymity and the school's anonymity in publications of the findings. The results of this study will be published as part of a completed Masters of Education thesis. Results may also be reported in journals or in conference presentations. All participants can receive a copy of the study by including your email address on the consent form.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisors (Chris Jansen – [chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz) or Dr Barry Brooker – [barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz)). This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study you may address any complaints to The chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June. Thank you for considering participating in this research.

Bruce Ellison

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014



## Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

### Teacher Consent Form

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, their supervisors and other advisors, and that any published or reported results will not identify me or the school.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they can be managed.

I understand that the results will be published as part of a thesis and may be included in other articles. Anonymity will be preserved in the results. I understand that if I include my email address on this consent form, I will be sent a copy of this report.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher (Bruce Ellison) or the research supervisors (Chris Jansen and Dr Barry Brooker). If I have any complaints I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form to Bruce Ellison in the envelope provided by Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: [bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

26<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs



### Information Sheet for Principals

My name is Bruce Ellison and I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Canterbury. Thank you for showing an interest in my research project. I am investigating the link between student voice (student's thoughts and opinions about their learning) and teacher's beliefs in a bicultural learning environment. The research involves obtaining and then discussing quality and authentic student voice in relation to teacher's professional inquiry.

I would like to invite teachers to participate in my research project. If they agree to take part they will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in an informal interview about their teaching beliefs. This will take place at the beginning and end of the research project and should take approximately 20 – 30 minutes.
- Work with the researcher to gather student voice data from appropriate children, including two focus groups; children who identify as Māori and children who identify as non-Māori. Elements of kaupapa Māori research methodology will be used in order to respect the mana of everyone involved.
- Meet with the researcher on two or three separate occasions to discuss the student voice data. These discussions are aimed at helping their professional inquiries. This will take approximately 20 minutes every 3 weeks for ten weeks.
- Meet after the data-gathering period to reflect on the initial findings. Their viewpoints and insight into the results is highly valued.

I would like to invite students to participate in my research project. If they agree to take part they will be asked to do the following:

- Work with the researcher by sharing their thoughts on their learning. This could be through written tasks or small group or individual interviews.
- This would take place every three weeks for ten weeks and would likely take up thirty minutes of their time.

Please note that teacher and student participation in this study is voluntary. If they do participate, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If they withdraw, I will do my best to remove any information relating to them, provided this is practically achievable. There is the chance that they may feel anxious or stressed during the study. If this is the case they are asked to talk with me about it so we can work out a solution. It is my intention to make sure this study will be helpful to everyone involved. I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. The data may be shared with my supervisors or other advisors as well as fellow research participants. Care will be taken to keep all data anonymous at all times. All the data will be securely stored in password-protected facilities and locked storage. I will be the only person to have access to it. It will then be destroyed after five years. I will also take care to ensure the anonymity of all participants including the school in publishing the findings. The results of this study will be published as part of a completed Masters of Education thesis. Results may also be reported in journals or in conference presentations. All participants can receive a copy of the study by including their email address on the consent form.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me (details above) or my supervisors (Chris Jansen – [chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:chris.jansen@canterbury.ac.nz) or Dr Barry Brooker – [barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:barry.brooker@canterbury.ac.nz)). This research project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study you may address any complaints to The chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

If you agree to allow teachers and students at your school to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided by Friday <sup>30<sup>th</sup></sup> May. Thank you for considering your schools participation in this research.

Bruce Ellison

## Appendix 8

Telephone: 021 02259875  
Email: bruce.ellison@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

26<sup>th</sup> May 2014



### Student voice and its influence on teacher beliefs

#### Principal Consent Form

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of teachers and students if they agree to participate in the research project.

I understand that the participation of teachers and students is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions that teachers or students provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, his supervisors and other advisors, and that any published or reported results will not identify the school.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that the results will be published as part of a thesis and may be included in other articles. Anonymity will be preserved in the results. I understand that if I include my email address on this consent form, I will be sent a copy of the report.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher (Bruce Ellison) or the research supervisors (Chris Jansen and Dr Barry Brooker). If I have any complaints I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below I agree to Bruce Ellison inviting teachers and students at this school to participate in this research project.

Principal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form to Bruce Ellison in the envelope provided by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May.

<b>Teacher Belief Gathering Tool</b>
<b>A Good Teacher ...</b>
<b>Gives clear instructions</b>
<b>Provides meaningful feedback</b>
<b>Manages children's behaviour and group dynamics</b>
<b>Engages students in learning</b>
<b>Uses a range of relevant learning resources</b>
<b>Asks probing questions to promote children's deeper thinking</b>
<b>Has a good knowledge of the content they teach</b>
<b>Adapts teaching to suit students' own abilities</b>
<b>Establishes and maintains routines</b>
<b>Uses a variety of teaching strategies and interesting activities</b>
<b>Has a good knowledge of children's individual abilities</b>
<b>Communicates effectively with students, families and colleagues</b>
<b>Structures lessons in a clear and effective manner</b>
<b>Is fair in their treatment of students</b>
<b>Sets high expectations for children's learning achievements</b>
<b>Follows through on consequences</b>
<b>Is flexible and adapts to the children around them</b>
<b>Shows patience</b>
<b>Improves children's friendliness towards each other</b>
<b>Accepts all students and includes them in the learning</b>
<b>Knows individual students and what makes them 'tick'</b>
<b>Sees behaviour issues as an opportunity to strengthen relationships</b>
<b>Values and respects students' opinions</b>
<b>Displays genuine warmth towards children</b>
<b>Cares about children's wellbeing</b>
<b>Tries to connect with children at their level</b>
<b>Is reliable</b>
<b>Demonstrates honesty and integrity</b>

<b>Shows empathy and concern for others</b>
<b>Is a good team player</b>
<b>Models positive and respectful behaviours</b>
<b>Leads by example</b>
<b>Is a good role model</b>
<b>Keeps learning about the subjects they teach</b>
<b>Grows their understanding of young people and how they learn</b>
<b>Evaluates their own performance in order to improve</b>
<b>Shares ideas freely with others</b>
<b>Gives students opportunities to manage their own learning</b>
<b>Takes risks and experiments in teaching</b>
<b>Has a presence</b>
<b>Is well prepared, organized and plans ahead</b>
<b>Makes efficient use of limited time</b>
<b>Inspires children's interest in learning</b>
<b>Is energetic and enthusiastic</b>
<b>Teaches students the value of learning</b>
<b>Is confident</b>
<b>Encourages others to feel positive and valued</b>
<b>Disciplines respectfully, letting students save face</b>
<b>Encourages students to reach their individual potential</b>
<b>Nurtures a child's physical, emotional, spiritual and communal well being</b>



**Nāu te rourou**

**Nāku te rourou**

**Ka ora ai te iwi**

With my food basket  
And your food basket  
We will all prosper

# Student Group Interviews

## **Respect**

- Everyone should have the opportunity to be heard
- All ideas and opinions are accepted
- The ideas and thoughts shared in the group, stay with the group.

## **Student Voice Reflective Questions**

What was your initial reaction, impression, thoughts after reading the student voice data?

What are the important messages (kaupapa) from the students?

How do these messages influence your thoughts on your students' learning and your teaching?

What future action(s) might you take from these insights?

*Please note that this question is hypothetical only. There is no expectation to follow through on any identified actions.*

What further insights do you now wish to gain from the children about their learning experiences?

