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**Lost in translation?  
Key Competencies from vision to  
reality**

**Deanna Johnston**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education,  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to a critical understanding of the place and purpose of key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007). The focus is on primary school children's perspectives on key competencies, with children's voices central to the empirical work. The findings highlight issues such as extreme individualism and competition, and their impact on social collective education ideals such as community and co-operation in curriculum and education.

The research question is: What, for children, is the place and purpose of key competencies in the curriculum?

Literature surrounding 21st century capabilities or key competencies in education mostly has its origins in the studies undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001, 2005). In 2010, the Ministry of Education (MoE) mandated *The New Zealand Curriculum* as official state policy. This policy document included five key competencies. The latter are described as "capabilities for living and lifelong learning" (p. 12), and they comprise: (1) thinking; (2) using language symbols and texts; (3) managing self; (4) relating to others; and (5) participating and contributing. Since 2010, ongoing school-based curriculum development has required schools to examine the purpose of the Curriculum's vision for education, including each school's interpretations of the competencies.

A qualitative research methodology approach was employed to address the question, and children's voice was central. Field work was undertaken in the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Five state primary schools, including both urban and semi-rural, were purposively selected. Six children from each of the five schools were research participants, and they were involved in pair and focus group interviews and observations. Ethical considerations included both consent and active student assent throughout the process. The children participants, at all times, were considered to be social agents with legitimate voices.

Two forms of analysis were applied to identify key findings. A thematic analysis was initially undertaken, followed by a conceptual analysis for greater illumination, based on Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning. Subsequent and deeper examination was framed by theory from the sociology of education; critical theory in particular was used to question the taken-for-granted or commonplace in issues surrounding key competencies. Critical theory enabled a probing analysis into the social realities of children, who are 'constructed' in the school context.

Progressive philosophies and politics of education theory were used to look ‘below the surface’ and more deeply examine the contextual forces that influence children’s interpretations of key competencies. The progressive education philosophies of the late John Dewey and Paulo Freire contribute to the thesis. Dewey’s and Freire’s philosophies challenge the role of curriculum, and the position that schools have in providing curricula that assist children to develop social democratic or collective capabilities. Additionally, the late John Codd’s (1995) ‘materialist conception of the policy text’ helped an examination of the ‘contexts of interpretation’ in relation to the key competencies.

A key finding was that the participants perceived that key competencies are for individual success and future employment purposes (i.e., are market-driven with less collective ideals). Global imperatives, based on individualism at a macro level, appear to have influenced the children’s ‘context of construction’ of policy text, and ‘contexts of interpretation’ about key competencies. A concern raised in the thesis is for the need for more social democratic collective education ideals in curriculum, which arguably, would better serve the needs of young children.

The study’s findings add to knowledge in New Zealand and the international curriculum theory field. The research contributes critical understandings on the key competencies in relation to collective and individual emphases in the curriculum. The unique focus is on the inclusion of children’s voice in empirical work.

## DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to my mum, who came to New Zealand from Western Samoa in the early 1960s – she has always been the strong woman behind her six children.*

*To my big sister – you encouraged me at the start 1965 – 2012.*

*To God – always the lamp at my feet.*

*To my babe and my boys – my love and my joy.*

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# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION: KEY COMPETENCIES, CURRICULUM AND THE MARKET

### Introduction

Key competencies, curriculum and the market are central concepts in this thesis. The work centres on empirical research; it draws on children's voice and brings their views and experiences into curriculum policy debate.

The central question is:

**What, for children, is the place and purpose of the key competencies in the curriculum?**

In addressing this question, the thesis has two main parts. The first part shares data findings and includes a thematic analysis of the children's voices about the key competencies by drawing on Delors' four pillars of learning (Delors, 1996). In the second part of the thesis, a philosophical lens is applied to the findings, drawing on the progressive education theories of John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

Key competencies figure as a recent 'education ideal' in the curriculum, and they have particular relevance in a climate of continuous education policy reform. It has been argued that education is being reshaped to fit a market ideal – forewarned by Karl Marx's prediction as the 'commercialisation' of education (Marginson, 1995, p. 294). Key competencies are located in education *and* associated with the market, as future-focused performance ideals for New Zealand's 'knowledge-based economy' (MoE, 2005, p. 5). The 'educational ideal' argument for 'shaping' children to fit 21st century, future-focused learning approaches provides for ongoing discussion and debate among researchers and theorists (Gilbert, 2005). The effects of globalisation, technological advancements and markets have influenced the reshaping of education, and not always for the better. Market effects are a "normalizing and competitive system" designed only to benefit the individual (Marginson, 1995, p. 295). These market effects can lead to unsettling implications for the "social democratic values of collective responsibility" in curriculum; such values have been long held in Aotearoa New Zealand's progressive education system (Codd, 2008, p. 14). In contrast, progressive education theorists such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire assert the importance of social democratic ideals in the curriculum, ideals which they believe better serve children's needs.

Shaping the ideal 21st education system to what it should, or should not be, is not new (Delors, 1996, 2000). While consensus for reform continues to be revisited (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013), the challenges of re-thinking the place and purpose of key competencies in the 21st century education system are important (Rychen & Salganik, 2003).

New Zealand schools face the challenge of preparing their children for a changing 21st century education landscape. As part of this challenge, schools are required to interpret *The New Zealand Curriculum* and implement their own local 'education ideals' (MoE, 2007, pp. 7-13). Such interpretation challenges reflect the growing demands on schools to align local school curriculum practices with the 21st century education ideal espoused in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

### **Key assumption**

This thesis operates on the assumption that primary schools have been given the choice to interpret and implement the state's policy – *The New Zealand Curriculum* – according to their own diverse local contexts. Aligning these local interpretations – from policy to practice – arguably, is not necessarily trouble-free. School's interpretation of what curriculum is for, and how curriculum will be developed, is contestable. Schools have been required to interpret the intentions of the *Curriculum's* core driving vision and other components such as the values, principles, key competencies and effective pedagogy, as part of their design and review processes. Based on these local interpretations, it is assumed that the Year 5 and 6 students in this research will have made their own interpretations of the key competencies, i.e., schooling views and experiences about the place and purpose of the key competencies. The concepts 'individual' and 'collective' are assumed inherent features of the key competencies. Therefore, consideration is given to these salient and competing features.

This introduction shares contextual information about the research project and the key competencies (KCs), as introduced in *The New Zealand Curriculum: For English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13* (NZC) (MoE, 2007, p. 38).

### **Context**

New Zealand's education system has three levels or sectors (<http://www.education.govt.nz/home/education-in-nz/>). The sectors are: (1) early childhood education, guided by the curriculum document *Te Whariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) – from birth to school entry age; (2) primary and secondary school education guided by *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education,

2007) – from five to 19 years of age (school attendance is compulsory from six to 16 years of age); and (3) organisations or institutions that provide higher and vocational education e.g., universities that offer Degrees, Certificates and Diplomas in a large choice of specialised subjects.

From age five to 19, school children enrolled in New Zealand state schools are currently classified by their age, according to the Ministry of Education’s level classification system (<http://www.education.govt.nz/home/education-in-nz/>). There are 13 year groups that locate children, i.e., Year 1 is typically the student’s first year at primary school and Year 13 is generally the student’s final year at secondary school. Children in Years 5 and 6 are typically aged 9 to 11.

In 2007, schools in Aotearoa New Zealand received a new statement of curriculum intent – *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) (MoE). In 2010, this latest curriculum, *The New Zealand Curriculum* became official policy for national curriculum implementation. *The New Zealand Curriculum* is made up of a national vision for learning, values, principles, and key competencies, typically referred to the ‘front end’, and nine learning areas with achievement objectives located in the ‘back end’ of the document. There are five key competencies or “capabilities for living and life-long learning” identified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007, pp. 12, 13): (1) thinking; (2) language, symbols and texts; (3) managing self; (4) relating to others and; (5) participating and contributing.

In this current and most recent curriculum, described as a “framework rather than a detailed plan”, *The New Zealand Curriculum* sets the direction for teaching and learning in New Zealand (p. 37). Schools and teachers are charged with the responsibility of interpreting *The New Zealand Curriculum* to clarify their own education ideals and priorities, with the design of localised teaching and learning programmes. The notion of ‘key competencies’ appears 31 times throughout the document, and they are emphasised as “providing the basis for teaching and learning within and across schools”, and they are to be developed “at all levels” (MoE, 2007, p. 37). The key competencies are intended for all students, are considered both ‘means and ends’, and must link within and across the curriculum learning areas (MoE, 2007, p. 16). The dominant placing of key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* requires the interpretations of their purpose by schools and teachers, which ultimately leads to the design of curricula for children.



## Policy

Policy texts and official documents laid out by New Zealand's Ministry of Education set the direction for education and curriculum on a national (meso) level. For schools, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) is the latest official policy text, and therefore it is reflective of government discourse that stipulates its direction for education. As a policy document, the *Curriculum* impacts the field in this research; this brings about the questioning of the state's agenda for locating key competencies in the school curriculum.

The notion of 21st century learning is reflected as the 'education ideal' in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In particular, this is reflected in its vision statement concerning "what we want for our young people": that children be "confident, connected, lifelong learners", and in its central components: the values, principles and key competencies (2007, pp. 7, 8).

Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are self-governing, in their own unique contexts. Schools have the responsibility to review and design their school-based curriculum (Bolstad, 2004).

School-based curriculum development (SBCD) is a term used to describe the review, interpretation and development process that New Zealand schools typically go through for localising the core components or 'front end', and the 'back end' of the NZC (Bolstad, 2004). Schools' design and review of teaching and learning programmes are based on local interpretations of the national curriculum's vision, values, principles, key competencies, and the nine learning areas in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

However, the national expectation is that, while one component becomes the central organisational feature, the other components must be deliberately included in school curriculum programmes. The three main implementation phases schools typically progress through in the design and review of school-based curriculum include: understanding the intentions, direction and obligations of the national curriculum; clarifying and exploring meanings for practice; and re-shaping the structure of written and practised curriculum (Flockton, 2009a, 2009b).

In New Zealand's egalitarian history, educational policymaking was once a "democratic consensual process" and mostly free of politics (Adams et al., 2000, p. 147). Following the global economic downturn in the 1970s, significant changes occurred in the education system. The year 1989 saw the beginning of the fourth Labour government's changes to the administration of New Zealand's education system; this was achieved through restructuring, decentralisation, and an enthusiasm for individual freedom and the market (Dale, 2008; Kelsey,

1997; Robertson & Dale, 2002). These radical changes, underpinned by a market-driven approach of competitive individualism, are hallmarks of the political ideology of neoliberalism.

Liberalism was an economic philosophy with origins associated with European liberal scholars in the 1930s. The philosophy resurged in the 1970s/1980s ([http://eepat.net/hayek\\_and\\_education](http://eepat.net/hayek_and_education)). Consequently, neoliberalism is a political ideology or a new form of ‘liberalism’, whose advocates emphasise individual freedom and choice, economic freedom, market-driven principles with the lessening of government controls, e.g., decentralisation, privatisation, deregulation, and free trade to increase the role of the private sector in the economy (Codd, 2008).

Educational policy changes, driven by neoliberal ideologies, came into full force throughout the 1990s. The market-driven ideals were reflected in the discourse of the policy texts and official documents promulgated by New Zealand’s government changes to the education system. The changes were to have significant educational implications for communities, schools, teachers and importantly, the direction of curriculum for children.

## **Curriculum and politics**

Curriculum is not a neutral body of knowledge; it is never free from the influences of society (Adams et al., 2000; Carpenter, 2001). Curriculum is the product of diverse social contexts, practices and interactions. Governments are the main agents in society; they direct policy reform and policy decision-making processes. The decisions of past New Zealand governments, and in particular of those in this 21st century, have directed new education ideals for schools.

In 1999, the politics of the then Labour-led government announced its future-focused education ideal: the “vision for the 21st century for New Zealand is of a knowledge-based, high skills, high income, high employment economy ... To achieve this will mean stimulating world-class innovation and skills development capable of sustaining New Zealand as a leading knowledge-based economy” (Hope & Stephenson, 2005, p. 29).

No society is free from the politics of knowledge – what knowledge is *for* and whose knowledge is *right*, continues to be vulnerable to the distortion of politics (Apple, 1993). Competing forces that influence what knowledge is *for* and whose knowledge is *right* for children in the 21st century, urge educators and principals such as myself to continually place curriculum “on the front burner of our consciousness” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 3).

## **Key competencies**

Politics, therefore, cannot be separated from education in the 21st century. In relation to this research, what is considered knowledge means the inclusion of key competencies as capabilities for ‘living, learning and lifelong learning’ in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Education researchers and theorists have identified a number of conflicting factors about the notion of 21st century capabilities, or key competencies, and their place and purpose in curriculum (Carr et al., 2008; Hipkins, Bolstad, Boyd, & McDowall, 2014; Hipkins & McDowall, 2013; Reid, 2006; Rutherford, 2004).

Key competencies in education documents are clearly associated with market ideals (MoE, 2005). Hallmarks of neoliberalism such as individual freedom, choice and competition now filter into the education system. Critics of market ideals highlight that “not all social groups come to the educational market as equals” (Brown & Lauder, 1997, p. 177).

The critical attention in this thesis is drawn towards whose interests are being served. My interest and concern also lies with market ideals and potential influences on children and the *Curriculum* in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Curriculum, Dewey and Freire**

The education philosophies of the late John Dewey (1859-1952) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997) add an additional and important dimension to this thesis. Key concepts from both of their philosophies are borrowed to highlight the need to reassert the advantage of progressive education ideals in the curriculum, which, arguably, better serve the needs of children.

There are four relevant concepts that parallel in the philosophies of Dewey and Freire. Firstly, Dewey’s concept of *mis-education* and Freire’s *banking* concept of dominant knowledge – *corpo consciente*. These two concepts highlight a rejection of passive learning for young children (i.e., traditional view of education). The second two are Dewey’s *growth* – dialogue and community, and Freire’s concept of critical thinking – *conscientizacao*.

Dewey insisted schools be places of growth. He held high expectations for the educational experiences of both children and teachers. The development of moral character traits and conjoint communicated experience are two elements of Dewey’s educational ideals; they align with social co-operative capabilities, and fit with collective aims in curriculum.

Central to Freire's progressive education ideals is a concern for emancipatory education, necessary to overcome the *oppression of knowledge transmission*, or the *banking* of dominant knowledge. Freire declared the transmission of dominant knowledge was a suppression of the child's intellectual growth, based on the assumption that the child could become a mere "receptor" or collector of knowledge (Freire, 2000, p. 70).

These key concepts highlight an arguable need for more collective or social democratic education ideals for children and curriculum. In the latter part of the thesis these concepts are used as lenses to more deeply examine the findings.

### **Interests and role of the researcher**

My primary relationships, as principal and researcher, are with children and teachers, teaching and learning. My passion for wanting to be a teacher began in the early 1980s as a secondary school student volunteering work with young children in a primary school who were referred to as 'failing readers'. The path of my educational career has its origins as a primary school teacher under the former Education Board, pre-*Tomorrow's Schools*, teaching and leading through decades of curriculum change in the 1990s, through to the present day as a principal, with Samoan and pālagi heritage, leading my second low-decile primary school.

My interest in education reform links back to when I recall being appointed as a school staff representative on the Board of Trustees during the early introduction of school self-governance with *Tomorrow's Schools*. Teaching and leading in primary schools with a diverse range of student populations throughout the 1990s and in the 2000s, has sustained my passion for curriculum. In this time I have been involved in curriculum change processes with teachers. These changes have intensified at an unsettling rate and I have witnessed fragmented outcomes for schools and children.

My interest in the politics of education originates with being inspired by course readings and teachings about educational policy during my Bachelor of Education studies at the Auckland College of Education. New Zealand theorist John Codd featured in those early readings. Recently, my curiosity around the changes to the curriculum work of principals and teachers and for children has heightened. This can be largely credited to my reading about critical theory, critical pedagogy, empowerment and social justice narrative underpinnings in curriculum, from writers such as Dewey, Freire and Kincheloe.

One fundamental question that teachers and principals such as myself have asked over the years, is, why has the education system consistently failed certain groups of children, and what can we do to change that? Further questions stem from this, such as how has educational reform in the past 30 years come to impact on the content of curriculum and challenge teaching and learning in New Zealand primary schools? Why has curriculum come to emphasise how much children know and can do – their outputs and self-managing capabilities, e.g., assessment of learning such as the mandatory National Standards in New Zealand, and the growing presence of key competencies linked to educational pathways? Where are the explicitly emphasised teachings of moral social and collective capabilities in the curriculum e.g., co-operation, community, tolerance, open-mindedness, caring, and empathy? A passionate area of leadership in my background – the social sciences (earlier known as social studies) – interestingly appears to have become a very thinned out, minimised area of essential teaching and learning in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

As teacher, principal and researcher, I am now in pursuit of exposing the causes of educational challenges that force change upon curriculum, ultimately, and not always positively, impacting teachers' practice and children's schooling experiences. It is my hope that new insights and understandings from this thesis will offer renewed ways of critiquing the purpose of key competencies in the curriculum.

### **Significance of research topic**

The research is designed to contribute towards the domain of pedagogical knowledge (teaching and learning). This topic is perceived as relevant for primary school teachers and professional leaders, as part of their own local critical review of curriculum and pedagogical intentions. The results of this research may have school policy implications for identifying education ideals that emphasise more social, collective underpinnings in curriculum review and design. The results may also assist with critical curriculum design and review that emphasises more socially responsive, rather than market-driven, development of children's capabilities for the 21st century. Importantly, the results may provide impetus for school-based critical conversations about what is the place and purpose of key competencies in curriculum. For these reasons, the research highlights issues such as extreme individualism and competition and its impact on the social collective education ideals such as community and co-operation in curriculum.

## **Thesis structure**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Throughout, the views and experiences of the key competencies are captured in the voices of Year 5 and 6 state primary school children in the North Island of New Zealand.

**This chapter** provides an introduction and background to the thesis question.

**Chapter Two** identifies and problematises the key competencies and their inclusion in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Literature relevant to the research topic is discussed and summarised. The selected literature illustrates the emergence of key competencies both globally and in local New Zealand primary school settings, and further places this research study in context. John Dewey and Paulo Freire's works are further signalled.

**Chapter Three** describes the methodology employed to address the research question. The philosophical, theoretical and methodological frameworks underpinning the research are presented. Critical theory is discussed in this chapter.

**Chapter Four** captures the voices of Year 5 and 6 students from five state primary schools in the North Island of New Zealand. The children's interpretations of the key competencies are presented in the findings.

**Chapter Five** presents a conceptual analysis of the findings. Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning: (1) *learning to know*; (2) *learning to do*; (3) *learning to be*; and (4) *learning to live together* are utilised.

**Chapter Six** provides findings and theory/philosophical (Dewey and Freire) based discussion about key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The key arguments of the thesis emerge in this chapter.

**Chapter Seven** concludes the thesis with a summary of the research findings. This chapter also discusses the thesis implications, limitations and recommendations.

In the following chapter, Chapter Two, a review of the literature addresses the background to the thesis question, by examining relevant literature. The chapter is guided by a range of questions which link to and/or underpin the research question presented above.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter contextual information about the research project and the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) was shared (MoE, 2007). In this chapter, key literature is reviewed to draw attention to perspectives and debates on curriculum, the origins, impetus and use of key competencies (or KCs) both internationally and nationally, theoretical perspectives of children as learners, the emergence of student or children's voice in the curriculum, and the education philosophies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. A critical examination of the literature helps to illuminate the theoretical context and histories related to the thesis question:

**What, for children, is the place and purpose of the key competencies in curriculum?**

The aim of this literature review is to address the background to the thesis question, by examining literature relevant to the international and local impetus of key competencies (KCs) included in the school curriculum. Unique to this study is that children's voice is sought in addressing the thesis question. Therefore, the notion of student voice in curriculum (or children's voice used in this thesis) will feature in this review (student voice in research is shared in the next chapter, Chapter Three, Methodology).

The review of the literature will also highlight the gap which the research findings are intended to fill; and therefore the significance of this study.

### **Literature review questions**

This review is guided by the following questions: (1) What is curriculum?; (2) what are the origins and definitions of key competencies?; (3) what research has been undertaken on the use and impact of the key competencies?; (4) what is student voice in curriculum?; and (5) what evidence is there of key competencies and children's voice in curriculum? The review closes with further discussion to the ideas of progressive education philosophers, John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

## **What is curriculum?**

The term *curriculum* has been explained and defined in various ways and by a range of groups in society, not just educators. Curriculum might be thought of as “the stuff that teachers do and what everyone else thinks they know how to do” (Jesson, 2008, p. 6). Another explanation of curriculum is the entire schooling experiences a child has as a result of the educational provisions made in and out of the school (Kelly, 2009). Complex explanations and debates about curriculum have ensued, making it a “very slippery concept” because it is based on different theories of knowledge, or ways of viewing the world *and* children (Jesson, 2008, p. 67).

Two views can be taken when thinking about knowledge and curriculum for children. First, curriculum can be viewed as official policy documents, content knowledge, descriptions, procedures, lesson plans and assessment tasks – in other words, a set of predetermined deliverables. This is a prescriptive view of curriculum – to equate content matter, planning and delivery is suggestive of a ‘transmit and receive’ approach of predetermined knowledge (Kelly, 2009). Such a prescriptive view of curriculum can be problematic, as it struggles to be inclusive of social democratic and moral elements in school curriculum, elements of children’s ‘human life’ or holistic development (Kelly, 2009). An example of social democratic elements in curriculum is the emphasis on developing children’s critical thinking and co-operative capabilities, which can be used for challenging and questioning in their schooling experiences (Kelly, 2009). In contrast to this is a broader view of curriculum, one that is not confined to prescription. Instead, a critical justification of the purposes of curriculum can be the focus (Jesson, 2008; Kelly, 2009).

### *Other names for curriculum*

Curriculum has various names, takes on various forms in schools, and produces a range of experiences for children. Sometimes these experiences do not best serve children. The ‘official’ school curriculum is also known as the ‘planned’ curriculum – the learning and teaching practices set out by each school, whereas the ‘received’ curriculum is the sum of what children experience in ‘reality’ (Kelly, 2009). The ‘formal’ curriculum can be described as the timetabling of specific subjects, and the ‘informal’ curriculum can be defined as those extra-curricular activities both accessible and inaccessible to children in schools (Kelly, 2009). The ‘hidden’ or ‘unintended’ curriculum can be described as the teaching and learning that does or does not take place, but is experienced by the children anyway, e.g., what children ‘receive’ or interpret – spoken or not spoken, enacted or not enacted – in the school context (Jesson, 2008).



The purposes of curriculum then, cannot be confined to the official (planned) curriculum. There needs to be critical and careful consideration of what potentially become the ‘received’ messages for children, and whether these messages best serve children. In the classroom and school contexts, the implications of what happens between the planned and the received curriculum for children requires careful and critical focus from teachers and principals such as myself. In other words, what purposes are planned or intended, and then what potentially becomes reality for children in their experiences (Kelly, 2009)?

Curriculum planning is not merely deriving knowledge or content to be ‘delivered’ to children, which suggests a ‘transmit’ model (Kelly, 2004). Also important are the *intentions* or assumptions made in the process of curriculum planning, and the values that underlie the practices and are then implemented in schools and classrooms (Kelly, 2004).

In the classroom context, the teacher is part of the process of interpreting and implementing curriculum; she/he has the responsibility of carrying out lessons derived from the school’s official or planned curriculum. These are experienced by the children, and such experiences include the ‘hidden’ curriculum, the by-product of the school’s official curriculum (Nuthall, 2007).

The education system and the official curriculum are devices by which a society prepares its children for adulthood. Curriculum, then, may be viewed as the battleground of competing influences and ideologies (Kelly, 2009, p. 201). Important questions become: Who controls the selection of particular knowledge in curriculum? What knowledge forms curriculum, and what knowledge is left out, and why? Curriculum has the powerful potential to reproduce inequality; thus teachers should be critically aware of how curriculum is shaped. In today’s educational context, as teacher workloads intensify, a potential risk surfaces where teachers become technocratic or deliverers of prescribed curriculum (Carpenter et al., 2001).

In relation to the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, each competency has been prescribed as part of the official curriculum. In relation to the research, schools and teachers make interpretations of their meaning as they plan and implement curriculum work which children ‘receive’ or experience.

### **Key competencies in the national curriculum**

The national curriculum, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, is the official curriculum from which schools derive ‘school curriculum’, or school-based curriculum. The professional teacher works

within the parameters of national policy, and school-designed curriculum to inform classroom practice which, ideally, meets the needs of learners. In all spheres, from a national curriculum, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, to the school-based curriculum, to the classroom curriculum, the child experiences both the official and hidden curricula (Nuthall, 2007).

The purposes of, and the potential ‘received’ experiences from, the inclusion of key competencies in the official curriculum, require critical and careful consideration by educators, especially in a climate of education reform and in terms of pedagogy and curriculum development processes. National and international education reform in the past 12 years, concerning the development of key competencies, has resulted in just a little more than one page in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007, p. 12).

The key competencies in the NZC and their curriculum pathway alignment are recommended for adoption across the whole school sector (early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary) (MoE, 2007, p. 42). There are reiterations of, and references to, key competencies in relation to purposes and planning throughout the policy document, including for tertiary education and employment.

Five key competencies are identified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007, p. 7). Together they are referred to as “capabilities for living and lifelong learning” and they are: (1) thinking; (2) language symbols and texts; (3) managing self; (4) relating to others; and (5) participating and contributing. The curriculum document states:

People use these competencies to live, learn, work, and contribute as active members of their communities. More complex than skills, the competencies draw also on knowledge, attitudes, and values in ways that lead to action. They are not separate or stand-alone.

They are the key to learning in every learning area. The development of the competencies is both an end in itself (a goal) and the means by which other ends are achieved. (p. 12)

While espoused to be *the key to learning in every learning area*, it is not made explicit in *The New Zealand Curriculum* what exactly are the *key* learning or knowledge purposes that underlie the key competencies. The three-stage design and interpretation process for curriculum learning (national, school, and class) is left up to schools.

The learning or knowledge areas included in the document are: English, the Arts, Health and Physical Education, Learning Languages, Mathematics and Statistics, Science, Social Sciences and Technology (MoE, 2007, pp. 16-33). In a primary school context (the focus in this research

study), interpretations of the purpose and place of key competences, as well as what knowledge is carried in these interpretations as they are implemented within and across the learning areas, are the responsibilities of each school.

It can be argued that critical and careful thinking from teachers and principals is needed when interpreting key competencies as part of a three-stage process of designing school-based curricula (Bolstad, 2004). Critical and careful thinking can pertain to identifying the underlying assumptions of KCs, which are intended for children to “live full and successful lives”, being “confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” (MoE, 2007, p. 7). Educators need to consider whether or not the KCs best serve the children of Aotearoa New Zealand. Each school as an organisation is responsible for, but may not necessarily have shared and owned understandings of, the purpose and place of key competencies for their pupils.

Earlier attention to the inclusion of key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* led to the introduction of teacher support material and discussion documents. These were supplied by the MoE in the official portal, and they are available to this day (see [www.keycompetencies.tki.org.nz](http://www.keycompetencies.tki.org.nz)).

The following section examines the origins and definitions of key competencies.

### **What are the origins and definitions of key competencies?**

The idea of competencies, competences, and capabilities are evident internationally, and in local contexts. For example, the concept of competencies has been associated with the introduction of the ‘Core Skills’ in Scotland, ‘English Key Skills’ in Britain, ‘Necessary Skills’ in America and the ‘Essential Skills’ in Australia (Reid, 2006).

There appears to be a common understanding across the literature that competencies or capabilities are more multifaceted than skills, that they encompass knowledge, attitudes and values, and that they are specific inextricable behaviours or actions needed by an individual for lifelong learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Boyd & Watson, 2006; Claxton, 1999; Gilbert, 2005). These particular behaviours can be described as continuously occurring over time, and they are influenced by the nature of people’s interactions within their context (Hipkins, Roberts, & Bolstad, 2007). Time and interaction imply that KCs are interconnected and transferable across other contexts, (Brewerton, 2004). The notion of dispositions (which is associated with the topic of capabilities) can be described as character traits that include attitudes, qualities, values, emotional tolerances or habits of mind (Claxton & Carr, 2004; Costa & Kallick, 2000).

New Zealand is not alone with its inclusion of competences, or in this research, key competencies, in the national curriculum. A wide body of literature attests to academic and professional discussion and debate in countries such as Britain, Australia and New Zealand. All have been impacted by the effects of globalisation. Globalisation can be defined as the increasing integration of countries as income, labour, trade and ideas become more portable (Bloom, 2004). The following paragraphs discuss international research, debate and global imperatives related to the origins of the development of key competencies.

Most literature attributes the origins of the KCs to the influence of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Established in 1961 and located in Paris, France, the OECD has 34 country members (including New Zealand). The objective of the OECD is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social wellbeing of people around the world. Governments work together in the OECD to seek solutions to common global issues. The key competencies were discussed originally in the publication *Key Competencies for a Successful Life and a Well Functioning Society* (Rychen & Salganik, 2003) and also in the OECD's (2005) *The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies*.

In 1997 planning began on the development of a framework for the definition and selection of key competencies (DeSeCo). This was co-ordinated by the OECD (2005) – a summary of this work was published in 2005. The motivation for the OECD framework stemmed from discussions and debates about what changes to education need to be considered for young people growing up in the 21st century. In addition, the OECD also set out to extend conversations through a framework of key competencies to inform assessment practice for the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) (OECD, 2005). The assessment focus of PISA includes the comparison of academic results in reading, writing, mathematics and problem solving (OECD, 2005).

International assessments are used by PISA for comparative purposes, such as determining the academic and economic success of a country (Hipkins et al., 2014). The comparison of assessment results, published by PISA, can influence education practices worldwide. New Zealand is affected by the outcomes of PISA's reports as it is a member of the OECD. Priestley (2002) describes the OECD as an example of a 'supranational' organisation, holding political influence over global issues such as education and curriculum in the 21st century (p. 127). He contends that, not only do supranational organisations force globalisation, they also benefit as organisations as a result of their influence on educational policy. New Zealand, as a member of the OECD, can be influenced by the incentives of international policy and discourse in the terms

of global economic pressure. The inclusion of key competencies in the proposed curriculum framework, linked to the comparison of educational and economic success, can imply a competitive and attractive goal for those OECD country members participating in assessment comparisons.

#### *Key competencies for a 'successful life' and a 'well-functioning society'*

The overarching question, 'what competencies do we need for a successful life and a well-functioning society?' gave impetus to the OECD (Rychen & Salganik, 2001). The resulting international OECD project for designing and selecting key competencies for a 'successful life' and a 'well-functioning society' came to be known as the DeSeCo Project – *The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* (OECD, 2005; Rychen & Salganik, 2001, 2002). With the support of the OECD, the DeSeCo project summarises the co-construction of a framework for key competencies (OECD, 2005).

Rather than seeking a set of prescribed lists, sharing a set of democratic ideals was claimed to be a vital part of the DeSeCo project's core process. Hence, a collaborative and multidisciplinary process was undertaken to seek contributions from various international experts and researchers, in an attempt to build consensus around identifying a set of key competencies 'for all'. The process highlighted the complexity in bringing about a coherent discourse for developing a normative framework for key competencies (Delors & Draxler, 2001). Nonetheless, multiple contributions subsequently informed Rychen and Salganik's (2001) publication of *Defining and Selecting Key Competencies*.

The sequence of activities to address their questions included an analysis of existing competence-related studies, concepts of competence clarification, and the inclusion of expert and stakeholder opinions. Further debates led to the first international symposium to attempt to establish networks and common ground around key competencies. The inclusion of country perspectives and expert analyses led to a second international symposium (Rychen & Salganik, 2002) and concluded with Rychen and Salganik's (2003) publication *Key Competencies for a Successful Life and a Well-functioning Society*.

### **Definitional debates on the concept of key competencies**

#### *The DeSeCo concept of key competencies*

The terms 'competence' and 'skill' are not synonymous; rather a competence is holistic in nature and defined "as the ability to meet a complex demand. Each competence corresponds to a

combination of interrelated cognitive and practical skills, knowledge and personal qualities such as motivation, values and ethics, attitudes and emotions. These components are mobilized together for effective action in a particular context” (Rychen, 2004, p. 321). The term ‘skill’ on its own is simplistic rather than holistic in nature and can be described as a learned ability to carry out a simple task with a pre-determined result. The term ‘key competency’ refers to a capability “more complex than skills” and encompasses “knowledge, attitudes and values” (MoE, 2007, p. 12) needed by all individuals to cope with the demands in any sphere of life.

The earlier work of the DeSeCo Project highlighted that multiple and diverse perspectives complicate the concept of ‘competence’ (Rychen & Salganik, 2001). Weinert (2001) maintained that interpretations of competencies vary, depending on which world view lens motivates the reader’s purpose. Therefore, to define key competencies for ‘all’ becomes a problematic approach. It is difficult to reach consensus as groups in society hold differing values for knowledge (Weinert, 2001). For instance, an economic worldview is usually concerned with labour market ideals such as sustainability and productivity, whereas in contrast, a sociological worldview can be concerned with education empowerment, voice, agency, and ideals such as social democracy and community.

Rychen and Salganik (2003) assert that key competencies are accessible to all individuals in society. Goody (2001) criticised the DeSeCo’s intention of seeking a set of competencies or life skills for all, because of the cultural diversity among groups of people and countries. Goody (2001) questioned whether an educational system underpinned by universal competencies was sufficient in meeting the needs of diverse groups in society. Furthermore, it was highlighted that equal success in life for all may imply necessary egalitarian objectives. Goody (2001) argues that the development of ‘successful’ competencies or life skills is not the sole domain of schools; they are also nurtured and influenced by family and community contexts.

According to Goody (2001), competencies for determining what is successful living, which reside in the control of schools, can potentially undermine and even threaten people’s cultural activities. Similarly, Claxton, Pollard, and Sutherland (2003) argue that what constitutes education for a successful life and a well-functioning society, is influenced by many complex cultural factors such as individual and family values and worldviews. Goody (2001) stressed that competencies which are politically and economically motivated would be to the advantage of developed countries, and arguably do not serve the interests of Third World countries or immigrants featuring in manual, unskilled labour markets.

Following the publication of *Defining and Selecting Key Competencies* (Rychen & Salganik, 2001), the World Bank Report (2002) provided a concept of lifelong learning which aligned with the impacts of globalisation raised in the DeSeCo Project (Ouane, 2002; Rychen & Salganik, 2001; Trier, 2002). As it is a supranational organisation, The World Bank's research findings have an underlying implication of being economically paramount, largely because economic opportunity is motivated by knowledge (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2005). That is, individuals need to be lifelong learners capable of adapting continuously to changed opportunities within the labour market, and in a knowledge economy such agency relies on the use and application of ideas (World Bank, 2002, p. v). In contrast, with changes in the labour market, Callieri (2001, p. 228) advocates that all, not just a privileged few, need more than knowledge and skills. That is, lifelong learners also need to draw on creative and interpretative capabilities.

### *Global imperatives*

The world is characterised by change, complexity and interdependence. International discourse for developing key competencies in the DeSeCo Project emphasised how complex and diverse societies and relationships have become as a result of change occurring at a macro level. These changes, or macro forces, can be viewed as having a direct impact on globalisation and modernisation (global issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six).

Rapid changes to technology (digital technologies) and increased modernisation have led to more interwoven personal relationships among individuals, often influencing interdependence beyond local or national communities. This rapidity of change, and greater forces at the macro level, arguably present both opportunity and challenge for communities in society, and for education ideals in curriculum. Researchers have highlighted that, as a key driver of globalisation, the increase of digital technologies brings with it challenges which do not necessarily result in equal access to, and benefit for, young people's education (e.g., finance, resourcing, professional development, geographic location) (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2005).

In response to globalisation, the DeSeCo project espoused that challenges in the 21st century cannot be addressed with last-century thinking, and hence, the necessity for key competencies. Individual demands will vary from time to time, and situation to situation. A set of key competencies, it is argued, are necessary for a successful life and a well-functioning society (Rychen & Salganik, 2001).

In order to be 'successful in life', to participate in a 'well-functioning society', and adapt in an interconnected world, individuals require specific skills and knowledge. These requisites need to

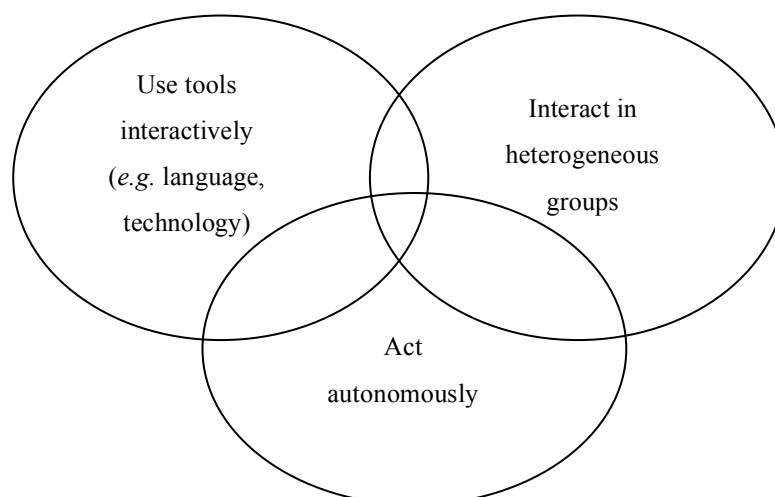
reflect a wide range of skills and knowledge so that they can, for example, be applied successfully in an interconnected labour market (OECD, 2005). The idea of competencies for individual success and a well-functioning society, presupposes personal agency and access to opportunities in education, the political arena or the labour market.

Inherent in the DeSeCo framework is a shift from taught knowledge and skills, towards a flexible, mobile, entrepreneurial set of competencies for individuals, who are seen to be capable of self-responsibility. In the selection of key competencies, the framework indicates “measurable benefits” for both “economic and social purposes” (OECD, 2005, p. 7). Also seen as important are “human capital” and “economic performance” (OECD, 2005, p. 7). The competencies are suggestive of aligning to a ‘knowledge society’ and a ‘knowledge economy’, which have links to market ideals (Gilbert, 2005). Competencies for ‘knowing and doing’ may be characterised by a changing labour market (OECD, 2005, p. 8). Individuals need to be mobile, flexible, entrepreneurial and self-responsible, to ‘fit’ market outcomes that nations may potentially seek.

#### *Culmination – a framework of key competencies*

The researchers who contributed to the DeSeCo project eventually came up with a framework for ‘key competencies’ which was grouped into three broad, interrelated categories and one central key competency: use tools interactively; interacting in heterogeneous groups; acting autonomously and reflectiveness (thinking – the central KC) (see Figure 1) (OECD, 2005, p. 5). Firstly, *using tools interactively* pertains to individuals needing to be critically reflective about the use of multi-literacies, or the effective use of communications in multiple situations. The vast and ready availability of technologies in our daily lives now facilitates a larger sphere of relationships. Secondly, *interacting in heterogeneous groups* is concerned with individuals needing to learn how to live and work with others, and have empathetic relationships for resolving conflicts. This is a requisite for social cohesion. Thirdly, *acting autonomously* refers to individuals needing to develop awareness of self, which leads to exercising self-empowerment and self-management in the various domains of life. Fourth, the notion of *reflectiveness* is an individual’s application of critical and creative thinking and action, including metacognitive processes. The latter is central to the key competencies in three broad categories in the DeSeCo Project (OECD, 2005) (see Figure 1 below). The OECD emphasises thinking or reflectiveness as central, ‘at the heart’ of the Key Competencies in Three Broad Categories (OECD, 2005, p. 8):





Source: (OECD, 2005, p. 5)

### **Figure 1: Key Competencies in Three Broad Categories**

The DeSeCo diagram above proposes that a combination or constellation of key competencies will be drawn upon in any one situation, in varying degrees. This diagram highlights a situated or context-embedded nature in the competencies. While the three categories appear to be attractive to educators, a universal fit of key competencies for all cultural contexts cannot be assumed.

While the framework indicated the importance of democratic ideals, and that individual competencies affect the goals of the collective, the discourse emphasis of OECD was on a set of competencies for the individual, rather than the collective (OECD, 2005, pp. 6, 7).

To end section two, attention is drawn to education ideals from a report written during a time of significant global change.

### **Education ideals – Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning**

It is important to consider what vision or education ideals best serve children in Aotearoa New Zealand. In relation to the key competencies in the curriculum, ‘lifelong learning’ ideals are interpreted by schools and teachers and experienced by children for a supposed ‘21st century’ education. Concepts from Delors’ UNESCO Report (1996) *The Treasure Within: The Four Pillars of Learning* – are shared below.

In 1996 the former European Commission Project President Jacques Delors presented a report to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), called *Learning: The Treasure Within*, highlighting four fundamental concepts for reshaping education

purposes, intended for guiding a holistic curriculum. The four types of learning are: (1) *learning to know* (acquisition of knowledge, e.g., literacy, numeracy and critical thinking); (2) *learning to do* (acquisition of skills, often linked to occupational success); (3) *learning to be* (personal development of the ‘whole person’: mind, spirit and body, creativity, aesthetics); and (4) *learning to live together* (the most emphasised pillar – social skills for understanding others through dialogue and an appreciation of diversity, shared values, respect, caring, empathy).

With the massification and intensification of information communication technology at the turn of the 20th century, Delors (1996) maintained that quantitative ‘acquisition of knowledge’ learning would not be appropriate for children in the 21st century. Furthermore, focus on any one pillar would be detrimental to the development of the others.

Delors (1996) highlights that traditional education for individuals focuses on the acquisition of knowledge and skills – ‘transmit and receive’, consistent with ‘just-in-case’ learning (Dale, 2008). Traditional forms of knowing or ‘just in case’ assume that all individuals progress on the learning continuum at the same rate (Gilbert, 2005). There is consensus in the literature that this assumption is based on a one-size-fits-all learning approach, not incompatible with the idea of learning throughout life (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Castells, 2000; Claxton, 1999, 2006; Costa, 2001; Gilbert, 2005; Perkins, 1995; Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2002).

Underpinning Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning report on education ideals for the 21st century is the notion of lifelong learning – posited not as acquiring a finite set of knowledge and skills for the future, but instead as one of learning operating on a continuum – constantly occurring throughout life. Delors’ (1996) notion is consistent with ongoing growth, and with holistic or whole-learning approaches and purposes of curriculum (Perkins, 2008). Similarly, Litowitz (1993, cited in Carr, 2004, p. 6) also asserts the importance of developing the whole child.

Barnett (2004) maintains that the world has always been changing, but makes the distinction that lifelong learning allows young people to have capabilities and agency to front new types of challenges where “[m]atters of will, energy and being come into play” (p. 254). Delors (1996) describes the concept of lifelong learning as a life cycle occurring both horizontally (across time) and vertically (between places and people).

Delors (1996) draws the conclusion that education for young people needs to be based on four pillars of knowledge: not just *learning to know*, and *learning to do*; they must also be inclusive

of *learning to be* and *learning to live*, especially concerning globalisation and changes to education heading into the 21st century (pp. 86-97). The *learning to be* and *live together pillars* arguably require particular emphasis in terms of global (macro) forces at large and the influences of these on groups of people and communities. These two latter pillars suggest a curriculum inclusive of nurturing children's human qualities such as imagination, creativity, critical thinking and judgment, and aesthetic and social democratic skills such as co-operation to challenge the 'dehumanisation' of the world (Nanzhou, n.d).

In the next section, interpretations of competencies and related terms are discussed, with an historical link to the shift from essential skills to KCs in the curriculum. There are other terms used internationally, apart from competencies and capabilities as used in New Zealand documents for schools (MoE, 2009a, 2009b). Further terms in relation to competencies also include Carr's (2006b; Claxton & Carr, 2004) learning dispositions, Claxton's (2006) learning power, Costa and Kallick's (2001) habits of mind, and Perkins' (2008) whole-learning and thinking dispositions. While the terms 'dispositions' and 'key competencies' are not used synonymously by Rychen and Salaganik (2003b), both terms can be associated with active thought and action in one's environment, which encourages development.

## **What research has been undertaken on the use and impact of the key competencies?**

### **International interpretations**

#### *Australia*

At approximately the time when New Zealand schools received the curriculum draft for consultation (MoE, 2006a), Alan Reid (2006) wrote an article overviewing issues around interpretations and implementation issues on key competencies. Reid is Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of South Australia. His research publications and professional debates centre on matters relating to educational policy and politics, curriculum change, social justice, and citizenship education.

According to Reid (2006), the projected meanings of 'key competency' vary, depending on the instigator's purpose and views. An accountability viewpoint can be associated with the term 'competency', whereas the term 'disposition' is more aligned with socio-cultural and holistic perspectives of learning (Hipkins, Boyd, & Joyce, 2005).

Reid (2006) highlights the problem of wide-ranging views concerning the interpretation of various terms and definitions of competencies. He further maintains that any notion of key competency should fit with a curriculum that serves children and their families/communities, e.g., personal voice and agency – consistent with empowerment and social democratic ideals in curriculum. Such a perspective acknowledges the importance of learning within the family and community – social contexts, also consistent with *learning to be* and *learning to live together* ideals, are unique to individuals within their particular social milieux.

Reid (2006) asserts that competencies are not new. They were originally seen as generic skills, they were economically generated for the market, and they had been evident in the previous two decades. Competencies can be problematic, depending on how they are interpreted and used. For example, one interpretation could be a “utilitarian economic focus” that derives competencies for the workplace, or a “liberal humanist focus” that derives KCs for individual good (Reid, 2006, p. 48). These two interpretations are both inadequate. A utilitarian economic focus is limiting for educational good, as is a liberal humanist focus that tends to emphasise private good. Underlying any impetus for competencies with market-driven ideals, Reid (2006) suggests, is the promotion of generating human capital which serves an economic agenda not the needs of schools (Reid, 2006). Moreover, a market-driven impetus for competencies lacks any theoretical underpinning and therefore is not helpful for identifying any potential impacts on teaching and learning.

Widening the focus, Reid (2006) maintains, is to encapsulate education ideals linked to social, cultural, personal and political aspects of life; to emphasise competencies for social reasons. A market motivation for competencies struggles with social democratic education ideals. Reid (2006) proposes educators move beyond any economic and individualistic motivation for competencies, and instead commit to fostering democracy and social justice (Reid, 2006).

International interpretations of competencies or capabilities for the curriculum has tended to be problematic for teachers (Reid, 2006). This is because schools and teachers are policy recipients, and as such are responsible for the interpretation and implementation of curriculum. Reid (2006) provides three particular problematic ways of interpreting competencies in the curriculum, and these are highlighted in his model below (see Figure 2). Firstly, the ‘name and hope’ model neglects any unpacking and shared understanding of rationalising the purpose of competencies in the curriculum. The ‘raising consciousness’ model assumes equal coverage of competencies will result in curriculum change, and the ‘embedded’ model fragments competencies in the curriculum.

<b>Curriculum Model</b>	<b>Assumption</b>
“name and hope”	Official compliance
“raising consciousness”	Coverage ensures quality
“embedded”	Pre-packaged parts create the whole

Source: Reid (2006)

## **Figure 2: Curriculum Model**

Reid argues (2006) that all three models are inadequate as they do not impel teachers to critically question traditional starting points for curriculum planning and traditional linear views of learning, where the acquisition of knowledge is dominant focus. He highlights that these three problematic curriculum processes risk resulting in the replication of the status quo – such as inequalities in education – where dominant knowledge and traditional teaching does not serve the interests of all young people and children. Reid (2006) cautions regarding what is anticipated or planned for curriculum: superficial interpretations of competencies, he warns, may result in educators simply creating more of the ‘same’ curriculum (reproduction), rather than opportunities for curriculum transformation (production).

Reid (2006) posited a capabilities model for rationalising the notion of competencies and for transforming the curriculum. Such a model presents both challenges and opportunities for schools. Identifying which capabilities are relevant for learning creates opportunity for social democratic engagement with groups of people. Content knowledge is not the initial reference point for planning learning (i.e., discrete subjects). Teacher, student and community voice would underlie the principles of key competencies, and they would guide teaching and learning.

Reid (2006) suggests that competencies or capabilities can be collaboratively interpreted and developed, as a means to critically examine the perpetuation of traditional ways of knowing or the status quo. The risk is to continue with the creation of subject hierarchies resulting in students being marginalised as they have no had access to certain areas of knowledge. Furthermore, a holistic view of developing competencies goes beyond confining interpretations to literacy and numeracy, or for teacher accountability (Reid, 2006).

The strength of Reid’s (2006) capabilities model is that it supports advocacy for building teacher autonomy to think differently about teaching and learning. A capabilities model affirms the process of challenging the status quo and addressing existing curriculum challenges (i.e., subjects versus integrated learning, and passive versus active learning). A further advocacy for

overcoming implementation issues is engaging community voice and family aspirations to “define what people can do and can become” (Reid, 2006, p. 58). Thus, the collective benefit of a capabilities approach is that it encourages flexibility, ownership and a strengthening of partnerships in the search of education ideals. Knowledge, skills and dispositions become people’s capabilities for exercising personal and collective agency in different contexts.

Developing competencies in one group but limiting competencies in another, only narrows the net for certain individuals to access equal opportunity (Reid, 2006). Capabilities need to be inclusive of *all* individuals, who can then participate and contribute as citizens whether for social, economic, national or global good (Reid, 2006).

### *Britain and United States of America*

Similarly, Claxton (2006) makes an argument for building students’ learning capacities with discussion about ‘dispositions’ which contribute to a shift from knowledge outcomes in competencies, to conceptualising competencies holistically. Claxton (2006) refers to the notion of disposition as being inclined to think and act in habitual ways (e.g., to ask a question is a skill but to be ‘questioning’ is a matter of disposition). Claxton’s (2006) literature also imply a shift from a skills focus (i.e., passive acquisition of knowledge and skills) to a dispositions focus (i.e., active learning) for rethinking teaching and learning. Thus, the development of key competencies or capabilities could imply a strong underlying focus on ability *as well* as being disposed to learn in various participatory ways (e.g., the development of active dispositions useful for social co-operative opportunities of interaction).

Claxton (2006) maintains it is not a matter of schools focussing on best practice, but rather on deciding what is right and necessary for students in their context. Claxton’s (2006) position, similar to Reid’s (2006), shifts from a knowledge focus to a learning one because “developing a capacity to learn is not about tick boxes of ‘can do this and that’ [and] this is not a robust way of understanding learning and is ‘naive in the extreme’” (Claxton, 2006, p. 8).

Costa and Kallick’s (2000) Habits of Mind literature also explains the development of learning dispositions or holistic characteristics of children’s thinking and actions applied in a range of settings. Similarly, Perkins (1995) refers to the term dispositions, or personal resources, that people draw on – including a kind of learning toolkit of broad intellectual behaviours.

### **The emergence of key competencies in the New Zealand curriculum**

Prior to the introduction of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007), education for primary and secondary school students aged 5 to 18 was outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (MoE, 1993a). This overarching framework consisted of: Curriculum Principles, Essential Learning Areas, Essential Skills and Assessment Methods. An emphasis on skills in the MoE's official curriculum documents implied a technicist model of teaching, or a standardised process of learning (Peters, Marshall, & Massey, 1994). A skill-based model of education can assume an easier progression into the labour market. In contrast, *Te Whariki*, with a focus on *dispositions* rather than skills (or key competencies) for children has remained as the one national education document for the early childhood sector (MoE, 1996).

Subsequent publications of the Essential Learning Area documents officially prescribing core knowledge followed: Mathematics (MoE, 1992), Science (MoE, 1993b), English (MoE, 1994), Technology (MoE, 1995), Social Studies (MoE, 1997), Health and Physical Well-Being (MoE, 1999) and the Arts (MoE, 2000). These respective national curriculum documents, cumulatively published with a plethora of achievement objectives, reflected a fragmented process and fragmented curriculum (Mutch & Trim, 2013).

In response to clarifying educational priorities, and in an attempt to address a fragmented approach to curriculum in New Zealand, *The Curriculum Stocktake Report* (MoE, 2002) recommended a reduction of the eight essential skill groups. Consultation included critiques from international curriculum experts, PISA data, teachers, stakeholder group meetings (education and business sectors), essential learning area meetings and other various Ministry work. Future-focused themes such as social cohesion, citizenship, sustainability, enterprise and innovation and also including digital literacy were discussed as renewed ways of envisioning curriculum, which also parallel characteristics of globalisation (Delors, 1996; Ouane, 2002; Rychen & Salganik, 2001; Trier, 2002).

*The Curriculum Stocktake Report* examined a number of problems and issues linked to curriculum in New Zealand, which have been raised both in and outside the education sector. However, while this approach was co-constructive, it also highlighted the political and complex nature of deciding what counts as curriculum knowledge that serves children and young people (Carpenter, 2001). A key point noted in the *Curriculum Stocktake* is the original use of the terms skills or attitudes, but a shift in focus to a more future-focused learning perspective of attributes, compatible with the notion of key competencies (MoE, 2002, p. 23).

Key competencies subsequently replaced the eight essential grouping of skills, originally stated in the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (MoE, 1993a). The original skill groupings were: communication, numeracy, information, problem-solving, self-management and competitive, social and co-operative, physical, and work and study (pp. 17-20).

### **Kelly's (2001) report to the Ministry of Education**

An early New Zealand research critique of the interim findings of the DeSeCo report was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, and undertaken by Frances Kelly (employed by the MoE). The research involved semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, and included Māori and Pacific Island perspectives. Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, also known as te tangata whenua. The research inquired into the generic relevance of key competencies that were outlined in the DeSeCo publications. Particular attention was given to 'school leavers' in the interviews, in terms of their capabilities needed for meeting social and economic challenges (Kelly, 2001).

Kelly's (2001) analysis of interview findings highlighted that the DeSeCo project had identified a set of generic key competencies based on a "western paradigm", and that these were a useful initial starting point for New Zealand inquiries (p. 18). Kelly (2001) indicated that particular attention needed to be given to the needs of Māori in New Zealand: "whose preferred key competencies risk being undervalued or sidelined by those of the dominant culture" (p. 18).

The unique demographic and place of Aotearoa New Zealand was emphasised in two of Kelly's (2001) conclusion points. These two points underscored implications for Māori and Pacific Island peoples, as well as individual and collective education ideals, for defining and selecting key competencies, i.e., "to find an appropriate balance between competencies that support individual development and those that foster group behaviour" and "to value, engage with and interweave into any competencies framework which may be developed Māori and Pacific communities' views of the world" (p. 18).

### **Brewerton's (2004) report to the Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education also commissioned Melissa Brewerton's (2004) background paper *Reframing the Essential Skills*. This was to examine the implications from the DeSeCo project. International views on key competencies were explored. Brewerton's analysis of the key findings from the DeSeCo project added to the review of the essential skills outlined in the *New Zealand*



*Curriculum Framework* (NZCF) (Ministry of Education, 1993a). Brewerton argued that the KCs should incorporate essential skills, attitudes and values.

Brewerton's (2004) view of lifelong learning is congruent with that of the early concepts discussed by OECD commentators (OECD, 2001). Her argument is that the well-being of New Zealand is determined by people's successful participation in, and contribution to, society. This argument aligns with the DeSeCo goal. Participation and contribution imply an ongoing learning process where particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and values begin in early education and are developed into adulthood. Interestingly, Brewerton acknowledges the economic influence for KCs in national curriculum.

Brewerton's position on reviewing the essential skills draws close to that of the OECD conceptualisation of KCs and, in addition, notes their alignment with the Early Childhood Education (ECE) national curriculum definitions in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). In particular, she notes that KCs help to address learning in a more holistic way, and that this is congruent with the ECE curriculum. The following implications, arising out of her argument, assist with understanding the reframing of the essential skills as: holistic comprising attitudes, values and knowledge; operating as 'constellations' of competencies; not being fragmented or protracted lists; and being aligned across the sectors (Brewerton, 2004, p. 16).

Furthermore, Brewerton cautioned against any overarching framework of KCs "becoming overly cumbersome and unwieldy" (Brewerton, 2004, p. 16). She inferred that the development of detailed prescriptive lists of learning would only work to undo any holistic or whole-learning conceptualisation of KCs. This sentiment is arguably inclusive of Delors' (1996) *learning to be* and *learning to live together* ideals. A certain paradox is implied when conceptualizing KCs as "the harder we try to be clear about the numerous aspects of these skills, the harder it is to understand and use the overall framework" (p. 20).

Brewerton (2004) concluded that, while the focus on KCs is in response to a diverse knowledge society, there is also potential for them regarding the role of education. A new emphasis could be placed on articulating how KCs can feature as an intrinsic part of all learning (p. 34). Her argument suggests that KCs can be viewed with a socio-cultural, holistic lens – competencies developed throughout life, expressed in purposeful action, in different contexts. These purposeful actions, arguably, align with an emphasis on the *learning to be* and *live together* education ideals in curriculum.

### **A theoretical lens to key competencies – early childhood dispositions**

Margaret Carr, a professor at the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Education Research, has undertaken research in relation to the notion of dispositions, and in association with the development of key competencies (Carr, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Carr et al., 2008). Her research and publications relate to curriculum and learning dispositions in the early childhood settings.

In her earlier working paper, Carr (2006a) posits a framework for strengthening KCs. Her position emphasises both opportunities and challenges as schools either grow or impair students' learning potential. Importantly, Carr's framework offers a lens for how teacher and students can be engaged in determining what inclinations characterise each key competency. Four elements that would contribute to this engagement are included in her framework. Students who display 'mindfulness' are exercising personal agency and taking the initiative in developing their competencies. Within a range of contexts and settings, students who develop a 'breadth' of competencies show interconnectedness to more than one place. The frequency of meaningful learning episodes is critical for students to develop competencies over time. Lastly, 'complexity' of learning pertains to transferring learning across a range of people, ideas and resources for students to develop competencies (Carr, 2006a).

Thus, KCs become an ongoing part of a student's identity. They are owned over time as they are developed through interactions in increasingly wide-ranging contexts. This implies there is no fixed point – no means to an end – for key competencies. A further implication of Carr's (2006a) framework is how students become more autonomous in their own learning capacity. A different lens can be applied to teaching and learning. The focus for developing KCs shifts from not what you know, but to how you use what you know for personal and social good (Sternberg, 2003).

Carr (2006b) explains dispositions are about patterns of behaviour, thinking and interaction – dispositions turn abilities into action (p. 21). This perspective supports a socio-cultural theoretical paradigm for positing key competencies in curriculum.

Carr et al.'s (2008) theoretical explanation shows how KCs and learning dispositions are aligned in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007) and *Te Whariki* (MoE, 1996). There is opportunity for teachers seeing a fit when applying a holistic lens to KCs and teaching and learning.

Further research undertaken by Carr et al. (2008) investigated the continuity and transfer of KCs over three years within the early childhood education and early primary years context. The strength of this research is that it posits a theoretical understanding of KCs, and also highlights

KCs' relationships to learning dispositions. Additionally, using a practitioner inquiry and qualitative research approaches encourages teachers to collaborate when inquiry is situated in their professional contexts. These collaborations emphasise the collective undertakings of professionals critiquing notions such as dispositions or key competencies in the curriculum, and how they serve children's needs.

Drawing from various theoretical perspectives, Carr et al. (2008, citing Barab & Roth, 2006; Lave, 1996; Solomon, 1993) maintain that both learning dispositions and key competencies occur in social contexts or are ecologically framed, situated and distributed (p. 4). The authors assert that KCs and learning dispositions are developed over time and within social contexts. An underlying paradigmatic shift in how teaching and learning is impacted. The reference to social contexts suggests learning can be derived from not just one source, but from others as well, and in different ways (Carr et al., 2008). Furthermore, the individual is developed within a multi-network of people relationships and with resources. This suggests a move towards a more holistic view of learning in relation to developing KCs. Consequently, a sociocultural model of learning helps teachers to theorise that knowledge is a historical, social, cultural and interactive process (Carr et al., 2008). The implication that schools can no longer be the main source of knowledge and experience in children's lives encourages the engagement of other voices in curriculum development.

While relationships in teaching and learning are complex and dynamic, the relationship between the learner and the learner's environment is critical for understanding KCs and learning dispositions. The research findings of Carr et al. (2008) provide a process of "telescoping in" on learning episodes, situations, learning stories and lessons to assist with conceptualising KCs and learning dispositions. The research process of "telescoping out" provides opportunities for teacher dialogue around their dissonance and practice dilemmas to strengthen co-constructed understandings (p. 90). Sufficient time to deeply unpack dilemmas and dissonance arising out of teachers' backgrounds, theories and assumptions helps to address the impacts of "you teach who you are" (p. 45).

The implications of Carr et al.'s (2008) findings suggest that co-construction and shared ongoing dialogue will assist with understanding the relationship between KCs and dispositions. Each school will need to construct their own local meaning of KCs. Understanding terms such as learning dispositions and KCs offers both opportunity and challenge. Such terms are "fuzzy concepts and although it is about observable action they are represented by language" (Carr et al., 2008, p. 87). The lived experiences of teachers themselves and their localised discussion will

be the platform for gaining understanding. Challenge comes with packaged solutions to interpreting KCs as they risk keeping teachers in their comfort zones (Carr et al., 2008).

### **Changing views of knowledge and perspectives on learning**

Jane Gilbert is a New Zealand education researcher and writer. Gilbert's book *Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the Future of Education* (2005) highlights pertinent implications for how knowledge is viewed in relation to teaching and learning. A traditional method of teaching or traditional forms of knowing, assumes that all individuals progress on the learning continuum at the same rate (Gilbert, 2005). The tension becomes whether teachers view knowledge as a 'noun', or knowledge as a 'verb'. By this it is meant that, if learning is to be solely based on a transmission type or linear learning model, then ways of knowing imply a passive form of learning, one where learning is expected to be stored and not used (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Resnick, 2001). Moreover, passive learning that does not allow for the generation of new ways of knowing will be problematic for achieving transferability of learning in new contexts, or for developing the necessary capabilities and dispositions (Gilbert, 2005; Claxton, 1999).

Key competencies which are viewed as actively developed in meaningful and real-life contexts, parallels with dispositions developing in the learner and their learning environment (Rutherford, 2005). Previous discussion on the topic of KCs revealing agreement about their complex, interactive and holistic nature also implies a shift away from viewing knowledge in discreet subjects. This would support an holistic lens on curriculum review and development. Additionally, there is a shift towards a more active view of knowledge, where learning is performative (Gilbert, 2005). This view argues learning as a process primarily occurs in groups, where the purpose of knowledge is for generation, not storage (not a transmit-receive-input-output-thinking process of teaching and learning).

Rutherford's (2005) argument makes clear that "any fruitful discussion relies on a universal understanding of the concept of KCs" (p. 212). It can be inferred that a universal understanding of KCs becomes problematic given NZ's diverse school contexts. Some problematic areas that will need addressing in order to develop a shared and owned understanding of the KCs will include a clarification of what is meant by KCs, and other terms such as capabilities and dispositions (Claxton, 2006; MoE, 2009a, 2009b).

The underlying theoretical work of the DeSeCo project positioned 'thinking' as a cross-cutting dimension; it was not intended for separation as happened in the NZC (MoE, 2007). Early

evidence of concern about the placement of thinking as a separate key competency was questioned by Carr (2004) (reframing essential skills as competencies) and Rutherford (2005) (consultation on the inclusion of KCs in the curriculum). Brewerton's (2004) response was also similar to that of Burrows' (2005) health and physical education perspective on KCs. The latter stated that placing thinking as a separate competency risks "privileging one locus of consciousness over another" (p. 16).

### **Hipkins – key competencies review and development**

Dr Rosemary Hipkins is a Chief Researcher at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Leading up to and since the introduction of the New Zealand draft curriculum for consultation (MoE, 2006a), Hipkins has contributed extensively to the education field on the topic of key competencies and curriculum. She has provided several literature publications, and has been involved in research exploring the notion of key competencies as education ideals in the curriculum. Hipkins' ongoing exploratory research and contribution to the field have provided discussion points for educators and teachers in the processes of interpreting and implementing key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007). Hipkins and her research colleagues continue to lead research for NZCER on key competencies and curriculum, and how they are understood by teachers, and enacted by children and young people in schools (Hipkins et al., 2014; Hipkins & McDowall, 2013).

Before the publication of the introduction of the New Zealand draft curriculum for consultation (MoE, 2006), Hipkins (2005, 2006) presented early perspectives on developing KCs for educators. Implications in the literature pointed to the need for supporting clear and deep understanding of the complexity of KCs. The terms 'capabilities', 'competencies' and 'dispositions', which have been used interchangeably in the primary sector, make consistent understanding of the nature of key competencies potentially problematic (Hipkins, 2005, 2006). Gaining clarity about the purpose and place of key competencies presents interpretation challenges for teachers, students, schools and their communities.

#### *Key competencies and assessment*

The assessment of KCs and 'learning stories' has been associated with curriculum development in New Zealand (Carr & Peters, 2013; Hipkins, 2007, et al).

Assessment practices can present time and resourcing constraints for teachers. Good assessment should convey helpful data for teachers to use for informing children's learning experiences. The inclusion of the KCs in *The New Zealand Curriculum* opens up discussion on accountability

issues, and the evidencing of competency enactment. The word ‘competent’ becomes problematic if learning is viewed as ‘means to ends’ or there is misplaced overemphasis on *learning to know* and *learning to do* ideals. Burrows (2005) maintains that competencies are not things to be accomplished – a ‘means to ends’, rather they are constantly being developed by young people. She further criticised any exclusion of individuals in critiquing the relevance of KCs in their learning pathways and for lifelong learning purposes.

Models of key competency assessments are less established, and not explicitly stated as imperatives in the curriculum, however, in New Zealand the KCs are expected to be developed in school-based curricula. Early confusion over whether schools should be assessing the KCs has been debated because of their complex performances specific to unique contexts (L. Flockton, pers. comm. 4.6.08). Reid (2006) challenges an accountability and compliance view of gathering assessment data for government educational priorities.

Further challenges were highlighted in Hipkins et al.’s (2005) comprehensive NZCER paper on the applicability of key competencies in New Zealand schools, in light of the DeSeCo report findings. The literature review explored and presented aspects related to the development of KCs and assessment purposes. One overall recommendation of the report indicated that the purpose of assessing KCs would be to support the development of young people’s empowerment of lifelong learning (p. 94).

The Hipkins et al. (2005) report was published as a contribution to the Ministry’s iterative process of engagement and consultation with the education community. The Ministry’s publications: *Key Competencies: The New Zealand Curriculum/Marautanga Project* (MoE, 2005b) and *Key Competencies in Tertiary Education* (MoE, 2005a) presented five KCs for the curriculum (all remain, except ‘making meaning’ was later replaced with ‘language, symbols and texts’ in the final and latest NZC).

The Hipkins et al.’s (2005) report highlights how assessment of KCs can benefit three broad purposes. These purposes can be starting points for teachers to rethink teaching and learning assessment purposes. To assess for accountability purposes would align with a dominant empirical analytic paradigm where competencies are assessed using standardised and psychometric tools. KCs predominantly assessed through formative practices by teachers and with student involvement would align with an interpretative paradigm. It is implied by Hipkins et al. (2005) that a critical-theoretical paradigm could address the above gaps in assessment of

competencies by including student voice (i.e., their decisions, ideas and inferences). Rychen and Salganik's (2003a) views support increasing student agency in assessment processes.

A process of developing appropriate and reliable assessments of competencies could become problematic, given competencies are complex and culturally and socially embedded (Rychen, 2004). A challenge would be to identify the value of assessing groups or components of key competences longitudinally, and in different situations, where students are from different backgrounds and at different stages of education (Rychen, 2004). A variety of methodologies may capture the complexity of KCs operating in constellations across settings to avoid their assessment in isolation (Rychen, 2004). This idea would be consistent with Hipkins et al. (2005) who also imply KCs can be reinforced by integrating evidence of transfer over an extended period of time and set in authentic tasks within multiple learning situations.

Assessing the transfer of KCs is a multifaceted issue that "depends on the nature, familiarity and complexity of the situation" (Hipkins et al., 2005, p. 13). The many new situations that students are faced with are as diverse as the individuals themselves. Oates (2003) argues that the differing views on transfer of learning from one situation to a next can be resolved through the notion of 'adaptability'. His robust view of transfer explains competency adaptability as "a process of adaption of existing skills in order to perform in a new, unfamiliar context, rather than a process of transfer of existing skills" (p. 177).

This view of key competency transfer would support locating the assessment of students' learning in a range of authentic contexts, to provide different forms of adaption data (Oates, 2003). Students may adapt and draw on one or more competencies to cope with any given situation, as learning dispositions are not disconnected but integrated in their presentation (Carr & Claxton, 2002; Hipkins et al., 2005; Kearns, 2001). In contrast, a linear or age band approach to assessing KCs could limit the expectations and both teachers and students. Teachers need to have clarity over what types of data can be used to draw relevant inferences.

Manageability constraints have been associated with the assessment of KCs. Methods of gathering assessment data that include the use of student learning stories or portfolios of teacher/student assessments and observations could be criticised for manageability and resourcing constraints (Oates, 2003). Other less established methods of assessing KCs such as computer simulations, interactive testing, performance assessments, portfolios and video or web-based data collections could be seen as more time consuming by teachers (Rychen, 2004).

### *KCs and early adopter primary schools*

Other NZCER education researchers contributed to the early interpretations of key competencies in primary school settings. Boyd and Watson's (2006) research, *Unpacking the Key Competencies: What does it mean for primary schools?*, was undertaken in Auckland Normal Schools in New Zealand, to trial the integration of KCs in the curriculum. A key focus of these early adopter schools was to explore how teachers interpreted the KCs and to highlight their shifts in how teaching and learning is viewed. Elements explored in this research helped to clarify how models of early curriculum change in schools' processes of interpreting the KCs.

Inclusive methods that were successful for helping teachers to interpret the KCs included the dissemination of literature by school senior leaders, school networking, developing a shared language, integration with inquiry learning programmes, thinking tools and strategies, student voice and assessment exemplars. These processes arguably showed how collective ownership of new initiatives is critical when interpreting the KCs, in relation to reframing teaching and learning priorities in curriculum that best serve children's needs.

However, the research findings revealed some key challenges for teachers and students (Boyd & Watson, 2006). It was suggested that teachers experienced timetabling and curriculum integration constraints when designing authentic learning situations. Additionally, increasing further opportunities for students to co-construct authentic learning situations was challenging. A commonality identified among researchers is the need to provide ongoing professional development – time, funding and space, to explore theoretical underpinnings of the key competencies (Carr et al., 2008).

Co-constructing the interpretation of KCs will continue to be debated given the variance in the cultural contexts of schools and classrooms. Teachers are less likely to see the opportunity for transforming curriculum practice and the need for KCs unless there are organisational supports to sufficiently manage sustainable change. Teacher assumptions such as “we already do that”, “we haven't got time” and “we won't teach it if it's not assessed” are more likely to influence the interpretation of KCs (Hipkins, 2006).

### *Key competencies for the future*

In a recent publication, led by Hipkins, *Key Competencies for the Future*, Hipkins et al. (2014) make a clear and compelling argument for educators to consider the design of curriculum for young people in the 21st century. Hipkins et al. (2014) explore the purpose of key competencies in curriculum, spotlighting young people's use of them in future focused and transformative



ways in line with 21st century espousals in education. The authors provide accessible examples for developing key competencies for a future-focused curriculum. Interesting examples are provided of how young people can front global challenges, using key competencies for solving what Rayner (2006) refers to as “wicked problems”, are included (p. 19).

Hipkins et al. (2014) also provide discussion related to KCs and Delors’ (1996) pillars of learning. The authors highlight the pillars in relation to both collective and individual education ideals in the curriculum (p. 9), and suggest a consideration of the *learning to be* and live together education ideals in the curriculum. A key feature of their argument in the publication relates to collective education ideals in the curriculum, emphasising young people working together – “with diverse others and ideas to solve complex world problems” (pp. 33-50).

### **Key competencies and ongoing implications for school curriculum**

Curriculum change is a contentious and complex process. For schools, teachers and children, interpreting the KCs according to their diverse contexts, is a challenging process. The inclusion of KCs in the curriculum signals a shift in the purposes of teaching and learning. Key competencies could be superficial add-ons to curriculum, or there could be other underpinning drivers for including KCs in the curriculum.

Schools have received various Ministry supplementary resources for more than a decade now, with the intention of supporting interpretation and implementation of KCs. Since schools received the *New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2006b), there have been ongoing contributions, discussion, position papers and relevant research available on the Ministry of Education’s *Te Kete Ipurangi* website ([www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz)), informing teachers and schools about the KCs. While resources and guidelines have been phased in which assist with leadership, school professional development and review processes, variance in schools’ full implementation is assumed (ERO, 2009; MoE, 2009a, 2009b). Schools are largely responsible for funding their own professional development and review processes. Any curriculum development and interpretations of KCs can present, in reality, constraints for many teachers and schools (Hipkins, Cowie, Boyd, & McGee, 2008). Some possible risks are ‘quick fixes’ that ‘tick the box’ and surface adoption of KCs, without critical thought to the implications of their purpose in curriculum, and their impact on children’s needs.

Each school in its own unique context, ideally has, with *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007), some flexibility and freedom to design its own curriculum. In the process of reflecting on the changing educational needs of students, schools could be encouraged to seek critical review

of how KCs are viewed and experienced in the school setting (Brewerton, 2004; Hipkins, 2004, 2005, 2006; Hipkins et al., 2007). The development of KCs or capabilities implies a strong underlying focus on ability, as well as being disposed to learn in various social co-operative participatory ways.

Doig (2007) maintains that any ‘tinkering’ with the curriculum to superficially insert KCs will not lead to any helpful transformation of teaching and learning. She advocates for identifying and resourcing key teachers in any school who are willing to tailor KCs to serve students’ needs, within the unique culture of each school. Time, reflection and in-school consultation are important aspects of interpreting curriculum ideals. The implication for teachers interpreting KCs means that teacher beliefs about children and learning need to fit with deciding what competency characteristics are reflective holistic development of KCs. Doig (2007) argued that traditional and high stakes assessment methods of KCs are questioned for their relevance when tracking the development of KCs over time, especially when a holistic lens is applied to learning.

Schools in principal networks have led their own specific, school-based curriculum development processes for unpacking the visionary notions, including interpretations of the KCs, described in the first 13 pages of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007). These processes have included a combination of contracted out consultants, and onsite and offsite school professional development. Variance in the undertaking of SBCD processes is assumed and expected, given the uniqueness of each school’s context.

Anecdotal evidence is of attending a conference where professional educators were advised that “schools should staple the back sections shut”, in order to focus on and engage teachers with what constitutes good teaching and learning that serves children’s needs and their relationship with the KCs (L. Flockton, pers. comm. 4.6.08). What constitutes good teaching and learning has been referred to as a matter of social and cultural judgement (Claxton, 2006). Teachers’ interpretations are influenced by worldviews of children, experiences and assumptions about pedagogy.

In the next section, the notion of student voice and student voice in the curriculum is discussed.

### **What is student voice?**

There is an increasing body of international literature and educational research emerging from Australia, England, Canada and the United States which highlights how student voice is informing the conditions of teaching and learning – curriculum (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Cushman,

2003; Demetriou & Wilson, 2010; Fielding & Rudduck, 2002; Fletcher, 2004; Hamilton, 2006; Hargreaves, 2004; Hopkins, 2010; Macbeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003). These authors indicate, in various ways, that there are both benefits and challenges of seeking student voice – the views and experiences of children and young people.

### **Definitions**

There are various terms in use for student voice, also known as pupil voice and children's voice. Finding a singular definition for student voice within the school setting can be a challenge. The term means different things to different people, depending on world views, knowledge, understanding and experience of associated student voice activities (Cook-Sather, 2006). In its widest sense, and in the education context, student voice is the views and experiences of young people about the conditions of teaching, learning, schooling and their community (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

### **Origins**

The emergence and diversity of interest in student voice within the educational field stems back to the 1960s and 1970s, with a growing impetus in the last decade (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Early thinking behind student participation, rights and voice, has its roots in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Cheminais, 2008). This example has contributed to fostering widespread interest in the voices of young people. That is, children should not be seen as objects but rather as subjects who have diverse and valid views to share with adults. In the education context, genuinely and ethically seeking student voice focuses on better understanding of how to serve children's needs: "through the eyes and ears of young people" (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014, p. 126).

Pupil voice has its origins with British research (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). The term 'student voice' is in use in United States, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand literature (Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007). The concept of student voice "is not fixed and absolute, but constantly changing and evolving in dialogue" (Fielding, cited in Cheminais, 2008, p. 5). Other terms associated with student voice include 'student rights', 'consultation', 'participation', 'involvement', 'choice', 'empowerment' and 'engagement'. As a group these have sometimes created ambiguity, as well adding to the diversity of dialogue among educators (Cheminais, 2008).

## **Theorising children and young people**

Historical and dominant views of children and young people have theorised them as dependent, passive and compliant – they are to be ‘seen and not heard’ (Cheminais, 2008). Further theories about children claim they are incomplete spectators of life, or unreliable constructors of social meaning (Cheminais, 2008). There are three dominant historical theories that have conceptualised the child: the evil child, the innocent child and the immature child (Christensen & James, 2000). These historical knowledge constructs influence the ways in which adults view children, their relationships with them and in education. There is evidence in the literature that educational policy and practice have been shaped by underlying assumptions that childhood is about dependency (Mayall, 2002; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). A traditional preoccupation with children’s incompleteness and dependency has arguably overlooked opportunities for students to participate in decisions about their lives, or exercise collective responsibility in the school setting (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Oakley, 1994). An implication for teachers, and principals such as myself, therefore, is to critically examine the purposes of curriculum design, and how children are theorised in teaching and learning practice.

The sociology of education has contributed towards the debate in theorising childhood since the early 1980s (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). Authors (James & James, 2008) confront power relations, traditional representations of adult authority, and dominant explanations of the child to acknowledge that children have diverse views and experiences to share. It is further asserted that children *are* active in the construction of their social world *and* competent in their own right. Furthermore, children are positioned as social actors who are capable of demonstrating personal agency in the classroom. In the classroom context, children experience and make their own interpretations of both the school-based and the hidden curriculum – often not shared with adults (Nuthall, 2007). These experiences present implications for educators to consider how the needs of children are being served. Children, when viewed as capable commentators of their experiences, present opportunities for social democratic dialogue in the classroom. Democratic dialogue about teaching, learning and schooling can benefit both teacher and student (McIntyre, Pedder, & Rudduck, 2005). However, issues may become apparent when democratic dialogue is impeded by power relations, or forces within and outside the classroom (Cook-Sather, 2002).

## **Power relations**

Schools and classrooms are essentially rule-bound settings where teachers as adults traditionally represent authority. In traditional education, the teaching and learning relationship is one where the teacher ‘delivers’ the predetermined or planned curriculum, and the children ‘receive’ it (this

includes the by-products of the hidden curriculum). Proponents of student voice, critical of traditional education, raise questions about power relations in the class setting, with implications for developing more social democratic dialogue opportunities for children: who is speaking?; what is permitted to be spoken?; who is listening?; what is being heard? (Fielding, 2001). Adult positions of authority and organisational structures can become barriers to children, lessening their agency and voice to create change. Teachers may not be prepared to ‘see’ young people differently – students are too young, immature or may lack reliable knowledge (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). Emphasising social co-operative learning opportunities for children to talk about learning or curriculum content may be seen by the traditional teacher as a lessening of their positional power. The traditional teacher may become anxious about what children have to say about teaching and learning practice in the classroom. Traditionally, teachers are seen as the change agents or decision makers about curriculum content for children in the school setting.

In relation to the research, children in New Zealand schools are in contexts where, presumably, messages about the place and purpose of key competencies in the curriculum have or have not been ‘received’. These messages, arguably, influence children’s views and experiences of the key competencies.

### **Experiences that serve children’s needs**

Not all schooling experiences serve children’s needs. Students may not see adults as having a genuine interest in their views or needs if there is no active follow-through on their suggestions, or if follow-through is not visible to the children. Student voice may be overlooked due to a lack of teacher confidence, skill, or access to professional development. A lack of genuine interest or teacher self-efficacy may discourage teachers from re-thinking their professional identities and student–teacher relationships. A lack of understanding about student voice can lead to teachers being less responsive to an idea that appears as a contrived add-on to the busy classroom timetable (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). The overall implication is that student voice approaches become less authentic if they are adopted superficially or for compliance purposes.

Interest in the voices of young people now has a wider association than just with children’s rights. In contemporary times student voice is often associated with the improvement of student self-esteem, student engagement, achievement, formative assessment, teacher development and school reform (Fielding, 2001). Student voice has the potential to be a catalyst for changing classroom practice when teachers listen and respond to what their students say about their learning experiences (Flutter, 2007a, 2007b). Students have a strong desire to voice their views

about improving their own learning and the relationships they have with their teachers (Kushman & Shanessey, 1997). Listening to student voice can provide teachers with valuable insights about the conditions of teaching and learning, including the relationships between teacher and student.

In the next, and final, section of this chapter, the review of the literature will close with discussion about current evidence of key competencies and student voice (children's voice) in curriculum.

## **What evidence is there of key competencies and children's voice in curriculum?**

### **Student voice in policy or official documents**

The term 'student voice' is not cited explicitly in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. However, links to the idea of fostering more social democratic collective ideals may be implied within the *key competencies* (MoE, 2007, pp. 12, 13). Specifically, these can be seen in the *relating to others* and *participating and contributing*: the relational elements of KCs. Children and young people need social co-operative abilities to actively participate and contribute in their communities.

Teacher *effective pedagogy* and *teaching as inquiry* have implications for understanding student voice and partnerships in the classroom setting (MoE, 2007, pp. 34, 35). Both personal and collective agency can be inferred when teacher and students develop partnerships to facilitate shared learning. Student voice and effective pedagogy may be linked to national and international discussion about authenticating or 'personalising learning' for students (Hargreaves, 2004; MoE, 2006a; OECD, 2006).

Student voice and social democratic ideals may be implied in the curriculum *values* (MoE, 2007, p. 10). That is, students are expected to learn about equity, fairness and social justice, and develop abilities to express their own values. An example might be when children and young people learn to use active listening and conversation to negotiate different points of view and share ideas.

### **Key competencies and principals' voice**

Utumoengalu's (2009) research findings, about Auckland Primary School principals' perceptions of KCs, suggest that students should be active in the process of comprehending KCs at the classroom level. The principals agreed that students' views should be accessed in the process of curriculum planning. Additionally, all principals claimed that the KCs should be easily recognisable in the classroom.

### **Key competencies and student voice in the secondary school context**

Brudevold-Iversen's (2012) local research on the topic of student voice and the curriculum makes an illuminating contribution to the field of clinical psychology. Her thesis research was undertaken in the secondary school context, with secondary school students in Aotearoa New Zealand (Brudevold-Iversen, 2012). The researched student voice data on the key competencies are viewed in terms of mental health, wellbeing and developing resiliency, rather than from an education worldview (p. x).

The research investigated adolescent students' values and their interpretations of the key competencies in their school settings. The students were involved in pair and focus group interviews and provided examples of the value of KCs and their experience and understanding of them. Brudevold-Iversen (2012) highlighted the important implication for understanding adolescent socioemotional competencies such as school engagement. An example in her overall findings highlights how the students valued their social experiences and friendships as important aspects of school engagement. The research findings highlighted how adolescent students associated the learning of and the socio-emotional aspects of KCs in settings outside the school context.

Relevant to this research of seeking children's voice in the primary context, is that Brudevold-Iversen's (2012) research acknowledged the need for further research in the education field related to accessing the views of young people who are "able to reflect on and contribute constructively to debate and discussion around issues that are important and relevant to them" (p. 116).

### **John Dewey and Paulo Freire**

Philosophers of education, the late John Dewey and Paulo Freire, advocated similar progressive education ideals about curriculum and children's learning. Dewey and Freire's ideals can be viewed as emphasising social co-operative, or collective capabilities in curriculum, requisites for engaging in a social democratic society.

At both ends of the 20th century, and at different times, Dewey and Freire debated curriculum tensions with other educators, and contested the political impacts of curriculum on education. Their ideas about the purpose of education systems and the place of curriculum are now seen by many as essential reading, and classic. Freire's and Dewey's ideas have important relevance for

the research question and empirical work in this thesis, as will become evident in the latter chapters.

### **John Dewey**

John Dewey (1859-1952) made a significant theoretical contribution to knowledge, society and the education field. John Dewey, American educator, philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer, wrote extensively about society, democracy and education from the late 19th into the early 20th century. Dewey held a lifelong passion for advancing participatory democracy as an ethical ideal for both men and women, distinguished in one way as, “a society in which people communicate across differences to increase shared interests and to work towards those together” (Meadows, 2013, p. 444). He was a public figure and commentator on contemporary issues. He was a political activist in causes such as women’s suffrage. Dewey’s lifetime of educational accomplishments have arguably greatly influenced, and continue to influence, educational thinking in the 21st century. Dewey’s philosophical education ideals and utopian vision for society have been praised, criticised and misinterpreted to this day (Shultz, 2001; Puckett, Harkavy, & Benson 2007; Simpson & Stack, 2010).

Dewey’s teaching and learning ideals, later to be called “pragmatism”, were in favour of an active view of knowledge, where a child’s inquiry is not a passive observation of the world. He championed the argument that traditional education or teaching approaches during his lifetime heavily relied on authoritarianism and pre-ordained knowledge. At the turn of the 20th century, Dewey’s theoretical development led to the establishment of the famous Laboratory School, as part of the University of Chicago’s progressive education movement, for a more participatory democratic schooling system (Puckett et al., 2007, p. 13). Dewey’s early theoretical developments were premised on educating for democracy and growth – a strong motivation for co-operation in the schooling system (Shyman, 2011). Many parents at that time were drawn to Dewey’s approaches that challenged rote learning, and instead encouraged children’s inquiry through curriculum. In Europe, contemporaries of Dewey included Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori; they were forwarding a range of similar arguments which encouraged children’s interactive approaches to learning.

### **Paulo Freire**

The extensive works of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997), continue to have influence on education. Freire’s philosophy of education stemmed from classical and modern approaches – Plato, Marxist, anti-colonialist thinking, liberalism, existentialism,



phenomenology and critical theory (Roberts, 2008b, p. 100). Like Dewey, Freire's education ideals or teaching and learning approaches allow us to critically examine and challenge the society in which we live. Proponents of Freire include critical theorists Peter Roberts (NZ), Joe Kincheloe, Shirley Steinberg, Peter McLaren, Carlos Roberto Torres, Ira Shor, Henry Giroux and Donald Macedo.

Freire wrote prolifically, and received both praise and notoriety for one of his best-known works, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in English in 1970. Like Dewey, Freire's educational teachings were criticised, and even banned in some nations. Accordingly, Freire responded to his critics through his continued writings, and encouraged his readers to go beyond his assertions in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Roberts, 2008a). Freire did not deny the problematic nature of the different facets of oppression (e.g., language, class, race, gender), neither did he provide pre-determined answers, or "universal pedagogical recipes" to complex education problems (Roberts, 2008a, p. 85). In his later years, the political and theoretical arguments of the late 20th century led Freire to call for more collective undertakings against all forms of oppression, to a position where strength would be held in unity of difference (Roberts, 2008a, p. 85). This assertion aligns with Dewey's call for participatory democracy (Meadows, 2013, p. 444). Freire was aware of, and argued against, the oppressive ascendancy of neoliberalism and its inequities, which he saw being disseminated in both education and society (Roberts, 2008, p. 85).

## **Conclusion**

This literature review presents research findings and philosophies surrounding the subject of the origins and definitions of key competencies in the curriculum; research, use and impact of the key competencies; and student voice. The chapter also signals the importance to the thesis of the philosophies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

Undoubtedly there are implications for schools, as policy recipients of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, in relation to interpreting the key competencies for curriculum purposes. While there is literature on teachers' interpretation and implementation of key competencies, there is limited research on how young children have interpreted the purposes of key competencies in the primary school context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Brudevold-Iversen's (2012) thesis contributes unique knowledge about the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* by seeking the perspectives of adolescents (students) in the secondary school context in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition to this local research, a review

of the literature shared in this chapter highlights a gap in the research field, regarding the interpretations (views and experiences) of the key competencies from the perspectives of children in the primary school context.

This thesis will, therefore, contribute to the subject of key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* by drawing on and critically examining the views and experiences of young children in a primary school context. Children's voices and subsequent theoretical analysis will be paramount.

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, the methodology for the research project will be shared.

# CHAPTER 3:

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, a review of the literature shared the background to the research question in relation to the key competencies in an international and national context, as well as their inclusion in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The appropriate methodology for this study is qualitative. This chapter therefore addresses how best to answer the key research question, using qualitative methodology: ‘What, for children, is the place and purpose of key competencies in the curriculum?’

This chapter discusses and justifies applying the qualitative methodological approach selected to address the question above, and makes links to relevant literature. The structure of the chapter is as follows: (1) outline of the qualitative research paradigms and rationale for a qualitative research approach; (2) an examination of critical theory and student voice (or children’s voice) applied in educational research; (3) description of the methods for data collection and analysis; and (4) outline of addressing ethical issues such as transferability, confirmability and validity.

### 1. Research paradigms and rationale

Researchers within the social sciences usually adopt one of two broad methodological paradigms: quantitative and/or qualitative. Both research paradigms have different underpinning beliefs about the world (Davidson & Tolich, 2007). Beliefs about the world – research lenses, paradigm, or interpretive framework “guide action” (Guba, 1990, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 33). Ontology (what exists in the world), epistemology (what counts as legitimate knowledge) and methodology (how do we know the world) underpin research paradigms. The researcher’s ontological and epistemological set of beliefs guides her/his thinking and action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011).

This project is set within the sociology of education and applies a qualitative research methodology approach. Researchers’ beliefs, assumptions or ways of thinking about the social world influence their choice of methodological approach (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). Certain philosophical assumptions underpin the decisions that qualitative researchers make when they choose a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research fits with an interpretive

paradigm and is underpinned by inductive processes of explaining social phenomena in social science.

Qualitative research is the study of people, their actions, and phenomena in their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this research study, the children's natural setting, to which they belong during school hours, is their school. The examination of the children's lived experiences within their natural school setting aligns with an interpretive paradigm.

Research planning and design is determined by 'fitness of purpose' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). A qualitative approach can be adopted to fit the purpose of revealing the complexities of the socially constructed settings, or the world in which children belong. The qualitative approach enables access to 'qualities' that can then become the focus for interpreting children's behaviour, which is constructed in their social setting (Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

Constructivist and social constructivist epistemologies emphasise that the nature of knowledge and reality are socially constructed (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). In this research with young children, children are acknowledged as being capable of constructing legitimate knowledge, within the school setting, as part of their daily activities. Knowledge construction within the setting is fluid, as are the children's social interactions. How knowledge is constructed by children can provide deep understandings of the social phenomena being researched (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

The notion that knowledge is socially constructed in this research, helps to make sense of the perceptions of children; they can provide valid evidence from their social setting (Christensen & James, 2000). Children's realities are not fixed, but are 'built', as they experience and learn from their experience. Constructivism has always been about children coming to know things through a process of reconstruction and reorganisation based on experience (Mutch, 2005). Underlying constructivism is a more subjective stance for making interpretations. An interpretive stance gives emphasis to the potentially rich provision of discovering authentic meanings within the children's social setting (Burns, 2000). A social constructivist analysis situates the researcher apart from a behaviourist or psychologist stance. Research planning and design, with a social constructive perspective, poses questions that are of interest to children's experiences, usually on topics that they can relate to.

The decision to use qualitative methods with a critical perspective, aligns with a constructivist interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2003). A set of assumptions sit beneath constructive

interpretive research, i.e., multiple realities, co-creation of meaning and naturalistic methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The qualitative approach assumes meaning is socially constructed and understood through constant human interaction. Social realities are constantly built through a process of interpretation and reinterpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). For qualitative researchers, the decision to use interpretive and critical methods enables a focus on the context-rich interpretations of the phenomena under examination within a particular social setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

## **2. Critical theory**

### *Theory*

In its simplest form, theory is explanation that helps us to understand the world. The late Jean Anyon, a key critical theorist in the field of educational research, defines the notion of theory as an “architecture of ideas – a coherent structure of interrelated concepts” (Anyon, 2009, p. 3). Theory, applied to educational research, thus helps us to understand and explain social phenomena, and offers a model of how discourse and social systems work, or can be acted upon (Anyon, 2009). To understand how and why things come to be, in particular, social phenomena, theory cannot be separated from research; they are interdependent (Ozga, 2000).

The theory or conceptual architecture used to explain the social phenomena in this research is critical theory, related to school curriculum. Critical theory is encompassed by a set of core beliefs about the social world, individuals and their relationships within the world. Employing critical theory in the school context can be a “theoretical arsenal of powerful concepts” for the teacher when examining educational practice and reform (Anyon, 2009, p. 2). Theory can inform practice and so theory can be used to search for ways to *improve* practice (Carpenter, Dixon, Rata, & Rawlinson, 2001). When planning educational research with a critical theory lens, connections can be made about how people and the practices “inside” the school are shaped by what is happening “outside” the school (Anyon, 2009, p. 3). Sometimes this “shaping” can be occurring in everyday practice, but in subtle ways. Critical theory therefore enables a better understanding of this “shaping” in the educational setting and, if necessary, encourages ways to change it. In the next section, the origins and place of critical theory in educational research are examined.

### **The origins of critical theory**

Critical theory has appeared in the literature since the early 20th century. Numerous critical theorists have drawn inspirations from Karl Marx, Immanuel Kant, Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire,

French feminists, social theorists and the Frankfurt School theorists (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). Early in the 20th century, the first critical theorists affiliated to the Frankfurt School were inspired by the writings of Marx. This group of early theorists shared the same paradigm position of “challenging belief systems and ideologies characterizing a society by comparing them with the social reality of the society itself (Anyon, 2009, p. 2).

The positivist paradigm held a dominant position in early 20th century society (Carr & Kemmis, 1994). Critical theory perspectives arose to confront the legitimacy of positivism, e.g., psychological theories that blame those who fail (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Critical theory is not preoccupied with the calculation and measurement of the human being. Actions that privilege some groups of people at the expense of others are rejected by, and are perverse to, critical theorists. Specifically, early critical theorists raised concern about the instrumental rationality of positivism, i.e., the preoccupation with method (how) over ends (why), and a preference for fact over value (Gibson, 1986). Critical theorists see instrumental rationality as a dominating form of unquestioned action that devalues and marginalises people, and in turn, constrains their social growth (Gibson, 1986). An ideology that uses facts to justify actions, without questioning the underlying values and motivations of those actions, is an unexamined way of viewing the social world (Kemmis & Carr, 1994).

### **What is critical theory?**

There is no one single representation of critical theory (Gibson, 1986). Instead there are many critical theories that share particular features. Critical theories continue to evolve and be re-conceptualised (Kincheloe et al., 2011). A central tenet of critical theory is empowerment, or freedom from constraint in the social world, especially for groups of people on the margins.

Critical theory is the engagement with, and elucidation of, real problems in the social world (Gibson, 1986). Its perspectives do not merely explain what is wrong with the world, but critical theory perspectives are committed to enabling change towards a better and more just world. Another principle of critical theory is its emancipatory undertaking. A critical perspective seeks to identify the prejudices and misrepresentations which malform and restrain social growth or human empowerment (Kincheloe et al., 2011). In doing so, critical theorists seek to illuminate social malformations, inequalities and injustices in the social world and are committed to their change (Gibson, 1986). Critical theorists are prepared to radically challenge conventional knowledge, assumptions, beliefs, values and practices. This challenging stance is a way of

enabling people to take more control of their lives and thereby to transcend the constraints placed upon them (Creswell, 2007).

### *Knowledge*

Knowledge, ideas and language are value bound. In the social world, knowledge, ideas, language or ‘facts’ cannot be detached from values. A basic assumption of critical theory then, is that there are no ‘givens’ or ‘facts’ in the social world. Instead, realities are socially, culturally and historically constructed (Gibson, 1986). Knowledge, ideas or language are thus open to human interpretation. In critical theory, researchers are aware that dominant ideologies set out to privilege the interests of specific groups, often over marginalised groups in society (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Dominant ideology in contemporary times struggles to best serve young people (Kincheloe, 2008), and in terms of this research, children and curriculum.

### **Critical theory in contemporary times**

Critical theory is often employed in the field of sociology. Since the 1970s, many sociological theorists with critical traditions have contributed to the dissemination of critical theory. Among the initial key writers of critical theory are Bowles and Gintis (1976) who produced their seminal work in America (social reproduction theory). Other critical theorists include Jean Anyon (2009) (e.g., curriculum); Joe Kincheloe (e.g., critical pedagogy) (2007); Michael Apple (2004) (e.g., politics and education); and Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., social capital) (1993); and David Tripp (1992). In the New Zealand context, John Codd (2008), Roger Dale (2008), Martin Thrupp (1999); John O’Neill and Ivan Snook (Snook & O’Neill, 2014) are renowned critical theorists.

When explaining people’s actions in any given situation, both systems and structures can be viewed as abling or *disabling*. In the contemporary context, critical theorists can examine how systems or structures have constrained and failed people, thus reducing their agency for change. Emancipation from constraint or powerlessness in one’s life is a focus for critical theorists.

The notion of power and agency through emancipation or enlightenment can be likened to Plato’s allegory of the cave (Heidegger, 2002). In Plato’s account, the cave can represent one’s beliefs, assumptions, perceptions or worldview. In the writings of Plato (Heidegger, 2002), inside the cave are prisoners who are shackled to chains, and prevented from turning their heads to examine the outside world. The prisoners’ experience and knowledge of the world is limited to the shadows projected on the walls inside the cave. While the shadows represent an “unhiddenness” or apparent truth, knowledge of the world is distorted. While the prisoners remain in the cave, truth or ‘facts’ remain unexamined. The powerlessness and constraint experienced

by the prisoners represent the absence of freedom to know the world, examine reality, and therefore be empowered to improve it. The idea of ‘shadows’ are referred to in this chapter to indicate the distortions of truth or dominant knowledge or ideologies.

### **Critical theory and teachers**

If you ask some teachers or principals for an understanding of critical theory, the response may be mixed, or even puzzled. Some teachers (and possibly principals) may have little knowledge and experience of critical theory to examine the world; consequently, “its impact ... has been negligible” (Gibson, 1986, p. 2).

Critical theory research perspectives then, ideally, will go beyond what is hidden by ‘shadows’ to examine what is wrong with the world (or schooling experiences that do not best serve children). Hidden perspectives are not so easily examined, nonetheless, the critical theorist must theorise and go beyond the ‘facts’ (Anyon, 2009). To undertake a critical approach in educational research means to examine what is hidden beyond the problem. Critical theorists ask four fundamental questions: (1) what is wrong with this reality?; (2) how and why has it come about?; (3) whose interests are being served?; and (4) what can we do to make the world better? The last question is a pertinent aspiration if the research is to be considered critical, i.e., the research must in some way “confront the injustice of a particular society” (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 164). Posing this question can be threatening for a teacher for, in order to challenge education systems and structures, she/he will need to challenge power and status. Such an endeavour can be personally and professionally unsettling for a teacher because she/he is both in a *position* of power and in *possession* of power (Gibson, 1986).

The pursuit of social justice and empowerment are central emphases of a critical theory research approach (Ozga, 2000). Therefore, the notion of power in social and political relationships is inevitably evident in the work of critical theorists.

As discussed in the previous chapter, forces such as the continual educational reforms of the past three decades are often at odds with progressive education ideals. Therefore, as a critical theorist my work includes asking what is wrong with NZ’s education systems and structures (addressing policy, practice and power).

A critical lens thus enables an examination beneath the surface. Such a lens provides a look past ‘shadows’, to identify whose interests are being served. It also considers whether practices perpetuate injustice or constraint upon certain groups of people.



### **Critical theorists who engage in critical research**

According to Kincheloe (2003), critical pedagogy is a complex notion, a perspective concerned with questions of social justice, democracy, power relations and ethics. Furthermore, teachers who engage with critical pedagogy, and probe into a domain of complex knowledge to examine practice, will find it a demanding journey. To be critical, some form of injustice present in society must be confronted (Kincheloe et al., 2011). The teacher or principal as researcher must be aware that the journey becomes a “transformative endeavour, unembarrassed by the label ‘political’ and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness” (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 164).

Why then, should teachers or principals (like myself) be interested in asking fundamental critical questions that aim to confront the given, the familiar, and the common sense in our everyday practice? Paulo Freire, a significant critical theorist, wrote extensively on the inadequacies of educational practice and its impact on children (and adults). Freire maintained that both child and teacher must learn to go beyond mere words upon a page, practice or problem, and seek out what is hidden by shadows (e.g., dominant ideologies) (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Critical theory is vital for going beyond what is distorted by shadows, to reveal what hides beneath the ordinary, the familiar, perhaps the taken-for-granted in our everyday practice. In taking a critical stance, dominant assumptions that inform educational policy, but are concealed in ‘common-sense’ teaching and learning practice, can be challenged (Ozga, 2000). The rationale to undertake a critical stance enables an enlarged view of how educational ideals are applied in the school context, and makes possible the addressing of problems with policy and practice.

To reiterate, the aim of this research is not to measure *how much* children know about the KCs, but rather *how* can we ‘get beneath the surface’ (or ‘beyond the shadows’) of the context to identify the place and purpose of the KCs in the NZC. In adopting a critical theory approach, an explication of the whole can be built, and in this case, the KCs are only one part of the curriculum as a whole (Cox, 1980, cited in Ozga, 2000, p. 46). Therefore, a critical theory approach has been embraced as the underpinning research paradigm to question the taken-for-granted or commonplace in teaching and learning contexts. Such engagement will enable a probe into the social realities of children, who are ‘constructed’ in the school context. Experience and understanding of the purpose and place of KCs, according to the perspectives of children will be sought. This research is premised on the assumption that children *are* capable social agents with legitimate perspectives (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014). This stance authorises children as “informants of their own lives” (Feuerverger & Richards, 2007, p. 556).

In the next section, the impetus for including the views of children or student voice in educational research is discussed, as are some of the challenges of inviting children to be participants or agents in research. I discuss the notion of including children's perspectives or student voice in educational research, and some of the philosophical, methodological and ethical challenges of inviting children to become research participants.

### **Student voice in research**

As discussed in the Literature Review, eliciting the perspectives and engaging the actions of young people is a key principle of pupil or student voice. The notion of voice in this research means to draw on children's views about their experiences of the key competencies. The decision to draw on students' or children's voice acknowledges the legitimacy and necessity to do so, not out of "insistent imperatives of accountability" but rather from a larger goal of "democratic agency" for improving education (Fielding, 2001, p. 123).

Educational research is about better understanding the phenomenon of education, in order to improve educational experiences. Since the 1990s, eliciting pupil or student voice on schooling has been encouraged in educational research (Fielding, 2001; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Since its early inception, the trajectory of student voice in educational research has proliferated (Cook-Sather, 2014). Qualitative researchers and practitioners now show increasing interest in the value of seeking children's perceptions on schooling (Cook-Sather, 2014). Genuine interest and advocacy in young people's involvement in research has also expanded from participants, to critical researchers, and active authorities on improving education (Kincheloe, 2007).

Philosophical, methodological and ethical challenges have arisen as researchers seek to include young people or children as participants in research (Theissen & Cook-Sather, 2007). Including children as participants or agents in research challenges entrenched assumptions about their capacity to 'translate', or scrutinise knowledge, and 'facts' related to education (Cook-Sather, 2013). However, advocates who choose to involve young people in educational research know that such practice occurs in a "highly charged, ideological inscribed educational context" (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 745). Moreover, to educate young people to become critical researchers themselves, empowers them to "go beyond common sense to begin to discover the reason for the facts" in their worlds (Kincheloe, 2007, p. 751). Engaging children or students to better shape their world, is "boundary practice", because it requires the shedding of light on the shadows, and the breaking free from "pre-existing moulds" on how young people are viewed (Fielding & Bragg, 2003, p. 55, cited in McGregor, 2010, p. 2). To involve young people in educational

research and to elicit their voices is to challenge traditional philosophical views and theorising of children, and such practice may even be considered radical (McGregor, 2010).

Eliciting children's voice begins with researchers, and this includes practitioners, prepared to view children differently (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). The acknowledgement of children's voice and agency in research, "starts from the position that interesting things can be said by groups who do not occupy the ... high ground—they may actually be quite lowly and situated at some distance from the centres of power" (Smyth & Hattam, 2002, p. 378, cited in Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 225).

Historically, children (and women) have not occupied the 'high ground', nor have they been viewed as complete or reliable constructors of social meaning (James & James, 2008). The "ideology of immaturity" has obscured adults' views of children, claiming they lack capability for providing explanation (Grace, 1995, cited in Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 227). For example, language such as 'in the best interests of' prejudices the social status of children, an agenda assuming decisions of 'what is best' for their needs (Oakley, 1994). Traditionally, and in the context of research, children, like women, share similar characteristics about their status as a social group (Oakley, 1994). Children have been viewed as a minority group, inferior to, or subordinate to, adults (or dominant groups in society). Both women and children have traditionally been constituted as objects by the patriarchy (Oakley, 1994). Children (and women), have been literary and historical objects of study and analysis, where their views or translations have not been sought (Cook-Sather, 2014). The notion of viewing children as subordinate objects, works to disadvantage their voice or their translations and democratic agency for improving schooling experiences (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

This study does not seek to position children as objects, but rather as subjects or 'primary actors' in the research process (Cook-Sather, 2014). Children included in research as participants, rather than objects, reminds qualitative researchers to be aware that they need to shift from a distanced and authoritative position to where they are no longer the 'sole author' of the meaning derived from their research methods (Cook-Sather, 2014). Therefore, engaging children's voice in educational research and reform, assumes that children *are* capable, and *do* have a democratic right to be heard (Macbeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003). Notions of rights are linked to notions of power. Therefore, in any qualitative research planning with children, power relations need to be explicitly and genuinely addressed, to avoid mere rhetoric for empowering children with little consequent improvement to their schooling experience (Cook-Sather, 2014; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004).

Historically, children have not been viewed as capable social agents for participating in educational research or reform. Traditional forms of adult authority that have dominant explanations of the child, challenge their capability (James & James, 2008). These research methods in the first half of the 20th century were mainly concerned with the notion of the child ‘becoming’ (capable or competent), and are underpinned by biological and psychological deficit theories of young children (Mayall, 2002). Research methods ‘on, not with children’, assumed no benefit to them because they are “not yet a person” (O’Neill, 2014, p. 222). Researcher views that claim under-developed reasoning capabilities diminishes children’s opportunities to participate in decisions about their lives, exercise responsibility, or provide explanations about improving schooling (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

To hold the view that children are competent social agents has contributed to ethical tensions and challenges for educational researchers; in particular, those who employ student voice methods (Cook-Sather, 2014; O’Neill, 2014). In this research, the children as participants are viewed as legitimate ‘experts in schooling’ (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Qualitative methods that elicit student voice for data, presupposes a practical agenda, of critiquing schooling systems and structures, and seeking ways to improve it. Ethically, this means that researchers adopt an active listening methodology, respecting what children have to say about their schooling experience (O’Neill, 2014, p. 227).

With this in mind then, I acknowledge children as participants in educational research, they are social agents, and have legitimate voices. They can choose to “provide or permit the collection of the requisite data on their own educational knowledge and experience” (O’Neill, 2014, p. 220). In seeking children’s permission to participate in research, there are always challenges around consent and assent. In research with children, and for legal and ethical reasons, informed consent must be sought from children’s parents/caregivers. In western society, parents/caregivers typically are the ones who make the decisions, or whose permission is sought about what activities their children participate in. Similarly, in schools, teachers have traditionally been the gatekeepers to decision-making processes. Therefore, researchers need to carefully consider how to facilitate the children’s right to participate, their “voluntary accord” or assent (Cocks, 2006, p. 229; O’Neill, 2014). What this means to a successfully reflexive researcher, is to actively seek assent, not just at the beginning, but be “constantly vigilant” throughout the research process – “attuned” and checking in with the children all the time (Cocks, 2006, p. 257). Checking in with children throughout the research process, or using a form of ‘debriefing’ at the end of research

phases can also well serve to affirm and reassure children's emotional well-being (Mutch & Gawith, 2014, p. 59).

In the next section the selected research methods are rationalised and discussed. These methods positioned the children as subjects, but also as capable and reliable constructors of social meaning in their school settings.

### **3. Research methods**

#### **Research setting and participant voice**

In this research, the social setting is the children's school. A subjective stance is taken, in that the researcher is not distant, but within the social setting of the subjects – that being the children (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). No single objective 'truth' was sought, rather; the goal was to gain rich understanding of the children's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the research, the understandings of the subjects was gained by "impacting the voice of the subjects", i.e., the children's voices (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 115).

The methods considered needed to capture the voice of young children, and their experiences in their natural settings. Qualitative researchers who use voice data, for example from interviews, attempt to increase their knowledge about their subjects (children as participants in this case), and to better understand their subjects' perceptions and experiences within their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Hence, the decision to use student voice data generated by the children in their natural setting is based on the premise that in-depth focus for interpretation can take place to understand a diverse range of views (Merriam, 2002). Through student voice, the children can be provided the 'space' to convey their perceptions of day-to-day schooling experiences. From here, the data can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the children's perceptions about the KCs.

This research aligns then with those more subjective stances that allow me to 'get beneath' the children's perceptions of the KCs, and examine their place and purpose as artefacts in the curriculum. The intention of using voice data from a critical perspective, ultimately, must lead to the production of social change and social justice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this research context this means to identify the place and purpose of the KCs as curriculum artefacts in the NZC.

In the next section, I outline in more detail how I used a purposive selection method to identify the sites and the participants for the research to take place. There were four stages to the

purposive selection process: (1) selection of five principals and schools; (2) selection of five potential teachers (3) five classes; and (4) 30 children or participants. The stages of purposive selection are explained below.

### **Selection of research site and participants**

An in-depth focus on smaller population samples that are selected purposively, rather than randomly, is a relatively typical method in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Purposive sampling enabled a careful consideration of how to bound the participant population to where the research is most likely to occur (Silverman, 2001). The decision to use purposive sampling was therefore a practical one. I needed to identify primary school principals who would most likely be sympathetic to a critical review of KCs in the NZC, and agree to my access to small groups of children. A set of criteria helped to carefully guide me in the process of bounding the research site and participants.

### **Stages of selection process**

#### ***Stage 1 Selection of five principals and schools***

The first consideration for selection of primary schools as possible sites to undertake the research involved my professional networks. In this part of the process I initially contacted a cluster of primary school principals through email or telephone. My intention was to identify primary school principals sympathetic to a critical review of curriculum development. I considered schools which had received an Education Review Office (ERO) Report within the last five years, reflecting strong evidence of readiness to implement the NZC, in particular the KCs. The Education Review Office is an independent agency, not a department within the Ministry of Education. ERO publically reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services in Aotearoa New Zealand. In seeking entry to potential schools and gaining access to their participants, I assumed that evidence of strong KCs' implementation or some experience of them, would have relevance to the research inquiry phenomenon (i.e., the place and purpose of KCs in the NZC). Also, common to each school, would be their ongoing involvement in school-based curriculum development (SBCD) with the NZC.

#### ***Location***

My educational experience and knowledge in the past 27 years has been located in state primary co-educational schools in the North Island of New Zealand. Hence, a second consideration for selection was to bind the research to a geographical region similar to that of my education background, teaching experience and principal networks. At the beginning of my doctoral

studies, I was working in urban city schools. When the research process began, I also had access to professional networks and schools, both urban and semi-rural. Therefore, I could draw from two differing geographical areas of the North Island.

### *Decile band*

A third consideration in the selection process was an attempt to gather data as best as possible from a range of primary schools across the decile bands, to partially represent socio-economic diversity. The New Zealand Ministry of Education uses a decile band ranking system of its schools (Norris et al., 1994). The Ministry of Education originally developed the term in 1994 as a 'socio-economic indicator' in its ranking system of *Tomorrow's Schools* (Carpenter, 2008). The decile system has changed over the years and remains as the Ministry of Education mechanism for identifying the extent to which the school draws its students from low socio-economic communities (Norris, Bathgate, & Parkin, 1994). There are currently five factors that make up the Ministry of Education's New Zealand decile system: (1) household income; (2) occupation; (3) household crowding; (4) educational qualifications; and (5) income support. Decile one schools are the 10 percent of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. The five selected schools were from decile rankings one to three, four to six, and seven to 10.

New Zealand is a class society within a capitalist society (Carpenter, 2008). My interest was in schools' interpretations and experiences for the implementation of KCs, and it was assumed a range of schools would provide social-economic status (SES) variation (Bell & Carpenter, 1994). SES is a static economic and social stratification system that categorises people based on their occupation (Bell & Carpenter, 1994). The terms 'socio-economic status' and 'social class' have been used in similar ways but differ in meaning.

### *Age and gender*

While I had strong experience and knowledge across a range of deciles in the primary school and student age groups, my particular interest stemmed from teaching senior school children, in Years 5-6 (age 9 to 11). I also made the assumption that senior children would have experienced approximately four to five years of the 2007 curriculum, at the time of the research. This position may have supported their articulacy for 'telling their story' of the KCs (Creswell, 2007). Bounding the selection of participants to the Year 5 level of children in the 9 to 11 age group this level and age group became the fourth criterion for selection.

An equal selection of participant gender and ethnicity was not a criterion. The reason gender and ethnicity ratio of the participants were not able to be maintained was because the children's participation was voluntary. Hence, the gender and ethnicity ratios of the children would be influenced or dependent on the result of the final number of agreed participants at each school (see Appendix A Student Assent Form). The final list of participants was achieved through a random selection process, carried out by an external facilitator from the University of Auckland.

Following this purposive selection process, five primary schools in the North Island were identified as research sites to access children's perceptions of the KCs, and examine their place and purpose as artefacts in the curriculum. Three urban schools and two semi-rural schools agreed to participate.

Stages (2) to (4) of the selection process are now explained in more detail, i.e., selection of teacher, class and children for the research sample (see Appendix B Participant Information Sheet To Teachers). The details and procedures for ethics are explained throughout the next sections, and also at the end of this chapter.

#### *Overview of schools and participants*

A total of 30 randomly selected Year 5 and 6 children, from five purposively sampled New Zealand state co-educational primary schools, accepted the invitation to participate in this project. In the following sections the five schools are briefly introduced. All schools have pseudonyms.

School A, Windbridge, is a co-educational state primary school, with approximately 60% New Zealand European/Pakeha children. The student population size at the time of data gathering was over 500. The school is classified in the upper decile band of 7 to 10, and it is located in the upper North Island area. A sample of six Year 6 children from one class, three male and three female, were randomly selected from a wider a pool of children, and all who were initially selected agreed to participate in this project. Data from Windbridge School were collected in November and December 2011.

School B, Channel Heights, is a co-educational state primary school, of approximately 60% New Zealand European/Pakeha and 30% Asian in ethnic composition. The student population size at data collection time was over 700. The school is classified in the upper decile band of 7 to 10, and it is located in the upper North Island area. A sample of six Year 6 children from one class, two male and four female, were randomly selected from a wider a pool of children, and all who



were initially selected agreed to participate in the project. Data from Channel Heights School were collected in March and April of 2012.

School C, Creek Valley, is a co-educational state primary school, of mainly New Zealand European/Pakeha and Asian in ethnic composition. The student population size at the time was over 400. The school is classified in the middle decile band of 4 to 6, and it is located in the upper North Island area. A sample of four Year 6 and two Year 5 children from one class, two male and four female, were randomly selected from a wider a pool of children, and all who were initially selected agreed to participate in this project. Data from Creek Valley School were collected in June and July of 2012.

School D, Woodhaven, is a co-educational semi-rural primary school, of about 50% New Zealand European/Pakeha and 50% New Zealand Māori in ethnic composition. A school that is defined as semi-rural means that the school is geographically located on the fringe of an urban area. In this case, the school drew its student population from both the city and country parts of the immediate region. The student population size of Woodhaven at the time of data collection was over 50. The school is classified in the lower decile band of 1 to 3, and it is located in the lower North Island area. A sample of two Year 6 and four Year 5 children from one class, two male and four female, were randomly selected from a wider a pool of children, and all who were initially selected agreed to participate in this project. Data from School D were collected in November of 2012.

School E, Dale Crossing, is a co-educational semi-rural primary school, of approximately 70% New Zealand European/Pakeha in ethnic composition. The student population size at the time was over 50. The school is ranked in the middle decile band and it is located in the lower North Island area. A sample of six Year 5 children from one class, one male and five female, were randomly selected from a wider a pool of children, and all who were initially selected agreed to participate in this project. Data from Dale Crossing School were collected in December of 2012.

## ***Stage 2          Selection of teachers and classes***

### *Entry to site*

Gaining access to research sites and participants can be challenging for researchers, for example, trust and credibility are essential building blocks in the process (Creswell, 2007). However, I was well known in my professional role and experienced no difficulty in seeking permission to initiate the sharing of the research proposal. The principals were very curious about the research goals, and were keen to know the results. Examples of the comments made to the researcher

prior to the research were “how do we know we are on the right track; I wonder what the children will say; how could we do better”?

The process for gaining access to sites and participants typically goes through a series of negotiations. Structures of compliance that exist in schools often mean that researchers go through a “chain of negotiation” (Valentine, 1999, p. 145). In particular, seeking to talk to young children in any research process involves such a chain of negotiation. The initial chain of negotiation in this research began with agreement from the principal of each of the five schools to receive research information outlining the specific research stages (see Appendix C Participant Information Sheet to Principals). Distribution of research information was achieved by way of email to the principals. Once the principals accepted the invitation for her/his school to participate in the research, I followed up with a visit to them and the schools to consult and discuss the research processes. Sharing research information with the various schools’ Boards of Trustees’ chairpersons was integral to the process. Once the principal and Board of Trustees chairperson of each school agreed to participate in the research, I followed up with an email or visit to the site to discuss the identification of a teacher and class in the Year 5 and 6 area of the school.

One class of Year 5 and 6 students was sought from each of the five schools. The next chain of negotiation was for the principals of each of the five schools to identify potential teachers to receive an invitation to participate in the research (see Appendix C). At my request, principals identified a teacher who might be open to me talking with a small group of their children about the place and purpose of KCs in curriculum. There was no specific criteria for teacher selection; this part of the process was left to the discretion of each school principal. Once teachers had been identified by the principals, I extended their invitation to participate (see Appendix B). All five of the identified teachers from the different schools agreed to participate in the research process, thereby, granting me access to five classes of Year 5 and 6 students, in five different schools.

The next part in the chain of negotiation involved me making contact with the teachers through email. This was to determine how I could best work into their teaching timetable as I wanted to have minimal (negative) impact on the children’s learning programme. I then distributed the teacher Participant Information Sheets and Consent/Assent forms, inviting the teacher’s whole class to take part in research through the return of an expression of interest (see Appendix D Consent Form to Teacher). All class members were invited, based on the assumption that all children are capable of offering their perspectives. I held no criteria to exclude any group of children within each class, nor was I just seeking articulate children. The final group of children

would be based on those who accepted the invitation to participate, and who were then randomly selected.

### ***Stage 3 Selection of participants or children***

The next step in the negotiation process was to invite children to participate in the research. Seeking permission from parents/caregivers of the children was essential to emphasise voluntary participation and informed consent as an ongoing negotiated part of the research process (Davidson & Tolich, 2007). Parents/caregivers of children, and the children themselves, received participant information and consent/assent forms. There were two reasons for providing assent forms for the children. Firstly, I wanted to minimise any potential unintended pressure from any party (Alderson, 1995, cited in Valentine, 1999, p. 145). Secondly, I wanted to maximise the children's freedom to think before making a decision whether to participate or not. Two versions of the information consent/assent forms were distributed – a child-friendly version for the children (see Appendix E Participant Information Sheet to Students) and an adult-oriented one for the parents/caregivers (see Appendix F Participant Information Sheet To Parents/Caregivers). My intention for two versions was to maximise effective and appropriate communication for each audience. Parents/caregivers and children were thus advised in advance that six students would be selected using a random process. Children were able to make an informed decision over whether or not they wished to participate in the research. They were able to exercise their own judgment having read the participant information and expression of interest forms.

Once the interested students returned their expression of interest forms, a list of names was compiled. An independent person from the University of Auckland then undertook a process of random selection of six students for each school list. The purpose of having an external process for participant selection, meant that I was removed from any potential bias as a researcher to include or exclude less or more articulate children (Ruddick & Flutter, 2004). Students not selected from the random pool received a letter of thanks and acknowledgement (see Appendix G Participants Not Selected).

From the external process of random selection, six students from each school engaged in three phases of the research data gathering: one pair interview (three pairs of students); one class observation; and one focus group interview (of all six selected students from each school).

### ***Pre-research meeting with schools, teachers and children***

Following the distribution of the participant information forms, and to further build trust and rapport, I met at a suitable time and place, determined by the teacher, with the students to share

the research aims and answer questions in person. With my background experience of teaching senior school students, this was an effective strategy in building rapport and trust with the students. I could address questions about participant information, e.g., no right and wrong answers, or the option of the children assigning agreed pseudonyms in the transcripts. I was also able to outline the benefits of the children sharing their open opinions about the KCs. For example, the children would have an opportunity to engage in consultative conversations about improving school, which sometimes cannot occur in the normal confines of the classroom timetable.

### *Summary of selected schools and participants*

The final selection of schools and participants represented a range geographically. All schools were state educational primary schools. Three city schools were located in the upper North Island and two semi-rural schools were located in the lower North Island. Information about the research participants and their sites is summarised below (see Table 1).

<b>Research Participants n=30</b>			
Years 5 and 6 New Zealand primary school children			
Female and male			
Age range: 9-11			
<b>Schools</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Decile band</b>
School A Windbridge	State co-ed	North Island city Urban area	Upper (7-10)
School B Channel Heights	State co-ed	North Island city Urban	Upper (7-10)
School C Creek Valley	State co-ed	North Island city Urban	Middle (4-6)
School D Woodhaven	State co-ed	Lower North Island town Semi-rural	Lower (1-3)
School E Dale Crossing	State co-ed	Lower North Island town Semi-rural	Middle (4-6)

**Table 1: Summary of Participants and Five School Sites**

### **Data-collection phases**

In the process of collecting data, qualitative researchers typically undertake a series of phases (Creswell, 2007). The rationale to use three data-collection methods was made to best position the children as active participants to the process. My ontological and epistemological orientation

led me to choose methods of semi-structured pair interviews, semi-structured focus group interviews and classroom observations to best answer the research question. The methods were selected to facilitate an inquiry into the place and purpose of KCs in the curriculum, according to the perceptions of Years 5 and 6 students within the classroom settings studied. It is assumed that the children's lived reality would generate rich stories of the phenomena (i.e., meaning is socially constructed) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I was primarily interested in the views and experiences (and the interpretations of those experiences) generated from the children's narratives of the KCs. These experiences and narratives are shaped by the children within their setting, and are therefore best understood in that setting (Lowe, 2007).

### *Data collection*

Methods used to collect data from all five school settings for this research were conducted in three phases, from November 2011 to December 2012 (summarised later in this section, see Table 2). Three data-gathering methods were used, each informing a separate phase of the research process (Creswell, 2007). These were pair and focus group interviews and single class observations. Conducting pair and group interviews requires attention to specific protocols (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). An overview of the data-collection phases follows in the next section, followed by a more detailed explanation of the methods.

A survey of questions was considered to collect data from the children in phase one. However, the survey as a data-collection method was excluded for a number of reasons. Administering a distance survey was considered least likely to mirror that of the children's normal classroom activities, such as small group conversations that can best capture the children's voice. In addition, I was aware of a few potential issues that could impact on the children's survey responses, creating communication barriers. For example, sometimes respondents experience boredom or 'respondent fatigue', from multiple ticking or circling of answers, and thus their attention span wanes (Davidson & Tolich, 2007 p. 141). Consequently, I decided to exclude a questionnaire survey, as this method did not align with my decision to minimise communication barriers. Additionally, I was also aware that qualitative researchers seek to be *in situ*, or in the field, rather than distant from their research participants, in my case, the children's classroom lived reality (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

### *Phase one*

Phase one consisted of Pair Interviews where I conducted three semi-structured interviews with two students at a time. The teacher, who arguably knows their children best, was invited to volunteer the pairing up of the six students for each interview. Each teacher did so, and they also

determined a suitable time and place in which I could conduct the interviews. My intention was to have minimal impact on the children's learning timetable. I was also aware of conducting the interview in close proximity to the children's classroom, conducive to audiotaping, but free from communication distractions (Creswell, 2007). Each interview was planned to take between 30 and 40 minutes, and most of the interviews used all of this time frame.

### *Phase two*

Phase two consisted of five classroom observations – one in each school. I undertook a single lesson observation of each group of six students in the five class settings. Once again, to minimise impact on the children's learning timetable, the class teacher determined a suitable time. The observations of the children took between 45 and 60 minutes. I invited each teacher to determine the curriculum area of literacy, numeracy or student inquiry. I wanted to maintain 'business as usual' for the children and teachers having me present in the classroom. The other children in the class were not being focused on and this was noted in the Participant Information forms. While qualitative researchers typically seek to be as close as possible to their participants in the field, in this case, I took on the role of a non-participant in the classroom during the observations (Creswell, 2007).

### *Phase three*

Phase three consisted of five focus group semi-structured interviews – one in each of the five schools. I interviewed all six children together to further clarify and build on statements and themes that arose from either of phases one and two. In seeking clarification or elaboration, I was aware that a feature of successful focus groups is to encourage active participation and group interaction (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). In keeping with having minimal impact on the children's learning timetable, and any potential respondent overload, the interviews were planned and were undertaken in under an hour. This timeframe also allowed enough time to structure and sustain an in-depth conversation with the children using common verbal prompts, rather than a 'quick fire' of questions (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 146). At the end of the interviews, I thanked the children for their contribution to my research and offered a koha of popular stationery, which the children all accepted. I found it amusing that one male child commented, "you're doing research kind of like what we do in inquiry".

### *Transcripts*

Qualitative interview data typically end up in some form of written text. All pair and focus group interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis purposes. An informal conversation began each interview to help ease the children's situation and explain the purpose

of audiotaping. Ensuring that the children were informed that all interviews would be taped was based on a number of ethical principles (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). These are ongoing voluntary participation throughout the interviews, to avoid deception, to do no harm, and maintain the children's anonymity (p. 157). To ensure the children's responses in the transcript remained confidential to the researcher only, an independent person signed a confidentiality agreement form, prior to engagement in the research process to transcribe the interviews (see Appendix H Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement). Additionally, pseudonyms were offered to the consenting children, and codings were applied to the data so as not to locate any participant and to disguise their locations. Once again, these decisions were based on the ethical principle of protecting the children's anonymity (Creswell, 2007). Each participant had the right to withdraw from the pair or focus group interviews, or not answer any questions in front of their peers. Internal confidentiality can be problematic in focus group interviews if participants decide to disclose information outside the group (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 159). Therefore, I could actively encourage external confidentiality to protect their identity and what they would say (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 159). The children were also informed that any information they provided would not be withdrawn after a set timeframe (see Appendix A).

Copies of the pair interview transcripts were sent to participants to comment on and approve as a true and correct record (see Appendix I Transcription of Interview Verification Form). This decision was based on another ethical principle of ensuring the children had the opportunity to check their transcriptions, and decide on any necessary alterations.

For the focus group interviews, there was no distribution of transcripts to verify, as no one particular child was focused on. There was no audio or visual taping of the class observations. Instead, I took notes of what activities the children engaged in according to what they informed me of what I could expect to see in the way of typical enactment of their KCs. The observations did not focus on the teaching practices of the teachers.

Before the focus group interviews were held, I produced for the children an oral synopsis or re-storying of the emerging findings from Phase one and two. The decision to do so was based on the premise of 'setting the atmosphere' for best generating group interaction about the 'picture' so far, and invite open responses before the focus group questions could be asked (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 143).

In the next section, details of the methods employed during each data-collection phase are explained.

## **Methods**

### **Phase one: semi-structured pair interviews**

Phase one comprised semi-structured pair interviews with small groups of randomly selected students. The use of semi-structured interviews was a credible and reliable way of capturing student voice, as they are the ‘experts’ who draw from their experiences (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 142). The interview model was modified to best fit the needs of the participants, and the current classroom practice and culture. I made this decision as the children had the opportunity to develop their ideas in small groups which reflected their similar classroom activities (Denscombe, 2003). Hence, the size of the interview groups (pairs of children) reflected standard classroom practice for students working together on similar small group tasks. The semi-structured pair interviews were conducted using set of indicative questions (see Appendix J Pair Interview Indicative Questions). Introductory questions about the children’s current learning were asked to build rapport and encourage responses from the pairs or get them ‘talking about their world’ (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 148). Subsequent questions posed in the pair interviews also enabled the children some flexibility to pace and articulate their understandings and interpretations on themes or issues about the place and purpose of KCs in their learning (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 151).

### **Phase two: single classroom observations**

Informal observations were conducted of the children in the five classes in the third data-collection phase. The purpose of conducting classroom observations was based on the premise that it was beneficial to observe the children’s normative behaviour, to later help illuminate and compare data at the analysis stage (Denscombe, 2003). The mechanics of observations can be demanding for qualitative researchers, and threatening for participants (Creswell, 2007). Bearing this in mind, to manage the possibility of the children becoming inhibited while being observed, I clarified my role with the children prior to the classroom observations. During the class observations, I collected data to identify frequency of KC enactment, and corresponding links to the children’s perceptions of the KCs gained from the semi-structured pair interviews. My intentions were to observe the children’s actions and non-verbal behaviours in their natural setting, to identify any further rich insights to be used comparatively with other data (Denscombe, 2003). That is, pair interview and observation data may have informed any further interview data following in phase three.



As discussed earlier, data from both the semi-structured pair interviews and observations were re-storied or summarised as an overview. This summary was then verbally shared with the children to prompt their response to my initial interpretations, and to open up the focus group interview. Subsequently, phase one and two data were used to expand on, and illuminate links, during the focus group interview discussed below.

### **Phase three: semi-structured focus group interviews**

Five focus group interviews, one from each school, were conducted near the end of the data-gathering process. The purpose of these interviews was to invite clarification and illumination from the collective about how children responded in the pair interviews, and what was observed in the classroom lessons.

Interview questions sought further flexible exploration on any unexpected links that emerged across the children's responses that may have otherwise been overlooked (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 120). An advantage of the focus group interviews was to use question 'prompts' for the children to further "open their world" to me (Tolich & Davidson, 2011, p. 151). The children responded to their peers' statements by clarifying and elaborating. The assumed strength of this method is that sometimes researchers find that 'common participant characters' may impede elaborations. For example, I was aware of, and could respond to, group conversation dynamics from the "introvert, conformist, rambler and dominant talker" (2011, p. 124).

Hence, semi-structured interviews provided a flexible method that encouraged the children to articulate their thinking, and thereby allow me to capture their natural language. It also afforded me the flexibility to respond to the children and encourage open elaboration of discussion. This method is based on the premise that I am not dominating the dialogue but rather eliciting the children's views (Mertens, 2005). In line with emphasising student autonomy and voice, these small group interviews were intended to replicate similar small group peer activities, familiar to children in their classroom. It was a deliberate intention to help reduce the children's inhibitions, so they felt more comfortable in the natural flow of conversation, as well as avoid a stilted question-answer mode of interaction.

The three methods were selected to best address the status of the children and include their voice. The data-collection phases and methods in each school are summarised in Table 2 below.

Phase	Data-collection method
<i>One</i> 6 randomly selected students from each of the 5 schools	3 semi-structured pair interviews digital voice recordings, transcribed verbatim
<i>Two</i> Same 6 students within their class setting	1 informal classroom observation of each group
<i>Three</i> All 6 students together	1 semi-structured focus group interview, with digital voice recordings, transcribed verbatim

**Table 2: Data-collection Phases and Methods in each School**

## Data analysis

### *Analysis of semi-structured pair and focus group interviews*

Using qualitative research methods such as interviews, typically generates a considerable amount of non-numerical and unstructured data (Davidson & Tolich, 2007). Organisation of the data into manageable form is a typical analysis process (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). The computer software package Nvivo was initially considered as a useful tool for managing the analysis of the data generated in my research (Denscombe, 2003). There are advantages and disadvantages to using computer software for analysis of data (Creswell, 2007). For example, it was expected that the programme would better support automated storage, coding, search and analysis processes. Qualitative researchers can be compelled to search for their own interconnections across their data (Tesch, 1990). With this in mind, I did not want to overestimate computer software packages for replacing the potential rich human interpretation of social phenomena. Thus, so that I could lead the conceptual interpretations myself, I made the decision to manually organise and analyse the digitally recorded data which was transcribed verbatim.

To guide my overall analysis framework, I used a blend of Tolich and Davidson's process (2011, p. 198), and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis methods (2006, p. 87).

The analysis process of searching for patterns or themes, can be broadly placed into three steps: (1) data reduction; (2) data organisation; and (3) data interpretation (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). In the first two steps of my analysis process, I organised all my school transcripts by sets of pairs and focus groups. Each school was assigned a letter A, B, C, D or E. Each of the six participants

in each school was assigned number 1 to 6. Thus, the children's names were coded with a letter and a number to correspond to their responses, and to later be used as extract identifiers, e.g., A1 = School A, Windbridge and 1 = child 1 of 2 in the first set of pair interviews; or E6 = child 6 of the last set of pair interviews at School E, Dale Crossing. In an ongoing way, I could return to my 'books' of transcripts to 'mark up' and make 'memos' or notes alongside the verbatim text (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). In step (3) of the process, I needed to identify and focus on patterns and regularities which critically related back to my research question on the purpose and place of KCs in curriculum (Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

From this point, and because of the nature of the data obtained through pair and focus group interviews, I decided to apply thematic analysis in step (3). Thematic analysis is a qualitative strategy for analysing patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mutch, 2005). Knowing that analysis is not a linear, but rather a recursive process, the rationale to employ this strategy was so that I could flexibly derive broad themes from the extracts of text (i.e., what the children said). Thematic analysis provided me with a flexible guide of six stages to draw from (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The first three stages of analysis involved close familiarisation with my data. All transcripts were read and re-read to check against the digital recordings for accuracy. The five KCs were assigned as initial pre-sets for coding the pair and focus group interview transcripts (i.e., colour, letter and number). From here, initial codes were generated across the data. Next, the occurrences of particular ideas were categorised. Through a process of constant comparative analysis, searching for patterns and commonalities, bundles of ideas were grouped into broad themes. Identified themes also aligned with the research question and to relevant literature. Some themes were predetermined prior to the research, while others, as expected, emerged from ongoing analysis of the data. Finally, a constant review of salient themes or patterns meant that vivid and compelling extracts of what the children talked about were selected for deeper analysis and confined interpretation. An example of applying the blended stages of thematic analysis can be seen in Appendix K.

In the final section of this chapter, although some issues concerning ethics have been shared in the earlier sections, an overall outline of ethical considerations is shared.

## **Ethical considerations**

Each method of data collection in this research required deliberate ethical considerations. As discussed earlier, negotiated entry into the boundaries of the five school settings to conduct this research was part of preliminary procedures (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

### *'Chain of negotiations' with multiple gatekeepers*

Following a 'chain of negotiations', I liaised with all stakeholders to strengthen trusted links and maximise clarity of communication about the research process (Valentine, 1999). I made initial contact with the principals who were interested in my research aims and I visited each principal to discuss the project. At the planning and preparation stage of my research, the various information forms were distributed to all school stakeholders. Information forms outlined the aims, objectives, procedures and intended benefits of the research (Denscombe, 2003). The research forms clarified and ensured that matters such as voluntary participation, right of withdrawal, confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability would be upheld (Cohen et al., 2000). Open and honest relationships were maintained from the outset, and such actions sustained the integrity of the research intentions (Gray, 2004).

### *Power difference and status*

A power difference can be perceived to exist between myself and the children as research participants. Schools and classrooms are essentially rule-bound settings where, traditionally, children have held less power status. Children are familiar with rules in the school setting and adults as symbols of authority. Both the school setting and my status as an adult had the potential to inhibit the children's responses. In some cases, children may wish to voice their thinking about improving teaching and learning, yet are uncertain how to, and therefore remain silent (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). I was mindful that adults traditionally represent authority which may have compelled the children to 'give me the right answers' to the research questions.

To address this tension, I explicitly stated and actively reminded the children during the interviews that responses were not about pleasing me – there were no 'right or wrong answers'. Rather, the research goal focussed on authorising the children's perceptions about the place and purpose of the KCs (Cook-Sather, 2002). Being in the presence of an unfamiliar adult can be uncomfortable for children. Thus, when I conducted the interviews I ensured that physical proximity did not inhibit the children (i.e., space chosen by the teachers and familiar to the children, seating arrangements and access to open doors) (Denscombe, 2003).

### *Parent consent and student assent*

A central aspect of this research focused on optimising participants' voices (Lincoln et al., 2011). Thus, the students were informed that they could decline to participate in the research, even if their parents agreed to their participation. Furthermore, students were informed that they could withdraw at a specific time from any part of, or the whole research process, without pressure to give an explanation. Sampling processes outlined the criteria for selecting students (i.e., that a student may or may not be included based on the composition of the group being sought). Child-friendly language, typical of Years 5 and 6 students, was a feature of information packages and letters, as well in my interaction with the children, because of my teaching background.

### *Right to withdraw from participation*

Each child participant had the right to withdraw from the research at any time and each was informed that the information provided would remain in the analysis of data up until a set period. I shared with the principals that participation or non-participation would not affect the standing of the school in any way. I also emphasised with the children that their participation or non-participation would not affect their school learning, assessment results, reports or standing in the class.

### *Confidentiality*

As discussed earlier, I actively encouraged the children to maintain confidentiality of the information shared. I said that confidentiality needed to be respected at all times when sharing information, but could not be guaranteed. As much as possible, I explained that the principal, teachers, students and school's name would remain confidential in the research project as well as participants' identities. Moreover, those who read the published results would not be able to identify specific participants. I reiterated with the students that no students' names would be used in any final publication. The children were invited to nominate their own pseudonym for the semi-structured pair and group interview (Valentine, 1999). No students took up this option.

### *Documentation*

Research conducted by adults with adults means that transcripts of adult commentaries are typically verified by the adult participants (Denscombe, 2003). In research conducted by adults with children, the ethical issue arises regarding who gets to verify the interview transcripts of the children. Children, irrespective of chronological age, may want to make decisions based on their own understanding (agency and voice) (O'Neill, 2014). To address this issue, the children were given the choice to read and verify the transcribed interview data. One child responded to this

option, requesting that her overuse of the word “like” be removed from her transcript. These changes were made.

#### *Naming of students, storage, retrieval of data*

All transcript data were electronically stored and were available for further examination of content. The true names of the schools were concealed in the form of pseudonyms.

#### **Transferability and confirmability of data – limitations**

There are limitations in all research (Cohen et al., 2000). The findings and interpretations produced by this qualitative research project are not assumed to be transferable across to other settings, nor be confirmable in other settings. This qualitative research focuses on the place and purpose of key competencies as one of the visionary elements of the ‘front end’ of NZC as a national policy text (i.e., Values and Principles have been excluded). A confined focus on children’s views and experiences of the key competencies are a perceived strength of this research. A confined deep focus enabled a critical search for interpretations to make a unique contribution to the education field of curriculum development.

#### *Validity*

Traditionally, quantitative research is associated with issues of validity and reliability, however, controversy has been associated with qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In all research, processes of interpretation are subject to questioning: are these findings trustworthy and robust; could the findings be trusted to base social policy on? (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 120). It is not intended to generalise the findings of this qualitative research to other settings, but rather present the children’s voices from their particular settings in five schools. The validity of this research was strengthened through the process of triangulation by analysing across the different sources of data which were the pair interviews, single class observations and focus group observations. To highlight the voices of the children, it was expected that there would be a substantial inclusion of extracts from the transcripts. The rationale for this decision was to enable critical interpretations and connection making in the data analysis process.

In the next chapter, Chapter Four, the findings of the data will be shared. In this part of the research, extracts of the children’s views are provided, along with some initial discussion.

# **CHAPTER 4:**

## **THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed and justified applying a qualitative methodological approach to address the research question, and made links to relevant national and international literature. This chapter presents the findings based on the thematic analysis of data from the pair and focus group interviews, and the five single classroom observations. The findings are based on the children's shared views and experiences about the meaning of the key competencies. In the next chapter, Chapter Five, a deeper analysis of these findings will be shared using Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning and the author's original acceptance/adoption continuum model (i.e., a follow-on discussion from this chapter).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the research was undertaken in five north island state co-educational primary schools of varying deciles, from November 2011 to December 2012. The research question (introduced in Chapter 1) informed the collection of data:

**What, for children, is the place and purpose of key competencies in the curriculum?**

### **Rationale for presentation of findings**

As explained in Chapter 3, the process of searching for patterns or themes, was broadly placed into three steps. In step three of this process, the focus was to identify patterns and regularities which relate back to my research question, on the purpose and place of key competencies in curriculum (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). A recursive process was applied to flexibly derive broad themes from the extracts of text (i.e., what the children said) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, data from each of the schools have been selected and categorised into four main themes.

The findings are presented according to four themes derived from the children's perceptions and experiences of the key competencies. Those themes are: (1) relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) class or school culture.

In the following sections, the findings of each school in the order in which the research occurred at each school will be shared. As already indicated in the preceding Methodology Chapter, the first two schools, Windbridge and Channel Heights, are in the upper-decile range. Creek Valley is in the mid-decile range, and Woodhaven is in a low-decile range. Dale Crossing School is

classified in the mid-decile range. The three data sources gathered at each school (pair and focus group interviews, and single classroom observations), have been combined to form a picture of how the key competencies were viewed and experienced by the children of each school.

The children were excited to participate in the research and to have the opportunity to talk about their experiences of the key competencies. Feedback from both teachers and the children indicated that they looked forward to my subsequent visits to hear their stories about the key competencies. The project itself interested them, as a child from Channel Heights School commented. At the end of the focus group session with Windbridge children, they became animated when synthesised voice data from the focus group through Wordle was shared. This visual representation prompted further ‘chat’, however it was cut short as they needed to return to their class. Windbridge children were the only participants who did not provide any further comment, or pose any questions for me at the end of the pair interviews.

## **Overview of research schools**

This chapter now moves to outline an introduction to each school. This includes a brief description of each school’s based curriculum development (SBCD) processes (Bolstad, 2004). These descriptions were summarised from reading school ERO reports, sighting curriculum overview and planning documents, and school enrolment and introduction documents. The findings are then presented, based on the categorised themes that highlight the children’s perceptions and experiences of the key competencies in their particular schools.

### **School A: Windbridge**

#### **Introduction**

Windbridge School is a large, high-decile, co-educational school located in a suburb of a North Island city. The school roll of approximately 500 draws from a high social-economic status (SES) community. Housing within the suburb is well established, attractive and with many surrounding prestigious properties. Families have access to multiple professional businesses and popular cultural, recreational and shopping facilities. The suburb is a highly desirable area for families seeking access to the school’s zone, nearby pre-schools and to secure future access to nearby high-decile intermediate or secondary schools.

The student population at the time of the study was mostly European/Pakehā, with the next largest cohort being Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese) and other nationalities. The community has high educational expectations and aspirations for their children, and, in turn, senior leaders



and staff have high expectations of professional performance for meeting the needs of their learners and parent community. School-wide curriculum leadership roles are clearly defined and staff are well supported to increase their capability for achieving the curricular and extra-curricular outcomes of their learners. The school is very well resourced with a successful academic performance history. There is a high degree of interest and involvement from parents and families in the school. The community of Windbridge expect to be, and are fully, engaged in the school's curriculum decision-making processes, sports events and social activities. Each class benefits from designated parent helpers who are responsible for supporting communications between home and school events.

### **Windbridge School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD)**

School-based curriculum development and review was led by Windbridge senior leaders soon after the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (MoE, 2007). Senior and curriculum leaders were highly involved in the development of their school curriculum, which is now implemented by the teachers. Not long after the introduction of the latest curriculum, the NZC (2007), Windbridge staff co-constructed and localised their school vision, values and key competencies.

The school's localization of their school based curriculum is aligned with the key competencies. Each key competency has kept its original label, as named in the NZC. A school-wide focus on assessment for learning emphasised the move towards developing children's learning to learn dispositions (e.g., self-evaluation, goal-setting, reflection). Hence, self-management and independent learning skills in particular, were specifically linked to the development of a set of multiple performance indicators for each key competency (KC). As a result of this process, staff have a documented profile for the successful Windbridge student depicted against each of the key competencies. The researcher uses the acronym 'KCs' for readability of the findings and not as a general replacement in the thesis for the full term, key competencies.

Recently, senior leaders began an exploration into Art Costa's 16 Habits of Mind (HOM) literature. When drawing on the 16 *habits of mind* (Costa, 2001), children reflect certain patterns of behaviour or dispositions in the school setting. Similar to the dispositions in the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki*, these dispositions are a composite of attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding, successfully performed when under challenging conditions, i.e., when learning or through interaction with others. Thus, the school made links with the habits of mind dispositions and the school's key competency student profile of performance indicators.

Habits of mind are now emphasised by the school; the assumption is that they will help children become actively involved and lifelong learners.

In addition, the school's values were developed to support their key competency student profile of performance indicators. The values are promoted through question prompts in information and newsletters, and parents are encouraged to make links to the key competency student profile. For example, a specific key competency from the profile is identified with a brief explanation and, through questioning, parents are encouraged to consider how the key competency is enacted beyond the class setting into wider settings, e.g., school context, home and community. Parents and families are provided with plenty of supporting induction and curriculum information guides. The school's vision statement, logo and key competency student profile are promoted in parent information. Further school-wide description of the school's operation and programmes are linked to each of the KCs.

The principal promoted and rewarded children at the school's assemblies and in communications to the parent community, for enacting the Windbridge KCs' indicators. Further promotion of the KCs was in documentation such as teacher certificates, incentive systems and acknowledgement of children's work samples with other teachers across teams of classes (i.e., called school syndicates, led by a team leader).

As explained in the previous chapter, the key competencies have been italicised and/or abbreviated i.e., TH (thinking), LST (language, symbols and text), RTO (relating to others), PC (participating and contributing), and MS (managing self).

In the next section the findings of the pair interviews are presented.

Based on the children's perceptions and experiences of their Windbridge KCs, four themes were derived: (1) relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) class or school culture. The six Year 6 Windbridge children who participated in the interviews, were confident and at ease when talking about their school experiences of the KCs.

### **Windbridge; pair interviews**

#### ***Theme One: relevance and ranking (future-focus)***

All children across the pair interviews did not rank any KC as more important than any other. They did not hesitate to indicate that all of the KCs were important for improving their future educational prospects. Hence, the KCs were associated with better achievement:

A4 *When you leave to go to intermediate you'll need all those skills... It's kind of like being a better person in a way, like a better student.*

The children were confident that the KCs encouraged purpose and direction for improving their current learning, and for developing lifelong learning habits:

A1 *If we didn't learn about them we wouldn't really know what we're supposed to actually be doing and what we have to achieve in school... if we didn't have managing self we wouldn't show initiative or responsibility.*

A3 *They [the KCs] help you learn.*

A2 *If we didn't use them [the KCs] we wouldn't be learning the best that we can.*

The children shared a future-focussed view that the KCs would be enacted as they transitioned into adulthood for example:

A5 *When you get up to your adult time you'll be able to manage your own self, relate to others and participate in activities using your thinking skills to think ... and using language, symbols and texts if you want to communicate with other people.*

A6 *Even in adulthood and childhood it is best to use these competencies.*

### **Theme two: Relationships (self-regulation, interpersonal behaviour)**

One of the three relational KCs, *relating to others*, dominated in the children's perceptions. The children shared the need for respectful peer relationships such as:

A2 *respecting other people and other people's property. Like they wouldn't just go and steal.*

A3 *Treat people how they want to be treated, like they don't just punch someone and then the other person will want to punch them back or something like that, but actually treat them nicely.*

Self-regulation of one's behaviour when interacting with peers was expressed:

A6 *I can modify [my] interactions with other people. I can share my feelings with other people.*

### **Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, self-responsibility)**

The *participating and contributing* and *relating to others* KCs featured when the children indicated what helped their learning, and how future learning of the KCs could be enhanced.

Dispositions such as perseverance and resilience seemed apparent when the children talked about learning from their mistakes:

- A1 *It is okay if you do something wrong ... [describing an experience in a PE lesson] I didn't give up.*
- A2 *I learned like it's okay to lose. It doesn't really matter if you win, unless you try your best.*

Confidence and self-awareness of one's ability was expected by the children to be developed over time, as the *participating and contributing* KC became more prevalent in school activities:

- A4 *Some people are really, really shy and they don't want to do things but if they did that [PC, RTO] more then maybe they'd like it and they wouldn't be so shy.*
- A5 *If you don't participate then you won't know what it's like to do that activity. If you don't try out for [extra-curricular activity] you might not know [how much talent you have].*

The children displayed a disposition of self-responsibility, and talked about making the most of their learning opportunities when using the *participating and contributing* and *relating to others* KC at their school:

- A5 *It helps you to learn – if you often don't bring your swimming gear then you won't learn how to swim, and if you often don't wear your hat because we usually can't do PE without our hats you won't know how to play sports. And if you don't participate in the school council, or anything, then you wouldn't know how to have good leadership skills.*
- A1 *This may be a bit mean to some of the students, but maybe they might have to do it for learning in the future.*

One participant asserted the need for improved teacher wait time during questioning in lessons, to assist with the demands of cognitive processing:

- A4 *Sometimes I don't have enough time to think and ... if [teacher] picks me and I was still working it out, then I wouldn't have the answer and maybe they could give us some time to think.*

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, feedback, transfer across settings; independence)***

The children were familiar with school systems that expected their active involvement in extra-curricular activities. The *participating and contributing* and *relating to others* KCs were identified as the main influences on the children's extra-curricular involvement in settings outside the classroom:

*A1 I participate in lots of activities around the school, like librarian, school council, gardening club and choir.*

The children said that all KCs were used in multiple settings, not just in the classroom, but “at playtime or lunchtime”, “in the playground, at home, if you’re on a holiday programme” and “when you’re doing your homework”. They said that *participating and contributing, relating to others* and *managing self* KCs influenced their interactions and would naturally transfer to other settings outside the classroom to include home or community activities:

*A3 We use them outside of school at sports... I play tennis and there’s doubles and if my partner loses a point to me I don’t get really angry at him... [I use] Managing self or relating to others if I’m playing a team sport.*

*A5 At your house and in your clubs and sports out of school.*

One participant identified that the *managing self* KC was necessary for maintaining positive interactions with peers across settings:

*A2 In many situations you probably need to do the right thing in that situation, and not choose the wrong choice.*

The children were familiar with the routine of their principal who publically promoted and rewarded the KCs in action at school. Similarly, the children were also familiar with the practice of being asked by their principal to articulate the KCs they used in particular situations.

*A4 In assembly the principal tells us about the KCs and sometimes one of them is kind of our goal for the week, to use that KC.*

*A3 [The principal] brings people out that have been using those [KCs] at assembly...when [the principal] says who’s been relating to others and they say we’ve been relating to others because we’ve been helping other people.*

Two participants maintained that the KCs would still be important to learn about and use to set work goals and improve their work habits, even if a system of school rewards for demonstrating performance against the Windbridge KC profile did not exist.

While they did not ask their teachers for specific feedback about personal performance against the Windbridge KC profile, the children expected they would be told if they inquired. All participants were confident though, to suggest what their teacher or other teachers might say to them. The *relating to others* and *managing self* KCs were perceived as the main areas of needed feedback related to self-control, good work habits, achievement and respectful peer relationships:

- A1 *If you were in a fight in the playground and you backed away from it they might say well done, making sure you don't actually hurt yourself.*
- A5 *My teacher would say that person has good sportsmanship and is being able to relate to others in the team... that student is a really high achiever would be able to work and think through problems.*

In the next section, findings of the classroom observation of the children in their class working with their peers and their teacher are presented.

### **Windbridge; classroom observation**

During the classroom observation, I sought to identify the children's enactment of the school's KCs as articulated in the pair interviews. The observation began with the children involved in a numeracy lesson that was related to their enterprise inquiry learning unit. The six children began seated on the mat for whole-class instructions and then moved off to their group activities. Co-operative learning routines were familiar to the participants, and they did not hesitate to engage in pair tasks at the computers or problem solving at their desks.

The pairs seemed at ease conversing with each other about how to solve mathematical problems. They questioned recorded calculations and clarified each other's thinking or decisions during pair games. When pair activities came to an end, while the teacher continued to instruct some of the other participants on the mat, the children confidently engaged in independent maintenance activities using materials and resources around the room. The participants listened and responded to teacher instructions, questions, raised their hands, smiled, offered explanations and recorded thinking. The atmosphere was relaxed and the children appeared to be enthusiastically engaged in their work.

In summary, multi-peer groupings and teacher group instruction showed congruence with the children's talk about *participating and contributing* and *relating to others*. Children completing independent book work and class activities focussed on goals, were congruent with their talk about *managing self* and *thinking*. These examples of activities aligned with particular KCs that the children said in the pair interviews and would be in use, i.e., *participating and contributing* and *relating to others* with the teacher in groups or pairs, *managing self* confidently during individual activities and *thinking* when focused on work goals or responding to teacher questions.

The next section shares the findings of the **focus group interview**.

The focus group comprised of three Year 6 boys and three Year 6 girls. Two boys and one girl were of Asian ethnicity, and the remainder were European/Pakehā. In the focus group, the following themes emerged from the children’s talk about the KCs. Themes one and two are grouped together as the ideas were closely related.

***Themes One and Two: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning) and Relationships (confidence, self-regulation, personal accountability)***

Early in the discussion, the participants agreed that the Windbridge KC profile was important for improving their achievement and success at school. Three children commented that reflective thinking assisted them with identifying how to look back on classroom tasks such as artwork or writing, in order to improve their work outcomes. Perseverance was conveyed when one participant insisted that it was important to use the *participating and contributing* KC “no matter how boring” activities can sometimes become.

It was suggested that the KCs would assist them in the future with getting along with their peers as they transitioned to “intermediate, college or university”. Children commented that the *participating and contributing, relating to others* and *managing self* KCs would be important as they became adults, seeking future employment or maintaining positive and productive work relationships. The concept of social negotiation surfaced as the children saw the need for the *managing self* KC to relate to co-workers and achieve independent work commitments. Children associated the *managing self* KC with future personal and employment success, because as adults they would need to have developed “self-care”, individual accountability and confident independence.

The children continued to explain the *managing self* KC in terms of being self-smart or having “self-care”, for example, when carrying out learning tasks independently in the classroom. One child clarified that, for her, and the group agreed, *managing self* was knowing when there are times to be an independent learner, and times when learning occurs in group situations. One child commented that the TH KC would be necessary in all situations “you couldn’t do anything without thinking...because it helps you with everything”.

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, feedback, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

When talking about improving the learning of KCs at Windbridge School, one participant disagreed with another, saying less talk about the KCs was necessary and she preferred learning

activities to be practical. When probed further, the participant found it difficult to explain, however, she wanted ‘doing’ activities.

When talking about enabling learning success, or ‘better learning’, the whole group found it difficult, and could not clearly identify, when and how their teacher was providing feedback against the Windbridge KC profile. The children presumed that feedback was applied once a day and expected that the teacher would be too busy to comment about their KC performance. The group was not perturbed by the absence of teacher feedback about their performance, although most agreed that they would prefer their teacher to reward them for performance against the Windbridge KC profile. One girl contradicted this stance and indicated that if there were no initial rewards, the promotional importance of the KCs would be lost. By this, she meant that her peers/school children needed to learn that the KC graduate profile was of value to them. The group’s discussion confirmed that the principal was an obvious provider of affirmative feedback about the children’s performance against the KC student profile. Furthermore, the children expected that school-wide KC performance goals would be announced and promoted by senior leaders, through school communications such as assemblies and newsletters.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; independence)***

The *participating & contributing* KC was confirmed as a main influence on the children’s extra-curricular activities. The children were familiar with school systems where multiple opportunities were available to them and they said it was important to be actively involved in any or several activities outside the classroom. One participant commented that they were “lucky” to have access to clubs, activities and resources in their school physical environment to develop the *participating & contributing* KC. The group agreed, and expected that children of other schools would still need to be actively involved, even if resources in the physical environment were difficult to access because of location. This attitude of active involvement also extended out to the children’s productive engagement in their community setting.

In summary, the children’s talk confirmed that the KCs were relevant and all equally important to learn about and use in their day-to-day learning at school. The KCs were talked about mainly in terms of helping them experience individual academic, cultural and social success. The relational KCs *managing self, relating to others* and *participating & contributing* dominated in the children’s perceptions and experiences at school. To improve individual achievement, success and accountability, there was the need for productive peer relationships to ensure productive individual work results. The KCs were perceived to extend beyond the class setting to



other settings outside the classroom. Furthermore, the children closely associated the KCs with preparing them for future educational transitions such as transfer to intermediate school, college or university. Consequently, the KCs were perceived by the children to position them to benefit and access future educational tertiary prospects. Overall, the KCs were viewed as ‘learning to do’ and ‘learning to know about’ tools for helping the children achieve success at and beyond school.

## **School B: Channel Heights**

### **Introduction**

Channel Heights School is a large urban, high-decile, co-educational school, located in a North Island city. The school has experienced significant roll growth in recent years. Approximately 700 children attend the school, and its population draws from a high socio-economic status (SES) community. The ethnic composition of the student population has changed in the past decade, and it is now mostly European/Pakehā, with other smaller groups of nationalities represented (e.g., Filipino, British). Inclusive relationships with parents are maintained by the staff with the Channel Heights community (e.g., parent help in classrooms, social or community events).

Parents value the consistent promotion of high expectations for educational achievement and school excellence by both teaching staff and Board of Trustees. The school emphasises close partnerships between home and school, and appears to succeed in establishing this aim through frequent community events and various forms of communications with parents, such as curriculum evenings, induction processes for new parents, achievement sharing, website and newsletters. Independent and responsible learning and behaviour from the children are emphasised by the staff as part of induction processes and continues as the children progress through their year levels. A family atmosphere at the school is also espoused by school leadership, and older children are expected to support younger children in the school setting. For example, senior classes are ‘buddied’ with the younger classes to support them with various learning programmes and school activities. The latter include older and younger buddy-reading programmes, sports and cultural performance activities.

### **Channel Heights School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD)**

Channel Heights School continues to focus on strengthening its vision and values with its staff and community. The Channel Heights School values of Truth, Trust, Duty, Persistence, Courtesy and Care (the author has adapted the wording of these values to maintain anonymity) underpin

all school activities and curriculum decision making processes. The school values are strongly articulated with the children and community in school orientation guides, evident in the school environment, celebrated in assemblies, daily communications and in the awards given by the staff and principal.

School-wide professional development of student inquiry learning and the seven curriculum areas of the NZC have been largely led by senior curriculum leaders. The implementation of a school-wide developed inquiry learning model aligns with the NZC vision. The school's model does not explicitly articulate or record that there will be the development of the KCs within and across the school's curriculum learning areas, as stipulated in the NZC. The school's curriculum promotional information emphasises concepts such as lifelong learning, authentic, relevant and challenging learning, and critical thinking, all consistent with the language of the NZC vision.

School-wide review and development of the KCs seemed to be in its early stages. During my time at the school, there was no indication that there would be continued review and development of the KCs on a school-wide level, other than what each team leader had decided to make links with, e.g., *managing self* with learning goals. While the KCs were stated in school promotional information, there was variable uptake and implementation of the KCs into teaching and learning programmes. Each syndicate of teachers had the responsibility of independently interpreting and developing the KCs at syndicate level. Some teachers had individually localised the meaning of the KCs for teaching and learning purposes at class level. These meanings were not congruent across the school.

As children transferred across the year levels, the explicit development of the KCs in teaching and learning programmes varied, depending on each syndicate's interpretation. Most of the 'interpretations' focussed on *managing self*, *participating & contributing* and *relating to others*. The Channel Heights teacher of this particular research class of children had developed a set of descriptors for each KC which was used in a previous syndicate. The children's views were not included in developing the descriptors, as these were pre-determined. These KC descriptors were not school-wide-owned examples, rather, they were used across the teacher's year level. Furthermore, they were specific to the syndicate which the teacher led, and were largely linked to *managing self*, *thinking* and *participating & contributing*, especially to do with the children's literacy and numeracy goals.

The following section presents the findings of the pair interviews.

## **Channel Heights; pair interviews**

The six Year 6 Channel Heights School children who participated in the pair interviews presented as very engaged participants. The children appeared confident and eager to engage in conversations about the KCs.

Four main themes about the Channel Heights KCs were identified by analysis of the children's data: (1) Relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) class and school culture.

### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning, learning to learn)***

Across all of the pair interviews, the Channel Heights children explained that the KCs were *very* important to use “every day, [for] everything, we need them” and “you need to use all of them as much”. The children felt that all KCs were of equal ranking. One child indicated there was a risk for children perceiving that any KC could be ranked “higher” than another, as this would lead to particular KCs becoming neglected,

*B3 If one was higher than the other and it's not, you're not going to try to achieve it as much, you achieve the higher ones.*

This child commented that sometimes one or two KCs were in action, and sometimes all of them were working together. One child stated that the KCs were needed to be used “to be a good student...to be a really good person”. Another participant elaborated on the importance of the *relating to others* KC in a competitive sports context, anticipating team members' game strategies. Channel Heights children perceived the KCs had an influence on their future life prospects. Individual productivity and accountability featured in the children's talk. Individual accountability was inherent in one child's view of the *relating to others* and *participating & contributing* KCs, important for, “when you're older and you get a job, you'll need to know how to work well in a group”. Talk about the KCs associated with productivity also included them being relevant for transitioning to secondary school. The perception was that “you have a list to do [school work tasks]” and “you can use them [KCs] more... to help you achieve what you're trying to do”. Channel Heights children implied the KCs provided individual direction, “so you know what you're doing”. Furthermore, the KCs were associated with the practice of individual goal setting which was to help them “get better” at something in the classroom. In addition, one child elaborated on the importance of goal setting to achieve better assessment results:

*B5 If you didn't set goals for yourself and just stayed at one level all the time, then you wouldn't get anywhere, you'd just stay on the same level.*

***Theme Two: Relationships (connectedness, negotiation, inclusion, self-regulation, interpersonal behaviour)***

The *participating & contributing* and *relating to others* KCs, in the context of class group work, dominated in the children's talk. The children were adamant, as they explained these KCs, that it was important to be good at "helping the people in your group" and "working together to get information". One child spoke about the two KCs in terms of being a productive group, accountable in their roles to avoid some peers having "to do all the hard work":

- B2 You'd be doing the writing, one person might be finding out all the research and the others might be starting to get it and write it down and then at the end you'd draw pictures and things so you shared it out.*
- B5 If you've got them [lazy children] in your group then it's just like not having anyone because they're just sitting back and not doing anything, so basically no work.*
- B6 [People] wouldn't want to work with you because they know you wouldn't do anything.*

The idea of working in small groups was also elaborated on to include talk that reflected ideas of being co-operative and inclusive when "you're sharing your thoughts with them". Being open-minded and non-judgmental when listening to others' ideas in the group was talked about by one child as "if they give a bad idea ... you wouldn't give them bad feedback". When asked to elaborate, the notion of feedback was associated with goal setting/achievement and being a focussed group member:

- B5 It's either good or bad and you'd still give them some feedback and say how well they did it. They can use it next time and think oh well this person said that I should maybe try to use...or make my writing clearer, then you can say okay, I'll work on that, that will be my goal.*
- B1 When you're thinking, you're thinking about work and nothing else like you can't be thinking about a play date after school or something, you have to be concentrating.*

Elements of empathy and encouragement were also evident in the children's interpretation of feedback and using the *relating to others* KC:

- B1 You're being really nice to someone else...and if they're a bit slower than you at work, you say nice job anyway, you're still finding out heaps of information.*

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

The Channel Heights children agreed that their class KC prompts, displayed on the front whiteboard, helped as reminders for learning goals. One child identified that the *language symbols & texts* KC helped with learning the most during reading and writing across all curriculum areas. One child had difficulty interpreting the *language symbols & texts* KC, “I don’t really get using it”, but suggested, “I think it’s just writing”. *Language symbols & texts* and *thinking* KCs were identified though to have a large influence on being successful at goal setting. This was perhaps so because the children had just recorded a new set of goals in writing. Another child elaborated on goal setting and suggested “if you want to be better at something”, then the *thinking* KC was important for individual reading, writing and maths goals.

Two children identified the *participating & contributing* and MS KCs working in combination during large group discussions, however, their involvement was less active, and more compliance to class speaking rules e.g., “putting up your hand...telling your answers”. When the children were asked what could be improved in their learning of the KCs, more time for peer conversations was suggested, reflecting the children’s desire to interact across groups of peers, shifting the locus of control from teacher to child. One child identified that to help better understand the *participating & contributing* KC in action during group learning tasks, the teacher could “go over what it means”. Two children were fixated with the non-productive work habits of their peers, and indicated that the *participating & contributing* KC could resolve this inclination, thus “change lazy people to helpful”. Lack of skilful use of the *thinking* KC was not to be tolerated and interpreted as peers not making use of time to think seriously about group tasks, they “give useless ideas ... they haven’t thought about it”. It was suggested that learning could be improved by allocating increased time to process the demands of thinking about answers to questions, or time for “good searching into the text more and getting information”. One child associated the *managing self* KC with personal accountability and a compliance lens, as a means to follow the school rules, you must “check yourself”, especially during break times outside the class setting, and that its importance could be promoted at school assemblies.

The Channel Heights participants could not recall examples of their teacher providing specific feedback about their performance against the class KC indicators. However, the children did agree on the value of receiving verbal praise for enacting any of the KCs. The children were confident to suggest what their teacher might say if they were demonstrating the KCs, “well done if [you helped] someone [who] was hurt”, “you are all working well together” and “they’ve

got good ideas”. The children were familiar with their teacher awarding certificates to their peers for demonstrating the KCs in relation to achieving individual goals. Two children perceived the KCs as becoming habitual, or common-sense for all, if the teacher continued to extend verbal feedback:

*B5 Using the key competencies more often so they become something that you should not do once in a while but something you do like all the time.*

As for Windbridge children, KCs at Channel Heights were closely associated with improving individual achievement or assessment grades, and facilitating entry to tertiary organisations:

*B6 It gets into your system [probing]. So it could help you when you get to university that you would get better grades and it would be easier for you to do your work.*

When asked about what they would share with the teacher about their KC performance, two children suggested it would be to receive affirmation about their how well they were achieving in writing. In addition, the children indicated that increasing wait time would help their cognitive processing or thinking about answers to questions. Talk also included more of a focus on the *participating & contributing* KC with the teacher to help set personal goals, so that they could persevere to achieve them.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, feedback, transfer across settings; social contexts; interactions)***

Channel Heights participants all perceived that the KCs were in productive, everyday actions outside the class setting, part of individual responsibility, extending to the home and community setting:

*B1 Cleaning your room. Doing other jobs for other people without asking.*

*B2 You'd really be using them everywhere ...At home, like when you do chores.*

Once again, two children associated the PC and MS KCs with transferring to the college setting:

*B3 It might be when you go to a college, when you're doing PE, [the teacher] might talk about it and make sure that you're participating and contributing and managing self if you are losing 10 points and then it's game over and you're a bit angry, you still manage yourself.*

Interpretations of the KCs in extra-curricular activities were not identified, even though the school offered multiple opportunities for students to engage in activities outside the class setting. While this was the case, *participating & contributing*, *managing self* KCs contributed to the

children's perception of self-responsibility – working hard, managing your time and personal commitments.

The next section presents the findings of the classroom observation.

### **Channel Heights; classroom observation**

In the classroom observation, the children were involved in an independent visual language task where they were asked by their teacher to design a recreational space. The children were instructed to work without talking, independently on this task and at times some children would refer to vocabulary resources to assist with diagram labels. As a result of the children working independently, what was espoused in the pair interviews was not observed, i.e., multi-groupings, contributing to peer tasks and peer discussion of work in progress would be what 'we do' every day.

The six Year 6 children participated in a focus group interview and the same four themes are presented in the following section.

### **Channel Heights; focus group interview**

#### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning)***

Although new to understanding the KCs, the Channel Heights children expected that they would become more aware of, and see value in, using them all of the time for achieving work goals. By this, the children eluded that the KCs would become part of their everyday class experience, and they expected they would come across them in other settings, or with other classroom teachers. Contextual factors such as a new teacher did not dissuade the six children from thinking they would not come across the KCs again. Their talk included the perception that all KCs were important "in their own way" or "in different ways", depending on the situation and task, particular KCs would come to the foreground, "all of them may not be important all at the same time". As commented in the pair interviews, the children shared that the KCs would be useful as they got older, for example at college, "when writing a report".

All the children expected that their understanding and use of the KCs would improve over time. One child commented that the KCs would be useful regardless of going on to university or deciding to immediately enter the workforce after leaving school:

*B5 If you don't go to university and you just go straight into a job or whatever you want to do, you are still going to use them, so if you are going to help with a car*

*wash station or something else, you would still be using most of the key competencies. Basically all of them.*

***Theme Two: Relationships (connectedness, self-regulation)***

One example highlighted the variability across the school syndicates for developing the KCs within the school. The *relating to others* and *managing self* KCs were perceived in terms of being accountable and committed to getting work done, “if we knew them last year, our class might have run more smoothly” and “working together” in groups or pairs. In contrast, children’s talk also included elements of inclusion and reciprocity:

*B5 If you are stuck and you are not getting something, then when you are working with groups, that helps, because one person, they might know what’s wrong, ’cos everyone could be stuck and they might not know what’s right. The person who knows it can share it with all the other people so then they know what it is instead of the person who knows it just doing it off by themselves and doing it in their head and learning, and the others are just sitting there thinking and trying to understand what is happening.*

The children’s talk was reflective of a positive awareness of social co-operative values and attitudes, e.g., being kind, caring, helpful and open to learning from peers in the classroom as desired outcomes of the *participating & contributing* KC:

*B6 [RTO] might change you because you might be really selfish and you don’t want to help anybody. But when you learn it you start helping people and you would have more friends.*

*B2 You could be really smart and you would have to listen to other people’s ideas, so you would have new ideas to think about, so it could change you.*

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

All six Channel Heights children considered it a necessity to learn about the KCs as early as possible. They expected the KCs to be role-modelled by other teachers, although the children did not elaborate on this general comment. Additional expectations from the children included KCs to be present in teachers’ language, and for their student leaders to also model the KCs. The children commented about improving the learning of KCs alongside receiving feedback about their next learning steps as desirable. The children associated this idea with the *managing self, thinking* and *language, symbols & texts* KCs. Interestingly, talk about the *language, symbols & texts* KC was not strong across the interviews. The group displayed curiosity about the sub-



criteria on their class KCs documents. They asked me “is that all of them?” and “can we make up our own?”, perceiving themselves in the role of co-constructing relevant KC indicators. When we talked more on this point, the children showed enthusiasm for coming up with their own ideas of what each KC would ‘look like’. Channel Heights children wanted to receive more help from their teachers with further understanding the KCs, and were curious what other teachers’ opinions were, and if they could access them. Talk also included indicating the need for visual scaffolds to support cognitive retention, “sometimes pictures help you understand and not just words”.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; independence)***

All Channel Heights children expected that the KCs would be developed over time. As shared in the pair interviews, the children were hopeful that they would continue to experience the KCs, as they were soon transitioning to intermediate school. Talk confirmed starting young to learn about the KCs, “year one” and “then they are always stuck in your brain and you will always remember them”. In the following quote, ideas of self-responsibility and individual accountability were associated with the KCs in the context of parent modelling in the home setting:

*B5 I know another place where you learn, where you get taught about key competencies, your parents will, ...they are showing you if you are doing something bad and they say you are not thinking or have you thought about this, you're doing very well, you've actually used your brain.*

In summary, like Windbridge, the Channel Heights children’s talk confirmed that the KCs were relevant and all equally important to learn about and use in everyday learning at school. Similarly, the KCs were talked about mainly in terms of helping the children to focus on and achieve long- or short-term goals as well as learn social skills. The KCs were perceived to assist the children as they transferred to other school settings, of value in any chosen tertiary setting, or for helping them achieve employment security or career success. Generally, the children’s mind-set attributed *managing self, participating & contributing* and *relating to others* as KCs necessary to motivate individual responsibility for achieving goals or tasks. Overall, the KCs were viewed as ‘learning to do’ and ‘learning to know about’ tools for helping the children achieve success at and beyond school.

## **School C: Creek Valley**

### **Introduction**

Creek Valley School is a large urban, mid-decile, co-educational school located in a North Island city. The school roll is over 400 and the school enrolls children from an ethnically and culturally diverse community. The ethnic composition of the student population is mostly Asian (Indian, Chinese), with smaller cohorts of European/Pakehā, Pasifika and Middle Eastern/African. Approximately 80% of children who speak languages other than English attend Creek Valley School. The diverse school community is promoted by the principal and staff, for example via the school's website, community events, and newsletters. The school has an inclusive culture and emphasises improving learning and behaviour outcomes. At Creek Valley School, the children have access to a wide range of resources and extra-curricular activities. In particular, sports, the arts and environmental education school activities are promoted. Learning extension classes emphasise science, mathematics and the arts. Children have access to out of school activities which focus on developing visual arts abilities. School-wide student leadership roles for the children to participate in are promoted.

The staff and principal, well supported by its Board of Trustees, appear to engage positively with the school's parent community. The immigrant community of Creek Valley School are highly supportive of the principal and staff. Parents and families have high aspirations for their children's educational achievement and future social economic status. They expect that their children will thrive with the multiple opportunities offered in a New Zealand/Pakehā academic environment and thus will transition confidently to their next school.

### **Creek Valley School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD)**

Staff at Creek Valley School are engaged in ongoing curriculum professional development programmes and they have strong school networks. The principal is well supported by experienced curriculum and team leaders, who all work collaboratively to strengthen teaching and learning practices. Curriculum development has been positively led within the school. The NZC, and in particular the KCs, have been implemented confidently by leaders and teachers. There has been a refocusing and further development of the KCs across the school. The staff have collaborated together to interpret the meaning of each KC and how they will be developed across the curriculum learning areas. A curriculum overview was developed which documents the KCs along with several indicators of performance against each KC for the teachers to deliberately foreground in teaching and learning programmes. The teacher of the researched class referred to the school's KCs' overview in conversations, and publically displayed it in the

classroom communal area. While the school KCs' overview was a teacher reference document, the children in this research class were able to articulate what particular key competency was in focus for their own development goals, during their inquiry learning visual language design task.

In the next section, the findings of the pair interviews with the children will be shared.

### **Creek Valley; pair interviews**

At the start of the pair interviews, the Year 5 and 6 children seemed timid and cautious and required encouragement to freely share their thoughts and experiences of the school's KCs. However, prior to returning to the school for the class observation, the teacher informed me that the group had indeed enjoyed their initial experience of sharing opinions, and were consequently motivated for further conversations.

#### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning, learning to learn)***

Children of Creek Valley School all perceived the KCs to be helpful, practical common classroom tools "because we use them in our everyday lives". They spoke of how the KCs were important for assisting them with current classroom achievement goals, "they're the things you use when you learn". The children's talk also included elements of using the KCs for prompting 'learning to do' individual actions, i.e., "[LST] teaches you to put apostrophes in your writing", next learning steps and accessing new learning or leadership opportunities:

*C2 We get to express our feelings and we get to set our goals so we can achieve them....Each term we select goals for one of our KCs and we try to achieve it so we can set a new goal.*

*C4 So they get opportunities to like learn new things like student council you help teachers lead the school.*

The above quotes highlight the children's positive adoption of the KCs for 'learning to know and do' purposes. All Creek Valley children asserted that the KCs had equal ranking of importance to make positive gains presently and for future life. In addition, the KCs would be needed when they transitioned to a new class, and also when they left school. Thus, a lifelong learning or a future-focussed mind-set was implicit when talking about the KCs developing over time and transferring to adult settings:

*C6 It's still important [when you leave school] because then you'll learn more [keep learning]*

*C3 When you get bigger they'll be all important, like you need to work on those like if you work on them right now you'll know what to do when you grow up.*

The children interpreted the *relating to others* and *managing self* KCs as being helpful for their future positive relationships, employment prospects, and for their physical wellbeing:

*C2* When you have a job you have to relate to others because sometimes you're working together and sometimes you share your ideas.

*C1* You might want to eat something that's really unhealthy and you know it won't benefit you but you really want to eat it and you have to manage yourself.

Another child identified the *thinking* KC as "helping you with almost everything...all subjects...everything I do".

***Theme two: Relationships (connectedness, negotiation, inclusion, self-regulation, interpersonal behaviour, empathy, helping)***

One child associated the RTO and PC KCs in use when the school's peer mediators worked "in two buddies and solved problems around the school". Another child elaborated on this example in terms of the RTO and PC KCs:

*C4* If we couldn't teamwork and if we weren't thinking properly we wouldn't sort out our problems, or the problems in maths ....without them you can't learn properly.

The MS and RTO KCs were associated within the competitive sports setting, "you have to manage yourself even if you lose and not get angry". Self-control and self-awareness of emotions in the group setting was implicit in two children's interpretations, "don't get angry at people if they don't do something that you like". In a future vocational setting, one child gave an example of being an employee or employer, "perhaps you don't like a business manager...and you're all mean or all their employees would probably quit because he's not very nice at all to them". The children also perceived RTO as important in their peer relationships, such as making friends or "showing empathy, put yourself in someone else's shoes and you feel what they feel". Inclusion, "sharing, helping" and empathy were similarly implicit in the children's talk in group contexts:

*C2* If we're making new groups we actually, if people are left out we make them join in....To work in a group and if someone is hurt you actually care about them.

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

The TH and PC KCs dominated in the children's talk. They said they enabled them to experience success in groups or independent contexts. Two children conveyed a resilient disposition when discussing teacher feedback; it was important "to go with it, so you can learn from your

mistakes” or if “he’s teaching you something you actually participate and ask questions and tell him what you think”. The TH KC was perceived as applying conscientious effort and persistence when working on tasks, and “if it’s a hard question [you] think about it”, “put thought into it” or “you’ll see people really trying and concentrating”. Decision making was also an attribute of the TH KC, for example, during a visual language task and having shared responsibilities for achieving those tasks: “we think about what we want to create and we make a survey ... we actually have to think about what kind of colours [others] want and if they’re important or not”. Similarly, talk about the RTO KC included group learning contexts, “you work together to do something”; “share ideas”; “because then everyone will build up on your idea and make it better”. The MS KC was identified by one child as assisting concentration, that one could “stop yourself” from being distracted to engage in social talk instead of learning tasks.

When asked which KCs helped them most to learn, the TH and RTO KCs featured. One child said that the TH KC provided space for “time to think about the answer”. Similar to what Channel Heights children commented on wait-time or more time to think, the TH KC was identified as the main influence for improving learning. In particular, it was suggested that the teacher could vary group organisation in the class or help reduce the demands of processing a task:

*C4 Give us more time to do things. Until everybody finishes...if we’re thinking, if we only have a certain amount of time we can’t really finish it. Yeah if you have stress you don’t really concentrate.*

One child related the LST KC to a visual arts lesson and saw its purpose for learning about new concepts “because I learn best when I’m looking at pictures and I’m drawing”. Three children perceived the RTO KC as having a purpose of building for relational security, “to help one another” and reciprocity was implicit, “it will help your learning...other people can help you, if you are nice to them”.

One child commented that the LST was her preferred KC “because I like being creative and doing art work”. She then asked me “which KC do you think you’re good at?” A competitive element was implied for using this KC in the classroom, and once again was associated with ‘learning to know and do’ purposes.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; social contexts; interactions)***

The children perceived that all of the KCs helped them with setting and achieving learning goals, and were evident in action in all contexts. Self-evaluation or self-reflection was implied when one child identified the TH KC across all school contexts, “because every single work you do you have to think about what you do and how you’re going to make it better”. Self-control of individual emotions was talked of when using the MS KC in competitive situations, “if they lose in sports they don’t start crying and have a tantrum. They actually say ‘good game, it was close, you were good’”. Across the pair interviews the children explained that the KCs were used in and out of the classroom setting, at break times and outside the school setting, at home or with family members. MS was also perceived to be in use when “preparing for learning” or “getting ready by yourself [at home]”. The children were enthusiastic about the RTO and PC KCs in action during extra-curricular school activities such as choir, environmental education, student council and drama groups. One child identified her RTO and PC KCs were in action when “I go to Girl Guiding so I use them there”.

In the next section the findings of the classroom observation of the children working in their peers and their teacher is presented.

**Creek Valley; classroom observation**

During the classroom observation, the children were involved in an inquiry learning lesson about visual language use in the graphic design of logos. The teacher started with all of the children on the mat and they listened as the learning intention was articulated (it was also publically displayed for independent reference). Lesson success criteria were discussed with the children, “we will be successful when...” and the teacher circled key words in task descriptions, e.g., composition and compromise. A reflection paragraph prompt was displayed on the whiteboard. The children were aware that the RTO and LST KC were in focus, with particular elements of empathy and negotiation during their group task. The children chose to work in pairs or small groups with the teacher commenting, “yes you have learnt that some of you work better in small groups and by yourself”. Each group’s task brief was to design a commercial label. The teacher modelled how to apply part-whole thinking when discussing the symbolism and effect of the example logos. The children then proceeded to pair up with peers, collect group members together, or work independently around their room.

All children appeared excited and were engaged in conversations about their work in progress. Two children chatted about their pencil plans and compared ideas with others. One child returned to the success criteria for the task, then returned to work independently on the design task. Other children independently collected materials to complete the design task. When the teacher called the children back to the mat, three children indicated they would share their work evaluations. The class engaged in giving feedback about next steps to improve designs. The teacher also recapped the KCs in focus and invited the children to give examples of how they were using the LST KC well in their design task. The class observation confirmed multi-group arrangement to complete tasks, peer co-operative tasks and peer to peer feedback conversations.

In the next section the findings of the focus group interview will follow.

The Year 5 and 6 children participated in the focus group interview and the four following themes emerged. Theme one and two have been combined with similar ideas that were talked about.

#### **Creek Valley; focus group interview**

***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning) and***

***Theme Two: Relationships (connectedness, self-regulation)***

All of the Creek Valley children confirmed that the RTO and PC KCs were helping them with their class learning and relationships, as well as with their involvement in self-chosen extra-curricular activities. Relationship stability, personal organisation, self-control and self-awareness were elements conveyed in the children's RTO and MS KCs' discussion. Tolerance was implied when all of the children agreed that the KCs were needed as you get older "even with people you don't like". The group also agreed that their ongoing use of the KCs was for the purpose of improving their future goals, in particular, tertiary achievement, career pathways and employment prospects.

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

The children identified that the importance of the TH KC needed to be raised because it was needed for them to process ideas in every learning activity, or to assist understanding people or for active listening in conversations. The children shared that the TH KC was in action when using print resources to make meaning during literacy writing activities. Two children thought that "it's ok" to experience confusion when learning new ideas, with resilience and perseverance implicit:

*C4 Life is all about learning... you keep learning and you keep going on and on and on.*

*C1 Yes, and you make mistakes and learn from them.*

The group agreed that their learning of the LST KC could be improved through more visual arts and creative tasks. This was to mean application of the KCs in more practical contexts of learning, not just ‘talking about’ the KCs. The group also confirmed that time allocation could be increased, “not being rushed”, this hinted at the need for helping the children with cognitive processing demands of tasks. The children identified that learning the PC KC could be improved by having more open access to school-wide opportunities to extra-curricular activities, regardless of age or perceived ability:

*C2 I think some people don't have chances to be in sports when they actually really want to, or choir or production 'cos for production you have to audition and some people might not have that talent, but they really want to be that character.*

When the children talked about making changes to classroom learning experiences, it was evident that they wanted to learn more from other teachers by having different teachers throughout the day for different subjects. This was clarified to mean that the KCs would be strengthened learning from different teacher capabilities, or being exposed to different teacher talents. This curious aspiration hinted at flexible learning contexts. When discussing the purpose of goal setting and teacher feedback on individual learning progress, ideas of individual improved achievement was confirmed by the group, with one child explaining this practice as:

*C2 Next steps up to your goal, like suppose you have this really, really long staircase and you are on a step and then you need to go up and you need to know your next steps to get on the next step.*

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; independence***

Consistent with the pair interviews, the children confirmed that the KCs were active in the class and outside the school setting. For example, two children identified the TH KC was successfully in use when strategizing in their club sports:

*C6 I play cricket. Yeah, thinking ... where to think where to hit the ball and where to throw the ball.*

*C5 I do soccer. [I use] Thinking. 'Cos you've got to think when to tackle.*



At the end of the group interview, the children seemed quite relaxed, wanting to share more about their personal successes. One child displayed curiosity and asked me, “Why do you think that education is important?” and following an explanation, she replied, “If you asked me that question I would say that education is important because it requires us to make our dreams come true”.

In summary, like Windbridge and Channel Heights, children’s talk reflected a positive adoption of the KCs, which were all relevant and all equally important to learn about. RTO, PC, MS KCs were mostly discussed, with a little amount of talk about the TH KC. The LST KC was talked about more, perhaps because this was the KC in planned focus across the school for all classes. The KCs were tools in use every day for learning at school. Similarly, like the other participants, the place and purpose of the KCs were for helping the children to focus on individual long- or short-term goals. Creek Valley children’s positive acceptance of the KCs was also important for getting along with their peers socially, or for collective group goals. The KCs were viewed by the children as being transferrable to other school settings, to be of value in any chosen tertiary setting, and for helping to secure employment and career success. While the children’s mind-set of the KCs focussed on ‘learning how to get along’ with their peers socially and academically, the KCs also served ‘learning to do’ and ‘learning to know about’ purposes for helping the children achieve success at, and beyond school.

## **School D: Woodhaven**

### **Introduction**

Woodhaven School is a small, semi-rural, low-decile co-educational school, located on the outskirts of a small North Island city. The staff have experienced a history of transient students, however, the student roll has stabilised in the past three years. The school draws approximately over 50 children locally and from low socio-economic status (SES) areas in the nearby city. The ethnic composition of the student population is approximately 50% European/Pakehā and 50% Māori. The experienced principal is dedicated to developing positive learning focussed relationships among the children and with the Woodhaven parent community. The principal has, in challenging conditions, successfully led the staff to improve teaching practices known to be effective for developing children’s emotional and physical wellbeing. Woodhaven staff have co-constructed school-wide learning expectations, and these are recorded on charts, present in parent induction material, in teachers’ planning and displayed on charts by the teachers in the classroom environment. The principal and staff are proud of the increased community engagement in the school’s curriculum consultation processes and organised activities.

### **Woodhaven School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD)**

The principal and staff are highly reflective, knowledgeable and have a relentless focus on improving their children's learning capability in literacy and mathematics. The principal and curriculum leaders of this school focussed their professional development on the area of formative assessment practices and the school's inquiry learning processes. Woodhaven children showed a positive connection to their school environment. This passion was observed as the children enthusiastically talked about their grounds, gardens and systems for caring for animals and food gardens. The children were confident to share how their environmental education helps to promote student care and shared responsibility of school animals and food gardens. As part of the Woodhaven NZC development, the staff decided to strengthen formative assessment practice and their children's assessment habits or their 'learning to know about and do' skills. There was a focus on strengthening the children's output of achievement, and ownership of learning through individual goal setting, self-evaluation and 'futurised' feedback for next learning steps.

The KCs had been locally interpreted by the school's staff. The children did not participate in the co-construction of the KCs indicators of success. These indicators were described on a KC's continuum profile and had been implemented across school literacy and inquiry learning programmes. The school provided a cumulative system for tracking the development and assessment of the KCs. Therefore the children contributed to a process of self-assessment and evaluation of their individual academic and social performance. Teachers assessed the children's demonstration of the KCs in relation to their summative assessment results. Recently, the staff and children explored how to improve concentration with less distraction, and strategies for goal setting and peer relationships. This professional development initiative involved the staff introducing the children to learning about the habits of mind (HOM) (Costa, 2001). This professional learning development is similar to what the staff at Windbridge were implementing in curriculum planning and classroom programmes of learning.

In this section the findings of the pair interviews will be presented.

### **Woodhaven; pair interviews**

The four Year 5 and two Year 6 Woodhaven children were at first quiet and hesitant to speak in the semi-structured pair interviews. One child would look at the other to prompt responses, however, they soon spoke more freely when they drew on their knowledge of how the brain functions and *habits of mind* influences thinking and behaviour. As the initial settling-in

conversations took place, the children began to enthusiastically share their perceptions about their KCs.

Woodhaven children were proud of their school's unique semi-rural setting, and appeared secure in their surroundings. When we talked about the school environment, one child began to reminisce and compare his previous home with the positive connection to his new school community. The children were curious and asked questions about what a principal does, and the workload involved. The children's recent class inquiry learning focussed on future educational settings, for example, colleges and universities. One child enquired about my own learning habits, "why do you want to keep on learning about learning" and location of study, "what university did you go to?"

Four main themes about the Woodhaven KCs were identified from children's contributions: (1) relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) classroom and school culture.

***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning, learning to learn)***

All Woodhaven interviewees agreed that the KCs were important to "help us learn" or "help you with your learning". Two children viewed the KCs as, overall, important for goal setting in curriculum areas, against their self-identified areas for improvement. All but two children commented that the KCs were of "equal value" or "all equal of being really helpful". One child maintained that the MS and TH KCs were the most important because she associated with those two KCs being in focus in her current classroom programmes. Another child declared that the MS KC could be "a little more important" because she perceived that, without MS, one could not perform the other KCs successfully. Her position was also about the MS KC being a mechanism for self-control, and she gave an example of MS in her classroom displayed rules. Consistently across the interviews, Woodhaven children indicated that the KCs were important for know what 'to do' to secure future quality of life or employment prospects, "as you get older" or when "we grow up ... [use them] on a job":

*D1 If you need a really, really good job you've got to learn how to do these and participate and be there [present] all the time, manage yourself and not be silly and work with other people that are different to you and visualise and so I know what I'm doing and I don't want to muck up and stuff like that. And thinking about what you have to do.*

Financial security and wellbeing were also evident in the children's perception of the MS KC, when one child commented that the KCs would help them in future for employment purposes, "so you can get money for doing work" because "you don't want to be a hobo". Personal attitudes such as "be able to make positive choices when in primary school or college" were talked about by one child. Two Woodhaven children agreed that, even though a new student may arrive at their school, not using or knowing about the MS KC, the need for learning about the MS KC was expected and "once they've got better [at it]" MS would be just part of daily routines.

***Theme two: Relationships (connectedness, negotiation, inclusion, self-regulation, interpersonal behaviour, empathy, helping)***

A common view held by the Woodhaven children was that respect, caring and helpfulness surfaced when talking about peer enactment of the RTO and MS KCs. One child expressed that all children were expected to learn how to care for themselves and their peers. There seemed a sense of urgency among the children that time out of learning had to be managed responsibly and kept to a minimum. For example, two children expressed attitudes of being self-responsible, time efficient and reliable because someone using their PC KC "carries out duties effectively ... you'd see them doing their job properly". Similarly, self-control and being accountable ideas were conveyed when the MS KC was explained in action as "if you're doing a job you would straight just do them and get back to the teacher". In addition, one child explained taking on a school-wide initiative as "helping [others] with their jobs...feeding the animals". A confident and hopeful attitude for forming relationships with new peers was expressed:

*D6 When you first come to this school you can meet some new friends and actually have a relationship with them.*

One child spoke of MS as respecting others' property and being respectful of the school's rules. Two children perceived peers who were good at using their MS KC would demonstrate independence. The expectation was that good use of the MS KC was striving to achieve their individual work goals, staying on task and using the class learnt strategies to avoid distraction from their peers:

*D4 When you sit with people that can manage themselves good then you'll be able to manage yourself. So you'll achieve your goals.*

*D5 You can learn about managing your impulsivity (probing) it's about managing your behaviour and focussing.*

Relational and interpersonal skills surfaced as one child indicated a need for confident and mature interactions with others when using the MS KC, and particularly drew on recent learning about HOM in uncomfortable learning situations:

*DI When we do folk dancing we find the humour.  
Don't laugh at anyone else because you have to hold hands and with boys and sometimes girls and it's weird and they need to manage themselves and participate and contribute... [one boy] didn't want to contribute but then he just joined in and he found the humour of it.*

Ideas of co-operation surfaced when children explained the RTO KC, such as the need for displaying openness when working with new groups of peers or with different staff, the children talked about being “prepared to compromise and work with different teachers”. Two children maintained that RTO, MS and PC KCs were about reinforcing positive school relationships for “everybody to show empathy and understanding” of others and for an “appropriate and more sensitive school”.

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

All Woodhaven children perceived their KCs as important for helping them to become more focussed learners, i.e., for ‘learning to know and do’ purposes. The KCs were perceived as a way of promoting helpfulness among peers, with the idea of reciprocity, “when I’m stuck or they are stuck on something they help each other”. A disposition of persistence and using positive self-talk was conveyed when one child interpreted the TH KC in use during mathematics lessons:

*DI If you think it's hard you say the opposite, it's really easy and then you think about the sentence or the sum or the fraction and then you can know the answer really quick and then think oh that was silly of me, I know that. I just needed to think about it.*

Woodhaven children had experienced a recent class study on brain function and neuron connection-making in relation to understanding how the TH KC helps them to process the demands of particular tasks. They shared the importance of understanding how and why their brain functions for learning purposes. The children associated this learning focus as training their brain to improve concentration and information recall. While the details of actual brain functioning or the state of the brain’s positive neuron pathways were difficult for the children to articulate, two showed their commitment to the TH KC being important for increasing their engagement and to achieve their goals:

*D3 When you're thinking [there's] three different types that your brain can be in, there's one like the little nets in your brain and there's one when they're really small and they're medium size and they're really big and the big ones mean heaps of answers come in....your net--so the holes get bigger so you can take in information better.*

*D4 The more you pay attention the bigger it grows.*

The TH KC was associated with showing self-control or self-awareness, “keeping above the line...about your attitude” when relationships were tense, or for managing demands during peer strategy games. Woodhaven children conveyed a strong sense of loyalty to maintaining positive class cohesion and would refer to their class shared learning and behaviour expectations (visually displayed). One child perceived the PC KC as necessary for taking up new learning opportunities to develop an ongoing range of skill sets, to enable transfer to future employment context:

*D1 You have to learn to participate in different roles and different classes and when you're older and on different jobs in case you lose your job and you find another job.*

When asked what could be improved at their school when learning about the KCs, ideas were largely focussed on self-control, self-responsibility and reliability. MS, RTO and TH were talked about in terms of improving “my self-control”, “thinking before you act” and specifically, taking action to sustain the school’s garden systems. More teacher focus on MS and RTO KC were identified for improving individual “impulsivity” so that relationships with peers were better.

The children did not clearly recall specific examples of their teacher providing feedback against the KCs. However, unprompted, the children were quite proud to share their artefacts or exemplars of work with teacher- and parent-written feedback against the KCs, including evidence of showing HOM learning dispositions. Woodhaven children perceived teacher feedback as verbal affirmation and rewards. They said that their teacher might comment “you’re focussing...on task and that you’ve achieved your goal” or “you’re doing a good job...keep it up, keep going, you’ll achieve it”. Feedback on the KCs in action were thus more focussed on ‘learning to do’ purposes.

Across all the interviews, talk of the TH and MS KCs in terms of goal setting, achievement and reflection, dominated the children’s reported experiences. The children commented on the importance of persisting with individual learning habits, “We have to reflect on our goals every morning”. Two children talked about being in the habit of sharing their learning exemplars to

engage in conversations about their progress, “we can share our thinking with our teachers, so if you want to get better at something, you can go ask them”. Persistence was also conveyed in their talk in terms of what was needed next to achieve their goals:

- D5 We grab our [assessments] and we open to the key competencies [section] and then we talk about what we have achieved and what we haven't.*
- D5 Our teacher helps us to learn like how we can achieve our goals and how we can achieve our key competencies.*
- D6 For goals that we haven't achieved, and we want to achieve it ... we just go and look [at the goals] again then think for a minute and then we just try and achieve it.*

Two children spoke enthusiastically about setting individual goals and were motivated to increase their output, “we’ve been learning a lot...sharing ideas, showing independence and self-confidence”. Three children identified that they would like their teacher to know that, if they were experiencing learning difficulty, they would engage in a conversation about “how we could get better at it and achieve more”. Additionally, one child commented that there could be a class celebration of goal achievements, “then we can all reflect on them and the teacher asks you questions” or plan ahead to “look at our [goals] more hard ... we know what we set a goal about and see what ones we need to improve on”. One child spoke passionately about the importance of the school’s regular and well-attended parent-child-teacher reporting meetings. These learning conversations were viewed by the children as an opportunity to celebrate individual performance against goals with parents and teachers. The children’s talk conveyed confidence, self-efficacy and motivation about their goals and future achievement success. The children held their teacher in high esteem as they shared how the teacher cared for their achievement results.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; social contexts; interactions)***

Two of the children did not specifically identify that the KCs were transferring to other settings, however, their talk did include examples of enactment in and outside the classroom. Two children indicated that the KCs were being transferred to the home setting and once again MS was associated with managing individual impulsivity:

- D3 I show my self-control when I'm at my house because my cousin ... sometimes he really, really irritates me, I just feel like punching him but I sometimes don't.*

Two children talked about MS as being transferred outside the class setting at break times and on school trips. One child said the TH, MS and RTO KCs were in action outside the classroom when they were independently fulfilling school-wide jobs.

In the next section the findings of the classroom observation of the children working in their classroom with their peers and their teacher will be presented.

### **Woodhaven; classroom observation**

In the classroom observation, the children as a whole class were initially led by their teacher in a literacy report-writing lesson. The learning intention and success criteria for achieving the lesson's goals were publically displayed and articulated by the teacher as the children sat on the mat. Both teacher and children were also referring to their writing goals displayed in their individual exemplar folders. Discussion about where they were at with their report draft writing task was led by the teacher, and the children responded with examples of progress by referring to their writing exemplars. The TH KC was articulated by the teacher in terms of reflecting on progress and making improvements, "be honest – you don't have to be sick to improve". The children were then instructed to engage in pair feedback on the mat. When the pair feedback conversations came to a natural end, the children moved off to work on their report drafts at group tables and at their desks.

Some of the children worked independently, and some worked in pairs. The children asked questions of their partner about improving particular sentences, checking opinion on their use of vocabulary, or using spelling support resources. One child approached the teacher saying she wanted to improve her draft content, and she wanted more brainstorming of ideas. She identified that she would use a thinking map to organise her ideas, and proceeded to clarify her thinking and explain her choice of map with the teacher. All six children sustained their engagement in writing, and they appeared focussed. Two children read each other's writing and then offered opinions about editing. One child had independently published a writing presentation on the computer. She also commented on her artwork, "I had to use my thinking KC, I had to plan and think about what I was using and where to put things".

The class tone was settled, focussed and the children appeared relaxed while chatting about their writing. The children were observed to be focussed on their independent learning goals, talking about their goals with their peers or making improvements to work. These examples of actions were consistent with what the children espoused about their KCs in the classroom.



In the next section, the findings of the focus group interview will be shared. The Year 5 and 6 children participated in a focus group interview and again, four themes emerged.

### **Woodhaven; focus group interview**

#### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, ownership, empowerment)***

All Woodhaven children enthusiastically agreed and were positive about their school helping them to understand the KCs, which they perceived to be important. It seemed that the children valued their KCs highly which they considered were helping them to be more self-aware of their learning needs and take independent control of their learning. The children did not specifically voice that one KC was ranked above any other. MS and RTO featured largely as necessary for 'learning how to know or do' and the group agreed that they assisted them with using the other KCs such as PC and TH. When asked to elaborate, the talk focussed once again on social skills such as self-discipline to manage distractions, as well as to know how to relate positively with peers. The group agreed that the purpose of the KCs was to help them to achieve in the present and their futures:

*D1 They teach us a lot about what we have to do and what we have to do to achieve them and if we use them in the future what we could have as a job.*

The LST KC was sparse in the children's conversation, and when asked about this KC, the children struggled to recall examples. The reason for this outcome could perhaps have been due to the children's relief teacher having responsibility for their assessments.

#### ***Theme Two: Relationships (connectedness, self-regulation, tolerance)***

The children's talk confirmed the TH KC would be in action when setting or achieving independent work goals, completing tasks and co-operative problem solving:

*D3 [We] would be helping each other, helping them figure it out [solutions] and seeing which one would be the best answer.... we can reflect back on we've been doing and how we've been doing in class.*

*D4 Every morning we do goal setting. On Mondays we set a goal and the rest of the four days of the week we reflect on them, every morning.*

One child spoke of MS and RTO as two KCs working together, "if you combine them then you'll have a good relationship". Goal setting was thus a strong feature in the children's talk.

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

The MS KC dominated the children's talk and was associated with ideas of complying with class expectations and positive behaviour. The purpose of this KC is to enable students to be more focussed learners. Two children shared that self-control was important for lessening the impact of negative behaviour on everyone's classroom learning. The two were confident and open about having learnt about managing impulsivity or "anger bursts". Another child implied peer support networks when using your PC and TH KC, "people helping each other" and "helping people make the right choices". Three children confirmed that their teacher inducted new children into the classroom's learning habits or KCs, "[teacher] sits with them and explains it". One child reiterated that she shared her MS KC performance during dance and visual art lessons. She further added that the class were in the habit of confidently sharing with the teacher if they were not drawing on the MS KC so effectively.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, transfer across settings; independence)***

All children confirmed that the MS, PC and RTO KCs were important to be in action outside the class setting, "we need to manage yourself outside when we're going on a [job] and do the right thing to help [others]" with empathy implicit. Woodhaven children agreed that the KCs were in action in the home setting. One child confirmed that the purpose of the PC KC was more about passive listening rather than co-operative activity, "if you're participating and contributing, you do your work and listen and so you know what to do." Three children discussed how the RTO, PC KCs were important when inducting new children to the school. Inclusion and empathy were conveyed through talk about new children arriving in the school:

*D4 Try and relate with them, contribute with them, see how he's doing, see what he likes, play with them and then maybe start doing different things with them and help him when he's got something wrong and you could build a good friendship and then he might listen to you.*

Again, the MS continued to surface as a priority when arriving at a new school and what successful induction would look like. One child summed up, "maybe depends how good they are at managing themselves first because if it's not that good I'd do that one".

In summary, like the other schools, Woodhaven children demonstrated a high acceptance of the KCs. All children perceived the purpose of their KCs were for their future employment prospects. Goal setting from assessment results and working productively towards achieving

their individual goals was associated with good use of the KCs. Woodhaven children's talk largely focussed on the MS and RTO KCs. All KCs were also valued highly as 'learning to know' and 'learning to do' tools in their daily learning.

## **School E: Dale Crossing**

### **Introduction**

Dale Crossing School is a small, semi-rural, mid-decile school located on the outskirts of a small city in the North Island. The school roll is over 50, with a student population that draws from the nearby city and from the local lifestyle farming community. The ethnic composition of the student population is mostly European/Pakehā. The school, parents and staff are welcoming. Staff at Dale Crossing are committed to providing a high quality of education for their children and community. The school has a history of successful academic achievement in literacy, mathematics and school sporting events. Parents and families have high expectations for their children's achievement and wellbeing. A strong work ethic is expected by the Dale Crossing community to be harnessed at school and extending to the home setting. The school benefits from ongoing parent participation in class programmes that support children's achievement. Children and families have a strong connection to their local environment and its history. There is a close family atmosphere at school fundraising events and when the community work together on property improvement projects. Parents and children show loyalty to the school through events such as participating in a wide range of extra-curricular and interschool sporting and historical celebration activities. Student inquiry learning experiences encourage the children to lead their own inquiries and draw on their personal interests.

### **Dale Crossing School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD)**

The principal and staff have consulted with Dale Crossing parent community and focussed their NZC review and development on strengthening the school's vision, values, KCs and student-inquiry learning processes. The principal has developed a school-wide curriculum document to guide teaching practice and learning programmes consistent with the NZC. There is a strong sense of collaboration among staff in curriculum team planning to ensure programmes develop the school's values and KCs. The school's values are confidently articulated by the staff and promoted in school communications with parents.

The principal and staff at Dale Crossing developed a large set of KCs aligning with the five KCs in the NZC. Each of the KCs had multiple reference indicators for the children to develop over

time, in and out of school settings. Both staff and students were expected to display any of the reference indicators on a daily basis.

Teachers deliberately looked for the children enacting the KCs in the school setting. Dale Crossing children were familiar with the NZC KC labels and could use these interchangeably with their school's set. Their understanding and language of the KCs was consistent with the school's localised KC skill set. Further recent curriculum development has resulted in the school emphasising the children's individual pursuit of interests and to strengthen ownership of the school's KCs through their inquiry learning programmes.

In the next section the findings of the pair interviews will be shared. The six Year 5 Dale Crossing children who participated in the pair interviews, appeared courteous, friendly, self-assured and were at ease when explaining their perceptions about their core skills.

Four main themes about the Dale Crossing KCs were identified: (1) Relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) class and school culture.

### **Dale Crossing; pair interviews**

#### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning, learning to learn)***

In all pair interviews, Dale Crossing children identified that their KCs were equally important and useful. The KCs were viewed by the children as helping them with their learning, not only in the classroom, but “anywhere”. The children believed that the KCs would develop over time as they moved into adulthood, “when you grow up”, and that you would “definitely need them later on in life”. One child was insistent that it was not only young people who must demonstrate the KCs, but adults are expected to as well:

*E1 You need to use all of them you need to practise learning them because you'll use them when you're older in the big world.*

Striving to be a “better person” dominated the Dale Crossing children's talk. The children associated the KCs with improving their future educational success and employment prospects. They were confident that if they continued to practise their KCs into adulthood, their chances of personal happiness, “being liked and having friends”, would be secured:

*E3 These [KCs] are equally right and if you follow them it will come to a good ending and you will live a happy life....Say you are just leaving [university] and you had studied something, to get you into a good job in the future...*

*E4 They help you set goals and they help you learn and have a better life.*

While all Dale Crossing children agreed that using the RTO KC was important for being a “better person”, one participant was emphatic about the negative consequences of not using KCs. She linked the purpose of KCs to an extreme example of security:

*E5 If you're a really naughty person and you leave school and you haven't learnt to be kind relating to others and that, you could go to jail.*

**Theme two: Relationships (connectedness, negotiation, inclusion, self-regulation, interpersonal behaviour, empathy, helping)**

The children of Dale Crossing perceived the RTO, PC and MS KCs as positioning oneself to make “good choices” or negotiating challenge. In addition, a disposition of self-control was implied to avoid harming others, “if you voiced an opinion and it wasn't very nice” or “not getting angry” at others:

*E6 You think before you do, if you're about to say something nasty, you think and you just keep it to yourself and just walk away.*

A problem-solving mindset “when one of your friends is being annoying” was linked to the MS KC, as one participant commented it would be better to use conversation to stop undesirable behaviour, rather than defaulting to “telling on them”.

Sharing or “helping out” when others needed something in the class setting were talked about, and a mind-set of patience, tolerance and perseverance were implicit when working in small groups of peers:

*E3 Helping a lot in the classroom and don't be mean when you start, if [someone doesn't] get it you just don't go, oh you don't get it, you should. And if they still don't get it, keep on saying it over so they then get it in the end.*

Inclusion and empathy dominated the children's perception of RTO, whether helping peers on class tasks, noticing someone who was alone at break time, or inducting new children to the school's KCs' expectations:

*E1 If someone was sitting on the seats with no-one to play with and someone came up to them and said would you like to play with me and then they said okay, and then the person who asked would be friendly.*

Attitudes of co-operation and courtesy were conveyed by children as they explained ways to negotiate thinking “if you don't agree with [someone] don't point it out”, admit personal mistakes and take responsibility for harming others:

*E5 Don't be mean to someone if they ask can you please help me. Just say 'yeah I'll help you', and if you're doing your work and you are nearly finished, you can just say 'wait a minute, I am nearly finished'.*

*E3 Don't take it out on others if there is a problem and if someone mucked up the game but you were kind of part of it don't take it out on them. Just admit you are sorry because you've actually done it as well.*

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

Dale Crossing children did not see the need for the school to include more KC indicators. The children saw value in their school KCs, “we don’t need any more” or “they’re just right” and “they would even be good for teachers, principals and you [the researcher]”. The children’s acceptance of their KCs largely reflected ideas of becoming better at ‘learning to know about and do’ in the classroom.

TH and MS dominated the children’s talk when they were asked how learning of the KCs could be improved “you need [to manage] thinking anywhere”. Three children maintained that developing the TH and MS KCs in all settings was important. In particular, their purpose was for being responsible and accountable for the consequences of one’s behaviour or any decisions that impacted negatively on their peers. Similarly, one child indicated that the MS KC would help future decision making skills because “you can make choices for the future”, and it was expected that MS would be developed over time to transfer into adulthood. There was talk of the TH and LST KCs having a positive influence on developing confident communication skills to become a “better learner” or “person”:

*E3 [LST] would be good then you know your voice is being heard and they [T] know what you need work on and what you like...*

Three children identified that there was a need for more teacher advice and listening to children’s views to help improve a better understanding the school KCs:

*E4 Then [Ts] knows what we think about [the KCs] and then they can teach us some more about them.*

Values of perseverance, resilience and courage were conveyed in the children’s talk about the PC and TH KCs. Confidence and courage to face new situations were implicit when the children shared that “you need to get through the next thing in life” or “don’t give up” when finding learning hard:

- E3 Never be afraid to have a go at it and just do your best.... it's like giving it a go. Just if it doesn't work out just keep on trying.*
- E4 Just keep on rowing down the river... the person who's just beat you is just like a waterfall and you just have to go down it and you have to continue along the river.*
- E2 If you got something wrong and you had been trying and trying week after week or day after day and you still couldn't get it and you were quite scared of asking the teacher, you shouldn't be because you need to understand something so you can go on.*

Two Dale Crossing children said that their teacher gave feedback on their performance against the school's KCs. However, all of the children were confident in saying that their teacher would verbally affirm their performance of any of the indicators in action and also provide tangible rewards. Two children noted that their principal promoted and used the school's language of KCs at assemblies and through community newsletters. Dale Crossing children saw motivational value in this practice, and looked forward to public acknowledgement of the regular school-wide rewards, "it's fun getting it":

- E5 So you know that you're doing the right thing.*
- E6 Then you would know what you need to work on.*

All children talked about how their teacher co-constructed some TH KC indicators at the beginning of the year specific to their class for "best ways of learning". The purpose of these indicators was sometimes referred back to, having been displayed in the classroom.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, extra-curricular activities, transfer across settings; social contexts; interactions)***

Across all the interviews, the Dale Crossing children explicitly identified situations where their KSs were in action. They suggested that the skills were practised in multiple settings, such as in and out of the classroom, at home, in town, and at friends' and family places. The children explained how they were using their MS, PC and RTO KCs caring for their pets, "not hurting" younger siblings and also carrying out school-wide senior duties reliably. Inclusion and fairness were implicit when two children talked about their expectations of others demonstrating the MS and RTO KCs during break times:

- E6 They would be making good choices and not cheating in games.*
- E5 Act fairly to other people and let each other play their games.*

In the next section the findings of the classroom observation of the children will be shared.

### **Dale Crossing; classroom observation**

During the classroom observation, Dale Crossing children were led by their teacher in a numeracy lesson related to number problem-solving strategies. The six children began with the teacher re-orientating the previous day's learning intentions. All participants were observed listening to the articulated lesson goals. As they moved off to work according to their previous day's tasks, maintenance materials were collected. If not participating in the teacher's micro instruction lessons on the mat, the children were observed working in pairs, or independently on follow-up maintenance tasks.

Two children were observed thinking out loud their solving strategies, asking each other clarifying questions, and elaborating on, or justifying, mental recordings. One child was observed halting her partner's interruption in a courteous manner because she needed more time to process her solving, "I need more time to think". The social interaction language used by the children was always very affirming and courteous. Another couple were working on independent maintenance tasks and one child asked the other to check his solving because "this doesn't look right". The response was "nah, it's not" and he proceeded to help the peer with his mental recording to highlight the strategy error. Another participant was observed to be working enthusiastically with her group and the teacher. She participated confidently by putting up her hand, offering to record her mental imaging for public scrutiny and continued to offer her thinking strategies.

In all of the tasks observed, the children's actions were consistent with the KC indicators they espoused would be evident if someone visited their class. For example, the children talked about the PC KC in terms of "listening to the teacher". The MS KC was shared in terms of children were responsible for being focussed on their learning goals and achieving those learning goals. This quote highlights one child's mind-set for showing MS to be, "not talking like how's your day ... but about your learning ... asking the teacher ... not about your horse because that's not about your learning [goals]".

In the next section the findings of the focus group interview will be presented. The Year 5 children participated in a focus group interview and four themes were evident.

### **Dale Crossing; focus group interview**

#### ***Theme One: Relevance (future focus, lifelong learning)***

All Dale Crossing children indicated in the focus group interview that they valued their school's KCs and that all were important for helping them to be successful at school, home and in the



wider community. No child ranked any of the KCs above any other. It was further confirmed by the group that there was no need to increase the bank of KC indicators, as this was equated with increasing further setting of learning goals. The Dale Crossing KCs were viewed as tools for improving access to future career opportunities or employment prospects, “you need them to get a job”. The purpose of their KCs were also for improving day-to-day living, “you want to be able to work at a job and get some money ... buy a house ... food ... feed your family”. The children had a strong sense of a work ethic at school, “trying your best and doing it [tasks] properly”. In addition, the KCs were viewed as increasing ‘learning to know about and do’ capabilities, such as “reaching your goals” and “you’ve got to learn to be really good at learning”.

***Theme Two: Relationships (connectedness, self-regulation, empathy, inclusion)***

The children’s talk about positive relationships with peers, family and adults largely centred on good enactment of the RTO KC, which was associated with empathy and inclusion. All children agreed and were insistent that “we would be welcoming” when inducting new teachers or children into class or school routines:

*E3 Don’t be afraid to go and ask them do you need help.*

*E2 If there was a new kid and they didn’t know anyone at the school you would have to ask them if they were alright and if they wanted to play with you.*

***Theme Three: Learning Conditions (confidence, enabling learning success, context and enactment, interconnectedness of KCs)***

Dale Crossing children exuded confidence about their schooling experiences and conveyed a positive outlook towards their next year’s schooling experiences. There seemed a strong commitment by the children to their school’s language of KC indicators to describe individual performance against them. Striving for life quality and personal wellbeing seemed important to the children. They all agreed that developing the KCs in different settings would enable them over time to experience a “happy life that you’ve got to make the most of”. Being a “better person” was a necessity for enabling the six children to be positive contributors in present and future settings: “it’s a big world, and you’re only one person, but you still make a difference”. When probed further, the notion of being a “good person” or leading a “good happy lifetime” meant that the purpose of using their KCs was to make a difference in the world. Confident use of the school’s KCs, according to the children, would enable increased personal stability and “safety”. Sharing their performance against the school’s KCs ranged from sometimes, to most of the time, including answering the principal’s questions during assemblies, and providing evidence of their performance or that of others they had observed.

***Theme Four: Class/School Culture (active involvement, transfer across settings; independence)***

Once again, the whole group confirmed that their KCs worked together in different settings. The purpose of their KCs would be to apply them in their new set of work goals as they transitioned to next year's class. The children agreed too, that once they had left school, the KCs would have a place in their daily lives, indeed "all our life". The children articulated a strong connection to their home responsibilities, saying that KCs were naturally transferring when being an independent and productive contributor to family routines such as "make your lunch and you need to feed your animals".

In summary, like the other four schools, children of Dale Crossing demonstrated a high acceptance and valuing of their school's KCs. The children's mind-sets were future-focussed. The overall purpose of their KCs was for better relationships, now and later on, securing future employment and increased family wellbeing. Once again, as highlighted in the other schools, KCs were emphasised for individual success such as goal setting, and working responsibly towards achieving individual goals. Dale Crossing children were confident users of their school's KCs. The children's talk largely focussed on the PC, RTO and MS KCs. As found in the other schools, talk on LST and TH KCs was sparse. All KCs were highly valued and adopted as 'learning to know' and 'learning to do' tools in the children's daily learning experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to present the overall findings of the data based on the children's views about the place and purpose of the KCs in curriculum. The children across all five schools were able to share examples of their KCs, with clarity, to highlight their place and purpose in and out of classroom, and across to other settings outside the school. Across the schools, the LST and TH KC were sparse and sometimes missing in the children's conversations. Most children had difficulty explaining the purpose of the LST and TH KCs, or could not provide clear examples of their enactment in the classroom or school.

The place and purpose of the children's KCs were mostly about 'knowing' and 'doing' in tasks such as reading, writing, mathematics, with a sprinkling of KC enactment in student inquiry learning tasks (e.g., some pair and small group work, with negotiated roles and responsibilities).

The place and purpose of the KCs were closely associated with individual success – assessment, i.e., grades, results and tests or achieving 'more'. Linked to this outcome, KCs were all

associated by the children with goal setting and independent attainment of those goals. Sometimes those goals were being achieved in small groups, however, the mind-set was that each child was ultimately responsible and accountable for the independent achievement of those goals. Across the schools, notions of self-care and self-responsibility were dominant. Coupled with this finding was the dominance of the MS KC or self-regulation being associated with better work habits, social skills and therefore, better achievement.

The individual ideals of using the KCs were dominant across the schools. Collective ideals of KCs such as co-operation were present, but less emphasised in the children's views and experiences. Being independent of the collective was a typical and acceptable experience. The children did provide some collective examples in the school setting, e.g., they talked about getting along with and helping their peers, or showing kindness and empathy.

The overarching themes present in the findings show all children displayed a future-focussed mind-set about the KCs. Across the schools, the dominant purpose of the KCs for these children was largely for individual success and to assist future employment. The children in all of the schools had learnt that the importance of the KCs was to secure their future prospects. Their talk and the examples highlight that the purpose and place for KCs is best exemplified in securing tertiary prospects and better employment, "to get a good job".

The children placed high value on the KCs and had adopted them as everyday tools. These tools were becoming readily accepted as 'common sense' – part of everyday classroom experience to help improve achievements or outputs. Overall, the KCs reflected 'learning to know about' and 'learning to do' curriculum tools, and were less about 'learning to be' or 'learning to live (together)' curriculum tools (Delors, 1996).

In the next chapter, a deeper analysis of the children's data will be provided, using the education ideals from Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning. The findings of this chapter highlight the dominant presence of '*learning to know*' and '*learning to do*' ideals of KCs. Delors' (1996) '*learning to be*' and '*learning to live (together)*' pillars are less present as education ideals in the curriculum.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **Pillars of learning and adoption emphases**

##### **Introduction**

This research examines children’s voices from five North Island primary schools and aims to understand how the Year 5 and 6 children viewed and experienced the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The thematic analysis of the findings presented in the preceding chapter convey the ways in which the children viewed and experienced the key competencies, in their school, other settings outside the school, and also anticipated in their future lives. Across the schools, a thematic analysis of the findings highlighted that, overall, the dominant place and purpose of the key competencies for these children was largely a future-focused one – for individual success and future employment. In line with the theoretical framework explained in the Methodology chapter, a deeper understanding of the place and purpose of the key competencies, as reflected in the children’s talk, will now link to the education ideals of Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning. Discussion will also be shared in relation to the children’s overall adoption of, and emphasis placed on, the purpose and place, for key competencies.

According to the findings in the previous chapter, across the schools, the children perceived their key competencies as all relevant and important, both in the present and in the future. The children’s perceptions and experiences indicated a strong adoption of the key competencies. Overall, the children viewed the key competencies as necessary tools to help leverage their day-to-day schooling experiences (i.e., better academic achievement and relationships). The children were able to articulate the transfer of key competencies to a variety of settings within, and extending outside, the school. They believed their application of the key competencies in and out of the school setting would strengthen over time, and it seemed they saw them as common sense tools, needed “all of your life”.

##### **Future focus emphases**

###### **Better individual success**

The over-arching theme in the findings shows that the children held a strong future-focussed mindset of the key competencies. Within this over-arching theme, there were two key emphases across the schools, linked to the adoption of the key competencies. The first emphasis for

adopting the key competencies was for individual purposes, i.e., goal setting, assessment, productivity (therefore improving individual success), and better self-management. Based on the children's perceptions and experiences, the key competencies were strongly associated with performance-approach individual goal setting and independent mastery of goals. Consequently, the adoption of the key competencies to improve individual performance was underpinned by serving assessment functions for the children. Individual assessment has dominated in the New Zealand education system (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014). Moreover, most assessment activity continues to be largely focussed on individual rather than collective learning activities (Hipkins, et al., 2014, p. 37).

There are three broad assessment functions typical in New Zealand schools. These functions are known as assessment *of* learning (accountability), *for* learning (support), and assessment *to* learn (reporting to stakeholders) (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014, p. 150). It is not an uncommon experience for New Zealand schools to manage the challenge of balancing the triple function of assessment (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014). Critically, an over-emphasis on assessment has the potential to increase its managerial purpose, while at the same time becoming a hegemonic practice (Au, 2009).

### **Better future employment**

The second overall emphasis highlighted in the findings was that the children's views and experiences of the key competencies strongly reflected market-driven views of the key competencies. Within this future-focused emphasis, overall, the children saw high value in, and therefore adopted, the key competencies, for better educational experiences, and needed for tertiary entrance "at university". Furthermore, across the schools, all children had adopted the key competencies for future employment purposes i.e., "to get a good job" or "have a better life". Ultimately though, and once again, KC adoption was emphasised for individual purposes and private benefit.

### **Individual and Collective Emphases**

Overall, while the children's talk highlighted both individual and collective ideals for adopting their key competencies, individual or "just-for-me" priorities were the dominant learnt emphasis. A tension between individual and collective agency surfaced in the children's perceptions and experience of the key competencies. Within this future-focused emphasis, and in contrast to the individual ideals for adopting the key competencies, were collective ideals, also present in the children's talk, e.g., *Relating to Others*, getting along, empathy, caring, helping and inclusion.

However, the overall drive for adopting the key competencies remained for individual and private benefit. The findings highlighted a shifting emphasis between individual and collective education ideals or worldviews.

Broadly defined, individualism and collectivism (I-C) are differing worldviews or structures for explaining people organisation, within and across societies (Hofstede, 1980). Individualism as an ideal emphasises and promotes “I” consciousness (personal autonomy, independence, competition), which has precedence over the social group or collective. Collectivism as an ideal assumes “we” consciousness, the interdependence of all people, contributing to cohesion within social groups (mutual obligation, democracy, harmony, relatedness). Individualism or “just-for-me” describes a worldview that is incompatible with community or the collective social structure. As structures or worldviews, neither individual nor collective education ideals should suspend the other.

In the quest for an education ideal for young people, it can be argued that a market-driven adoption of key competencies is shifting the educational emphasis from a “decent life”, (democratic ideals), towards a “successful life” (vocational ideals) (Hoskins, 2008; Lozano, Boni, Peris, & Hueso, 2012). The literature review outlined the origin of key competencies as providing for a “successful life” and a “decent, well-functioning society” (Rychen, & Salganik, 2003). The competencies were subsequently defined in the work of the DESECO Report i.e., Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (OECD, 2005). If key competencies are adopted as “just-for-me” tools then the education ideal shifts the emphasis towards private benefit for a “successful life”. However, employability and socioeconomic integration cannot be the only result of a successful life and education.

The Managing Self, Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies in The New Zealand Curriculum have been referred to as relational aspects of the five key competencies (Flockton, 2009b). These three key competencies can also be viewed as emphasising a community or collective type of developing children’s capabilities for learning and living.

While the Managing Self, Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies predominated in the children’s talk across the five schools, the Managing Self and Participating and Contributing key competencies emphasized “just-for-me” or individual capabilities, needed for academic achievement and employment prospects. An economic or better employment emphasis gives priority to competitive spirit and individual success over

collective activity (Delors, 2000, p. 17). A “just-for-me” or individual emphasis towards the adoption of the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is problematic, and arguably flawed.

### **Individual and collective education ideals in The New Zealand Curriculum**

The key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* are inclusive of both individual and collective ideals. When consultation and reporting on *The New Zealand Curriculum Draft* occurred between 2006 and 2007, reports and analyses that were generated included international critiques (Ferguson, 2007; Le Metais, 2007), and New Zealand commentators (Aitken, 2007; Doig 2007; Flockton, 2007; Patara, 2007). The Reference Group reviewed all of the reports and analyses, including emerging issues, and subsequently prepared recommendations for the Ministry of Education to inform the release of the final NZC statement.

The notions of individualism and collectivism are not new in educational tension debates (Delors, 1996; Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013). However, balancing individualism and collectivism surfaced among the “significant” issues and as one of five key themes identified in Patara’s (2007) Report to the Ministry of Education on the Draft New Zealand Curriculum (p. 2). While one submitter’s feedback indicated that a balance could be achieved by “broadening the overall focus on individualism to community”, Patara concluded, the issue would always exist, and thus a solution was difficult to ascertain (p. 3). Similarly, in Doig’s (2007) summary review of the consultation findings and several reviews on the draft, significant issues were often raised. One such issue was the need for a “balance between collective responsibility and individual ideals” (p. 5). Doig (2007) noted no change was required, however, a community or collective emphasis was necessary. It seems that this conclusion was not given further curriculum evaluation or debate. Further critical review of this identified problematic imbalance ideally should have been encouraged and prioritised, especially in terms of developing the whole child, to avoid submitting to an instrumental view of education (Delors, 2000).

### **Pillars of Learning**

Closely associated with the two underpinning emphases highlighted in the findings, and introduced earlier in the literature review chapter, are Delors’ (1996) four learning pillars. These are: *learning to know*; *learning to do*; *learning to be*; and *learning to live (together)*. A recent revisit of the original vision of the Report opens up the space for educational debates to continue in terms of the impact of global societal transformation (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013). These new

authors raise questions regarding whether the Report remains valid in contemporary times with the rise of new challenges for education, and what needs adjustment.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that the original intent of the document remains today, that all four pillars can still provide schools with the opportunity to (re)view the purpose of education and curriculum. The *learning to know* and *learning to do* pillars are familiar to teachers; yet, *learning to be* and *learning to live* are value-laden pillars. The latter need critical (re)thinking in terms of traditional education and 21st century educational ideals emphasised within *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Hipkins et al., 2014). Traditional education has largely focused on the inseparably linked *learning to know* and *learning to do* pillars, with the other two pillars left to chance (Delors, 2000). Traditionally, *learning to do* has mostly been associated with the individual acquisition of certified skills (Delors, 2000). As a result, a traditional or a narrow view emphasises the acquisition of knowledge, to the detriment of the other two pillars.

In contrast, it can be argued that the *learning to be* pillar needs ‘a special place’ in curriculum for emphasising children’s creative, imaginative, and artistic capabilities, as well as interdependent competencies (Delors, 2000). A further extension of this pillar thus advocates a curriculum where children learn to act with greater judgment and personal responsibility i.e., critical thinking, communication skills and collective capacities (Delors, 2000). Additionally, the *learning to live (together)* pillar emphasises collective education ideals, such as empathic understanding of people and human diversity, conflict management and mutual understanding of peace, social justice, interdependence and co-operative projects (Delors, 2000). If a lifelong learning perspective is about the development of the whole child, then, all four pillars of learning are necessary for each child to “unearth and enrich their creative potential” (Delors, 2000, p. 14). It is vital to consider all four pillars for informing policy and educational reform in relation to curriculum (Delors, 2000).

### **Voice, agency and diversity**

Shifting the curriculum emphasis towards more collective educational ideals can be posited as giving impetus for increasing children’s voice and agency. Arguably, the *learning to be* and *learning to live (together)* pillars need more emphasis to inform and guide curriculum content and methods (Delors, 1996, 2000; Hipkins et al., 2014). Traditional curriculum content and teaching methods have predominantly emphasised homogenous groupings where children, by subject or ability organisation, have not necessarily experienced many opportunities to work with diverse others and ideas (Hipkins et al., 2014, p. 37). The notion of developing collective



knowledge and collective action, by focusing on the interactions that go on among children, rather than knowledge itself, enables children to develop capabilities to work with diverse others and ideas (Bareiter, 2002; Bareiter & Scardamaila, 2006).

Collective knowledge and action development have implications for how teachers view curriculum, and what learning is prioritised in the classroom (Lozano et al., 2012). One implication for developing children’s capabilities for working on collective projects and to create change, will be to challenge an education system that has traditionally focused on individual activity: i.e., *learning to know* and *do*. Johnson and Morris (2010) maintain that a curriculum that emphasises collective learning activity would better help prepare young people to learn to think critically, to engage their voice, and expand their worldview. Giroux (1997) argues that the moral dimension in conceptions of critical thinking capabilities has been overlooked (cited in Johnson & Morris, 2010, p. 79). An added implication for emphasising the moral dimension of critical thinking capabilities is to enable young people to learn about the diverse societies in which they live, where social justice underpinnings may be less obvious (Burbules & Berk, 1999, cited in Johnson & Morris, 2010, p. 79).

The social justice narrative underpinnings in curriculum arguably have not been given enough priority in supporting young people to develop capabilities for a “decent life who are active citizens who shape society for the good of all” (Hipkins, 2014, p. 99). This moral leaning, or “ideal critical citizenship” may help to address a focus on human rights, social goals, and enable a rethink of a curriculum that has more collective ways of learning and action (Johnson & Morris, 2010). The shift in emphasis then, would be from competencies that prioritise a “successful life”, *learning to know* and *do*, to capabilities that emphasise a “decent life”, *learning to be* and *live together* (Delors, 2000). These latter learning pillars are an education ideal of critical pedagogy, consistent with more participatory and transformative ways of learning e.g., social democratic, co-operative and using critical dialogue (Bareiter & Scardamalia, 2006) –this learning ideal will be expanded on in the Discussion chapter, in relation to philosophers of education John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning are used in the next section as an analytical frame for the emphases underpinning the children’s perceptions and experiences of the key competencies. In particular, *learning to know* and *learning to do* aspirations for adopting the key competencies emphasised by the children for individual achievement and future employment purposes. Delors’ (1996) *learning to be* and *learning to live (together)* pillars are also discussed; these were less emphasised ideals in the children’s talk, and hence, they tend to be missing in curriculum.

## Overview of Schools

### Use of key competencies and emphasis

As explained earlier, based on the overall findings, the children from all five schools held strong future focus mindsets for adopting the key competencies. However, the adoption of the key competencies highlighted both individual and collective purposes. The overall purpose for adopting the key competencies highlighted a shifting emphasis towards more individual ideals.

Within the schools, though, decoding of the key competencies as part of their school-based curriculum development influenced the children's authentic adoption of the key competencies. The idea of authentic adoption means whether the children were actively involved in the decoding (interpretation) of the key competencies, or whether the key competencies had already been decoded for the children's reference (for instance by the teachers and school leaders).

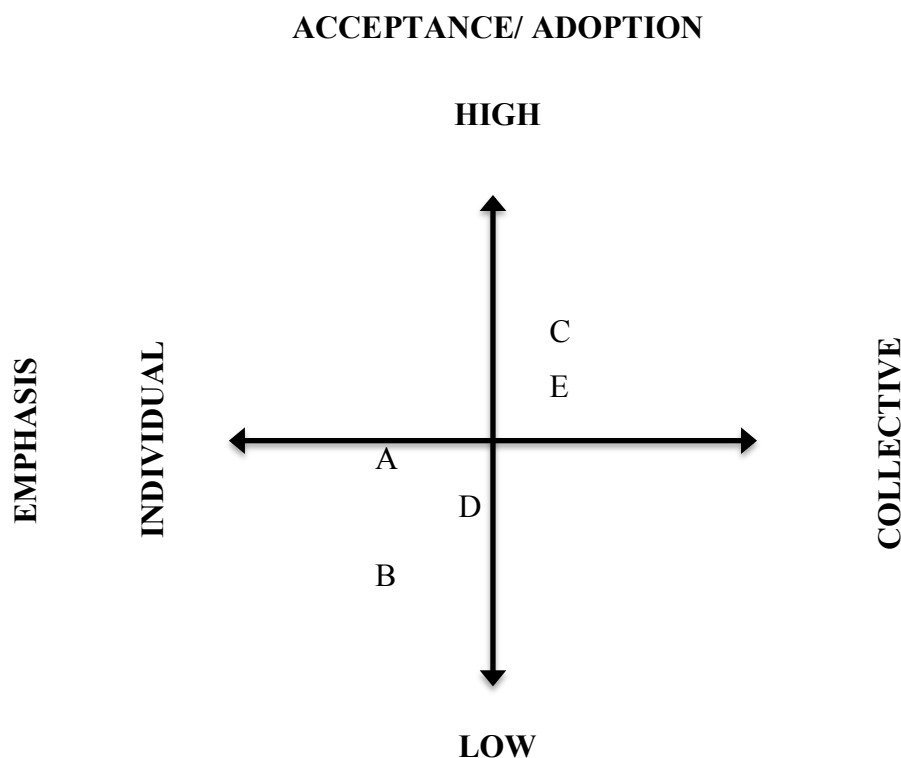
### Explanation of adoption and emphasis diagram

The *Acceptance/Adoption Continuum* below (the author's original conceptual model Figure 3) has been constructed as a result of analysing the place and purpose of the key competencies, as highlighted in the findings. In the diagram below, each school's overall position is placed within two intersecting continuums. The vertical axis shows acceptance of the key competencies, from low to high. This axis relates to the extent to which the children were included in the development or decoding of their school's key competencies. The horizontal axis shows the emphasis of key competencies from high to low. This axis relates to the overall extent to which the key competencies have been adopted for more individual or collective purposes. In this way, each school is positioned in a particular quadrant, which represents their emphases for their key competencies.

The letters denote the schools: School A is Windbridge, School B is Channel Heights, School C is Creek Valley, School D is Woodhaven and School E is Dale Crossing.

The axes of the diagram are numbered below:

1. Low acceptance of key competencies with individual emphasis
2. High acceptance of key competencies with individual emphasis
3. High acceptance of key competencies with collective emphasis



(Developed by Johnston, 2015)

**Figure 3: Acceptance/Adoption Continuum**

Using the author’s own Acceptance/Adoption Continuum above, the overall findings can reflect a ‘best fit’ position of each school on the two intersecting continuums. The rationale for determining the ‘best fit’ positions from low to high acceptance/adoption of the key competencies, is in terms of the children being included in the encoding process, and as well as their overall emphasis on individual or collective education ideals.

Three of the schools are positioned on the lower end of the acceptance continuum and represent individual emphasis. These are high-decile schools Windbridge (A), Channel Heights (B) and low-decile school Woodhaven (D). Two of the schools are positioned on the higher end of the acceptance continuum and lean towards the collective quadrant. These are mid-decile schools Creek Valley (C) and Dale Crossing (E). Once again, as highlighted earlier, while the overall findings show that all children had adopted the key competencies for more individual purposes, there was evidence that the children had also adopted them for collective purposes. Creek Valley (C) and Dale Crossing (E) schools had included their children in the encoding and implementation of the key competencies.

Windbridge (A), a high-decile school, is positioned slightly lower than the mid point of the acceptance/adoption continuum. To determine this ‘best fit’ result, the reader will recall that the teachers had been involved in the encoding of the key competencies over a period of five years, but the children had not. The children’s lower acceptance of the key competencies is in terms of not being included in the process of encoding the key competencies. However, the children were familiar with, and made reference to, their school’s KC graduate profile. They reflected a general acceptance of the key competencies with an individual emphasis, as it was the school norm. Hence, their position ‘best fits’ with the individual end of the continuum. This profile had been implemented during the children’s early years at the school.

Channel Heights (B), a high-decile school, showed lower acceptance of the key competencies, only in terms of being new to the introduction of key competencies in the classroom. That is, these children had not been included in the teacher’s encoding of the key competencies. Readers will recall the teacher had developed this class set of key competencies in a previous teaching syndicate, and the children had ‘inherited’, but were not included in, the encoding of their key competencies. Hence, their ‘best fit’ is positioned at the lower end of the acceptance/adoption continuum.

Woodhaven, a low-decile school (D) is positioned on the lower end of the acceptance continuum. For this ‘best fit’ result, the children’s teacher had developed a language of assessment against the key competencies, but the children had not been part of any encoding process. The children had adopted the school’s key competencies as part of their individual assessments’ processes, and for reporting to their parents/caregivers.

In summary, Windbridge (A), Channel Heights (B) and Woodhaven (D) schools appear lower on the acceptance/adoption continuum and are represented in the individual quadrant. These ‘best fit’ results highlight that, while the children had readily adopted the key competencies for individual purposes, their acceptance was lower probably as a result of not being included in the encoding process of the key competencies. However, as highlighted earlier, the overall emphasis of the key competencies remained a future-focused one, and largely for individual purposes (i.e., better achievement and employment prospects).

Creek Valley (C) and Dale Crossing (E), both mid-decile schools, appear higher on the acceptance continuum of the key competencies. This ‘best fit’ result is most likely due to the children being included in the encoding process of the school’s key competencies. The teachers had also been through a longitudinal process of KC encoding as part of their professional

development and curriculum-revisioning process with their (then new) principal. The school's KC interpretations were evident in personalised, school-wide planning and teaching documentation, and daily planning in literacy, numeracy and student inquiry learning. The KC school-wide focus was also evident in the teaching and learning activity observed in the classroom lessons.

In summary, while Creek Valley (C) and Dale Crossing (E) schools appear higher on the acceptance continuum, and move into the collective quadrant, overall, their adoption of the key competencies remained largely aspirational tools for individual purposes. Based on the children's talk, Relating to Others, Participating and Contributing key competencies were strong in terms of achieving their goals.

As discussed earlier, the over-arching theme in the findings shows that the children held a strong future-focused mindset of the key competencies. Within this over-arching theme, two key emphases across the schools linked to the strong adoption of the key competencies. The first emphasis for adopting these was for individual purposes i.e., better achievement success (e.g., increased productivity). The second overall emphasis highlighted in the findings was that the key competencies had been adopted with strong market-driven underpinnings, i.e., tertiary/vocation and employment prospects. All groups of children voiced elements of collective underpinnings in their conceptions of the key competencies.

The discussion now moves to the prominent emphasis of key competencies adopted largely for individual purposes. Each school is examined separately in the following sections.

## **Low acceptance (and high adoption) of key competencies for private good**

### **Windbridge School A (high decile)**

The reader will recall that the children from Windbridge, a high-decile school, did not rank any of the key competencies as more important than others. All key competencies were commonly emphasised in the children's talk, as being imperative for their present individual needs and future educational success. Their high adoption of the key competencies therefore transmitted fundamental ideals such as access to better employment and career prospects.

Individual achievement and success were highly valued and sought after by this group of children. High adoption of the key competencies was strongly associated with the children's assessment of learning. Key competencies were linked to their performance-approach goals promoting the attainment of classroom success. The children talked of how their individual work

goals could be more effectively achieved through their use of the school's key competencies (espoused by staff in the graduate profile). As curriculum tools, the children's talk of the key competencies emphasised high performance for setting, tracking, and achieving individual work goals, and for improving individual work habits. In particular, the children's prominent adoption of the Managing Self KC emphasised more individual structures of learning to know and do, such as independent learning tasks, rather than collective ways of learning.

Key competencies that over-emphasise *learning to know* and *do* arguably diminish the children's voice and agency to critically question what is the point of good learning, because good learning is about "... being able to do it, instead of having to go like, what's this question" (A5) and a "good learner is more scientific and progressed" (A6). The children held individual ideals of learning, synonymous with good learning and being a good learner. Learners were seen to be productive and independent of the collective, e.g., "you wouldn't be chatting to your friends...getting on with your work" (A2) or "they talk very much...they don't get distracted" (A1). While the children were familiar with and agreed with the need to use the Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies in small group and pair activities, the emphasis lay still with being productive and independent of others, in the individual pursuit of goals, e.g., the Managing Self KC is being able to "meet guidelines... always do what the teacher asks them to do", "no one guiding you" (A3) and "[Managing Self is about] independence...managing impulsivity" (A4).

#### *Good learner and good learning*

Talk from two of the Windbridge children highlighted that good learning could be improved through homogenous social structures of "sameness". Yet, the underlying emphasis implied that individual success would be hindered through more diverse collective structures, for example, "if other kids in your class are about the same level as you maybe you could work together and that way you'll be able to learn stuff at your level but if you mix with too high levels or too low levels, it would be too hard for you and you won't be able to learn as much and if you work at too low level for you, you won't learn that much either because you'll be helping them, not them helping you" (A5).

The children attributed their present and future individual achievement and success with ongoing use of their key competencies as tools. It was agreed that achievement and success with the key competencies was their enactment independent of the collective. Embedded in the children's talk was that developing their KC work habits was the responsibility of the individual rather than the collective. An ideal conception of a peer showing successful Managing Self, emphasised

individual activity, someone as “...smart, they like to work by themselves and be able to be independent and taking care of themselves” (A5).

The children were resolute that their key competencies could be carried through to multiple contexts, essentially though, for their next class level, next school, and into adulthood. The fundamental emphasis of their key competencies remained individually and future focused. Key competencies, for these children, encouraged the transmission of private benefit for individual employment or career chances.

Attributes such as confidence, resilience and perseverance were the emphasis for individual success when using the Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies, “if you don’t participate then you won’t know what it’s like to do that activity” (A5). The children were not deterred by personal losses in competitive situations: “I didn’t give up” (A1) and “it’s okay to lose”. These examples show that the children held high aspirations of achieving well as a result of maximising individual participation and contribution in school activities. The Participating and Contributing KC was viewed by the children as being necessary for being successful and self-responsible, “if you don’t participate in the school council or anything, then you wouldn’t know how to have good skills” and “[students] have to do it for learning in the future” (A5 and A1 p. 5), emphasising a future-focused individual pursuit. Windbridge School had determined and publically articulated high values and expectations on children being actively involved in and out of school extra-curricular activities. The children thus appeared to have been socialised into promoting an emphasis on more individual education ideals (A1, A3, A5).

The children were familiar with having easy access to a range of school and parent funded activities, in and out of school. The children viewed KC development transferring to settings outside the classroom to the school, home and community. Individual success was to be accomplished through a range of school- and parent-organised activities and indeed, the children expected others to take up multiple roles, including leadership, and compete for individual success. Language learned by the children to articulate the Managing Self KC such as “self-smart” or “self-care” seemed to epitomise the individual independent of the collective. A social underpinning of key competencies was not given priority by the children, and neither was working together ideals emphasised. The school’s created notion of “self-care” or “self-smart” appeared in the children’s economic motivation for seeking and securing future university and employment success. The children’s talk reflected a market-driven conceptualisation of the key competencies.

The children's talk prioritized the Managing Self KC and was consistent with a *learning to know* and *learning to do* emphasis in the classroom or school context. The children's perceptions and experience of the Managing Self, Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies included learning in small groups with the teacher, or pair groupings. While learning occurred in pairs or small groups, for the children, being an independent learner was a more desirable outcome for showing the Managing Self KC. One child did state that the learning of key competencies should be more practical. However, the overall adoption of the key competencies as learning tools for the children emphasized *learning to know* and *learning to do*, rather than more collective structures of working together.

## **Low acceptance (high adoption) of key competencies for private good**

### **Woodhaven School D (low decile)**

In the same way that Windbridge School children had learnt to value their key competencies as part of being a successful graduate, Woodhaven children, too, valued their key competencies. Acceptance of the key competencies was associated with individual assessment learning activity. The children at this low-decile school had learnt that the purpose of their key competencies was for improving individual assessments of their learning. That is, key competencies were associated with performance approach goals, i.e., priority was on learning to set, focus on, and achieve individual goals, and set new ones.

Key competencies were thus synonymous in this school with performance-approach goals.

Active interaction with other children was not necessary to obtain those individual benefits. The checking mechanism for individual success was relatively good use of the Managing Self KC as a tool.

### *Good learner and good learning*

The children's talk about being a good learner did not emphasise collective actions. Instead, being a good learner was viewed as being apart from collective actions, e.g., to show good use of the Managing Self KC as a tool. The ideal learner was a silent learner – “being really quiet doing our work... not talking to other people” (D1). The ideal learner did not emphasise critical engagement with other children and share ideas, the priority was about “getting on with their work and not jibber jabbing to each other” or “asking each other a few times...getting on with their work” (D4). (D3). The learning context implied compliance, e.g., “looking at the teacher... not fiddling or talking...really concentrating (D2) or “to improve...you don't talk on the mat and you fold your arms and legs to focus” (D6). Furthermore, the ideal learner was one who “listens



to the teacher” (D4); “you improve...you get 100% in your basic facts...they don’t fidget...they don’t talk while the people [or] teacher is talking” (D5).

Aspirations for individual success at Woodhaven School conveyed that the key competencies would lead to better employment prospects, and financial security, and these would benefit the individual. It appears this focus was legitimised by the school in the way that the key competencies were communicated, emphasizing that all good learning was to eventually improve future prospects (i.e., economic purpose). This emphasis reflected a market-driven view of the key competencies. The underlying conceptualisation of the key competencies thus placed more emphasis on having a “successful life” through better vocational and employment skills, rather than key competencies for a “decent life” for a “well-functioning society”.

#### *Learning to know and do purposes*

Based on the children’s experiences and perceptions of the key competencies, the common view in this school was that all five key competencies were important to “help us learn” or “help you with your learning”. Central to the group’s views was that key competencies were, overall, strongly important for individual performance goal setting, or “just-for-me” motivation. Success against their goals was highly valued and determinedly sought. Individual performance and accountability became the emphasis as the children learned to prioritise curriculum performance via individual portfolios. Most of the children agreed that all key competencies were equally important for improving individual successful outcomes. While two children maintained that Managing Self and TH were most important, all of the children’s talk tended to return to articulations of the Managing Self KC. Individual performance and accountability characteristics conveyed in the children’s talk emphasised an individual education ideal, and more *learning to know* and *learning to do* purposes.

Thus, the key competencies were closely associated with performance, e.g., setting, tracking and achieving individual classroom goals. Improving one’s learning tasks, assessment outcomes and individual productivity were emphasised as an education ideal. Managing Self, Relating to Others and Participating and Contributing perceptions about positive relationships within social structures surfaced as important for class and school cohesion. However, the underpinning expectation emphasised compliance to prioritise individual outcomes.

Market-driven underpinnings were embedded in the focus group’s articulations. Having acknowledged the adoption of the key competencies, the children agreed that their ultimate purpose was for future employment success, e.g., “as you get older”, when “we grow up [we use

them] on a job”; “if you need a really, really good job you’ve got to learn how to do these”. The group agreed the key competencies were helping them in the present and would also provide direction in the future, e.g., “They teach us a lot about what we have to do and what we have to do to achieve them and if we use them in the future what we could have as a job” (D1). Once again, outcomes-based, market-driven underpinning of key competencies influenced the children to adopt an economic language, so that key competencies are internalised e.g., “so you can get money for doing work” because “you don’t want to be a hobo”.

A *Learning to do* conception was embedded in the children’s talk about the Managing Self, and Participating and Contributing key competencies. Characteristics central to these key competencies included being productive, independent of the collective and “you do your work and listen and so you know what to do”, being responsible, time-efficient, reliable and trustworthy. A requirement of the Managing Self KC to accomplish daily goals was conveyed by one child as “people that can manage themselves good then you’ll be able to manage yourself. So you’ll achieve your goals” (D4). Talk included a commitment to the teacher’s expectation that goal setting, attainment, individual focus and avoiding distractions, were important attributes of successfully engaging with the key competencies as learning tools. Conversations about individual performance against goals assured, “how we [the children] could get better at it [using the key competencies] and achieve more”. Thus, the children’s views emphasised productive individual performance.

Overall, a social justice underpinning emphasis of the key competencies was lacking, however, *learning to live together* (Delors, 1996) conceptions emerged in association with the Managing Self, Relating to Others, Participating and Contributing and TH key competencies. The example showed more compliance relatedness such as being respectful of the school’s rules by “managing your impulsivity” (D5), “keeping above the line about your attitude”. In contrast though, talk did feature “[showing] empathy and understanding” of others to contribute to an “appropriate and more sensitive school”.

In addition, the children valued that their teacher promoted key competencies linked to showing confidence and maturity during uncomfortable peer interactions “...when we do folk dancing we find the humour. Don’t laugh at anyone else because you have to hold hands and with boys and sometimes girls...” (D1). Similarly, the following comment highlights the openness to diverse ideas of others, including adults, e.g., “[be] prepared to compromise and work with different teachers”. Collective structures of learning with peers were emphasised in the TH, Managing Self and Relating to Others key competencies, e.g., “[we] would be helping each other, helping

them figure it [solutions] out and seeing which one would be the best answer....” (D3), and “helping people make the right choices”.

In summary, the school had determined language and expectations that prioritized assessment of individual outcomes, in conjunction with learning to use the key competencies. The children consequently learned that key competencies were mostly “just-for-me” tools, and thus the transmitted fundamentals about their key competencies led them to emphasise individual benefit. This emphasis is associated with more *learning to know* and *do* purposes and with “successful life” education ideals. Developing key competencies that supported the children’s social goals were not so emphasised. Rather, social goals were largely equal with displaying the Managing Self KC well.

## **Low acceptance (high adoption) of key competencies for private good**

### **Channel Heights School B (high decile)**

The reader will recall in the findings that the children of this school talked about how they were new to the introduction of key competencies in their class setting (in their final two years at school). While the school is positioned on a low- to mid-acceptance part of the continuum, adoption of the key competencies was becoming higher. This seemed to be the case because the children associated the key competencies with better success at school. The children perceived that key competencies were relevant every day, and maximised use would engender ongoing individual success. Similar to Woodhaven School, underlying the children’s talk was that key competencies were best prioritised as individual tools. This emphasis is associated with more *learning to know* and *do* purposes and with “successful life” education ideals. The five key competencies were generally equally ranked, and there was agreement that no KC should be elevated above the other. Sometimes one or two key competencies were perceived to be in tandem use and sometimes all key competencies were working together or in action beyond the class setting, extending to the home and community settings. Classroom culture and language appeared to lead the children to adopt their key competencies.

#### *Good learner and good learning*

Like the children of Windbridge and Woodhaven, key competencies were tools associated with obtaining better achievement. Good learning and being a good learner were emphasised by children as being a listener, and focused on individual goals “so they get it right...work really hard” (B1); “listen all the time...don’t speak when the teacher is speaking” (B2); “you’re focusing...not looking at other things” (B3). Better individual performance outcomes were the

norm in the classroom and thus emphasised mostly apart from the collective with “not talking...head down and writing” (B4). The children’s developed perceptions leaned towards an emphasis on productivity to be “on task ... not chatting about the parade or something ... concentrating ... probably they might have done a bit more than others” (B5); “concentrating on their work” (B6).

### *Learning to know and do purposes*

The children seemed to have adopted the key competencies as a means for providing *learning to know* and *do* direction, e.g., “to know what you’re doing”, a more individual outcome-based emphasis. To accomplish individual learning success in the classroom, performance goal setting was emphasised. The group’s perception derives from a *learning to know* and *do* education ideal. Individual performance and outcomes were the learned education ideal.

In contrast to individual emphases, the group did, however, elaborate on important factors related to more collective social structures of learning. The children likened the Relating to Others and Participating and Contributing key competencies with social and moral motivation too, e.g., “a good student” and “a really good person”. The children agreed that being co-operative, inclusive and caring was reflective of using the key competencies, implying social structures of learning. For example, group learning constituted “helping the people in your group” and “working together to get information” or “you’re sharing your thoughts with them”. However, the underlying emphasis continued to prioritise individual productivity and accountability. This was an expectation of (and pressure on) all group members, with no tolerance for “lazy children” because “[People] wouldn’t want to work with you because they know you wouldn’t do anything”.

However, the notion of inclusion in the context of classroom mixed ability grouping did surface with one child commenting, “You’re being really nice to someone else...and if they’re a bit slower than you at work, you say nice job anyway, you’re still finding out heaps of information”. Similarly, when working with the diverse ideas of their peers, the notion of empathy was embedded in the children’s Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others KC talk, “if they give a bad idea...you wouldn’t give them bad feedback”.

There was no overall emphasis on working together to support peers who were lacking in thinking capabilities. Based on the children’s talk, there was no tolerance for unproductive group members who “give useless ideas...they haven’t thought about it”. Thus, the children’s

conceptions were less about collective knowledge building and agency. The emphasis instead leaned toward *learning to know* and *do* purposes.

All Channel Heights key competencies were highly adopted as being essential for living successful lives. A future-focused, market-driven view of the key competencies was internalised by the children as they had accepted a common language of performance and outcomes. Key competencies were seen as necessary *learning to know* and *do* tools. Their use was emphasised when transitioning to intermediate and secondary school, and eventually, for future employment. For example, Relating to Others and Participating and Contributing key competencies were referred to “when you get older and you get a job, you’ll need to know how to work well in a group”.

Common among the Channel Heights children’s talk was that good use of the Managing Self and Participating and Contributing key competencies would ensure future assessment and vocational success, “so it [key competencies] could help you when you get to university that you would get better grades and it would be easier for you to do your work”. An explicit benefit of the Managing Self and Participating and Contributing key competencies was for individual transfer to outside contexts, such as college, university or for employment, e.g., “if you are losing 10 points and then it’s game over and you’re a bit angry, you still manage yourself”. Key competencies were seen to be applicable in tertiary or employment situations: “If you don’t go to university and you just go straight into a job or whatever you want to do, you are still going to use them, so if you are going to help with a car wash station or something else, you would still be using most of the key competencies” (B5). The children had internalised that key competencies were likely to enhance successful, individual, tertiary experience.

Like Windbridge, a social justice narrative underpinning of the key competencies, or *learning to live together* purposes, was not emphasised. Instead, the “successful life” was emphasised, rather than a “decent life”. This individual emphasis on the key competencies arguably diminishes children’s collective opportunities to voice and mould society for collective good. Thus, adoption of the Channel Heights prioritised *learning to know* and *do* priorities.

In contrast though, the tension between individual “just-for-me” needs and collective structures of critical agency surfaced in the children’s Relating to Others KC talk about peer relationships. The children conceptualised group work required learning how to develop character traits such as openness to diverse ideas, “you might be really selfish and you don’t want to help anybody. But when you learn it [Relating to Others] you start helping people and you would have more

friends” (B6) and “You could be really smart and you would have to listen to other people’s ideas, so you would have new ideas to think about, so it could change you” (B2). These examples reflected links to *learning to be* and *learning to live together* purposes for key competencies.

In summary, it appeared common sense or part of the day-to-day school routine to adopt the key competencies as early as possible, as early as “year one” so that “they are always stuck in your brain and you will always remember them”. You will recall that the children had no involvement in critically co-constructing or encoding the meaning of key competencies. Yet, the classroom culture appeared to have prioritised the key competencies for more individual agency and securing future success. This emphasis is associated with more *learning to know* and *do* purposes, and with “successful life” education ideals.

## **Collective emphasis**

### **High acceptance (high adoption) of key competencies for collective good**

#### **Creek Valley School C (mid decile)**

The reader will recall the Creek Valley school children accepted the key competencies as tools for supporting their learning, and for their everyday lives. All key competencies had equal ranking of importance. Their experiences of the key competencies reinforced an immediate and future-focused learning need to achieve individual success.

Consistent with a future focus view of key competencies were the children’s perceptions that key competencies would necessarily develop over time, and transfer to adult settings, if they continued to use them as learning tools. Like the Windbridge, Channel Heights and Woodhaven children, KC talk from Creek Valley reflected *learning to know* and *do* purposes, e.g., “when you get bigger they’ll be all important ... if you work on them right now you’ll know what to do when you grow up”. This example also reflected the future-focused mindset of the children, and is associated with “successful life” ideals.

Strongly embedded in the children’s voices was a high value for independence, success and strong work ethics; however, there were also education ideals of being co-operative and caring within collective social structures. From the children’s perceptions, the key competencies transmitted the fundamentals of *both* individual and collective education ideals. The children’s overall high adoption of the key competencies also came with reflections of *learning to be* and

*live together* purposes, e.g., working together (collective social structures), associated with “decent life” ideals.

### *Good learner and good learning*

The children’s strong motivation for success was not at the expense of their peers. Their voices leaned towards emphasising critical thinking and learner agency “people [the group] actually involved in thinking”. The ideal learning experience for the Creek Valley School children seemed to be a transformative or active process, e.g., “actually learning something new, instead of someone repeating something you’ve already learned”. Good learning was perceived as being “involved in thinking about what you’re doing and having fun” (C1), as well as “focused” (C3), “working hard, motivated” (C6) and “learning new stuff” (C4). You will recall that, at the end of the focus group interview, one of the female participants displayed curiosity and wanted us all to talk about what was the point of school: “why do you think education is important?”

These children’s high adoption of the key competencies reflected an emphasis on social goals or *learning to be* and *live together* purposes. In particular, the Managing Self and Relating to Others key competencies were important to the children for learning to develop self-control and self-awareness, e.g., “don’t get angry at people if they don’t do something that you like”. These characteristics that focus on supporting the development of social goals, were applied to being successful in future vocational contexts because “perhaps you don’t like a business manager...and you’re all mean or all their employees would probably quit because he’s not very nice at all to them”. Using Relating to Others and Participating and Contributing key competencies were associated in team situations, e.g., “when you have a job you have to relate to others because sometimes you’re working together and sometimes you share your ideas” (C2). Once again, this example highlights the children’s experiences of the key competencies were also closely associated with future employment purposes. This emphasis is associated with more *learning to know* and *do* purposes and with “successful life” education ideals.

The Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies enabled the children to achieve success, whether working independently or in more social structures. Similarly, KC perceptions conveyed empathy and inclusion, with the children conveying value for shared and less competitive contexts “if we’re making new groups we actually, if people are left out we make them join in...to work in a group and if someone is hurt you actually care about them” (C2). The children’s ethical thinking appeared to help increase their awareness of social goals concerns. High adoption of the Relating to Others, Participating and Contributing and TH key competencies highlighted a collective ideal from the children’s talk, to “share ideas” and

improve them “because then everyone will build up on your idea and make it better”. This emphasis is associated with more *learning to be* purposes.

The children’s high adoption of pair and group learning approaches seemed to encourage more collective interaction and critical thinking. High value for pair and small group work was talked about by the children, and also observed in the class lesson and the children led the activities. It appears the children maintained their individual voices within the collective, and that they were not overcome by ‘group think’ (Johnson & Morris, 2010) or ‘mob mentality’ (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Apple and Bean (2007) maintain that such learning approaches promote active citizenship because problems can be confronted collectively.

While successful performance against individual goals was strongly associated with their key competencies across a range of class and school settings, the emphasis in this school remained a future-focused one. Creek Valley children had also adopted their key competencies for *learning to know* and *do* purposes, i.e., present and future achievement of individual goals. The children’s perceptions of the Managing Self, Participating and Contributing and Relating to Others key competencies through group structures included elements of *learning to know* and *do*. This emphasis is associated with “successful life” education ideals. While the children were responsible for improving their individual work goals, they were also expected by their teacher to show strong group work ethic. Achieving together, working as a collective and group work habits were KC characteristics emphasized by the teacher. Creek Valley children had learnt this expectation and were confident that they could use their key competencies for individual and collective purposes, to “make it [the outcome] better”.

## **High acceptance (high adoption) of key competencies for collective good**

### **Dale Crossing School E (mid decile)**

The reader will recall that this group of children from Dale Crossing, a mid-decile school, were confident and articulate in their interviews. All key competencies were described as being equally important and highly valued for successful learning at school. The children also commented that the key competencies were a normal part of school. The key competencies were also perceived to be for adults and their parents, not just children. In their articulations, the children maintained that their school’s language of key competencies were in operation in multiple contexts “anywhere” – in and outside the class or school setting. Key competencies were a normal part of their schooling experience, and using them was common sense. Overall, their key competencies were highly adopted as classroom *learning to know and do* tools, e.g.,



when striving to better oneself, associated with “successful life” ideals. The key competencies also emphasised *learning to be* and *live together* purposes, e.g., supporting their peers, improve personal happiness and securing future educational success, associated with “decent life” ideals.

As with the other groups of children, the overarching future-focused theme for adopting the key competencies was emphasised.

### *Good learner and good learning*

Similar to Windbridge, Woodhaven and Channel Heights, Dale Crossing children associated good learning with less collective and uncritical learning approaches, e.g., “understanding and getting things right” (E2, E5), “you’ve got your head down and you’re writing all the time” (E1); “listening to the teacher...doing your work” (E3). The Managing Self KC was emphasised, “you’re confident and you know what you’re doing...don’t distract other people and talk” (E6) and a good learner was associated with “trying their best” (E2), “staying on task... they make good choices” (E1). While the children’s talk emphasised performance approach goals, the school’s key competencies also emphasised individual and collective purposes.

You will recall that no KC was ranked above any other in this school. As with all other schools, Dale Crossing children held a strong future focus mindset of the key competencies. The children perceived the key competencies would transfer to adulthood “when you grow up”, and that you would “definitely need them later on in life” or “You need to use all of them you need to practise learning them because you’ll use them when you’re older in the big world” (E1). They had learnt that from child to adult, the purpose of their key competencies would become part of day-to-day life, and important for supporting their future family and the community they would live in. The key competencies were valued for also supporting and assuring their present and future well-being.

Consistent with all other schools, the children’s talk also reflected that using the school’s key competencies was motivated by future employment because “you need them to get a job”, or “you want to be able to work at a job and get some money...buy a house...food...feed your family”. Additionally, children were resolute that tertiary or employment prospects would be advantaged, “these [key competencies] are equally right and if you follow them it will come to a good ending and you will live a happy life...Say you are just leaving [university] and you had studied something, to get you into a good job in the future, you might be a really be a good person ...” (E3). Further talk highlighted *learning to know*, *do* and *be* conceptions of the key competencies, which were strongly associated with individual goal setting and successful

achievement, “They help you set goals and they help you learn and have a better life” (E4).

Competitive conceptions of learning were not emphasised by the children. Thus, consistent with the other schools though, Dale Crossing children had adopted their key competencies for *learning to know* and *do* purposes.

Similar to Woodhaven children, a future-focused articulation of the key competencies included an emphasis on self and family well-being. That is, children had also adopted their key competencies for *learning to be* and *live together* purposes. It was understood by the children that working together as a collective, could be improved through self-betterment goals. The children had strongly adopted the school’s socially defined key competencies that seemed to transmit fundamentals consistent with a “decent life”. *Learning to be* conceptions of the key competencies were highlighted when the children commented on the Participating and Contributing and TH key competencies, “Never be afraid to have a go at it and just do your best.... it’s like giving it a go. Just if it doesn’t work out just keep on trying” (E3) and “Just keep on rowing down the river... the person who’s just beat you is just like a waterfall and you just have to go down it and you have to continue along the river” (E4). The children pursued and valued personal attributes of confidence and resilience (social indicators within their school key competencies), which arguably encouraged *learning to be* ideals, e.g., “you need to get through the next thing in life” and “don’t give up” when schooling experiences were becoming hard.

Having acknowledged the importance of key competencies for the individual achievement of goals, *Learning to live together* ideals also featured parallel to children’s Relating to Others, and Participating and Contributing key competencies talk. Inclusion and empathy surfaced in comments such as “Helping a lot in the classroom and don’t be mean when you start, if [someone doesn’t] get it you just don’t go, ‘oh you don’t get it, you should’. And if they still don’t get it, keep on saying it over so they then get it in the end” (E3). Ideas of patience, caring, helpfulness featured too, “Don’t be mean to someone if they ask can you please help me. Just say yeah I’ll help you, and if you’re doing your work and you are nearly finished, you can just say wait a minute, I am nearly finished” (E5). While the children associated Relating to Others, Participating and Contributing and Managing Self with their individual social or self-betterment goals, they had adopted these key competencies for working together and supporting peer, *learning to be* and *live together* purposes.

In summary, Dale Crossing children had fully adopted their school’s key competencies and associated their daily use of them with striving for more successful living and better personal well-being. Consistent with the other schools, the children all agreed that their key competencies

would develop over time, be applied naturally in multiple settings, enabling them a “happy life that you’ve got to make the most of”. Having acknowledged the high value of their key competencies, it was expected one would become a “better person”. The children associated their key competencies with making positive contributions in present and future settings, because “it’s a big world and you’re only one person but you still make a difference”. Consistent with the other schools, the key competencies served individual *learning to know* and *do* purposes, and were associated by the children with achieving a “successful life”. In addition, the children’s adoption of the key competencies also leant towards *learning to be* and *live together* aspirations, associated with an education ideal for a “decent life”.

## Conclusion

Overall, encoding and decoding of the key competencies, from the teachers to the children, influenced the children’s adoption of key competencies. Overall, the place and purpose for adopting the key competencies had a future-focused emphasis. Key competencies in schools appear to be shifting from collective to more individual educational ideals. Across the schools, the adoption of the key competencies emphasised individual achievement and the adoption was motivated by economic or *learning to know* and *learning to do* purposes.

Have the *learning to be* and *learning to live together* education ideals been lost in the translation of the key competencies? As a result of the encoding process, the children appear to have learnt that the place of the key competencies resides in individual achievement activity and the purpose of the key competencies, ultimately, is an economic one, i.e., better employment prospects.

Delors’ (1996) pillars of *learning to know* and *learning to do*, highlight the tension between key competencies adopted “just-for-me”, an individual motivation, and the collective social structure. Individualism describes a worldview that is incompatible with collective education ideals. The *learning to do* pillar in formal education, and traditionally, is underscored by the acquisition of vocational competencies for a profession or trade (Delors, 2000). Vocational competencies are evident in the children’s rationales for the adoption of the key competencies. The *learning to live together* pillar articulated in the Delors’ Report (1996) emphasises an education ideal as “an essential contribution to the search for a more just world, a better world to live in” (p. 17).

Whether the acceptance of the key competencies was high or low on the continuum, the ready adoption of the key competencies remained the overall emphasis for all children. Even for Channel Heights’ children who were ‘new’ to the key competencies in their late Year six level,

the key competencies were being readily adopted. The children had encoded that their purpose was to motivate better achievement, and ultimately, help them with employment prospects (whether they went onto tertiary levels or not).

In the following chapter, Chapter Six, these findings will be further illuminated. The works of philosophers of education John Dewey and Paulo Freire will be drawn upon. Further discussion will relate to global politics and the construction of the curriculum policy text (including key competencies).

## CHAPTER 6:

# PHILOSOPHIES, POLITICS AND CURRICULUM

### **Introduction**

In the past three chapters the place and purpose of the key competencies in *The New Zealand curriculum* were explored. A conceptual analysis of the findings using Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning, in the previous chapter, highlighted a tension between individualism and collectivism in the children's adoption of the key competencies. The findings revealed that the Year 5 and 6 primary school children had similar views and experiences of the key competencies. Specifically, the over-arching theme in the thematic analysis of the findings highlighted that the children had a strong future-focused mindset of the key competencies. Across the schools there were two key emphases within this over-arching future-focus theme: key competencies for individual success and key competencies for future employment (i.e., market-driven purposes).

The first reason the children shared for adopting the key competencies was for individual success, i.e., performance-goals and self-management. For example, it was apparent that the children's views and experiences of the key competencies were strongly associated with individual assessment – *learning to know* and *do*, i.e., goal setting and independent mastery of goals. This strong association with self-regulation appears to have influenced the children to adopt key competencies for individual success.

The second reason for adopting the key competencies strongly reflected market-driven imperatives. Within this market-driven view, the children adopted the key competencies as tools for individual success, and ultimately for future employment purposes, e.g., tertiary entrance “at university”. All children commented that the key competencies were for better future employment purposes, e.g., “to get a good job” and to “have a better life”. Ultimately though, the adoption of the key competencies emphasised individual success for personal benefit.

A curriculum that emphasises key competencies solely for market purposes is, arguably, consistent with fixed, rigid or traditional forms of education, i.e., education predetermined for preparing the child for future employment. The notion of traditional education as discussed in this chapter is about an emphasis in the curriculum on the acquisition of individualized knowledge and skills or key competencies (subject matter) for market-driven purposes, over social democratic or collective ideals. Hence, traditional education neglects the growth of

children's collective capabilities such as co-operation. The focus instead is on the individual, and ideals such as competition; it is an "extreme individualistic spirit", neglectful of collective or community education ideals (Gautreaux, 2015, p. 3).

This chapter provides a theoretical explanation for how the key competencies, for these Year 5 and 6 children, have come to exemplify a market-driven approach. It also considers the disadvantages of this as an education ideal or direction for children. There are three parts to this chapter.

In part one, an ideal curriculum is discussed drawing on the works of two philosophers of education: John Dewey and Paulo Freire. While these theorists were from different parts of the world, and wrote in different decades of the 20th century, they advocated similar democratic education ideals in the curriculum, including social co-operative capabilities for children. Dewey and Freire's socially progressive education theories help to illuminate the concerns underpinning the findings of this thesis, i.e., a market-driven view of the key competencies that threatens the collective or *learning to be* and *live together* education ideals in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Delors, 1996).

Part two bridges a 20th century discourse – the collective education ideals of Dewey and Freire, with an individualistic ideology which has emerged in the 21st century – that of neoliberalism. The emergence of the respective philosophers' ideas and forms of liberalism have commonalities: Dewey advocated collective education ideals in a context of Liberalism and the rise of capitalism in the early 20th century. Freire too, advocated collective education ideals, but his emerged during the ascendancy of neoliberalism on the cusp of the 21st century.

From one century to the next, it is suggested, New Zealand's education system and therefore the curriculum emphasis has departed from collective goals to 'destinations' that are more individual. This departure, arguably, can be attributed to the ascendancy of neoliberalism with its market-driven principles which have underpinned education reform and curriculum change in the past 30 years. The findings in this research highlight that market-driven ideals have come to be exemplified in the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. To understand how the children's views of the key competencies for individual success and future employment purposes have come about, the 'pillars' of neoliberalism (Gautreaux, 2015) and their impact on curriculum education reform in the past 30 years will be discussed.

The implementation of the key competencies in the curriculum depends on the way in which they are interpreted or ‘translated’. In part three, ideas from Codd’s (1995) materialist conception of policy text are used to highlight how the key competencies have been interpreted to emphasise individual success and future employment – market ideals of education. It is argued that neoliberal discourse in education policy texts that emphasise individual ideals, but struggle with collective ideals, is a consequence of its ideology filtering across the curriculum. In reality, the collective education ideals originally espoused by Dewey and Freire have been lost in translation, through the received curriculum, to the market-driven view of curriculum evident in the research findings. What is wrong with a market-driven view of curriculum? Social democratic or collective education ideals in curriculum risk being lost in ‘translation’. If key competencies are interpreted and implemented mainly for individual success and future employment, then education becomes more about private good rather than public good (the notion of benefit – ‘private good’ and ‘public good’ is discussed later in this chapter). Children’s social co-operative capabilities, i.e., *learning to be* and *learning to live together* needed for creating social change for a better and democratic society, are arguably lost when a market-driven curriculum overshadows the social collective narratives of education.

## **Part One: The Ideal Curriculum**

### **Introduction**

A conceptual analysis of the children’s views and experiences of the key competencies in their school settings highlights a strong market-driven underpinning. While the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* are inclusive of both individualism and collectivism, the children placed emphasis on individual success and future employment priorities. These two emphases, at their extreme, can be referred to as ‘just-for-me’ capabilities (individual and competitive ways of working) (Dale, 2008); the focus is more on the *learning to know* and *learning to do* pillars of the curriculum (Delors, 1996). Collective or democratic ways of working, for example through co-operation to increase children’s voice and agency, were less emphasised. Instead the key competencies were overly rationalised by the children to mark a fixed point, i.e., important “at university”, “to get good grades” or “to get a really good job”.

Earlier, in the Literature Review chapter, Chapter Two, philosophers of education John Dewey and Paulo Freire were introduced. Dewey and Freire shared education ideals that promoted social democratic or collective ways of working. Both espoused that ‘community’ was a key ingredient needed for a more democratic society (i.e., active learning and social co-operative

capabilities). If education helps young people to critique their world as they work together with diverse groups, in this way, the active and co-operative undertaking of problems can be fostered (democracy) (Apple & Beane, 2007). Discussing the tension between the individual and collective exemplified in the key competencies, and experienced by the children, is illuminated by placing of the education ideals of John Dewey and Paulo Freire into a modern context.

There are three sections to part one. Sections one and two discuss the respective philosophies of Dewey and Freire. Section three is a comparison of similarities in the philosophies of Dewey and Freire in relation to the research theme.

### **Section one:**

In this section, individual and collective education ideas in the research are linked with John Dewey's philosophy of education. Specifically, Dewey's ideas about community, co-operation, conjoint learning activity and participatory democracy are used to highlight the possibilities of a curriculum with more socially co-operative underpinnings.

### **The ideal education narrative: John Dewey**

This section draws on Dewey's work to highlight the tension in the findings of this research between individualism and collectivism. Links to the tension will also be made using Delors' (1996) pillars of *learning to know, do, be and live together*. Social or co-operative processes of learning are a key notion that aligns with Dewey's education ideal of becoming a more democratic society. Ideas about collective or conjoint learning activity, which link to social co-operative aims in curriculum, are selected from two of Dewey's key publications.

#### *Introduction*

Among Dewey's extensive output of writings, two publications, *Democracy and Education* published in 1916, and *Experience and Education* in 1938, arguably frame his philosophy of education. Since the publication of these two books, it can be argued that critics and proponents of Dewey have polarised two views of education. Dewey wrote about these educational views, one termed traditional, and the other progressive, in his book *Democracy and Education*. He later returned to the idea of polarities, or traditional versus progressive education, in his book *Experience and Education*.

Dewey (2008) argued that, at one extreme, the traditional school and curriculum were "fixed and rigid", thereby ignoring the unique dispositions and needs of the child (p. 55). In contrast, educators have been cautioned that going to the opposite extreme, to an "inchoate curriculum,



excessive individualism, and a spontaneity which is a deceptive index of freedom”, prolonged the polarities (Dewey, 1948, p. x). That is, progressive education that took a free approach to education, for the sake of freedom, was a weak philosophy. Dewey (1948) referred to these education polarities or dualisms, as “either-ors”, and saw both as inadequate on their own (p. 1). He maintained that neither “ism” helped the fundamental issue of “old” traditional, versus “new” progressive education (p. 115). Education of the child emphasising either “old” or “new” experiences, “distorting the growth of further experience” was what Dewey (1948) explained as “mis-educative” practice (p. 13). That is, experience and education are not equal, because not all experiences are educative if a person’s learning is narrowed or restricted (Dewey, 1948, p. 38). Dewey’s (1948) closing remarks did not argue for one form of education over the other (p. 115). Instead, he claimed that while both education views had their fundamental shortcomings, both forms of education were needed.

In terms of this research, key competencies that emphasise individual success and future employment have shortcomings too. This emphasis can be viewed as a rigid and narrow (mis)education of the child, and it can mean ignoring or minimising collective ideals in the curriculum.

#### *Mis-education – a narrow and rigid curriculum*

The findings discussed in the previous chapters highlight an adoption of the key competencies with an emphasis on the individual, and for future purposes, i.e., goal setting and “getting a good job”. Borrowing Dewey’s notion of “mis-education”, key competencies with an emphasis on the individual with market-driven purposes are a mis-education, for they serve more competitive ideals. Moreover, this emphasis or mis-education can lead to a narrowing and restricting of children’s social or collective learning capabilities. A Deweyan analysis asserts that education needs to include a social function whereby, “[a] being connected with other beings cannot perform his own activities without taking the activities of others into account” (Dewey, 2008, p. 35). In Dewey’s *My Pedagogic Creed*, published in 1897, he maintains that school is primarily a social institution and therefore, education is a social process “of living and not a preparation for future living” (2003, p. 87).

The research findings highlight that the children adopted the KCs with a strong future-focus emphasis, for “when you get older” and “to get a good job”. A narrowed or rigid adoption of key competencies, for market-driven purposes, arguably parallels individual ideals of competition, and therefore does not align with democratic ideals such as co-operative capabilities. Dewey contends that traditional education narrows or restricts the fundamental democratic or co-

operation principle, and that school is a form of community life. Key competencies for market-driven purposes thus restrict children's development of co-operative capabilities, and narrow the *learning to be* and *live together* ideals in curriculum (Delors, 1996).

### *Democracy and co-operation*

The notions of democracy and education imply that a narrowed and restricted curriculum that emphasizes individual competition (rather than social co-operative education ideals) struggles to align with democracy. Democracy was a central tenet of Dewey's view of education (Warren, 2003). *Democracy and Education* was written at a time of expanding industrial capitalism, revering entrepreneurial individualism (Warren, 2003). Dewey's theory of experience or ideal of meaningful and co-operative learning activity for children, (not fixed or pre-determined) was considered revolutionary in the early 20th century. For Dewey, the idea of democracy was about the individual having knowledge and understanding of the world and importantly, an appreciation of group life or community (Warren, 2003). Furthermore, the individual and group constitute and construct each other. Dewey (2008) recognised that democracy goes beyond mere control to that of "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 44). Collective education ideals would be in alignment with Dewey's notions of democracy and conjoint experience. Dewey believed in democratic habits or dispositions of tolerance, caring and co-operation, where a community of individuals could respond to society's needs through experimental and inventive ways.

Consequently, Dewey (1948) stated a need for a theory of experience, or a "sound philosophy of education" (p. 116). Dewey's philosophy of education emphasised learning relevant to children's lives, guided by experiences that fostered democratic habits such as co-operative capabilities. Thus, in association with Dewey's call for democratic learning habits, more social co-operative capabilities can be aligned with Delors' (1996) *learning to be* and *learning to live together* education ideals, which were less emphasised in the research.

### *Social co-operative classrooms*

Dewey consistently argued that education and learning are social and active processes, and that children would thrive in a curriculum which was actively experienced. He viewed the school as a social institution, or a reflection of society. Consequently, he believed in a strong connection between education and social action in a democracy. Children ideally would experience an education where they not only gain content knowledge, but also learn how to live.

In Dewey's model, learning would not be based on a regimented curriculum with pre-determined skills and knowledge. Rather the emphasis would be on collective capabilities that can be used to better society. These ideas align with *learning to be* and *live together* education ideals (Delors, 1996). Thus, collective capabilities for creating social change and reform fit with Dewey's (1897) remark in *My Pedagogic Creed* that "the only way to make the child conscious of his [sic] social heritage is to enable him to perform those fundamental types of activity which make civilization what it is" (p. 90). The findings in this research signal a curriculum emphasis on individual ways of *learning to know* and *do* e.g., key competencies, for the children, were for setting and achieving goals independently, or "for better grades".

Dewey (2008) opposed competitive individualism and did not promote a desire for high grades, as these equated with limiting the growth of children's social capabilities. Furthermore, he chastised the promotion of "sharps", those who would use egotistical skills for personal advantage over others. Instead, Dewey promoted co-operative classrooms, a reflection of "genuine community" based on an inborn need for mutual companionship, because children are "naturally sociable" (Dewey, 1948, p. 61). Key competencies with an over-emphasis on the individual can minimise the social or collective underpinnings of curriculum, or the *learning to be* or *live together* education ideals for children.

### *Community*

In *Public and its Problems*, Dewey (2003) posited that "community" – as another word for democracy – allows conjoint communication opportunities for people to join with others on common projects (p. 48). His idea of community is consistent with the principles of the *learning to be* and *live together* pillars, e.g., social co-operative capabilities, an appreciation of diversity, and understanding of others through dialogue. For Dewey, conjoint communication is a powerful means of achieving community or social co-operative goals. In terms of this research, Dewey's ideas of community and democracy align with collective education ideals or the *learning to live together* pillar in curriculum. That is, children can learn moral capabilities, which are closely linked to democratic ideals, such as co-operation, tolerance and open-mindedness. Dewey viewed morality as being closely linked to group co-operation stating, "modern nation states have maintained a frontier conception of individualism, a self-centredness" (Fishman & McCarthy, p. 52). Hence, Dewey urged that our most pressing concern is not the "wilderness frontier", but human relations or the "social frontier" (p. 221). The social frontier notion aligns with the *learning to be* and *live together* pillars for informing and reshaping curriculum for children. Dewey's (2008) belief in "conjoint communicated experience" (p. 44), emphasised in

co-operative classrooms, advocates “[a] genuine community life has its ground in this natural sociability” (Dewey, 1948, p. 61).

In Dewey’s terms, being part of a genuine community *is* both individualistic and communitarian (i.e., there are shared purposes). Dewey’s ideas of community and democratic societies mirrored close-knit families. His dynamic view of democracy also looked beyond mere tolerance of difference, to a functional view of democracy that was open to interaction within and across diverse groups (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998, p. 62). He maintained that children needed to genuinely learn about the plurality of groups in society and democratic notions such as liberty and equality (e.g., capabilities to work in groups on collective tasks). From this point, Dewey did not advocate that collective or conjoint learning activity necessarily suppresses individual capabilities development. Dewey was not content with meritocratic systems of learning where one, more capable, person took advantage over another.

#### *Individual and collective*

Dewey (1948) persisted to reconcile several dualisms for he was critical of “either-or” choices. He stated, “Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites” (p. 1). Dewey’s underlying strategy of locating and integrating two opposing forces included how people co-operate with each other, or have a mutual dependence (e.g., individual and group). A Deweyan analysis would recognise the long-existing tension between individual and group, and attempt to resolve apparent contradictions (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998). Such an analysis would argue that the individual and group condition each other, at the same time as they are dependent on each other (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998, p. 16). Dewey (2008) illustrated that, in our quest to resolve dualisms such as individual and group, we find other dualisms “nested” within concentric circles. The experience of inquiry can be likened to “going around in circles” in a world of interacting processes, for example, talk about education leads us to politics, or talk about knowledge leads to social class (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998). Hence, when faced with these human realities, a Deweyan approach would be to explore and reconcile the dichotomous activities (p. 17).

#### *Summary*

Dewey has been heavily criticised for over-emphasising both individual and collective educational ideals (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998, p. 60). Regardless though, Dewey’s education ideals for children and teachers are far from permissive. Dewey exercised high expectations for the educational experience for both child and teacher. The two elements of Dewey’s educational ideals – the development of moral character traits, and conjoint communicated experience – align with social co-operative capabilities in this research. These capabilities fit with collective

aims in curriculum, rather than KCs for market-driven purposes. The fulfillment of these aims depends though on the translation between the ideal education and the received curriculum, i.e., *The New Zealand Curriculum*. (The ideal cannot be the unchecked acceptance of knowledge that serves market-driven ends.) Dewey insisted schools be places of growth – consistent with Delors’ (1996) ideals about *learning to be* and *live together*. Rather than impressing dominant knowledge upon children, school should be a place where “education means the creation of a discriminating mind, a mind that prefers to not dupe itself or to be the dupe of others...” (Dewey, 1922, cited in Kincheloe & Weil, 2001, p. 719).

In relation to this research, key competencies that emphasise individual success and future employment are not consistent with Dewey’s collective ideals (social co-operative capabilities and conjoint experience). Similarities from Dewey’s early 20th century collective education ideals can be made with Paulo Freire’s education ideals which emerged in the latter part of the 20th century.

In section two of this part one, there follows a discussion of an ideal education, employing ideas from Paulo Freire’s philosophy of education. Freire’s ‘banking concept’ (traditional education and transmission of dominant knowledge), passive learning (*corpo consciente*) and critical consciousness (*conscientizacao*) can be paralleled with the above discussion on Dewey’s ideals, that education should be about the creation of a discriminating, not closed, mind, and the development of social co-operative capabilities which lead to ‘growth’.

## **Section two:**

### **The ideal education narrative: Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire’s writings highlight the tension between individualism, *learning to know* or, *do* and collectivism, *learning to be* and *live together*. Children’s voice and collective agency emphasise *learning to be* and *live together* capabilities in curriculum, and align with two of Freire’s education ideas about learning. These are a rejection of knowledge transmission that is passive learning – *corpo consciente* in contrast to developing children’s critical consciousness – *conscientizacao*. Like Dewey’s, Freire’s ideas can be viewed as emphasising social co-operative capabilities in curriculum, requisites for engaging in a social democratic society.

#### *Banking traditional knowledge*

Central to Freire’s theories is a concern for emancipatory education, to overcome the ‘oppression’ of ‘knowledge transmission’, or the ‘banking’ of dominant knowledge. Oppression,

according to Freirean theory, is any educational activity that seeks to suppress or disrupt educational equality (Galloway, 2012). Freire believed that traditional education is a flawed concept – an oppressive disorder of “narration sickness” (delivered by the teacher) within the classroom (Freire, 2000, p. 71). The oppression takes the form of knowledge transmission, defined by Freire as the “banking concept” of education that suppresses intellectual growth. The assumption is based on a view of the child as a “receptor” or collector of knowledge (Freire, 2000, p. 70). The child receives “deposits” of knowledge as the “empty account”. The teacher assumes the role of “depositor” of knowledge. A continued flaw is the view of the child, as “object” not subject. The “act of depositing” attempts to control the child’s thinking and action, thereby inhibiting his/her critical consciousness capability for engaging in the world (Freire, 2000, p. 77).

In relation to the research, a narrow form of knowledge transmission would be the ‘depositing’ of key competencies for individual and future employment purposes, which arguably, is neglectful of developing collective capabilities in the curriculum. This depositing is not consciously done by teachers; rather the process is likely to be hegemonic. Knowledge transmission or depositing knowledge can also be likened to emphasising *learning to know* and *do* capabilities in the curriculum.

The role of teachers as ‘depositors’ of knowledge, and children as ‘receptors’, can enforce a rift in the relationship between teacher and child – education can become “completely alien to the existential experience of the students” (Freire, 2000, p. 70). A Freirean analysis of traditional knowledge is fundamentally narrative in character with the teacher’s role as “narrator” whose task is to “fill the students the contents of his narration” (Freire, 2000, p. 70). Transmission or banking of dominant knowledge oppresses the child who becomes consciously dependent on the teacher. Thus the method of depositing knowledge becomes, as Freire’s states, one of ‘dehumanisation’. We ‘dehumanise’ others when we actively inhibit relationships through oppressive practices. For example, the child becomes the ‘oppressed’ when not encouraged to think critically or interact with the teacher, who can become the “oppressor”. Hence, the concept of ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ refer to two positions within an unjust society. In terms of teaching and learning, power resides with the oppressor – the one who transmits the dominant knowledge.

In contrast, ‘humanisation’ is an ontological process of becoming fully human through critical thinking and communication – dialogical practice (Roberts, 2008). This is not an abstract individual process – but a social one; we do so through our relationships with one another as we

develop our thoughts, feelings and decisions (Roberts, 2008). Freire's epistemology or conception of knowing is both socially inclusive and practical, because the way we think, feel and act is shaped by our everyday reality. From a Freirean perspective, knowing involves the collective; we use capabilities of 'critical consciousness' with openness to listening and learning from others. This condition is dependent on character traits such as open-mindedness, empathy and co-operation – the *learning to be and live together* capabilities.

In relation to the research, key competencies that emphasise individual success and future employment for market-driven purposes, arguably, are a form of dehumanisation when collective capabilities are neglected in curriculum.

Freire conceived the idea of 'liberation' as continuous reflective, transformative action and engagement with others (a collective undertaking) (Roberts, 2008a). Banking dominant knowledge though, suppresses dialogue, leading to a dichotomy between self and the world. From this point, the child cannot be liberated to act upon his or his world. The child's education becomes one of dependence, not freedom. Choices about engaging in the world will be based on whatever dominant source of knowledge has been transmitted.

In relation to the research, the dominant source of knowledge about the key competencies appears to emphasise individual success and future employment purposes. Freire maintained that the "oppressed" person must play a part in her/his "liberation". The person should ideally experience a democratic education system that reverses the role of silenced "spectator" in the world to an active "re-creator" with other people (Freire, 2000, p. 75). To be a mere 'spectator' in one's education was defined by Freire as *corpo consciente* – absent of critical voice and agency (p. 75).

#### *Critical consciousness capabilities*

Freire argued that curriculum and educational experience needs to disrupt the 'oppressed' from their 'culture of silence' and being *corpo consciente* (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Hence, Freire referred to developing the person's critical consciousness capabilities – their 'conscientisation'. People must have an awareness of their reality in order to examine and challenge it, thereby deepening their understanding and place in the social world. This idea of conscientisation is similar to that of Dewey's notion of educational 'growth'. Additionally, the idea of conscientisation aligns with *learning to be and live together* ideals in the curriculum.

Coupled with Freire's notion of conscientisation is that of 'praxis'; both ideas interact together. The idea of praxis is action – reflection and dialogue. The idea of praxis subsumes the values of active listening, caring and co-operation. Freire argued that these values are an inherent part of collective activity, exercised in a person's environment in order to transform it – this is critical reflection and action. This is in contrast to knowledge transmission, a process that assumes the child inactive and incapable. Instead, Freire's conscientisation and praxis posit the child as dialogically active and capable in the environment (i.e., they have voice and agency). Hence, the view of the child shifts from one of "docile listener" to that of "critical co-investigator" (Freire, 2000, p. 81). The individual is engaged in dialogical action with the collective. In relation to the research though, children's knowledge and experience of the key competencies emphasised individual success and future employment, rather than capabilities for collective dialogue and activity.

Transmission of knowledge about KCs that emphasises individual success and future employment, arguably, parallels a fixed and traditional curriculum – more about *learning to do* and *learning to know* purposes. Freire (2000) asserted, that traditional education was the depositing of prescriptive knowledge through and regimented practice. Additionally, Freire (1970) asserted that the "oppressor" or educator needs to re-examine praxis, for "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (p. 60).

### *Critical consciousness and problem-posing*

In Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998) he advocates an education ideal that empowers the individual to critique, challenge and engage in dialogue as a member of the collective, to oppose those who seek to control and determine their future. This ideal is consistent with emphasising co-operative capabilities in curriculum, referred to in the research. Freire's central tenet of 'education is freedom' means the child needs to be able to reflect on her/his reality and transform it. The negative, suppressed self-image of the child within a culture of 'silence' is transformed when the teacher cultivates a culture of 'critical consciousness'. Freire prompts us to either reject the role of passive recipient of knowledge, or to engage in a 'problem-posing' approach where we link knowledge to action in collective activity.

Freire believed passive learning frustrated true consciousness or imagination, similar to that of Dewey's "mental truancy". To counter a system of oppression and passivity, Freire's posits a more liberating educational practice of "problem-posing" as collective activity (Freire, 2000, p. 79). His alternative engages both teacher and child dialogically thus "liberating education consists of acts of cognition not transfers of information" (p. 79). However, contrived



‘problem-posing’ does not necessarily produce child agency, especially if the teacher continues to deposit what is perceived as the ‘right knowledge’. The outcome, Freire says, is the absence of consciousness or ‘liberation’ in the thinking process. Freire rejected dominant ‘*communiqués*’, instead, in its place there should be collective capabilities such as conversation, questioning, sharing, co-operation, with the intent to make a difference on the world. In relation to the research, Freire’s ideas about co-operation, caring and dialogue are similar to Dewey’s ideas, emphasising community and collective capabilities in the curriculum. The idea of community as a consequence is enhanced when people gain knowledge and understanding from each other. Freire argued for a need for ‘unity in diversity’ where collective difference is viewed as a “source of strength rather than divisiveness” (Roberts, 2008a, p. 85). The idea of unity in diversity aligns with *learning to be* and *live together* – collective education ideals. Collective ideas in curriculum and critical thinking capabilities presuppose a shift in power from both teacher and child (Freire, 2000).

#### *Power (im)balance*

Traditionally a power imbalance structure exists in the classroom because authority has always resided with the teacher as the ‘teller’ or depositor of knowledge. Instead of a culture of telling, Freire highlights one of questioning which emphasises critical problem-posing capabilities applied in collective activities. As Freire highlights, this is a “radical pedagogy of questioning”, a democratic form of interaction that conflicts with traditional education (Freire & Faundez, 1989, cited in Shyman, 2011, p. 1039). Furthermore, such an approach enables people to use “their power to think critically about *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (Freire, 2000, p. 83). Hence, critical thinking, collective dialogue and co-operation are characteristic of democratic education ideals, in contrast to the “power-powerless” and “knower-ignorant” view of the teacher–child relationship (Shyman, 2011, p. 1039). Similarly, Dewey contends that the teacher reverts from “high magistrate” to “co-partner...in common enterprise” with children (Dewey, 1934, p. 10, cited in Shyman, 2011). Both teacher and child are empowered to imagine and act upon their world through collective inquiry (Freire, 2000s). This condition of course is also dependent on the relationship between teacher and child, and whether the teacher is comfortable to relinquish power through Freire’s collective idea of problem-posing.

### *Politics and education*

Freire reminds us that tomorrow's child is a product of today's education. We are cautioned that education is a political act and cannot be divorced from education. By applying critical pedagogy, teachers can be aware of the politics of education or the 'what' and 'how' in which children are taught – vulnerable to political agendas (Kincheloe, 2008). Politics and education tensions are evident in teacher–child and teacher–teacher relationships, the school community context, teaching methods, assessments, available funding and resources. Therefore, there are no quick fixes to education tensions or “rapid neat answers to problems” (Roberts, 2008b, p. 105).

Freire (2000) continued to believe that education could and should alter the conditions of social and economic hardship in the world; he knew that problems were not easily resolved by quick fixes (p. 105). Freire did not believe in one perfect teaching method for all children in all contexts – no single method or set of quick fixes. To teach and change lives is a significant responsibility in the child's development as a human being. Therefore, he argued that teaching and learning is never just about skills and methods, education is never non-neutral; on the contrary, it is political and ethical. Freire was particular regarding how teachers perceived their position – they may exercise influence but should not be overpowering. The teacher must be prepared to be part of a genuine and ethical process with children.

For example, unethical education would be the transmission of dominant knowledge or political ideology – an idea similar to Dewey's 'mis-education' of children. Teachers need strong curriculum knowledge while, at the same time, being discerning of classroom practice in an ethical sense (i.e., promoting dialogue, co-operation, care, critical thinking). Freire (1997) emphasised the inclusion of ethical capabilities in education because these “...requirements are becoming more and more critical in a world that is becoming less and less ethical” (cited in Roberts, 2008b, p. 103).

### *Key competencies translated as market-driven ideals*

In relation to the research, the market view of key competencies shared by the children is, arguably, the result of the unethical marketisation of education. Too much emphasis appears to be being placed on future employment in a global workforce (Gautreaux, 2015, p. 3). Freire explicitly rejected the marketisation of education, stating it as pragmatic, fatalistic and deterministic (Roberts, 2008b). The marketisation of education, according to Freire, is a meritocratic view of education based on competitive ability – accepting of inequality among diverse groups as inevitable. A competitive education ideal emphasises extreme competition and

individual success (Gautreaux, 2015). One either takes advantage of opportunities over others, or fails to compete (Roberts, 2008b).

Thus, in a marketised world, the individual gets what he/she deserves – competition is the ideal, rather than ideals of co-operation and community in the curriculum. According to Freire though, competition as an education ideal is flawed. If education is a commodity traded in the market, sold by providers (schools) and bought by consumers (parents) who are motivated by self-interest, then education becomes a private benefit (access for some, rather than all, is acceptable) (Giroux, 2013; Roberts, 2008b). Freire maintained that education is a more dynamic and ethical process and from this stance, cannot be limited to bargaining activity: a market-driven view of education is dehumanising for both teacher and child (Roberts, 2008b).

Freire's view of education was not confined to the individual but espoused inclusive value for all in society. In *Mentoring the Mentor* Freire (1997) stated, “When one accepts the role of being a mere dispenser of knowledge along the lines of the market requirements that view students as mere consumers of knowledge, one becomes entrapped in the very ideological manipulation that denies one the possibility to articulate his or her world as a subject of history and not as a mere object to be consumed and discarded” (p. 315, cited in Roberts, 2008b, p. 104).

Freire's multiple posthumous publications such as *Ideology Matters* (2000) highlight that, even in his later years, Freire remained deeply concerned about the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology – the treating of education as a commodity (Roberts, 2008b, p, 103). Freire rejected the fatalism and determinism of neoliberal ideology and what he described as its perverse ethics.

Consequently he remained passionate for an imagined world “more beautiful, less ugly, less discriminatory, more democratic, less dehumanizing and more humane” entering the 21st century (Freire & Macedo, 2000, p. 26).

To end part one, the following section three draws parallels between the democratic education ideals of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, and makes links with the research findings.

### **Section three:**

#### **Similarities between the education ideals of John Dewey and Paulo Freire**

Both Freire's and Dewey's ideas about curriculum and the child are relevant in today's changing and challenging educational landscape. While Freire and Dewey theorised education in different times and in different cultures (Shyman, 2011), the borrowing of some of their ideas helps to re-contextualise the place and purpose of the key competencies in the curriculum. Both educators

saw the importance of curriculum that enabled children to put into practice their co-operative capabilities in collective settings, because “democratic culture and democratic politics are facilitated in the process of democratic education (Feinberg & Torres, 2001, cited in Shyman, 2011, p. 1036).

#### *The individual is part of the collective*

As already indicated, a similarity can be drawn between Dewey and Freire’s ideas about the mutuality between the individual and collective (Shyman, 2011). Both educators indicated that the individual cannot exist in separation from the collective. In relation to the research, key competencies appear to have been adopted by the children for both individual and collective purposes, e.g., the children talked about “getting along”, “showing empathy” and “helping others”. Freire did not perceive the individual’s education was experienced in separation from the social setting, where interaction and communication are important (Shyman, 2011). Rather the individual, as part of the collective, makes specific use of interactive dialogue as a transformative education tool (Shyman, 2011). Dewey similarly believed the individual experienced educational growth through collective or communal processes of conjoint inquiry (Shyman, 2011). Thus, the individual is a meaningful part of the collective, and the collective has no meaning apart from the individual.

From these two perspectives then, it can be argued that the theories of both Dewey and Freire converge, as they argued for critical education through social co-operative activity: community. The idea of community highlights that people can rely on each other – for individual and societal betterment, and ultimately, for political justice (Shyman, 2011, p. 1045). In relation to the research, although the children’s KCs were adopted in communal processes, their overall emphasis was on individual success.

#### *Co-operative capabilities and democracy*

Dewey and Freire both theorized on the complex issue of democracy and education (equality and fairness – *learning to be and live together* capabilities). Both theorists shared similar ideas about fostering children’s democratic capabilities of curiosity and genuine co-operation. Such capabilities would be needed by children and later as adults, to actively contribute to democracy and transform their worlds. Democracy and education require mutual communication as Dewey (2008) explained, or the ability of individuals dialoguing with, not past, each other. This statement is similar to Freire’s (2000) affirmation that the “world and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction” (p. 50).

The research findings highlight that the children felt that good learning was mainly about individual accountability and productivity, rather than co-operative ways of dialogue and interaction. Based on the children's views and experiences of the key competencies, individual success and future employment were prioritised – *learning to do* and *know* capabilities in curriculum.

## Summary

In summary, there are four concepts that parallel Dewey and Freire's philosophies, and are relevant to the research findings. The first two are Dewey's concept of 'mis-education' and Freire's banking concept, '*corpo consciente*'. Both concepts highlight a rejection of passive learning and a disdain of the banking of predetermined knowledge (i.e., traditional view of education). In terms of the research, the children's adoption of key competencies for market-driven purposes can be seen as a mis-education of the child, and being the result of a narrow or pre-determined view of the curriculum, emphasising *learning to do* and *know* capabilities. The second two concepts are Dewey's 'growth' – dialogue and community, and Freire's concept of critical consciousness – *conscientizacao*. In relation to the research findings, these concepts highlight the need for more collective (social democratic) education ideals for the child and curriculum, with an emphasis on the *learning to be* and *live together* pillars in education. Both philosophers of education insisted on renewed ways of thinking critically and inclusively about the child and curriculum – they advocated an informed view of democratic responsibility (Shyman, 2011, p. 1036). Freire and Dewey argued that education should not favour a privileged few, but be of vital social democratic responsibility and benefit for all.

An underlying concern about a market-driven adoption of key competencies arguably, is that collective (social democratic) capabilities of *learning to be* and *live together* – necessary for a 'decent life' – become less emphasised in the curriculum. Instead, the curriculum departs from collective (social democratic) ideals when key competencies emphasise *learning to do* and *learning to know* capabilities. These two pillars can destabilise collective (social democratic) ideals in the curriculum as they become reshaped for individual success and future employment. The rationale for this reshaping would align with market-driven principles underpinning the KCs that emphasise competing for a 'successful life' (Hoskins, 2008; Lozano et al., 2012; Rychen, & Salganik, 2003).

In part two, the discussion will turn from philosophies of education to the extreme individualistic ideology of the 21st century: neoliberalism. To understand how the children's views of the KCs

for individual success and for future employment purposes have come about, key global issues shaping the pillars of neoliberalism will be described and discussed. It is argued that the impact of neoliberal educational reform on national policy in the past 30 years has led the destabilisation of, and departure from, collective education ideals in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Over time, the ‘pillars’ of progressive curriculum (social democratic ideals), long held in Aotearoa New Zealand, have been destabilised by neoliberal ideology that emphasises individualism and market-driven education ideals (Codd, 2005; Codd & Openshaw, 2005). A departure from collective (social democratic) curriculum ideals, such as those espoused by Dewey and Freire in part one above, can be attributed to aspects of globalisation, including and the ascendancy of neoliberalism with its market-driven ‘pillars’ strongly influencing education reform and national policy in New Zealand (Brown & Lauder, 1997; Codd, 2002; Codd, 2005; Dale, 2008; Gautreaux, 2015; Thrupp, 1999). The research findings highlight that market-driven ideals have come to be exemplified in the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

## **Part Two: A Departure from Collective Education Ideals in Curriculum**

### **New destinations of *learning to know* and *do* – the pillars of neoliberalism**

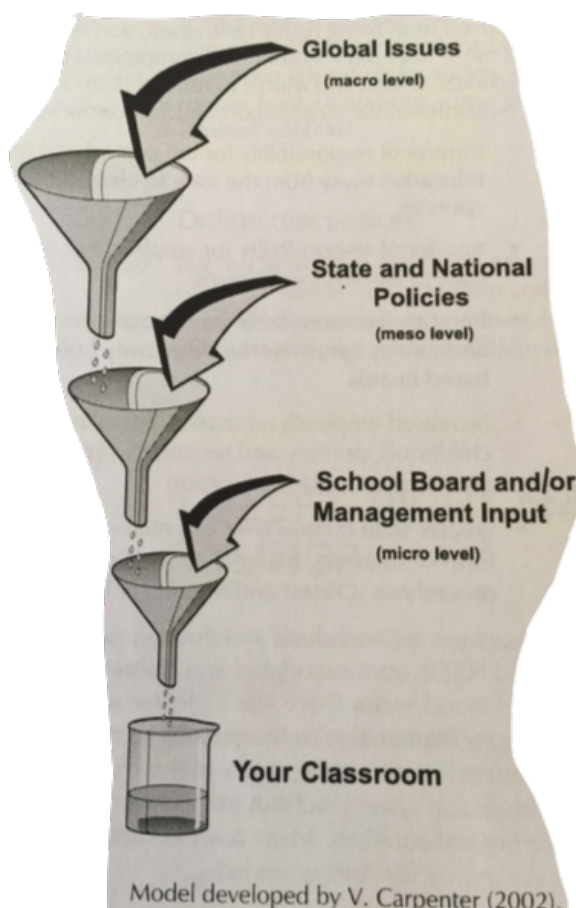
Delors’ (1996) pillars of *learning to know* and *learning to do* were earlier linked to KCs, adopted for individual success and future employment purposes. The two pillars of *learning to know* and *learning to do*, along with the two purposes of KCs highlighted in the research, are consistent with educational ideals for a ‘successful life’ (Lozano et al., 2012; Rychen & Salganik, 2003). In contrast, the research findings highlighted KCs for a ‘decent life’ – the *learning to be* and *learning to live together* pillars, were less emphasised (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 220, cited in, Lozano et al, 2012, p. 138; Rychen & Salganik, 2003). The changing purpose of curriculum to emphasise the *learning to do* and *learning to know* pillars can be associated with the growing impetus of globalisation, and the marketisation of education. Dale (2008) refers to the changing purpose of curriculum as a ‘re-shaping’ of curriculum:

One major consequence of these changes for the relationship between globalization and curriculum is that the issue is becoming not so much one of ‘updating’ the contents of the curriculum as container, but one where the very *shape* of the container, and its *place* in the processes of education, are undergoing significant change. (p. 23)

Why is it that the children’s adoption of the key competencies is future-focused and reflects market-driven purposes? What is causing the ‘re-shaping’ of the curriculum to emphasise knowledge for future employment? It is suggested that globalisation and the ‘pillars’ of

neoliberalism (marketisation of education, and individual self-interest) have impacted education reform and national policy, causing a re-shaping of curriculum (Dale, 2008). Arguably, the two future-focused purposes of key competencies highlighted by children in the research – individual success and future employment – can partially be attributed to neoliberal ideology impacting school curriculum policy and practice.

The next section provides an outline of globalisation and neoliberalism, in the international and national contexts. Carpenter’s (2002) policies ‘funnel’ model provides educators and principals such as myself with a conceptual view of how global issues occurring on an international context (macro level) eventually filter into the national context of curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand (meso level) (Figure 4 below). What does globalisation have to do with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the key competencies in school classrooms?



Source: (Carpenter, 2002)

#### Figure 4: Policies Funnel Model

It would be a misconception to assume that what happens to curriculum in the classroom is solely the domain of teachers (Carpenter, 2002). Politics of education exists at all levels –

international, national, and within education systems (Carpenter, 2001). In our national context, in the past 30 years, our education system has been impacted by some tenets of globalisation such as market-driven national policy and reform which can be linked to key competencies for individual success and future employment (Brown & Lauder, 1997; Codd, 2002; Dale, 2008; Robertson & Dale, 2002). These outcomes have influenced curriculum; what children need to learn and what teachers have to teach according to the state's national education policy, i.e., key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

A brief overview of global issues will be provided before linking New Zealand's 'radical experiment' in economic restructuring and education reform during the 1980s and 1990s with a contemporary phase of globalisation – neoliberal globalisation (Dale, 2008; Kelsey, 1997; Robertson & Dale, 2002).

The processes of globalisation have filtered across international borders, influencing education needs and impacting education systems in both developing and developed nation states (Al'Abri, 2011; Dale, 2008). Defining and understanding the processes of globalization are very dependent on a person's worldview and how those views are interpreted (Robertson et al., 2007).

Globalisation can be interpreted as being good or bad by different groups of people in society – it has both “strong advocates” and “strong opponents” (Codd, 2002, p. 2). According to Dale (2008), “globalization is not a single, homogenous phenomenon... [it] is both new and different, and it varies in its character” (p. 26). Consequently, globalisation has been the subject of much debate across disciplines, with a strong impetus of academic literature to interrogate its forms (Codd, 2002; Robertson et al., 2007).

Globalization takes on three main inter-related forms, i.e., economic, political, and cultural (Codd, 2002; Robertson et al., 2007). Processes of economic globalisation focus on the accumulation of capital: the “free flow of goods, services, investments, labour, and information across national borders (Codd, 2002, p. 2).

The world market exploits of early mobile organisations (e.g., the Dutch East India Company, colonial groups) have been adopted and improved on by a contemporary version (Merrifield & Duty, 2008, p. 4). Today's versions are mobile organisations or 'transnational corporations' with financial power and now a central vehicle for the accumulation of global profit, e.g., International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and share markets (Codd, 2002, p. 2).



At a macro level, decisions made by contemporary transnationals or international agents now have the potential to affect societies and the quality of life on the other side of the world (Merrifield & Duty, 2008, p. 5). For example, global issues are affecting societies on economic, political and cultural levels: access to food, petroleum, money loans, production of services and goods. Further global issues in contemporary times include the exploitation of human rights, the environment, water crises, financial crises, illegal activity, poverty, conflict, as well as education policy reform (Robertson et al., 2007). In consideration of social justice issues, it is worth considering the ways in which curriculum can help young people front the demands of such diverse, complex and challenging situations.

A second form of globalisation is cultural – processes which focus on the expansion of Western culture or cultural ‘sameness’, promoting values of consumerism, standardisation and profit (Codd, 2002, p. 3). Early processes of economic and cultural globalisation, such as market exploits, have their origins hundreds of years ago, as “local borrowing and adapting of ideas language, foods, textiles, technologies and other products [which] gradually gave way to regional inter-connectedness through trade, conquest and cultural diffusion” (Merrifield & Duty, 2008, p. 4). Cultural globalisation can be viewed as the world becoming more like a small village – a borderless global village where time and space have been compressed through the facilitation of new technologies a form of complex connectivity (Merrifield & Duty, 2008).

While time and distance are factors of globalisation, the rapidity of global change becomes easier with the explosion of information (e.g., the Internet) and the intensification of digital technologies (Codd, 2002, p. 3). With global interconnectivity comes other issues – there is a continuum of unequal effects on groups of people in society – not everyone is benefitting, and the interests of only some groups in society are being served: “The information age, knowledge economy and digital technologies have added new layers of inequities within and across communities, nation-states, and regions” (Merrifield & Duty, 2008, p. 13).

The third form of globalisation is political – processes that focus on accumulation of capital and production of knowledge that “serve the interests of those who globalize” indicative of the ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ (Codd, 2002, p. 4; Gilbert, 2005). A consequent implication of globalised economies is that “we are witnessing a growing appreciation of knowledge as a core element for competitive advantage” (Castells, 1996, cited in Lozano et al., 2012, p 136). In relation to the research findings, key competencies adopted for individual success and future employment could be viewed as a viable ‘solution’ for the New Zealand education system and its policy makers for the knowledge economy and knowledge society.

Hence, what people need to know and do is no longer assumed to remain within the ‘nation’s borders’, as the economic and political processes of globalisation have altered this assumption (Merrifield & Duty, 2008, p. 14). In terms of education policy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, the ways in which to emphasise the education pillars of *learning to know* and *learning to do* for the nation has become increasingly less found within the nation’s resources of “ideas and discourses, as well as funding and infrastructure” (Dale, 2008, p. 25). To look beyond the nation’s borders – to gain market competitive advantage – it makes ‘common sense’ to adopt key competencies for individual success and future employment. The key competencies are arguably an attractive ideal for education systems, no matter where nations are in the global context.

It is argued that political processes of globalisation are perhaps the most dominant force as the sovereignty of nation-states becomes “radically reduced” and “eroded” (Codd, 2002, p. 4). On a meso or national level, the economic and political processes of globalisation can be considered to have links to the erosion of the collective (social democratic) purpose of curriculum in New Zealand (Codd, 2002, p. 4).

In terms of the research findings, one such critical implication is the erosion of the *learning to be* and *learning to live together* (social democratic) pillars in curriculum, as “full commercialization and commodification of education” becomes emphasised in a contemporary phase of globalization – neoliberalism in the nation state context (Codd, 2002, p. 4).

#### *Meso context: Building pillars of neoliberalism in the education system*

Neoliberalism and its associated political forces such as monetarism, Human Capital Theory (HCT), Public Choice Theory (PCT), Agency Theory (AT) (marketisation and managerialism), abruptly manifested internationally and then in the local nation-state context during the 1980s and 1990s (Codd, 2008). The notion of HCT posits investment in human capital whereby the individual is made better in skills or competencies and knowledge, for the intention of creating maximum return for the state (Brown & Lauder, 1997). HCT advocates an education ‘solution’ that will create a highly skilled and highly waged, ‘magnet economy’ (Brown & Lauder, 1997). HCT and its economic ideals of future prosperity are evident in the discourse of global entities that promote the reduction of trade restrictions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and the World Bank. Derived largely from business models, neoliberalism came to dominate the legislative and educational domains across the education sectors New Zealand (Mutch & Trim, 2013). New Zealand experienced an economic crisis (i.e., declining population, less skilled labour, and increasing debt which decreased international market trade, thereby providing impetus for some form of reform (Kelsey, 1997).

The subsequent sweeping reforms to education policy were posited within the ideological model (with strong market-driven undertones) and political context of neoliberalism (Marshall, 2000). Underpinning this political model was educational reform with an emphasis based on pillars of neoliberalism, e.g., individualism – choice, self-interest, and absolute market freedom. Individualism and a market-driven view of education prevails in neoliberal ideology i.e., marketisation and commodification of education – choice. These pillars of neoliberalism arguably align neatly with an emphasis on the *learning to do* and *learning to know* pillars in education, and also highlighted in this research as KCs adopted for individual success and future employment.

Thus in the 1980s and 1990s, the New Zealand education system underwent significant reform, due to the downturn of the global economy in the 1970s, and the ascendancy of global neoliberalism (Brown & Lauder, 1997). Pillars of neoliberal discourse became a dominating force in decision-making processes across the education sector, not just in the primary schools of New Zealand, but also in the early childhood education context (Mutch & Trim, 2013). These education reforms were applied across the nation's education sectors and were held up by the pillars of neoliberalism such as individualism and market-driven education ideals.

In terms of the research findings, the adoption by children of KCs as being for individual success and future employment aligns with the pillars of neoliberalism. The purpose of education has been transformed into preparing self-interested individuals for the job market (Codd, 2008, p. 16). Somehow, as the research findings demonstrate, children have internalised this message.

## **Neoliberalism and education reform in New Zealand**

### *Education reforms of 1980s and 1990s in a neoliberal context*

From this point, a brief overview of the economic reforms as well as the restructuring of the New Zealand education system will be provided. The neoliberal pillars of individualism and market-driven education ideals in relation to the research, where KCs were adopted for individual success and future employment, are also linked. The Government's pillars of neoliberalism – individualism and market-driven education ideals – have their education policy related beginnings in *The Curriculum Review* (Department of Education, 1987), the *Picot Report* (Department of Education, 1988), *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education, 1988), and the Education Act (1989).

The kind of state governance and economic restructuring of legislation that occurred in New Zealand during the mid-1980s and 1990s, has been described as “far more radical than other democracies (including Britain and the US)” (Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 4). Significant state restructuring occurred in a context of neoliberalism with the election of David Lange and the fourth Labour Government in 1984 (Codd, 2008, p. 15).

Since 1935, social welfare legislation was characteristic of New Zealand Labour Government policies. However, its historical “cradle-to-grave” Keynesian system, typified by social-welfare-based policies, came to an abrupt end in 1984. Market (economic) growth could not be maximised through the continuation of state intervention – it had to be released from its “welfare shackle” (Brown & Lauder, 1997, p. 176). Hence, existing systems (e.g., railways, postal services, health and education) were restructured with the explicit intention of reducing the role of the state from its ‘welfare shackle’ as historical main provider to one of ‘user pays’ (Codd, 2008). All organisations funded by the state, including education were, and are still, impacted by neoliberal reform.

The Government’s neoliberal and economic reasoning for restructuring was to reduce state intervention, and maximise market freedom and efficiency. The state-supported systems were thus minimized or closed down by neoliberal policy reforms, to make way for individual self-interest, choice, freedom, rights, private ownership, market competition, prosperity and efficiency (Codd, 2005).

The resulting impacts of a deregulated global economic environment ultimately led to a shifting of the state’s priorities for the education system, as the existing education system was viewed as an inefficient “drain on the nation’s resources” (Codd, 2002, p. 15). In terms of the education system, new state priorities were built on neoliberal pillars of individual self-interest, choice, freedom and market efficiency. This was in contrast to New Zealand’s historical social democratic pillars for the collective good (Codd, 2008).

### *Education re-shaping in a neoliberal context*

The New Zealand education reforms promoted by the Government in the late 1980s were integral to the political ideology of neoliberalism. Central to the reforms was a new emphasis on individual choice and competition.

Prior to the publication of the various reports and policies, and during the tenure of the Labour Government, the Minister of Education, Russell Marshall, undertook a major curriculum review

process. The community consultation and debate led to the capture of a wide range of voices about the aims of education and the purposes of curriculum in New Zealand (Adams et al., 2000). What culminated was *The Curriculum Review* in 1987 by the then Department of Education. A social democratic collective ideal, such as how school communities could work together, was evident in the *Curriculum Review* (p. 109). Surprisingly, the recommendations from the review were put aside as the Picot Report was to herald education administration reform to schools. The reforms were unprecedented in New Zealand's education history.

In 1987, the Department of Education was dismantled and replaced by the Ministry of Education, with David Lange as self-appointed Minister of Education. Government policy development and education administration reform at the time became a market-driven 'solution' (Jesson, 2001). The Government's neoliberal solution would reduce the demands on the state, reduce public spending, and increase the role of the market. Public deregulation reduced the role of the state. The neoliberal pillars of individualism meant that private enterprise and competition could gain ascendancy.

The *Picot Report* (1988), also known as the watershed *Report of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration*, was highly critical of the education system. It signaled significant changes to education structures, rules and regulations (Adams et al., 2000). The Report's proposals to radically restructure the education system were a market-driven solution, underpinned by public-choice theory that focussed on improving the nation-state's economic growth by reducing spending on education (Codd, 2008, p. 16).

Key aspects of the proposed restructuring were: (1) a decentralised system of self-managing 'units' (schools); (2) transfer of responsibility from the state to elected Boards of Trustees (BoTs); (3) bulk funding for operation and maintenance of each unit, managed by the principal; (4) School Charters – agreements between parents and Boards with responsibilities; (5) a Ministry of Education that (6), replaced the Education Boards positing the contracting of outside providers; (7) review and audit agency establishment (later renamed the Education Review Office (ERO)); (8) community education forums' establishment; (9) and parent advocacy councils (the latter two were eliminated in 1991 by the National Government) (Adams et al., 2000, pp. 151-152).

In 1988, *Tomorrow's Schools* became the mandated solution for the restructuring (governance and management) of New Zealand schools (Codd, 2008). The restructuring solution meant the shifting of responsibility and control from state support to a new form of governance: School

Boards of Trustees (BoTs) (Wylie, 2012). This new form of governance system with principals working with Boards of Trustees to govern and manage schools continues to this day. New Zealand has experienced both a radical and unique form of restructuring and changed governance systems with the introduction of self-managing schools (Robertson & Dale, 2002; Wylie, 2012).

### *Reshaping education – from public to private good?*

The restructuring of the education system under *Tomorrow's Schools* enabled the Government to promote market-driven ideals through the creation of an 'educational market' – a competitive and efficient system of 'providers' (teachers and schools) and 'consumers' (parents free to choose their 'provider') (Codd, 2008, p. 16). Economic growth (market-driven ideals) is a key pillar of neoliberal doctrine to improve the education system (Codd, 2008, p. 16).

This economic rationalisation for devolving state control (or governance) to a local level (meso and micro systems) initiated three 'waves' of education reform (Cheng & Mok, 2008, cited in Mutch & Trim, p. 74). To improve the schooling system, education was to be promoted as a *private good* based on individual consumer choice and competition. This shift conflicted with a previous egalitarian history of education as a *public good* in Aotearoa New Zealand (Jesson, 2001). Before *Tomorrow's Schools*, competition between schools *had* existed, however, "it was not relied upon to improve the system" (Wylie, 2012, p. 105).

An egalitarian history of education as a *public good* in New Zealand changed when the emphasis shifted to education as a *private good*. These concepts are hallmarks of neoliberal thinking that assumes a self-interested individual, hence, education that benefits the individual, will be at a cost to the individual – this is an efficient 'user-pays' system. This neoliberal pillar means education becomes a commodity – an ideal instrument that prepares children for the job market (Codd, 2008). The commodification of education prevails in neoliberal ideology (Codd, 2008). An implication for curriculum is that a market-driven view of education – a 'user pays' system – encourages schools to compete based on the assumption that all individuals operate on self-interest. In relation to the thesis, the research findings highlight that key competencies were adopted for individual success "being self-smart" and for future employment – "to get a good job".

### *The self-interested individual with 'just-for-me' benefits*

This neoliberal position that education is a private benefit – or 'just-for-me' – is a reflection of extreme individualism (Dale, 2008). Individualism or 'just-for-me' education promotes a nation

of productive individuals who compete and work harder because individuals are serving their own interests and needs (Olssen & Morris-Matthews, 1997). Additionally, the neoliberal position “promotes personal responsibility through individual choice within markets. The individual is conceived as an autonomous entrepreneur who can always take care of his or her needs” (Hirsch, 2007, p. 496).

The research findings highlight that children believe that if you are “self-smart”, and work hard, you will “get a good job’ and reap the rewards of individual efforts. The self-management key competency (self-regulation is another hint of neoliberal discourse) also dominated in the children’s views and experiences. Thus, it would make sense to apply neoliberal models of thinking to measure the individual in terms of economic and social success, through the idea of key competencies with market-driven ideals. At its extreme, to shift the emphasis from collective to individual curriculum ideals could drive a model of self-regulation ahead. This drive potentially assumes a competencies or skill-based model of teaching and learning as the curriculum ‘solution’ is to ensure an easier progression of a skilled workforce into a competitive market place.

#### *A highly skilled workforce*

In the early 1990s the National-led Government reflected ‘new right’ ideologies in a new overarching curriculum document – *The Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993). New Right is a market-orientated ideology with a neoliberal enthusiasm for the competitive individualism in a free market – a right to individual freedom, public choice and minimal government (Brown & Lauder, 1997). The New Right adheres to neoliberal economic policies. The New Right is associated with Reaganomics (i.e., United States 1980-1989), Thatcherism (i.e., United Kingdom 1979-1989) and in New Zealand, Rogernomics, i.e., Roger Douglas as Finance Minister in David Lange’s Labour Government 1984-1990 (Codd, 1995).

Neoliberal thinking – individualism, freedom of choice and market-driven ideals seeped their way into this new policy document – *The Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993). Local analysis of the Framework highlights particular discourse tensions between both ‘new right’ and ‘liberal left’ (Mutch, 2003, p. 119).

In relation to the research topic, there were tensions between individualism and collectivism in the new curriculum. However, neoliberal discourse of individualism was evident in its overall purpose of a building a “highly skilled and adaptable work-force” for “tomorrow’s competitive world economy” (MoE, 1993a, pp. 1, 2). Furthermore, the Framework’s inclusion of ‘essential

skills', arguably, would align with the idea of vocationalising the curriculum – the development of tertiary and workplace skills, rather than the 'whole person' (Lozano et al., 2012, p. 136). The education reforms that were to follow throughout the 1990s continued to shift the emphasis away from social democratic or collective education ideals in curriculum.

### *Third way politics of education*

Forward to the 1999 election of the Labour-led Government, and into the 2000s, processes of globalisation and education reform have come to reflect *Third Way* politics (Codd, 2002; Giddens, 1998). Third Way ideology can be viewed “as an alternative both to the neoliberalism of the mid-1980s and to the “old style” socialism of the Keynesian welfare state” (Codd, 2002, p. 1). In the mid-2000s, education policy reform entered another ‘wave’ of development. A shift to emphasise the notion of ‘sustainability’ arose as New Zealand joined other countries to “achieve the status of world class education systems, as judged by their performance” (Mutch & Trim, 2013, p. 83). The notion of ‘sustainability’ can be linked to market-driven notions in the curriculum (discussed in part three of this chapter). Subsequently, *The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for consultation* (Ministry of Education, 2006) was introduced which would later become revised as a new national curriculum for schools – *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007). It is in this policy document that the KCs are first articulated for school curriculum.

### *Summary*

This part two focuses on global issues and neoliberalism impacting education reform and policy decision-making in New Zealand, starting in the 1980s. The New Zealand education system has undergone significant reform in the past 30 years. In the pursuit of an ideal education ‘solution’, diverse and competing voices have arisen which promote particular ideals of society and of the future. From the macro level, the effects of globalisation have filtered down to the micro level – impacting schools, classrooms, teachers and our young people. Political, community, religious and social groups have sought to reshape society and education, according to their own values and beliefs. Thus, New Zealand society and the education system have been reshaped by both the Government, and neoliberal-informed organisations such as the ‘business roundtable’ – political agents serving the interests of multinationals outside the state (Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 467). A consequence of this radical political reform is that the social democratic or collective ideals in education have been moved to the margins. The neoliberal pillars of individualism and market principles have taken prominent place in the reform of education policy. Consequently, a neoliberal discourse of what education is for and about in a contemporary context, and that is



future-focused on market sustainability has filtered into the interpretations or ‘translations’ of curriculum, such as in the KCs.

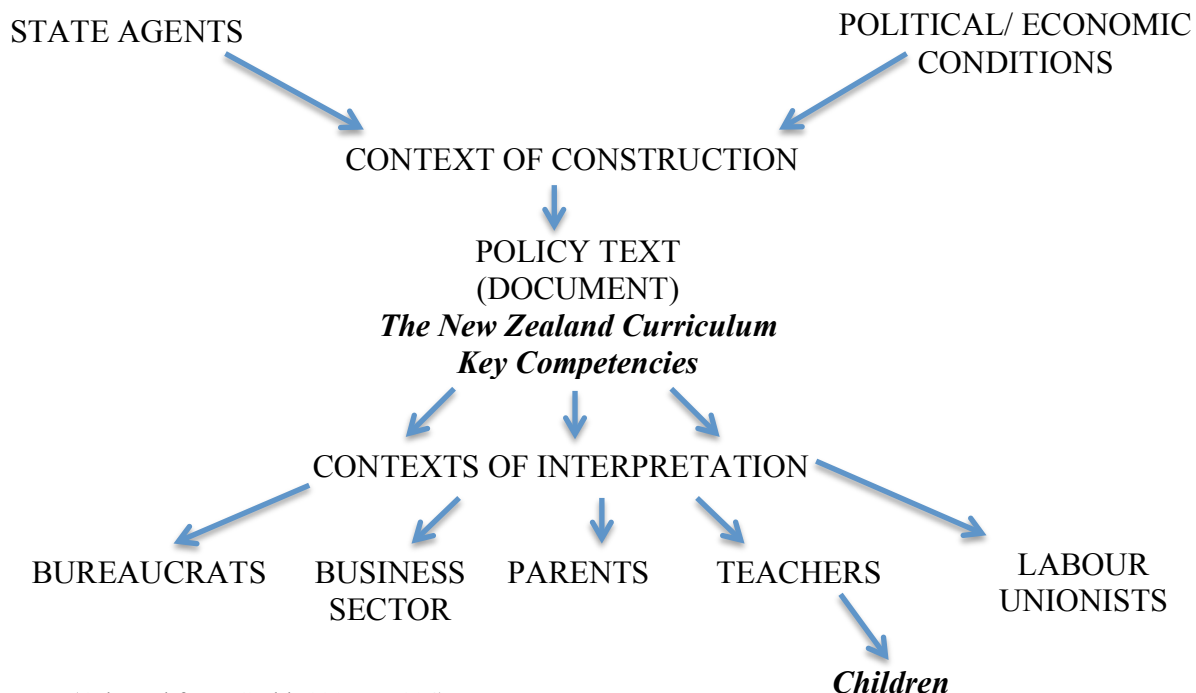
Part three of this chapter moves to investigate how the place and purpose of the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as the received policy text, have come to exemplify neoliberal discourse, i.e., interpreted for individual success and future employment (market-driven ideals). The ascendancy of neoliberalism, described in part two above, has led to a pervading neoliberal discourse in the received policy text (*The New Zealand Curriculum*). An adaption of Codd’s (1995, p. 104) “materialist conception of the policy text” is used to highlight the “context of interpretations” or “translations” of the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Figure 5 below). In relation to this research, it is the children’s ‘translations’ of the key competencies implemented in their school context. The argument that follows is how the social democratic or collective education ideals have been ‘lost in translation’ as a consequence of neoliberal discourse in the policy text, through the ‘contexts of interpretation’, at the children’s level.

### **Part Three: Lost in Translation – Ideal to the Received**

#### **Codd’s Materialist Concept of the Policy Text**

*The New Zealand Curriculum* is the state’s policy text. Agents of the state shape policy texts and other official documents. Often, there are plural authors, usually unidentified, who contribute to the construction of a policy text. The official discourse within the policy text is said to only create meaning for the reader when it is interpreted within a particular social or cultural context (Codd, 1995, p. 103). Thus, interpretations are “not with the mind of an author but with the text and its linguistic structures and meanings. It is the context of interpretation that is crucial, and not the authorial intentions” (Codd, 1995, p. 103).

In the Figure 5 below, the author has made an adaption to Codd’s original (1995) ‘materialist concept of policy text’ (p. 104). Inserted below ‘policy text’ is *The New Zealand Curriculum* as this is the received curriculum for schools and teachers. Within this ‘policy text’ are the key competencies. An additional ‘context of interpretation’ has been inserted to stem from the key competencies in the ‘policy text’ to the ‘teachers’ and then to a further context, that of ‘children’. Context in this sense can refer to how schoolteachers have engaged with the ‘linguistic structures’ – official discourse of the policy text or interpreted and implemented the key competencies. Consequently, children make interpretations of them too.



Source: (Adapted from Codd, 1995, p. 104)

**Figure 5: The ‘Materialist Concept of Policy Text’ (adapted)**

**The ‘received’ policy text – The New Zealand Curriculum (adapted from Codd, 1995)**

The ‘political/economic conditions’ and the ‘state agents’ components in Codd’s (1995) adapted figure above (see inserts highlighted) fit with the earlier discussion in part two of this chapter. That is, the radical education reform and policy decision-making in the in the past 30 years have been politically and economically driven influences in the ‘context of construction’, which has led to different priorities for New Zealand’s education system. As Dewey and Freire espoused, education is a political activity and the education system is an instrument by which a society prepares its young for adulthood (Kelly, 2009, p. 199).

The implementation of the key competencies in the curriculum depends on the ways in which they are interpreted or ‘translated’. Using Codd’s (1995) materialist conception of the policy text, *The New Zealand Curriculum* can be placed under Codd’s (1995) ‘policy text’ heading, as the state’s policy text, with the ‘key competencies’ as a subset. The policy text serves as an instrument that constitutes the official language or dominant discourse of the state. The interpretations or ‘translations’ of the dominant discourse, eventually filter down to become evident in the views and experiences of ‘children’ – a sub-heading inserted under Codd’s (1995) ‘teachers’ heading.

The dominant discourse of *The New Zealand Curriculum* serves a political and economic purpose. Over time, the ascendancy of neoliberalism has influenced the discourse in the ‘context of construction’ of education policies and other official documents. In this thesis, the origins of the pervading discourse in the policy text of *The New Zealand Curriculum* are neoliberal (that stem from the historical ‘contexts of construction’).

In relation to the research findings, further consequences occur in the ‘contexts of interpretations’. What this means is that the school makes interpretations of the key competencies in the curriculum, its teachers in relation to practice, and then the children in relation to their school experiences.

### **Contexts of interpretation – a filtering process**

Contexts of interpretation (of the key competencies) include the school, teachers and children. The schools the children attend are contexts in which the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* are translated. The schools’ translations of the policy text discourse are usually filtered through their review and development of vision, values and localised school-based curriculum. The teachers within the schools have also translated the language of the policy text, including the key competencies, through these processes. The schools’ and teachers’ translations of the policy discourse naturally influence the shaping of the children’s adoptions and interpretations of the key competencies. Those translations filter down to classroom, curriculum-based actions. The children in the research developed their own translations of the key competencies, mainly as viewed and experienced in their classroom curriculum and the culture of their school, but also informed by who they are as young people (their histories and life experiences). The home context, media and peers undoubtedly also influence the children’s views and experiences of the key competencies. The children’s views and experiences of the key competencies are therefore received, but also interpreted and reinterpreted, according to their personal life histories and who they are. Children do have agency, and that agency impacts on how the competencies are, or are not, internalised, and interpreted.

### **Contexts of interpretation – market values located in translations**

What is it that is pervading our New Zealand educational discourse, which leads children to be pre-occupied with being future-focused, economically minded and self-managing individuals? The children’s translations of the key competencies are, to a great extent, the result of a much larger macro influence: the ascendancy of neoliberalism and its subtle hand on the market that has filtered down from policy text to classroom experience. There are a number of language

examples in *The New Zealand Curriculum* that link to the larger macro influence (neoliberal globalisation) and that fit with the place and purpose of competencies to emphasise individual success and future employment. The following section gives consideration to some examples of neoliberal discourse filtering future-focused and market-driven – *learning to do* and *learning to know* education ideals in the translations of the key competencies.

*Policy text discourse – market-driven and future focussed*

The capture of neoliberal or dominant discourse is that the education ideal has become more future-focused, individualistic and to use Dale's (2008) phrase, key competencies are about 'just-for-me'. A schematic overview of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007, p. 7) (see Figure 6 below) is a starting point for considering the official and dominant discourse. The elements in the policy text that carry the dominant discourse related to a future-focused notion of market 'sustainability' in translations of the key competencies for individual success and future can be located in the 'directions of learning': (1) vision; (2) principles; and in (3) the key competencies, as well as in earlier official Ministry of Education documents (already highlighted in the literature review).

## Overview

A schematic view of this document



Source: (MoE, 2007, p. 7)

### Figure 6: A Schematic Overview of The New Zealand Curriculum

#### (1) Vision

Future-focused discourse that influences translations of key competencies for individual success and future employment (global market-driven ideals) are implied in the language of

sustainability in the vision statements (p. 8) such as “enterprising and entrepreneurial” and “international citizens”. A future-focused vision on sustainability arguably aligns with ‘pillars’ of neoliberalism such as the “free market, private enterprise, consumer choice, entrepreneurial initiative...” (Ross & Gibson, cited in Gautreaux, 2015, p. 3).

### (2) Principles

Eight statements make up the principles and these are expected to be consistent with school-based curricula. The eighth statement is devoted to a ‘future-focus’ section and it is inclusive of market language such as ‘sustainability’, ‘enterprise’ and ‘globalisation’.

### (3) Key competencies

The five key competencies are emphasised as important for people to use to “learn, live and work” (p. 12). This future-focused, global market-driven idea of “economizing education” is a continuous thread in the school curriculum design and review section of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ozga, 2000, p. 59). Key competencies are to form the basis across the learning areas, “at all levels”, “for growing [and] working” and in schools’ (MoE, 2007, p. 37). The future-focused language is further articulated as four issues “relevant to students’ futures” emphasising and including ideas of “sustainability” (economic), “enterprise” (innovative and entrepreneurial) and “globalization” (part of a global community) (2007, p. 39).

Further individual success and future employment emphases of *learning to do* and *know* are also reflected to “gain increasing significance for senior school students as they appreciate that these are the values and capabilities they will need as adults for successful living and working and for continued learning” (MoE, 2007, p. 42). Thus, the future-focused idea of KCs traverses the learning pathways, “As students journey from early childhood through secondary school and, in many cases, on to tertiary training or tertiary education in one of its various forms” (p. 41). These market ideas can be associated with preparing young people for the global ‘knowledge society’ (Gilbert, 2005).

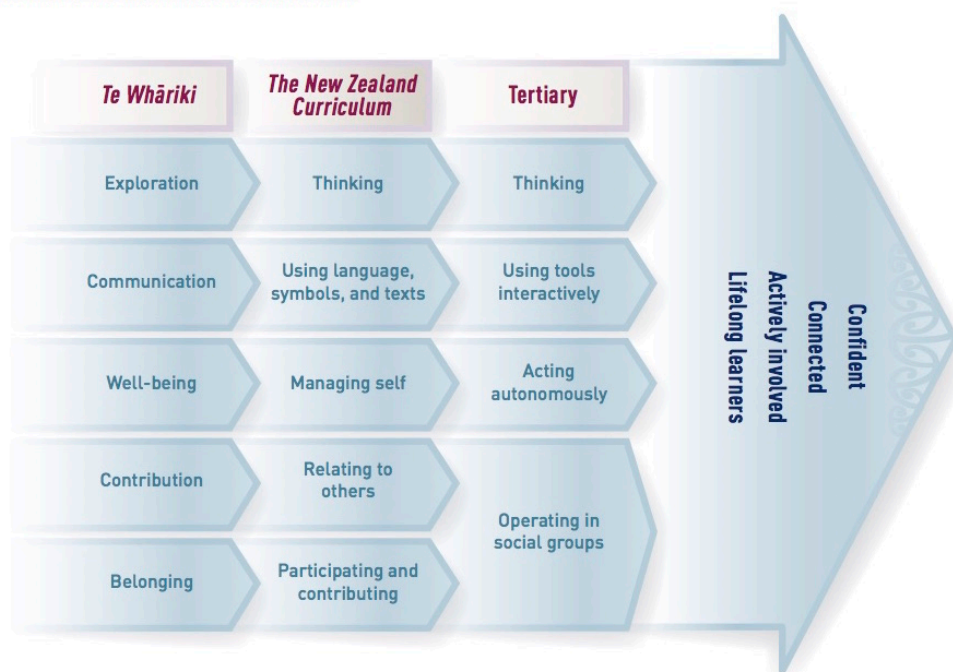
In contrast, the *learning to be* and *live together* or collective ideals can be traced in the values (MoE, 2007, pp. 10-42). For instance, children are to be encouraged to learn about “equity, through fairness and social justice; community and participation for the common good” and develop abilities to “explore, with empathy, the values of others” and “make ethical decisions and act on them” (p. 10). The tension between individual and collective ideals seems apparent with the tandem placement of the values and the key competencies in the learning areas (p. 16), future-focused issues (p. 39), learning pathways (pp. 41, 42).

Why values and key competencies have been reiterated as dual components in the policy text leads back to questions of *what* values and *whose* values have informed curriculum development. In terms of this research, school curriculum is a reflection *of* and dependent *on* the schools’ and teachers’ ‘contexts of interpretations’ of the key competencies. Earlier discussion highlights how dominant ideology (neoliberal discourse) filters down from the macro level to influence the ‘contexts of interpretations’ of schools, teachers and eventually destined for children.

The key competencies seem to be destined as ‘means to ends’ with their place and purpose for ‘tertiary and employment’ and on ‘qualifications’ (MoE, 2007, p. 42). This future-focused market discourse apparently emphasises a *learning to do* and *learning to know* journey. Key competencies for individual success and future employment have been destined for “success at tertiary level” and its course can be seen plotted in *The Key Competencies: Cross Sector Alignment* (p. 42) (see Figure 7 below)

**The key competencies: Cross-sector alignment**

This diagram suggests how the tertiary competencies align with those of *Te Whāriki* and *The New Zealand Curriculum*:



Source: (MoE, 2007, p. 42)

**Figure 7: The Key Competencies: Cross Sector Alignment**

As highlighted in the literature review, key competencies at the tertiary level and the future-focused discourse of economic ‘sustainability’ are clearly evident in the discussion document *Key Competencies in Tertiary Education: Developing a New Zealand Framework* (Ministry of

Education, 2005, p. 4). For instance, strong tones of market-driven ideals are valued to raise New Zealand's position in the 'knowledge society', so that adults can "contribute to national economic and social wellbeing. They will further develop their skills to adapt to changing labour market demands thereby benefiting as individuals and providing our country with a competitive advantage in the global knowledge society" (MoE, 2005, p. 4). Ideals that value the labour market, individual benefits and global competition are further hallmarks of neoliberal discourse in official documents of the state. A market ideal of key competencies implies a common sense vehicle – rather than 'means and ends' but 'means to an end'. The social democratic or collective ideals of *learning to be* and *live together* have a minimised place in the curriculum when the purposes of curriculum have been reshaped.

### *Curriculum – the 'shape of the container' changes*

Using Dale's (2008) phrases about the purposes of curriculum, the discussion about the past three decades highlights that the New Zealand education system has travelled a course of 'just in case' learning to 'just in time' learning and arguably, the education system is now plotting a 'just-for-me' course (p. 21).

It appears the key competencies in the research findings have been translated, for the children participants, into 'just-for-me' education ideals. That is, a 'just-for-me' concept highlighted in the research as two of the sub-themes across the findings – key competencies adopted for individual success and future employment (market-driven purposes). A neoliberal view of education navigates a 'just-for-me' course, positing a competitive individual motivated by self-interest.

Through the filtering process, global imperatives and the associated neoliberal discourse have reached local 'contexts of interpretation': the schools, teachers and children in this research. The key competencies appear to be implicated in the changing of the shape of the social democratic or collective purposes in curriculum. As Dale (2008) highlights, "the issue is becoming not so much one of 'updating' the contents of the curriculum as container, but one where the very *shape* of the container, and its *place* in the processes of education, are undergoing significant change" (p. 20). Key competencies for 'a global knowledge economy' shift and reshape what knowledge is to be valued in curriculum (Dale, 2008, p. 10). Hence, key competencies with market-driven ideals can explain the reshaping from 'just in case' to 'just in time' learning, to emphasise individual success and future employment: 'just for me' in the contemporary New Zealand curriculum context. Subsequently, the social democratic or collective education ideals in the



received curriculum, e.g., equity, diversity, community (p. 7) become lost in translation from ‘context of construction’ to ‘contexts of interpretation’ – national policy to classroom practice.

### *Key competencies and ‘translation’ issues*

Other reasons can be attributed to the less-emphasised translations of social democratic or collective ideals in curriculum. Reid (2006) reasons that key competencies have not been theorised in curriculum terms, and thus they lack a theoretical rationale. Accordingly, two problematic views of key competencies are posited regarding the curriculum. Reid (2006) purports competencies with market-driven values minimise the education of young people, because such assumed values would posit children as servants to the economy. Secondly, key competencies with a strong individualistic or competitive underpinning over-emphasise education as a private, not a public, good. Hence, Reid (2006) argues that a rationale for including key competencies in the curriculum needs to go beyond any market and individualistic underpinning, to one that is based on education ideals of social democracy and social justice.

In contrast, Sen and Nussbaum (cited in Reid, 2006) posit a “capabilities to function” approach which comprise key knowledge, skills and dispositions that would enable young people to exercise collective agency in society (p. 49). An aspiration for the education of young people to exercise collective capabilities in and on the world, in a truly democratic society, would thus go beyond “economic success and social control” purposes in curriculum. A capabilities-based approach is a way to conceptualise equity – it promotes “unity in difference rather than disunity through sameness (Kelly, 1995, p. 110). Rather than a common curriculum for *all* (which has historically favoured or served *some*), a broadly described, competencies-based approach would flexibly and locally encourage children’s agency.

### *Key competencies – a common sense ‘destination’?*

Have key competencies become the vehicle for neoliberal discourse of economic rationalism? There appears to be an unsettling shift from the social democratic collective discourse in curriculum, to a more individualistic type of discourse. The discourse seems so pervasive it is sometimes seen as acceptable, and it is possibly expected. That is, it seems key competencies have become almost common sense, to be adopted for private good, as highlighted in the research for individual success and future employment reasons. The idea of being common sense can be associated with influences of cultural globalization – the dominant ideology creates acceptable standardisation and ‘sameness’ (Codd, 2002). Being the ‘same as everyone else’ is to accept the status quo as common sense without critical thought: ‘that’s just the way it is’. There is no doubt that many educators such as myself want children to have positive and empowering

schooling experiences, and to fulfill their aspirations. Education ideals that emphasise economic sustainability struggle to be inclusive of *learning to be* and *learning to live together* education ideals in the curriculum.

In terms of policy, the ‘story presented’ is based on one that seems to serve the Government’s priorities and interests (Ozga, 2000, p. 102). The policy text ‘story’ is a neoliberal one of ‘economising education’, influencing the discourse of curriculum, and consequently the translations of key competencies in the curriculum (Ozga, 2000, p. 58). An analysis of the discourse in policy texts and official documents discussed thus “reveals the reiteration of phrases and key words that encapsulate policy makers’ assumptions” and in this context, key competencies for market purposes (Ozga, 2000, p.105). In reality, the neoliberal ‘story’ appears to have become common sense.

### *Summary*

In a neoliberal context, the key competencies have become a vehicle or instrument to advantage individual success and future employment. As Dale (2008) states, the ‘shape of the container’ has changed and, in relation to this thesis, that change appears to emphasise key competencies for market-driven purposes. The purpose of curriculum has thus, for the child participants, become less focused on a journey of developing their social democratic capabilities or a stronger sense of collectivity, to one that emphasises a ‘successful life’ destination. This would make sense, with emphasising *learning to do* and *learning to know* capabilities in the curriculum to align neatly with vocation and employment imperatives.

Over time, future-focused, market-driven translations of key competencies in the curriculum are likely to be the result of a neoliberal filtering system that prioritises future-focused economic outcomes. In this way, according to policy makers, New Zealand will achieve a competitive status as a ‘world class education system’ (Olsen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004, p. 137).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this discussion has been to illuminate how the key competencies, for the Year 5 and 6 children in the research, have come to exemplify market-driven ideals, i.e., for individual success and future employment. Although present, the collective education ideals or social democratic underpinnings of key competencies are less emphasised in the children’s views and experiences.

In part one, the education philosophies of Dewey and Freire were used to reassert advantages of progressive education ideals, while also illuminating the concerns underpinning the findings of this thesis: a market-driven view of the key competencies that threaten and minimize the social democratic or collective ideals or the *learning to be* and *live together* pillars in education.

In part two, the discussion focused on the radical changes to the New Zealand's education system in the past 30 years, and the consequences for the contemporary context. It has been argued that the curriculum is at risk of departing from the social democratic or collective goals to 'destinations' that fit a more individual journey. This curriculum departure has been attributed to the ascendancy of neoliberalism with its market-driven pillars that have influenced education reform in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In part three, ideas from Codd's (1995) materialist conception of the policy text were used to highlight how key competencies as a subset in the 'policy text' have led to translations that emphasise individual success and future employment – market ideals of education. It is argued that neoliberal discourse in education policy texts struggles with collective ideals in the 'contexts of interpretations', and a consequence is an emphasis of individual ideals within curriculum. Schools' and teachers' translations of the key competencies in the policy text appears to have led to a curriculum that emphasises individualism: self-management, goal setting and outcomes.

Children's translations of the key competencies, evident in the findings, emphasise individual success and future employment. Children's aspirations are subtly shaped in the context of the school's and teacher's implementation or adoption of key competencies through the school's language and expectations.

The language of education in policy texts has undergone significant transformation, and curriculum been subjected to a process of discourse manipulation when language carries the intended dominant values for a society to embrace (in relation to this thesis, values of neoliberalism) (Kelly, 2009, p. 61). Governments are in pursuit of 'solutions' which reflect political goals and the dominant agenda. These pursuits can be viewed as the 'visions' of educational policy makers (Jesson, 2001). There are subsequent perils in the politics of knowledge for education and society; an ominous process ensues when control is legitimised through dominant discourse. Hence, the dominant group that exists in society, with its associated dominant ideology, controls the distribution of knowledge and determines what knowledge will be available. In terms of this thesis, the dominant story is underpinned by neoliberal ideology;

the education system, through the key competencies and other mechanisms, is the conduit for achieving its goals (Kelly, 2009, p. 47).

All governments have respective political ideologies and goals. Kelly (2009) warns that the indoctrination of education is brought about by one dominant group within society imposing its ideology for political control at the expense of others (p. 46).

Stenhouse (1975) maintained that we must not only critique teacher practice we must also critique the practice of teaching (p. 143). Since Stenhouse (1975) first declared the idea that curriculum development was teacher development, the truism has been rejected for more coercive methods of curriculum development (Kelly, 2004, p. 12). These more coercive methods of curriculum development have taken place among the rhetoric, metaphor and discourse control used by Governments to bring about curriculum change based on their agendas (p. 12) (i.e., macro drivers).

Codd (2002) highlights that neoliberalism in the contemporary context provides strong impetus to inform and regenerate the debate about the challenges originally outlined in the Delors' (1996) Report. Such a debate would be in relation to meeting the needs of the future by New Zealand's education system, and also about the purpose of curriculum (p. 7).

If we recall Delors' Report to UNESCO, *The Treasure Within: A Necessary Utopia* (1996), it appears we have come to a polarisation of two competing ideological positions in contexts of interpretations: Delors' (1996) first two pillars of *learning to know* and *learning to do* struggle with the two other pillars, *learning to be* and *learning to live together*. These two latter pillars of learning would align with what Reid (2006) explains as a socially just or democratic view of interpreting key competencies.

Earlier, in the literature review, we saw that the social and economic challenges for the future of young people were espoused in the OECD publication *Key Competencies for Successful Life and a Well-functioning Society* (Rychen & Salagnik, 2003). A market-driven view of competencies underpinning schools' implementation places an over-emphasis on future employment skills – an education ideal for a 'successful life'. This ideal struggles with developing children's social democratic collective capabilities.

The key competencies seem to have become a balancing act between the individual and the collective, between private benefit and public good. The balancing act is between individual agency or regulation of the individual, and how the individual contributes to the larger group. If

key competencies are translated to focus on the individual, without guiding the individual (where the individual is left unchecked), then how does the individual learn to contribute to the larger group's goals (i.e., social democratic or collective values in curriculum)? With less emphasis on collective ways of learning and critical thinking, there is less emphasis on children's critique or dialogue that invokes ethical questions to help shape their society and future (*learning to be* and *learning to live together* ideals).

The subtle hand of neoliberalism consequently leads to an over-emphasis on the individual, rather than the social democratic goals and a stronger sense of collectivity in curriculum learning (Apple & Beane, 2007; Johnson & Morris, 2010; Lozano et al., 2007).

# CHAPTER 7:

## CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This thesis set out to critically examine the place and purpose of key competencies, for children, in New Zealand's curriculum. This is an important area for investigation because key competencies are a recent 'education ideal' which schools and teachers are expected to work towards. While children's voice is central to the thesis arguments, a wider critical-theory-based lens meant that a deeper analysis of key competencies, their emergence and their espoused purposes, became imperative. The literature review highlighted that the origins and emergence of key competencies were within a backdrop of competition and the free market, with clear links to education policy and wider policy reforms. Key competencies located in education *and* associated with the market, have particular relevance in a climate of continuous 'radical' education policy reform in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This thesis argues that children's views of the key competencies have been influenced by the effects of neoliberal ideology and its market-driven 'education ideals' that emphasise individualism and focus on future employment. Neoliberal 'education ideals' are exemplified in the key competencies in New Zealand's curriculum for young people and children. Neoliberal market effects are a "normalizing and competitive system", designed to emphasise the benefits of the individual rather than the collective (Marginson, 1995, p. 295). These market effects lead to unsettling implications for the social democratic values of collective responsibility for children's curriculum learning; values long held in Aotearoa New Zealand's progressive education system (Codd, 2008, p. 14).

The reshaping of New Zealand's education system to fit the market-driven ideals of individualism and future employment, arguably exemplified in the key competencies, has the potential to destabilise the social democratic collective education ideals which New Zealand education has historically aspired to.

In this thesis the empirical work focused on the voices of primary school children and the ways in which they dealt with, and understood, the key competencies, in their local contexts. The thesis question asked:

**What, for children, is the place and purpose of the key competencies in the curriculum?**

This concluding chapter draws together the main concepts highlighted in the previous chapters, and summarises the key findings. It also describes how this thesis contributes to the knowledge and understanding of key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007), and children's voice in curriculum research (teaching and learning) (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014; Cook-Sather, 2014). The implications of the research findings for education policy and practice for educators and schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are posited. Some reflection is shared on the use of critical theory in the research project. The chapter closes by highlighting the limitations of the research, and shares recommendations for further research.

To set the context of the research was an important first step. As the research was undertaken in New Zealand primary schools, both these and the schools' wider contexts were introduced. A review of relevant literature highlighted education policy and reform in New Zealand, stemming from the 1980s. Attention was drawn to the perspectives and long-standing debates on curriculum. The macro influences for key competencies to become 21st century education ideals were identified; in *The New Zealand Curriculum* they are described as "capabilities for living and life-long learning" (MoE, 2007, pp. 12, 13).

It was helpful to place the macro influences on the impetus for key competencies into a theoretical framework. This framework meant applying a critical lens to the thesis question to identify macro influences filtering into education policy and reform. The underpinning dominant agendas of neoliberal reform in Aotearoa New Zealand were articulated. Use of critical theory enabled some distance and a wider perspective on the research issue under investigation. Using the lens of a critical theorist I was able to ask: 'what is going on here?', 'whose interests are being served?' and importantly, and the heart of this thesis, do such 'interests' (or agendas) serve children? (Gibson, 1986; Kincheloe, 2003, 2007).

To investigate the important issue of key competencies in the curriculum as 21st century 'education ideals' for children, a qualitative methodology with a critical perspective was chosen, including a constructivist interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The children's lived experiences within their natural school settings were researched, the methods aligning with an interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Data were collected by gathering student voice from Years 5 and 6 primary school students; the focus was on their views of key competencies as they experienced in them in their school contexts. To best position the children as active participants to the research process, data-gathering methods that reflected the natural setting of the children were chosen. Student voice

data were collected from semi-structured pair interviews, semi-structured focus group interviews, and classroom observations. Using these methods, the focus was on the views and experiences (and the interpretations of those experiences) generated by the children.

Data analysis used a blended approach, combining Tolich and Davidson's process (2011, p. 198), and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis methods (2006, p. 87). This recursive process derived broad themes from children's voice and my observation notes.

The children's views and experiences about the key competencies, the findings, were presented in two chapters, Chapters 4 and 5. The first, a thematic analysis was presented according to four themes: (1) relevance and ranking; (2) relationships; (3) learning conditions; and (4) class or school culture. Each of the five schools' findings was highlighted, with an overview of school-based curriculum development, along with key extracts from the interview and focus group voice data. Thus data from each set of children, from each of the five schools, was shared to illustrate the four themes. The overarching and key idea from the children was that they had a future-focused mind-set about the key competencies. However, they did see both individual and collective purposes in the curriculum.

The second analysis in Chapter 5, was more conceptual. It employed Delors' (1996) four pillars of learning: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together*. A conceptual model – an *Acceptance/Adoption Continuum* in tandem with Delors' (1996) pillars of learning, was used to highlight an overall 'learning pillar' emphasis regarding the key competencies in the curriculum.

## **Main findings**

To answer the research question in this thesis: What, for children, is the place and purpose of the key competencies in the curriculum?, the following main findings are presented. The main finding is that the Year 5 and 6 primary school children's acceptance and adoption of the key competencies emphasised a future-focused mindset. Children viewed the key competencies for: (1) individual success and (2) future employment (market-driven) purposes. Children also viewed the key competencies as ideals for both collective and individual purposes.

Related to these main findings are others which evolved from my use of a critical theory lens. One is that global imperatives, based on individualism at a macro level, have influenced New Zealand education policy and reform, and also the 'context of construction' of policy text (Brown & Lauder, 1997; Codd, 1995). Neoliberal market-driven ideals of individualism have



filtered down, and are evident in policy text. The policy text in this research is *The New Zealand Curriculum*; the key competencies can be seen as a subset within the policy text. Macro influences have arguably filtered through ‘contexts of interpretation’ at the meso level – schools and classrooms – to influence children’s views and experiences. This highlights a shift from the (albeit largely historical) social democratic collective purposes of curriculum, to place greater and growing emphasis on the market purposes in curriculum.

In the following four sections these findings are examined in greater detail:

**1. The place and purpose of key competencies in the curriculum, for children, is for individual success and future employment – market-driven ideals.**

The children in the research viewed the KCs as all being relevant and important, both in the present and for the future. The children placed high value on the KCs and had adopted them as everyday tools. These tools were becoming readily adopted as ‘common sense’; according to the children they were part of everyday schooling experiences, and they helped improve individual success. The first reason for adopting the key competencies was strongly associated with individual assessment, i.e., performance-goals and self-management. The second reason for adoption reflected market-driven ideals, the KCs provided tools for individual success, *and* ultimately for future employment purposes, e.g., tertiary entrance “at university” and “to get a good job”. Some collective ideals of the KCs such as co-operation were present, but they were less emphasised as the children’s discussed their views and experiences.

A conceptual analysis of the findings, using Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning, highlighted this tension between individualism and collectivism in the children’s adoption of the key competencies. Overall, adoption purposes were rationalised with a future-focused mindset – key competencies were for individual success and future employment. These purposes reflect an individualised emphasis on the pillars of *learning to do* and *learning to know* as education ideals in the curriculum. The *learning to be* and *learning to live together* – social democratic collective underpinnings in curriculum, were less emphasised. Children’s social co-operative capabilities, i.e., *learning to be* and *learning to live together*, needed for creating social change for a better and democratic society, are arguably lost when a market-driven curriculum overshadows the social collective narratives of education.

**2. Neoliberal ideals have influenced the ‘reshaping’ of the education system and curriculum, to reflect individualistic and market-driven ideals.**

Theoretical searching revealed that New Zealand's history of education policy reform has been influenced, especially at a macro level, by market-driven imperatives. The New Zealand education policy reforms promoted by the Government in the late 1980s were, and are, integral to the political ideology of neoliberalism. Central to the reforms was a new emphasis on individual choice and competition.

In a contemporary context, the processes of neoliberal globalisation have filtered from the macro level to influence education ideals and impact on education systems on the meso or national levels. The pillars of neoliberalism emphasise education ideals based on individualism – choice, self-interest, user pays, competition and absolute market freedom. Individualism and a market-driven view of education have influenced the reshaping of the curriculum, which has moved more towards Delors' *learning to know* and *learning to do* ideals. The emphasis on *learning to know* and *learning to do*, arguably, can make the key competencies an attractive ideal for education systems, no matter where nations are in the global context.

A significant understanding is that, on a national level, the economic and political processes of neoliberal globalisation are linked to the erosion of the collective (social democratic) purposes of curriculum in New Zealand (Codd, 2002). The *learning to be* and *learning to live together* (social democratic) pillars in curriculum are disappearing from understandings at the micro (school-based) level as the “full commercialization and commodification of education” becomes emphasised in a contemporary phase of neoliberal globalisation (Codd, 2002, p. 4).

The findings highlight that the children adopted the key competencies for individual success and future employment. This finding, that education is seen as a private benefit – or ‘just-for-me’ – is a reflection of extreme individualism (Dale, 2008). A corollary of this situation, and arguably an unsettling, implication for society is the preparation of self-interested individuals for the job market (Codd, 2008, p. 16). That is, if you are “self-smart”, and work hard, you will “get a good job” and reap the rewards of your individual efforts. Somehow, as the research findings demonstrate, the children in this research have internalised this future-focused curriculum ideal.

### **3. Interpretations of the policy text – key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* have been influenced by neoliberal discourse (with market-driven ideals).**

The dominant discourse of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) serves a political and economic purpose. Over time, the ascendancy of neoliberalism has influenced the discourse in the ‘context of construction’ of education policies and other official documents. Further consequences occur in the ‘contexts of interpretations’ (Codd, 1995). What this means is that schools (and leaders)

make interpretations of the key competencies in the curriculum, teachers do the same in relation to practice, and the end result is then internalised by the children in relation to their school experiences.

The official discourse within the policy text creates meaning for those who read and interpret its linguistic structures, within a particular social or cultural context (Codd, 1995, p. 103). Context refers to how school teachers have engaged with the ‘linguistic structures’ – the official discourse of the policy text, and have thus interpreted the key competencies. The children in this research are undoubtedly within ‘contexts of interpretation’; they therefore make their own interpretations or translations of the key competencies. As indicated earlier in the thesis, children have some power as agents; they are able to filter their interpretations, based on who they are, their beliefs and cultures, and the influences of their respective families and communities. Such filtering is arguably more feasible when the adult/child power relationship is not as pervading as it can be in schools.

The key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as the received policy text, have come to exemplify neoliberal discourse, i.e., translated for individual success and future employment (market-driven ideals). The elements in the policy text that have the dominant discourse related to a future-focused notion of market or ‘sustainability’, in translations of the key competencies for individual success and future, can be located in the ‘directions of learning’ (MoE, 2007, p. 7).

Key competencies arguably have become the neoliberal discourse vehicle. Their use, in education policy texts, to emphasise market-driven ideals of individual success and future employment, appears to be influencing future generations in particular directions. This is likely to have implications for the kind of society New Zealanders will eventually live in.

#### **4. The social democratic values of collective responsibility have been minimised in the curriculum (Dewey and Freire).**

Key competencies that exemplify a market-driven approach arguably sideline social democratic collective ideals. A curriculum that emphasises key competencies solely for market purposes is, arguably, consistent with fixed, rigid or traditional forms of education, i.e., education predetermined for preparing the child for future employment.

Dewey and Freire’s socially progressive education theories helped to illuminate the concerns underpinning the findings of this thesis, i.e., a market-driven view of the key competencies that threatens the collective or *learning to be* and *live together* education ideals in curriculum

(Delors, 1996). The philosophy-based discussion highlighted four concepts that parallel Dewey and Freire's philosophies, and are relevant to the findings. The first two are Dewey's concept of 'mis-education' and Freire's banking concept, '*corpo consciente*'. Both concepts assert a rejection of passive learning and a disdain for the 'banking' of predetermined knowledge (i.e., traditional view of education). A significant research finding is that the children's adoption of key competencies for market-driven purposes can be viewed as both a mis-education of the child, and the result of a narrow or pre-determined view of the curriculum. This is an unsettling view, the shifting of emphasis to the *learning to do* and *know* capabilities, so that one can compete for a 'successful' life.

The second two concepts are Dewey's 'growth' (dialogue and community), and Freire's concept of critical consciousness (*conscientizacao*). A significant finding in this research is that these concepts promote the need for more social democratic collective education ideals in curriculum. This move places an emphasis on the *learning to be* and *live together* pillars in education, capabilities necessary for a 'decent life' in a democratic society (Rychen, & Salganik, 2003a).

Both philosophers of education espoused 'community' as a key ingredient needed for a more democratic society, i.e., active learning, critical conversation and social co-operative capabilities. The findings in this research highlight the necessity for an emphasis on the social democratic collective purposes of education. These purposes will best serve the interests of young people. Such social co-operative ideals in curriculum will help young people actively critique their world as they work together with diverse groups. The active and co-operative fronting of 'wicked problems' can be fostered through more social co-operative undertakings in curriculum (Apple & Beane, 2007; Rayner, 2006).

## **Contributions to knowledge**

Unique to this research was a focus on and inclusion of children's voice in curriculum research. This thesis has contributed an understanding of the place and purpose of key competencies in the New Zealand curriculum. In particular the voices of Year 5 and 6 children share the impact of the KCs on contemporary young New Zealanders.

The continuum of acceptance and adoption conceptual model for critically examining the place and purpose of the key competencies in the curriculum was developed (see Chapter 5). This model enabled a clear analysis of the tensions between collective and individual emphases of key competencies in the curriculum, for each of the five schools. The use of Delors' (1996) four

pillars contributed further knowledge on the analysis of the key competencies and their purposes of curriculum. The use of a critical theory approach and, in particular, the work of the late John Codd, enabled a wider political- and discourse-based understanding of ‘what is going on here’ and whose ‘interests are being served’. The three levels of analysis, macro, meso and micro, provided deeper levels of understanding.

In brief, this thesis contributes to knowledge on the key competencies as a result of using student voice as a springboard in education research. Involving children in research encourages the pursuit of “richer understanding of education experiences, policy and practice through the eyes and ears of young people” (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014, p. 126).

## **Limitations**

The research project included a small sample of 30 children, and was based on one set of pair and focus group interviews, plus an observation in each school. A possible limitation is that the purposive selection of schools represented a small sample from across the decile rankings, and two of the schools were both from the same decile. While each school had engaged in school-based curriculum development on *The New Zealand Curriculum*, documents related to each school’s key competency development were not the focus of the research.

Another possible limitation of the research was the criteria for selecting the participants were limited to one school type: state contributing primary schools and two year groups, Years 5 and 6. This limiting of variables can also be seen in a positive light. Due to the nature of the research, with small groups of children in two locations in the North Island of New Zealand, generalisations are not possible to other primary school settings. However the macro analysis, the critical theory approach, and the structure provided by the acceptance and adoption model may be useful as tools/frameworks for examining other curriculum-related matters.

While the above limitations of the research are acknowledged, the views and experiences of the 30 primary school children about the key competencies in the curriculum are unique. The voices of the children – their views and experiences in this research are valuable and valued.

## **Implications and Recommendations for further research**

The research was designed to contribute towards the domain of pedagogical knowledge (teaching and learning). The thesis and its findings are therefore relevant for primary school teachers, professional leaders and principals, as part of their own local critical review of

curriculum and pedagogical intentions. School-based curriculum development requires schools to examine the purpose of the *Curriculum*'s vision for education, including interpretations of the five key competencies.

There are a number of critical challenges that lie ahead for educators, teachers and principals such as myself in relation to further interpretations of education ideals for children in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (MoE, 2007).

In this global age, the research findings may prompt educators to ask further questions about the purposes of education, and what kind of learning and teaching experiences in the curriculum could place renewed emphasis on the social democratic values of collective responsibility.

The results of this research may have school policy implications. These could identify professional development themes for school-based critical conversations about the place and purpose of key competencies.

Further research could foreground children's voice from other school types, in different geographical locations, and at different school levels. Such action could widen or change policy focus and values in the curriculum. A greater emphasis on social democratic values in the curriculum could well lead to the expansion of children's voice, and their power, in research.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis is a contribution to our understanding of what an examination of the key competencies tells us about greater forces at large in education. The voices of primary-aged children about the place and purpose of the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (MoE, 2007) are unique to the study.

It is argued herein that education is being reshaped to fit a market ideal of individualism, and that this has influenced children's translations of the purposes of curriculum – for individual success and future employment. These market-driven education ideals in the curriculum are seen here as problematic. A preference is for the social democratic values of collective responsibility. These can be expanded upon and elevated as education ideals in the curriculum for children, and my contention is that they will better serve the needs of our small nation-state.

This thesis ends by returning to the start where it was maintained that politics cannot be separated from education. So to those who dare to teach, I end with a quote from Freire (2005):

As educators we are politicians; we engage in politics when we educate. And if we dream about democracy, let us fight, day and night, for a school in which we talk to and with the learners so that, hearing them, we can be heard by them as well. (p. 121)

## Appendix A: Assent Form to Students



**THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

Te Kura Akoranga o Tamaki Makaurau  
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
The University of Auckland  
Faculty of Education  
School of Critical Studies in Education  
Epsom Campus  
Private Bag 92601  
Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### ASSENT FORM

Students

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS**

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, spoken to my parents/caregivers. I understand what this project is about and that only 6 students are needed. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and I am happy with the answers.

- Should I be 1 of the 6 randomly selected students from my class, I agree to take part in the 3 phases of this project.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me up to 1 December 2011.
- I agree to being audiotaped during the interviews and understand that I may wish to request that the tape be turned off.
- I wish / do not wish to read the transcript of my pair interview recordings.
- I agree not disclose anything discussed in the pair interviews and focus groups with any other person in my class, school or elsewhere.
- I understand that I may ask to have access to the final publication of the research findings from the University of Auckland library.
- I understand that a third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement to transcribe the audio tape recordings of the pair interviews.
- I understand that consent forms will be locked in a cabinet on University premises.
- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which hard copies will be shredded and electronic files will be deleted.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Year Level \_\_\_\_\_ Room \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address for sending the pair interview transcript

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
8/06/2011 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 2011/288



## Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet to Teachers



**THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

Te Kura Akoranga o Tamaki Makaurau  
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
The University of Auckland  
Faculty of Education  
School of Critical Studies in Education  
Epsom Campus  
Private Bag 92601  
Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

To Teachers

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**<Address of School>**

**Dear <name of teacher>**

My name is Deanna Johnston and I am a Primary School Principal. I have taught all levels, in a range of schools for the past 23 years. I am also currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education Degree (EdD) at the University of Auckland, undertaking a research project for my Doctoral Thesis requirements in relation to the New Zealand Curriculum.

#### **The aim of my research is**

To investigate how primary schools are engaging student voice to inform the development of the Key Competencies (KC) in school based and classroom curriculum. My research is not a focus on teacher practice or teacher voice.

#### **My research question is**

How is student voice informing primary schools' development of the Key Competencies?

#### **In particular, I will investigate**

1. How do Year 5 and 6 primary school students voice their perceptions of the key competencies (being developed in their class and school setting);
2. In what ways do the students use the key competencies in the class and school setting and;
3. What is the strength of the relationship between the key competencies and student voice?

#### **Invitation**

Your school Principal has consented to participate in this research project. This letter is an invitation to you to consider taking part in my research project:

- 6 students from your class will be selected through random sampling.
- An independent person will randomly select 6 students from all the returned expression of interest and consent forms for:
  - 1 pair interview (3 pairs of students)
  - 1 class observation
  - 1 focus group interview (of all 6 students)
- Students who are not selected from the random sampling will receive a letter of acknowledgement.

Following the **distribution of the Parent/Caregivers and student Information and consent forms**, I will meet with your students to share my research aims, at a suitable time and place determined by the you.

- Being an experienced teacher of senior school students, this is an opportunity to build rapport and trust with the students.
- I can answer questions about the research procedures e.g., no right and wrong answers, using agreed pseudonyms in documentation. I can also outline the benefits of the students sharing their perceptions and voice.

### **Project Procedures**

#### Phase One: Pair Interviews

- I will conduct 3 semi-structured interviews with 2 students, at a suitable time and place determined by you.
- Each interview will take between 30 and 40 minutes.
- I will invite you, knowing your students best, to volunteer to pair up the 6 students.

#### Phase Two: Class Observation

- I will undertake 1 observation of the 6 students in their class setting, at a suitable time and place determined by you.
- The observation will take between 45 and 60 minutes.
- I will invite you to determine the curriculum area of either literacy, numeracy or student inquiry learning lesson time.
- The other students in the class are not being focused on and this will be pointed out in the Participant Information forms.
- I will be a non-participant in the classroom during the observations.
- The students will receive a synopsis or "re-storying" of the emerging findings from Phase one and two before Phase three.

#### Phase Three: Focus Group Interview

- I will interview all six students together to further clarify and build on statements and themes arising from any of the Phases.
- The session will take between 45 to 60 minutes.

### **Audio Recordings**

The interviews will be audio taped. Participants may request to turn the taping off at any time throughout the interviews. A copy of the pair interview transcripts will be sent to the participants to comment on and approve as a true and correct record. For the focus group interview, there will be no distribution of a transcript to verify as no one particular student is focused on. There will be no audio or visual taping of the class observations. NB the observation will not focus on your teaching practice.

### **Right to Withdraw from Participation**

Each student participant will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and the information they have provided until the analysis of data up until 1 December 2011. Participation or non-participation will not affect your standing in the School in any way. Student participation or non-participation will not affect their standing in the class.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

You and school name will remain anonymous in the research project as well as the participant's identities. No students' names will be used in any final publication. The students will be invited to nominate a pseudonym.

### **Data storage/retention/destruction/future use**

All tapes and transcriptions of interviews will be kept by me and will be locked in a secure cabinet for six years, after the completion of the thesis. An independent person will sign a confidentiality agreement before transcribing all audiotapes. All consent forms of the participants will be kept in a secure cabinet for six years. Consent forms, tapes and transcriptions will be

disposed of after six years by way of deleting electronic files and shredding all hard copies. This will ensure the anonymity of each school and students.

### **Expression of interest**

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete and return the enclosed consent form in the stamped envelope provided. I can then make contact with you to follow through Stage 2 of the above invitation process.

### **Benefits**

I believe the benefits for your students participating in this research are that they will have opportunities to voice their perceptions about the key competencies in their natural setting. I would like to offer participating schools either a negotiated day's free relief work or a koha of student picture books.

Thank you in anticipation of your support and collaboration of this research project in the primary school setting.

### **My research supervisors are**

Dr Vicki M. Carpenter  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
v.carpenter@auckland.ac.nz

Dr Carol Mutch  
Associate Professor and Head of School  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston  
dwsj@ihug.co.nz  
027 281 7625

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 8/06/2011 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 2011/288

## Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet to Principals



**THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

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Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

To Principals

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**<Address of School>**

**Dear <name of Principal>**

My name is Deanna Johnston and I am a Primary School Principal. I have taught all levels, in a range of schools for the past 23 years. I am also currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education Degree (EdD) at the University of Auckland, undertaking a research project for my Doctoral Thesis requirements in relation to the New Zealand Curriculum.

#### **The aim of my research is**

To investigate how primary schools are engaging student voice to inform the development of the Key Competencies (KC) in school based and classroom curriculum. My research is not a focus on teacher practice or teacher voice.

#### **My research question is**

How is student voice informing primary schools' development of the Key Competencies?

#### **In particular, I will investigate**

1. How do Year 5 and 6 primary school students voice their perceptions of the key competencies (being developed in their class and school setting);
2. In what ways do the students use the key competencies in the class and school setting and;
3. What is the strength of the relationship between the key competencies and student voice?

#### **Invitation**

This letter is an invitation to you to consider taking part in my research project.

#### Stage one

I will select **5 primary school principals** and their **schools**.

- 3 schools will be selected from the Auckland urban area.
- 2 schools will be selected from the Wanganui central area.
- The 5 schools will be selected to reflect a representation from decile rankings 1 to 3, 4 to 6 and 7 to 10.

#### Stage two

- **One class of Year 5 and 6** students will be selected from each school.
- **Six students** from each Year 5 and 6 class will be randomly selected.
- A total of 30 students will be in the total sample pool across the 5 schools.

#### Stage three

I seek **your support and consent to identify** one Year 5 and 6 teacher and his/her students who will be willing for me to access the class.

#### Stage four

If you consent to identify one class of Year 5 and 6 students, I will provide an information pack for your distribution to the class teacher.

- The **teacher** will receive **Participant Information Sheets, Consent/Assent forms** inviting the whole class to take part in this research through the return of an **expression of interest**.
- **Parents/Caregivers** and **students** will be advised in advance that **6 students** will be **selected** through **random sampling**.
- An independent person will randomly select 6 students from all the returned expression of interest forms for:
  - **1 pair interview (3 pairs of students)**
  - **1 class observation**
  - **1 focus group interview (of all 6 students)**
- Students who are not selected from the random sampling will receive a letter of acknowledgement.

#### Stage five

Following the **distribution of the forms** and at a suitable time and place determined by the teacher, I will meet with the students to share my research aims in person.

- Being an experienced teacher of senior school students, this is an opportunity to build rapport and trust with the students.
- I can answer questions about the research procedures e.g., no right and wrong answers, using agreed pseudonyms in documentation. I can also outline the benefits of the students sharing their perceptions and voice.

### **Project Procedures**

#### Phase One: Pair Interviews

- I will conduct 3 semi-structured interviews with 2 students, at a suitable time and place determined by the class teacher.
- Each interview will take between 30 and 40 minutes.
- I will invite the teacher, who knows their students best, to volunteer to pair up the 6 students.

#### Phase Two: Class Observation

- I will undertake 1 observation of the 6 students in their class setting, at a suitable time and place determined by the class teacher.
- The observation will take between 45 and 60 minutes.
- I will invite the teacher to determine the curriculum area of either literacy, numeracy or student inquiry learning lesson time.
- The other students in the class are not being focused on and this will be pointed out in the Participant Information forms.
- I will be a non-participant in the classroom during the observations.
- The students will receive a synopsis or "re-storying" of the emerging findings from Phase one and two before Phase three.

### Phase Three: Focus Group Interview

- I will interview all six students together to further clarify and build on statements and themes arising from any of the Phases.
- The session will take between 45 to 60 minutes.

### **Audio Recordings**

The interviews will be audio taped. Participants may request to turn the taping off at any time throughout the interviews. A copy of the pair interview transcripts will be sent to the participants to comment on and approve as a true and correct record. For the focus group interview, there will be no distribution of a transcript to verify as no one particular student is focused on. There will be no audio or visual taping of the class observations. NB the observation will not focus on the teaching practice of the teacher.

### **Right to Withdraw from Participation**

Each student participant will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and the information they have provided until the analysis of data up until 1 December 2011. Participation or non-participation will not affect the standing of the School in any way. Student participation or non-participation will not affect their standing in the class.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

You, your teachers and school name will remain anonymous in the research project as well as the participant's identities. No students' names will be used in any final publication. The students will be invited to nominate a pseudonym.

### **Data storage/retention/destruction/future use**

All tapes and transcriptions of interviews will be kept by me and will be locked in a secure cabinet for six years, after the completion of the thesis. An independent person will sign a confidentiality agreement before transcribing all audiotapes. All consent forms of the participants will be kept in a secure cabinet for six years. Consent forms, tapes and transcriptions will be disposed of after six years by way of deleting electronic files and shredding all hard copies. This will ensure the anonymity of each school and students.

### **Expression of interest**

If you are interested in participating in this study and agree to identify one of your Year 5 and 6 classroom teachers, please complete and return the enclosed expression of interest form in the stamped envelope provided. I can then make contact with you to follow through Stage 2 of the above invitation process.

### **Benefits**

I believe the benefits for your students participating in this research are that they will have opportunities to voice their perceptions about the key competencies in their natural setting. I would like to offer participating schools either a negotiated day's free relief work or a koha of student picture books.

Thank you in anticipation of your support and collaboration of this research project in the primary school setting.

**My research supervisors are**

Dr Vicki M. Carpenter  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
v.carpenter@auckland.ac.nz

Dr Carol Mutch  
Associate Professor and Head of School  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston  
dwsj@ihug.co.nz  
027 281 7625

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

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## Appendix D: Consent Form to Teachers



**THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**  
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School of Critical Studies in Education  
Epsom Campus  
Private Bag 92601  
Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### CONSENT FORM

To School Teacher

#### THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to the researcher having access to my class of Year 5 and 6 students and approach them to invite their participation for this research project.

I understand that I may ask questions at any time.

I understand that access to the students' data will be restricted to the researcher and the supervisor(s).

I understand that the anonymity of the School, the participants and myself will be maintained in any written or oral form of this research.

I understand that the privacy of the School will be respected at all times and the findings of this research will be made available if requested.

I understand that participation/non participation will in no way affect my standing or the students' academic progress, assessments and reports.

Consent Forms and data will be stored in a locked cabinet for six years, after which they will be then destroyed by incineration.

I understand that the generalised findings of this research may be used by the researcher in her Thesis, journal articles and/or conference presentations.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet to Students



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Private Bag 92601  
Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

To Students

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**<Address of School>**

**Dear <name of student>**

My name is Deanna Johnston and I am a Primary School Principal. I have loved teaching all age groups, especially your Year 5 and 6 level, in lots of schools for the past 23 years. I am also a student in the Doctor of Education Degree (EdD) at the University of Auckland, doing a research project for my Thesis. My project is about your ideas and the key competencies in your classroom and school. What you think and say is important. This project is not a test about what you think and say. This project will not affect any of your class results or what your teacher thinks of you.

#### **I am curious about**

What you think of the key competencies and how these are used by at school.

#### **I would like to find out**

1. How you think and what you say about the key competencies and;
2. How you use the key competencies in the class and school setting.

#### **Invitation**

Your school Principal and your teacher have consented to participate in this research project. Your parents/caregivers also have these forms. This letter is an invitation to you if you would like to take part in my project.

#### **My research question is**

How is student voice informing primary schools' development of the Key Competencies?

#### **To answer my project questions**

I need **6 students** from your class.

- Someone else, not me, will randomly select 6 students from anyone in your class who returns a parent consent and student assent form for:
  - **1 pair interview (3 pairs of students)**
  - **1 class observation**
  - **1 focus group interview (of all 6 students)**

I will give a thank you letter to those who are not selected for the interviews.

### **Audio Recordings**

The interviews will be audio taped. You can ask me to turn the taping off at any time throughout the interviews. A copy of what you say in the pair interview will be sent to you to read and check if you are happy with it. For the focus group interview, no one student will be focused on. I will share a "story" (synopsis) about what I have learned from the pair interviews and observation before our focus group interview. I will not use a video or a recorder when I come into your room to watch you during learning time.

### **Right to Withdraw from Participation**

You can tell me you do not want to be part of my project at any time and the information you have provided **up until 1 December 2011**. Participation or non-participation will not affect your class reports or assessment results in the class.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

No one will know your name, your teacher's or school name in my project. I will not use your name in anything I publish. You can give me a made up name if you like (pseudonym) to be used when I am writing up my information.

### **Data storage/retention/destruction/future use**

All tapes and transcriptions of interviews will be kept by me and will be locked in a secure cabinet for six years, after the completion of the thesis. An independent person will sign an agreement before transcribing the audiotapes, so your names are safe. Your consent and assent forms will be kept in a secure cabinet for six years. I will destroy the consent forms, tapes and transcriptions after six years by deleting computer documents and shredding all paper.

### **Benefits**

What you think and say is important to my project. I am curious to learn about your 'voice' and you will have an opportunity to share what you think in small group. When my project is finished, I would love to offer to teach for a day in your school or give you some really fantastic books for your library.

### **Expression of interest**

If your parents consent and you too are interested in participating in my project **please talk with them before completing and returning** the forms in the envelope to your class teacher.

### **Initial meeting with you**

Following your parents/caregiver's consent and your assent, should you be 1 of the randomly selected 6 students, I will meet with all students (including you) to share my project goals at a good time and place decided by your teacher. I will then chat with you about the research procedures and answer your questions.

Thank you for reading my letter.

### **Contact Details**

My research supervisors are

Dr Vicki M. Carpenter  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
v.carpenter@auckland.ac.nz

Dr Carol Mutch  
Associate Professor and Head of School  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
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c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston  
dwsj@ihug.co.nz  
027 281 7625

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

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## Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet to Parents/Caregivers



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Private Bag 92601  
Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

To Parents/Caregivers

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**<Address of School>**

**Dear <name of parent/caregiver>**

My name is Deanna Johnston and I am a Primary School Principal. I have taught all levels, in a range of schools for the past 23 years. I am also currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education Degree (EdD) at the University of Auckland, undertaking a research project for my Doctoral Thesis requirements in relation to the New Zealand Curriculum.

#### **The aim of my research is**

To investigate how primary schools are engaging student voice to inform the development of the Key Competencies (KC) in school based and classroom curriculum. My research is not a focus on teacher practice or teacher voice.

#### **My research question is**

How is student voice informing primary schools' development of the Key Competencies?

#### **In particular, I will investigate**

1. How do Year 5 and 6 primary school students voice their perceptions of the key competencies (being developed in their class and school setting);
2. In what ways do the students use the key competencies in the class and school setting and;
3. What is the strength of the relationship between the key competencies and student voice?

#### **Invitation**

Your school Principal and your child's teacher have consented to participate in this research project. This letter is an invitation to you to consider expressing interest for your child taking part in my research project:

- **6 students** from your child's class will be **selected** through **random sampling**.
- An **independent person** will randomly select 6 students from all the returned expression of interest and consent forms for:
  - **1 pair interview (3 pairs of students)**
  - **1 class observation**
  - **1 focus group interview (of all 6 students)**
- Students who are not selected from the random sampling will receive a letter of acknowledgement.

## **Project Procedures**

### Phase One: Pair Interviews

- I will conduct 3 semi-structured pair interviews with the students, at a suitable time and place determined by the class teacher.
- Each interview will take between 30 and 40 minutes.
- I will invite your child's teacher, who knows their students best, to volunteer to pair up the 6 students.

### Phase Two: Class Observation

- I will undertake 1 observation of the 6 students in their class setting, at a suitable time and place determined by the class teacher.
- The observation will take between 45 and 60 minutes.
- I will invite the your child's teacher to determine the curriculum area of either literacy, numeracy or student inquiry learning lesson time.
- The other students in the class are not being focused on and this will be pointed out in the Participant Information forms.
- I will be a non-participant in the classroom during the observations.
- The students will receive a synopsis or "re-storying" of the emerging findings from Phase one and two before Phase three.

### Phase Three: Focus Group Interview

- I will interview all six students together to further clarify and build on statements and themes arising from any of the Phases.
- The session will take between 45 to 60 minutes.

## **Audio Recordings**

The interviews will be audio taped. Participants may request to turn the taping off at any time throughout the interviews. A copy of the pair interview transcripts will be sent to the participants to comment on and approve as a true and correct record. For the focus group interview, there will be no distribution of a transcript to verify as no one particular student is focused on. There will be no audio or visual taping of the class observations.

## **Right to Withdraw from Participation**

You and your child will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and the information your child has provided until the analysis of data **up until 1 December 2011**. Participation or non-participation will not affect the standing of the School in any way. Your child's participation or non-participation will not affect their class report or assessments in the class.

## **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Your child's teacher and school name will remain anonymous in the research project as well as the participant's identities. No students' names will be used in any final publication. Your child will be invited to nominate a pseudonym.

## **Data storage/retention/destruction/future use**

All tapes and transcriptions of interviews will be kept by me and will be locked in a secure cabinet for six years, after the completion of the thesis. An independent person will sign a confidentiality agreement before transcribing all audiotapes. All consent forms of the participants will be kept in a secure cabinet for six years. Consent forms, tapes and transcriptions will be disposed of after six years by way of deleting electronic files and shredding all hard copies. This will ensure the anonymity of each school and students.

## **Benefits**

I believe the benefit for your child participating in this research is that he/she will have opportunities to voice his/her perceptions about the key competencies in their natural setting. I will be offering participating schools either a negotiated day's free relief work or a koha of student picture books.

**Expression of interest**

If you are interested in your child participating in this study **please complete and return** the enclosed consent and assent forms in the envelope provided to your child's class teacher.

**Initial meeting with your child**

Following your consent and should your child be 1 of the randomly selected 6 students, I will meet with all students (including your child) to share my research aims at a suitable time and place determined by the teacher.

- Being an experienced teacher of senior school students, this is an opportunity to build rapport and trust with the students.
- I can answer questions about the research procedures e.g., no right and wrong answers, using agreed pseudonyms in documentation. I can also outline the benefits of the students sharing their perceptions and voice.

Thank you in anticipation of your support of this research project in the primary school setting.

**My research supervisors are**

Dr Vicki M. Carpenter  
06 623 8899  
Private Bag 92601  
Epsom Campus  
Auckland  
v.carpenter@auckland.ac.nz

Dr Carol Mutch  
Associate Professor and Head of School  
06 623 8899  
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c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston  
dwsj@ihug.co.nz  
027 281 7625

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

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## Appendix G: Participants not selected for the interviews to students



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Auckland, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANTS NOT SELECTED FOR THE INTERVIEWS**

To Students

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**<Address of School>**

**Dear <name of student>**

Thank you for your interest and keen response to participate in my research project.

As I mentioned in the Participant Information Sheet, only 6 students were needed for this project and not all students from your class can participate in the interviews.

Your name was not randomly selected by an independent person for this small sample pool of 6 students from your class.

I really do appreciate the willingness you have shown to participate in the project.

Should you remain interested, a final research outcome will be available at The University of Auckland Library.

I wish you all the continued success in your school learning.

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston

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# Appendix H: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement



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Auckland, New Zealand

## TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

**Project Title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

**Supervisor:** Dr Vicki Carpenter

**Transcriber:** <name>

I agree to transcribe the audiotapes/videotapes for the above research project.

I understand that the information contained within them is confidential and must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researcher and his/her supervisor(s).

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

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

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



## Appendix I: Transcription of Interview Verification Form



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Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW VERIFICATION FORM

Students and Parents/Caregivers

#### THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Dear <name of student>**

I enclose a transcription of your interview. This is for you to check and to ensure that you are happy it is a true and accurate record of you said.

I will make contact with you in the next few days to see if you agree with the transcript and if you have any comments/changes to make.

Your real name appears on the transcript, but a pseudonym of your choice, will be used in any reference to this interview and in the final write up of the thesis.

Once again, thank you for your help with my research project.

Yours sincerely

Deanna Johnston

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## Appendix J: Pair Interview Indicative Questions



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Symonds Street  
Auckland, New Zealand

### Pair Interviews Indicative Questions

For Students

**Project title:** Student Voice and the Implementation of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

**Name of Researcher:** Deanna Johnston

#### Before the interview/Establishing rapport:

Researcher introduces self again, briefly discusses project aims again, answers any questions, including assent, confidentiality, taping of interview, requesting the tape to be turned of if requested.

e.g., I am going to tape our chat. I might write some notes. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a test. Your answers to the questions will be kept confidential. This means I will not use your name to tell what you said with anyone else in your school or in anything I write. Do you have any questions? Remember you don't have to answer all of the questions if you don't want to. Here are a few things before we start:

Show that you care about each other, so we don't talk about what other people have said in this interview to other students or teachers. So what's said in this group stays in the group. Are you happy with that? If one person is talking, try to let the other finish before you speak again. Thanks!

#### Initial questions:

1. Tell me what you love about your school?
2. Tell me some things you enjoy learning about at school at the moment/something that you love learning about?
3. Tell me what you think good learning looks like?
4. Tell me what you think a good learner does?

#### Main questions: (Have KCs on prompt cards)

1. These are the 5 KCs/your school words for the KCs. Why do you think they are important to learn about and use? Can you tell me more about...
2. Tell me what you know about the key competencies/your xxxxx (use the School's particular wording for the KCS e.g., "learning keys").
3. What have you learnt about your KCs?
4. You are doing some learning about the KCs in your class. Can you tell me more about ....?
5. If someone in your class is using the xxxx KC, what would that look like or sound like in the classroom/school? Or Are you using the xxxx KC at any other time?
6. What does Managing Self "look like" in the class/school? (repeat for other four KCs) or

7. If someone in your class is using the Managing Self KC in the class/school, what do you think they would be good at?
8. What would you think your teacher/teachers would say if you are using the xxxx KC/your xxxx?
9. When you think of the xxxx KC, what comes into your mind? Can you tell me more about that?
10. What ideas do/would you share with your teacher about the KCs/your xxxx?
11. Do you think that any one of the KCs/your xxxx are more important than the other? Can you tell me more about ...?
12. At school, what are the 3 things about your xxxx KC that most helps you to learn?
13. How does each thing help you to learn about the xxxx KC?
14. What could be made better in your learning about the xxxx KC?
15. Is there any thing else you would like to say about ....?
16. Do you have any questions for me or any other comment?

## Appendix K: Example of Initial Blended Stage of Thematic Analysis

Data reduction		Data organisation	Data interpretation
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<i>Generating codes</i>	<i>Reviewing categories</i>	<i>Defining themes</i>	<i>Identifying &amp; linking patterns</i>
1. Thinking TH1 2. Language, symbols, texts LST2 3. Managing self MS3 4. Relating to others RTO4 5. Participating and contributing PC5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All KCs</li> <li>• Importance/ranking/ future focus/prospects/ aspirations/purpose/ direction/ empowerment</li> <li>• Relationships/ peer network/ friends/ social &amp; emotional/ relational/connectedness inclusion/empathy/ resilience/ active involvement/ extra-curricular activities/sports/ access</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities/ group instruction/ attitudes</li> <li>• Settings/context based/ authentic contexts</li> <li>• Achievement/ motivation/ engagement/ self improvement/ self control/ motivation/ goal setting/ independence/ inclusion/ affirmation/ high expectations/ managing thinking and enactment</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• Strategising</li> </ul>	1. <i>Relevance</i> ( <u>ranking</u> lifelong learning, learning to learn, <u>success</u> ) 2. <i>Relationships</i> (connected, social and emotional capability, negotiation, inclusion, <u>self regulation</u> ; interpersonal behaviour, empathy, resilience) 3. <i>Learning conditions</i> ( <u>successsful</u> learners, <u>confidence</u> , authentic learning and success, context and <u>enactment</u> , interconnectedness of KC) 4. <i>Class/School Culture</i> ( <u>active involvement</u> , <u>extra-curricular activities</u> , learning conditions, feedback and expectations, transfer across settings; development in social contexts; interactions)	1. Selection of extract examples 2. Analysis of extracts 3. Identifying patterns and regularities 4. Linking patterns and themes back to the research question and to relevant literature

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