Experiences of a Learning Advisory Initiative:
A Practitioner Research Project in a South Auckland College

Matalevai Liu-Asomua
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ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the experiences of teachers and students during the first year of their school implementing a school wide Learning Advisory model.

A qualitative methodology was applied for this research project and data collection methods used. The data collection activities focused on gathering both teacher and student voice on their personal experiences and perspectives of the impact of a newly constructed learning advisory model in one school. The study focused on exploring themes and commonalities in the data and comparing the experiences and reports of the participants with practices for advisory and youth mentorships suggested in the literature.

The findings indicate a variety of areas of the advisory model that have been valuable to the participants. They also identify commonalities in potential future developments and supports needed in order to both better meet the desired outcomes of the model, and to meet the identified needs of both participant groups. The findings also highlight some key challenges which should also be addressed in order to strengthen the positive impact of the model for all stakeholders. Implementing and further developing a learning advisory model is enhanced when certain considerations and focus areas are addressed and planned for. These include; using academic and pastoral data to set personalised goals and monitor and support progress towards these goals for each student.

The findings indicate a variety of approaches to how academic mentoring can be offered in secondary schools. Challenges were also identified and of particular note in this study is the
impact of a teacher’s skill set in their ability to effectively deliver a learning advisory model. Both teacher and student participants reported that not all teachers are currently equipped with equal skills when it comes to academic mentoring which has a significant impact on the quality of and value placed on the experiences in the advisory.

These findings suggest that school leaders need to consider carefully how they will introduce, implement and run such programmes. The recommendations arising from this study have implications for schools that include: schools having good student data management systems; schools allocating adequate time to the academic mentoring programme; schools working with staff to make sure they are using practices that are responsive to student needs and contexts; having support available to professionally develop academic mentors; ensuring the mentee groups are of a manageable size; and involving staff, whanau and Māori students in the setting up and development of the academic mentoring programme.
CHAPTER ONE: THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING AND INQUIRY

1.1 Introduction

This research project focuses on teacher and student experiences and perspectives of a new learning advisory model in its first year of implementation at the school in which I am employed as a Whanau Leader or Dean. The school is a senior secondary school in the South Auckland region of New Zealand. The purpose of the study is to consider first-hand experiences of teachers and students involved in the implementation of the new model in its first year with a view to further developing the model.

A background to the model employed in the school is provided along with literature relating to learning advisory models in general. The research process, methodology and methods are provided along with the findings and recommendations associated with the school under study. It is hoped that the findings within the thesis also provide some useful insights to support other schools going through a similar process.

1.2 Background

Learning advisory models exist in many different schools and are undertaken in a variety of ways to service a range of purposes in wide-ranging school settings. To create a specific definition or description of learning advisory is a complex task. Advisory models often have different names and/or focus areas that are relevant to each individual school that chooses to
use the practice. In order to ground this research with a working definition, Fort and Shurr’s (1993) description of the learning advisory model provides a strong framework. According to Fort and Shurr (1993), a learning advisory is a structured program which focuses on the holistic development and education of students and provides a personalised and caring approach from the advisor teacher.

The purpose of learning advisory models also crossover with the purposes outlined in youth mentorship, academic advising, and, in some settings, the evolving role of the form or tutor teacher (Fort and Shurr, 1993). Similarly, in New Zealand, the purposes of traditional approaches to pastoral care systems, such as the role of the form class teacher and dean, are often present in schools, but may lack clearly defined targets and practices (Ministry of Education, 2017). Specifically targeting the enhancement of the whole child including their wellbeing and future pathway awareness as well as current academic success is recommended in working with pastoral systems in contemporary New Zealand Schools (Ministry of Education, Te Pakiaka Tangata, Strengthening Student Wellbeing for Success, 2017, p.9). Carmin (1993) summarises the mentoring relationship in the following;

...the nature of this dynamic learning and mentor-type relationship as a complex, interactive process occurring between individuals of different levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychosocial, career and or educational development and socialisation functions into the relationship (Carmin, 1993, pp. 10-11).

Both Fort and Shurr (1993) and Carmin (1993) outline key aspects that a learning advisory model addresses in relation to the needs of the learning community it is located in.
These areas include the principles of advisories, organisational elements, teacher professional development, resource creation and availability, and the personalised needs of the local community. In order to achieve the objectives of a learning advisory in any setting and in a way that is appropriate to a local school community, the approach to the implementation is important as well as the skill development of those delivering the model is key to its success (Dillow, 2016). These ideas will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two, however, it is important to clearly state that each school’s context is different, and the needs of its learners are distinct thus the approach in each context will be unique. It is noted that context and learner needs should be the driving force behind the adoption and development of any learning advisory model to be a “best fit” for the community it serves (Dillow, 2016).

1.3 The wider context in the New Zealand community of practice

When undertaking the development of an advisory system, schools in New Zealand have tended to draw on research associated with both mentorship and advisory models. Local and international research in these areas have informed decision-making around the planning of their models. There are a variety of research projects and literature which address the grounding principles of mentorship, advising and coaching which form the basis for this innovation in education (Brown University, 2003, and Simmons & Klarich, 1989).

Currently in New Zealand, I am aware through personal communication with other professionals in my community of practice that there are a small but growing community of schools which have begun to investigate the potential impacts of implementing advisory based learning models to improve student outcomes and success throughout and after primary and secondary school. Several secondary schools across New Zealand have an advisory type
model to support their learners and describe their approaches on their public documents, and often share ideas about how they are developing this approach to their students learning with other schools doing similar work.

1.3.1 The context of the study

The school in which the study is based is a decile two co-educational state school located in the South Auckland Region. The school caters for 1213 year nine to thirteen students, and the student body includes large Māori and Pacific Island populations at 38.33% and 23.58% respectively. Throughout the school’s history, a Whanau or house style system has been a key part of the school’s identity and curriculum. Since opening in 2004, the school has incorporated the concept of a Whanau group and tutor teacher and has positioned this at the core of its practices and strategic planning. Each student at the college is placed in one of 5 Whanau groups of between two hundred and fifty to three hundred learners, and within the Whanau, each student also became a member of a vertically aligned tutor group of roughly twenty to thirty students. If possible, learners are placed in the whanau with other members of their immediate and extended families in order to leverage any existing connections between home and school, and between students to support the transitions and support network of each learner.

Until 2017, this system has been focused on the ethos of developing the school’s mission to support all learners to belong, learn and succeed. The mission statement reads as follows;
The College will be a learning community dedicated to developing and supporting lifelong independent learners by creating an environment that fosters a sense of belonging, values learning, and expects success. (College Strategic Plan, 2004-2017)

1.3.2 Background to the advisory model initiative

There were a number of elements that led to the implementation of a learning advisory model to support student achievement at this school. The Counties of Manukau Education Trust (COMET), an independent charitable trust, works alongside each Auckland Council local board in the region to collect data on youth employment rates, impacts and effects each year. COMET’s data overview for the local area shows clearly that students are leaving school without qualifications. The most recent local board snapshot for 2015 highlights that the area in which the school is sited shows 12% more young adults (age 15-24) have no qualifications compared to the rest of the region, and has 11% less undergraduate degrees, only 71% of young people stay at school until they are 17 years of age, and 14% of young people between 15-24 are not employed or in education or training of some sort (COMET, 2015). Government policy documents including Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success (Ministry of Education, 2013), The Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2013), and The Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2013) all identify poor rates of tertiary engagement and success for the demographics represented in the community; Māori, Pasifika, and those with low-income or below poverty line status. The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), an optional operational grant program designed to assist schools to support students with additional learning experiences and qualifications from the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Its
funding, research, data banks, and learning opportunities have all been developed to help target this issue for the target demographic of my project. STAR initiatives have also centered around similar principles as the model proposed in this project; mentorship, experience, skills, and strategies for future pathway development and tertiary study success. A focus on life skills and positive social and emotional outcomes are some of the areas that are often customised and addressed in advisory models, and this provides a strong argument for why implementing a model like this is a relevant approach for the College at this time.

1.3.3 Future pathway planning

One of the goals of the advisory model is to provide a structured opportunity to work more directly with learners over time to support them in creating a plan for their future work and study. The learners have difficulty planning and actioning strategies for their future pathways and post-secondary education (The New Zealand Curriculum Update, 2011). In Student Perspectives on Leaving School, Pathways and Careers, Vaughan (2008) found that twenty percent of the student participants were not satisfied with their course-selection and thirty percent wanted better advice to be available on subject selection and how to plan for further study and careers. Vaughan’s study clearly suggests that enhanced support with learning pathways is needed (2008).

This lack of support for pathway planning and tracking is also reflected in the New Zealand Ministry of Education Data (The New Zealand Curriculum Update, 2011), as well as the study school’s demographic and the local Auckland City Council community snapshot data. (COMET, 2015). The overviews presented by COMET and in the Curriculum Update reflect
learners’ struggles to make informed choices, understand their options, or develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions they need in order to be set up for success both during and beyond high school. With this information in mind, the College began the process of implementing a new Learning Advisory model. The model was designed to specifically target and develop social and emotional learning connected to the New Zealand Curriculum Key Competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007), as well as targeting pathway development and work and study skills amongst the students at my school in order to support stronger planning for future success for our young people.

Towards the end of 2016, it was decided by Senior Leadership in the school that a steering group would be formed consisting of any interested staff to investigate possible pastoral care or advisory based innovations that may strengthen student achievement and support the existing ethos and vision for the school. The focus of the steering group was to begin to investigate the purpose, principles and processes necessary to implement a successful learning advisory model. This steering group visited other New Zealand schools using advisory models, compiled an early collection of readings and resources that described advisory approaches, shared the findings with the whole staff. The group prepared a report based on their findings and developed a Whanau philosophy to drive the design of the advisory model based on the Mission Statement of *Personalised and unconditional support, care, and guidance for every learner*. The learning advisory leadership group also developed the principles and change management plan which would underpin the practices of the advisory in its first year. These are as follows.
The Māori translation of *amokura* is of a leader or guide, and is used as such in this context.
This planning phase and data gathering in the early weeks of the model became a guide for how all teachers would undertake this new role within the school. This was the first measure of how the teachers and students were experiencing the advisory in its earliest days. The work also formed the foundational information for developing this research project.

As the group continued working on the advisory model, the importance of completing thorough academic research and provide literature based recommendations for further development and refining became clear for both the immediate community of practice, as well as being valuable for the wider education community who are implementing or considering similar approaches. At this point, the formal research proposal was developed as a part of the requirements for the Master of Applied Practice programme.

1.4 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

The research project on which this thesis reports was developed based on the following aims and to address the questions outlined below.

Aims

To understand the experiences and perspectives of students and teachers in relation to the Learning Advisory Model undertaken in this school.
To develop recommendations for improving the Learning Advisory Model undertaken in the school.

The Research Questions

This project was guided by the following research questions:

What are student and teacher experiences of the learning advisory model?

What recommendations can be made for the ongoing improvement of the college learning advisory model?

1.5 Rationale

This study was motivated by a desire to improve student experiences and outcomes at this school. Overall, it is believed that by investigating the experiences of teachers and students as key participants in the new learning advisory initiative the model could be further improved.

An informal survey was undertaken after one term of implementation of the model to inform ongoing implementation. It was at this point in my work environment, that the need became clear that a research approach to the advisory model’s implementation would be valuable and a worthy topic for my Master’s research. My role as a member of the implementation team also influenced my desire to take an academic approach to studying the
programme’s impacts on those involved and investigate how the participants’ experiences could help inform ongoing developments to the model.

1.6 Organisation of Thesis

This thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction and overview of the study and a background and impetus for the research project. It also explains the rationale for the thesis and provides the background information. This section also outlines the aims and research questions for the study.

Chapter Two focuses on a critical review of the literature around learning advisory approaches and considers the literature on mentorship theories and practices. This chapter begins with a historical perspective on the development of learning advisory models in contemporary education, and then presents Māori and Pacific perspectives on similar and related practices which are both relevant to the concept of developing learning advisory approaches in New Zealand, and relate particularly to the community being studied in this research project. Chapter Two then goes on to identify key themes from the literature. The review of the literature considers the perspectives of various international and local educationalists and researchers, and links the wider body of research around youth mentoring, particularly in New Zealand, to the connected practices involved in developing a localised approach to learning advisory models.

In Chapter Three, the methodology and methods used to carry out the research are presented. This includes a discussion of the role of practitioner research and qualitative
research as well as the ethical considerations and recruitment and collection processes that were undertaken.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. The data is presented as a complete analysis and the voices of the participants will be presented in relation to the key themes and questions driving the research.

Following this, Chapter Five provides the analysis of the findings of the research and discusses these in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two. This chapter will also present the possible limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future practice based on this analysis and interpretation as well as recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to better understand the purposes and undertakings of an advisory model it is important to consider the literature. For the purposes of this study, this includes consulting the literature regarding advisory approaches, models and mentoring approaches. It is acknowledged in Chapter One of this thesis the importance of context (COMET, 2015, Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success Ministry of Education, 2013, The Pasifika Education Plan Ministry of Education, 2013 and The Tertiary Education Strategy Ministry of Education, 2013) and thus some consideration of the literature relating to the unique context of the school in which this study is embedded is consulted. Similarly, the value of teacher skill is identified as a key component in the success of advisory models and for that reason literature that is relevant to the teaching environment of the school and the specific skills relevant to teaching within that context is explored (COMET, 2015, Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success Ministry of Education, 2013, The Pasifika Education Plan Ministry of Education, 2013 and The Tertiary Education Strategy Ministry of Education, 2013). Literature that links pedagogy and learning advisory is identified.

The first section of this literature review provides an outline of the literature on advisory and youth mentorship models. Following this, literature on culturally relevant practices is reviewed. The review also includes literature relating to teachers practices in relation to pastoral care systems with a focus on the New Zealand Education setting. The literature on how
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advisory models have evolved in contemporary schools is explored, particularly those within New Zealand, and the research around successful implementation and strategic development of advisories within New Zealand schools is reviewed. Finally, literature on the changing role of the teacher within an advisory context is outlined as well as the literature in relation to the skills and professional development needed in order for a teacher to be able to deliver an effective advisory. Literature will be included which outlines the implications for ongoing evaluation and development of using an advisory approach.

2.2 Learning Advisory Models

Advisory models take many forms largely depending on the community and purposes they are aimed at addressing (Galassi et al 1997). Pearsell (2017), also offers a working definition for both researchers and practitioners in order to help focus the wide range of services and programmes offered by schools which address similar goals within advisory models;

An advisory program is an arrangement whereby one adult and a small group of students have an opportunity to interact on a scheduled basis in order to provide a caring environment for academic guidance and support, everyday administrative details, recognition, and activities to promote citizenship. (Pearsell, 2017, p. 293)

The idea of academic advising at Universities, or youth mentoring for young people who have been identified as being at risk of not achieving or prospering, are not new concepts as stand-alone initiatives. There is some research around learning advisory models or course advisors in particular at the University level with a very specific focus on academic supports and course selection. Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk (2003) and the Carnegie Mellon College of
Engineering (2011) apply a strategic approach to advising with specific descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the academic advisor in relation to academic support and success, however it should be noted that the approach they outline is specific to the context of university courses and not to the ongoing mentorship of young people in secondary school settings.

2.2.1 Learning Advisory Models: Towards a Working Definition

In the development of learning advisory models in New Zealand, reference is often made to the implementation of advisory’s in American contexts including Big Picture Schools and other similar charter models which employ this approach. Historically, mentor and advisory roles and models have not played a huge role in schools (Faruggia, 2011). However, Dennis Littky and Eliott Washer and their work in the development of the American Big Picture Schools in 1995 sought to change that (Littky, 2004). Littky and Washer (2004) envisaged the role of the teacher, and their relationship with the student to be at the heart of a learner’s success. They then brought the concept of a formalised advisory into their brand of charter schools beginning with The Met school in New York and have now extended the Big Picture charter network to include over 60 schools nationwide in the United States of America (Littky, 2005).

Littky and Washer’s approach to embedding a learning advisory model within a school’s pedagogical approach was mirrored around the same time in Canada in the Canadian Schools for Self-Directed Learning (CCSDL). The CCSDL approach to advisor focuses on mandating the essential skills of coaching and mentoring learners on personalised development and pathway planning. Gibbons (2002) and Littky, (2005) were among educators and researchers who began to explore and advocate for the role of mentorship and relationship based support as being a
key indicator of successful teachers and successful learners. Cole (1992), suggests that a teacher advisory (TA) program could be defined as “an organizational structure in which one small group of students identifies with and belongs to one educator, who nurtures, advocates for, and shepherds through school the individuals in that group” (Cole, 1992, p. 5). This particular definition provides a good fit for the purposes of this study, and for this purpose will be used as a working definition of a learning advisory from here forward.

2.3 Evolution of Advisory Model’s in New Zealand

Despite evidence that academic and youth mentoring methods and approaches make a difference to student outcomes, it is rare that advisory or mentor models are found within schools in New Zealand. Both Millar, (2014) and Maynard et al, (2011) shed light on the rarity of advisory models, and identify that finding time within the existing schedules and curriculum, as well as the funding to properly spend professional learning time to upskill staff to take on this role well, are two of the largest constraints that keep schools from implementing advisory approaches. They also provide some context and tips for direction setting to those schools who already have advisories in their learning community (Millar, 2014; Maynard et al, (2011).

Of note is that New Zealand advisory or mentoring models tend to be run by external agencies with only a few notable exceptions over the last ten years which will be presented later in the review of literature. One of the key challenges in New Zealand has been access to and retention of young participants by external agencies working in partnerships with schools. However, those models operating within schools are time poor and often staff or those involved in the mentoring or advising have no background with this skill set, therefore running a successful model depends upon upskilling those providing the mentorship, and ensuring there is
a structure for gaining access and maintaining time for students to be involved (Millar, 2014; Tyzon, 2010).

2.3.1 Culturally Responsive Advisory Models

Faruggia et al. (2012) suggests that, “Within the New Zealand context, it is argued that programs should provide cultural training to both mentors and staff and incorporate Māori and Pacific cultural values and practice into the program framework and delivery“ (p.6). Mentorship or advisory models in New Zealand tend to be developed to address perceived disparity in the schools they are implemented in (Millar, 2014). Māori and Pacific youth in particular are overrepresented in student groups deemed to be a priority for their schools or at high risk of not achieving the expected academic and career outcomes for the general population of New Zealand (Faruggia et al., 2012). Therefore, it is also valuable to examine culturally-relevant approaches to mentorship and advising and learning relationships in order to begin to uncover culturally relevant or responsive baselines or approaches that may also exist. To do this, it is necessary to look beyond mentorship and advisory research specifically for clues on how to localise approaches to support and develop models that have a culturally responsive base. Youth mentorship and relational approaches are not unusual in New Zealand - particularly those run by agencies or trusts (Youth Mentorship Trust, 2015, and Ministry of Education, Te Pakiaka Tangata, Strengthening Student Wellbeing for Success, 2017). It should be noted in the literature reviewed that the definitions of advisory and mentorship models are closely aligned. In addition, the outcomes each approach is focused on also cover similar territory (Bullen, Davidson, and Faruggia et al. (2011). However, it should be noted that there is little formal research on schools who are implementing this approach within their curriculum (Millar, 2014). In a study of twenty-six youth mentoring programmes in New Zealand, Bullen, Davidson, and
Faruggia et al. (2011) found that 96% of youth mentoring programmes included at least one educational goal in the targeted outcomes. The study suggests that even though all the programmes included in the study were run by external agencies, the agencies attempted to address academic and education specific goals. Furthermore, the study identified that there is a tendency for New Zealand programmes run by external agencies to focus on working collaboratively with schools to engage with youth, as opposed to recruiting and mentoring participants from outside their school environment (Bullen, Davidson, and Faruggia et al. 2011).

One of the problems identified by Bullen, Davidson, and Faruggia et al. 2011) is that the collaboration between schools and outside agencies often ends at the recruitment phase, and there are often very few or no ongoing links between the work being done in the school and the mentorship actions even though the school and agency share the mutual areas of interest in improving academic outcomes.

The current literature and research on mentorship and advisory systems emerges from a social services and health care services sector research environment in New Zealand, and there is very little research coming from the educational research sector (Dutton, Bullen, and Faruggia et al, 2011). It is the intention of this study to inform my school and my own practice and that it may also be of interest to others who are working on similar approaches. Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia et al (2011) also suggest that although there seems to be a growth in the development of models of youth intervention and support, there is very little quality research on what makes an initiative successful (Dutton, Bullen, and Faruggia et al, 2011).
The vast majority of youth mentorship programmes in New Zealand target high priority or at risk youth. Given that many youth identified as ‘at risk’ tend to belong to communities affected by poverty, intergenerational unemployment and underemployment, youth crime and substance use, and lower rates of high educational outcomes (Faruggia et al, 2012) this demographic makes up a large part of the participants in New Zealand research on mentoring and advising interventions.

2.3.2 Pacific Perspectives on Mentoring Relationships

Noonan, Bullen and Faruggia (2012), observe that, “Within collectivist societies, the importance of the group and feeling connected to one’s cultural group are paramount” (Noonan, Bullen and Faruggia, p.1, 2012). Relational mentoring in Pacific communities is not entirely new. In particular, Ako Aotearoa’s relational and community expertise based mentoring for Pacific young people in a tertiary environment demonstrated success in engaging more Pacific youth in trades apprenticeships and pathways through its careful use of both local knowledge and experiences and international research (Noonan, Bullen and Faruggia, 2012).

Holland (2012) discusses one mentoring programme, The Ako Professional Development Programme, and provides information about what the researchers learnt from their mentorship work by saying that the organisation “understood that what counted as effective mentoring sat within a relational framework of regular face-to-face meetings, trust, confidentiality and holistic support, in which issues of power were absent or ‘parked’ (Holland, 2012, p.12). Holland (2012) goes on to highlight important aspects of developing mentor relationships in
Pacific communities in terms of noticing and leveraging existing relationships and relational norms, mentor’s understanding of Pacific world views, and advocacy for the mentee when challenges arose. In particular, cultural norms around respectful behaviour and approaches to conflict and challenge were noticed as key areas positively affected by both mentors and mentees alike.

Holland (2012) also includes perspectives of the mentor participants. According to the research participants a difference was noticed in the ways that apprentices from European New Zealand backgrounds, and Māori and Pacific backgrounds responded to their teachers or supervisors. Holland (2012) notes that “the mentors commented that while Pākehā apprentices were comfortable speaking up and asking for help, Māori and Pacific apprentices were culturally disinclined to call attention to themselves” (Holland, 2012, p.24).

Holland (2012) also noted that even when mentees did not request support directly from their mentor, the advocacy element of the relationship helped to promote success and supported the overcoming of challenges. In particular, the research asserts that when Māori and Pacific youth have a significant adult supporting them to advocate for their needs, and teaching them how to advocate for themselves in study and professional settings. The implications of having a significant adult mentor relationship is one of the most articulated experiences and outcomes of implementing mentor programmes (Holland, 2012). Finally, Holland’s (2012) also advocates for relationship development beyond the mentoring events to wider community activity participation, and the importance of opportunities reciprocity to be allowed to again reflect pacific norms in building and maintaining relationships (Holland, 2012).
Although there are noticeable differences between different Pacific cultural groups, people in Pacific cultures have a particular way of communication and speaking with one another when they meet (Lemanu, 2014). Talanoa (conversation) is an important aspect of building relationships (Lemanu, 2014). Similarly, the development of feagaiga-like (brother/sister relational covenant of mutual care) that are focused on trust, love, caring and sharing and are rooted in the principles of talanoa (conversation), also appear in a range of research connected with developing powerful learning relationships (Lemanu, 2014 & 2015, Faruggia & Bullen et al, 2011).

With regard to building advisory and mentor relationships in a pacific context in New Zealand Pacific academics, for example; Manuatu (2002), Vaioleti (2006), Mahina (1998), and Seve-Williams (2009) have developed a description of the Talanoa model which includes four elements; Ofa (love), Mafana (Warmth), Malie (Humour) and Faka’apa’apa (Respect). In particular, the relationship between not just the young person being mentored, but also the relationship between the mentor and the mentee’s family is pivotal to the success of initiatives with Pacific Youth (Bullen, Faruggia and Noonan, 2012; Holland, 2012; Lemanu 2014 & 2015; The Pacific Education Plan, 2013).

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2 This relational covenant and mutual respect and protection is also found in Tongan, the Fahu, and in Fijian, the Vasu, and has also been used to describe the covenant between a church minister and the congregation.
2.3.3 Tikanga and the importance of culturally relevant mentor relationships for Māori

Faruggia et al (2005) suggests that peer mentoring programmes in schools based in Australia and much of New Zealand, are likely the first formal mentor type initiatives outside of the business world in New Zealand during the 1980’s. The 1980’s marks the beginning of the emergence of mentoring in the education sector in New Zealand. Since then youth mentoring approaches have begun to capitalise on the history of tuakana/teina practices to begin to create more relevant approaches in New Zealand programmes (Faruggia, 2011).

Māori cultural traditions around relationships and positive role modeling also stress the importance of developing relationships to understand personal and family history (Faruggia, et al, 2011). Māori identity can be described as revolving around three important areas of knowing (O’Regan, 1987); “knowing who you are, who you are related to, and your descent” (O’Regan, 1987, as cited in Faruggia & Bullen et al 2010, p.11). The impact this has on relationship development has very real implications for a teacher or mentor and young person relationship. Supporting Māori youth to know their whakapapa (ancestry or genealogy), is often seen as the beginning of building a strong base for beginning to work on developing confidence and self-awareness (Metge, 1995).

Hawk, Cowley, Hill, and Sutherland (2001) suggest that relationships which support enhanced outcomes and achievement between students and teachers/mentors have three specific elements. They include “empathy and an understanding of Māori culture,” “caring about the student,” and “respect for the student.” (Hawk, Cowley, Hill, and Sutherland, 2001). Metge (1995) also points out that Māori traditions of older whanau members supporting younger
whanau members or tuakana/teina relationships demonstrate that group mentoring within Māori culture is a common practice (Metge, 1995). The Ministry of Education (MoE), describe the tuakana-teina relationship as being;

an integral part of traditional Māori society, provides a model for buddy systems. An older or more expert tuakana (brother, sister or cousin) helps and guides a younger or less expert teina (originally a younger sibling or cousin). In a learning environment that recognises the value of ako, the tuakana–teina roles may be reversed at any time. For example, the student who yesterday was the expert on te wā and explained the lunar calendar may need to learn from her classmate today about how manaakitanga (hospitality) is practised by the local hapū.

(Te Reo in English Medium Schools, n.d., para. 1)

Metge (2015) suggests that youth mentoring type relationships were well-established in New Zealand before the concept became a term. These relationships focused largely on the same areas that contemporary mentorship relationships focus on. These include “training on new tasks, companionship, comfort, and managing minor wrongdoings” (Metge, 1995, p. 36).

The tuakana-teina approach to mentoring relationships has proven to be very successful in achieving targeted outcomes when implemented well and with a culturally responsive and respectful approach (Te Reo in English Medium Schools, n.d.). However, despite the fact that formal approaches to mentoring became common in the 1980’s, it is still unclear how frequently or how effectively programmes incorporate elements of Māori and Pacific Culture (Metge, 2015) and there is little formal guidance as to how an organisation might go about undertaking this
work. In terms of recognising and supporting Māori identity with youth for personal development. Borell, (2005) suggests that it is unclear as to what extent this has been incorporated into mentorship initiatives in meaningful and successful ways. This is clearly still a gap in both the literature and practical applications of mentorship and advisory approaches in New Zealand.

2.4 Mentorship Practices in Schools

Fort and Shurr (1993) define the learning advisory model as;

an affective educational program designed to focus on the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, and ethical development of students; a program providing a structured time during which special activities are designed and implemented to help adolescents find ways to fulfill their identified needs; intended to provide consistent, caring, and continuous adult guidance at school through the organization of a supportive and stable peer group that meets regularly under the guidance of a teacher serving as advisor (Forté & Schurr, 1993, p.117).

The literature around advisory and youth mentoring programmes identifies a number of aims and outcomes that learning advisory and youth mentorship models target. For example, the programmes are also sometimes based on developing a localised knowledge of what is needed in a target group of learners or on research around effective outcomes in advisory and mentor models. The outcomes that are most often targeted in advisory and mentorship models include prosocial skills, academic enhancement in combination with careers and future

The Education Alliance of Brown University’s (2003) provides an approach to creating advisories and expands on the above named outcomes to also include; group development, promote diversity and tolerance, foster positive peer relationships, and to promote character development. Galassi et al (1997) elaborate further that “Some programs, for example, might emphasize affective needs of students; whereas other programs seemed more concerned with needs in the cognitive area…” (Galassi et al., 1997, p. 40), but still acknowledges a “typology” of advisory aims and outcomes that is consistent with the above.

It should also be noted that there is a tendency for advisories and mentor programmes to be developed with some or all of the above mentioned target or goals areas in communities with low-socio-economic or poor social outcomes (Cole, 1992, Faruggia et al, 2011, and Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007). Research in both the United States of America and New Zealand also confirm that mentorship initiatives are more likely to be implemented in communities which display low-socio-economic or poor social outcome characteristics exist (Cole, 1992, Faruggia et al, 2011, and Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007). These mentorship models also tend to have the most measurable impacts in terms of mentor and mentee experiences of success in relation to each models specific goals (Cole, 1992, Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia et al, 2011, and Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007).
On one hand this may indicate that these are the communities which are likely to experience the most value from a mentorship model, however, research on this and comparisons to other types of communities is inconclusive or non-existent (Cole, 1992, Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia et al, 2011, and Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007).

Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia et al (2011) and Cole (1992) also acknowledge that studies on the effectiveness in mentorship models demonstrates that mentorship in general produce varied results and that mentor and advisory models in general do not necessarily achieve goals. Rather, the focus areas and quality of implementation are the key factors which lead to effective mentorship and positive student outcomes (Dutton, Bullem and Faruggia, 2011).

Further to this, in New Zealand, 88% of studied initiatives showed some level of effectiveness in delivering aspects of prosocial skills, academic enhancement in combination with careers and future pathways learning, community leadership and impact, administrative tracking and communications, development of personal hauora and problem solving and decision making skills (Dutton, Bullem, and Faruggia, 2011). However, Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia’s (2011) work indicates that New Zealand youth mentorship produces the most effective outcomes when they are focused on psychological and interpersonal goals. In fact, these were more effective in achieving each of their model specific mentorship goals than New Zealand “programmes (that) focused on educational, behavioural, vocational or cultural goals” (Faruggia et al, 2011). This is significant in terms of identifying the goals that a school community should consider when thinking about developing an approach to advisory. Without a clear set of targeted aims and outcomes that advisors and advisees are familiar with and align
to the qualities of effective advisory, the mentorship or advisory model is also more likely to be poor (Faruggia et al, 2011 and Galassi et al 1997).

2.4.1 Taking a principles based approach to advisory implementation

Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk (2003), Dillow, (2016), and Cole (1992) advocate for developing a mission, vision, or principles based approach in order to ground the community of learning in a shared goal. All three authors strongly recommend a collaborative and transparent approach to developing mission statements and principles that all members of the school communities can turn to when practices or those implementing the approaches need guidance.

Bullen, Galassi and Grossman & Rhodes (2002) assert that following the principles of good practice are pivotal to the success of any mentorship or advisory programme. According to Grossman & Rhodes (2002), these principles include applying the known best approaches to “social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development” (2002, p.32) that best fit the context of the programme and should be taken into account when planning for and implementing a mentorship initiative. A principles based approach helps to ensure high quality mentorship by mentees who understand and share the same vision for the work and skill set needed to deliver an effective mentorship experience Grossman & Rhodes (2002). While the few researchers, practitioners and authors that have examined the implementation aspects of advisory models, there is a significant lack of literature - particularly from New Zealand, Māori, and Pacific communities and learners, that shed light on ways of developing relevant learning advisory approaches for schools.
2.4.2 Implementation and Strategic Development of Advisories

In New Zealand, youth mentoring rose quickly to prominence through the 1980’s and has been a feature of many youth initiatives since then (Dutton, Bullen and Faruggia et al, 2011). Youth mentoring for at risk young people in particular has gathered much momentum as government or non-governmental organisation funded entities or trusts have emerged and research has been undertaken in a range of models over the years (New Zealand Youth Mentoring, 2014). For example, Faruggia (2011) and Dubois (2011) both describe the positive impacts of a ‘one on one’ mentoring relationship as being pivotal, particularly for those youth deemed to be ‘at risk’. When implemented well, both academic advising and youth mentoring can lead to improved outcomes in well-being, education and career pathways for those young people who have had this exposure (Kiarich and Simmons, 1989).

Kiarich and Simmons (1989) note that in American Schools advisory programs designed for gifted students also have a positive effect on overall school culture, particularly in those factors connected to increased feelings of belonging and safety, and optimum conditions for learning. Bragg and Simpson (2013) elaborate on this idea and identify that the personalised approach to long term relationship building, individual support, and attention to the cognitive, social, and emotional development have been shown to support improved learner outcomes both during secondary school and beyond. These results have been noted across diverse socio-economic contexts, and in rural, urban and inner city environments (Bragg and Simpson, 2013). Overall, creating the opportunity to customise support for students with a relational focus has been shown to be a very worthwhile endeavour in a wide range of settings and communities (Kiarich and Simmons, 2013).
Kiarich and Simmons (2013) note that if the quality of an advisory model is high, there is a noticeable range of benefits (NMSA, 1996, and Kiarich and Simmons, 1989 & 1991). The impacts of successful implementation for advisory can include; lower absenteeism in high risk groups, stronger academic achievement, lower dropout rates, higher rates of transition to tertiary education, and better communication and culture across the entire school (NMSA, 1996, and Kiarich and Simmons, 1989 & 1991).

In addition, well-implemented advisory models have also been shown to address the impacts of social and interpersonal concerns and impact on academic and disciplinary outcomes (NMAS, 1996). Wiggfield and Eccels (1994) also assert that well implemented learning advisories also support the development of “adolescents’ competence beliefs and expectancies for success (which) are the strongest predictors of subsequent performance” (Wiggfield and Eccels, 1994). It is hoped that in my school, the result of the advisory implementation will positively affect learners in the aforementioned areas. The data from this research project will then be used to better understand if the initiative has been successful so far, and how the next phase of implementation might be undertaken to improve the model and its intended outcomes for students.

Another aspect of advisory programme implementation research into the key factors for developing an effective model includes investigations on the planning, evaluation and development of existing programmes and their leadership. Dutton, Bullen, Faruggia et al, (2011), Galassi et al (1997), and Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk (2003) outline the key success factors for starting a school or organisational based approach to developing mentoring or
advisory programmes. These researchers agree that key factors that lead to the development of a quality programme include:

- The purpose, aims, and outcomes of the proposed model should be clearly articulated
- Organisation of time and groupings should be at a regular specified routine time, in a group ideally no larger than 15, and any specific local factors should be researched and taken into account. (there is potential for gender, interest base, cultural responsivity to play a role, or the very opposite, should not be a key consideration at all.)
- That the best outcomes stem from quality time spent between the advisor and the advisee in one to one situations\(^3\) for a program time of at least one year.
- That leadership focused on creating buy in, ensuring professional development and resources are quality and up to date, developing content, conducting or seeking out research based self-review and ongoing evaluation by all stakeholders involved leads to improved outcomes of these models.
- That the skill set and understanding of the advisor/mentor role is crucial to supporting positive outcomes for advisees.


The New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network (n.d.) offer similar observations to DuBois et al., (2002), and Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, (2000) on the importance of following a safe

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\(^3\) It has been suggested that this approach to individual mentoring may not be an appropriate cultural fit - in particular for mentees from NZ Māori and Pacific cultural backgrounds. However, Bullen and Faruggia et al also point out that there is little research on the cultural contexts which affect mentoring. This is likely an excellent area for further research.
practice model as illustrated in their recommendations for youth mentorship programmes in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network: Model for Safe Practice in the Mentor/Mentee Relationship*

(NZ Youth Mentoring Network, 2016)
The Youth Mentorship model (above) has a particular focus on articulating the importance of the Mentor/Mentee relationship being supported by the programme design, planning, management and evaluation. These administrative elements in turn, should be underpinned by the processes necessary to run a sustainable programme; including considerations such as recruitment and suitability, training and connecting appropriate mentors with mentees, ongoing monitoring and support and how to acknowledge the importance of closure to the relationship upon completion (NZ Youth Mentoring Network, 2016).

Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk (2003) recommend a system which includes collaborative exercises and planning models for implementing an advisory model which considers the context of the school or organisation. This as well as Cole’s (1993) work are key reflections into action planning for successful advisories that address the specific needs of learners in a community, and also offers formal research based support for incorporating whanau, aiga, and concepts of self within collective cultural groups such as Māori and Pacific learners within the New Zealand school settings.

2.4.3 Implications for administration of implementing successful advisory initiatives

Overall, the body of writing and research on implications for administering advisory models serve to direct potential advisory programmes with the key areas for consideration, but notably, there is little formal research into the action planning of implementation or recommendations for implementation in New Zealand schools. In addition, research is needed
that reflects how New Zealand schools might include elements in mentorship and advisory models that are relevant and responsive to the needs of Māori and Pacific young people.

In addition, currently there is little formal research on the impact of different leadership styles or deliberate actions and strategies for implementing advisory models in schools or in mentor programmes. However, Cole (1992) advises that there are a number of key considerations that leaders can plan for when designing a programme. These include the developmental characteristics and needs of students, regular routine and scheduling of time to support student and teacher expectations, supported by both leadership and staff as a shared approach within the school, and the programme is appropriate for the context, culture and ethos of the school (Cole, 1992). A plan becomes an anchor for both administration, advisors, and advisees, and help to shape the development of the programme if created and referred to regularly (Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk, 2003, Dillow, 2016, Cole, 1992). Millar (2014) agrees with this perspective, and also identifies key recommendations based on research gathering student, school, and whanau voice on Māori learners’ experiences in academic mentoring programmes.

2.4.4 The Role of the Teacher

Dillow (2016) points out that teacher administration, keeping notes, and written records of communications and developments is also key to tracking, monitoring, and ongoing planning and evaluation of the effects of the advisor/advisee relationship and progress towards goals.

Literature on the skills and strategies involved in being a good advisor or mentor is another area that must be considered in this area of research. Communication, conflict resolution, and personal coaching and development are key skills for successful mentors and
advisors (Galassi, 1997). Cole (1992), discusses the importance of basic active listening skills and promotes training for all those undertaking an advisee role using her model. Similarly, the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network also addresses the importance of good listening skills, silence, and open, reflecting, and clarifying questions as being key skills in the toolbox of a good mentor (Cole, 1992, and New Zealand Youth Mentoring, 2016).

2.4.5 Skills and Professional Development for Teachers

The role of mentor specific communication skills are also a key component of developing effective advisor/advisee relationships Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter’s (2007). Hutchins and Cole (1991) go into more detail about the importance of advisors being developed and taught the communication skills necessary to effectively deliver a relational and student focused approach. Similarly, Osofsky, Sinner and Wolk (2003) advocate for these communicative relationship skills to be taught, practiced in workshops, and developed over time. Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter’s (2007) research provides specific examples which demonstrate that advisor/advisee communications that had elements of verbal aggression affected outcomes and the perspective of the advisor as a credible advocate and sources of support, while the presence of humour in the communicative relationship skill set of the mentor positively affected the relationship and relational trust. This also enhanced positive student effects related to their experiences of advisory (Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007).

Dillow (2016) adds to the skill-set description of an advisor as being able to differentiate between “yellow-light and red-light” disclosures by advisees, and ensuring good programme planning prepares advisors with the knowledge and skills to be able to identify ethical concerns,
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student safety issues, and when students should be referred on to another professional for specialist support (Dillow, 2016).

Furthermore, Dillow (2016) outlines potential issues that may arise if advisors do not understand when there is potential conflict of interest. This may be as a result of advisor agenda’s or worldviews conflicting with that of the advisees, or because of dual roles held within a learning community or organisation. (Dillow, 2016), Cole (1992) and the NZ Youth Mentoring Network (2016), also echo that this awareness must be addressed as part of the necessary planning and professional development phases incorporated into implementing an advisory model.

Millar (2014) advocates for a whole systems approach that intentionally addresses strategies for implementation including the development of mentor skill set and inclusion in the development of the programme and systems to support. This includes considering how effective and efficient the school’s data collection and storage systems are, but most importantly, that schools “must work with staff to make sure they are using culturally-responsive pedagogy and that they recognise their own cultural positioning and how it impacts on their Māori students” (Millar, 2014, p, 101).

DuBois et al., (2002) and Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, (2000) have added that family or caregiver involvement is also connected with the success of programmes. Millar’s (2014) work asserts that mentor programmes must also incorporate working with whanau/family in ways that extend past contact for disciplinary actions. This includes beginning to better include processes for ongoing co-design with Māori learners and their whanau in order to inform further
developments to advisory programmes (Millar, 2104). The relationship between connecting the goals and purposes of any model with the learner’s pathway and planning while engaging whanau in the process is also clearly articulated in a range of other studies on academic mentoring work with Māori learners (Biddulph and Faruggia. et al., 2003, and McKinley et al., 2009).

2.5 Gaps in the Existing Literature

After exploring literature which dealt with the importance of context and culture to advisory, implementation and administration of successful advisory models, and the changing role or the teacher or mentor in advisory or mentor programs, there are gaps which can be identified. In particular, there is little literature that refers to the implications (outcomes, practices, resources, and implementation strategies) for Learning Advisory Models in New Zealand, and in particular, in communities with large proportions of Māori and Pacific peoples. Similarly, there is little research on how learning advisory models should be implemented, specifically in the New Zealand settings, and what strategies are recommended to support their success. Furthermore, while the schools seem to be implementing these models in New Zealand contexts, there is little educational research on how the intended purposes for each model are intended to inform further developments or provide direction for other schools implementing, or considering implementing, similar initiatives. In particular, literature that explores the value of developing mentor models with a community’s unique characteristics in mind is lacking.
This research is designed to help me understand the student and teacher experiences of a new advisory model in my school’s context. It is intended to support the school being studied to ensure they are developing a high quality advisory approach, and to consider the students and teacher’s experiences of the model, what they value, and their voices around what should be taken into account alongside the literature in order to continue to improve and develop the learning advisory at my school.

The study is also intended to provide some insights into one school’s experiences of the first year of implementing a learning advisory that other teachers and schools may find useful. The method and approach to understanding the initiative and developing it may also be of use in other schools implementing a similar model and could potentially be useful for researching their own implementation. In this way, the wider community of practice may benefit by being able to use or modify the research approach in order to take practical steps to better understand and improve their own version of learning advisory models.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach that was used, outlines the questions that led the research, and identifies the limitations of that approach. The participant description and data collection methods used to carry out the research will be described, and how this data was analysed and used to inform the study will be addressed. It will then discuss the ethical considerations and consultation approach used to mitigate the largest ethical concerns.

3.2 Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of the research was to describe teacher and student’s experiences of a new learning advisory model at one school including identifying the participant’s reports on the value of their experiences. The research is also intended to use student and teacher voices to guide recommendations for further improvement of the learning advisory model. The questions which led this study were:

What are student and teacher experiences of the learning advisory model?

What recommendations can be made for the ongoing improvement of the College learning advisory model?
3.3 Epistemology and Ontology

This study was influenced by the researcher’s own epistemological and ontological perspectives which also helped to inform the methodology, the methods selected to carry out the research, and how the analysis was carried out. It is important to be able to identify the beliefs that underpin the perspective of the researcher as this influences their positioning and how the researcher sees the world.

I believe that schools and the communities they are a part are complex environments. I also believe that knowledge held by communities within the school setting provide valuable information to inform the improvement of school systems and processes. This is in line with an interpretive view as outlined by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007), and means that by taking into account the unique and complex positions that the individual student and teachers hold about their own experiences, “the social world” (p.15) of the school being investigated can be accounted for and better understood. Therefore, the belief that the answers to my research questions can be found within the social contexts to which they are meaningful informs my decision to adopt an interpretivist approach through the use of a qualitative research methodology informed by practitioner research approaches (Anderson and Herr, 1999). In fact, my belief that my positioning as a practitioner researcher will further enhance the analysis of the research by anchoring it in insider knowledge of the context (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998), also confirms that this is the best approach to take in order to address the research questions.
3.4 Qualitative research methodology

Creswell (1994) suggests that a qualitative methodology aims to gain understanding of a particular context and the participants involved within that context. This qualitative study is clearly focused on identifying and describing the teacher and student experiences of a new initiative in my school to inform improvement and development. The study draws on a practitioner research (Anderson and Herr, 1999) approach and employs a qualitative methodology (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994) to design the research process. Qualitative methods are used in the collection and analysis of the data. Metze and Page (2002) identify a qualitative methodology as being of particular use in legitimising practitioner research in education.

A qualitative methodology fits the intentions of the research well and ensured that the focus was on collecting meaningful data that was relevant to the initiative being studied was kept in focus (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007 & Mutch, 2005). A key intent of practitioner research is that the answers to the research questions will have the most meaning to those involved in the context of the research, and has the most potential to meaningfully impact the participants (Robinson & Lai, 2006). It is for these reasons and considerations that a qualitative methodology informed by practitioner research was the most appropriate for this study.

3.5 Practitioner Research

Because of my position with the school and my perspective as a member of the implementation team for a new advisory model within the school, it is acknowledged that this is
insider researcher (Miller, 1990, and Gitlin et al., 1992). This perspective is also outlined by Robinson and Lai (2006) who describe the relevance of this methodology as particularly beneficial when the researcher is aiming to improve the teaching and learning practices in their own setting. In order to conduct effective, practitioner research one must include compelling accounts (Robinson and Lai, 2006). There must also be criteria for validating the research, and making sure that ways of mitigating potential bias or coercion are planned into the design (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994). The outcome of this study is intended to initiate an ongoing change and improvement process in terms of the quality and relevance of the advisory model. This goal is at the heart of the work carried out by practitioner researchers (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1998; Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy, 2010).

This research perspective was included for two reasons despite it being controversial or questioned at times because of the obvious potential for bias (Anderson, 2001). The first is because of my role as an insider in the school being studied which means that this perspective was unavoidable for the study. The second, is because carrying out valid insider research has the potential for greater personal, professional, and organizational learning (Miller, 1990), and is recognized as an approach to authentic staff development, professional renewal, and school reform (Gitlin et al., 1992), and a new way of thinking about knowledge creation, dissemination, and utilization in schools (Carr & Kemmis, 1983 as cited in Anderson, 2001). If carried out accurately and ethically the nature of high quality participant research has the potential to be of significant use to the immediate and wider community of practice (Metz, 2001). Undertaking practitioner research in this way in an applied field such as education and in my own community...
of practice had the potential for enormous benefits to my personal practice, the immediate community of practice, and the wider education community (Metze and Page, 2002).

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Two questionnaires were used to collect data relating to the aims of the project. One teacher questionnaire and one student questionnaire were used to establish the two different groups’ experiences of the model in order to best account for the experiences of those most deeply involved in the model’s implementation and execution.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were designed to collect data about the participant experiences of the model based on their personal experiences. Mutch (2005) describes questionnaires as being relevant when collecting a large amount of data in order to represent a specific group or population. As this study intended to uncover the overall teacher and student experiences of a whole school implementation of a new initiative, the questionnaire approach was the most appropriate to gather data from this large group. Hinds (2000) agrees and also notes that questionnaires are useful to study groups in order to make comparisons and use their responses for further development.

The questionnaires were carefully designed to ensure they met the considerations outlined by Hind (2000) and Mutch’s (2005) regarding simple and effective questions that focus
on events in the recent past within easy recollection of the participants. Questionnaires were selected as a method as they are particularly relevant for collecting large amounts of data which represent specific groups (Mutch, 20015). The questions associated with the questionnaires are provided in the appendices (appendix A1).

The student and teacher questionnaires were made available to all students and teachers involved in the initiative and were chosen as a method that would best meet the need to gather a school wide snapshot of student and teacher’s experiences over the entire school. The advantages of this approach is that questionnaires were an achievable way to collect data from a large number of participants. A questionnaire was made available to all teachers and students in order to collect their perspectives of the implementation. One student and one teacher questionnaire were used to ask each group of participants to report on their experiences of the model’s objectives and implementation.

In total twenty-six teachers and three hundred and one students completed the questionnaire for each of the two participant groups. The data collection point was at the three-quarter way point in the first year of implementation in order to give the initiative a period of time to settle.

There were some challenges associated with the gathering of data through questionnaires. Interpreting some of the responses was also tricky in terms of understanding student and teacher responses accurately and making sure that the meaning was not inferred or any researcher bias was present which was also challenging (Hinds, 2000). This risk was mitigated by working with my advisors in the interpretation of the data. The other disadvantage
of this method was that some participants gave very brief or non-descriptive responses. This is always a risk when using the questionnaire for data collection (Hinds, 2000) since a researcher is unable to go back to the respondent to fill in any gaps. However, conducting focus groups for a wide enough range of participants was not scalable for the time frame and size of this study. Mutch’s (2005) and Bell’s (1997) suggestions and approaches to designing the questionnaire were considered and applied. Gathering parent permission for participants under the age of sixteen was also a challenge, and added a significant time challenge to the study as well.

A final limitation of this data collection method is that the participants are restricted to the lines of questions available and there may be other information worth capturing that does not have a chance to come to light or the depth of their answers is limited. (Mutch, 2005).

3.6.3 Data analysis

Detailed analysis of the student and teacher questionnaires was undertaken. Key themes, drawn from the literature review including the evolution of advisory models in New Zealand, culturally and contextually appropriate mentorship practices (such as a focus on whakawhanaungatanga, hauora, and talanoa), administration and implementation of advisory models, and the role of the teacher including teacher development and skill set, all provided a way to sort the data.
3.6.4 Participant Overview

The participants were made up of two groups; the students involved in the implemented advisory model and the teachers implementing the advisory model. The questionnaires were issued to 1213 learners across the entire school from year nine to year thirteen, and eighty teachers. The aim was to gather as much information from as many participants in the new learning advisory environment as possible in order to be able to draw conclusions that would be meaningful for the whole school. The focus was on trying to get a wide range of perspectives on experiences of the advisory model in order to best reflect the entire student body and staff. In total three hundred and one learners, and twenty-six staff members participated in the research.

Student and teacher participants were recruited in assemblies, staff meetings, and class time, by a neutral third party who explained the nature of the research project and went through the participant information and consent processes. Those interested in participating could then collect the consent forms and final information on where, when, and how to participate in the research.

3.7 Analysis of Data

The nature and number of questions associated with the questionnaires as well as the number of respondents meant that there was a large amount of data collected during the collection phase. The analysis of this type of data is complex as it relies on the interpretation of the participants articulated experiences and the researcher must also take care to avoid any personal bias in this analysis process (Campbell et al, 2010). Bias was mitigated by ensuring that all
analysis activities followed the method in the design and was checked for accuracy and interpretation with my supervisors at regular intervals.

The practitioner researcher approach makes mitigating bias particularly important, and as part of the analysis, care was taken to approach this work keeping the participants point of view in mind. A thematic approach to analysis was undertaken. This thematic analysis approach is advocated for and defined by Mahrer (1988), Spradley (1979), and Taylor & Bogdan (1984) and provided a way to begin the analysis of a large amount of complex data. A concept chart (Aronson, 1994) was developed based during initial reading of the data (1994) and was used to sort and organise the questionnaire responses. Key themes in the literature review also provided guidance during this phase of analysis.

Once the data was collected and put through the initial sorting phase, the perspectives and experiences of the participants were analysed within the context of the background information on this particular initiative by looking for keywords, phrases or references. Unanticipated themes were acknowledged and added or used to adapt the existing codes. Verification of the theme and analysis process was also undertaken by the researcher’s advisors. In addition, this perspective also helped to acknowledge irrelevant or inadequate areas of data, the emergence of trends and how to go about validating trends through the analysis process.

The approach used to complete the thematic analysis is consistent with Aronson’s recommendations in *A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis* (1994). Initial coding areas were developed with anticipated themes identified in the literature review, as well as salient themes that emerged through the data and relevant to the study’s context. Themes and sub-themes
included areas such as the nature of a relationship with a significant teacher in the school, attendance and achievement tracking, goal setting, monitoring, and pathway planning, positive psychology and learning to learn skills, developing student leadership, making connections with home and family, and networking internally and externally with other experts and services.

While the data was sorted, other trends and patterns in the participant responses were also sorted and added to this initial list. Data was also sorted in relation to the context of the research questions, and other information given in individual participant answers.

After the initial sorting phase into patterns, sub-themes were then identified. This data type was analysed and recorded in three ways. The first was to code the data into themes found in the data and to inform overall judgements regarding the sorting. The second was to look for gaps and outliers in the data that pointed to inconsistencies in the participants’ experiences of the initiative. The third was to compare the data sources to look for further sub-themes including convergent ideas, divergent ideas, outliers, and gaps in expected data in order to identify any perspectives that were anticipated but did not emerge, trends that were only identified by particular groups of participants (for example, the teachers identify one outcome they believe they have achieved, however, no learners identify this as an important experience), or to look for trends that begin to highlight issues or successes that are linked and could be leveraged for further successes in the model, or are linked and should be addressed or removed from the model (Aronson, 1994).

Finally, the data was then sorted and considered in comparison to the themes identified in the literature review. This final step functioned to unpack the identified themes and
sub-themes to look to build a detailed picture of the advisory initiative based on the literature and the findings of the research. This final analysis helped to identify the intended goals and principles of the initiative, identify the key student and teachers experiences, and to compare these two things in order to describe the initiative's first year of implementation. This led to the consideration of the critical implications of the research, implications for further study, limitations, and recommendations for the future of the advisory initiative.

3.7.1 Validity

The importance of mitigating possible validity issues was of the utmost importance for this study. Within practitioner research ‘trustworthiness’ is identified as an essential aspect of research. In order to ensure that the research was ‘trustworthy’ (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 2007) and due to the complex relationships involved in practitioner research, great care was taken in each stage of the analysis processes. This was done through the ongoing guidance of the researcher’s advisors, by ensuring the literature was from a range of sources well outside my usual scope of work, and by undertaking a data collection approach which included student and teacher voices. These factors ensured that the analysis process was not reliant on the researcher’s sole interpretation of documents, drivers and processes used in creating the plan.

Another key element of this study’s validity is the importance of the perceived trustworthiness of the insider practitioner researcher (Mayo, 2009). Klincheloe (2008) asserts that the validity and usefulness of qualitative practitioner research is directly related to the perceived trustworthiness, or the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the
participants. Kincheloe (2008) also states that quality teacher researchers must take the position of not only knowing their context and interpreting the data within that context, but of ensuring the comfort of the participants and the confidence of those participants in the researcher to make meaning of the data in order to inform the next steps. In the context of this research, the trustworthiness of myself as a researcher and also colleague was key to undertaking the research and identifying the need within my school, but more importantly, to the perceived usefulness and informed nature of the research due to my insider knowledge (Kincheloe, 2011). In other words, in order to have the most valid outcomes for the research, my position as insider likely allowed for a specific perspective on the existing complexities, and also supported the participants in their willingness to report on their experiences as well as to trust in the findings and recommendations of the research as coming from someone in a position to understand their context specifically (Kincheloe, 2011 and Mayo, 2009) and thus contribute to the ongoing success of the initiative within the school.

3.8 Ethical Considerations and Consultation

Approval to carry out this study was provided by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. It was important for the committee and researcher to consider the student and teacher participants involved in this project whose wellbeing could potentially have been affected.
Students may have potentially been at risk of harm or discomfort while completing the questionnaire. There was also the possibility that some students may have felt uncomfortable talking about their experiences and learning, or may have felt under pressure to respond in a particular way. In addition, there are also high numbers of Māori, Pasifika and immigrants who were likely to be participants. Measures were taken to ensure participant wellbeing was managed and maintained by ensuring the support or systems from the school were available if needed. The kaumatua iwi representative and the Māori Liaison officer, pasifika representative, and school youth officer and guidance counsellor were asked to advise and approve the format, wording, and content of the questionnaire. They also agreed to provide support or include whanau if needed to support a learner completing or requesting support during or after undertaking the questionnaire.

3.8.1 Confidentiality, Consent and Anonymity

Cohen et al (2002), recommends that participants are given detailed information about the research and what is involved in their participation. The researcher used a neutral third party to inform all participants of the research’s aims and objectives, ethical research practices, the design for anonymity, and their right to not participate at the outset and during the research and participant recruitment. The third party also delivered the participant information and notification that the research has no bearing on academic or professional outcomes, assessment or appraisal. Included in this information was details of how to go about requesting support or making complaints through a neutral party or with the support of a relevant person.
In order to mitigate ethical issues related to staff group participation, the following steps were undertaken; the questionnaire data collection method was designed to be short and to the point in order to avoid increasing participant’s workload. Participants were also made aware of how their confidentiality would be ensured through secured and password and IP protected storage of data, and anonymous participation protocols as well as who would have access to the data. Finally, there was no compensation for participants as participating in research and data collection is a normal activity within the school and may have also compromised the integrity of the data collected. All consent, information and research participation aspects were reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure they were up to standard.

3.8.2 Conflicts of Interest and Bias

There are also potential conflicts of interest that may exist in the project that must be acknowledged and mitigated. The first is the role of the researcher as a member of a leadership team in the implementation of the advisory model. This involvement meant that there was potentially a conflict of interest and that the researchers perspectives may be biased. To mitigate this risk, all data and conclusions were checked by an objective party, in this case the researcher’s supervisors, in order to receive guidance and assurance that this bias has been avoided. In addition, this conflict of interest extends to the presentation of potential findings and the reports and recommendations based on the research have the potential to influence the researcher’s professional status and regard either positively or negatively. Again, the researcher’s advisors have been consulted throughout the process in order to ensure the risk to the researcher and the research validity is mitigated and accounted for.
3.9 Summary

This chapter has focused on discussing the methodological approach used in the research project. The qualitative research methods that were used have been described. This included the use of two participant questionnaires. The advantages and disadvantages of the method have also been discussed. The chapter also gives a description of the student and teacher participant groups and the data collection and analysis processes that were followed. The chapter includes the ethical considerations and consultation processes that were used in order to mitigate any ethical risks in the study.

This study is focused on participant experiences of the advisory model in detail - the new learning advisory initiative at the College - by documenting the voices of the students and teachers involved in implementing the programme in order to understand and describe the initiative and to form recommendations for the initiative’s next steps. By using student and teachers voice to describe the actual experiences of the programme, greater understandings of the success and challenges of a learning advisory approach at the College can be understood and then used to improve the approach in the future.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The research project that is reported on in this thesis focused on the student and teacher experiences of implementing a learning advisory model in a state secondary year 9-13 New Zealand school.

Research Questions

The project was guided by the following research questions:

- What are student and teacher experiences of the learning advisory model?

- What recommendations can be made for the ongoing improvement of the college learning advisory model?

Before the research project began, a thorough review of the planning documents, policies and intended outcomes relating to the learning advisory model was undertaken. This helped inform the development of the questionnaires. The review included school-based documents with content relating to the learning advisory model including the school strategic plans, board reports related to the model, and 2017 goals, school planning, tracking and reporting templates relating to the learning advisory model. Also reviewed were resources used for planning and implementing teaching and learning experiences and staff professional development documents around the learning advisory model. Planning and process documents
used to create the principles, targeted outcomes, and practices relating to the learning advisory model were also reviewed and this included meeting minutes, school developed handbooks, statements on the principles and documents relating to forums undertaken with teaching staff. All data collected from internal implementation student and teacher voice gathered prior to beginning this research project was reviewed. Thus a thorough overview of school related principles, goals and intentions and the intended processes and procedures for this initiative was gained.

There were three main areas I wanted to explore with this research. Firstly, I was interested in the teachers’ experiences and views of implementing an advisory model; secondly I was interested in the students’ experiences and views of their involvement in an advisory model and; thirdly I wanted to utilise the reported experiences of participants to explore how the model could be improved and made more valuable in the future.

A review of the literature identified common themes in advisory and mentorship models and key considerations for implementing advisory models in New Zealand. However, very little research gave any definitive processes, skills, or learning outcome recommendations for running successful learning advisories in New Zealand, and it also became very clear that the success of any model was dependent on the implementing groups’ ability to localise the approach and investigate what the community and learner’s needs are relevant to context. By exploring my own school of practice while we worked on implementing this concept in a way that was meaningful and valuable for the learning community, I hoped to uncover the key elements that were successful in the first year of implementation, and also to identify any areas
of concern or focus areas for future development. It was also important to me to develop this understanding by focusing on the actual experiences of the learners and teachers.

The analysis of the data was guided by these research goals and by the literature review. The data analysis focus on 1) Teacher’s and student’s experiences of the key elements of running an advisory 2) Teacher’s and student’s perspectives on what was valuable to them in advisory and what would be valuable to improve or add into the model.

4.1.1 Overview of the Questions, Responses and Findings

As mentioned in the methodology, the research questionnaires were designed to gather the perspectives of the teachers and students on their experiences of the advisory model. The questions on both surveys were designed to collect data on these two different perspectives and used similar questions and language in order to collect information as accurately as possible that reflected the same areas from the two participant groups. Each questionnaire had nine descriptive open-ended question (Appendix D and Appendix E). The questions were designed with the intention of collecting information from the participants to describe what was going on in the model for them at the time (Creswell, 1994). This unstructured design was also used to capture as much of the participants original thoughts and voice as possible, while providing key words and ideas about the advisory model for consideration based on the literature and minimizing prompting or leading questions which narrowed the scope for authentic response (Gitlin et al. 1992). Themes were identified using the initial information from the College’s steering group priorities and in consideration of the key themes from the review of literature.
The questions were worded to focus the participants on describing their experiences specifically around the theme areas of:

- The intended learning in the model
- The experienced learning in the model
- The effectiveness of the teaching approaches used in delivering the model
- The key resources used to deliver the model
- What learning resources, experiences or outcomes are not used that may be of benefit
- What teaching approaches are not being used that would benefit the model
- Any other issues, ideas or information that each participant reported was important

The depth and level of detail in responses to both the student and teacher questionnaires varied. Question eight on the student question questionnaire and nine on the teacher question questionnaire, ‘In your experience, are there any other ideas or issues you believe are worth bringing to the attention of the researcher?’ in particular, did not yield a high rate of response; 32% of students responded, and 58% of staff responded to this question, with the remainder opting not to respond. Over the entire student questionnaire 54% of student answers were short phrases or descriptions, 14% were made up of descriptive one word answers, 13% of all student answers were short one word answers that could indicate a neutral stance, and 19% of answers were lengthy and included multi-sentence answers with a range of perspectives and description.

Staff questionnaires yielded a 100% answer rate for questions one through eight, with all staff producing multi-sentence or multi-point descriptions of their experiences and perspectives.
on each question topic.

4.2 The Learning Advisory Model: Perceived Benefits, Challenges and Areas for Development

Key themes emerged through the analysis of the data and these are:

- Whakawhanaungatanga and student wellbeing
- Learning-to-Learn, Self-Management, and Learning Support
- Future Pathways and Student Agency
- Changing Role of the Teacher, and
- Negative Perspectives of the Learning Advisory Model

Both teacher and student participants identified elements of the advisory model that they thought was of benefit. They also identified aspects that were not beneficial or were not being implemented well.

For the context of this project the learning advisory groups are referred to as hapū groups and the teacher advisors are referred to as amokura. Hapū groups are organised in year levels and range in size from fifteen to twenty-five students with one teacher or amokura. During the year of the study, groups were scheduled to meet daily for thirty-five minutes as part of the regular school timetable. The learning focus for each group was to be tailored to that group and with a focus on the development of the school’s Belong, Learn, Succeed ethos. Foci were required to be developmentally appropriate for the year level outcomes and the learning goals related to the school’s ‘Four C’ focus areas; Connection, Character, Confidence, and
Competence. Teachers were provided with the opportunity to be flexible in the way they structured these meetings.

4.3 Whakawhanaungatanga and Student Wellbeing

In Te Reo Māori, or the language of the Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand, whakawhanaungatanga refers to the process of building and maintaining relationships or relating well to others. Teacher and student participants strongly identified whakawhanaungatanga and student wellbeing as elements of the advisory that they valued most and reported they benefited from. This particular theme also mirrors the other advisory experiences identified in the literature review. Both teachers and students responses suggest that their experiences of relationship building and supporting student wellbeing as largely positive and pivotal to the advisory initiative. This included fostering a sense of belonging and supporting the personal wellbeing and development of each learner. It is important however, to also note that while all teacher comments on whakawhanaungatanga and student wellbeing experiences were positive, not all student responses were also positive. These responses and perspectives will be addressed in the findings section.

4.3.1 Whakawhanaungatanga and fostering a sense of belonging

The participants all reported that hapū groups which focused on including developing and purposefully nurturing relationships between learners and amokura, within the learners in the hapū group, and between the home and family with the amokura, were central to the ethos of the advisory model. The importance of having an intentional relational approach to
developing a learning community that included the relationship between the teacher and individual learner, between the learners in the hapū group, and between the teacher and the family of each learner was something both the teacher and student participants wrote about in their responses. Teachers articulated this in the following ways:

“As amokura, our responsibility is to have a stronger relationship with learners and their family.” (Teacher respondent A)

“(to) Provide a space where learners can establish, maintain their sense of belonging at (the College). A place to feel socially accepted, academically support/driven, and individually guided.” (Teacher respondent B)

“Our role is to help learners to feel that they belong to a community (safe environment and close relationship) which will support them with academic and personal goals (Connection), to participate and contribute and to make decisions which support learning and achievement and personal growth (Character), to take deliberate acts to make a difference in outcomes and to see the value of goal setting and reflection as part of the learning and achievement cycle (Confidence), to engage in the tracking, monitoring and reflection (eg Personal Statement) process in order to raise their achievement (Competence).” (Teacher respondent C)

The importance of developing stronger connections between the students, their families, and the school was also specifically mentioned. This was articulated as a way of ensuring the students were supported holistically and in culturally appropriate ways.

Although students identified study and independent learning time as one of the main purposes of the learning advisory and this will be discussed in the following section, they indicated that their experiences were focused more clearly on whakawhanaungatanga between their group, teacher, and home.

“I’ve learnt heaps of things when I’m in hapū I’ve learnt how to connect with my
peers and my amokura. I love the bond and the connection we do in hapū makes me feel like I belong in (the) college and the experiences I've had has been fun and enjoyable. “ (Teacher respondent D)

“Connecting with our amokura.... connecting with a family and all learning the love and respect a whanau has.” (Teacher respondent E)

“How to develop connections with people you don't usually associate yourself with.” (Teacher respondent K)

“How to make friends, socialize and be less of an A**H***, which has made me less egotistical and helped with how I interact with people.” (Teacher respondent M)

Participants stated that the relational aspect of the model was a key purpose and that doing this work intentionally was the basis for the other work and learning involved in the programme.

4.3.2 Personal wellbeing and development:

Another area that both teachers and students identified in their experiences of the advisory model was hapū times which were designed to target social and emotional learning. Both participant groups also reported that overall, they are supported to target the holistic wellbeing of the learner as an individual. Teachers described that having one on one learning conversations during hapū time was key to their effectiveness in delivering these advisory goals. Teachers also referenced the concept of whakawhanaungatanga as central to this work and used it to help describe the complex idea of how student belonging, trust and connection needed to be developed for the personalised learning conversations focusing on students successes, needs, and next steps were central to their ability to be successful delivering the models goals.
The students expressed similar ideas, however, their concepts of how well this relationship and how much they valued the amokura interaction was very strongly connected to their perspective of the teacher’s disposition and demeanor as an amokura. This has implications for developing a shared understanding of how to enhance the interpersonal skill set of amokura in order to make the most of this practice and build stronger relationships between the amokura and the learner. In the quote below a teacher outlines their experience of the interpersonal skills required of the role within the group

"Being flexible, and adapting to what the kids want to learn. Being responsive to what’s happening in classes, life, social issues (and) examining the needs of the class and individuals." (Teacher respondent H)

Noticeable throughout the data collected from the teachers and students, and in line with the literature, was agreement that the one on one learning conversation was a key practice associated with perceived effectiveness of the model. Participants identified these conversations as a valued element of the delivery and way of learning and achieving the identified outcomes in a personalised way.

"They are really good in my opinion because some teachers hang over your shoulder or focus on one person but they always check up on every single one of us which is good." (Student respondent 1)

"To me they're effective as they help us and give us one on one help which helps." (Student respondent 23)

"In my opinion I find it helpful being able to talk to someone one to one who can provide me with helpful input." (Student respondent 128)

"It is good cause the one on one sessions helps us get to know and be comfortable with each other." (Student respondent 187)
4.4 Learning-to-Learn, Self-Management and Learning Support

Another component of the advisory approach that teacher and student participants identified as central to their experiences was that advisory was a place where learning-to-learn skills, self-management and organisational/study skills were developed. It also became apparent that other learning supports were regularly available and part of the model that were not necessarily part of the intended practices. For example, practices such as giving students access to technology such as computers, chromebooks and ipads that they did not have access to at home to complete learning and assessments was a theme, and one which the students valued.

One student summarizes the reports of many of the participants well in the following,

“Amokura has helped me to work out how to do my learning better across school. We learn how to be organised, how to study, and make plans and track our learning. I have to say though, that one of the biggest helps is that we can use the computers at school. I don’t have one at my house, so sometimes it’s really hard to get my work done at home.”
(Student respondent 16)

4.4.1 Metacognitive and executive function learning skills and content

One area that was identified by teachers and students includes what they referred to as learning to learn which included further descriptions of both life skills and study skill, and, to a lesser degree, work and employment skills and strategies. Teachers also responded that learning study skills and learning to learn skills and strategies made up a large portion of student experiences of advisory time, but also that this learning is often connected to the ability
of the teacher to foster good relationships with the learners. One teacher notes the connection between the relational elements and how this supports learning to learn.

“Critical self reflection with reinforcement, the ability to converse with an adult regularly about next steps in a equal conversational exploration rather than being delivered instructions, a number of specific skills and educational awareness learning outcomes to develop the teenage mind and awareness of independently motivated progress and results.” (Teacher respondent O)

Several teachers also identified responsive academic support and future focused pathway planning as key elements of the advisory. Teachers described this focus in a number of ways.

“We have focused on goal setting, time management, study planning, we are working on career planning, after school life planning such as tertiary options, budgeting, and applications such as work and uni and other things.” (Teacher respondent B)

“I'll just list a range of things we've covered throughout the year (not everything though!): learning how to deal with failure, understanding that people have different perspectives, leadership development, how to review and reflect on where they're at and where they want to get to so they are able to develop personal deliberate acts, understanding that there is more that unites us than divides us, how to collaborate, identifying and developing skills that help with life, how to track own credits using an app, how people's values and beliefs impact on the decisions they make.” (Teacher respondent F)

Other types of learning outcomes that also arose often in the responses can be summarised up in this teacher’s listed response,

“Time Management, goal setting, reflection, confidence/collaboration activities, issues affecting/of interest to the group, tracking and monitoring.” (Teacher respondent J)
A number of resources were also described in relation to this particular learning outcome and focus area, and it came through as an area that both the teachers reported that they were most confident supporting and the students could identify and describe well.

### 4.4.2 Independent learning tasks and learning area specific academic support

An area of responses that came through but was unanticipated in the data, is the inclusion of subject specific support during advisory time, specific academic tutoring and revision task orientation. This also includes students being given time to work on learning tasks while teachers carry out one to one learning conversations. Many students talked about valuing the time and support. It was also clear that a significant portion of advisory time for many students was spent completing independent learning, homework or study time.

“To discuss what we might be doing in WBL (whanau based learning Junior integrated classroom programme at the school), finishing off work for our linc-ed, completing things that are related to our future, and a small class so that our amokura can get to know each student better.” (Student respondent 34)

“To reflect on assessments in school and how to improve your knowledge & what you need help for. Also time to catch up on work and set goals for your next steps.” (Student respondent 247)

“The intended learning during hapū is to catch up on any assessments you might need to do, talking to your amokura about your attendance or learning.” (Student respondent 286)

While teachers acknowledged that this was a part of how many of them spent some of the hapū time, and students later in the questionnaire also value and identify supported academic work time as something that they would like to get out of the model, this was an
unanticipated theme. While this was not an intended activity for the hapū groups it is clear that students valued this opportunity. This provides implications for future development as it was valued by students. Many students reported that they saw being given time to work on assessments as one of the ways that they are supported with their learning. Similarly, teachers used this as a planning element to help them schedule the time and create the atmosphere that was needed to carry out one on one learning conversations with students.

At the junior level, some participants indicated that they saw no difference between their normal academic program and the time allocated for advisory. Yet, as identified later in the questionnaire, this is also one of the identified areas they would like more personalised support with.

“It’s a small class so the amokura can get to know us well and help us plan for our futures. We talk about what we are doing in WBL and finish off work for linc-ed. (Student respondent 23)

Students also included in their responses that they believed the model was intended to give them someone to connect with, support with home-school partnerships, and create a student group support system to help them through school.

“To get involved with other people and learn more about each other.” (Student respondent 142)

“In my experience, having social connections between students and/or amokura would be one of my intentions in recommending for amokura/hapū time. “ (Student respondent 288)

“To get to know people in our hapū better, connect as individuals and help each other in our classes, and even catch up on our learning.” (Student respondent 12)
They also identified the pathway planning and academic tracking as key parts of the learning advisory. For example students valued the following:

“To complete work and to track our progress through the year. As well as help with our credits and any other work.” (Student respondent 55)

“To catch up on home learning and discussing our career pathway with our Hapū teacher.” (Student respondent 97)

“To help us with our tracking our future planning and pathways.” (Student respondent 142)

This sits in line with many of the advisory goals, named above, as seen in the document analysis, and also with the teacher’s perspectives on some of the key outcomes being targeted by the model.
4.4.3 Access to technology for learning

Another unanticipated response in the questionnaire was the volume of students who identified that their ability to use and access technology for their learning and to complete class work had a positive impact on them and was valued. The student participants valued the access to technology and, in particular, computers and chromebooks, and saw this as a benefit to their learning and an important resource during advisory time.

“...if we need any work finish we will probably get chromebooks to complete our overdue work and use those.” (Student respondent 13)

“I feel that having the chromebooks are a good thing to have for the students especially for the seniors with externals and most of the internals being due within the next few weeks it gives us a chance to try get whatever we can done, which I find great and more so for people who don’t have access to a computer or laptop.” (Student respondent 18)

This was a significant response set with 32% of students indicating that access to chromebooks was valued in the advisory model. While access to technology and the use of resources to complete homework was not a feature of the outcomes and purposes of the model, nor did it feature in the teacher response data, the students have identified an element of the advisory that is meeting one of their needs.

It should be noted that the school is Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) friendly, and that it also does have its own supply of technology for learning, but also that the community the school serves has lower than average device for student use at home or internet service to support learners completing digital dependent tasks at home. This has implications for both the advisory
and its purpose, as well as potentially for how out of class learning is developed, assigned, and supported by the school or in curriculum areas.

4.5 Future Pathways and Student Agency

A range of activities, and learning outcomes that targeted working with students to develop present and future pathways for study and careers were reported as valued by both students and teachers. This included time spent in the advisories on internal and external pathways between courses and qualifications. Teachers and students both described the hapū times which included a focus on transitions through school and internal course selections, participating in and seeking out careers advice and support, and the ongoing tracking and monitoring of learner data including academic and attendance data and daily and weekly goals in review, reflect, act cycles.

It should also be noted that both participant groups also described the personalised nature of this goal, and that the focus during these experiences was not on simply telling students what to do, but rather, teaching them and supporting them to become agentic in their own lives, and develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions to seek out, self-monitor, plan and action their own informed ideas about their next steps and future.

4.5.1 Pathway planning, support, and learning

Both teachers and students also seemed to value the time to help prepare students for learning about how to manage their day to day qualifications tracking and learn about careers
pathways. This includes setting regular goals and milestones in relation to the demands of the student’s other coursework and tracking their progress and achievement towards NCEA qualifications and certificates.

Students could clearly articulate this aspect of their hapū time;

“Hapū time is for managing my time for NCEA. Keeping track of my credits. Making sure I meet my set goals/deadlines.” (Student respondent 237)

“How to manage time with regards to school work family time and personal time also to see where we are in terms of NCEA.” (Student respondent 24)

“From my time spent during hapū, what we mainly learn is what should be able to achieve by the end of every term but also what we also should think about for our career pathways.” (Student respondent 43)

Teachers also recorded using the time to connect students with the careers department and to liaise and support students with university and scholarship applications. There was also work done intentionally with students in terms of completing NZQA Core Skills credits in careers and future pathway planning, and how to investigate career development and planning for further study. Teachers of junior students also acknowledged their role in discussing how course pathways within the school support students in working towards their goals for the future.

It is also noteworthy that some students were able to specifically identify what was lacking in their experiences in terms of this area that they would like to see incorporated in the model in the future.

“I feel as a Year 13 that we should be discussing life skills for when we leave school like money wise, banking, renting, bills etc.” (Student respondent 59)
And another reported that;

“I would like to have something that may involve what to do for the future or career path-a-way. Also teach us the ways of year 11 (credits etc) and also what classes we can choose for next term.” (Student respondent 238)

These content specific types of observations will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

4.5.2 Development of student agency

Another theme that emerged from both students and teachers was around ways that students were given opportunities and guidance in developing their own agency as a group in how they addressed the focus learning for each theme or topic. Participants described the inclusion of intentional student leadership opportunities, their teachers regularly eliciting student voice to enhance planning of advisory sessions, and the emergence of some advisory groups pursuing peer mentoring and peer tutoring models and routines.

One teacher sums experiences of student agency up as one of their perceived key elements in the learning outcomes for the model.

“I’ve been focusing on developing learner agency and student leadership within my group so they can support one another.” (Teacher respondent J)

4.6 Changing Role of the Teacher

Student and teacher participants also articulated that the role of a teacher in the learning advisory context had changed over time. Teacher participants tended to identify that their focus
on learning how to plan in ways that were responsive to the student’s needs and requests became more of a focus. Others reported that their focus was on developing their ability to deliver one or two aspects of the advisory model. For example some teacher respondents outlined that they were developing their ability to build a team of learners who could support one another, others reported that they were keen to develop their ability to teach and support the study and academic tracking skills of the students in their advisory group.

The student participants also noticed a change in the role of the teacher in the advisory as opposed to their other classes. Student responses identified the relational approach and showed that they were aware of their teachers attempting to develop a personalised approach to supporting them with their goals and needs. However, those students that had negative experiences of advisory time, also reported teachers showing a lack of interest in them and the group as a whole. Some students also reported that their amokura did not have the ability to develop relationships with students and as part of their experiences of the whole advisory model. This observation by the students who did not value the advisory model is backed by the literature which is clear about just how important it is for advisers to have developed relational skills sets, and the ability to adapt and co-construct how the advisory time is used by aligning student needs with the identified objectives of a given model. This is a key finding that will be further unpacked in the critical discussion and recommendations in Chapter Five.

4.6.1 Teacher effectiveness as an amokura

According to the teacher participants, their ability to implement the model effectively centered on their ability to understand what was being asked of them, and the time to
collaborate and plan in meaningful ways with other advisors and the team leading the initiative. Teacher participants identified that their ability to be effective in their role included having time and support for developing and then applying; mentoring skills, careers and academic tracking knowledge, running team and culture building experiences, and understanding how to address personalised character development and self-awareness to support future planning and holistic success and wellbeing. Areas that the teachers reported were important to their practice as advisors are summed up well by one participant when asked what practices they experienced were the most effective in the advisory model:

“One on one learning conversations, peer mentoring and support (learner to learner), small group work, whole Hapū, learners teaching learners, learner directed (experiences and activities), Learning Leader directed teachable moments.” (Teacher respondent N)

Another teacher described their key approaches and also notes how this has begun to evolve over the year.

“Team teaching, co-construction with learners, team talks, 1:1s, use of digital tools to 'touch base'. We did (the) drive activities in Term 1, but have moved away from this in order to conduct 1:1s and encourage ownership by the learners.” (Teacher respondent C)

However, most teachers identified very few distinct and specific practices as a mentor/amokura. Rather, teacher descriptions included overviews of task oriented practices connected to what they reported were key to delivering the mode. For example, one teacher indicates how their different practices make up one group’s week.
“Basically I have asked my learners what they want to get out of this time, and what they want to focus on in this time, I am a structure and routine person so have taken on board what they wanted and put a structure in place such as monday is focus and "active teaching time" for me to get through our focus for the moment, Tuesday Connection time and games, Wednesday chill and chat - no devices and talking . Sometime I give them topics etc. Thursday is home learning day and they often talk across classes and help each other with study or theories etc. On Friday we go to the library and read or use computers, I have asked if they want to change this term by term but the answer is always no.” (Teacher respondent L)

Student participants also seem to value the relational elements of the model and reported that the focus of the relationships with them and their peers was key to their learning experiences. Students also identified that they had experienced teachers incorporating one on one learning conversations into their advisory role. However, the nuances of how to do this well or what the participants valued or learned from one to one learning conversations were not articulated by any of the participants. In addition, in subsequent questions one on one learning conversations were identified by teachers as one of the most common areas where development or support is needed.

It should be noted that the students described that their teachers used effective teaching approaches with them in their learning advisory time and group. Specific comments included;

“They are really good in my opinion because some teachers hang over your shoulder or focus on one person but they always check up on every single one of us which is good.” (Student respondent D)

“Very effective, because they encourage me to push myself and widen my thoughts and perspectives on my schooling.” (Student respondent E)

“Very helpful.... very encouraging. It's gives us a feeling that yes someone is standing behind us to help us.. that we are not alone.” (Student respondent 142)
“My Hapū teacher is very on task and on point with her advice on our learning. She's very sharp with what she says for example, she'll be straight up about any of us who will fail and pass and who will be the top. She's not mean but she is very strict about our learning. She is also very helpful with making us understand what we need to do, to be confident with our NCEA”. (Student Respondent 203)

4.6.2 Collaborative and connected teaching and professional development:

The teacher participant group identified that the ability and opportunities to collaborate with one another and access other internal and external experts and sources related to the advisory model and delivery were key to how they developed their understandings and practices. These experiences were shared in response to being asked about what resources teachers found to be most valuable in developing their practice and delivering the advisory model’s targeted outcomes.

Eighteen teachers identified the most common resources used in the amokura group were based on other positive psychology models or programmes available. Two teachers elaborate on this and describe the connection between the use of positive psychology approaches to achieve the advisory model targeted outcomes. Teachers identified the following resources and concepts as key elements of their advisories. They also recorded how valuable they found collaboration with other amokura, leaders, and even outside experts can be in terms of sharing or creating high quality resources which support the teachers achieving the aims of the programme. This practice as a valuable development strategy is also identified by teachers in their responses about what support or developments are needed in the model.
“Working with my amokura leader has been the most helpful. Under her careful
guidance, I have learned heaps.” (Teacher respondent L)

“I saw the vision and what Hapū could be and ran with ideas of my own as well as
followed the plan of what the team devise.” (Teacher respondent O)

This data set showed clearly the value teachers placed on their ability to collaborate and connect with other teachers to plan and resource the learning and teaching for the advisory and saw this as something that should be developed with a more intentional school wide approach to resourcing and working.

“Just sharing resources and current practices would be a good start.” (Teacher respondent B)

“A wider collective across the school of what could be happening.” (Teacher respondent G)

This desire also included how teachers could work together and with the leaders to make sense of the new role of the teacher as an amokura and how to plan for, resource, and act as an amokura. This included working both within the school staff network and beyond the school, notably, perhaps even beyond the education sector to gain other perspectives and skill sets.

“More sharing of methods and ideas used by others during hapū time is needed. i.e.
‘Share the gold’.” (Teacher respondent Q)

“Connecting with the community, guest speakers, and inspirational people. Others in the community who have a different take on similar skill sets.” (Teacher respondent D)

Understanding and delivering future pathways planning and tertiary and career support is another area of note for teachers. The responses suggest that while teachers are
incorporating this learning outcome into their practice, they are unsure about best practice or how and where to find high quality resources to use with their students.

The data collected from the teachers also seems to highlight the recognition of which learning outcomes teachers were least confident with or unsure of. It identifies some of the ways the teachers preferred to develop their understanding, resource banks, and skill sets. The recognition that collaboration with more direction and success criteria for the teachers to use as guidance came through clearly in their responses. While teachers identified areas of improvement and development both for themselves and for the leadership and strategic planning of the model, they were not presented as insurmountable challenges or cause to abandon the approach. In fact, no teachers in the entire data set for the teacher questionnaires asserted that the model be shelved, rather than developed further.

4.6.3 Implementation, strategic planning, and teacher practice

Teacher participants also commented on potential areas for future changes to the model based on their own experiences and needs. This extended to include operational and organisational elements of how the school functions and is connected to the advisory model. The data collected from the teachers shows a recognition of the difficulty in getting the balance right between planned and resourced predictive learning experiences and flexible personalised outcomes based on the knowledge of the learner. While teachers identified that more strategic planning was needed to support the specific needs of each cohort, they also continued to emphasize the importance of personalising their approach and content to the needs of each group and individual as equally important. One teacher sums this up well by saying
“Sometimes it feels like we don’t have time to do the 1:1’s well, and we need to make sure we are covering the learning outcomes the kids have identified for themselves, or the school plan is showing us to cover.” (Teacher respondent M)

“Having a wider and more personalised view of where each cohort of learners are on their learning journeys, eg: the entire Y11 cohort, so that we can plan best for the learners in our individual Hapū and Whānau, with a view to helping the entire cohort, across the school.” (Teacher respondent J)

In other words, teachers reported that a more clear year overview plan for each year level was needed that also incorporated a toolbox to support the flexibility to provide high quality personalisation and deal with things as they come up - whether that is world issues, academic needs, or personal issues.

The sub-theme for Implementation and planning has arisen across many responses to this particular question, and of particular note this response was in relation to clarity of role expectations and metrics. The teachers were keen to better understand how do I know if I’m doing well? And how are those who are struggling receive support or be held accountable? One response in particular zooms in on parts of this issue.

“Learning outcomes in classes where students actively report ‘we do nothing in HAPU’ is the concern. Prescriptive generic delivery of a global programme is not the answer. I am unable to address what is not occurring in other HAPU because I am not there.” (Teacher respondent K)

Apparent in the data collected from the teachers, was the need for further clarity and direction for both their practice and the learning outcomes they were to address. Added to this is the feeling that both informed responsivity, the skills needed to facilitate a responsive and
personalised ethos, and a framework designed for each year level to attach learning outcomes to was an important next step for the model.

The teachers identified that their own practice as an advisor or amokura, as opposed to operating in the traditional role of a teacher, was an area that they were not using in the delivery of the model. When considered in relation to the student questionnaire responses, this area of the model’s implementation begins to stand out as needing clear definition and development. Teachers commented that they were still unclear as to the skills and strategies they could or should be able to apply as an amokura, and that they were still developing in their own understanding of just what a mentor or advisor can do differently in their interactions with students in order to achieve the relationship as well as exactly what outcomes the model is trying to address.

“I’d like to see some consistent format for tracking learners could be implemented. Also some way to ensure that all amokura are engaging with the time given to meet all outcomes.” (Teacher respondent I)

It was also clear that some different staff had different areas of their practice to develop. This also echoes the student responses in that an overall assessment of student responses of their experiences indicates that the student experience of their amokura varied in relation to how each teacher ran their advisory group.

“I really am enjoying the system as it is, I do like the freedom to ask the learners what they want to do, but at times their ideas are so vague it would be nice to have some more focus points to work through and program to structure what they want around if you get what I mean, a plan they the learners have buy-in-to, this is a balance between structure and freedom but I feel that my job to balance out, a monitoring system - who checks up on who. For example, is this amokura putting linc-ed entries on, is this amokura contacting home, at times I feel I am putting in heaps of effort but others are not and who checks we are doing what is required?” (Teacher respondent J)
Based on the responses it seems that there are specific implications for the further development and recommendations as it shows that within the school, teachers have strengths in the different practices and strategies needed to run a successful advisory programme, and that sharing expertise and knowledge areas of strength with others internally is likely to provide some immediate gains, and more consistency in school wide delivery.

The teachers clearly described that having a more deliberate and specific approach to planning each year level and the learning outcomes expected each term was a needed next step.

“The (amokura) plan needs to have a weekly focus that amokura can adapt for their kids. have a skeleton term plan with a fortnightly/ weekly focus, resources/activities etc. as well as have regular PLD (professional learning and development) for each year level for amokura to learn and share successes etc.” (Teacher respondent D)

“Possibly more direction is needed for the junior school in regards to hapū/ amokura expectations and learning outcomes.” (Teacher respondent Q)

In addition, further clarity about the role description and how to know they, and their colleagues, were meeting the success criteria for the role was another theme that emerged.

“The differences between amokura and their practices, and therefore the experiences of the learners needs to be addressed. It is hard to know what is going on in other rooms and to provide support when everyone is involved in the programme.” (Teacher respondent R)

“I feel that the good amokura are good learning leaders and were good whanau tutors (previous approach to pastoral care at the college). I don't think the weak have got any better. I think a common programme to start the year may have helped develop weaker (teachers), otherwise they default to doing what they have always done.” (Teacher respondent G)
Again, an even split between areas of practice can be noted in the responses, for example teachers requesting support with developing student leadership an agency, earlier in their individual questionnaires had identified the metacognitive components of the programme as strengths. The teachers who identified action based team-building, seemed to have identified a need for support in the academic tracking, and some who expressed a need for support with team-building learning activities, felt they were delivering the learning to learn elements of the programme effectively. This range of responses and strengths is a key finding and will feature in the critical discussion and recommendations in Chapter Five.

4.7 Negative Perspectives of the Amokura Model:

Finally, it should also be noted that 13.33% of student participants didn’t identify benefits or positive experiences of the advisory initiative at all. Throughout the student survey, negative responses about all aspects of the model were consistently expressed by the same forty participants. In other words, a distinct group of learners were consistently negative throughout their responses, while those who contributed detailed accounts or more positive perspectives on the advisory remained consistent in their outlook. This may indicate that the student experiences in each individual advisory group are significantly varied. Due to the design intention of the questionnaire to protect the anonymity of the participants, there is no data available to potentially narrow down this group of participants and identify similarities such as gender, age, whanau grouping, ethnicity, etc. for patterns which may explain this groups’ perspectives and inform recommendations. This will also be addressed in the recommendations chapter.
“During my experience in hapū I personally feel like I haven’t learnt anything because all we do is walk into class and sit down. We do catch up on assessments but we could do that in our own time.” (Student respondent 164)

“In my humble opinion hapū often feels like a waste of time that could be better spent elsewhere, occasionally I manage to make effective use of the time to finish off some work but more often than not little to no work is achieved.” (Student respondent 286)

“I don’t think we should have hapū everyday and for 40 minutes because checking up on students only take like 10-15 minutes and after the teachers do that, there is nothing to do and it’s a waste of time.” (Student respondent 200)

“That 40 mins of something that is not relative to my subject choices is an absolute waste of time.” (Student respondent 128)

Again, the same forty respondents with other negative responses in the rest of their response sets identified that their perspective on their teacher’s effectiveness in advisory was negative, this was in addition to a further ten students who also indicated that the teacher effectiveness was not satisfactory in their advisory.

“It ain’t that really helpful, like they hardly talk to us and only want to talk to us when were away for a day or if we miss a class.” (Student respondent 188)

“Not effective if the students are trying to just pass the year and if they are not interested in doing other things that don’t involve gaining credits.” (Student respondent 178)

“They are not that great we don’t do enough effective learning.” (Student respondent 43)

“Not that effective. We don’t learn much during Hapū.” (Student respondent 23)

This group of responses also included observations that they experienced teacher disengagement from the role and that the planned learning experiences were either poor, or non-existent. Other students also reported that some advisory teachers either had a difficult time connecting or building relationships with the students in the group. While many reasons
may exist for one group of student participants to describe their experiences as consistently poor, when considered in the context of the wider data, this theme also seems to highlight the importance of specifically addressing the changing role of the teacher and improving the clarity of the model, and consistency of the teaching approaches as a key area to consider for recommendations which will be made in chapter five. It also has implications for further data collection by the college which looks more closely at teacher practices alongside student experiences and any trends that may arise.

It would appear from these responses that an overall negative experience of hapū group is directly related to the perceived performance of the teacher.

4.8 Summary of Findings

4.8.1 Perspectives on elements that make up a valuable advisory experience

Both teacher and student participants reported key elements they had experienced and reported were valuable in the advisory model. The building and maintaining, or whakawhanaungatanga, of learning centered relationships with each learner identified as being at the center of the advisory model. This relationship development was highly valued, and extended to how relationships were intentionally fostered between the advisors and the students, between students in the advisory groups, and between the teachers and the whanau and families of each student. In particular, fostering a sense of belonging and personalised support for each student and their family was described as an extremely valuable elements of advisory.
This relational approach was also valued for its perceived impacts and connections to supporting student wellbeing. Student and teacher participants highlighted that the student's wellbeing was a focus area during advisory time, and that having this time to reflect on and develop strategies and skills for maintaining personal approaches to their own wellbeing was a valued part of the approach. This included references to teaching resources, activities, and learning outcomes as described by the students.

Learning to learn skills and strategies also formed a key area of learning and valued experiences for staff and students. Both groups described some of the key elements of advisory as being focused on developing self-management, time management, organisational, and study skills with a focus on the student's ability to apply these in their own lives and areas of study. The responses which also reported impacts on the student’s ability to learn about and improve their learning also reported that access to technology and having supported independent learning and study time were important and valued parts of their advisory routines. This also included focusing on developing student’s ability to track their own attendance and academic progress, set short, mid and long term goals, and create and carry out action plans that helped them develop their future pathways for further study and careers.

Finally, another area that was valued amongst both participant groups was the emergence of advisory approaches some teachers used to give opportunities for student agency and leadership. Practices and experiences that were mentioned include advisory groups who were developing models for student leadership roles within their groups, peer mentoring, and peer tutoring. Another aspect of this that the participants reported experiencing, was the
focus on teachers and students co-constructing relevant goals and learning experiences that fit the groups’ needs.

### 4.8.2 Perspectives on what future developments should be prioritised

Both groups of participants shared their thoughts on how the model might be improved and developed further. Overall, both the teacher and student participant groups tended to have had valuable experiences of one or two key elements of the model, however, very few participants had experienced the range of valuable experiences, or targeted advisory outcomes. For example, some groups of participants focused all their responses on discussing the whakawhanaungatanga, social and emotional and wellbeing aspects of advisory. Others reported experiences that were only connected to learning to learn, academic progress, and future pathways outcomes. Other groups tended to only discuss connections with home.

Another sub-group of student participants reported only negative experiences and that they did not perceive that there was any value added for them and their learning. This sub-group of learners also reported dissatisfied perspectives throughout all of their responses. This data seems to indicate that while the breadth of the intentions of the programme are being delivered, the practices in each advisory group are varied and do not yet cover the holistic vision for the model and, in some cases, are so varied that the experiences for the students is particularly poor and of little or no perceived value. This finding will be addressed in more detail in chapter five.
The findings of the study suggest there are also a number of areas that the teacher participants the ongoing implementation and development processes could be improved on. Professional development for teachers about how to become an effective advisor was one of these areas. In this study participants reported their uncertainty and lack of clarity around what the expectations were of them and their colleagues in terms of their advisory role. This also extended to include an overall lack of clarity on what the learning outcomes were, how to facilitate the outcomes, and how to know if they had achieved the desired outcomes. In addition, while professional development was acknowledged, teacher participants responses were that it was insufficient and was not provided in a timely or in the most effective way. The findings of the study also highlighted the importance and value the teachers perceived having time with the other teachers and leaders of the advisory model to collaborate, share ideas about planning and outcomes, and to develop their understanding of how to continue to grow in this new role. In addition, teacher participants requested further professional development and support in order to focus on practical strategies, and developing deeper understanding of the learning outcomes in order to better plan for and execute running their advisories at a higher level, and also to be able to better address student needs.

Finally, while many students were unsure about what might be missing from the advisory model for them, some learner participants identified specific academic support and help with their learning tasks as being something they responded was needed in the advisory setting. Other responses included references to needing specific support with subject area learning such as maths, or writing.
Two students gave answers that highlighted other areas that may be missing from more student’s experiences. While these responses were classed as outliers for this response set because they only arose once here, they are worth mentioning. One student noticed that,

“Dealing with stress for year 12s and how they can support us with it, it would be nice if they understand that sometimes students need emotional support and not just academic support.” (Student respondent 86)

Another added this perspective,

“How to better prepare ourselves or the future (C.V making etc) and I would say free trips to different universities, like Unitec or MIT.” (Student respondent 94)

Of the students who commented that nothing was missing from their advisory time, it should be noted that this may indicate their lack of awareness of what other content or strategies could be included. Or, in other words, they don’t know what they don’t know. Others students elaborated on this perspective.

“Nothing. My amokura is able to catch up with me on a daily basis to ensure I am staying on task and I know what I am doing and the goals I have set for myself for each day.” (Student respondent 33)

“In my hapū mainly everything is discussed e.g she tracks everyone’s credits to see where they are at also gives us catch up days once a week to help us out.” (Student respondent 26)

“In my hapū I don’t think there's any missing addressed key work that needs to built amokura in my opinion it's okay as it is, and it's still helpful for our Learning in school.”(Student respondent 154)
These perspectives that participants reported on in terms of what was important to them and should inform the development of the future of the advisory model will also form the basis of the final critical discussion chapter. The feedback and feedforward will be considered in relation to the rest of the data, the intended outcomes of the advisory model, and alongside the literature, and will inform the critical discussion and recommendations from the study.
CHAPTER FIVE: CRITICAL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from the data analysis and questionnaire responses presented in the previous chapter.

The research questions will frame the chapter and be addressed through a discussion of each question and the sub-themes identified in the findings. This will be presented in relation to the literature, and what recommendations or implications there may be for the future development and practice in the advisory model. Finally, this chapter will also present the limitations of the research and implications for further research in this space.

This study aimed to explore the experiences of teachers and students in the model and consider the perspective of those experiencing the initiative.

5.2 Valued Experiences in the Learning Advisory Model

This study highlights the variety of outcomes and experiences that can form part of an advisory model. It also outlines the participants' perspectives on key elements of the study school's advisory model that are meaningful and valuable to the teachers and students. In particular, the importance of intentionally creating a relational model that focuses on fostering a sense of belonging and support for each student's achievement and wellbeing as an individual
was seen as a central principle of the model and was the area most consistently identified by teachers and students in their descriptions of their experiences and learning (Dillow, 2016).

Teachers involved in the study also reported that they noticed the potential for more meaningful home-school partnerships to develop that would be centered around each student’s needs and pathways which mirrors the findings of Maclver (1990). Student participants in particular also reflected on the development of a class culture and ethos that supported them with their social and emotional learning while providing opportunities to connect with other students and form reciprocal and supportive relationships that revolve around the learning and success of the whole group. These experiences included advisory groups adopting elements of peer mentoring and tutoring as well as student leadership sharing and lesson co-construction.

Students also appreciated the flexibility and responsiveness of advisory time and how it was used to support them with developing their skills as students and also completing learning tasks in a supportive environment with access to technology that they may not otherwise have easy access to. This included using advisory time to investigate course and career options, complete more in-depth academic tracking of achievement for use in goal setting and monitoring cycles, and having support with scholarship applications and study skills.

5.3 The challenges of providing a high quality learning advisory model

However, for the many positive experiences of the model, it is important to note that a group of 40 student participants or 13% of total student participants, reported that the model
was a waste of time, and had no positive benefits to them or their lives now or in the future. As highlighted by their negative responses, this existence of a clear student sub-group within the data suggests that the teacher practices and delivery of the advisory model at the time of the study was still inconsistent, and ensuring that this issue is targeted in future planning and development is key to the models future success.

Teachers in this study also associated a lack of time and clarity to their experiences of the first year of the implementation of the advisory model. While the teacher participants all agreed that the model was beneficial for learners from their perspective and worth continuing to develop, they also noted that gaps existed in their understandings of how to effectively deliver an advisory programme. These gaps included a lack of resources, teachers being particularly strong with one aspect of advisory learning and delivery, but lacking familiarity with other elements, the lack of a longer range plan for each cohort to better see and understand the advisory pathway through the school, and the need for more shared resources and strategy development with other teachers and potentially outside experts as well.

Students in the study who were not positive about their learning and experiences in the advisory system pointed towards two key observations about their poor experiences in their advisory groups. Some of these students described their advisory teacher displaying apathy and a lack of planning or enthusiasm for delivering the model. This included observations that the teacher “just sits there on their computer” or “never has anything planned for us to do”. A second group of students also reflected on the difficulty their advisory teacher seemed to have in connecting with and building meaningful relationships with the students in the advisory group. Some students described an advisory teacher yelling at them all the time, or another
advisory teacher as having favourites or only enjoying speaking with the students they have things in common with. In general, students that responded that the teacher either lacked empathy and relational skills and strategies, or teachers that were apathetic about their delivery of the approach made a strong impression on their students and as a consequence, the student’s who perceived their teachers’ practices as such responded less favourably on the questionnaire.

This challenge is parallel in many ways to some teacher comments around their uncertainty about what the success criteria as an advisor was for them as professionals, and how some may or may not be coming to grips with the change in their role in this new ‘class’. Similarly, some of the teacher participants also commented that they also noticed disparity in practices between them and their colleagues, and wondered about how others, and themselves, would be held to account or to a high standard within this new element of the school’s structure.

5.4 Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations will be made in order to directly reference the implementation of an advisory model with the school of study. The recommendations may also be of interest to other New Zealand schools that are considering or are already implementing learning advisory approaches within their schools. There are three overarching categories that frame the recommendations for practice. These are; recommendations for implementing advisory models based on the literature and other school’s experiences, recommendations on
responding to the changing role of the teacher in advisory models, and finally, recommendations for the organisational elements of the advisory model.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Implementing Advisory Models

The research has been intended to inform how the school of study might approach ongoing improvement of the advisory initiative outlined. By better understanding the experiences and perspectives of students and teachers in relation to the Learning Advisory Model undertaken in this school, and aligning these with the existing literature, the following recommendations are made for improving the Learning Advisory Model in the context of the school in the study. The recommendations made are intended for the school to consider as they move into their second and third year of implementation.

The recommendations for practice are based on two key factors. They are intended to address both the research in the field of best advisory practices and to also address the areas for development as identified by the participants and in the findings of the research. The focus of the recommendations will be on how to best support the changing role of the teacher in an advisory model and what organisational elements should be considered for improved practice and teacher and student experiences. They are also intended to provide clarity for both staff and students moving forward and to support the continuation of the practices that are currently valued, while addressing and improving in areas that are currently not strong or missing from the current programme.
5.4.2 Responding to the changing role of the teacher

Professional learning and development around amokura skills and practices should be transparent and personalised. Both students and teachers clearly identified that different teachers wanted and needed different supports and professional development in order to deliver effective advisory models and to feel that they were making a valuable contribution. In addition, teacher's ability to see what was on the horizon, and the bigger picture of how the professional learning plan for the year maps out a school wide approach to implementation and skill development, while including personalised options and supports that directly address the areas each individual reported that they needed support with would be the most effective way forward to address this changing role of the teacher. Within the overview or learning plan for the initiative, a number of factors should be included based on both participant responses and the literature.

- Teachers should be given time to collaborate on their planning and learn from one another's experiences and practices. Teachers very clearly identified that collaborative planning and sharing time was valuable to them and how they were developing in their new role (Millar, 2014). In particular, several teachers noted their appreciation for the initiative leadership teams involvement, and would prefer to have more time to undertake professional discussions with their teams and share what is working, while also problem solve and support one another in developing other approaches that may help them to feel more effective that their leaders or teammates were using.
• Specific professional learning and support should also be included in the professional development overview in the areas of future pathways and careers planning, academic tracking, and how to develop mentorship relationships and strategic relational skills (MacIver, 1990).

• Finally, more clarity is needed around a learner advisory role description and clarity of the specific expectations and tasks involved in this role (Millar, 2014). In addition, processes for the identification of and methods to support for those teachers who are struggling in the new role should also be developed in order to more clearly articulate how teachers should undertake this work (Murphy and Lewes, 2017), and also to give the wider team confidence that if they are finding the role of the advisor challenging, there are avenues for improvement and also to uphold the quality and consistency of the initiative across the staff.

5.4.3 Considerations for organizational elements of advisory systems

Organizational elements were another aspect of the advisory experience that came up for both students and teachers. These include more detailed information and resources for the scheme or planning for the content of the model, clarity of roles, clear data analysis and tracking expectations, and overall approach for self-review and voice for ongoing work on the advisory as a whole. The following recommendations are made based on the findings.

• Matrix of Year Schemes: Planning skeletons and supporting resources and direction should include more detail and be made available to all teachers and students. Plans should consider a matrix of outcomes that are tailored to each year level. Flexibility should be allowed for each teacher to personalise the
learning experiences and approaches in ways that are appropriate to their groups, however, resources should also be made available to support staff in the delivery of the models outcome targets in order to provide clarity for staff as well as a starting point for their own group programme planning and development (Dillow, 2016). This is to ensure a seamless outcome focused plan that addresses key learning outcomes for each year group, while also offering opportunities to personalise elements based on the nature of each advisory group as well as the individual needs within the group.

● Clarity in roles for all involved: Overall, more clarity and transparency is needed in terms of the advisory leadership roles and what the specific role and skill set of a learning advisor or amokura is (Simpson and Bragg, 2016). Specifically, who is responsible for the different elements of programme planning, data collection and analysis, what is the scope of the steering team, and how will the school go about making decisions in the future about developments and potential changes to the initiative (Dillow, 2016).

● Clear models for data analysis and tracking: An overall tracking sheet with consistent frameworks that reflect the school priorities for the advisory programme is needed (Dillow, 2016). This addition is intended to address variation in practice and perceived purpose of the programme, and to collect data in an ongoing way that the teachers and students can use to inform their next steps. Tracking needs that were highlighted in the study included academic programming and credit tracking support, overall monitoring of the distribution of personalised student support and needs, and the desire to maintain records
about students that reflect each individual as a whole person (Dubois and Karcher, 2013).

- Transparent and systemic approach to self-review: Teachers in particular identified the need for more clarity around how the programme and their practice are reviewed internally so that the college continues to improve in its delivery of the model (Hargreaves & Fullen, 2012). It was clear that targeted support for teachers in a way that was timely and transparent was response based on internal data and observations. This is so any change or support is fit for purpose, and it is also clearer what areas of the model are up for review at any given time.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The data collection process overall was a thorough way of addressing the research questions and aims of the research project. The target numbers of staff participants were reached easily and with a short turnaround time. This seemed to indicate that staff stakeholders were keen to be involved in developing a research based baseline for the first year of the advisory model. This part of the collection process may indicate that future questionnaire based data collection on the advisory model may be left open longer in order to gather even more voice from the staff and to also further dig deeper into their narratives and further areas of interest. The data was rich and provided the research with a variety of insights into the model and ways forward. It is also worth noting that one potential limitation of the research is due to its anonymous nature with no opportunity for follow up questions or focus groups to dig deeper into initial findings. This meant the following are possible limitations to the accuracy of the research,
and also may offer insights into further areas of investigation for the school or future research projects. Firstly, any possible outliers or sources of richer data could not be followed up on due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire and most variations between year level or whanau group ⁴ could not be accurately accounted for as requesting this information in questionnaire format was seen as potentially unethical in that it had the potential to increase bias or reduce the confidential nature of the questionnaire.

In addition, teacher stakeholders who participated in the voluntary questionnaire were generally happy in the beginning to implement this model. This may indicate that teacher stakeholders who may have potentially been the most unhappy with participating in implementing the model, may not have taken the time to respond and therefore there is a chance that if this perspective or voice exists amongst this participant group, it is not represented.

Finally, ethnographic and cultural information was also not requested for similar reasons associated with possible identification of participants. This may have held valuable information in terms of understanding where the participant experiences sat in terms of the conflicting American and New Zealand research which suggests opposing viewpoints on the importance of embedding culturally responsive practices in advisory and mentor programmes.

5.5.1 Limitations of the data

The limitations of the data collected from this participant group could potentially be

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⁴ A system of vertically organised “schools within schools” or houses, used by the College to foster a relational and culturally responsive approach.
further explored through other methods that focus on specific findings from this data set. If the researcher, the school, or other researchers chose to follow this up, other methods such as focus groups would be recommended to best continue the data collection in this context.

Learner data was more difficult to gather due to the large population of learners under the age of legal consent. This meant that a caregiver consent process needed to be followed accurately to ensure the data was collected ethically. The process of data collection for the student group took longer as well, and recruitment without the potential of coercion meant that it was difficult to ethically promote the questionnaire or provide support for those learners who requested it from their advisor teacher or the researcher was difficult or impossible to give. The same set of constraints on learners experiences also applied to this data set, and follow up focus groups of learners representing different demographics, perspectives and needs would be an excellent way to continue this work and engage a participatory action research type approach that has potential to positively impact the development of the initiative as well as the body of research in this area.

A final constraint of the data collection is that wider community and family members were not a part of the target participants for this research. This participant type was not included as it was not identified as closely related to the research question or objectives of the project. This data would not necessarily have helped to meet the current aims. In addition, in the early phases of the initiative it also would not likely have been a rich source of data while the influence of the amokura model is still developing. However, repeating a similar research project and including this set of participants is likely to help the community of practice to understand and begin to evaluate the outcomes of the initiative and other areas for development.
5.6 Recommendations for Future Study

The decision to implement a learning advisory model is largely part of a wider response to the emerging literature which describes mental health crisis in young people, and a lack of support for thorough pathway development or in school study skills, particularly in contexts deemed to be at risk or with large numbers of priority learners. As highlighted in the literature, learning advisory models, and attempts at localising mentorship approaches within schools are vital to their success in a given context, and understanding the community and participants experiences, values, and needs is crucial to not only successful implementation, but also for advisories to be useful at all. Similarly, implementing new initiatives within schools involves a complex range of factors that are both human, and organisational. Fullen (2016) reminds us that change in schools takes time and an important part of this process is often to take the first steps and then follow up to improve and develop these new ideas over time. This particular study has not provided information from all community members or leadership voices to give a complete picture of all possible considerations for future development. The groundwork has been laid for further research that are worth pursuing for both the school in the study, and other New Zealand schools with advisory models or those who are either considering implementing advisory or searching for ways to develop their approach to personalised student support in their own context. Therefore the following areas are recommended as having potential for meaningful further research;

1. A more inclusive study that involves a wider range of participants in the school community. This could include family and whanau participants and leadership perspectives on the advisory model in order to access all considerations and
perspectives on developing processes and practices that will lead to an effective and localised advisory program.

2. More in depth research including gathering cohort, demographic and ethnographic data to better support and fine tune the school’s ability to dig into teacher practices and more specifically identify areas of successful implementation and areas to target for improvement in relation to sub-groups experiences of the model within the school.

3. Follow up research that involves using other data collection methods which support further unpacking participant responses in more detail. For example, conducting follow up research using interviews, focus groups and observations in particular may help to dig deeper into practices and experiences in class from an informed perspective and support more detailed understanding of participant experiences.

4. Research into how to go about developing a New Zealand based approach that considers cultural and community contexts, and what aspects of learning advisory are particularly relevant in New Zealand settings.

5. Research into how New Zealand schools can adapt existing advisory frameworks/systems for their local contexts and the change and implementation processes needed to be successful.

6. A research based comparative analysis of a range of New Zealand schools that are implementing advisories in order to compile perspectives and provide a broader and deeper view of this growing practice in New Zealand.

7. A longitudinal study of this particular school in order to explore another point in time and highlight themes over time and track developments and changes as the model evolves.
5.7 Final Word

This study was developed from my perception that a variety of New Zealand schools, including my own, were beginning to implement different approaches to learning advisory models. I wanted to explore the value of the model in my context and better understand the experiences of the teachers and students directly involved in the model. It was my hope to be able to then describe any value added for the participants, and the practices and experiences that were of value to those delivering the advisory, as well as to compare this with the existing literature in order to ensure that my school’s approach to developing a learning advisory program was robust and personalised for our community and learners. The study provided students and teachers with a voice in the new program that would help to inform recommendations that may help the school and community members to make informed decisions about whether or not to keep the learning advisory approach, and how they might consider going about continuing to improve it for their context.

I have gained a huge amount of knowledge and understanding about the variety and complexities involved in delivering an effective learning advisory. I have also developed a better grasp of the power of reviewing a wider and deeper range of research to help inform practices in schools, as well as the potential value for a school being involved in carrying out research on its own initiatives and practices. My eyes were also opened to the complexities and factors that impact how well a new initiative is implemented, and how I might go about this differently in the future when involved in other initiatives or program development. Finally, while I gained an enormous amount of understanding from reading and interacting with a huge range of research literature, I have also come to value the importance of looking outside my own
sector of education for research that may be of benefit to educational initiatives, and also, have come to appreciate how removed academic research often is from practice in my sector. In particular, I now have a huge appreciation for how researchers and schools could, and should, work more closely together in order to foster better research, and to bridge the gap between study and practice. Finally, I have also come to understand, appreciate, and will now advocate for the value of practitioner research in connecting findings of other literature and their uses in contemporary contexts.
References


Experiences of a Learning Advisory Initiative: A Practitioner Research Project in a South Auckland College

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title:
Investigating the impact of a Learning Advisory Model at Alfriston College

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don’t have to be part of this research project should I chose not to participate and may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the research project for any reason simply by ceasing their involvement.
I understand that should I withdraw once the study has begun my data will not be able to be removed from the research due to its submission under anonymity and the resulting inability to retrieve any participant’s specific data.

I understand that everything I record on the questionnaire is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have written will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 10 years.

I understand that my answers on the questionnaire will be stored by the researcher will be archived and analysed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Name: ……………………………………………………………………………………………
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Form

My name is Matalevai Liu-Asomua. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies degree in the Applied Practice program at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is: To investigate the impact of the Learning Advisory model implementation (Amokura and Hapū program) on students and teachers at Alfriston College and make recommendations about its further development.

I request your participation in the following way:

1) To complete an anonymous questionnaire which includes questions about your experiences in the Amokura/Hapū program.
2) To submit for analysis the use of any anonymous/unmarked Amokura/Hapū documents including; planning, resources or tracking records that you have created, and professional reflections to be used as a part of the data for this research project.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. The results of the research activity will
I hope that you find this invitation to be of interest. If you have any queries about this research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is: Dr Lisa Maurice-Takerei phone: 815-4321 ext. 7338 or email: lmauricetakerei@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1039
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/6/17 to 26/6/18. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Sheet

Participant Recruitment Script

Matalevai Liu-Asomua, a Whanau Leader and teacher from the College, is currently enrolled in the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies degree in the Applied Practice program at Unitec New Zealand. He is seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of his research project is: To investigate the impact of the Learning Advisory model implementation (Amokura and Hapū program) on students and teachers at Alfriston College and make recommendations about its further development.

On behalf of Mr Liu-Asomua we would like to invite you to participate in this research in the following way:
1) To complete an anonymous questionnaire which includes questions about your experiences in the Amokura/Hapū program.

2) To submit for analysis the use of any anonymous/unmarked Amokura/Hapū documents including; planning, resources or tracking records that you have created, and professional reflections to be used as a part of the data for this research project.

Neither you, members of our community, nor your organisation will be identified in the thesis. The results of the research activity will also be made available in full upon the conclusion of the research, as well as a simplified summary for the entire school community. Due to the anonymous nature of the research, participants will not be able to withdraw from the study once they have submitted their questionnaire responses or documents for analysis, as retrieval and return of unidentifiable data is not possible.

I hope that you find this invitation to be of interest. If you have any queries about this research, you may contact Mr. Liu-Asomua’s principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand:

Dr Lisa Maurice-Takerei phone: 815-4321 ext. 7338 or email: lmauricetakerei@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1039
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/6/17 to 26/6/18. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix D: Student Participant Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire:

1) In your experience, what is the intended learning during amokura/hapū time?

2) In your experience, what are the main things you have learnt during amokura/hapū time?

3) In your experience, what types of teaching approaches (styles) do amokura use during Hapū learning time?

4) In your experience, how effective are the teaching approaches (styles) that your teacher uses to support your learning during amokura/hapū time?

5) In your experience, what resources (books, readings, activities, speakers, videos, etc) were key elements of the amokura/hapū learning advisory model?
6) In your experience, what key learning and experiences or outcomes are not addressed in the amokura Hapū model?

7) In your experience, what teaching approaches (styles) could your amokura use to support your learning in the amokura/hapū learning advisory model?

8) In your experience, are there any other ideas or issues you believe are worth bringing to the attention of the researcher?

Appendix E: Teacher Participant Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire

1) In your experience, what are the intended learning outcomes for students of the amokura/hapū Learning Advisory model?

2) In your experience, what learning have your students experienced during amokura/hapū Learning Advisory model time?

3) In your experience, what types of teaching approaches do you use as an amokura during Hapū learning time?

4) In your experience, how effective are the use of different teaching approaches for teacher student interactions in supporting your students learning in amokura/hapū time?

5) In your experience, what resources (books, readings, activities, speakers, videos, etc) did you use that were key elements of the amokura/hapū Learning Advisory model?

6) In your experience, what learning outcomes are currently not being addressed in the amokura/hapū model?

7) In your experience, what learning resources and experiences are not being used or addressed in the amokura Hapū model?

8) In your experience, what teaching approaches that you are not currently using could you use as an amokura to support your students’ learning in the learning advisory model?

9) In your experience, are there any other ideas or issues you believe are worth bringing to the attention of the researcher?
Declaration

Name of candidate:


Principal Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Maurice-Takerei

Associate Supervisor/s: Dr. Falaniko Tominiko

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION
I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number:

Candidate Signature: [Signature] Date: 12/15/2018

Student number: 1454543
Full name of author: Matakoari Lin-Asomua

ORCID number (Optional): ..........................................

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ("the work"):
Experiences of a Learning Advisory Initiative: A Practitioner Research Project in a South Auckland School

Practice Pathway: Te Miro Post Graduate

Degree: Master of Applied Practice

Year of presentation: 2018

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Maurice-Takei

Associate Supervisor: Dr. Fapaniko Tominiko

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