



TEACHING & LEARNING  
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NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNIKO TAKU

**CASE STUDY**

# Towards Reconceptualising Leadership: The Implications of the Revised New Zealand Curriculum for School Leaders

Wayne Freeth

University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

with Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti

University of Oulu, Finland



This case study explores the challenges for school leadership posed by the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (2007), and investigates some implications for practice. The study is situated within the wider Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project, 'Shifting the Conceptualisation of Knowledge and Learning in the Integration of the New *New Zealand Curriculum* in Initial and Continuing Teacher Education' (Andreotti, Quinlivan, & Abbiss, forthcoming) which examines shifts in educators' understandings of knowledge and learning in the implementation of the NZC in nine settings within initial and in-service teacher education.

In my case study, I worked as a leadership and management adviser (with the assistance of a research mentor) with a group of 22 area school principals and middle leaders as they worked within their schools to implement the revised NZC. I drew on notions of distributed leadership, 'knowledge as a verb' (Gilbert, 2005) and collective ownership of curriculum design and documentation to work with the school leaders. I start this paper by outlining the conceptual frameworks that I drew on to inform the project. I then present the research methodology and my own positionality in this study. Next I describe a pedagogical intervention, designed with the support of my research mentor (Dr Vanessa Andreotti), which focused on shifts in principals' and school leaders' understandings and conceptualisations of leadership, documentation and the NZC, and offer a collaborative analysis of themes that emerged in the data related to the participants' shifting understandings of knowledge and learning. I also present a reflection on my learning journey in 2008/10, as a practitioner researcher in this project, in relation to my own shifting understandings of knowledge and learning. I conclude by outlining the implications of the case study for curriculum implementation with school leaders and suggestions for further research.

## Conceptual framework

The theoretical framework of this project draws on the work of Gilbert (2005) with reference to the 'knowledge society'. Gilbert challenges long-held views about education and knowledge, making a distinction between knowledge conceptualised as a noun and a verb. In her outline of the differences, knowledge conceptualised as a verb is something we do something with, rather than something we have; it is linked with performativity rather than truth, and it is more like an 'energy' than building blocks that can be accumulated. This has several implications for the area of leadership. Knowledge conceptualised as a noun tends to enable autocratic and bureaucratic styles of leadership, while knowledge conceptualised as a verb may enable democratic, distributed and transformational styles of leadership, which are necessary for the effective implementation of the NZC, particularly in terms of the principles of inclusion and community participation in the co-construction and the co-ownership of the curriculum. Another important aspect of the NZC that is emphasised by the conceptualisation of knowledge as a verb is the role of teachers as leaders in the construction of the curriculum and in responding to the needs of diverse students.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009, p. 2) have argued that 'within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership that can be a strong catalyst for making changes to improve student learning'. They state that investing in teachers and their learning is the best investment for improving student outcomes. Similarly, Frost and Durrant (2002) emphasise that teacher agency is central to school improvement. However, teacher leadership is different from leadership associated with administrative or managerial roles, as it moves away from top-down, hierarchical reward/punish (transactional) practices towards practices of shared decision making, teamwork and community building (Urbansky & Nickolaou, 1997; Wynne, 2001). According to Wynne (2001) the literature on teacher leadership offers a profile that defines teacher leaders as those who:

- demonstrate expertise in their instruction and share that knowledge with other professionals
- are consistently on a professional learning curve
- frequently reflect on their work to stay on the cutting edge of what is best for children
- engage in continuous action research projects that examine their effectiveness
- collaborate with their peers, parents, and communities, engaging them in dialogues of open inquiry/action/assessment models of change

- become socially conscious and politically involved
- mentor new teachers
- become more involved at universities in the preparation of pre-service teachers
- are risk-takers who participate in school decisions. (Wynne, 2001, pp. 2–3)

Beauchum and Dentith (2004) state that three factors are essential to attract and support the development of teacher leaders: specific school structures and organisational patterns; particular processes and identities; and deliberate use of outside resources with consistent, strong community relationships. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009, p. 4) assert that

to tap into the potential of teacher leadership requires moving beyond changing policy, enforcing mandates, and offering professional development. These reform strategies are relatively easy compared to the challenges of guaranteeing teacher quality in every classroom, ensuring effective principal leadership, and engaging teachers in meaningful leadership responsibilities.

They identify the structure of the school and school system leadership as the first obstacle that needs to be examined. Therefore, for the qualities of teacher leaders to be cultivated, a shift in leadership practices is also necessary (Wynnem, 2001). Crowther, Kaagan, Fergusson, and Hann (2002) have examined the role of principals in fostering teacher leadership through distributed leadership and collective ownership of visions and processes in schools (Table 1).

<b>Table 1</b> Summary of characteristics of principals who promote teacher leadership	
<b>Communicate a clear strategic intent</b>	Model futuristic thinking; provide a safe environment for exploration and experimentation; show the linking of visioning to knowledge creation
<b>Incorporate the aspirations and ideas of others</b>	Demonstrate confidence in teachers' professional capabilities; help teachers clarify their personal values; explore the alignment between strategic and educational values
<b>Pose difficult-to-answer questions.</b>	Heighten the level of professional dialogue about educational practices; encourage individual commitment from alienated teachers
<b>Make space for individual innovation</b>	Create opportunities for individual expression; encourage identification of – and confrontation of – institutional barriers
<b>Know when to step back</b>	Demonstrate trust; illuminate how power can and should be distributed; acknowledge the importance of the individual professional; attest to the central place of teaching in school decision-making
<b>Create opportunities out of perceived difficulties</b>	Demonstrate ways in which knowledge may be created; encourage thinking outside the box
<b>Build on achievements to create a culture of success.</b>	Model positive problem solving; create an ethos of teachers as guardians of the school culture; demonstrate that from little acorns, big oak trees can grow

Source: Crowther et al. (2002, p.65)

These characteristics align with several dimensions of the literature on twenty-first century education. The authors' idea of knowledge creation as a social process (involving teachers), for example, can be related to Gilbert's ideas of knowledge as an energy or as a verb (Gilbert, 2005). Their emphasis on problem-posing and 'thinking outside the box' can be related to Gee's (2003) and Claxton's (2008) call for a new understanding of the role of difficulty, challenge and dissonance in the development of resilient learner identities, one that equips them to engage in complex learning environments. The focus of Crowther et al. (2002) on collective ownership can be related to Hargreaves' (2003) call for dialogue and shared decision making.

Another dimension of the literature on principal and teacher leadership that interests me is related to culturally responsive practices that address the different needs of diverse students (especially those who are low achieving) and facilitate the involvement of economically disadvantaged families in school processes, including

the co-construction of the curriculum. In the international literature, Lipman (1999) has found that school reforms that empower teachers to become leaders had little effect on African American student achievement unless issues of class, race and gender were made a priority. Critical studies of class, race or gender have not been robustly addressed in studies on leadership itself or twenty-first century education, but in related fields like critical multicultural studies (Nieto, 2006; Sleeter, 2005). In New Zealand, the works of Bishop (1999) and Macfarlane (2004, 2007) emphasise the importance of addressing the social context and issues of power relationships in improving the achievement of diverse learners through school leadership.

Gilbert (2010) has also argued that the literature on twenty-first century education should be combined with new political theory related to individuality. She suggests that combining these two theories offers something that is new in educational settings: an appropriate theory of knowledge and an appropriate theory of social change. She predicts that, if this combination does not happen, issues of equity fall off the agenda of education and a polarisation between those who can create new knowledge and those who need basic skills and 'old knowledge' will emerge. She states that this is a huge and difficult task as it challenges the core of current educational thinking into which we have been enculturated.

My initial assumption was that a combination of the concepts of 'knowledge as a noun' and 'distributed leadership' could serve as a starting point to sensitise principals and teachers to the possibilities available through the NZC for (a) dismantling traditional power structures and deficit theorising beliefs within the school and (b) connecting with diverse learners and families to create the conditions for more relevant and inclusive education where everyone can achieve. In this case study, I report on my experience of emphasising these two concepts in my professional practice with principals and middle managers. I used the characteristics in Table 1 (Crowther et al., 2002) as a framework of features against which I could identify and compare what was happening in the schools I worked with, in relation to leadership, to implement the NZC.

## Research methodology: Settings and participants

In my advisory role in school leadership, I had been working with a range of schools before my involvement in the TLRI project. When the project was established, I built on my previous work with school leaders across a number of schools. Eight area schools were involved in the TLRI study. Participants included eight principals, five deputy principals and four assistant principals. There were also two heads of department and five teachers involved. I worked more intensively with six of the principals, as two schools had newly appointed principals and they gained most of their support through the new principals' programme during that time.

The eight area schools (comprising students from Years 1–13) were situated in a range of rural and urban sites in the wider Canterbury region. Six schools were located in rural townships, and two were urban, Christian, special character schools. Schools were mid-size in terms of student enrolment, ranging from 250 to 500, with most being in the lower range. Four of the schools were decile 7, three decile 8, and one was decile 6. All the principals were male and, other than in the schools that had newly appointed principals, all principals had worked in New Zealand schools for more than six years, and in their current school for more than five years (except one).

## Research methodology: Data collection

This project had the ethical approval of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. Informed consent (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) was gained from the participants, and the participants had the right to withdraw from the project at any time. None chose to do so, but a few did not participate in all stages of data collection. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of the participants and schools.

Initial data were collected from 22 participants (who represented a range of leadership roles and perspectives in the schools) through a survey and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews held in the schools. The aim of the survey was to gain insights into how participants were progressing with the implementation of the revised NZC. The participants' understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of knowledge in the NZC was also sought, and they were asked to identify next steps needed in their professional learning and development. The survey

was useful in identifying the main issues influencing curriculum understandings and implementation for the participants. They were informed that their feedback would help shape a professional learning day which was to occur in the next five to six weeks.

A second face-to-face interview with 16 of the participants took place a month after the professional learning day and focused on progress made with curriculum implementation, reflections on the professional learning day, changes in their understandings and emergent issues. The data from the first and second interviews were coded and analysed thematically using an interpretivist framework (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The analysis of participants' data is presented in a subsequent section of this case study.

Field notes were used to document my shifting conceptualisations of knowledge as a practitioner researcher. At the beginning of the project I wrote a brief outline of my beliefs and positionality and what brought me to the project. I wrote journal entries to capture my thinking throughout the project. My mentor also kept notes of meetings held during the course of the project. I continued to have discussions with my mentors (including Kathleen Quinlivan during the later part of the writing phase) related to ongoing shifts in my conceptualisations of knowledge and learning. I also participated in a follow-up interview with the researchers at the end of the project.

## Research methodology: Researcher positionality

My own shifts in understanding of knowledge and learning are examined as part of the case study, for two reasons; firstly, because I acknowledge that my values and belief systems were integral in working with the participants as part of my study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), and secondly because understanding my shifting conceptualisations of knowledge and learning forms part of the intentions of the wider TLRI project. The project has given me a chance to reflect on my own beliefs and practices.

A key driver for me in education has been fighting inequity. I grew up with a strong belief in valuing each person as a unique being and valuing the skills and qualities they had. As I worked in the teaching profession I found people, and systems, that did not seem to value this. Instead I often found a hierarchy of school subjects, a lack of appreciation or recognition of 'difference' and what I considered to be very narrow views of 'intelligence'. As a teacher I struggled with many of these issues and with the lack of student and parent voice in school settings. I also struggled to cope with hierarchical models of leadership that showed little acknowledgement of the knowledge and experience of teachers. I often felt that more effective decisions could have been made if teachers had a stronger voice. My appointments as a principal and later as an adviser for leadership have contributed to my insights into effective support for staff, parents and community in terms of school improvement. I am also interested in how to support students to provide constructive feedback for teachers and leaders and to participate in decision-making processes in schools.

I believe that genuinely distributing leadership is a key to developing more effective schools. I also believe that many leaders want to be more inclusive and empower others, but are not sure how to do it or do not even realise the hierarchical paradigm they are operating under, and its effects. Perhaps we have become so accustomed to leaders or so-called 'experts' making decisions for us that we expect that others have, or should have, the answers. As a result, some teachers have low self-efficacy and find it challenging to take responsibility. In a time of uncertainty, change and pressure, the introduction of the NZC may encourage educators to turn towards 'strong' leaders and look for quick fixes, rather than engage critically with the big picture questions, examining the kinds of knowledges that schools and students need to engage with—and why.

## Description of intervention: Professional learning day

As my intention was to explore distributed leadership and collective ownership of processes in the implementation of the NZC, I decided to start the planning of professional support with the input of the leaders themselves. My idea was to 'walk the talk' of collective ownership by involving the leaders in discussions about the planning of their professional learning day. I visited six of the eight schools and asked each participant to review their understanding and progress and to perform a needs analysis in relation to their professional

learning needs as leaders in the implementation of the NZC. My intention was to prepare the day based on their own ideas and I expressed that to the leaders.

I was surprised with the outcomes of this exercise. Most leaders identified 'documentation' as their first priority. They wanted something 'practical' to do on the day that could make easier a task they were required to do. Many expected that I would tell them how to articulate what they were already doing in the school in the 'language' of the new curriculum. I did not feel I was being invited to challenge any thinking or practices. One leader expressed the opinion that they definitely did not want any more 'thinking' on the day as enough of it had happened before. For this participant, it was time to 'do' something in relation to the NZC (thinking was not perceived as 'doing').

I found myself in a difficult situation as I did not expect these responses. My assumption was that the leaders would be interested in 'leading', in pushing the boundaries of the thinking and practices happening in their schools, or in strategies of leadership, and would be wanting to embrace this opportunity to bring about curriculum change. However, by asking participants for their input, I had created expectations in relation to meeting their self-identified needs in the professional learning day. In that sense, there was a clash of agendas based on different perceptions of professional learning needs. While participants wanted me to help with documentation of existing practices in their schools to meet the criteria of the revised NZC and thought the majority of the thinking part was over, I felt it was important for them to think *differently* about the NZC and their own practices before any documentation took place.

I felt the revised NZC required a significant shift for many schools. In my view it required much greater collaboration amongst teachers, leaders, students and parents. I felt strongly that the notion of knowledge as a verb (Gilbert, 2005) could be enacted in robust curriculum leadership that broke disciplinary silos. If the idea of knowledge as a noun is what creates separation between disciplines, seeing knowledge as a verb would imply seeing each discipline as a community of practice (Gilbert, 2005) which could establish links with other communities of practice. This space of linkages would give teachers a perfect opportunity to perform their leadership, to see their disciplines, themselves and their students differently, which would in turn enable more equitable practices.

I also believed that documentation, according to the revised NZC, would mean something different from the assumptions that participants seemed to have in mind. In my view, to be consistent with the notion of knowledge as a verb, and indeed in line with the 'principles' of the NZC, documentation should be done collaboratively, should involve different voices (including those of teachers, families and students), should reflect the fluid and responsive nature of the curriculum and be about processes rather than prescriptions.

From my observations in schools, I concluded that many leaders and teachers had had little time to deepen their understanding of the new curriculum or to understand the degree to which they needed to do this. I wanted to give them some sort framework whereby they felt supported to take steps, did not feel they had to do everything at once and did not feel that, by taking one step, they had already taken all steps. I wanted to be able to provide advice and models that would not feed a dependence on my input as an 'expert', and would acknowledge what they had achieved so far.

In a meeting with my research mentor, we discussed how I could meet both the participants' expectations and mine: focus on what participants wanted for the day, but do that in a way that challenged their thinking about documentation and the NZC and provided a pathway in a continuum. The final plan was organised around the theme of 'documentation'. The morning focused on 'challenging thinking about documentation' and the afternoon on 'documenting the NZC'. Two outside speakers, Dr Rosemary Hipkins and Dr Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti, were invited to provide 'food for thought' in the morning and support the writing in the afternoon.

Dr Andreotti started the day with a 'conceptual tool' based on Gilbert's (2005) distinctions between an understanding of knowledge as a noun or a verb in industrial and post-industrial thinking. She invited the participants to consider 'red' and 'yellow' conceptualisations of key themes in education. The colour red referred to knowledge conceptualised as a noun, the colour 'yellow' referred to knowledge conceptualised as a verb. The leaders were asked to match different statements about society, identity, conflict, answers, etc. with their corresponding colour and to discuss and justify their answers (see Table 2).



<b>Table 2</b> Knowledge as a noun or as a verb?		
If 'knowledge as a noun' is represented by the colour red (and the metaphor of milk) and 'knowledge as a verb' is represented by the colour yellow (and the metaphor of weaving), which colour would you paint each statement?		
<b>Ideas about society</b>	Society is something to be fixed into one normative order, which creates the desire for certainty, consensus and harmony (one lens)	Society is complex, multiple and always changing: ideas of what is real and ideal are constructed by different communities (multiple lenses)
<b>Ideas about truth</b>	Answers are always partial, provisional and context dependent	Answers are right or wrong independent of context
<b>Ideas about difference</b>	Consensus (elimination of difference) is the only desirable outcome of conversations and clashes of perspectives (conflict) need to be 'resolved'	Consensus is desirable in certain contexts, not in others; the capacity to live with and learn from dissensus is a 'key competency' which requires seeing conflict as an opportunity for learning
<b>Ideas about identities</b>	Identities are fixed and based on cumulative (innate or learned) attributes related to culture/nationality or ethnicity	Identities are socially 'constructed' and context dependent, and therefore multiple and open to reconstruction and negotiation (fluid)
<b>Ideas about language</b>	Language creates our 'realities' and the meaning of words is constructed in context	Language describes reality objectively and the right meaning of words is defined by good dictionaries
<b>Ideas about teacher education</b>	Teacher education is about preparing students to reproduce existing 'best practices'	Teacher education is about preparing students to respond to the changing needs of diverse learners and societies (for 'next practices')

Source: Andreotti and Wheeler, 2010

Next, Dr Andreotti shifted the focus towards the principles of the revised NZC. She distributed a handout with 'red' and 'yellow' interpretations of six principles (Table 3) written in consultation with myself and another colleague. She invited participants to discuss where, on a continuum, their schools would be placed in relation to each proposition and what the next step for learning would be. At the bottom of the handout there were two blank cells related to 'red' or 'yellow' interpretations of documentation, which prompted participants to discuss how documentation would be conceptualised according to each paradigm of knowledge.

	<b>Knowledge as a noun</b>	<b>Knowledge as a verb</b>
<b>High Expectations</b>	We expect all learners to achieve in our school. We expect each family to take responsibility for the engagement, effort and success of students.	We believe all learners can achieve personal excellence regardless of individual circumstances. We aim to make education relevant and flexible in order to foster engagement and to address the diverse needs of all learners.
<b>Treaty of Waitangi</b>	It is important that students understand the Treaty of Waitangi. We have treaty workshops in years X and Y in Social Studies.	Biculturalism is one of our greatest assets in a knowledge economy. A bicultural component is included in all aspects of the curriculum. The Treaty principles of partnership, protection and participation underpin all school decisions and activities. Staff are equipped and willing to uphold a bicultural dimension in all school activities.
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	We make sure we treat every child the same. We have special programmes to support ESOL students to integrate and to learn our language. We celebrate diversity in dance, music, food and costumes in cultural days.	We aim to know and connect to our students and their communities and to do our best to address their diverse needs and to invite them to be themselves at the school. Linguistic and cultural pluralism are actively encouraged and supported amongst students and staff.
<b>Inclusion</b>	Our curriculum is inclusive, as we do not discriminate against anyone. We create a safe space for our students where we promote and reward harmony, order and the right behaviour.	We see all our students as diverse. We aim to create an environment where difference is viewed as an asset and learners are equipped to engage with different ways of knowing, being and seeing the world. Deficit theorising is actively challenged amongst teachers, students and in the school curriculum.
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Whānau and communities are informed about the curriculum and what happens in the school.	Whānau and communities, as well as staff and students are actively involved in the ongoing decision making process about the school curriculum.
<b>Documentation</b>	(Who decides? In whose name? For whose benefit? Through what process?)	(Who decides? In whose name? For whose benefit? Through what process?)

Source: Andreotti, Major and Freeth, 2009

There was a lot of discussion in relation to this tool. The leaders were very engaged and clearly relished working with a framework which stimulated their thinking. Despite their earlier request for something practical, they were responsive to this intellectual stimulation and enjoyed it, as academic engagements are not usually part of professional development days. Rosemary Hipkins presented a brief overview of examples of powerful stories and themes of the co-construction of the NZC that she had observed as she went around the country.

The conceptual tools presented by Andreotti and Hipkins had the desired effect. Many participants reported that their original expectations for the day, and questions about documentation, had shifted. They could see the limitations of existing conceptualisations and new possibilities. In the afternoon I provided a framework



of questions/requirements that documentation might cover and the school teams had time to work on any of those they chose to, supported by Dr Andreotti, Dr Hipkins or myself. We also made ourselves available if participants wanted to discuss any other issue related to the implementation of the NZC.

Over the next two months, I went back to each school to interview participants in relation to their steps towards documentation and to measure the effect of the ideas of 'knowledge as a noun' and as 'a verb' on their understanding of the NZC and their practices, and their progress with implementation of the new curriculum. I explore the themes which emerged in the analysis of this data in the next section.

## Analysis of data

The data from the first and second interviews were coded and analysed thematically using an interpretivist framework (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). My analysis focused on issues arising from the data that could hinder or facilitate the engagement of leaders with the concepts of distributed leadership and collective ownership of the curriculum. These are concepts that I strongly associate with seeing 'knowledge as a verb' (i.e., shifting understandings of knowledge) and seeing professional learning as a collective and collaborative process that requires a shift of power relations and leadership styles (i.e., shifting conceptualisations of learning). I organised the data into five categories representing recurrent themes: (1) engaging with the bigger picture of the NZC; (2) seeing roles differently; (3) responses to uncertainty; (4) individual efficacy and; (5) voice/power and the 'tyranny of the urgent'.

### Engaging with the bigger picture

In terms of curriculum design, the NZC states:

Curriculum is designed and interpreted in a three-stage process: as the national curriculum, the school curriculum, and the classroom curriculum. The national curriculum provides the framework and common direction for schools, regardless of type, size, or location. It gives schools the scope, flexibility, and authority they need to design and shape their curriculum so that teaching and learning is meaningful and beneficial to their particular communities of students. In turn, the design of each school's curriculum should allow teachers the scope to make interpretations in response to the particular needs, interests, and talents of individuals and groups of students in their classes. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 37)

In this section, I explore the challenge that the participants faced, in engaging with the major philosophical thrust of the NZC as expressed in the extract, to draw on the principles of the document in order to develop an operational curriculum (McGee, 1997) that is relevant and meaningful for a wide range of members of the particular school community. This was proving to be a complex and challenging task for principals who appeared to struggle with their role as curriculum leaders in their school:

We have all the bits done—but how do we put it together?—we don't know how and where to start.... (Principal 4, interview 1)

The issue for our curriculum development team is how do we put all the bits together. We still lack direction. (DP 2, interview 1)

It seemed that the perception for several school leaders was that the NZC organised differently something that was already happening and that required minor changes. In their mind, the NZC required leaders to re-articulate (rather than question or reinterpret) what they were doing in order to meet requirements.

There were conflicting ideas and expectations about whose job it was to lead and develop the school curriculum. Some principals were hoping heads of department would lead the way through the professional development they were involved in at subject level, while heads of department usually expected principals to do this part. Both groups were also hoping for leadership from outside the school, particularly from the Ministry of Education (MoE). As one teacher noted, 'the lack of direction from the MoE is very frustrating' (Teacher 4, interview 1).

Some were hoping that advisers like myself would show them what to do. Sometimes it felt to me as if, when they were asking for help with documentation, they were really asking me to do it for them, thinking that somehow I had the 'new' knowledge and would be able to 'do it'. I would suggest that, if the deeper philosophical changes implied in the NZC had been more fully explored and grasped, it would have been easier for school leaders to have more of an appreciation of the task ahead of them. The process then would be seen as much more long-term, characterised by questioning of current practice, experimentation and action research, ongoing discussions amongst the stakeholders, and a degree of comfort with uncertainty. This implies three realisations on the part of school leaders. One, that curriculum development becomes an ongoing process rather than a point of destination. Two, that the school can work towards genuinely owning its curriculum. Three, that the school has a responsibility to share this ownership with its community. Viewed through these perspectives, collective ownership cannot be separated from de-centralised leadership.

Some participants expressed a sense of collective ownership which nevertheless still seemed to be tied to centralised and hierarchical leadership where everyone has an externally determined place and function. As two of the participants noted:

How can I decide what I am going to do in my subject before we have decided on a school approach to things like key competencies and values? ... we have done the key competencies to death ... but not at department level. (HoD 3, interview 1)

The principal's role is to have the big picture. Staff have their respective roles. The principal has to know how it all fits together—to give meaning and cohesion. (Principal 4, interview 1)

After the professional learning day, this perception seemed to shift for some participants towards a notion that taken-for-granted and 'commonsense' meanings of curriculum could not be taken as 'givens':

You have to plot a course and go for it. Yes ... some people want a template ... but there isn't one! Some talk about 'getting it done'. . . . But it ain't like that either! (Principal 5, interview 2)

Leaders were developing their understanding of the various components of the curriculum document but varied in their knowledge and confidence to see it holistically, and see ways of translating it into practice. They used metaphors such as 'it's like building a plane as you are flying' and 'it's like doing a jigsaw puzzle with no idea of what (the picture) is' (field notes, May 2009).

Some participants could see the enormity of the shifts in understanding curriculum needed, but they felt concerned that there was insufficient time to engage in these processes in depth:

I think the changes are excellent. I like the emphasis on pedagogy and the student-centred approach but I think the implementation has been done on the cheap and so understanding is patchy and variable. How will we get people to make changes in the classroom and not just give lip service? (Principal 1, interview 1)

There appeared to be little interest in exploring alternative organisations of curriculum. For most of the schools, the greater part of their curriculum was organised along subject/discipline lines. It was interesting to note that most of the professional learning and development was also delivered along these lines, thus reinforcing the status quo. It seemed that the participants were largely unquestioning of this fact, perhaps because that was what had always been done, and it was assumed that it would just continue. I believe this was an opportunity lost.

I am not sure whether there was a lack of confidence, interest or energy or a combination of all three. Perhaps the challenge was just seen as too big. There was also some political scepticism; certainly confusion over mixed educational priorities emerging as a result of political transitions:

The national standards seem to stand for different values than NZC. . . . One can't help feeling a bit schizophrenic. (Principal 3, interview 2)

Despite these challenges, one principal did recognise the way in which the NZC can encourage discussions related to the 'big picture' aspects of knowledges, learning, and schooling:

The overarching challenge of the NZC is—changing thinking. (Principal 1, interview 2)

Perhaps we all underestimated the sheer immensity of that challenge for school leaders and how they understand their roles.

## Seeing roles differently

An implementation of the NZC that fosters the capacity of teachers and school community to participate in the construction of the curriculum requires a principal that sees herself or himself as a facilitator of 'bottom up' approaches—a distributor of leadership. At the same time, it requires teachers to see themselves as leaders as well. However, the data suggests that this seems far from the dominant idea of leadership prevalent in schools. Issues of accountability, control and authority dominated the preliminary interviews and seemed to prevent engagement with concepts related to co-construction or 'teachers as leaders' themselves.

The role of the principal is keep putting the ideas about the new curriculum in front of staff. . . . Keeping it in front of teachers . . . to lead some of the professional development and help with the design of the overarching documents. (Principal 1, interview 1)

Notions of accountability, documentation, and charismatic leadership qualities inform the understandings of a teacher in the same school:

The role of the principal is to inspire a shared vision and help make it a reality. Hopefully there would be some charismatic qualities that make you want to change. His role is to make sure things are done. The buck stops with the principal as far as the documentation is concerned. (HoD 1, interview 1)

This trend also surfaced in the interviews with middle leaders who associated their role with notions of 'control of curriculum' and compliance with authority.

The role of the HoD is to interpret the requirements for others in the department . . . to get the documentation done and ensure the front section of the NZC is taken into account. (Deputy principal 1, interview 1)

This was consistent with ideas of some principals of the role of heads of departments.

It is the role of the HoD to ensure the pedagogy of the subject area aligns with the school pedagogy. (Principal 4, interview 1)

An assistant principal who espouses inquiry learning advocated the same pattern of control in relation to the role of the teachers in organising the content of the curriculum so that students could 'discover' it for themselves.

The curriculum is the content we would like kids to discover. It is not just about providing opportunities for students—it is about the strategic placement of things—scheming on the part of the teachers—orchestrating. (Assistant principal 1, interview 1)

Teachers' perceptions of their role varied greatly. One thought decisions about curriculum were not part of his role. 'Curriculum is what the powers that be [MOE/principals] decree' (HOD 1, interview 1).

Most teachers saw their role as traditional subject specialists. Geijsel and Meijers (2005, p. 419) suggest that 'today's innovations require changes in teachers' professional identity. Identity learning involves a relation between social-cognitive construction of new meanings and individual, emotional sense making of new experiences.' I suggest the same is true for leaders. Perhaps the emotional side of things has been neglected and the effort to bring the changes under-estimated. After the intervention, other patterns of responses started to appear that are more aligned with distributed leadership as described by Crowther et al. (2002). For example, one deputy principal said:

The HoD role has changed. They need to think holistically about how one thing fits with another and try to incorporate other facets. For example as HoD of English I must also think about how I can integrate coverage of key competencies, values and principles in my lessons . . . not just think about English . . . and think about possibilities for cross curricular links...(Deputy principal 3, interview 2)

The characteristic of distributed leadership of 'posing difficult questions' and 'incorporating the aspirations and ideas of others' (Crowther et al., 2002) emerged in the notion of valuing professional conversations and challenging thinking in the data:

[The principal] needs to ensure teachers are aware of and have the opportunities for the latest pedagogy as shown in research and to ensure staff have opportunities for professional conversations. His job is to challenge our thinking. (Deputy principal 1, interview 2)

These characteristics recurred in the framing of the role of the principal as a facilitator of discussions that prompt teachers to ask 'why?'

The role of the principal is to facilitate discussions that explore the nature of curriculum... To assist and develop teachers understanding and also to help develop coherency and what we are doing and why (Principal 2, interview 1)

The characteristics of 'communicating a strategic intent' and 'knowing when to step back' (Crowther et al., 2002) emerged in the notion that 'anyone can be a leader' in the school, although notions of control and regulation (based on expert or hierarchical authority) could still be simultaneously present:

The role of the principal is pivotal. As Viviane Robinson research suggests, where the Principal takes and leads PD ... there is a big impact [Robinson, 2007]. The principal must be empowering and give opportunities to the middle leaders. Someone with no position of leadership can step up and take a role. The principal does not need to be the font of all knowledge but needs to be familiar enough to direct staff. The principal needs to ensure there is a strong evidence base to teacher's work and decision making. The principal has a role to stand on the balcony and to look further out (not as a superior) ... to take time and reflect and look to the horizon while other teachers are busy with business as usual ... and see what is ahead ... what the next move is going to be (Principal 3, interview 2)

These last two quotations speak to the fact that processes of shift are not straightforward, as different and conflicting values are held simultaneously. Furthermore, a change of rhetoric does not necessarily lead to a change of leadership style. In my work in schools I noticed that of the many who espoused collaborative decision making, some were better able to translate it into practice than others. However, it seems to me that being able to articulate the difference between centralised and distributed models of leadership is a start.

The many changes in schools appear to have overwhelmed teachers and leaders and many felt insecure. I would suggest that this is not the best environment for experimentation and creativity, themes explored further in following sections. Despite such constraints, teachers and leaders are slowly adapting their roles.

## Responses to uncertainty

The Ministry of Education emphasised that schools needed to see the implementation of the NZC as a period of trialling new ideas. According to the ministry, schools had until 2010 to work towards full implementation. The publication *From the New Zealand Curriculum to School Curriculum* (2008) stated that during this period, schools should clarify intents, engage in inquiry explorations, review processes of decision making and engage their communities. However, school leaders were often looking for prescriptions of the new 'right way' which they believed could be applicable across contexts. Freedom to experiment was interpreted by some as a lack of structure, and talk of curriculum being 'cyclic' was missed by many.

One principal who seemed uncomfortable with uncertainty and who expressed a pragmatic approach to 'getting the job done' and a lack of interest in 'theory' stated that he would engage when 'all was sorted out' (field notes, March, 2009). Other principals interpreted the freedom of experimentation promoted by the ministry as an extra pressure which seemed to create a sense of crisis that tended to reinforce the need for more certainty and structure:

There are conflicting pressures ... we want certainty and structure but we also want creativity and variety. (Principal 1, interview 1)

With a wealth of programmes, units, schemes and plans tied against the objectives of the old curriculum and in need of redevelopment, it is not surprising that principals would feel that way. In this context, the innovative concept of designing curriculum to reflect the needs and interests of students may not command much excitement among many leaders and teachers.

However, some embraced and welcomed the concept. As one teacher remarked to me: 'The curriculum needs to be continually reviewed' (Teacher 1, interview 2). Teacher 1 was excited and confident with the idea of a student-centred curriculum and showed empathy and understanding towards teachers who did not show the same level of enthusiasm. In thinking about the future, she saw the benefits of collaboration outweighing the extra work:

The next step is for those interested in integration to get together ... And hopefully it will mean less work if we all collaborate.... And it will make it much more meaningful for students. (Teacher 1, interview 2)

One principal saw the role of the head of department (HOD) as a leader in experimentation. 'The HoD role is to give things a go—trial new things' (principal 3, interview 2). Another principal seemed very comfortable with the idea that the implementation of the NZC would be a long process that involved trial, error and a collaborative learning:

It is a bit like scaling a mountain. There is no set way and we head on our way and have to choose a route. . . . It might not lead to where we want to get and we may need to come back and try another path. (Principal 3, interview 1)

### Individual efficacy

A change of culture goes hand in hand with a change of conceptualisations of knowledge and of leadership. Leaders not only need to see their role differently, but engage and relate differently with their day-to-day realities. This transition requires safe spaces for thinking and coming to terms with these new relationships. This raises two significant issues: time and reservoirs of energy for 'teacher thinking'. The lack of time was emphasised by many participants. 'A major restraint is that we don't have time to sit and think without interruption' (teacher 3, interview 1). I wondered whether, in certain cases, this may not also become an excuse that masks other reasons, such as the perception that 'thinking' is heavy intellectual work that is done in a strange and difficult language:

Please don't ask any hard questions [...] We need interpreters to help with the heavy vocab and philosophy. [...] You feel a bit intimidated by the language, newness and theory stuff. (Deputy principal 3, interview 1)

The request not to ask hard questions was echoed by a frequent demand for me to 'tell people what do to do', especially in the initial stages of this intervention. This can be associated with a traditional understanding of teaching as low skill transmission of content that relies on external authorities for curriculum decision-making. '[Curriculum is] what my masters think I should be doing—what I am supposed to be doing' (HOD 1, interview 1). This assumption can lead to a strong instrumentalist teaching approach, which translates into demands for top-down models and templates. This results in a passive role in curriculum decision making and a 'grab everything going' attitude towards change. This perception collides with the realisation that the 'cavalry is not coming' (a comment made by principal 5, field notes, July 2008) and that the curriculum should be created by all.

I know many people want a template . . . but there isn't one ... and some think it's something that needs to be done and then it's done. . . . But it's not like that either. Some schools feel they just have to do it . . . not understand it. (Principal 5, interview 2)

On the other hand, participants recognised that teachers are working their way out of instrumentalism as well—and by themselves. One principal argued that many teachers are collecting data about their work in an attempt to experience teaching as inquiry. However, they may lack the tools of analysis to interpret the information they gather. 'Teachers are collecting data but not really owning it . . . not necessarily thinking what they gained from it' (principal 1, interview 1).

If the thinking of leaders and teachers needs changing, the questions are 'by whom?' and 'into what?' Within the paradigm of distributed leadership, teachers need to own this change as well. The key question then becomes: How can teachers be equipped to become independent thinkers? One research participant referred to the difficulties of developing thinking with students: 'there is a problem of over-mothering' (teacher 4, interview 1).

Professional development that is committed to 'making things easier' for teachers may not help in this sense.

Demands for efficacy and efficiency create a context in which teacher educators are rewarded when teachers provide positive feedback. To receive positive feedback, it is important to meet teachers' demands for practical things that are easily implemented, which is understandable given teachers' high workloads and complex environments. Therefore, if one wants to offer professional development that engages teachers in deeper thinking, this professional development will also need to offer some immediate practical results. This is not easy, especially in a context where there are competing demands for teachers' efficacy and accountability, pulling teachers (and teacher educators) in different directions and creating different priorities. At the end of the day, accountability becomes the highest priority: 'What do ERO expect?' (teacher 2, interview 2).

### Voice, power and the 'tyranny of the urgent'

Competing priorities were also regarded as diversions in relation to distributed leadership: 'Sometimes it is easier for the principal to do the task themselves ... as a time saver' (principal 1, interview 1). This 'tyranny of the urgent' may prevent a long-term commitment to the self-sustainability of the community. On the other hand, with competing urgent priorities, leaders may adopt a survival mode of 'crisis management' where collaborative thinking and 'relaxed' dialogue for problem solving (that allows for diverse voices, conflict and collective ownership of decisions) is not prioritised.

A real advantage of the PLD [professional learning and development day] was that there was time for dialogue. We don't ever get the whole management team together. It is a key issue for us that we are not finding/making the time for this in our normal work. (Principal 2, interview 2)

On the other hand, lack of time can also be used as an excuse to centralise power and avoid the messiness of the conflict and debate that arise when one tries to make space for different voices in a non-tokenistic way. This became particularly marked when participants approached the issue of involving students in curriculum-making and listening to student voice:

We have to meet student needs but they need to be able to articulate them. We need to listen to student feedback and what ways we can help them but I am not sure how to do this effectively. (Principal 4, interview 2)

With the 'tyranny of the urgent' and the difficulties of cross-cultural and cross-generational communication, staff may construct the involvement of students as something that already happens in 'business as usual':

Running records is a form of student voice. There are many ways of hearing what students are thinking and what they want and need. We should not undervalue the observational role of the teacher. (Deputy principal 2, interview 1)

The last quotations raise important questions. How can students learn to speak in an environment where their voices have traditionally been silenced? How can school staff learn to listen carefully to these voices without imposing convenient interpretations or forcing students to express only what is expected? How can students learn to articulate their needs in the language of school staff? How can school staff learn to interpret the messages of students if they do not fit the words, categories and protocols in their own language? How can we start thinking about student participation in decision-making processes if teachers' voices are still not fully incorporated into those processes?

Some schools seemed to be moving in directions where these questions emerge in authentic contexts of student involvement:

In the first term we did asTTle testing and shared the results with students and then had a three way meeting with parents. We have dropped the structure of traditional teacher—parent interviews. We look at the whole child—there is more openness and we ask what the child enjoys and include this and so it's not a 'you need to take this cod liver oil tablet' approach. (Assistant principal 2, interview 1)

The risk in implementing the NZC is that teachers narrowly restrict what students should say in order to avoid 'taking the cod liver oil tablet' themselves. Principal 4 showed a genuine commitment to facing this issue in his school and moving towards student leadership. However he acknowledged the challenging nature of the task:



Student input is high in primary with more choice, more inquiry learning and more co-construction. [It is] not where I want it [in my school]. We do more feedback-feed forward. I would like to develop student leadership skills so they are able to give teachers more feedback on learning. Our conferences are not quite student led . . . but we are moving that way. (Principal 4, interview 1)

A few leaders who feared sharing power with students also seemed to be confused about what this meant: 'Teachers don't really get what "students in charge of their own learning" means' (teacher 5, interview 1). Others, meanwhile, showed a deeper reflection on this key idea:

The curriculum is going to be more student-centred and it is going to be good when everyone grasps that. Many think it means 'student self-centred'—of course it doesn't. (Teacher 1, interview 2)

A commitment to listening to, and acting on, student voice reflects the difficulties of power-sharing within formal school leadership and between school leadership and the teachers. There is still a lot of work to be done in terms of supporting leaders to make spaces for teachers' (and students') participation, as well as to equip teachers and students with self-confidence, tools, languages and skills to bring themselves to the conversations.

On a positive note, my interviews with participants and observations in schools also show very promising signs of shifts in leadership styles and approaches to collective ownership:

We have more shared responsibility for student learning.... More open classrooms. We have PLG's (professional learning groups) . . . With readings, research and professional input to challenge our thinking. (Principal 3, interview 1)

I have changed ... I am trying to have teachers explore their areas of interest (Principal 2, interview 1)

Staff meetings are more interactive and lively because we are trying to role model the things ourselves. We treat them as 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. (Principal 3, interview 1)

HoDs are no longer just budget holders. There is an expectation they will lead learning. The principal must be empowering and give opportunities to middle leaders. Someone with no position of leadership can step up and lead an area e.g., literacy. (Principal 4, interview 1)

## Personal reflections: Shifting my thinking

Identifying shifts in my conceptualisations of knowledge and learning over 2009 and 2010 is a challenging task. It is difficult to identify what was there before, or the shifts that happened before the project. The main trigger for shifts in my thinking was a personal crisis which coincided with the timing of the research. Having moved to a different environment (I am working in the Middle East now) I can see that some things are different in the way I think about myself, and the strategies I use to relate to others. This difference is evident when I am engaging with expatriates and observing their strategies for coping with a new environment and when I am observing working relationships in schools. I will use a narrative approach to summarise my learning process during 2009 within four broader themes: multiple truths, walking the talk, changing others or helping others to change, and divergent thinking.

### Multiple truths

During 2009, I have reflected much more on how people develop meanings and ideas. It seems to me that once people have determined ideas that are right for them, many then think their ways are 'right' and therefore right for everyone. In my thinking before the project, I had an understanding of, and empathy for, various perspectives but tended to believe that there were universal truths, and that if everyone had all the information, they would come to the same conclusion. I now understand that different people will come to different 'right' ways of doing things, that there are multiple truths. Perception is reality.

Acknowledging multiple truths and pathways has been very unsettling. Whether of necessity (because of the personal difficulties) or through development in my thinking (in my new identity as a researcher), I feel that I have become much more comfortable in living with uncertainty, diversity and multiple truths. While some of my old ways of thinking and behaving have been challenged and no longer 'work' for me, I have gained a fresh understanding of the challenge involved in changing deeply held beliefs and thinking. One of these changes relates to the idea that people can see what is obvious to me. An example from this case study was my attempt

to involve participants in the preparation of the professional learning and development day—my assumption was that school leaders and I would be coming from a similar starting point (i.e., the need for further reflection on the NZC), which was not the case.

### Walking the talk and blind spots

If people's views are coloured by their experiences, values and thinking (both conscious and unconscious), there will always be areas that fall outside their experience. This has made me more aware of the need to understand the reasons why people may hold certain views. At the same time, I have become more aware that people (including myself) often say one thing and do something else without realising the contradiction. Even people who are quick to judge the incongruence between espoused and enacted theories are frequently blind to their own inconsistencies. Throughout the year, I tried very hard to reflect on my behaviour. Sometimes I have had feedback which I found very hard to reconcile with what I thought I actually did. I believe that I have developed my skills of self-reflection and know myself better. However, I do not always have a good understanding of what triggers my behaviour or thinking. Living with this blind spot makes self-reflection very problematic for me. I can see why there will always be a blind spot – there will always be things that I 'don't know I don't know' and it is the same for others, which makes every perspective 'partial'. Therefore, others will judge my behaviour through their own partial lenses and my own perspective on what I do will always be partial. According to Haidt's (2006, p. 71) 'naïve realism', we tend to see the biases of others but not our own. The idea that 'knowing everything' is impractical makes me feel pulled between learning to live with uncertainty and incomplete knowledge and blind biases, on one hand, while having to make decisions and taking action, on the other. It would be useful to have help in understanding behaviour—but I suspect that many blind spots are deeply embedded in our subconscious and would be very difficult to change. Acknowledging and exploring these beliefs would be a start (Alsup, 2005; Bendixen, 2010).

### Changing others or equipping others to change

Although one cannot change another person, a person may change as a result of something you do. Effecting change in others is an explicit part of the job of an adviser and a leader—the two roles that I have recently worked in. A key goal in my work, and of my involvement in this research, has been about improving my ability to effect change (i.e., provoke learning) in others. I grappled with my role in this process. On one hand, I was trying to appreciate difference and multiple truths and, on the other, I was trying to challenge folks to think differently and consider significant change in their thinking. I felt a bit of a conflict between roles. It was a test for me to develop patience and understanding, to think about best way for me to challenge people's thinking and methods and to interrogate my own views that there was a 'way' things should be done. I still wrestle with this.

### Divergent thinking

This project has provided a space where I felt encouraged to explore types of knowledge that are not easily articulated in language. I have always had a sense of knowing about things that I cannot necessarily articulate and communicate: things that I know by 'feeling'—tacit knowledge. Although they are not rationalised, they seemed valid to me. Many times in my career this 'feeling-knowledge' diverged from the dominant 'thinking-knowledge' of my colleagues. My attempts to articulate the feeling-knowledge were often met with impatience and a lack of interest. I often felt silenced. On the other hand, I do understand that my inability to articulate feeling-knowledge within thinking-knowledge language could be very frustrating. I kept trying to find ways to improve this and working in the TRLI group has helped immensely.

In the process of becoming more aware of my own thinking, I have come to realise that some of my thinking is out of kilter with that of colleagues and prevailing paradigms. I have gained a greater appreciation of what it is like to be and think differently from those in the mainstream and the 'powers that be'. Members of the TRLI project team often communicated similar ideas and difficulties. They accepted my divergent thinking and helped me to articulate my ideas. I like to hope that I have become a better listener and a more understanding person as a result of this experience.

# Conclusions

Through my interpretation of the data, I have come to realise that the NZC challenges us to think very deeply about core values and beliefs and how these might look in practice. The changes implicit in the NZC are certainly more far reaching than I had thought and the effort to make the required changes has perhaps been underestimated. The data suggest that grappling with these issues may be something that we are only just beginning to consider. Despite evidence that a few people were naturally inclined to participate in such processes in my project, school structures, hierarchies and other mechanisms seemed to work against autonomous thought and shared leadership and ownership. However, there is also evidence that distributed leadership is emerging as a desired goal. In my view we need to question the long-held views of the centrist role of the principal (Crowther et al., 2002). Principals are trying to do this but they need more support because it involves changing identities for them and teachers (Alsup, 2005; Bendixen, 2010). Such shifts can sometimes conflict with expectations about leadership that emerge from boards of trustees, communities and government agencies. It will be interesting to observe how traditional hierarchies of leadership in schools will be renegotiated in the future.

In practical terms, the research process showed that participating schools are getting on with the task of implementing the revised NZC. However there are signs that this may be happening without a strong, deep or shared understanding, or a cohesive plan. Most schools had developed their 'visions' for what they wanted graduates to be, but few had gone the next step of asking what those visions meant for programmes and plans in any comprehensive way. The emphasis has been largely on components of NZC. Much of the support offered has also been compartmentalised and there has been less focus on curriculum design and crossing of existing disciplinary boundaries. The traditional approach has been subject/discipline based. Broader cross-curricular interest or expertise to manage different approaches seemed rare skills among teachers and leaders and knowledge of alternative approaches was also unusual. Much of the change related to the NZC was implemented by only a few people in the school. There did not seem to be a strong sense that teachers and school leaders could be effective curriculum leaders within the 'new' NZC paradigm. Kotter (1995) argues for the importance of forming a powerful coalition and suggests that for change to be accomplished it takes three to five people leading the effort. Perhaps principals could benefit by increasing the size of their curriculum leadership groups.

While distributed leadership could bring about more cohesive and collaborative curriculum development, existing traditional and hierarchical modes of leadership (supported by accountability processes) create a strong constraint. In addition, teachers are often overloaded. Many resisted deeper, philosophical thinking in relation to the meaning of curriculum and its contested nature in schooling contexts (McGee, 1997). A few seemed to be disengaged with these and other changes. Some seemed to feel disempowered by what they perceived to be powerful players (i.e., senior leadership, the ministry or broader societal changes). Principals and middle managers could play an important role in empowering these teachers to negotiate their roles and identities differently. In the same way, a change of perception in school leadership could help principals and middle leadership to share leadership and ownership of curriculum development. It seems to me that, if this does not happen as a first step, the broader vision of involving learners and the wider community in curriculum decision-making will not be feasible.

The work of Drs Andreotti and Hipkins was provocative and challenged the thinking of many participants, but it was a brief encounter. Perhaps it would be a good idea to facilitate school access to academic researchers so that long-term partnerships can be supported. Further research on structures and organisational patterns of schools, as suggested by Beachum and Dentith (2004), would also be beneficial, especially in terms of how the implementation of the NZC might be changing how schools organise professional development, meetings, syndicate divisions, timetables, and team curriculum planning.

My original intention of using distributed leadership and 'knowledge as a noun' as starting points that could create the space for engagements with issues of equity, was just moderately successful. The approach taken in this case study of 'shifting thinking' tends to overlook affective patterns that shape behaviour. Recent studies in psychology, sociology and education propose that behaviour is conditioned by affect and that we often act

first and then rationalise our actions afterwards (Haidt, 2006; Nathanson, 1992; Skattebol, 2010). If this is true, then a better starting point would have been a combination of engagements with affect and cognition.

During this study I have witnessed a transformation in my own thinking. I have faced a major personal crisis and have come to question everything in my life. My thinking is still very much in a state of confusion and curiosity with a constant search for new answers. It has been a time of rigorous self-searching both personally and professionally and I find myself observing the behaviour of my colleagues and myself very intensely as I try to understand human behaviour more clearly.

One key insight that made a real difference for me is that there are many perspectives to anything, there are 'multiple truths', and life is full of paradoxes. I am more skilled at listening and hearing different perspectives. Some people are very black and white and very sure they have the answers. Others seem more flexible and more open to recognising this diversity or, at least, tolerating it, even if they do not understand it. Another important insight has been that many people talk about things as if there are single answers for problems and there are simple causes and effects. I have long thought that things are extremely complex:

To think well means to perceive in multidimensional ways. It is the essence of thinking with integrity. The word 'integrity' come from the noun 'integer' which signifies wholeness, entirety, completion. To think and ultimately act with integrity, we have to integrate the multiple reasons and dimensions of our incredibly complex world. (Peck, 1998, p. 60)

I have come to realise that to work with others effectively I need a good knowledge of how they (and I) see the world. I need to learn how to bring to the surface the culturally embedded deep-rooted values, habits, dispositions and beliefs that drive myself and others. I wonder what 'blinkers' I might still be wearing without realising. Applying all these conceptual understandings will hopefully help me be more effective in my work.

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