# Tomorrow's Schools
## 20 years on...

Edited by John Langley

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Dr John Langley ONZM*

> **"** *New Zealand has a long and established tradition of social initiatives seeking to enhance the social wellbeing of its citizens. An essential part of these initiatives was an emphasis on the importance of education.* **"**

Every so often I am asked to do something that is an absolute pleasure, and introducing this collection of essays on Tomorrow's Schools and their outcomes is one such task. This is because the contributors understand that education is about the lives and aspirations of individuals and communities, and how they view themselves and their places in our world. The events outlined and commented on in these essays marked a juncture in the history of education in New Zealand that will resonate for decades to come; but as these authors know, the ideological arguments that continue to swirl around them are irrelevant when viewed against a background of the hopes and aspirations of our fellow citizens.

If we are to believe in the importance of education as a means of enhancing the lives of individuals, communities, countries and civil society, then the way in which we conceptualise, implement, analyse and organise education must be seen as a matter of great importance. In the end, though, it really comes down to one thing – the impact education has on individuals, and, as a result, how those individuals function as human beings and how they function in relation to those around them. This can include a myriad of complex behaviours, from increasing simple knowledge and skills to how we view others and, in turn, how we come to see the world and our place in it. Outside family life, no institution has a more significant impact on the shaping of our societies and world than our education system.

Too often in recent years, education and its goals have been described in purely functional and economic terms. How often do we hear catch cries about 'globalisation', 'generating a knowledge economy', or 'catching the knowledge wave'?

**Dr John Langley ONZM**
Chief Executive Officer
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All of this seems to imply that the major role education plays in our society is simply to increase knowledge and skills in certain areas, so that the recipients can go forth and produce. This has tended to be the basis of the policy frameworks of successive governments. It is not only conceptually wanting, it is also boring.

The truth is that, along with our whanau, education plays the major role in sustaining, understanding, changing and renewing our communities and lives. To see it as having any less influence than that is simply to misunderstand both its power and its impact.

More than anything else, it is education that sustains and improves our democratic way of life. Democratic states have many goals, but three are common to all: freedom to lead our lives unfettered by repression and persecution; prosperity, in order that our citizens may lead dignified material lives; and social justice, in order for prosperity to be spread equitably and all citizens to be treated in a fair and even-handed way by the laws and conventions of our society. None of these three key 'legs of the democratic stool' can be attained without an effective education system.

The essayists featured in this publication not only understand the true importance of education, they also understand the nature and importance of reform processes in education and, in the case of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, the very real shifts and changes that were made. Most importantly, all grasp the essential question to ask, in order to determine whether any reform is successful: has it made a real difference to teaching and learning, and how do we know?

As all the authors here acknowledge, the administrative changes of Tomorrow's Schools were long overdue. The Picot Report[1] targeted organisation and administration. It assumed that by getting these into better order, the benefits would 'trickle down' into more effective teaching and better learning. However, it could be argued that we started at the wrong end.

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## Background to the reforms

New Zealand has a long and established tradition of social initiatives seeking to enhance the social wellbeing of its citizens.[2] An essential part of these initiatives was an emphasis on the importance of education. The educational structures built up from the 1930s consisted of district governance with central regulation and funding in order to ensure, as far as was possible, that the system promoted fairness and equal opportunity.[3] Within this dominant, central bureaucratic structure, teachers were part of a large public service organisation, with human resource policies and procedures controlled by central government or its local agencies.

The fact that by the 1980s, the education system was overly bureaucratic, top-heavy, bound by regulation and in sore need of reform was clear to most of those who worked within it and dealt with it.[4] Many also argued that the education system did not involve communities of interest to the extent necessary for effective delivery, and hence was slow to respond to the changing needs of a modern, dynamic society and economy.

Towards the middle of the 1980s, three key forces began to emerge with regard to the education system:

- There was frustration at the local level that the system was too centralised, too slow to respond to the needs of children and communities, and too constraining. Freedom from these constraints was sought.[5]

- A number of influential stakeholders supported government's view that teachers and schools were not sufficiently accountable for what they did, and that the level of performance of many in the sector needed to be lifted.[6] The limited and indirect involvement of parents and communities was often confined to fundraising-type activities through parent-teacher associations.

- New Zealand was undergoing a period of radical economic reforms in the private and public sectors. The Labour Government elected in 1984 had set about reforming the economic and political landscape in a way that had not occurred since the reforms instituted by their first counterparts in 1935. Paradoxically, in some respects the second set of reforms dismantled the first set, due to the extensive amount of deregulation that occurred and the amount of control ceded to the 'market'.[7] Senior cabinet ministers and officials saw the education system and its teachers as a necessary component of that reform.

The Picot Report identified five areas of weakness in the existing system, outlined in the opening paragraph:

*Our investigations convinced us that the present administrative structure is over centralised and made overly complex by having too many decision-making points. Effective management practices are lacking and the information needed by people in all parts of the system to make choices is seldom available. The result is that almost everyone feels powerless to change the things they see need changing. To make progress, radical change is now required.*

Rather than propose the reform of existing institutions and systems, the report recommended their abolition and replacement. The Department of Education and local education boards were to be eliminated, effectively stripping away a whole middle layer of educational administration. The plan was for there to be no intermediate regional or local educational authorities between the individual learning institution and the government.[8] A crucial part of the proposed changes was the need to give parents and communities far greater involvement, not just in the education of their children, but in the governance of schools.

By the end of 1991, most of the major reforms proposed by Picot were either in place or well on the way. At the local level, each school became a 'self-managing' institution with its own board of trustees, charter, set of policies and procedures and operational funding. At the national level, a number of agencies were created to focus on specific areas. Those of most significance to the compulsory education sector are summarised in the chart below. For the most part, these were all operational by 1990.

| Agency | Specific Role/Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Ministry of Education (MoE) | 1. Policy advice to Minister of Education<br>2. Allocation of funding |
| New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) | Quality assurance and qualifications |
| Education Review Office (ERO) | External audit and review of schools |
| School Trustees Association (STA) | Representation of the interests of elected parents on boards of trustees |
| Teacher Registration Board (TRB) | Determination of standards by which teachers can become registered to practise, maintenance of existing practising certificates, deregistration processes |

The National government elected in 1990 affirmed the reforms; but in their view, national agencies still had too much power, and greater accountability from teachers was needed for what was taught, and how well. The plan was to introduce bulk funding of salaries; this met strong resistance from the teacher unions, who saw it as threatening national pay levels and conditions, and hence teaching standards. The introduction of a national curriculum framework was intended to tie teaching strategies and assessment to learning outcomes, and make teachers accountable for its delivery through regular reviews carried out by the Education Review Office. In addition, discussion and debate began about the existing secondary assessment system and its fairness and relevance for the future achievement of young people and the place they would take in New Zealand society. Should such a system be a means of sorting and rating young people, or should it describe what they can do, and how well?

As outlined in several of the essays which follow, confusion began to arise from these various policy developments, particularly over curriculum reform. Other forces were also at work. For example, by the year 2000, New Zealand was a much more multicultural society than in the past, with substantial numbers of people from east and south Asia and various parts of Africa, as well as Māori, Pakeha and Pacific peoples (with Auckland now the largest Polynesian city in the world). It was clear that many and varied tensions would be inevitable.

## Charting the post-reform landscape

The Tomorrow's Schools reforms had six key drivers: greater simplicity, more accountability, greater transparency, more responsiveness to national and local needs, more flexibility and less bureaucracy. The implied philosophy of the reforms was that stand-alone institutions, governed primarily by parents, and competing for students, would inevitably lead to better teaching and learning, and hence a better quality public education system.

Twenty years on, it is clear that several major issues have emerged which challenge this assumption, and must be addressed. All of these are highlighted in the 11 essays which follow.

## Fragmentation of the system

All of the contributors see the issue of fragmentation as a major problem of the reforms. In an attempt to separate and clarify various roles, the unintended consequence has been to create a system in a small country that almost beggars belief in terms of the number of agencies, educational organisations, policy strands and officials' groups. In addition, each school is a separate Crown entity with its own board of trustees, set of policies, governance and management protocols and resources. As Terry Bates points out, in a country where most of those schools have fewer than 300 students, this is not a sustainable system for the future. Margaret Bendall succinctly pinpoints the over-arching problem caused by this level of fragmentation: 'The nation's future is too often a silent stakeholder in today's schools.'

## Dominance of managerialism and industrial relationships

Industrial issues and relationships continue to dominate education. Despite the desire of teachers and others in the community to move education in a professional direction, the relationships that exist within schools and across the sector are focussed on industrial issues such as hours of work, workload, contract negotiations and the ever increasing demands for various types of compliance, promoted by nervous governments and officials.

Yet in Harvey McQueen's words, 'Education debate should be primarily not about ways and means but about purpose, vision, and goals.' Genuine professional issues centred on what drives practice, ownership of standards, ethical standards and performance cannot be driven by an industrial mindset that pits the various parts of the sector against each other, rather than engaging in genuine dialogue of a kind that will see teachers take greater ownership and responsibility for what they do and why.

## Variation in capacity at local level

These issues centre on local capacity of both the board and the school principal, together with the autonomy of individual schools, which is often fiercely defended. What has not been sufficiently taken into account is the extent to which schools need to work together to meet the needs of students within a wider system. Moreover, not all stakeholders within the system have the capacity and/or desire to deliver what is required at a national level. The extent of the devolution has meant the Ministry of Education has little real authority – and is often unwilling to exert what it has – to act, except where (and after) schools are proven to be seriously failing their students, or the relationship between the board and principal is such that the school is no longer being effectively governed. It has also meant that there is wide diversity in the quality and nature of the education students receive across schools, even in similar socio-economic bandings. The role of principals is even more powerful in a devolved system than in more centralised ones. As with all layers of the education system, the capacity of individual school principals is widely divergent, as are their personal values and beliefs. The need for principals to be strong educational leaders is, therefore, even more important.

## Lack of policy coordination and oversight

Because the various institutions created by the reforms were conceived of as completely stand-alone, with separate governance structures, it was almost inevitable that there would be some confusion around both the development and the implementation of policy between the various agencies. One striking example was around the vexed issue of teacher

standards. At one stage there were three sets of these within New Zealand: Professional Standards (Ministry of Education), Satisfactory Teacher Standards (Teacher Registration Board), and Effective Teacher Standards (ERO). Each agency saw itself as responsible for standards, creating confusion and frustration.

While all of this was done in the name of keeping functions separate and clear, it had the unintended consequence of making it appear at various times that 'one hand didn't know what the other was doing'. In fact, there was no formal mechanism for linking the various agencies together. This has now clearly emerged as a major problem, particularly when it comes to focusing on how to improve teaching and learning system-wide. As Cathy Wylie succinctly puts it in her contribution, 'Our system is not failing, but it has reached its limits.'

## Competition versus cooperation

One of the principles of the reforms was to create a greater level of competition between institutions. This was based on the rationale that if schools had to compete more strongly for students, they would, by definition, become more receptive to community needs, thus driving up standards of teaching and learning.

> *Overall, it is simply about fairness. All children and young people are entitled, as of right, to the very best quality education possible, but this will never occur as long as 'winner' and 'loser' schools are tolerated.*

Yet there is little evidence that standards of teaching and learning did in fact increase. Competition is not a bad thing, but the type of competition that seemed to develop in many cases, with schools using matters of perception rather than substance to promote themselves, must make us question whether or not this element of the reforms has had the most effective result. Far from promoting better quality teaching and learning, glossy brochures, achievements on the sports field, building projects and school uniform design are little more than sideshows that distract from the most important issues.

The Tomorrow's Schools model has produced mixed results for schools; some have prospered and are experiencing extensive growth, while others are languishing. In Auckland, five secondary schools with over 3000 students are constantly

requiring more buildings and material resources, while other schools nearby, capable of holding similar numbers, are only two-thirds full. The same pattern exists with both primary and intermediate schools. Some would argue that this is the natural and reasonable result of a competitive system. It could equally be claimed that it fosters wasteful resources and social injustices, and does not include a strategy for seriously addressing the 'long tail' of the lowest performing students.

Overall, it is simply about fairness. All children and young people are entitled, as of right, to the very best quality education possible, but this will never occur as long as 'winner' and 'loser' schools are tolerated. Furthermore, the pattern of winner and loser schools will continue as long as the current governance, management and funding system that defines each school as a stand-alone entity competing with all others is retained.

## Promoting real community involvement

One of the major features of Tomorrow's Schools was the desire for greater community involvement in the education of children and young people. The Picot Report proposed that community forums be established; at a national level, there would be an opportunity for community debate and discourse about education through an Advocacy Council. Neither of these came to pass in the final legislation, with the result that boards of trustees were left to provide that community link. However, boards of trustees are not necessarily about community involvement in education. They are, first and foremost, a governance mechanism. While the two functions clearly overlap, they are different in many ways.

Few would disagree with the proposition that positive relationships between schools and communities are desirable.[9] Effective schools had developed such relationships even before the reforms. The problem was that Tomorrow's Schools seemed to imply that involving parents in the governance of schools would, by itself, deal with the issue. Such an assumption misunderstood the complex layers of relationships that exist within schools and between schools and families.

What is also clear is that the reforms, while producing positive results in terms of flexibility, competition and more accountability to local communities, have not always delivered on the other goals that were stated in the Picot Report. It is important that the nature, purpose and types of community partnership envisaged by the original Picot Group are more clearly defined and more accurately implemented.

## Bringing about real improvement in teaching and learning

Finally, and most importantly, none of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms specifically focused on what happens in classrooms. Yet there was an apparent assumption that a clear curriculum, sound and flexible administration, community involvement and greater teacher accountability would lead directly to more effective teaching and better learning across the board.

There is little evidence of this. Too many of the later initiatives which were directed at schooling improvement have tended to be 'top down', driven by external agencies and excluding the direct involvement of teachers. Consequently, a number have been viewed as an added imposition involving more work for little benefit, rather than change which will improve the capability of teachers to deliver quality programmes to learners.[10]

As Howard Fancy states, 'The challenge over the next 20 years will shift from a focus on individual schools to one centred on how the system as whole can better contribute to higher achievement for all students.' This will demand what Brian Annan calls 'a relentless focus on a learning agenda for improvement'.

## Looking ahead

In Elizabeth Eppel's encouraging words, 'Whenever New Zealand brings together diverse interests in the pursuit of better teaching and learning, it is possible for some very innovative and positive things to emerge from the process.'

If we think of the first phase in the development of education policy in New Zealand as occurring pre-1989, and the second phase as the reforms that occurred from 1989 onwards, then we are now in a third phase, begun over the last five to 10 years. This phase can be thought of as having three stages.

The first is the realisation that improvement in the achievement of children, and especially those children who are currently missing out, does not necessarily occur simply because administrative reforms occur. It occurs largely as a result of the quality of teaching. The second is a gradual move away from the relentless external accountability created by a doctrine of managerialism, and towards professional accountability through the development of agreed professional standards, ethical standards, and focusing on evidence-based best practice. The third is the process of collecting and examining evidence about what works and what does not work in teaching and learning, and using that as a basis for policy and practice. This stage is, in most respects, the most difficult, but also the most important.

As several of the authors here point out, such a change involves a profound shift in how we think about education – or as John Hattie puts it, 'a new metaphor'. But as we all know, shift happens. First, it involves a change in the ways in which we view success. Secondly, it involves a change in the ways in which we measure and evaluate success. Thirdly, it involves a major change in the ways in which we talk and think about our education institutions, and the ways in which they operate and evaluate their performance and responsibilities. Finally, it takes vision, courage and leadership. We need all four.

## Notes

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[3] Perris, L. (1998), *Implementing educational reforms in New Zealand 1987-97*, *The Education Reform and Management Series, 1(1)*.

[4] Adin, B. (2003), *Tomorrow's Schools revisited*, NZEI Rourou, 15(8).

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[6] Codd, J.A. (1993), *Equity and choice: The paradox of New Zealand educational reform*, Curriculum Studies, 1(1), 75-90.

[7] Easton, B. (1997), *In stormy seas: The post-war New Zealand economy*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

[8] Perris, L. (1998).

[9] Langley, J. (2005), *Finding strength in numbers*, New Zealand Education Review, 10(3).

[10] Langley, J. (2002), *'Turning 16... what have we learned?'*, Address to the Auckland Primary Principals Association annual conference, Auckland.

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**Dr John Langley** is a senior educator with numerous professional accomplishments in education, tertiary education, teacher education, business government and project leadership. He has lead a number of organisations and projects at local, national and international level, and has been involved in the strategic direction setting of a Crown entity, large tertiary institution and private company. John has held office roles along with past and present membership of a number of educational groups such as the New Zealand Council of NZARE, the Asia Pacific Education Dean' Association, the Independent Advisory Group on Youth Justice and the board of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. As a former principal of Auckland College of Education, director of the New Zealand Teacher Registration Board and a school principal, John's key knowledge in areas relating to the role he will play in education in the future include leadership, strategic direction setting, research and development, community partnerships and the formation of public-private partnerships in education. John was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in January 2009 for services to education.

# Chapter 2
## Towards a covenant

*Harvey McQueen*

**Harvey McQueen**

Each education minister has to relearn a lesson which their predecessors have already learnt the hard way. You can make education policy in offices in the capital, but you cannot implement it without the cooperation of teachers. Therefore in some way, the politicians and the teachers have to establish a working relationship. And it must be said that as a species, teachers tend to be conservative. They are busy, and to them change is disruptive.

After I resigned from the old Department of Education, I set up my own education consultancy in 1986. Now such businesses are plentiful, but back then it was a brave step. I also became a regular commentator on education issues in the *National Business Review*. Late in 1987, I had a call from the Beehive: would I like to come in and talk about working as education aide for Prime Minister David Lange, in his capacity as Minister of Education? I would, and I did. There was a strip search of ideas and prejudices. A few days later, I was invited to meet the Minister and his associate, Phil Goff. They offered me the position.

By the time I began work in early 1988, David Lange had publicly backed away from the idea of a flat tax. The dispute between him and his Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, erupted into the public arena. I had shaken hands on an education job; instead I had entered a war zone. The conflict between the two men dominated the political scene for the next two years.

That, as the novelist says, is another story; yet it is part of the background to the implementation of Tomorrow's Schools. It sapped Lange's energy and attention. However, I was still amazed at his stamina, commitment and enthusiasm, despite ill–health as well. It was my good fortune that his chief aides decided he should go walkabout, first to get feedback on the
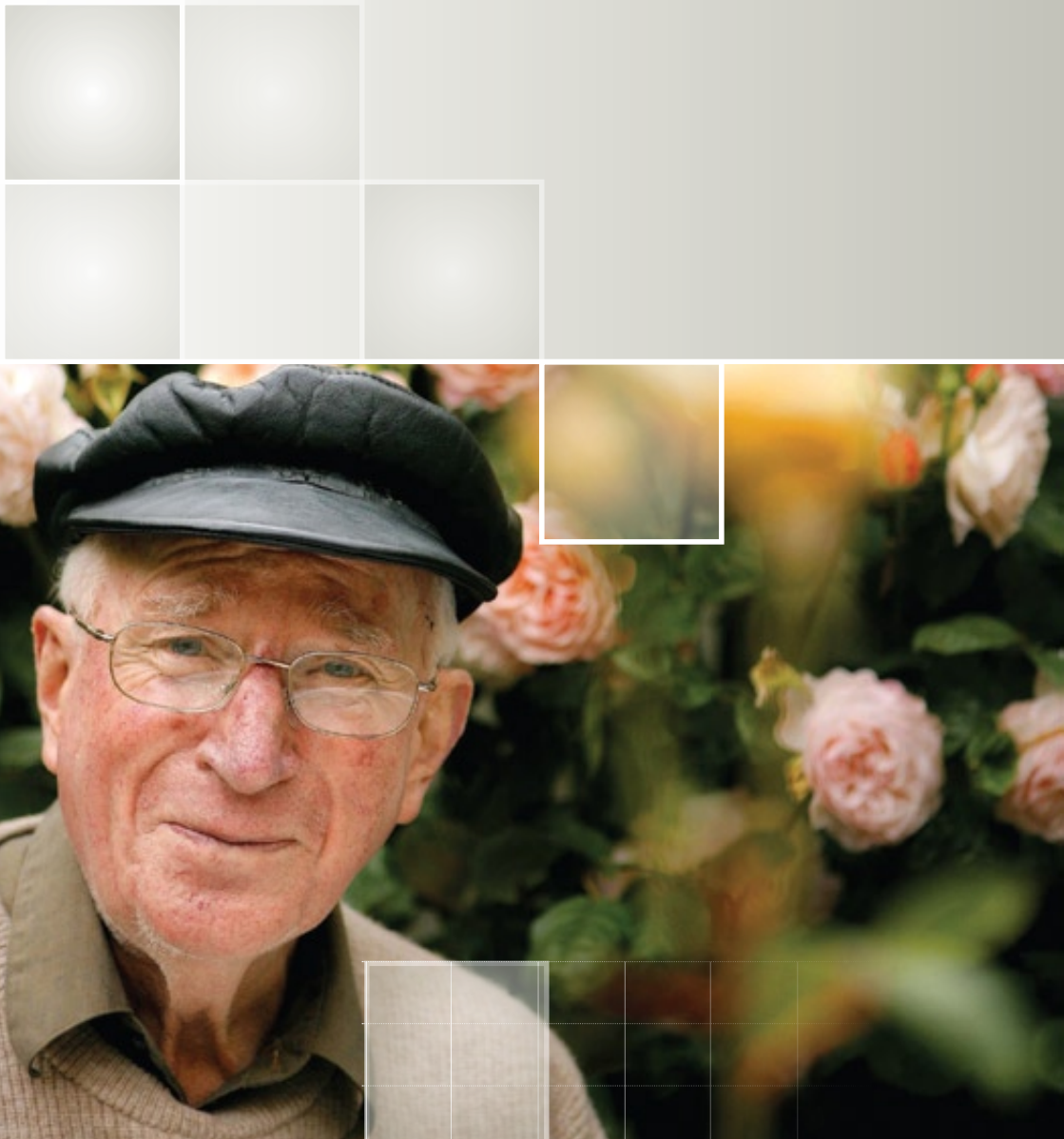
proposed reforms, and later to sell them. So instead of a desk job, I found myself accompanying the Prime Minister up and down the country.

One of the numerous submissions on the Picot Report,[1] released in early May 1988, began with a quotation from Thomas Jefferson: 'I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.' I suggested to the Prime Minister that it would make a good beginning to the Tomorrow's Schools document, as it summed up his attitude. He enthusiastically agreed.

The administrative reforms were based on a premise of trust. David Lange kept talking about a covenant. I was asked to try to stop him using that word. He explained that he meant it in a legal sense. The community should be able to know that the school had the necessary resources and teachers to deliver the required education. The state had that responsibility. It was a clear vision - underpinned no doubt by his Methodist upbringing. He saw it as a three-way partnership: school, community and government.

He also wanted to ensure that the changeover disrupted young people's schooling as little as possible. The process was like refitting a ship while it was sailing. To this end, he appointed four well-known educators and charged them with making sure the refit did not disadvantage students. It seemed to me then, and does now, that this is a good consultative model. It worked well.

Regrettably, however, one important Picot recommendation was not implemented. That was for an overarching Council, with the heads of the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Education Review Office, plus three other prominent New Zealanders appointed by the government. This Council would be charged with co-ordinating policies from the various agencies, and looking at long-term effects of educational decisions. That idea never got out of the hangar. Treasury claimed that it added another bureaucratic layer, and was unnecessary. The Education

Ministry didn't want conflicting advice being offered to the government. The result has been an on-going lack of co-ordination between the agencies, and outright competition in some instances.

The administrative reforms, while massive in the primary sector, had much less impact on the secondary sector. In 1996 I visited a German university and observed the horror of an elderly professor of teacher education when I explained that in New Zealand, the local school appointed its own staff. 'How can you trust them to make the right choice?' he asked. When I said that our secondary schools had always done this, he shepherded me away from his junior staff in case such heretical ideas might prove contagious.

Two decades on from the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools, it is interesting to reflect that of the three partners, the parents and their community, the teaching profession, and government and its agencies, the boards of trustees are now probably the smoothest running part of that trio. There have been personality and/or ideological hiccups in some schools; but on the whole, the trustees have got on with their job with energy, enthusiasm and competence.

Admittedly, there are regional areas where schools have struggled collectively and the government has had to intervene. At first glance, this makes it appear as if the Picot proposal of self-management that led to Tomorrow's Schools was not a good model. Not seen in that glance is the removal of the safeguards Picot envisaged, such as a Parents' Advocacy Council and Community Forums. The report never envisaged an absence of accountability, just as it did not give licence to the schools. The removal of such safeguards has seen the imposition of centralist policies – often developed without professional input – and a return to the old stop-go model that Picot, echoing the earlier Atmore and Currie reports,[2] condemned.

The central hands-off approach on daily management advocated by Picot has been lost sight of, as the Ministry of Education and other agencies have reacted to policy directives or local inadequacies or failures. At its heart, the Picot report called for a top-down attempt to enable empowerment. Maybe that 'top-down' was an underlying

"*I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.*"

Thomas Jefferson

flaw in the proposal.  Or it could be that the attempt to delegate responsible ownership was never honoured.  Instead, that old top-down approach remains, whether it be assessing achievement or producing the national curriculum.  It also lacks one component that the pre-Picot model possessed to a considerable degree – professional participation.

This brings in the third group of the partnership, teachers. Often they feel sidelined.  They are engaged in a complex and challenging task, spurring, maintaining, and facilitating learning and the motivation to learn with a diverse group of young people.  They have knowledge and expertise.  They believe they are engaged in an essential task.  Unless they do their job well, the knowledge society demanded by our policy-makers will remain a mirage. Yet this strong sense of marginalisation remains. The administrative reforms envisaged the empowering of the profession as well as the local community through self-managing schools. That has not happened.  Unless it happens, many an impasse in the system will remain.

I had always envisaged a strong Teachers' Council – of the teachers, for the teachers, by the teachers – as a way of empowering the profession.  Maybe I was naïve in denying political realities.  As funder, government is always going to be intimately involved.  The tax-payers' dollar is at stake.

Nearly 97 percent of our schools are state schools.  Teachers have long enjoyed autonomy in their classroom, in the sense that they choose the resources and teaching methods to deliver the curriculum.  But prior to 1990, especially in primary schools, they were very much under the control of central bureaucracies.  Tomorrow's Schools was an opportunity to move them from that dependency to greater self-sufficiency.

Teachers know that their task is to try to move their charges along the same path.  They know it is difficult.  They know it takes time.  They also know it operates best on a system of trust.  However, trust is a two-way process.  It means accepting that you cannot win every time.  It means accepting that the person with whom you differ is sincere.  It means not just digging in to retain the status quo.  The reverse is that if you are not trusted and are treated as if you were out of the loop, you will tend not be open to such acceptances.  Negative criticisms compound into distrust.

> *Unless more trust is given to the teachers as a whole, then, even with the best vision in the world, we will get nowhere near achieving it.*

Government cannot change education by itself.  Teachers know that without good will, exhortation rarely works. Charges of 'provider capture' should be dropped from the vocabulary.  People in glass-houses shouldn't heave bricks. As teachers have to accept that parents expect good learning for their children, so government has to accept that teachers possess professional expertise.

In saying this, I am well aware that some individuals bring the profession into disrepute.  It must be the profession's responsibility to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure such people are dealt with appropriately.  Unless this is seen to be working well, the profession itself will continue to face a lack of trust from the other stakeholders.  Further, teachers have to accept that government always has competing claims for resources.  It is impossible to deliver on all demands.  But unless one is involved in the drawing up of priorities, one does not take ownership of them.  So if a relationship based upon trust and mutual understanding is developed, then the nation will acquire an improved education system.

At present the education debate is mainly about ways and means – how to bulk-fund with equity, whether to amalgamate ERO back into the Ministry, how long the school year should be.  It should be primarily about purpose, vision, and goals. It should be about issues such as how to balance choice and flexibility alongside equity and justice.  It should be about how to enhance the learning of the nation's young people. Unless we can lift education debate to that level, we will see little change in the next decade as we stagger from one policy reversal to the next.

Unless more trust is given to the teachers as a whole, then, even with the best vision in the world, we will get nowhere near achieving it.  If, however, they are given the chance to help set and participate in that vision, then we can get mighty close to achieving it.

Tomorrow's Schools has become a synonym for any and every aspect of education change since 1988, and that is unfair.  In the criticisms I hear of it, nearly all concern education issues which it did not deal with.  The reform was not about what went on in the classroom, or how learning, or teachers, were assessed.

Tomorrow's Schools was about education administration, which frankly had become cumbersome and unwieldy. For decades, if an administrative conduit was not working, a new channel was created. When that one became blocked, another one was added. Simplification was badly needed.

The Picot report recommended precisely that. Releasing it, Picot summed up: 'Good people, bad system.' On the evening that Picot reported, the PM's office received a fax from an intermediate principal: 'Thanks! At long last I can appoint the staff I want to and employ an electrician to repair the staff-room Zip and someone to fix the leaky swimming pool.'

In the 20 years since the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools, the widening gap between rich and poor in our community has introduced new tensions into our education system. Year 1 teachers are well aware of the huge learning gaps among their charges. Some youngsters come from homes where curiosity has been fostered, books cherished and used, and stimulating and challenging experiences provided. Other kids are not so lucky. They arrive at school way behind in their prior learning. Teachers do their best, but what happens in their classroom cannot be divorced from what is happening in the rest of the community. Marginalisation has various causes, but many stem from policy decisions made by central and local government and private enterprise. The classroom is never divorced from the community.

There are other factors affecting today's schools. Throughout their schooling, but especially in their teen years, students are subjected to intense media and peer pressure. Until recently, family, school and church were the major learning sources. They worked together relatively coherently. Now learning sources are much more fragmented and competitive. At the stage in their lives when young people move from dependency to self-sufficiency, they receive contradictory and conflicting messages about their own self-image.

There were, however, opportunities in the reforms that have never been pursued. In his introduction to Tomorrow's Schools, David Lange said, 'The reformed administration will be sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet the particular needs of Māori'. This has not come about. Picot had proposed, and

*"Tomorrow's Schools has become a synonym for any and every aspect of education change since 1988, and that is unfair. In the criticisms I hear of it, nearly all concern education issues which it did not deal with. The reform was not about what went on in the classroom, or how learning, or teachers, were assessed."*

Tomorrow's Schools accepted, the concept of students being withdrawn from existing arrangements if parents of at least 21 students wished it. I know the Picot team saw this as an opportunity for a whanau to set up its own institution, or at least use it as a bargaining chip. Admittedly, Tomorrow's Schools said it was 'a last resort'. To the best of my knowledge, no request for this possibility has been made or considered.

In other instances, the opportunities for flexibility have been used. Several years ago, I squired a group from the World Bank to some Wellington schools. At the primary school I took them to, they were fascinated to find four separate institutions operating within the one overall institution.

It is sad, but inevitable, that our rural areas have so many closed and abandoned schools. This has community impact. For the dwindling numbers that remain, there is a small pool of people to be trustees. That was always of concern to me. But I envisaged that because there was nothing in the reforms to prevent an amalgamation of schools, or a sharing of facilities and resources, such things would happen. This has not happened as quickly as I anticipated, with the exception of the East Coast, where the Ministry of Education has facilitated the process.

One of my disappointments is the failure to develop the idea of community schools. Progress has been made, but the opportunity for a wider range of institutions has not been pursued with the vigour I anticipated. One reason for this saddens me. When I was teaching, I was well aware that although I was a member of one school community, I was also part of a nation-wide teacher fraternity that shared experiences and professional knowledge. As an inspector, I often advised principals to send new or struggling teachers to watch and learn in other schools. I also had a capacity to use good teachers as temporary school advisers. Each time I asked the principal for these people's release, they would sigh and say they were sorry to lose them from their own classes, but for the teacher's own personal development and subject improvement in other schools, they would agree.

I detect an increased self-interest since the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. As Director of the Council for Teacher Education in the 1990s, I managed on contract the work of the national

language advisers. In collaboration with the Language Teachers Association, we got the Ministry of Education to agree to fund the temporary secondment of teachers to assist these people regionally. I rang a prominent principal to ask whether the school would be agreeable to releasing their excellent teacher to do this work for a term. I was refused, on the grounds that education was now very competitive. They did not want other schools learning about their best practice.

The 1988 education reforms were about the delivery of education. It is worth recalling that David Lange always said they were only the first leg of the double. The second leg was to be curriculum, the what, why and how of teaching. In various ways, his successors and their officers have wrestled with this issue; but I have not been involved enough to make suitable comment, and it is beyond my brief here.

> " *What curriculum should be taught is a national matter. How it is delivered is a local matter. How these two needs are reconciled will shape our education over the next decades.* "

Many people in the community still think that education can be delivered through an Industrial Revolution model – a production line. But that's not how we bank, play, farm and communicate now. The Information Revolution is based around interactive networks. Yet even the captains of industry seem to be having some difficulty making the connections between their modern workplaces and the kinds of schools we need.

As part of this shift, perhaps we need to move away from the rigid age cohort concept. It is not how people learn naturally. I count myself lucky that I went to a sole teacher country school where we all learnt together in the one room. The cohort model also carries another assumption: that one finishes learning when one leaves school. Yet a modern knowledge society assumes lifelong learning. The shelf life of much information, and often of skills, is short. As work patterns, both paid and unpaid, continue to change, people of all ages will increasingly require new skills and new knowledge. Schools might be transformed into learning centres which, as well as delivering compulsory education and necessary upskilling, could also make digital technology and all kinds of media available for all in the local community. I had always hoped Tomorrow's Schools would lead on to such exciting prospects.

This possibility takes us back to the tension inherent in the Picot model: power to the local people, yes – but what about the priorities needed by the nation? Autonomy and accountability are uneasy but necessary bedfellows. What curriculum should be taught is a national matter. How it is delivered is a local matter. How these two needs are reconciled will shape our education over the next decades. The structures created by the Tomorrow's Schools reform are in place. Issues of responsiveness and flexibility are ultimately in the hands of all concerned – exactly where the new structures were meant to allow them to be.

### Notes

[1] *Picot, B. (1988), Administering for excellence: effective administration in education. Report of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration (Picot Report), Wellington: Government Printer.*

[2] *When Harry Atmore became Minister of Education in 1929, the Education Committee of the House of Representatives was empowered to sit during the recess and report on 'all matters relating to education and public instruction generally'. Their report, published in 1930, became known as the Atmore Report. The Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand (1962), known as the Currie Report after the Commission's chairman, G.A. Currie, became the blueprint for educational development for the next 25 years.*

**Harvey McQueen**, who retired from formal involvement with education in 2002, was born in Little River in 1934, and taught secondary school English and History in the Waikato before becoming an inspector. In 1977 he moved to Wellington to work in the Department of Education, then became an independent education consultant and commentator, writing two books on current issues. In 1987 he was appointed education aide to the Rt Hon David Lange. For six years he was Director of the New Zealand Council for Teacher Education. As interim Director of the Teacher Registration Board, 2001–2, he oversaw its transformation into today's Teachers' Council. He is also well-known as a poet (six volumes), anthologist (seven collections, including, with Ian Wedde, the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*), and memoirist. He writes a regular blog at stoatspring.blogspot.com which often reflects on his experience in education. In 2002 he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to education and literature.

# Chapter 3

## Twenty years on

*Wyatt Creech*

**Rt Hon Wyatt Creech**
former Minister of Education
and various other portfolios

One of my favourite quotes on education comes from George Bernard Shaw. Like all Shavian quotes, it is short, pithy and funny, while at the same time making a very relevant point. Discussing education, Shaw stated that he had never let his schooling interfere with his education.

In the past, parents and homes were expected to play a greater role in teaching their children. Sadly, to my mind, for most of our citizens their education and their schooling is pretty much synonymous – if the 'kids' do not learn it at school, the chances are they will not learn it at all. There are constant cries for schools to fill gaps – parenting skills, road safety, sex education, life skills – the list goes on and on. I recall a group advocating to reduce New Zealand's terrible incidence of youth suicide asking me why teachers did not notice the at-risk youths and alert authorities. The reality is that so often, even the parents don't notice the signs.

When it comes to solving the problems of society, the expectations of the education system are very high. For this reason, education has always been and will always be a 'hot' political portfolio – the intensity of the debate around education will rise and fall but never disappear. No mystery as to why; good parents will always want the best for their offspring. The nature of careers nowadays is such that for many, the success of those children in the education system is a major determinant of their success in life.

I found my time as Minister of Education rewarding. It's not an easy portfolio at any time, but it is important. By the end of my time as Minister, I was becoming very familiar with the expectations/demands of the sector. I used to joke about it: how I used to lie awake at night thinking about how I could deal with this or that hot issue – 'will I go this way or that, what will I do?' Sometimes it seemed as if it couldn't be worse – and then the Prime Minister made me Minister of Health!

At the time I took the job, secondary teacher pay was the burning issue, and the PPTA was leading a campaign to significantly lift pay rates. If you looked at other groups' salaries, their claim was not unreasonable; but because there are so many teachers, any pay rise costs millions, and given the state of our national books at the time, there was no enthusiasm around the Cabinet table for more expenditure on anything. After some industrial scuffling, we managed to settle that dispute, but this only made the other burning salary issue of the day, parity of pay rates for primary teachers, worse. It left a bigger gap to cross. While the Qualifications Framework policy (under which all qualifications would be integrated into a common system) was still officially being implemented, the implementation was creaking. Significant parts of the sector – especially universities – would not have a bar of it. Key education leaders in the secondary sector saw the proposal, with its unit standards, as a recipe for mediocrity. At that time the Education Review Office (ERO) was particularly outspoken, and regular ERO reports pointing to education disasters in certain schools (especially colleges in South Auckland) called for action.

A small team in the Ministry developed real effectiveness in pulling those schools through, and most are now doing well, but the picture back then was not pretty. While the Catholic school system continued to contribute to the diversity in the New Zealand education system, the original arrangements under which their properties were integrated into the public school system were stressing. While it was easy to point at some outstanding successes where salaries were bulk funded, the 'salary bulk funding' issue would not lie down. Even though they had introduced the law requiring bulk funding, the Labour Party, now in opposition, had shifted to opposing the policy to rebuild their support base among teacher unions. Curriculum reform issues continually came up; having no real expertise in the matter, I deliberately choose to leave that to the officials who had the expertise, but the criticism was naturally directed at the government. Pressure on rolls put continual pressure on school property. There will always be a limit to what taxpayers can afford, and money was always short.

Whether or not an education system will succeed certainly has something to do with the politician in charge and with the activities of the Ministry, but probably not as much as people think. Schooling occurs in classrooms, and the key is effective teaching. I expect we can all recall the name of one or two teachers who provided us with real inspiration, and fired a spark in us on some subject or other. Those special teachers are a real treasure. Some teachers will naturally be better at it than others – some will work for some children's personalities, and not for others. Often (but far from always), the most effective teachers advance themselves by moving up the scale into administrative positions. It's good that they are there, but a shame that this takes them away from being in front of children.

Teachers and schools cannot help but feel the social pressures that come through their gates. No matter how much resource we appropriate for them to carry out their tasks, they could always usefully use more. Some programmes work because the people who are running them are the right people – they are personally very committed to the outcome. But the same programme will deliver little elsewhere.

As they say about government, politicians change, but officials don't. The issues Ministers of Education face have a continual and common ring: poor performance by boys, Māori and Pasifika underachievement, truancy, the poor schools/rich schools socio-economic divide, bullying, competitive exams versus inclusive achievement standards, the overloaded curriculum, literacy and numeracy – again, the list of issues goes on.

If you choose to emphasise the negative, education always produces some politically exploitable bad statistics. Opposition politicians continually hold out to parents the promise (not much believed, but constantly repeated nonetheless) that all that stands between success or failure for their offspring in the education system is a different party in charge. As with toughening up on crime, elections usually see a veritable parade of promises to comprehensively 'fix' the system. The reality is that most of these issues will, like death and taxes, be the certainties that are constantly with us.

There will always be excesses that can be exploited, blown out of proportion to their real importance. In the bad old days, one way it was decided that money would be used efficiently was to use a common design for schools – one set of plans. I don't suppose New Zealand has ever been famous for its public architecture. Some of the old schools in New Zealand were interesting (Waitaki Boys' High is a good example, or even my local Wairarapa College), but generally our public buildings have a regrettable bias to the drab. We had the wooden two-story Nelson Blocks of the 1950s, and then the concrete walls and Japanese looking peaked roofs of the 1960s designs. This may mean that one plan can be used again and again, but that one design had to withstand Southland's snow load, which was hardly relevant in Northland, and Northland's summer heat load, which was hardly relevant in Southland. There always seemed to be problems – leaky roofs, rooms that were hard to heat or to cool, or the time, I recall, when the ash cloud from the 1990s Ruapehu eruption rotted the roofs of a Rotorua college – that factor had not been factored into the design. Saving money is never as easy as it seems.

The first order of business in speeches I made as Minister was to remind the public that when it comes to education, we are a lucky country. There are bad apples in every basket, but overwhelmingly the teachers in New Zealand I met as a Minister and the schools I visited (and there were lots of both) try hard to do a good job. While we hear plenty from our media about the failures – headlines scream when they occur – most young New Zealanders come out of our schools with a good base from which to achieve their life's potential. Not every teacher suits every child, and in any system as large as our education system there will always be some averaging out; but if a parent supports their children in school, the offering compares well with that of other nations I have seen. Whether they finally succeed or not will depend on how well individuals build on that base.

Tomorrow's Schools was built on a good base, but it was never going to solve all the problems. It was to be a less bureaucratic, more parent-controlled system. In its time, this was a radical notion, although in reality it was a much more radical change

> *Tomorrow's Schools was built on a good base, but it was never going to solve all the problems. It was to be a less bureaucratic, more parent controlled system.*

for primary schools than for secondary schools. The idea was a product of the Lange Labour Government of the 1980s, the time of the 'quiet revolution' in so many facets of New Zealand life. The Picot Committee had been given a wide brief; they thought well outside the square of where education administration had been, and recommended a thorough makeover. Rather than every penny of resource being subject to rules set in Wellington, elected groups of trustees, dominated by parents, would set the priorities for each school, depending on their assessment of the needs though bulk funded operational grants. The old suffocating bureaucracy would be side-stepped. Even the teachers' salaries would be bulk funded. The objectives of the school would be driven by its Charter – a Charter written by its own community. All would be driven to common, highly supported goals.

Most aspects of this were smart ideas; used correctly (and largely it was) it had the possibility of reinvigorating the education system and moving it into the new era. Bypassing the bureaucracy was a good idea; almost every New Zealander who has experienced dealing with bureaucracy knows how rigid and unthinking that can be. Sensible judgement too easily goes out the window as all try to subscribe to the prescriptive controls that manage large-scale state spending.

One common flippant and trite comment I heard was that we are all experts on education because we have all been to school. Thinking like that would lock the mind. I had no doubt that there was a new era – schools were nothing like what they were when I was there. I did well in school academically – always got high marks in exams, and all that – but when I was at school, being successful at sport carried more currency than academic prowess. Rugby was king, with other sports a close second. We had 'cadets' – military activities – as a normal part of school life. Discipline, like all aspects of school, was rigid and expected to be accepted without question. Corporal punishment was not just legal, it was common. The idea of a child having a valid opinion was utterly foreign; children were to be seen and not heard.

By the mid-1990s, all that was gone. I can remember frequent policy remits at party conferences calling for the reintroduction of discipline and compulsory military training in schools, but there is no turning back the clock. There was no doubt that times had changed for education.

Not surprisingly, the initial years were when the Tomorrow's Schools changes 'happened', as that word is used in the modern idiom. Over time it has slowed down; the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools had seen the old administrative Department of Education replaced by the new small policy Ministry, but that has reverted. I suppose that was inevitable – no revolutions last that long. But it would be a shame if a great deal of local control does not hang in there.

I saw some great things happening in our schools during that period when I was Minister. The biggest initial advance was in the way schools campuses were tidied up, and I have no doubt that the flexibility introduced with Tomorrow's Schools contributed hugely to that. Whenever education property issues have since become controversial (there have been some prominent cases), the advocates for improvement have been the local trustees, and the block has been the Ministry. On the *Closeup/Campbell Live* test, the Ministry looks hidebound and clumsy.

I am less sure of the advances on the academic front – would they have happened anyway? To an extent they would have; resistance from teacher unions made the full Tomorrow's Schools vision impossible; but it was probably too ambitious for reality in any event. Mass professions always throw up tricky issues. Teachers vary in ability. Recognising better performance sounds good, but making it work fairly so that you are genuinely awarding performance, and not favourites, is always going to be challenging.

In retrospect, some aspects of the reform went too far, and the boards of trustees became, not surprisingly, advocates for their community school. Even when pupil numbers had dropped below the level that sensibly maintaining a school required, they continued this advocacy. It would have been better if common communities (small districts, say) had a board, rather

> " *In retrospect, some aspects of the reform went too far, and the boards of trustees became, not surprisingly, advocates for their community school.* "

than each school; had that happened, the rationalisation of school campuses as times changed would have been driven locally. Rationalisation by the Ministry process has not been particularly notable for success. But overall, the judgement twenty years on will be materially on the positive side.

I started with a George Bernard Shaw quip. We need balance in all things in life, so maybe I should conclude with one of the funny things that happened to me when I was the Minister of Education that will, I hope, also make a good point. It happened in one of the most remote places in the whole country – Pitt Island. For the uninitiated, Pitt Island is the second island in the Chathams, about 15 kilometres south of Chatham Island, across the rough and wild Pitt Strait. About 50 permanent residents live on Pitt, and there is a single primary school. To tell this story, I have to go back into the time of my predecessor Lockwood Smith. The holidays of primary and secondary schools differ. An issue had arisen with school buses in the King Country. When they drove into the rural areas, naturally enough the same bus collected all the pupils, both primary and secondary, in the area. Some parents in the King Country had observed that because the school holidays fell at different times, the bus had to travel half full when one or other of the schools was on holiday; this could be fixed simply by aligning the holidays for all schools. Effectively, this would give a shorter primary year, with a slightly longer school day. Would it affect educational outcomes? The only way to find out was to give this system a trial. The trial was conducted over three years, finishing when I became the Minster. Academics investigated the effects, and (unsurprisingly) came to the conclusion that it was not possible to discern any difference in educational outcomes. Once it was accepted in the King Country, other schools throughout New Zealand became interested in modifying their holidays in the same way; if it's OK for the King Country, it must be OK elsewhere in New Zealand. About 500 schools throughout the country expressed an interest. Ministry officials were pretty cynical – they could see the merits, but also detected schools perhaps finding a clever way of cutting their working time. Be careful, they warned me.

One school expressing an interest was Pitt Island School, and they did not even have a secondary school there. When our boat arrived in the Flowerpot (as Pitt Island calls its pier), my small tour party went straight to the school to meet the principal, board and pupils, and a happy little school it was too. After a couple of the usual questions asked at those sorts of meetings, the principal broke the ice and asked directly how I was addressing their application to have their school term shortened to align with the secondary school holidays. I explained about the background in the King Country and all that, and then, conscious of the warning from my officials, asked the school to explain why they wanted this change. Their reason was surprising, and actually very sound. Because they had no secondary school on Pitt Island, when their young people reached secondary age they had to leave the island and go to the mainland (or New Zealand, as the Chatham Islanders interestingly call it, which shows how distant they feel from the mainland). The only time those attending school away from the island came home was during their holidays (the secondary holidays); so aligning the holidays would allow siblings to maximise their time together. Good reason, I said, and promised to look favourably at the matter when I got back to Wellington. After the meeting I was taken for a look around the island. There are no roads, and therefore no cars. Transport is by four-wheeler motor bike – everyone appears to own one. I was riding on the back seat of the principal's four-wheeler, and on the other side of the bike was the chair of the board of trustees. After we had been going a while she leaned over and said, 'Minister, you know that issue we were talking about at the meeting about bringing our school holidays into line with the secondary schools?' 'Yes' I said, and I told her they had made a good case – I intended to look favourably on it. She leaned over a bit more and said, 'Well Minister, you might as well agree because we do it anyway.'

I really liked that. Without intending to do so, she had hit on the real spirit of what is great about New Zealand, and what Tomorrow's Schools is all about too, wrapped up into one short line: people taking control of their own lives and taking control of their children's schooling. George Bernard Shaw's quip to the side, when that is their attitude they will be taking care of their children's education in the fullest sense – the next generation of Kiwis will be safe and happy.

**Wyatt Creech** was born in California, USA, in 1946. He moved to New Zealand in early 1947 and spent his time growing up on the family farm in the South Wairarapa. Entering Parliament in 1988, he was MP for Wairarapa for 14 years, nine of them as a Minister. His roles included serving in a wide variety of portfolios, including Education, Health, Deputy Finance, and Revenue, and finally as Deputy Prime Minister. Following retirement from politics, Wyatt returned to the commercial sector and still retains an interest in education. He is an occasional political commentator on education issues, and has been a member of the Cognition Education Research Trust since its inception.

# Chapter 4

## Re-engineering the shifts in the system

*Howard Fancy*

### Introduction

By any measure, the degree of change faced by the New Zealand school system over the past twenty years has been huge. Tomorrow's Schools signalled a significant change in roles and relationships within the school system. Roles and relationships have continued to change significantly. Major assumptions underpinning policy and practice have been seriously challenged and changed.

Policy and administrative reforms dominated changes in schools and the school system during the first half of the 1990s, before giving way to a much more explicit focus on raising student achievement. Looking ahead, schools will continue to play crucial roles in educating young people; but a strong focus on raising achievement levels will see a much stronger emphasis placed on lifting system performance and, within this, developing stronger networks within the system that support more effective teaching and learning.

Here I reflect on some of the changes that have taken place, and the key influences on the performance of the school system, before looking forward over the next 20 years to consider future changes.

### Background

The reforms that dominated schools during the first half of the 1990s had their origins in a rapidly changing global economy and the major economic problems faced by New Zealand. These brought education into the spotlight in ways that had not occurred before. Future economic growth was seen as critically dependent on having a more highly skilled work force. Many students were staying longer at school and needed to successfully transition into tertiary education.

**Howard Fancy**
Director of Motu Economic
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Large scale remedial education was needed for young people without the life skills and knowledge to succeed in a modern economy and society. The education system needed to become more responsive to a changing economy, and attuned to the different interests of students, communities and employers. All spending areas faced pressures to make savings and increase cost effectiveness. The education administration was seen as over-centralised, cumbersome, and too intertwined with the profession to be an effective driver of change.

Reviews of school administration, the early childhood education sector, and the post-compulsory sector reflected concerns that led to significant shifts in roles and responsibilities for the school system.[1] Tomorrow's Schools shifted responsibilities for running schools to communities, and the Education Review Office began to publicly inform parents and communities about the quality of learning and management in schools. The new National Curriculum gave teachers and schools much greater professional freedom to use a wider range of learning resources and methods in the pursuit of nationally prescribed learning outcomes. The growth of participation in senior secondary schooling led to a wider range of learning options, with a greater focus on student pathways and progressions along these. The reform of senior secondary qualifications was part of the response.

The scale of change being faced by the system was huge. A study of the reforms comments that, 'Rarely has any country engaged in such a sustained and far-reaching overhaul of its education system.'[2] Popular beliefs and rhetoric in 1989 and 1990 suggested that the architects of the reforms expected that the teaching profession would not only continue to do what they currently did, but could focus more on learning, because decision-making was closer to the learners and their learning needs.

The reality was far from this. In practice, the period that followed Tomorrow's Schools saw the system focus not on raising achievement, but on implementing new policies and developing new capabilities. The loosening of the rules and constraints certainly allowed for innovation and trial-and-error learning, but much of the effort within schools was directed at simply implementing changes.

*The new capabilities required by boards and schools, including legal, financial, property and employment responsibilities, were considerable, and were seriously underestimated, as was the degree of change implied by the new curriculum and qualifications framework.*

The new capabilities required by boards and schools, including legal, financial, property and employment responsibilities, were considerable, and were seriously underestimated, as was the degree of change implied by the new curriculum and qualifications framework. Debates surrounding bulk funding, senior secondary qualifications, pay parity between primary and secondary teachers and the development of new special education policies absorbed large amounts of time and effort.

ERO reports did carry considerable weight, both publicly and with the schools concerned. The language of the self-managing school took a strong hold, and was interpreted as meaning a model of competition between autonomous schools, with the Ministry adopting a more arm's-length relationship. It was not unusual for school leaders to admit that their concern for additional property or computers was as much about improving the attractiveness of their schools to parents as it was about improving education achievement. Yet as Gary Hawke has stated, 'The proposal was never to substitute local control for central control. The Picot language of "local autonomy within central guidelines" was carefully chosen and the intention was to shift the balance between central and local in favour of the latter while retaining both central and local components.'[3]

While the reforms did provide important foundations for a modern and more responsive school system, the educational effectiveness of these reforms was limited by: lack of clear educational purpose in terms of the shifts in achievement and practice expected; paucity of information about student achievement, and absence of a good evidence and research base; underestimation of the degree of change involved; and the failure of the Ministry to redefine its educational role within the emerging system.

## From outside the classroom to inside the classroom

In the mid 1990s, growing evidence emerged that raised concerns about student achievement. A number of schools experienced difficulties and required assistance. International achievement surveys suggested that the comparative international standing of New Zealand students was at risk of declining in the areas of literacy, mathematics and science; and taskforces were established to review teaching in these areas.[4]

The Education Review Office reported on systemic poor schooling outcomes in Mangere and Otara and on the East Coast. Overall, one in five students was leaving school without meaningful qualifications. There was also growing disenchantment with the education system among Māori.

These concerns triggered a major rethink about the overall performance of the school system and the approach to education policy. A number of specific initiatives informed and illustrated these shifts.

**Literacy and numeracy:** A literacy and numeracy strategy was developed. It focused on clearly articulating expectations of what students could be expected to achieve, identifying effective professional practices, encouraging professional learning communities to develop, and developing diagnostic tools to support teacher assessment and teaching.

**School support:** A proactive approach to monitoring school performance was developed, with the ability to intervene early and effectively when schools faced difficulties.

**Major schooling improvement initiatives:** In Mangere and Otara schools, reform was approached with community, professional and Ministry involvement. Following intensive processes over several years, effective, significant changes occurred that saw children increasingly achieving at or around national average levels.[5]

**Research:** Research was commissioned that focused on identifying the most important influences on student achievement. A small project, Te Kotahitanga, looked at Māori achievement in mainstream schools and highlighted the importance of the relationships between students and teachers.[6] In 2002 a series of research reports, commissioned by the Ministry and called Best Evidence Synthesis, reviewed a wide range of international and New Zealand research.[7] The research highlighted the powerful influence of teaching effectiveness and the role of families, and key characteristics of teaching practices that contributed most to effective teaching.

*" However, effective change requires shared ownership of problems and an acceptance that everyone needs to challenge their roles and be willing to change. "*

**Engagement with Māori:** New ways of engagement with Māori were developed, including formal education partnerships with a number of iwi,[8] and a series of educational hui led by Ngati Tuwharetoa. These led to new understandings of success from the perspective of Māori, and how policies and practices could be designed to achieve the best of both world outcomes.

Projects such as these highlighted several important points. First, poor backgrounds need not be a barrier to student achievement. Secondly, teaching effectiveness is the most powerful influence within the system on achievement. The whole system needs to contribute to, and support teaching effectiveness. Thirdly, it is comparatively easier to change teaching practices than it is to change home and social conditions.

However, success requires significant changes in professional practice, investment in professional development, and beliefs that teachers can make a difference. Overcoming deficit thinking is critical. Effective teaching requires teachers and schools to see the life experiences and cultures of children as potential strengths to be harnessed, not as barriers to learning.

Mason Durie has articulated three key educational outcomes or goals for Māori: to live as Māori, to be citizens of the world, and to have high and healthy living standards.[9] Such a formulation is powerful, because it emphasises positive strengths of culture and potential, rather than negatives. However, effective change requires shared ownership of problems and an acceptance that everyone needs to challenge their roles and be willing to change. Good information is also powerful. It can demonstrate what is possible irrespective of a child's background and circumstances. It can inform positive changes to teaching practices. The relationship between teachers, schools, students and parents provides valuable information about the student and about learning objectives. The increasing availability of good evidence acts as both a challenge to improve, and a tool to assist teachers, trustees, parents, students, communities and government in their roles in supporting student learning.

## Looking out to 2029

The past 20 years has involved considerable change. Today, student achievement is central to dialogue, policy and practice. More students leave school with better qualifications and make successful progressions into tertiary education. There is clear evidence that poor home backgrounds should not be barriers to learning. Teaching is becoming a much more evidence-informed profession. Effective teaching is seen as the most powerful influence over student learning within the system.

The challenges ahead, though, are still considerable. More students need to do better at school and make more successful transitions into tertiary education. Standards are now much clearer but will need to be regularly refined and lifted. Students will demand more options and choices and different pathways, and some students will require more personalised support. Teachers and schools will need access to different forms of expertise and professional development, as expectations of schools continue to rise.

The devolved nature of Tomorrow's Schools is giving way to a better understanding of the interdependent nature of the relationships between the centre and schools. Individual schools can make a real difference to student achievement; but by themselves, they cannot possibly meet all the needs of every student and every community.

I believe that the challenge over the next twenty years will shift from a focus on individual schools to one centred on how the system as whole can better contribute to higher achievement for all students. This will require mobilising the collective capabilities and creativity of the system to see innovation happening more within the system, rather than just within a school.

Schools will continue to be at the centre of the system, but the focus will shift to how the system, as a whole, uses its greater capabilities to support and meet the diverse interests of students. Just as the reforms of the 1990s changed roles and relationships, this too will require substantial shifts in thinking, policy, professional practice, relationships and the roles of the education agencies. It will involve schools thinking

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beyond their boundaries to create and access quality learning opportunities for their students. This is likely to lead to the development of more formal networks of relationships. Two examples follow.

## Schools as centres of learning

A focus on the quality of learning programmes available to students will require schools to think about how best to use not only the resources of the school, but also those in other parts of the system and the community. Learning opportunities available for students can increase through the development of specialised centres of expertise, which might centre on certain disciplines, such as foreign languages, technology, or the arts. The Correspondence School is one example of a system asset that can support teaching and learning across the system. Information and communications technologies will continue to expand opportunities for student learning across schools and into the wider world. More deliberate approaches to education for enterprise could see many learning opportunities being created within community and work settings as 'living classrooms'.

## More specialised supports for students and teachers

More specialised capabilities to support students, teachers and schools might include specialised support for students who have special needs, who need remedial support or who are gifted. Teachers and schools could be supported through a range of professional or administrative supports. More integrated and aligned social services could be provided to students at schools. New ways of delivering professional services could include stronger links between research, evaluation and practice, as well as access to teaching resources and diagnostic tools.

There are examples of many these things happening now – for example, in special education, alternative education, through the education portal, Te Kete Ipurangi, aSStle, Māori immersion, STAR, and social workers in schools. But the need is for a more deliberate and system–wide development of more formal networks and approaches over the next decade.

This will require a major investment in building different capacities and capabilities. It will further challenge assumptions

that have long underpinned the school system – such as the length of a school day and how the custodial functions of schools can best be met. It may require different capabilities to support schools and students to access wider sources of quality learning and guidance, and to broker and arrange learning opportunities for schools, teachers and students.

The role of the Ministry would also need to evolve considerably. It would need to facilitate and support changes that enable more flexible and innovative ways of working. It would need to invest in developing a much broader infrastructure that provides access to the information and services needed by schools in high-quality and timely ways. Approaches to funding would need to be developed to support such investment, and leadership at all levels will be critical.

Effective governance would continue to be crucial, but it would also be important in terms of the governance of networked arrangements. The system would have to be much less hierarchical and less controlled from the centre, with its many policies, rules and regulations. This form of control would need to be replaced and anchored by a strong system focus on raising achievement, with clear views about what constitutes success, and strategies to raise performance that are built up from school and community levels.

At the core of the system will be strategies developed by schools which are designed to ensure that all students are given the best opportunities to succeed. These strategies would inform both the priorities at school level, and the wider learning opportunities to be accessed by students. These would continue to recognise that those closest to a student will have the best information about that student. Services would be provided on a just-in-time basis rather than a just-in-case basis, in order to better match the delivery of services with the priorities determined by schools. The result would be a school system that is orientated towards adaption and innovation across all schools, and is centred on student achievement. The key accountability will be an accountability for improvement.

Such a system will see more personalised learning, where teaching and learning is made relevant to each student. This will recognise, value and tap into the different skills, aspirations, backgrounds,

interests, experiences, cultures and abilities of individuals, families and communities. It will see policies and practices tailored at a system and classroom level to diverse individuals.

## Some concluding thoughts

Tomorrow's Schools had at its heart greater family and community influence over schools. The value of the relationships between school and home lies in the knowledge that is shared about a student's home practices and cultures, and how these can inform teaching strategies.

We have also found that students learn in different worlds – the school, the home and the community. When all of these learning environments are strong, students generally do well. When all are weak, students are at risk. When one environment is strong and another is weak, then the ability of the stronger learning environment to compensate for the weaker one is crucial. At the heart of developing a strong and deliberate focus on system innovation is the need for the system as a whole to provide more personalised learning opportunities and to strengthen learning in all the worlds in which students walk.

New Zealand has many good and dedicated teachers, but we have found that they are learners too, and need access to good tools and support. We have gained deeper insights into the nature of the understandings that need to be gained and shared between families and schools, and the nature of the information and understandings needed to support both parties in this relationship.

We have also found that the Ministry, other education agencies, teacher trainers and researchers must see themselves as part of the system, and understand that when the system is not doing as well as it could, they are part of the problem and need to be part of the solution.

Over twenty years ago, the school system was directed and controlled from the centre. The reforms of the 1990s devolved more responsibilities and opportunities to teachers and schools. This led to the emergence of self-managing schools. But the capacity of schools to respond to this and all the other major

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changes occurring was substantially underestimated. Recent years have seen a strong focus on student achievement emerge, and with this, recognition of the roles and relationships that are crucial to raising achievement. So independence is giving way to interdependence.

It is easy to be diverted into funding and ideological debates in education. In the past, the absence of strong relationships between professionals and the government often led to unproductive debates centred on 'who was to blame', and whether funding was adequate or workloads manageable. Much of the 1990s was spent implementing and arguing about things 'outside the classroom'.

But we have now relearned that it is what happens within a classroom that matters most. We have clear evidence that effective teaching and the role of families are the two most powerful influences over student achievement, and we ignore these at the peril of students. Teaching effectiveness involves the combination of 'knowing a student', 'knowing your subject' and 'knowing a range of teaching strategies'.

The ability of parents and communities to engage effectively with teachers and schools, and to support the learning of their children effectively, is also crucial to teachers knowing their students, and both families and schools being able to shape and support 24/7 learning in all the different worlds that students walk in. Tomorrow's Schools has shown the power of community governance. Governance will continue to be important and will continue to need to be strengthened. But the key idea in this paper centres on lifting our sights from the 2500 autonomous schools, and instead investing effort and leadership into how the system as a whole can do much better in supporting better teaching and better learning.

In moving in this direction, quality governance will continue to be vital; but tomorrow's governance will need to be more centred on system performance, and much more representative of a partnership between communities, education professionals and the government. It is only through stronger partnerships between the centre, profession and community that the system will be able to innovate and work more efficiently and effectively in the interests of all students.

> *Tomorrow's Schools have shown the power of community governance. Governance will continue to be important and will continue to need to be strengthened.*

## Notes

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**Howard Fancy** was Secretary for Education from July 1996 to October 2006. In those 10 years he led and oversaw major reforms in all parts of the education system, including a substantial reorientation of the Ministry of Education. Previously Howard filled senior positions in the public sector, including Chief Executive of the Ministry of Commerce, Acting Chief Executive of the Ministry for the Environment, and Deputy Secretary of The Treasury. Currently Howard is the Director of Motu Economic and Public Policy Research. He also holds a number of governance positions and undertakes a range of consultancy projects.

# Chapter 5

## Curriculum, teaching and learning:
A celebratory review of a very complex
and evolving landscape

*Elizabeth Eppel*

> " *The processes of teaching and learning bear the hallmarks of being essentially human complex processes, and much more.* "

**Elizabeth Eppel**

When I reflect on the world of curriculum teaching and learning in the schooling sector over the last twenty years, I see a co-evolving landscape made up of students and their families, their teachers, schools, boards and New Zealand society at large. The components might be the same, but over the 20 years since Tomorrow's Schools, there has been a process of evolution where the parts have adapted in various ways in response to each other and, over that time together, have created a different landscape. I want to reflect on several themes: our history and where we have come from, and how that affects where we are and where we might go next; the learning that has come from the experience of doing things together; creativity, innovation and emergence of new ideas and new ways around curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment; and most importantly, interdependence between the parts of the system and their co-evolution.

The world of curriculum, teaching and learning (and I include student assessment in that mix) is a complex one. 'Complex' doesn't just mean complicated and difficult to understand. It also means dynamic, with many parts which interact with each other, and in the process change each other in unpredictable ways. That is what happens in the interactions between human beings all the time. The processes of teaching and learning bear the hallmarks of being essentially human complex processes, and much more.

The curriculum teaching and learning landscape is complex, because of the diverse and changing nature of our students and their learning needs; because our society continues to change and evolve and therefore the demands on what students need

to know and be able to do also shift over time; because the nature of schools and schooling is affected by their students and the society they come from; and, not least, because of the increasing sophistication of our understanding about effective teaching and learning, and the demands this places on teachers, on their professional knowledge and practice, and on the need for ongoing teacher development.

I will retrace here a little of the history of where we have been in the last 20 years or so, in the belief that if we don't understand how we got where we are today, then we are not adequately prepared to think about where we are going next, what needs to be done to get there, and the challenges we will have to overcome along the way. My perspective on the last twenty years is shaped by my roles in the Ministry of Education during that time, and also by my experiences before that as a classroom teacher of science, as head of a science department, as a secondary school inspector, working on the science curriculum, and 12 months from 1988-1989 seconded to the implementation unit that was put in place in Wellington to make Tomorrow's Schools happen in October 1989.

## Learning from doing

Curriculum, learning and assessment policies evolve over time on an ever-changing social, technological and political terrain. It is well documented that Tomorrow's Schools was about the administration of education – the institutional arrangements within which schooling took place. It was widely assumed in 1988/9 that the teaching and learning business of schools would continue unaffected and, if anything, be enhanced by freeing up the administrative processes of control, and placing most of the resources and decisions about their use in the hands of schools. An attempt to review the schooling curriculum had been ongoing for much of the decade preceding Tomorrow's Schools. Some will remember the highly contested and centrally driven attempts by Merv Wellington as Minister (1978-1984), and then the broad consultative process undertaken by Russell Marshall when he took over as Minister (1984-1987). Changes to the senior secondary school were also on the agenda with

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the review of assessment, and a policy paper on secondary school qualifications. All of the anticipation, preparation and backroom work that had gone into supporting curriculum review went on hold while the Picot Review and Tomorrow's Schools became the only item on the agenda for much of 1988, through the actual changeover to the new regime on 1 October 1989, and into the early 1990s.

In retrospect, many would consider TS a giant earthquake type interruption. Most importantly, it interrupted thinking about, and the focus on, the real business of schooling i.e. teaching and learning. At the time it was simply assumed that schools and teachers could get on with their business better without support from the centre.

The senior school assessment and qualifications issues still needed addressing, and the syllabus documents which schools were bound to follow, according to the Education Act, were way past their use-by date when the Government changed in 1990, and Lockwood Smith as Minister (1990-1994) put curriculum and assessment reform back on the agenda. Two major streams of policy development and implementation followed, one focused on curriculum teaching and assessment, and the other on terminal senior school assessment and qualifications. Space here leads me to focus only on the former; reflections on senior school curriculum, assessment and qualifications must wait for another opportunity.

The development of the first New Zealand Curriculum statement, in English and Māori, got under way rapidly in 1990, and the Ministry of Education was able to draw on the work that had been put on hold before Tomorrow's Schools. Work also began on the development of curriculum objectives for the seven learning areas: Language (English or Māori) and Languages; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Health and Physical Education; and the Arts. Lockwood Smith declared that his entire curriculum review would be completed and implemented within five years.

The Minister and the Ministry might have expected rejoicing in the sector that this long-awaited work was finally under way. Far from it, and there were a number of interacting

reasons for this. The 1989 changes had created the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Ministry of Education, in the place of the old Department of Education. Those (in the State Services Commission and Treasury) who designed the new agencies wanted to ensure that there was no slipping back to the old bureaucratic control of the Department. There were huge changes in the people involved in the new bureaucracies, and much loss of institutional memory at the leadership levels of these agencies. The people networks and relationships which connected the government agencies to the schooling sector had been deliberately disrupted. The Ministry was to focus on policy, and 'capture' by the wishes of the schooling sector was to be avoided. The result was nearly a decade-long chasm in the relationship between the schooling sector and the government agencies.

Another factor was the attitude of the then Minister to the engagement of teachers, and particularly their unions, in curriculum development. There were many good teachers on the curriculum advisory and writing panels; yet the Curriculum Stocktake Review, undertaken in 2000-2003, recalled the lingering feelings of teachers that the 1990s curriculum documents were not theirs. The process was seen as being too exclusive and non-consultative. Writing a curriculum statement and outcomes is one thing, enacting it and achieving it in the classroom is quite another. The timelines for implementation of the curriculum statement were gradually extended, and the last of the curriculum statements, for the Arts, was finished at the end of the decade. The process for the development of the first curriculum statement, Mathematics, was very different from that for the last, The Arts. But the environment by then was very different also.

While the curriculum was being implemented progressively through the 1990s, the Education Review Office (ERO) was also becoming active. The Chief Review Officer and individual reviewers became another important dynamic in the evolution, as they interpreted the curriculum requirements and the expectations on schools in particular ways that began to shape the behaviour of teachers and schools. The lack of ownership which teachers, in the main, felt for the curriculum

> " *The development of the first Maori curriculum statement coincided with the rise of the Kura Kaupapa movement. Unfortunately, the Maori curriculum development timeline always lagged behind that of the English language curriculum.* "

was compounded by the narrow compliance approach ERO took to their review of schools' implementation of the curriculum during the 1990s. This situation changed only after the review of ERO in 2000, which resulted in the development of a different approach to reviews.

The development of the first Māori curriculum statement coincided with the rise of the Kura Kaupapa movement. Unfortunately, the Māori curriculum development timeline always lagged behind that of the English language curriculum. Again, there were many reasons for this. Capability and capacity of the Ministry of Education and the availability of Māori medium teachers and curriculum experts was one challenge. There was a huge amount of learning going on about what it meant to deliver a curriculum in Māori. In some areas, this extended to working with the Māori Language Commission on Māori vocabulary development to cover the conceptual ideas involved in the curriculum areas.

The Curriculum Stocktake conducted at the completion of the Arts curriculum in 2000 helped us learn some lessons from the experience of the previous decade. One was about the importance of teacher involvement in and ownership of curriculum, and an even more important reminder that the curriculum exists at a number of levels. The written curriculum is not the same as the taught curriculum, or, more critically, the received and achieved curriculum. This decade reminded us that it was important to focus on learning as the objective of schooling, and that everything we did should support that objective unequivocally.

## Creativity, innovation and emergence

The curriculum was only one leg of what some described as a three-legged stool supporting effective teaching and learning. The other two legs were assessment and teacher professional practice and development. These also underwent significant change during the 1990s.

The drive from parents and those outside education to know more about the outcomes of the schooling system is never far from the surface. We are reminded of that this year by the

current government's policy initiatives. These are legitimate needs. Parents want to know more about the achievement of their child(ren). School boards want to know more about the learning outcomes being achieved through the programmes in their school. Employers want to know about the skills and knowledge of those they might employ, and they are rightly concerned to know that the schooling system will meet the current and future needs adequately. The government and the public generally want to know that New Zealand has a good schooling system and that taxpayers get value for their money. The challenge is how we meet all those needs in a way that is supportive of the highest achievement outcomes for all.

Debates about student assessment and reporting of assessment results were a feature of the 1990s. At that time, there were many fewer assessment tools and instruments than we have today. Some simply wanted to institute standardised tests at several ages, and to report the results of those tests by school, nationally. What happened in the end is a brilliant illustration of the creativity of the system gradually evolving some solutions that have been acknowledged as world-leading. There was an interaction between the expert knowledge we had in New Zealand on assessment, the knowledge of practising teachers, and the development of approaches to assessment which could learn from international experience. There was also engagement with teaching professionals and expert teachers in the development of new assessment tools. Finally there were elements of serendipity – the right people in the right place at the right time.

The result was the emergence over fifteen years of the array of complex instruments we know today, which are able to tell us about different aspects of the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the overall health of our schooling system. The existing Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) were added to by the development of assessment resource banks (known as ARBs) in other curriculum areas, such as science and maths, and the School Entry Assessment tool (SEA) for use by individual schools. The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) assesses the learning of a sample of children at Year 4 and Year 8 in each learning area of the curriculum,

on a four-year cycle. The sample approach allows the development of complex assessment tasks, and reveals a far richer picture of the current state of learning in Year 4 and 8 students than any pencil and paper test could. The repeating four-year cycle also means that we are now building up a rich picture of student learning over time. We have also created a feedback dialogue with teachers, because the areas of under- and over-achievement are discussed and exemplified in ways that teachers are able to take back into their classrooms and use to improve their teaching practice. NEMP is acknowledged as a world leading and innovative approach to system-wide assessment of learning achievement. It was a creative innovation involving bureaucrats, assessment expertise, academics and teachers, and it continues to evolve.

At the same time as these domestic initiatives were getting under way, there was a focus on measuring student achievement in internationally comparative studies. New Zealand has a long involvement and commitment to participation in three international comparative achievement studies: the International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) at age 15 in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. Many principals, teachers and board members will have read these reports or seen graphs and references to results from them. They were important in policy formation for two reasons. First, they told us that the New Zealand system performs very well for some of its students. We have some of the best performances surveyed in reading and scientific literacy, and are above average overall. This gave teachers a boost of confidence against criticisms of schooling. The second thing they told us was more important; it was that our system systematically underperforms for parts of our population – that is, we have a wide distribution in our scores. This information helped to focus policy more sharply on why and how a system that can do well with some students fails others, and what we are going to do about this unacceptable situation. Policy began to focus on effective teaching for learning by all students.

Two more creative developments on the assessment front followed, yet again through collaborations between academics, assessment experts, and curriculum and teaching experts: the development of asTTle, Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (He Punaha Aromatawai mo te Whakaako me te Ako); and the development of assessment exemplars to go with the curriculum statements. The focus was on supporting teachers to teach better, and acknowledging the place of good assessment information to feed back to students and to help both teachers and students to move forward. There is a theme here. Whenever New Zealand brings together diverse interests in the pursuit of better teaching and learning, it is possible for some very innovative and positive things to emerge from the process.

## Learning how, learning from each other, and learning to learn

Innovation around more effective teaching and learning also took place in the sphere of teacher professional development. Professional development and the opportunity for teachers to learn from each other and from the best in their profession have always been part of the equation. However, in the early 1990s there were problems about the closeness of the connections and communication between the parts of the curriculum teaching and learning system. Teachers struggled to communicate their professional development needs in ways that helped them to be met. The professionals designing and planning for curriculum development opportunities found it difficult to get an overall view of those needs and where the gaps were. It was difficult to show that professional development can lead to improvements in student learning through improved pedagogy and curriculum understanding. As a consequence, it was difficult to show value for money when successive governments made their decisions about budget priorities.

It has been not one thing but a number of things interacting that has slowly helped change this scenario since the latter part of the 1990s. As the first cycle of NEMP results appeared, we began to get an emerging picture of what teachers find difficult in each curriculum area. Some very innovative,

> *The focus was on supporting teachers to teach better, and acknowledging the place of good assessment information to feed back to students and to help both teachers and students to move forward.*

research grounded work began to appear in the approach taken to the Numeracy Project. The Literacy Project also focused on teachers' professional practice and how this might translate to a whole-school focus on literacy achievement. The SEMO project (Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara) began working with previously failing schools in Mangere and Otara, building on what had been learnt from the Literacy and Numeracy projects.

From initiatives such as these, we began to gain professional insights into effective ways to keep learning as teachers – ways to learn from each other and from research. It became much more common for people to talk about professional learning communities, in which in-depth knowledge of professional practice is shared for the purpose of improving professional practice. ICT PD (Information and Communication Technology Professional Development) helped teachers to use new communication technologies in their collaboration around professional practice. Te Kete Ipurangi (tki.org.nz) facilitated the creation of some on-line communities of professional practice in specific curriculum areas. Te Kotahitanga helped us learn about how Māori students can achieve well. Each of these initiatives has been a coming together of dedicated and gifted teachers, research and bureaucrats. Opportunities were seized, and much of what happened did so because it was driven by the system itself and the way it reinforced the good bits within that system.

The creation of the Best Evidence Synthesis series has been a huge step in furthering the professional dialogue on which such innovations thrive. The research community, the professional practice community, and the teachers of teachers now have material around which they can engage in a very constructive way, instead of talking past each other. This dialogue is also assisted by an unequivocal focus on the outcome for which everyone is striving: high levels of achievement and learning outcomes for all students.

## Final reflections

Complex changes take time. The curriculum, teaching and learning system that consists of our schools and their teaching professionals and principals, students and their parents, and researchers and professionals in government departments forms a highly distributed and complex knowledge network. Each person has considerable degrees of freedom about what they can do and what they can change, even though every one of us sometimes feels constrained by the system. People have different interpretations of the nature of the problems requiring solutions and the changes needed. The knowledge needed to effect change is highly distributed and changing. No one person or body has sufficient knowledge or expertise to plan and execute system change effectively; but each of the actors is a part of the solution.

The development of the new curriculum illustrates these points. The 2000 Curriculum Stocktake told us some of the things that were wrong with our former curriculum, but it couldn't give us a recipe for how to get it right. The curriculum development processes that took place between 2003 and 2007 engaged many different groups of people, who all had a piece of knowledge about what the new curriculum needed to be like. It used knowledge and understanding built up through the individual and collective learning that had occurred in the previous decade's curriculum development and implementation work. The result is the product of that collective learning, and a collaborative, creative process. The translation of that curriculum into the taught and learned curriculum in each school and each classroom will also be the product of further ongoing collaborative learning processes between teacher, principals, students, parents and others in the school community.

We have seen attention shift more emphatically to the key role of principals in this distributed knowledge network, as leaders of learning and achievement in their schools. What principals focus on and how they lead the professional learning community in their school affect how well the teachers in that school can be the best teachers they can be, and the learners the best they can be.

> *There are no silver bullets, no magic recipes. We have seen, in the last twenty years, significant evolution in the right direction.*

Teachers, learners, principals, boards, parents, advisers, reviewers, policy developers, managers, administrators and government are parts of a complex whole. No one can achieve much of significance for very long without the others. No one part can change without affecting the other parts, which will in their turn make changes. Progress is achieved when we are clear about the outcomes we collectively want to achieve, and work both collectively and individually to see that everything we do moves us in that direction.

There are no silver bullets, no magic recipes. We have seen, in the last twenty years, significant evolution in the right direction. The immediate challenge for the next decade is to make significant and permanent improvements on our systemic underachievement, and to make the best parts of our system more universal. With a collective and determined focus on this goal it will happen, and more quickly.

Currently a researcher and an education and public policy consultant, **Elizabeth Eppel** is completing a PhD at Victoria University of Wellington on public policy processes. Her career has been spent in education and public policy, as a secondary school science teacher for 13 years and various forms of bureaucrat for 20 more. As a classroom teacher and a head of department in science and computing in Sydney, Gore and Dunedin, she participated in the science education community in a number of capacities. An inspector of secondary schools for three years, she then joined the Ministry of Education on its establishment in 1989. Apart from a two-year secondment to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet as education (and science) adviser, she continued to work in various areas of education policy, covering the early childhood, schooling and tertiary sectors, until 2006.

# Chapter 6

## Can we dare to think of a world without 'special education'?

*Barbara Disley*

**Dr Barbara Disley**
Principal Consultant
Cognition Education

### A vision for 2020

In 2020, diversity will be embraced and valued. We will no longer be talking about 'special needs' or 'disabled' people, as we will embrace and value at a deep level the diversity of every individual. We will not assume we know or understand young people's needs or their realities. We will instead focus on listening, learning and gathering information about each person's experience, in order to begin to enter their world and build bridges with them that extend it further. The education system will provide the support each student requires to engage in learning and to achieve, and will do this within a broad array of educational contexts. We will be driven not by ideologies, but by the intrinsic need to ensure that every student is valued, encouraged and supported to develop the skills, attitudes, values and practices that will maximise their choices, relationships and opportunities. There will be multiple pathways to achieving these goals and flexible mechanisms for moving through these pathways.

All schools will be fully inclusive, while valuing the uniqueness of each student. We will appreciate the learning and insights each student has; we will take time to understand and relate to them and their view of the world; and we will work with them to fully develop their interests and strengths. No young person will be denied education because they do not fit the model being provided. We will acknowledge that for some young people, sitting in a classroom with thirty other young people is not conducive to their learning or, at times, their peace of mind; so we will provide high quality options that allow the necessary respite in flexible, integrated and meaningful ways. The system will be cohesive and collaborative, and the specialist teaching and support workforce will be skilled, coordinated,

evidenced based and forward thinking. All schools will take responsibility for all students in their geographical catchment area, and work with the existing specialist student support hubs to meet needs flexibly.

All early childhood education centres and schools will teach and contribute to creating a non-disabling society. They will reflect positive, inclusive and valuing attitudes to every student.

## The Disability Strategy

Despite significant funding changes, the deeper intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy[1] has yet to be realised within the education sector. It is true that many schools are inclusive of all students, and work hard to ensure that all students learn in an environment that supports them. However, the vision of the New Zealand Disability Strategy is one of a society that 'highly values the lives of every disabled person and actively enhances their full participation'.

The challenge for the education system is twofold. It has a responsibility to promote a positive learning environment and experience for every disabled young person; it also has a responsibility to educate all young people to promote the behaviour, skills and attitudes that are required to create a non-disabling society.

At a deeper level, the New Zealand disability strategy contains within it a paradigm shift which is akin to that expressed by Jane Gilbert, discussing individuality and equality:

*Post-modern political theorists say we should move away from the one-size-fits-all model of individuality and equality. They think we should look for new and different ways of thinking about individuality, ways that allow difference to be expressed as difference rather than as deficiency, lack, or exclusion.[2]*

Embracing this strategy would mean that every educational context would not only include disabled students in every aspect of school life, but would deeply value their participation and the contribution that they make to enable a learning organisation to contribute to the vision of a non-disabling

> " *Despite significant funding changes, the deeper intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy has yet to be realised within the education sector.* "

society. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy's research reinforces the importance of embracing and reflecting a student's cultural context and understandings into learning.[3] While the implications of this work are being picked up in respect of Māori and Pasifika students, the implications for every young person, particularly young people who are disabled, are equally important.

Creating an educational environment that reflects back to a disabled student their world, and does so in a non-disabling way, is a challenge. Valuing the experience and life path of a young person who may require significant support, different approaches or innovation on the part of a teacher is also a challenge. However, learning takes place when a learner engages with an individual, a group, a situation or a context, and this is facilitated when the learner feels validated and respected.

When I worked in special education, parents frequently spoke about how important it was to them that their child was accepted and valued. This was a key factor in the parent feedback collected in the Let's Talk consultation.[4] Many said that while refusals to enrol were rare, the look on a principal's or teacher's face, the lift of an eyebrow or the seemingly well-intentioned advice that another school was better equipped to 'accommodate' their child, said more than was required. For inclusive schools, on the other hand, resources were not the primary concern. A positive, welcoming, can-do attitude was what made a real difference to parents in determining an appropriate education option for their child. Forcing enrolment or acceptance through a compliance model did not reassure many parents that their child's needs would be met.

The Disability Strategy is more than ticking all the boxes and complying with all its objectives. A non-disabling early childhood centre or school is one that embraces all young people and positively projects and reflects their worlds. These organisations actively seek ways to engage disabled students in all classroom activities in learning, cultural, physical education, drama, theatre, music and dance. Learning occurs for all students in a context that forges relationships which foster

understanding. Our challenge in education is to create a reciprocal learning context where a young person has the opportunity to share their world, to influence the view of others, and to contribute in all the ways they might want.

I visited a school where senior students were working toward NCEA credits in drama through a school production that engaged a group of students who were disabled. The learning attitudes, skills and talents displayed by all, were of the highest calibre.

The Disability Strategy acknowledges that many of the disabling barriers for people with impairments are imposed by society, and schools, like other organisations, reflect the disabling attitudes of the wider community. The strategy aims to promote and value interdependence, and to move forward from exclusion, tolerance and accommodation of disabled people to become a fully inclusive and mutually supportive society. When an environment is mutually supportive, there is recognition that all participants contribute and create an outcome. In the learning environment, this means that a student who is differently able contributes to the learning context, both giving and creating knowledge, connections and relationships. Creating a context where this can happen is the challenge for every educator.

A teacher who cares about every student interaction and outcome, embraces difference and diversity, is reflective about their own practice and their contribution, and is open to and constantly learning, is likely to create a context for positive non-disabling attitudes and behaviours to develop. Gilbert recognises that education is much more than teaching students to acquire a certain body of knowledge:

*We need to emphasise multiplicity, diversity, and connectivity not linearity, uniformity, and autonomy. We need an education system that develops people's ability to connect with one another, work together across their differences and add value to each other.[5]*

The paradigm shift required to leave behind our 20th century approach and develop an education system that is truly fit for this century is the paradigm shift that many disabled people envision for their future.

Specialist professional knowledge and technology allow access to information and, more importantly, provide new ways for learning and connection to occur. While there have been advances in the use of technology to support learning, the realm of assistive technology remains the domain of a few specialist teachers. Sharing knowledge and skills on the many ways that worlds can be accessed and opened will require greater partnership between specialists and teachers.

## Looking back to move forward

Since 1989, there has been substantial change in the education sector. The Tomorrow's Schools education reforms vested greater responsibilities in communities to run their schools. Boards of trustees were established for all schools and given greater control over resources, as schools became 'self managing'. Schools have responsibility for resource allocation, including the resources that are tagged for 'special education'. The reforms also required all schools to accept and provide appropriate education for all students. The 1989 Education Act stated that:

*People who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not.*

However, other than creating this base, little real change occurred until the mid 1990s, when the Special Education Policy (SE2000) framework was introduced. While education practices were already heading in a more inclusive direction, the policy intent of SE 2000 was to reinforce this move. While SE2000 was a 'funding framework' rather than a comprehensive policy, it wrapped funding resources (ORRS funding) around individual children, as opposed to the provision of centralised dedicated funding that was previously provided to some schools to run 'special education units'. The move to allocate funding to individuals who met particular criteria for support was designed to ensure that resources remained attached to the young people requiring the highest levels of support, and gave parents more choice in respect of the context in which a child received their education. The funding was designed to follow

the child and ensure that schooling in a regular setting was a viable option, as the funding moved with the child.

The changes did give greater funding certainty to children who met the criteria; but in many ways, the changes made students who had previously been perceived as having 'moderate needs' more vulnerable. Many of these young people had been educated in specialist units that were now not directly funded from the centre. Instead, all schools received special education funding (the Special Education Grant) for students with moderate learning support needs, as part of their overall funding package, and each school had control over how and to whom they applied this resource. In subsequent years, additional resources, in the form of Resource Teachers of Learning (RTLBs) and Behaviour and Supplementary Learning Support teachers, have been added to the resourcing mix. These teachers work across a number of schools and provide a range of support to students with behaviour and learning needs who do not meet the criteria for the individualised ORRS funding packages.

While not necessarily intended, the changes increased the focus on resourcing (or, from many principals' and parents' perspective, the lack of it). Many schools used their special education grant to bolster their literacy and numeracy programmes and target students with 'learning difficulties', rather than those with higher support needs. Resources were predominantly used to fund teacher aides, rather than to provide more targeted specialist teachers and interventions.

Throughout this period, special schools continued in their previous form. However, they still receive more baseline resources than regular schools; they are significantly better staffed, with lower teacher student ratios and dedicated classroom teacher aide funding. Some receive additional physical therapy resource, while also receiving the individual funding packages (ORRS) that many students with higher support needs attract. So while the intent of SE 2000 was to provide a more equitable funding approach, schooling context

and economies of scale were inadequately considered. Young people with 'high support needs' in regular schools tend to receive their specialist support directly from a 'fundholding school' or from Special Education Services, which provides an itinerant service to schools, offering speech language therapy, physical therapists, psychologist and teacher aide support. However, special schools receive additional resources for these services as well as the funding package, and along with some 'fund-holding schools', their greater economies of scale and aggregation of students on one site mean they are able to provide higher levels of therapy. Indirectly, the funding mechanisms provided incentives for aggregating students with high learning support needs, rather than supporting them within individual classrooms.

Parents consulted in 2005 reported that while regular schooling is an option, their children were often disadvantaged by having more restricted access to specialist services when in a regular school context.[6] Some regular schools continue to operate special education units, and attract a disproportionate number of students who receive ORRS funding. Some of these units operate in quite a segregated way within the regular schools, while others provide flexible pathways for students to move in and out of regular classrooms from the specialist unit base. However, parents frequently reported that irrespective of the funding package, some schools were not welcoming, and some were reluctant to enrol their child:

*They (parents) are concerned by the lack of welcoming atmosphere in many schools and encounter negative attitudes from teachers and principals. Parents say some school environments are not inclusive and some schools lack the expertise in how to be inclusive.[7]*

In the same sector consultation, educators acknowledged that not all schools were welcoming. They recognised that some teachers and principals lacked the right attitudes to make inclusion work.

While many educators supported the concept of inclusion, they reported difficulties in making it work, due to:

- balancing the needs of all children in the classroom

- fear of becoming a 'magnet' school and attracting a disproportionate number of children with special education needs

- the burden of administrative requirements

- the additional stress on teachers in the classroom, especially with large class sizes, and especially when there are severe behaviour difficulties

- the additional costs involved, e.g. of running special units

- the difficulty of attracting teachers to 0.1 and 0.2 teaching positions.[8]

A key review in 2000 by Cathy Wylie[9] identified that the Special Education 2000 policy had expanded the number of students receiving special needs support to around 5.5 percent of the school population. While it had improved opportunities for some students, it had not done this for all. Wylie reported that contestability between fund-holders had created fragmentation and gaps in accountability and inequities in resourcing and opportunities for students. There was less certainty around funding for many students, and the specialist workforce was fragmented. Specialist teachers were more likely to be employed on a casual basis (ORRS specialist teachers were resourced on a 0.1 or 0.2 basis for each child), with the resulting loss of expertise and reduced focus on ongoing professional development. A common theme reported from parents and educators was that often the least trained staff were working much of the time with the students who needed the greatest support and teaching knowledge.

There has been substantial additional funding for special education over the past ten years. However, despite these gains, the concerns identified in Wiley's review of special education remain. The special education sector is fragmented. Schools continue to operate as 'self managing' entities, with little evidence of them taking collective responsibility to ensure a collaborative network of support for all students. Some schools

*" Increased collaboration and cooperation are required within our education system if needs are to be better met. Some students do require high levels of support to ensure that they are physically safe and continuing to learn and develop. "*

have developed reputations for engaging disabled students, and doing so in a way that supports parents, while others struggle. While the reforms of 1989 vested greater decision-making power at the local level, they also led to lower levels of cooperation and collaboration between schools, less sharing of knowledge and resources, and a greater sense of 'competition' in attracting students and parents who would enhance the school's overall reputation. Schools that are welcoming of all students frequently attract a high number of students who require higher levels of specialist support.

One notable exception to this is the Secondary Schools Partnership in Dunedin, where the secondary schools coordinated to maximise the likelihood that every student will remain within school. Across the country, there is a network of special schools that tend to operate quite separately from the regular schooling system and other specialist services. With some notable exceptions, the special schools are not active members of their local schooling networks.

Increased collaboration and cooperation are required within our education system if needs are to be better met. Some students do require high levels of support to ensure that they are physically safe and continuing to learn and develop. Greater levels of expertise and resource sharing across schools could enhance outcomes for all students, and enable the education sector to honour its obligations under the Disability Strategy.

Our current system of funding continues to fracture the specialist education workforce. This has led to specialists becoming isolated from each other, less opportunity for ongoing professional development, inadequate career pathways, and split allegiances and loyalties. Some specialist resources, such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour, are shared among schools; however, there are many RTLB clusters that do not work as effectively as they could, and management of the clusters and teachers by a combined management team is often poor.

The difficulty some schools have in accessing specialist support and interventions has led to many principals and teachers not valuing or seeing the benefit of specialist input. For example,

a speech language therapist may be able to support a classroom teacher to develop effective communication systems for a student with autism. A psychologist may have a range of strategies for promoting pro-social behaviour and more positive interactions. However, if access to these specialist services is severely restricted, a principal is unlikely to see their value and will often prefer to trade this resource for more teacher aide time to 'manage' classroom behaviour, rather than change it. Given the choice, many would opt for greater control over their resources so that they can purchase more teacher or teacher aide support. This view is widespread, despite evidence that enhanced specialist input can and does make a difference. In some respects, this view is perpetuated by the concept of 'self managing schools' and some principals' preference for having direct control over all the funding that goes to students in their schools.

One of the biggest challenges within our current funding system is to find ways to better integrate all specialist resources, and create a critical mass of expertise that ensures more effective and higher levels of direct service to young people in schools. Ensuring local ownership and decision-making over resources in a way that promotes high levels of responsibility and accountability for every student is also a challenge.

Over the past eight years, there has been an attempt by the Ministry of Education to initiate stronger special education networks at a local level, in order to provide additional resources to schools, so that they can give more adequate educational support to students with 'moderate' needs. These networks attempted to aggregate the 0.1 and 0.2 specialist teaching resource and attach them to a special school, so that a more consolidated specialist workforce could be developed. One of the first such models, which operated out of the special school in Wanganui, worked so effectively to ensure an integrated approach to student placement that it became a virtual school, with no students being educated on the special school site. Instead, every student received their education in their local school in an integrated context. The specialist teachers and therapists visited the schools and supported the

regular teacher. This model was not about 'special' school versus 'mainstream' school. It was instead focused on how each child could be best supported to receive their education in their local school, while accessing specialist expertise and support to maximise their learning. These models are clearly worth more attention and exploration.

There has also been a greater focus by Group Special Education and schools on more targeted interventions for young children with behavioural needs. This is an area of increasing concern within schools. Again, it is imperative that we do not create a parallel education system for young people with behaviour needs, but instead concentrate on ensuring all teachers have adequate training and skill in classroom management practices and access to specialist support to intervene early when behavioural concerns begin to manifest. The greater overall focus on early childhood education and increased funding to meet the needs of disabled infants and young people have increased levels of access to early supports and interventions.

The recent shift to strengthened assessment for learning has increased the accountability within schools. This could work for or against disabled young people. Being clear about a student's learning achievements and reflecting these back to the student is important; however, it is also quite different from national testing that ranks individuals and schools. While an increased focus and greater accountability for fostering success for all students is rightly placed with schools, care must be taken to ensure that what is actually measured as being indicative of 'success' does in fact reflect the knowledge, skill, culture, aspirations and interests of the individuals and groups being tested.

While many people argue that increased competition between schools and a 'market driven' model will lift educational standards, the reality is that parents of disabled young people have very little power within our system. In many cases, parents have to continuously fight to ensure that their child has a place within the school and that their needs can be met.

Given that it is unlikely that the same priority will be given to assessing the extent to which every school is 'non-disabling' or inclusive of all students in their catchment area, care will need to be taken to ensure that some schools do not become more discriminatory in their enrolment practices. Excluding students with behavioural concerns without exploring every opportunity for supporting them is one very obvious way of being less inclusive and raising a school's achievement status.

A greater challenge for the education sector will be to ensure that within such a context, schools continue to meet their obligations under the Disability Strategy by ensuring a non-disabling society, while at the same time promoting positive learning experiences for every disabled young person.

## How do we get to 2020?

There is no one educational pathway that works for all. Embracing difference and diversity and valuing the contribution that every individual makes are the changes required at all levels within our education system. While there are frequent calls in special education for more resources, these alone will not change hearts and minds; and it is shifts of hearts and minds that are required if we are to become an education sector that embraces the intent of the Disability Strategy. Embracing diversity and difference, valuing the contribution of all, and being open to learning from every interaction, are the values and attitudes that will drive us forward.

Resources are important, as is the way they are distributed, because the resource allocation processes can incentivise particular behaviours. It is therefore critical that future resourcing decisions do provide incentives for all ECE centres and schools to welcome disabled young people. This means that economies of scales must be factored into resourcing allocation. It is more costly to provide specialist support to one child in an isolated local school setting than in a large fund-holding or special school. Resources should be allocated close to where the young person receives their education, and decisions need to be made by those who know them well. However, every child needs to be welcomed first, before resourcing questions are considered. Too often, parents are

made to feel that they have some responsibility for providing resources to support their child's education.

The key challenge confronting the education sector is to overcome the current fragmented approach to providing specialist support and expertise. Finding a mechanism for placing all specialist resource, both money and people, into collaborative networks that allow equitable, fair and effective services and support to be provided locally, while ensuring high levels of accountability for student outcomes, must be a stronger focus. Special schools and specialist services (GSE) need to be an integral part of these networks. The specialist teachers should be amalgamated so that RTLB, Supplementary Learning Support teachers, and specialist ORRS teachers become a strong united workforce, with clear pathways for training and career progression. These teachers could be employed by a local network and operate out of a 'student support' unit or hubs located within well functioning, regular or virtual special schools.

Rather than being divided, the specialist workforce must become united to achieve the overall disability strategy vision. It is time to move from the rhetoric of 'special school' versus 'regular school' so that the sector can focus on ensuring the best match of schooling context with each child's needs. Special schools' resources and expertise could be integrated into the 'student support' units across the country, and provide specialist assessment to support a young person with particular short-term learning needs, as well as for providing specialist teacher and therapy support to students who receive their education within the local schooling network. Using the expertise currently locked up in some of the special schools and units could enable a specialist 'hub' or 'student support' unit to be developed that works across a whole schooling network.

Over the past few years, learning support networks have been trialled in some parts of the country. In these models, specialist teachers operated through what effectively were 'virtual' specialist school hubs employing specialist teachers and therapists, who then worked across a range of local regular schools in which the young people received their education. This model and variations of it are worth exploring more widely. These

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approaches would require clear identification of all specialist resources going into a geographic collection of schools, along with the identification of a management model that would enable clear accountability for funding and collaborative service provision. An explicit regional student support plan that engages all contributing schools needs to be developed. The plan could form the basis of a contract for the release of the school clusters special education resources. It will be essential that the model requires contributing schools to commit to providing appropriate and effective educational pathways for every child, irrespective of their support requirements.

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>
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Heading toward 2020, we need a flexible education system that allows young people to flow through a range of differing pathways. Early childhood centres and schools need to work collaboratively, offering a range of environments rich in a diverse array of learning networks which allow a young person to access the experiences and environments that support their education best. Early childhood centres and schools will be well networked, and specialist teachers, therapists, psychologists and behaviour specialists will work into a range of local educational facilities, and be closely connected to the teachers within the schools they service. Their knowledge and expertise will be valued, and they will offer high levels of practical support to enable young people to have access to quality teaching.

Parents and students themselves will be partners in education. Teachers and support people will be willing to listen, learn and share knowledge, skills and experiences, in the interests of creating a more meaningful, culturally appropriate learning context across the whole of a young person's life. Parents will make a greater contribution toward evaluating the success of schools.

Finally, the success of the model discussed above will be predicated on a platform where diversity is celebrated and embraced, and the richness that difference brings to a learning context appreciated. We will no longer use the terminology 'special needs', but instead see each person as unique, bringing with them their own world view, cultural context, experiences, aspirations and dreams.

## Notes

[1] *Ministry of Social Development (2001), New Zealand Disability Strategy, Wellington Disability Directorate.*

[2] *Gilbert, J. (2005), Catching the knowledge wave, Wellington: NZCER Press, 109.*

[3] *Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T. & Teddy, L. (2007), Te Kotahitanga Phase 3 whanaungatanga: Establishing a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in mainstream secondary school classrooms, Wellington: Ministry of Education.*

[4] *Ministry of Education (2005), Local Service Profiling National Report, Wellington: Ministry of Education.*

[5] *Gilbert (2005), 68.*

[6] *Ministry of Education (2005).*

[7] *Ministry of Education (2005), 72.*

[8] *Ministry of Education (2005), 75.*

[9] *Wylie, C. (2000), Picking up the pieces: Review of Special Educaiton 2000, Wellington: Minister of Education.*

**Dr Barbara Disley** has worked extensively in the areas of mental health and education. As Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, she conducted research and community education programmes with a particular interest in youth mental health, suicide prevention, violence prevention, refugee mental health, problem gambling and patient advocacy. In 1996, she became inaugural chair of the Mental Health Commission, providing advice to the Minister and monitoring the provision of mental health services. In 2002, Barbara joined the Ministry of Education as Deputy Secretary with responsibility for the funding and provision of special education services for children and young people. Barbara now works as an independent consultant. She has a Doctorate in Education and has completed leadership programmes at both Harvard University and Henley School of Management. In 2004 she received The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office-Aotearoa Scholarship to study in the United Kingdom. A Churchill Fellow and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Management, she was made a life member of the New Zealand Association of Adolescent Health and Development for her outstanding contribution to the promotion of healthy development of rangatahi/young New Zealanders. In 2005 she received The Mental Health Services (THEMHS) individual award for exceptional contribution to mental health services in New Zealand.

# Chapter 7
## National mission or mission improbable?

*Terry Bates*

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Reflecting on his time as Minister of Education and the Tomorrow's Schools reforms he initiated, David Lange wrote:

*The Picot Report proposed a model of administration which was based on local control. Above all it was a democratic model aimed at harnessing the most powerful force in education – the desire of parents to see their children do well at school. It set up a number of institutions through which not only the school but the agencies of central government were obliged to respond to parental wishes.[1]*

Not a word in any of that on the other 'powerful force' in education – the quality of the reciprocal relationship between teachers and learners, and the teacher competence and commitment that anchors and informs that relationship. What motivated Lange was a personal theory of educational responsiveness – but it was a view that appeared to be driven primarily by frustration over the performance of the then Department of Education, rather than any comprehensive analysis of system or student performance. As one of Lange's senior ministers had put it:

*Every caucus member could paper a wall of his office with acknowledgement notes from the [Education] Minister's secretary saying that a matter was under discussion… The educational maw had an insatiable appetite for new ideas… they disappeared out of sight with scarcely a gurgle.[2]*

The government view was then a Wellington-centric view. It was driven by a prevailing fear of bureaucratic capture, and reflected a fundamental desire to redesign the mechanics of government. It was based on a dual premise of busting the 'dead hand' of centralised educational bureaucracy, and distributing authority over schools to local communities.

The assumption was that more direct parent voice in local schools would create greater responsiveness to students, and thus more successful students – a considerable leap of faith, and one that largely ignored the broader question of system responsiveness.

What no one at a policy level seemed willing (or perhaps courageous enough) to ask was how this major shift in the locus of educational administrative control would impact on a teaching force which, in the ensuing two decades, would face unparalleled demands for accountability and performance, and unparalleled levels of anxiety about the perceived costs of educational failure.

Education – the business of teaching and learning – is self-evidently a labour-intensive industry. The average New Zealand school has fewer than 300 students. The majority of schools are therefore relatively small work-places, with relatively modest discretionary resources. The critical performance factor in each of those schools is the competence and commitment of the individuals who make up the teaching staff. Yet ultimate responsibility for the professional supervision and in-career development of those staff was placed in the hands of local community members, and atomised across approximately 3,000 (mostly small) schools, with a local rather than a national focus.

Twenty years on, significant challenges confront the New Zealand education system. Despite the assumed efficacy of local control and enhanced parent voice, the disproportionate underachievement of Māori and Pasifika students within our network of locally managed schools appears embedded – a blot on our civil society and on New Zealanders' fundamental sense of citizenship. We may have moved away from, in Lange's famous phrase, 'an economy managed like a Polish shipyard',[3] but we continue to produce educational outcomes that appear to disqualify too many of our youth from working in one.

The unpalatable truth is that as educators, we are far less effective with Māori and Pasifika students than we are with students of other ethnicities. If current demographic

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projections are correct, New Zealand will become a nation of predominantly Māori and Pasifika peoples in the second half of the century. The potential economic and social costs of continuing failure with this part of our population are self-evident – can we really contemplate a near future where success at Level 3 of the Qualifications Framework is confined to around a fifth of the Year 13 cohort?[4]

The Ministry of Education's recent *Ka Hikitia* strategy document establishes the framework of a national mission to address the issue of Māori underachievement. In the words of the current Secretary for Education:

*The next five years [i.e. 2008-2012] are critical years for the Ministry of Education – as they are for the whole sector. It is time to make the difference for our whole country by significantly improving education outcomes for and with Māori.[5]*

This is an excellent example of a clarion-call (wearingly familiar) to action that the system is ill-equipped to respond to. Worthy though its intentions are, the document is really no more than a set of aspirations. Accepting the general proposition that it is the quality of the teacher that is likely to make the greatest difference to the quality of student performance,[6] at the heart of Ka Hikitia's challenge is the need for us, as a national teaching force, to become more effective teachers of Māori students. As Hattie puts it, 'not all teachers are effective, not all teachers are experts, and not all teachers have powerful effects on students'.[7] In the context of Ka Hikitia, one might well add, 'and all the more so with Māori'. But the strategy does not, indeed cannot, engage with the critical issue of mass mobilisation of the teaching force.

This flaccid response is an implicit acknowledgement of the effect of system fragmentation. The Ministry of Education has little in the way of practical authority to influence the focus of teachers, or the professional development priorities of the schools that employ them. The design theory of Tomorrow's Schools is critically deficient in two respects: it does not naturally incentivise system-wide professional collaboration or critical problem-solving; neither does it admit to the reality

that the capacity and willingness of largely autonomous schools to deliver to national objectives is highly variable. What makes this even more critical is Hattie's observation that:

*For most teachers … teaching is a private matter; it occurs behind a closed classroom door, and it is rarely questioned or challenged. We seem to believe that every teacher's stories about success are sufficient justification for leaving them alone.*[8]

Hattie's point resonates with a particularly pungent observation that I heard from Jack Shallcrass many years ago – 'too many good ideas in education ultimately founder on the edge of the classroom door'. A perverse outcome of Tomorrow's Schools is that we compounded the effects of the traditionally privatised space of the classroom in a semi-privatisation of the school dressed up as community control. In truth, what was intended as control through community trustees (few of whom had any direct educational expertise) greatly enhanced the position and control of the principal.

A direct consequence of that control is that what happens in schools is highly dependent on the personal capacities, beliefs and values of principals. In a schooling network where by far the majority of schools are relatively small, those local leadership effects are magnified, and the defence of school autonomy tends to be at the expense of broader notions of collective educational good. Did Lange and his government ever quite anticipate the overgrown sense of principal prerogative that the new system would unleash, or the impediment to coherent national action that it would come to represent?

Key to the successful completion of the national mission that an initiative such as Ka Hikitia represents is the sense of priority that individual principals choose to give it. The strategy may lie with the Ministry, but giving action to the initiative and resourcing that action effectively lie with schools. Opening classroom doors to change requires a prior opening of the school gate, and this, in my experience, can be very difficult. As Langley et al. point out, despite the challenges of apparently embedded underachievement, the

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current policy settings largely ignore the need to influence 'micro aspects' of the teaching–learning relationship, 'with the apparent assumption that a clear curriculum, sound and flexible administration, community involvement and greater teacher accountability … lead to better learning'.[9]

A good part of my educational career has been involved with the policy crucible of schooling improvement initiatives. These initiatives are typically organised in geographic clusters, almost always have the espoused purpose of raising achievement – typically Māori and/or Pasifika – and are generally proposed as a 'development partnership' represented in a formal contract for additional resourcing between the Ministry of Education and the target schools.

The underpinning theory of these funding provision agreements (as the contracts are known) rests on lofty notions of purposeful intervention, evidence-based work programmes, measurable outcomes, reciprocal benefits, fiscal transparency, and lifting teacher skill and competence. Given the general proposition that publicly funded education ought to be beneficial to the consumers it represents – what's to argue? Yet within cluster after cluster, what I have typically observed is intervention performance and relationships compromised by any mix of the following factors:

- Schools' general mistrust of the Ministry's motives in initiating the intervention, and resentment at being 'coerced' into participation

- Unresolved differences between schools within a cluster as to the nature of the issues to be addressed, and the problem they represent

- Unresolved differences within a cluster, and between that cluster and the Ministry, as to the required degree of transparency (particularly in the measurement of outcomes and the degree of public disclosure associated with same)

- Active and open resistance to the purposes of the intervention by some principals

- A cavalier attitude in some participant schools to contractual terms and accountabilities, thus corroding transparency, trust and collective purpose

- Principals' unwillingness to align core resources with the purposes of the additional appropriation the contract represents

- A tendency for principals to relate in a supportive collegiality, rather than expose themselves to the demands of collective accountability.

In a recent evaluation by the Cognition team of a major schooling improvement intervention, we concluded that after five years, '…there continues to be a strong value placed on [school] autonomy ….. The work of the cluster is seen as additional to the core work of the schools rather than as integral to it.' [10]

If the point of schooling improvement intervention is to make a greater difference to the quality of learning inside every classroom in every school, the response seems to be 'only to the extent that individual principals are prepared to allow'. There appear to be few system sanctions to prevent obstruction. The critical lesson, then, is that the greater good of teachers and learners and the drive to create greater system responsiveness to the education needs of target groups are easily sacrificed to the vanities of local school autonomy, and an associated protectionism born of an endemic fear of reputational loss.

What this brings us to is a wider set of questions about the professional support and growth of teachers across a loose network of highly atomised workplaces. The issues are particularly significant given Hattie's proposition that one factor critical to lifting the skill and knowledge base of teachers is an openness to error – the development of professional environments where 'error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, where discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed, and where participants [i.e. teachers] can feel safe to learn, relearn, and explore….'[11]

In a highly fragmented system where the inherent privatising impulses of teachers are compounded by an operational imbalance which incentivises local school autonomy and, inter alia, values performance opaqueness over transparency, that seems a fond hope. It also augurs poorly for the ambitious

> *A related pressure is the depressingly ill-informed populist and political commentary that too often confines teacher accountability to crude performance management measures.*

targets and timelines of an initiative such as Ka Hikitia. The agency response to such challenges tends to be read at the school level as pressure for compliance and bureaucratic interference. During the term of the last government, we heard an increasing volume of complaint that the autonomy of schools was being progressively eroded by centrally imposed regulatory requirements. That fundamental concern is also at play in the generally negative sector response to the current government's National Assessment Standards policy, and the increasing stress that many principals report.[12]

What sits under all of this is the relative difficulty of creating an atmosphere of professional trust, openness and deep collaboration in a system where the gap between agencies and schools is very wide, where principals are consumed by administration ahead of educational leadership,[13] and which, in moments of strain, tends to adversarial relationships between schools and agencies and government. The Education Review Office, for example, is too often seen in schools as a bureaucratic inconvenience to be managed, rather than an opportunity to engage in open organisational reflection. And why should we be surprised by that? The ghosts of the (winners/losers) competitive school model originally promoted by Lockwood Smith still haunt the sector, as do the mixed policy messages associated with enrolment zones. The incentives to 'admit error' openly are not obvious.

A related pressure is the depressingly ill-informed populist and political commentary that too often confines teacher accountability to crude performance management measures. Sadly, in my experience, too many schools unintentionally reinforce this debate with a compliance approach to performance management that frequently seems more 'theatre' than 'substance'. Not that they are particularly assisted by the Teacher Professional Standards, which are vaguely articulated and feature a confusion of competencies and good behaviour mantras. Equally questionable is the light resourcing of the Teachers' Council, which is almost completely reliant on the integrity of systems and processes for the supervision of teachers within each school, regardless of scale or of the

experience of staff, including the principal. Taken together, these factors make for an inherently unhelpful atmosphere to encourage the levels of sustained and system-wide growth in principal and teacher capability that make constructive error safe. Yet this is what we appear to require as a nation if we are to enable significantly greater numbers of Māori and Pasifika youth to succeed educationally.

Of course, teachers and principals know all this. The problem is that they themselves are victims of a system which, while apparently accepting that the locus for educational change lies in the classroom, struggles to systematically promote and support change within classrooms. The Extending High Standards policy had some potential in this direction, but it was compromised at the outset by poor implementation and low accountability standards. The systems engineering of Tomorrow's Schools is, in this regard, inherently flawed. At a policy level it treats the classroom, in Black and Wiliam's now famous phrase, as a 'black box',[14] within which teachers are largely left to tackle the task of raising educational standards alone. It then compounds the problem with a deficient theory of self-managing schools that leaves principals professionally isolated, and tending, understandably, to place public relations and local autonomy well ahead of engagement with national priorities. The inherent risk of such arrangements for students is, as Hattie puts it, a lack of engagement with robust evidence, and an over-dependence on 'war stories' and anecdotes, coupled with too high a tolerance for sometimes poor teaching.[15]

At a policy level, the practical distance between the Ministry and schools is reflected in the steadily rising volume of statutory and regulatory prescription, of which the new National Assessment Standards are but the most recent prominent example – government and agency shouting through loud-hailers from afar. This is a classic example of policy engineers feeding well-intended inputs into the 'black box', but not providing sufficient direct support to teachers to maximise the utility of the input, or generate sufficient trust in its purpose. Indeed, the potential from 2012 to connect up data and create national pictures of student achievement

*" At a policy level, the practical distance between the Ministry and schools is reflected in the steadily rising volume of statutory and regulatory prescription, of which the new National Assessment Standards are but the most recent prominent example… "*

is seen as inherently threatening and coercive. Rather than opening classroom and school doors in a system-wide sense of voluntary accountability and shared purpose, the sector's reading is of Kafkaesque policy-makers prising those doors and gates open with crowbars.

None of this should be read as a call to default to pre-1989 policy settings, but there is no avoiding the fact that there is a deep fault-line in the current policy framework which needs to be addressed. Substantially improving the achievement of our most disadvantaged educational consumers ought not to be an issue of local subscription. Shouting virtuously through loud-hailers from Wellington won't do it either.

That said, it is doubtful that the political will exists to contemplate significant statutory modifications to the current administrative arrangements. However, until we find the necessary measure of political will to make some modifications, the policy drive to systematically raise levels of achievement with groups where failure appears endemic and entrenched is likely to be unsuccessful. There is some useful thinking to be done about the scale of the administrative (governance) units that typically employ principals and teachers. If they are to trust and willingly open their school gates and classroom doors, principals and teachers need to feel part of educational communities that are larger than the 'principalities and fiefdoms' which end at the physical boundaries of individual schools. The Education Act allows for combined boards to manage multiple schools; but in practice, few incentives have been created to encourage such combinations, except in the highly charged (and potentially toxic) atmosphere of forced network reviews or schooling improvement interventions. In these contexts, collaboration and networking can feel more like punishment than incentive.

Along with thinking differently about the scale and substance of school governance units, we need to cease the policy shouting about 'performance management' of teachers, with its coercive and punitive overtones, and seek instead to create a systemic high-trust culture of professional supervision and

mentoring for principals and teachers in all schools, which focuses on maximising the skill and confidence of every teacher in every classroom in every school. We need to understand that highly individualised teacher and principal practice, along with the traditional practitioner supports of soft collegial association, are often defensive strategies masquerading as confident autonomous professionalism, and these behaviours tend to be compounded by school autonomy.

Accordingly, we need to stop expecting each and every principal to find and lead a local solution to the required standards of teacher development, regardless of their experience and the size and setting of their school. In that process, we need to ask ourselves some searching questions about how high quality professional support and supervision might be made available to principals, and how the nature of such 'supervision' might differ from the industry of largely self-employed retired principals and former education bureaucrats who typically supply the principal appraisal market.

Most of all, we need to recognise that without reform, the currently unbalanced ideology of school autonomy represented in the statute is inherently toxic to productively co-opting the energy of our public teaching force to the national mission that Ka Hikitia currently confronts us with. In education, it is the responsiveness and competence of the individual teacher that matters. An effective system of schooling must be engineered to that fundamental design principle. National mission – or mission improbable?

> *Most of all, we need to recognise that without reform, the currently unbalanced ideology of school autonomy represented in the statute is inherently toxic to productively co-opting the energy of our public teaching force to the national mission that Ka Hikitia currently confronts us with.*

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**Terry Bates** holds post-graduate degrees in Arts and Commerce from the University of Auckland, and his career in education spans thirty years. He first worked as a teacher and middle manager in secondary schools, and was working for the PPTA at the critical transition of Tomorrow's Schools. Shortly thereafter he moved to the Education Review Office, where he worked as an senior review officer. Terry was a member of the ERO team that wrote the Review Office report on South Auckland schooling, which led to a major programme of schooling improvement intervention in the area. As foundation principal, he led the establishment of Southern Cross Campus in Mangere, then moved to the Ministry of Education to manage the Otara schools' work-streams in the SEMO project. He was subsequently appointed as the Ministry's regional manager for Auckland and Northland, and has been with Cognition for five years.

# Chapter 8

## Schooling improvement since Tomorrow's Schools

*Brian Annan*

### Introduction

My contribution to Cognition's 20th anniversary publication focuses on schooling improvement in New Zealand since the introduction of the Tomorrow's Schools legislation. The opinions expressed in this chapter are my own and do not necessarily coincide with or represent those of the Ministry of Education.

Schooling improvement can be defined in different ways. For this chapter, I define it as planned interventions designed to raise overall academic achievement of the students in the target classrooms, schools, school districts, regions or country.[1] This definition reflects the way schooling improvement initiatives are being used to help tackle student underachievement in reading literacy.[2] It depicts raising academic achievement as the primary purpose of a schooling improvement initiative. The definition contrasts with others that link effectiveness to different outcomes, such as strengthening the school's ability to manage change or to be innovative.[3]

There is an important distinction between schooling improvement projects that aim for systemic change independent of student outcomes, and the one being put forward in this chapter. Variables such as managing change are seen here not as outcomes of schooling improvement, but as mechanisms that can contribute to the desired outcome of raising student achievement.

The first section of this chapter covers several waves of schooling improvement that have occurred since the inception of the self-managing legislation. In the second section, key ideas about what to do, and how, to achieve effective schooling improvement are outlined. The third section highlights some

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of the challenges that participants of schooling improvement initiatives (school leaders and teachers, researchers, professional providers, and Ministry officials) have experienced along the way.

An important aspect of schooling improvement work in New Zealand is the shared work of the participant groups, who work in partnership to systematically try things until something works. Debates arise as those groups test ideas with one another and deal with competing theories.[4] This paper refers to a promising evidence base which is emerging out of the debates and associated interventions. I want to acknowledge all the groups involved for willingly engaging in the debates, for changing their practices and for publishing their useful ideas for others in the field to consider.

> *There is an important distinction between schooling improvement projects that aim for systemic change independent of student outcomes, and the one being put forward in this chapter.*

As with many other educators, I became involved in schooling improvement work as a practitioner, taking a non-theoretical approach to getting on with the job. After several years, I realised that the 'no.8 wire' approach I had adopted was not going to contribute to a comprehensive solution in a hurry. I believed more discipline was required, and one way to contribute more meaningfully was to master the art of applying a theoretical perspective to practice.

Through this journey, my view of the landscape has been a fascinating one, as I have sat in between the world views of educational policy developers, researchers and professional developers, and school practitioners. These diverse views have challenged me to conduct, rather than just consume, research, and to become a theoretician of the practice that I lead. That does not mean that I now believe practice is subservient to theory. To the contrary: application remains vital to success, as long as it is theory-informed application.

## The evolution of schooling improvement since Tomorrow's Schools

Educational improvement in New Zealand has not always been concerned with raising academic achievement among students. There have been at least three waves of improvement since the inception of Tomorrow's Schools in 1989: improving business practices; engaging low socioeconomic communities in schooling; and raising student achievement. The self-managing

law has remained steadfast throughout the three waves, carrying with it an overriding policy expectation that communities and their schools continue to think and act for themselves within critical limits, as outlined in the national curriculum and the education and administration guidelines. Boards of trustees can, therefore, set their own improvement agendas and address them in ways that they choose. This principle of local ownership and choice pervaded all four waves of improvement, including Tomorrow's Schools itself, and continues to be a strong force today.

### Improving business practices

Tomorrow's Schools meant that communities were able to look after their own schooling affairs, after decades of heavy reliance on regional and central bureaucracies. The days were over of ordering new boxes of chalk from the Department of Education and getting yet more unwanted crayons to store in the cupboard for a rainy day. I fondly recall the impact of the radical policy change at the beginning of 1990, when I was a first-time principal at Tirimoana Primary School in West Auckland. A series of seminars and booklets prepared by the Principals' Taskforce got us started in the new environment.[5] It was a matter of tucking those booklets under the arm and working things out with the new board, staff and students as we went along.

My Standard 4 (Year 6) class helped me work out administrative forms from the newly formed Ministry of Education. Fortunately, our wonderful secretary had considerable experience in running small businesses. Moreover, our parent representatives on the board had sufficient knowledge and skill to work through standard governance decisions. They were also able to support innovations, such as developing a partnership with neighbouring Arohanui Special School to establish a 2:6 unit for children with special needs. Upon reflection, it was a liberating time for all of us in developing effective business systems in schools.

While most schools' trustees and teaching professionals relished the business opportunities in the early 1990s, up to 10 percent of schools struggled with the new governance and

management tasks thrust upon them. Government asked the Ministry of Education to establish a support framework for what were then called 'at risk' schools.[6] A range of supports were established to assist boards to deal mainly with difficulties in finances, human resources, and disputes among trustees, principals and community groups. The Ministry applied a minimalist approach to intervening, in an effort to avoid a drift back to central control.[7] It was a matter of getting in quickly, providing sufficient support for the boards to get back on their feet and then leaving them to it.

### Engaging communities in schooling

The second wave, in the mid to late 1990s, was concerned with the engagement of low socio-economic communities with significant numbers of Māori and Pacific students in schooling. Many students in these communities came from families who were adjusting to the recent loss of incomes, as manual labour was replaced by machines and computers. A prominent kura leader referred to the families in her community who were experiencing those difficult times as 'the broken people'.[8]

One positive way forward was for those families to engage more in school, so that their children could interact successfully in the new world of information and technology. Government started backing a range of new strategies to make this happen, some of which came from tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) within the communities. The kura leader mentioned above reported that the 'broken people' in her community bounced back, and many students from that kura are now going on to successful tertiary education in a range of different fields.

### Raising student achievement

Although some schools and kura can show evidence of academic success among all their students, there are still many students in low socio-economic communities performing below expected norms in reading literacy. The third wave of schooling improvement focused on lifting academic achievement among those students. Māori and Pacific students

> *School leaders, researchers, professional providers and Ministry officials found out early that learning and doing effective schooling improvement work is too hard alone.*

continue to be over-represented in this situation. The next section of this paper discusses some of the more important findings related to this third wave.

## Learning along the way

### Learning together

School leaders, researchers, professional providers and Ministry officials found out early that learning and doing effective schooling improvement work is too hard alone. Designing effective reading literacy interventions, for instance, was not something many schools could do without expert support.[9] The need for a co-operative approach in a self-managing environment led to small groups of willing schools working together in 'clusters', with support from professional providers and local Ministry officials.

A cluster is synonymous with a learning network, which I define as a connected group of reformers working together non-hierarchically to find out what the achievement problems are among students underperforming in school, and how to solve them.[10] One research team recently identified five good reasons for clustering.[11] By working together, schools can: test their interpretations of data with one another; access new knowledge from one another; develop shared meaning of the achievement problem, the solution and extent of success; develop collective responsibility; and develop collective efficacy. The research team observed that clusters which did these five tasks improved reading literacy among many students who would otherwise have failed in school.

### An inquiry learning approach

An inquiry learning approach emerged from the most effective cluster work. This approach involved a sequence of interrelated tasks, including problem analysis, intervention design, implementation integrity and evaluation. This series of tasks encourages school staff to attend carefully to all stages of the inquiry process, and ensures corners are not cut at the beginning and end. The process is consistent with the rule-of-thumb methodology outlined in the Ministry's operational

policy for schooling improvement, which steers cluster participants into integrating four inquiry learning practices into their improvement plans:

a.  Agree on common assessment tools

b.  Analyse the achievement data to identify the priority problem

c.  Alter teaching, leadership and systems-level practices to solve the priority problem

d.  Check for changes in practice and improvement in student achievement.

It is a simple process for improvement, and easy to understand for beginners. However, as experienced participants would attest, the more they learn about each practice and the links between them, the more complex the task of doing effective schooling improvement becomes. It is intensive and often frustrating work, and early successes are often followed by long plateaus. Persistence in using the process has proven to be effective in creating some significant breakthroughs in the area of reading literacy.[12]

What I find most compelling about the inquiry learning approach is that it asks teachers, school leaders, professional providers and Ministry staff to identify what practices they are using that could be contributing to the priority achievement problem. It then asks them to make changes to their practices, and to check with one another that they have made the agreed changes. The change process supports participant groups to take responsibility for what they can control – that is, their own practices. This acceptance of responsibility has reduced 'blame talk' about the students, their families, the community and government, in favour of professionals using 'learning talk' to critique and improve one another's practice.[13]

An important part of the change process is for participant groups to analyse achievement information as it comes to hand. Teachers and school leaders should not be waiting for cluster-wide data to become available before they start thinking about altering classroom and school-wide practices.[14] Another important change principle is specificity in altering practice.

> " *What I find most compelling about the inquiry learning approach is that it asks teachers, school leaders, professional providers and Ministry staff to identify what practices they are using that could be contributing to the priority achievement problem.* "

It is a matter of building adaptive expertise by undertaking detailed practice analyses, and making specific rather than generic changes.[15]

### *Spreading effective practice*

Some specific lessons have been learned in relation to spreading the inquiry approach across the clusters and into other projects. These ideas indicate that it is possible to scale up useful strategies in a self-managing environment, with one caveat: the process in this case is slow.

A horizontal spread started to unfold after the inquiry approach was shown to improve reading comprehension interventions in two clusters.[16] By horizontal, I mean non-hierarchical learning within and between formal structures.[17] There were two tiers to this spread. The first tier was within and across the twenty schooling improvement clusters in New Zealand. It occurred by word-of-mouth from cluster to cluster and through researchers, who developed the approach in the first few clusters, branching out into other clusters to refine and replicate it.[18] The approach also became one of the criteria used by the Ministry's national officials to approve schooling improvement funding.[19] This requirement encouraged professional developers in all of the clusters to integrate the approach into their work.

A second tier of spread occurred when a few researchers acted as transfer agents. One researcher left the cluster work to join the advisory services, and trained advisors to integrate the inquiry learning approach into their work. She also co-authored a book with another prominent researcher involved in the original cluster.[20] The book became a useful resource for professional providers, advisors, teaching practitioners and Ministry staff, as it made concepts such as problem analysis readily accessible. It also provided examples for practitioners to see that the ideas were 'doable' in their regular school environments. A third researcher involved in the source cluster transferred the inquiry approach into the national literacy professional development programme. She conceptualised the process as an inquiry learning cycle, and trained national facilitators to use it in a consistent way. She then went on to

document the approach in much more depth in a national 'best evidence synthesis' about professional learning, which is another useful resource for those trying to learn and do effective schooling improvement.[21]

## Building evaluative capability

Although all the clusters adopted the inquiry approach to a greater or lesser extent, most of them were unable to present strong evidence that their efforts were making a significant difference to student learning.[22] This finding reinforced the fact that the approach was not as straightforward as it looks at first glance. It also indicated that the school leaders, professional providers and Ministry staff attached to the clusters had not been trained to conduct within-school or across-school programme evaluations. Everyone was doing their best to assess progress, but their overall capability to do so was low.

Participant groups acknowledged the need for expert support to speed up the process of growing capability. A team of evaluators from the University of Auckland and the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, with expertise in programme evaluation, was enlisted. The work, known as BECSI (Building Evaluative Capability in Schooling Improvement), was launched in 2008, with two aims in mind. The first was to support the clusters to find out the extent to which they were impacting on student achievement. The second was to identify and address areas for development to get achievement lifts at a faster rate. Both these aims meant that school leaders, professional providers. and local as well as national Ministry officials who were attached to the cluster work were prepared to become more disciplined in the evaluative tasks attached to schooling improvement work.

Inroads are being made into BECSI's first aim of assessing the overall effectiveness of schooling improvement cluster work, and the findings are promising. Achievement data was analysed from 187 of 199 schools in a feasibility study which indicated that it is possible to assess overall effectiveness, even though the clusters use a variety of tests at different times during the school year.[23] This first attempt to pool data indicated that all schools needed to provide sufficient demographic data, e.g. on

> *Participant groups acknowledged the need for expert support to speed up the process of growing capability.*

gender and ethnicity, in order to refine the identification of variables influencing the achievement trends in more in-depth studies in the coming years.

What was most interesting about this value-added study was the willingness of the schools to participate. Informed consent was straightforward and the data collection process caused little, if any, grief in schools. Participant schools clearly wanted to know if they were making a difference, and whether other clusters or individual schools with similar student populations were getting better gains – and if so, how.

Progress is also promising in BECSI's second aim of building evaluative capability among the participants. The evaluation team found evidence that pointed to six development areas:

- Self-reviewing against key dimensions of the inquiry and knowledge building cycle, and developing themselves where necessary

- Developing effective and practical plans

- Making explicit and developing the theory for improvement underpinning their plans

- Analysing and using student achievement data

- Supporting teachers to engage students in the improvement process

- Using a lot more change talk to make sure changes do occur across the system.

They prepared position papers in each area to shape the content of the professional learning programme for the next year.[24] These papers will be used to assess cluster leaders' level of knowledge and skill in each area. It is proposed that the participants assess whether they are operating at a basic, developing or integrated level in each development area. The evaluation team will moderate the participants' ratings, and negotiate with them the best next steps in the development process. Criteria to make these progression-style assessments are still in development, and will be trialled in the next six months.

# Challenges

It is not possible to put on rose-tinted glasses and say that effective schooling improvement is a tidy, straightforward set of tasks. Researchers worldwide recognise that it is intensive and messy work, and challenges are inevitable.[25] I deal with three priority challenges here.

## Staying focused on learning

The first challenge is to retain a relentless focus on a learning agenda for improvement. It is easy to get distracted. In the early stages of the cluster work, participants had to learn how to manage talk fests, administration matters and arguments about insufficient funding, in order to concentrate on the core business of teaching, learning and achievement.[26] Recently, in the evaluative work through BECSI, a new distraction has emerged. It involves participants trying to embellish their work in order to get a high rating from the evaluators. Low ratings tend to be viewed as a reputational risk, which is entirely understandable in New Zealand. School leaders rely on good ratings to attract students and funding, and professional providers have to think about their next contract. Managing to avoid these sorts of distractions is just as important as learning the inquiry learning process. Expert support from researchers and professional providers assisted school leaders to do both tasks, which led to a preference for interdependent relationships over dependence or independence.

## Role clarity

A second challenge is role clarity for participant groups, to ensure that each is doing the most appropriate work to achieve a positive effect. The BECSI evaluation team raised this challenge,[27] and several clusters requested support to achieve better clarity about their role. After discussing roles and tasks in several clusters, it became clear that the professional providers tended to assume the instructional leadership role of principals and, to a lesser extent, lead teachers in and around classrooms. In general, professional providers should support school leaders to do their work in and around classrooms, rather than doing it for them. There are times, however, when professional providers will have good reason to model

> " It is not possible to put on rose-tinted glasses and say that effective schooling improvement is a tidy, straightforward set of tasks. "

a particular instructional leadership practice, or pass on relevant pedagogical content knowledge to principals and lead teachers. As capability grows, those occasions should become the exception rather than the rule. Several months later, one professional provider reported a tentative beginning to this repositioning, as principals and lead teachers learned to lead the professional learning programme, and the professional providers learned to critique and challenge the people who pay them.[28] Providers are now accessing knowledge as the need arises, and introducing tools at relevant times to support the principals and lead teachers as they play out the inquiry learning process with their teachers. It is a shift from a situation in which providers conduct generic off-site planning for the cluster to one where they do specific needs-based planning with principals, lead teachers and teachers in their schools.

## Terminology

A third challenge is the terminology used in schooling improvement. The terms 'problem analysis', 'intervention design' and 'targeted students' are fundamental to effective schooling improvement methodology. However some, for example Māori, attach words such as 'problem', 'intervention' and 'targeting' to deficit thinking and action. That argument challenges participants of schooling improvement in New Zealand to change their language so that it is aligned with the language of those they are serving. Ka Hikitia[29] has what I consider to be a brilliant table on page 19 to help guide schooling improvement participants into a new language of realising potential, rather than remedying deficit. Problems become opportunities, interventions become investments, and targeting becomes tailoring. Paul Goren, an Axford Scholar investigating the transfer of Ka Hikitia from policy to practice, referred to this simple and incredibly powerful table regularly in his presentations, to reinforce the point that equity issues will not go away unless the language of those with positional authority changes.[30] Of course this challenge goes much deeper than the semantics of language. It questions schooling improvement's narrow focus on raising student achievement, and brings into play the importance of cultural and social goals in the improvement process, which will undoubtedly inform a new wave of schooling improvement in New Zealand.

# Conclusion

Improving schooling over the past twenty years in New Zealand has been a fascinating process. It started with Tomorrow's Schools liberating communities to steer their own way forward, and has ended with some sophisticated thinking about the links between teaching, learning and achievement. The journey signals a move on from the do-it-yourself no.8 wire tendencies of the past to solve a wide range of problems. Accompanying that move is greater discipline among participant professional groups in getting sharply focused, testing assumptions, and checking that their work is making a positive difference to student learning.

The journey also signals a long-term commitment to improve New Zealand schools from successive governments and their agencies, from researchers and professional providers, and from schools and communities. That commitment over the past 20 years is going to remain essential well into the future, if New Zealand is to prosper in an increasingly globally connected world.

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**Dr Brian Annan** is currently working on building evaluative capability in schools and Ministry teams, to ensure that they are linking their work to improved student outcomes. He moved into this role after a decade of coordinating front-line schooling improvement work. During that time, he completed doctoral research into the effectiveness of schooling improvement initiatives, and his findings continue to be well received in New Zealand and overseas. In his earlier career, Brian was a primary school principal and teacher and loved every minute in and around the classrooms.

# Chapter 9
## A leadership perspective

*Margaret Bendall*

A recent issue of *Time* magazine[1] reminds us that 1989 was a watershed year internationally; among other significant geopolitical shifts, the Berlin wall came down, literally, and with a satisfying symbolic resonance for many commentators. In retrospect, that event seems to have happened in simpler times, in a more binary world, in which people took sides with greater confidence.

For those of us involved in education in the much smaller context of New Zealand, the policy reform represented by Tomorrow's Schools was similarly seismic, initially experienced by many as a faultline between opposing ways of thinking about education itself. There was an evangelical quality in the rhetoric for change, and reactions to it were often unequivocal. For many teachers, the links between the proposed changes and the world of 'business' had dark associations. They foresaw competition replacing social justice, product replacing process, and the profession of teaching devalued by a concept of management that explicitly made no distinctions between managing a factory and managing a school. On the other hand, many citizens, including teachers who were at times dissatisfied parents, felt that unsatisfactory schools were at last being opened up to parental questions and criticism, and support.

Some principals were apprehensive about being made accountable locally for a hidden political agenda of reducing national resourcing for education. They were unconvinced by comparisons between their roles and the roles of generic chief executives, who had a greater capacity to increase their funds and simpler outcomes to deliver. However, a good number of principals saw the changes as enhancing the profession. They welcomed the recognition of principals as

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equivalently influential and therefore deserving of the same status as chief executives in the business sector. They looked forward to having more control of their schools, especially freedom from the Department of Education's often sluggish and standardised responses to property issues. Some principals began enthusiastically to pursue MBAs and membership of the New Zealand Institute of Management, and conferences for principals were held for the first time in attractive hotels and resorts. But in the early 1990s, such choices were seen by many teachers as signals of defection. On both sides of the debate, acceptance of the moderate idea that while schools could never be businesses, they could benefit from being more business-like, was some years away. Twenty years later, current exhortations to school leaders from researchers to focus more on 'the core business' of teaching and learning contain more than one irony.

In the international context, the old certainties were not immediately dismantled with the Wall. It took time for the global community to come to terms with new ambivalences post-1989. In our small education community, it took years for the after-shocks of a far-reaching reform to diminish sufficiently to assess the effects of shifting the foundations of our schools. Even now, casual discussion of 'our system' tends to begin with polarised positions on centralisation and decentralisation. Two colleagues serve as examples, both with experience as New Zealand secondary school principals, and both recently returned from the UK. One described trying to explain the dimensions of the responsibilities of a New Zealand principal to fellow principals in England. 'Their eyes glazed over very quickly', he reported. 'I had barely started to explain the dimensions of my job before they were shaking their heads and saying "we couldn't work in that environment".' Like many other principals, he was lamenting, as a legacy of Tomorrow's Schools, his multifaceted role, the lack of centralised support for administrative requirements, and his consequent difficulty in finding the time his UK colleagues enjoyed for educational leadership – as 'head teachers'. The second colleague recorded his clear impression that UK schools were much less 'nimble' than ours in responding to change and challenge. He was reflecting on the freedom of New Zealand

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principals to develop innovative learning environments in response to local needs, which can engage students more than the standardised classrooms predating Tomorrow's Schools. Recent independent reports support the viewpoints of both these principals. An increased workload, reflecting the multiple accountabilities for leaders of Tomorrow's Schools, is real; but increased independence and flexibility does enable New Zealand principals to put new ideas into practice quickly.

While their voices are less likely to be heard than those of the most stringent critics, or the most fervent supporters, most principals have always seen both the potential and the risks of the reform. In general, they were prepared to work with the system in good faith, despite anxieties about the ability of the reformers to make some important distinctions between babies and bathwater. Twenty years later, we have begun to exchange thoughtful evaluations of Tomorrow's Schools and judicious considerations of 'where to next'. In the process, we are beginning to make subtle distinctions between what was gained and lost by the shift to Tomorrow's Schools, what hopes and fears were never realised, and what was put at risk.

The most obvious manifestation of the shift to Tomorrow's Schools was the establishment of separate and individual boards of trustees in primary and intermediate schools, largely composed of parents elected by the local community to share with educators the responsibility for the welfare of 'their' school. The model chosen for Tomorrow's Schools was the less common governance model in which the CE is a managing director; the school principal, unlike most CEs, would have equal status with fellow trustees on the board. At the same time, the principal would be wholly responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, as its professional leader.

Workshops in 1989/1990 emphasised a sharp and clear distinction between management and governance, a line to be drawn and held in all circumstances, although the principal's dual role had already compromised such a sharp distinction. The ways in which management and governance can add value to each other, when both sides understand and agree on

a course of action that does not strictly observe the theoretical division between them, have since been explored effectively in many schools. While unacknowledged confusion about roles and responsibilities can and does have a destructive effect, governance/management theory does not in itself ensure a healthy organisation. In a well-known case of irretrievable breakdown in the relationships between a board and principal, Judge Palmer's decision in favour of the principal sounded a sensible warning:

*… the fundamental essence of Tomorrow's Schools is the maintenance of a very high and comprehensive level of co-operation, respect, goodwill and trust between a Board of Trustees (and) its Chief Executive… a doctrinaire mutual exclusivity approach to the issues of day to day management and governance, if rigidly adhered to and persisted in by either a Principal or a Board of Trustees, will tend to create confrontation between them which is the antithesis of the cooperative, trusting partnership approach contemplated in Tomorrow's Schools regime.[2]*

Judge Palmer also noted that trust should characterise relationships between principals and staff in Tomorrow's Schools; but the inclusion in the governance model of a staff trustee was a significant complication. The commonly used title 'staff rep on the board' captures neatly the source of considerable tension in this role.

The staff trustee is a full trustee, bound by the requirements of all trustees, including collective responsibility for board decisions and respect for the different roles of the principal and trustees. No trustee is a representative – trustees must make their own judgements in the best interests of the school. In practice, however, unlike other trustees, the staff trustee is accountable every day to his or her electorate, easily caught up in the daily politics of the staffroom. A significant number of staff trustees with good intentions have been lured into the role of staff advocate when staff disagree with the principal, and believe they have a representative on the board who can be a voice for them. The staff report presented by the staff trustee, typical of the practice of many boards, has often been a

lightning rod for this tension. What is the relationship between the staff report and the principal's report? Should the principal know what is in the staff report before the meeting? Can a principal insist that her or his role as 'professional leader' takes precedence in the relationship with a fellow trustee who is also a member of staff? Where do professional ethics fit in the relationship between the staff trustee and the principal?

For many principals, negotiating the relationship with a staff trustee and developing mutual trust and understanding that still allows for a divergence of opinion are significant challenges. The staff trustee's own potentially difficult position has to be recognised. Some schools have developed effective protocols for the two members of staff on the board to work together, recognising the rights and responsibilities of both the principal and the staff trustee. But there is no similar challenge in the business model.

Among the hopes for Tomorrow's Schools was that schools governed by their own boards would become more accountable to parents, their primary stakeholders, and thereby more effective. Proponents averred that successful businesses, held accountable through their boards of directors to their stakeholders, were focused in their endeavours and significantly more responsive to their environments than schools were. The concept of parents as the key stakeholders in compulsory education remains a key understanding of the reform. In a recent speech to the New Zealand Principals' Federation, arguing for national standards, the current Minister of Education noted: 'Accountability to parents is the underlying principle behind Tomorrow's Schools.'

However, for many principals this view is simplistic. Parents do matter. They clearly deserved more respect for their potential contribution to the education of their own children than had been granted them in the small and relatively powerless committees of yesterday's schools. Most schools accepted this thinking long before we understood how significantly the engagement of families and whanau in their children's education can increase young people's chances of success at

school. Nor is the presence of a board of trustees in the school a sufficient level of partnership. Today's schools are looking for new ways to engage parents in their children's actual learning, not only in managing the school. These schools accept research that is consistently clear about the benefits of parental involvement in their children's education.

Nevertheless, parents are not the only, nor arguably the most important, stakeholders in Tomorrow's Schools. The elected government, on behalf of taxpayers, is also an obvious stakeholder. However, successive governments have experienced the relative autonomy of self-managing schools as a barrier to implementation of policy intended to improve the national education system. A tension is perhaps evident in the slightly tentative language of 'frameworks' and 'guidelines' that set national priorities – although they are actually requirements, not a matter of choice, for state and integrated schools. At times, governments have appeared to cynically exploit the devolution of responsibility to schools, in order to implement government policy without sustaining political damage themselves. When a change in government policy required over-subscribed schools to draw unequivocal boundaries around their enrolment zones, schools were required to manage their own consultative meetings and face angry local 'stakeholders' who then blamed their schools for locking out their children – and even for causing the value of their houses to drop! However, more frequently, the national interest in educating New Zealand's young people so that each one can contribute to the economic and social welfare of our society requires more centralised decision-making than our system allows. The closure and merging of small schools, for example, which might have freed up resources to be better used for all students, was fought by parents and teachers for whom Tomorrow's Schools had understandably come to mean 'our school'.

Decentralisation has also seriously endangered the educational opportunities of successive cohorts of students in struggling schools, because government agencies cannot override

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principles of self-management by intervening early enough to be constructive. Schools with a history of unhappy staff, a high turnover of principals, and other significant, unresolved issues that are impacting on students' learning are too often left to their boards during years of turmoil, each year one more year of crucial growth in a young person's life, potentially wasted. In some of these schools, it seems, we watch well-meaning boards choose another, and then yet another principal, from increasingly small lists of reluctant applicants, as successive ERO reports sound repeated warnings about the quality of the education students are receiving, and we all wait for the final 'statutory intervention'.

Other schools founder slowly in what seems a kind of creeping paralysis; students, staff, principals, trustees, parents and the Ministry of Education are all deeply aware of ongoing difficulties, but potential whistle blowers have no clear way forward that would enable issues to be addressed constructively, without further damage to the school. People remain silent above all to avoid exposure to trial by media that could only make things worse for the school and, most importantly, for its students. Nor is the national interest in universally well-educated citizens served by the effects of market forces on schools coyly described as 'hard to staff'. There is no regulatory framework that insists on trained teachers contributing, as they once did, to country service, and no appetite for interfering with self-managed schools by offering centrally funded incentives to good teachers for working with students in poorer communities, who need them most.

All of this highlights the importance of students as stakeholders. Schools exist not for teachers, or principals, or parents, but for students. Among the unfulfilled promises of Tomorrow's Schools was that schools would become more flexible, given proper autonomy, and more creative in their responsiveness to changing times. The assumption was that 'market forces' would ensure continuous improvement, as they do in business. The welfare of students was to be 'paramount'; but our schools have not adapted quickly enough to prepare more students for living and working in a rapidly changing world, increasingly

different from the world in which their parents and teachers began their adulthoods. The informed thinking of life-long educators seeking to lead change in our schools has often not persuaded parents (and, to be fair, some teachers), against firmly held, largely conservative convictions about what makes a good school and constitutes a good education. Perhaps parents are always, if unconsciously, struggling against the knowledge that they are gradually and inevitably losing the power to build their child's future themselves, as their child grows away from them, and the collective parental unconscious seeks familiar footholds in schools. On the other hand, the tendency for boards to be conservative about education may be the effect of inadequate learning programmes for boards. Current board training programmes still tend to emphasise understandings about current systems, management and governance, and accountabilities. The Establishment Boards of new schools, given the time and the resources to learn about education and the imperatives for change, often wholeheartedly support the development of imaginative curricula and flexible systems informed by new understandings about knowledge and learning.

Whatever the reason, in general, parents tend to be suspicious of educational change; whether or not they were successful in the system they experienced themselves. If adaptability to a changing world is essential for New Zealand's future welfare, it can be argued that the nation's future is too often a silent stakeholder in today's schools. It seems clear that we do best as a small nation when we are most creative in our endeavours, when we create new solutions and develop new ideas in business, in science and in the arts. While business leaders talk about the need for 'enterprise' to lift our performance as a nation, it is ironic that the net effect of the business model underpinning Tomorrow's Schools has been to weight the education scales in favour of the comfort of current stakeholders, and against developing new ways of catering for young learners' many talents, especially their ability to think creatively.

In the view of many principals, the fear that Tomorrow's Schools would result in a competitive environment, in which self-managed schools would vie with each other for success

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and status at the expense of collaboration for the common good, has been realised. Schools withdrew from each other from the first, writing all their own policies, for example, even when it was clear that many schools could sensibly avoid reinventing wheels by sharing key policy documents. In attempts to attract and keep students, marketing has been largely pitched at parents, trumpeting traditional successes more often than innovation; and the process of marketing itself has devoured educational resources better spent on improving learning for students. Almost imperceptibly, well-intentioned work to build and sustain a strong school culture too often became the pursuit of what was good 'for the school', rather than what was good for the students. For example, schools wooing from their local schools fine young sportsmen and women, or outstanding scholars, or gifted musicians, often seemed focused on augmenting their own school's reputation; they have consequently been accused of undermining other schools' chances of success by 'poaching', 'cherry-picking' and 'bribing' talented students away.

But no school is an island. The country as a whole has a stake in a strong network of schools. There are both economic and social impacts on communities, including students, when some schools grow larger and more successful, and then larger again, at the expense of neighbouring schools and their neighbourhoods. The success and happiness of each student at a thriving school remains interdependent with the success and welfare of the schools least preferred by the parent community, where students and their constructive engagement in society are inevitably damaged by a cycle of falling rolls, low morale, the loss of teachers –with subsequent difficulties in attracting more good teachers – and the general sense students themselves develop of being at a 'dumb' school.

In this competitive environment, roll numbers preoccupy principals. A falling roll is cause for deep anxiety, not only because staffing must decrease commensurate with student numbers, but also because schools with falling rolls and even small schools are, often unfairly, seen as synonymous with failing schools. Perceived failure has proved to be

self-fulfilling; for example, shrinking schools lose the staff to offer a full range of options to students, and they lose more students as a result. Many schools do not dare to change familiar educational recipes, even if the change would improve learning, for fear of losing students; newly appointed principals too often understand that their boards expect them first to increase the roll, not to improve learning. Further, it often seems that the more a school grows, the more successful it is perceived to be. As more parents chose schools offering familiar, apparently measurable outcomes for their children, schools began more and more to choose the safety of traditional practices. Apparently credible, traditional markers of a good education have not often been sufficiently open to disinterested debate, despite increasing access to educational research in the same period.

The history of NCEA serves as a good illustration of the ways in which the effects of the 1989 reforms could be said to have slowed change in education that might better prepare more young people for successful lives in the 21st century. The debate between schools that flared and still flickers over the introduction of the NCEA and its philosophy was fuelled at least in part by competition between schools.

Records of success in academic examinations had long been accepted by the public as indisputable evidence of excellence in schooling. There was a tendency for schools that were successful in examinations to resist the concept of a qualifications system that gave equal status to a range of forms of excellence, and valued equally new disciplines, practical learning, and the learning associated with the traditional hierarchy of subjects. Many learning outcomes thus recognised could not be assessed in a written examination; that the same number of credits could be gained in an internal assessment of the performance of a skill, as in a traditional written examination performance, caused dismay. To focus on one specific example, the debate was at one stage expressed in public outrage that 'chainsawing' could gain the same number of credits as physics. For many years, tertiary degrees of equal status had been offered in agricultural, industrial and academic

disciplines, without concerns that any of these pathways lowered the value of degrees in general. But a Year 11 student learning about machinery, in the very first stage of an NCEA pathway to construction, or farming, or horticulture, was for some illustrative of 'dumbing down' the curriculum, somehow undermining the achievement of a Year 11 student of physics, in the first stage of a learning pathway oriented towards astrophysics – because the two students could earn equal numbers of credits.

To briefly explore a more general issue, the very distinction between 'academic' and 'vocational' was surely overdue for debate. Is a medical degree academic, vocational, or both? Is a degree in law, or engineering, vocational, academic, or both? Knowing how to know and knowing how to do were held to be equal pillars of learning by Unesco's research into learning for the 21st century, and most university disciplines have long recognised internally assessed applications of knowledge as well as written demonstrations of knowledge. Indeed, some forms of 'doing' require higher levels of cognitive skill than some forms of 'knowing'.

At a time when a more plural New Zealand increasingly needed more young people with higher levels of skill, for a greater diversity of workplaces than ever before, more young people had to find what they were good at, and to have that talent valued, at school. NCEA offered a mechanism to enable schools to provide multiple pathways for differently talented students. It was noteworthy that while Business New Zealand spoke strongly for NCEA, schools that had been most supportive of the business-related reforms of 1989 were among NCEA's strongest critics. Yet although NCEA is an entry level, general qualification, it was and still is subjected to more criticism and more demands that it prove its credibility than any other qualification, including tertiary degrees.

The introduction of Cambridge examinations into state-funded schools, often in opposition to the national qualification of NCEA, illustrates a number of the downstream effects of Tomorrow's Schools.

First, the Labour government of the time did not withdraw funding from state-funded schools that often publicly denounced aspects of the national qualifications system, while they implemented an imported qualification, despite the objections of many to their continued enjoyment of state funded infrastructure. There were probably many reasons for this decision, but it did reflect the old tension between the right to self-determination vested in Tomorrow's Schools, and the national interest, as defined by a democratically elected government. (In the case of NCEA, several successive elected governments of different persuasions had supported the thinking behind the new qualification.)

Secondly, many commentators saw both the introduction of Cambridge examinations, and the often accompanying denigration of NCEA, as attempts to protect the competitive edge of schools with traditions of success under the previous qualifications regime, at the expense of success for more students across many more schools.

Thirdly, the introduction of Cambridge and public support for it demonstrated again that the agenda of 1989, which sought to reform schools seen as complacent and old-fashioned, did not lead to a more innovative school system. NCEA is a standards-based qualification that rewards every student who reaches the standard in a wide range of disciplines and performances. The desire to restore primacy to success in traditional, written academic performance, according to a student's ranking against other students, has seemed to many commentators reactionary.

Finally, Tomorrow's Schools fell short of its own implicit rationale that the reform would help schools to improve in the ways that matter most: teaching better to deliver better learning outcomes for students. In hindsight, that intense period of writing charters and policies (some necessary, many not) and filing them in smart folders, in a process repeated in school after school, serves as a symbol of one of the more obvious outcomes of the legislation. The emphasis was on systems, procedures and structural change. One of the effects was to shift principals' time and attention away from leading teaching and learning.

*" While New Zealand schools continued to do reasonably well under the new regime by comparison with schools internationally, educational outcomes for our students did not significantly improve. "*

While New Zealand schools continued to do reasonably well under the new regime by comparison with schools internationally, educational outcomes for our students did not significantly improve. Chronic challenges for the school sector, such as the unrealised potential of Māori and Pasifika students, persisted, unresolved. In response, new accountabilities, such as more stringent Ministry requirements for focused planning and reporting on student achievement, seemed to reflect an ongoing belief that systems and procedures could still make a difference. Despite increasing research evidence about effective teaching, however, teachers' practice did not significantly change, and too many students continued to leave school unqualified and disenchanted.

Principals of today's schools are reshaping themselves again, reviewing their roles and responsibilities in view of research findings that they can make the greatest difference to student achievement by focusing on teaching and learning, and the people in their school communities, much more than on systems and procedures. The inclusion of a section on pedagogy, and the use of the word itself, in the revised New Zealand Curriculum, reasserted the status of professional knowledge about the art and science of teaching; the fact that pedagogy is also included in a research-based framework for describing and evaluating the leadership of Kiwi principals reflects a recent sharpening of focus on the principal as head teacher. The energy of schools is being directed back to the purpose of schools: to recognise, foster and build on each student's unique potential and prepare them for contributing purposefully to their world. The possibility of more students achieving personal excellence in a national system where success at school is no longer narrowly defined and rationed is beginning to be realised.

The voices of international experts in education constantly remind us that Tomorrow's Schools was not an antipodean whim, but a response to global trends – although no system moved further towards the self-management of its schools than New Zealand did. Now many leading thinkers in many different countries, including New Zealand, are arguing

for a return to more connectedness between schools, for partnerships, clusters, networks, local districts and federations, through which schools can pool knowledge and resources and bring collective wisdom to better realising the diverse potential of more students.  In a recent workshop for New Zealand school leaders, Professor Tony Townsend from the University of Edinburgh characterised recent decades as dominated by an accountability metaphor, as an age of competition, choice and the education market, and looked forward to a dawning 'age of justice', where governments would 'accept their legal and moral responsibility to educate all of their people'.[3]

In Aotearoa New Zealand, widespread support for the revised national curriculum, with its focus on meeting students' needs and aspirations, mirrors increasing understanding of the need for schools to put students and their learning first.  Professional networks among schools are increasingly focussed on improving teaching and learning.  There is increasing talk about how to resource schools so that principals can focus more on educational leadership.  In a world less binary than it was in 1989, the choice is no longer between left and right, east and west, centralisation or decentralisation, as it was when the wall came down.  In education, in Professor Viviane Robinson's phrase, we are beginning to work with 'the many alternatives in between'.[4]

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## *Notes*

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[1] *Time, 29 June 2009.*

[2] *Hobday vs Timaru Girls High School (1994).*

[3] *Townsend, A.  (2009), presentation at University of Auckland Centre for Educational Leadership seminar, May.*

[4] *Boyd, S.  (2009), 'Spotlight on leadership: An interview with Professor Viviane Robinson', set 1.*

# Chapter 10

## Tomorrow's Schools - yesterday's news:
### The quest for a new metaphor

*John Hattie*

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Tomorrow's Schools is yesterday's news. New Zealand has now experienced over 20 years with the same metaphor. While there have been excellent gains in the professionalisation of principals and teachers, there are too many gaps in our system as we continue to stay with the fundamental philosophy of Tomorrow's Schools.

The fundamentals are simple – devolve to the school, and particularly the community (read Boards of Trustees), control over the key decisions about running the local school, and leave overall steering of the ship of schools to the Ministry (curriculum, major policy initiatives). In one sense it has worked: New Zealand retains its high place on the league tables of world rankings (via PISA, PIRLS, and TiMMS), although our overall achievement rates have barely changed since Tomorrow's Schools. The suggestion in this chapter is not to move back to the old system of mother–ministry and uncle–regions controlling the details; the suggestion is to devise a new metaphor to move New Zealand schools to capitalise on the successes and remedy the failings from our experiences with Tomorrow's Schools.

Deciding what such a new metaphor should be is beyond this paper, and requires the creativity and checks and balances that only a community of input can provide. As long as the problem is clearly defined, then there should be high confidence in the sector devising a new metaphor. Of course, with so many important special interest groups in New Zealand, this will not be a consensus; hence the power of a Royal or Law Commission may be needed to make resolutions and provide some certainty of direction, matched against a series of principles and outcomes desired for schooling in New Zealand.

Tomorrow's Schools has made advances that are most worthwhile; but about 20 percent of our schools are not succeeding, according to ERO reviews. (Howard Fancy, when he was Secretary of Education, estimated the proportion of schools for which the reforms were not working at 10–30 percent.)[1] Schools tending to prefer their own in promotion can stifle the rise of excellence; and teaching is one of the few professions where there is no accomplished professional group to provide policy critique and directions. Teachers have strong unions, but their success is very much a function of enhancing the working conditions of their members; this is not always the same as maximising the outcomes for students, although most aim and wish for both to be so maximised simultaneously. I have worked in a US state which was a 'Right to Work' state, and thus banned unions; the effects on teachers' conditions, pay, and promotion was devastating both to the profession and to the outcomes for students. But teachers have no professional body of accomplished teachers which can provide pronouncements on policy – everything goes, and thus nothing goes.

We need a Vision 2020 plan, or at least a new metaphor, to capitalise on the better parts of our system and move forward over the next 20 years. Some areas of the current system that need attention are outlined below.

## Adequacy more than equity

Adequacy is defined as what is required for all students to achieve identified goals or performance levels. It goes beyond equity by considering the resources needed, not just how existing resources are distributed.[2]

Tomorrow's Schools barely dented disparity of achievement in New Zealand, and could well have exacerbated it. Many of the efforts to ameliorate disparity have been grossly misplaced, largely because of metaphors based on inappropriate problem-definitions. 'Fixing the tail' and 'closing the gap' have meant than oodles of dollars have been spent on the wrong problems, and it should thus be of little surprise that they have been ineffective. Using the asTTle norming data, I have showed the overlapping distributions of scores for Māori and Pasifika students, compared with Pakeha and Asian students, in reading and mathematics.[3]

This identifies two gaps, above and below the median. The tail is less of a problem than the gaps on either side of the middle. There are just as many Māori and Pasifika students scoring above the national mean who are falling behind their Pakeha and Asian counterparts – and it is likely that these are the students who could go on to become our leading doctors, lawyers, teachers, and professionals. But where are the programmes, attention, or funding to resolve this issue of the gap being as great above the middle as it is below the middle?

It is true that New Zealand has one of the greatest spread of outcomes between the brightest and the struggling. It is possible that this could well have been maintained, or even enhanced, by Tomorrow's Schools, which has resulted in schools pitting themselves against each other in competition for resources (especially students), and has led to many succeeding and too many failing. A new metaphor based on 'adequacy' of outcomes, rather than, or as well as, on equity of funding by socioeconomic resources, may be needed to reduce these gaps. No system can afford to perpetuate, or worse, increase, the gaps between the haves and have nots, especially when those gaps are correlated with student background variables (in this case, ethnicity).

## No agency responsible for improvement

As Allan Peachey has noted, Tomorrow's Schools was not a mechanism for school improvement, it was about reducing and reforming the bureaucracy and our schools were run to thence create an environment for improvement.[4] The Ministry of Education is responsible for overall policy direction, and ERO is responsible for evaluation and auditing, but it is up to each school to decide on its own improvements. This has led to a pot-pourri of initiatives, and often it seems that each school has discovered a new idea – only to find that other schools have already disregarded it as of little use. There is some interplay and communication across schools, but each is permitted to discover its own solutions.

The 20 percent of schools that need major innovation could have learnt about successful innovations well before they got into strife. One solution would be a fund that allows ERO to nominate schools that could profit from a 2–3 person

resource team. This team could come into the school, assist in determining the problem, provide clarity as to the direction of improvement, provide assistance in analysing the school's data, provide input evaluation within the school, initiate ideas about evidence-based improvements that address the problems of the school, work on capability and sustainability of successful programmes and people in the school, and be noted by their success in leaving much and leaving early.

The greatest problem in our current system is the absence of an agency responsible for improvement. There have been fleeting efforts, and Improving Schooling, Extending High Standards, AimHI and SEMOE are examples of improvement implementations that have had major successes. The difficulty is that many of these initiatives come into being after a school is finally identified as 'having problems'; too often the problems are by then entrenched, the discovery comes too late, and the remedy is not within the school's offerings. We wait until the school and/or board get into difficulty, then we turn around and ask these same people to get the school out of difficulty.

It is important to note that this descent into difficulties may not necessarily be attributed directly to the board and principal. Many schools in New Zealand have massive resources in the community in terms of serving on boards – lawyers, accountants, builders, entrepreneurs, and so on. But many boards have no access to such expertise, and these has not helped them to perform the forensic analyses that are often needed to determine the major problem(s) facing schools. Since Tomorrow's Schools, there has been increased polarisation of schools along ethnic and socio-economic lines, partly as a result of middle-class white flight.[5] As a consequence, the Post-Primary Teachers' Association has claimed that these schools can often enter a 'spiral of decline,'[6] with falling student rolls, reduced funding, problems in recruiting and retaining staff, and constraints on the capacity of the school to deliver the curriculum. In many other educational systems in the world, this would be regarded as totally unacceptable and addressed as a matter of urgency.

> " *The message here is that we need more evaluation capacity within our schools to begin to understand the magnitude of the effects that they are having on student learning.* "

Responses to the recent Board of Trustees stocktake acknowledged that capacity and capability of trustees was a weakness, and that rural, isolated and low-decile schools were most likely to experience difficulty in attracting parents to be trustees.[7] The stocktake also noted that high turnover of members could undermine board sustainability. There is nothing particularly new about these observations; they have been raised as issues since the inception of Tomorrow's Schools. The question is whether it is fair to the thousands of students who attend these schools to continue to treat the problem as if it were a relatively minor matter, solvable by improved access to training and support, rather than as a serious structural failure in the system.

## Making schools the unit of evaluation

I have noted elsewhere that in the field of education, one of the most enduring messages is that 'everything seems to work'.[8] The research evidence relating to 'what works' is burgeoning, even groaning, under a weight of such 'try me' ideas. One of the most critical problems our schools face has been described as 'not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical and uncoordinated acceptance of too many different innovations'.[9] One of the reasons 'everything goes' is that so often, a low benchmark of success is set – that is, we set the benchmark for enhancing student achievement at zero (an effect-size = 0). Almost 98 percent of innovations and teachers in our system can exceed this benchmark. If we instead set the benchmark at the average of what is actually achieved (effect-size >.40), then almost half our teachers can achieve this higher benchmark. The key issue is to identify the attributes of these teachers who attain this level of impact: how do they think differently about their work, and what are the common ingredients of these more impactful teachers, compared with those with student outcomes which are lower than the average?

The message here is that we need more evaluation capacity within our schools to begin to understand the magnitude of the effects that they are having on student learning, and at

least aim to gain an effect-size of >.40. The aim should be for schools to learn internally what to change, what to keep, what to foster and let flourish, and what to stop. Schools need to be both more resourced and more responsible for evaluating their programmes, people, and policies. This would require a different focus for our system, the development of different capacities, and a safe and trusting environment in and across schools, so that they engage in evaluating the merit and worth of their practice.

In his book about 'changing 5000 schools', Levin argued that schools can well be the unit of analysis for improvement.[10] He started from the premise that much more can be gained in our schools, and that we can continue to make these improvements even under the most difficult circumstances:

*'Improving capacity requires sustained effort – not just professional development days but various forms of coaching and mentoring, effective use of staff meetings and other in-school time, and support through related practices such as supervision and evaluation. This means that there are policy, leadership, and system-procedure implications to capacity building.'[11]*

It is not about more public pressure on schools, but more school evaluation which convinces the public of their impact on students.

We cannot rely on good intentions and 'leave us alone/ autonomy' messages, particularly as the percentage of voters who do not have children in schools continues to rise. There is too much competition and convincing evidence of other priorities. Schools need to switch from an expected right to gain the additional resources to an expectation that the community must be shown the continued evidence of the success schools have on the learning and outcomes of students. Making schools responsible for evaluating their programmes, people, processes, and policies requires more evaluation capability and sustainability. We do not have it under the current model.

## More independent evaluation of initiatives

The Ministry of Education is not always best situated to provide evaluation of its initiatives. New Zealand is a small country with a wonderful open society (freedom of the press, access to official information, etc.). It is difficult for the Ministry to fund a project (a great deal of quality assurance goes into this step), and then later evaluate it and find it wanting (although it is noted that there have been such conclusions, and programmes have been changed or dropped as a result). Coming to this conclusion looks like bad decision-making and a waste of money and effort, but it is the reality for many projects. What may be needed is an independent evaluation group that is empowered to ensure quality control over evaluations, promote the use of established evaluation models, and undertake, commission and release evaluations with no reference to Ministry sign-off. Schools could also use this evaluation service, and much capability could be built in schools on the use of the best evaluation methods.

## Attending to the career path of teachers

Tomorrow's Schools is having a negative effect on teachers' career paths. No longer can new entrants into teaching know what is required to be promoted through the system; they cannot see that quality and competence can speed promotion, and they note that the increasing aging of the workforce has the inevitable effect of blocking opportunities for younger teachers. The expectations on all principals are becoming too great, and fewer teachers are seeking to take on this role or seeing it as the epitome of a career in teaching. The principal is expected to be everything to everyone, and the skills demanded are so wide – human resource manager, building and infrastructure overseer, chief executive officer, instructional leader, cultural guru, community leader, major arbiter with school boards, fund manager and fund raiser, seeker of 'donations', and marketer to foreign fee-paying students. So much of this work is managerial and entrepreneurial, rather than instructional. As the workload moves to encompass much more than teaching and learning, the major reasons for entering teaching dissipate.

Further, the increase in schools preferring to promote their own referred to earlier is the start of the demise of quality teachers in our system. In many US states, teachers get appointed to schools for life, thwarting regeneration, cross pollenisation of ideas, and healthy spreading of critique. A review of career paths, aimed at ensuring that excellence in teaching and learning is the basis for career advancement, is very much needed. Now that there are many more ways for teachers to document their impact, using dependable forms of evidence, such evidence needs to be supported in developing career paths in the teaching profession.

## The wastage involved in empowering 2800 schools to be mini-markets

The recent example of a Minister negotiating a contract for all New Zealand schools with Microsoft led to appreciable savings (in costs, copyright protection, and coverage). Over 70 percent of our school internet connections and systems are now very antiquated (at 512k). The cost for upgrading these old systems is becoming prohibitive. The system should never have let schools get this far behind. As Grubb[12] has shown, about 80 percent of total expenditure within a school is locked into salaries and buildings. Schools have discretionary powers at the edges; but higher expenditure per school appears to reduce teacher collaboration and reduce school attendance rates. He particularly noted the wastage of inappropriate and ineffective professional development, and the unnecessary over-supply of curriculum resources; yet many of the most effective resources cannot be bought. Teacher quality is exchangeable; while salaries are related to experience, there is a weak relationship between salaries and quality.

Which decisions are best made at the school level to maximise the student learning outcomes? Which decisions are best made at the level of the cluster or group of schools, and what are best made at the central level? The answers are key to the optimal use of scarce resources, and may release many schools from the use of time and the dilemmas involved in making decisions about things that do not matter, as well as enabling the greater buying power available through linking schools together.

## The need for schools to stop competing with each other

Competition between schools was a major part of the pre-1999 system, but once zoning was re-introduced, this competitiveness decreased. But there is still much posturing and promotion. I recently attended an evening where 15 schools had 'stalls', colour brochures, balloons and fridge magnets to take home, and smiling advocates – all aimed at enticing parents to choose their secondary school. Only one school commented on the quality of its teachers and provided evidence of all students succeeding; the others promoted smaller classes, more equipment and resources, and photos of happy and diverse students. One of the consequences of creating so many school 'islands' is that any bridges are built out from an island, and sometimes there is no shore out there!

It seems impossible to imagine that each school will be able to resolve the fundamental issues facing schooling in the 21st century. What is astonishing and exciting is that many do have excellent programmes, people, and policies. But not all. A different metaphor would allow, indeed mandate, schools working with each other. Why, for example, could not a secondary school(s), some intermediates, and contributing and full primary schools in a region have one board of trustees with multiple school responsibilities? This may led to more efficient and effective schooling, with the proviso stated above – that evaluation is the cornerstone of decision-making in this more regional approach. This is not a call for reinventing district offices, or a creeping centralisation of the Ministry, but a request for more professional educators having oversight over more than one school – where that is deemed to be in the best interests of maximising student learning and outcomes for that community.

> " *Which decisions are best made at the school level to maximize the student learning outcomes? What decisions are best made at the level of the cluster or group of schools, and what are best made at the central level?* "

## Minimal effects of Tomorrow's Schools on student learning

Although Tomorrow's Schools was introduced mainly in terms of efficiency, there was the expected promise that this would lead to better learning outcomes. Over the past 20 years there has been little evidence of 'doing better' in student learning, despite the millions of hours of industry, effort, and intelligence expended. This is not a claim that New Zealand schools are not, overall, excellent – they are, as the international evaluations show. It is a claim that we have not done better because of Tomorrow's Schools. There is no doubt that many excellent innovations have come about because of the freedoms and autonomy under Tomorrow's Schools, and these must not be lost when moving forward; but the well-known dispersion across our schools balances these advances. We have taken our eye away from the outcomes of schools to concentrate on the distribution of resources, inventing 2500-plus islands. As a result, we have increased dispersion of outcomes, leaving so many behind while spending resources where the problems are not, and we have too rarely undertaken evaluations of policies, fearing criticism of misplaced resources.

Warwick Elley has documented this lack of change.[13] He found no change in mean PAT reading, listening comprehension, and mathematics scores from 1968 to 1990. There is 'extraordinary stability' in New Zealand's mean scores in the international mathematics TiMMS study, in IEA science, in IEA reading literacy, and in NEMP. In 170 comparisons over time, from Year 3 to university, covering almost every aspect of the curriculum and varied test formats, there are only 'negligible differences'. We need a new metaphor that will be successful because it can show a demonstrable effect on average performance – a tough ask indeed!

## Conclusions

Tomorrow's Schools claimed to look towards tomorrow; instead it discovered a nineteenth century British public school model of powerful plenipotentiary principals attending to parental pressures, each school inventing its own solutions with nary a responsibility to defend their choices of teaching methods and decisions, and privileging the views of parents over professionals as the final arbiters of all that is supposedly

> " *Although Tomorrow's Schools was introduced mainly in terms of efficiency, there was the expected promise that this would lead to better learning outcomes.* "

good in a school. We forgot that it was often the boards that could get a school in difficulties, and then, absurdly, we asked these same people to get the school out of trouble. We washed away much efficiency in the name of the community. However, it will be a brave government that overturns New Zealand's most participative democracy. As we move forward, we need greater collaboration among schools, government agencies, ERO and all involved in schools.

There are so many islands of excellence in New Zealand. We need more bridges between these islands and ways of ensuring that optimal evaluations of their impacts are shared across schools. There is much that can be undertaken by more coordinated groups of schools to ensure that we focus on the major purposes of schooling: to build literate, civic-minded, socially responsible students. Fiske and Ladd concluded their study of the effects of Tomorrow's Schools with the claim that the faith put in school autonomy and competition has been shown to 'have practical limitations. …In a state education system in a democratic country the center cannot absolve itself of responsibility for failing schools… [the policies of Tomorrow's Schools] were destructive to some schools'.[14]

The argument is not that school communities do not know what is best for their students; it is not that we should go backwards; it is not that everything good and bad can be laid at the doors of Tomorrow's Schools. It is that a new metaphor is needed to drive the next generation of schooling in New Zealand. A Royal Commission, or some similar process, is needed to devise a new metaphor that will allow different, more regional/cluster models of schools to develop; remove even further any disparities between schools and between ethnicities in terms of achievement; and ensure all have adequate resources and teaching to attain appropriate outcomes. It is also needed to further reduce competition between schools and allow more sharing of improvements, particularly before schools are deemed to be failing; allow schools to become the major units of evaluation, and create an agency responsible for evaluations of various initiatives; determine optimal career paths for teachers and school leaders; identify and reduce wastage; and measure success in terms of teaching and learning effects, as well as equity of resources.

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# Chapter 11

## Getting more from school self-management

*Cathy Wylie*

> " *Our self-managing system continued to run on goodwill, on the back of a marked degree of trust of educational professionals and public confidence in the quality of public education.* "

For years after Tomorrow's Schools instituted self-managing schools, I found myself on the map of the many visitors who came to see how New Zealand had made this radical change, and what impact it had actually had on schools and learning. The evidence we had of the impact showed that school self-management did make principals more mindful of their parent communities, and that most relished their decision-making powers, though they did not relish so much the increased workloads, or the way administration work often eroded time they wanted to give to educational leadership. Our self-managing system continued to run on goodwill, on the back of a marked degree of trust of educational professionals and public confidence in the quality of public education.

Behind the scenes, the system was supported through advice and sorting out of the employment issues that schools encountered, from the (partially centrally funded) New Zealand Schools Trustees' Association network, teacher unions, and principals' organisations. Some of the worst fears of what might happen when each school was left to run itself and earn its keep through its roll numbers had not eventuated, partly because some safeguards remained, such as the separation of staffing from operational funding, and a socioeconomic decile-linked component to operational funding. Though there was data showing declines in some schools, there was little evidence showing negative impacts for learning at a systemic level.

However, the evidence of positive impacts for learning was either lacking or not convincing at a systemic level. Figures for secondary school retention and qualifications, and the gaps between the achievement of Māori and Pacific students and others, remained much the same until the school leaving age was increased, and NCEA was introduced. The first generation to experience all their schooling in self-managing schools did

no better (or worse) than the immediate generations before them. Yet a central premise of the shift to our version of school self-management was that student learning needs would be better met if decisions about how to meet those needs were made by those closest to them. Clearly, simply shifting decision-making to become more local is not enough on its own to improve teaching and learning.

When I undertook the review of special education policy for the government in 2000, it became evident to me that one of the key reasons that so many schools were struggling to meet the needs of individual students with special needs was that we did not have any way to provide 'wrap-round' services. We asked individual schools to assemble solutions for students from their per-student funding and staffing. We were not sharing knowledge of how to work effectively with students with different needs, and no-one had responsibility for ensuring that schools could access the qualified and experienced expertise they needed when they needed it. Such staff were also hard to retain for schools that could offer only 0.2 of a position, and then only for an indefinite period; and without being employed and working collaboratively, they could also find it hard to remain up to date. Asking clusters of schools to share Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) for students with moderate needs was also often problematic, with schools not used to sharing common resources (some clusters allocated it fairly, others did not). The Special Education Service, separated from the Ministry of Education in the 1989 reforms, had become too distant from both schools and parents.

It seemed to me that these gaps in our approach came from the way we had set up our system of self-managing schools, taking self-management too literally, trying to make one size fit all, and not putting the development of capability, and the support of that capability, at the heart of our education administration. Self-management went with separation and, in some cases, isolation, preventing the development and use of collective expertise.

But it was only relatively recently that it really struck me that the international interest in New Zealand's self-managing system had never resulted in any other country emulating what

we have done here. Other countries are happy to make use of our reading programmes and approaches, for example, and do envy the scope given to our teachers to customise curriculum according to particular needs; but our administrative approach remains the most devolved in the developed world.

It took an intensive short visit to another system based on self-managing schools to really crystallise for me the missed opportunities of our own system. It wasn't just the negative reaction of the confident public district principals in Edmonton (Alberta, Canada) to the way each New Zealand principal is separately employed by their individual school, rather than by a district which provided them with support and varied opportunities for different roles within education, as well as regular shared learning and problem-solving around shared issues. It wasn't just the negative reaction of the confident public district school board chair (sharing responsibility for 200 schools) to each school having a board of trustees with exactly the same set of legal responsibilities, rather than allowing each school to work with parents and the local community in ways that the parents and community were comfortable with, while giving parents real voice.

As I examined this similar but different system, I saw that we had missed the opportunity to make the most of self-management by not providing the processes that would support capability in schools, while also supporting the collective professional learning that we need if we are to get real shifts in student learning. I noticed that in Edmonton, responsibility for the quality of education and for improving performance was shared in a realistic way between the district office and the schools. It was evident that careful thought, too, had gone into ensuring there were good channels for principals and teachers to learn from each other. Careful thought had also gone into the allocation of resources, to ensure that while schools had incentives to do well and provide options for parents and students, it was not at each other's expense. The system could make use of the efficiencies that come with pooled spending and common designs, while ensuring that each school had responsibility for its own budget decisions and choice over its spending. Finally, this district was generally performing well, and had improved on some of its key indicators.

> *It took an intensive short visit to another system based on self-managing schools to really crystallize for me the missed opportunities of our own system.*

When we went into school self-management, we went in with a number-8 wire confidence that allowed us to make radical administrative changes. But that confidence is reactive, not forward thinking, and it did not provide the infrastructure of support and challenge, and of strategic attention to the development of principal and teacher capability and the building of collective knowledge, that I saw in Edmonton. Our system is not failing, but it has reached its limits. It is unlikely to be able to realise the potential of the New Zealand curriculum (which others do envy), work with a more diverse student body, and make further gains in student learning – most importantly, gains in Māori and Pasifika student learning – unless we are prepared to think creatively about what kind of supportive infrastructure we can weave through our system.

This means starting with what we want to achieve and working back from there. Rather than seeing school self-management as the goal, we need to see what kind of school self-management will best serve improvements in teaching and learning. One way to frame this might be this core principle:

*Successful school self-management is reliant on having well-led schools that focus on learning. They operate as learning organisations themselves: using, creating, and sharing robust knowledge and understanding about successful teaching and learning in relation to their students and communities; and problem-solving with other schools in their locality.*

In the rest of this chapter, I want to illustrate the limitations of our approach to school self-management by looking at how we currently approach school leadership, particularly around its ongoing development and accountability. I want to illustrate the ways in which we do not ensure that principals get the combination of support and challenge associated with continual development. Then I will suggest some alternatives which would be more effective in ensuring that all our schools are well led, and that our school self-management model can deliver on its promise.

## Ensuring all our schools are well-led

What does the situation look like now in terms of how schools find principals, and keep them? At present, filling principal vacancies is the responsibility of that school's board of trustees. A sizeable minority of boards making appointments are disappointed with the quality of their short-listed applicants, and a sizeable minority have to readvertise their vacancies.

It is difficult to attract and retain principals in small or rural schools, Māori immersion schools, and schools that have fallen into difficulty. At any one time, around 5 percent of schools have statutory interventions in place, where the Ministry and ERO have identified risks to school quality and sustainability. These schools often have first time principals, and are more likely to be serving some of our most vulnerable students: they are more likely to be low-decile, have high proportions of Māori, or be in rural areas. Most principals do not think there is adequate career progression for New Zealand principals. While principals are staying longer in their jobs, a third are now aged 55 or older, suggesting that the difficulties of attracting suitably experienced principals will remain or grow. While principals enjoy much about their work, stress levels remain higher than for other professions.

It is only in the last few years that the Ministry of Education has undertaken some responsibility for initial principal development, contracting the provision of a First-time Principals programme that most new principals take part in. However, not all do so, because it remains voluntary. It funded a popular pilot suite of centrally framed but locally customised professional development for aspiring principals in 2008, and this will resume in 2010. The Ministry of Education is embarking on a similar centrally framed, but locally customised, 15-month programme for more than 300 experienced principals. The Ministry of Education has also worked with the sector to develop a Kiwi Leadership Framework, which describes the complex role of school leadership in ways that principals and boards can use. This framework builds in the insights from the Ministry of Education's Leadership Best Evidence Synthesis, which again describes the kinds of leadership practices found

to be most associated in the research literature with positive student outcomes. It also provides descriptions and analyses that principals, boards, and those working with principals and boards can use to support their work. But this knowledge also needs to be embedded in the organisational frames for principals' work, and the ways in which their work, and the wellbeing of the schools they lead, are measured. That means the ways in which principals are held accountable, at present split between their annual appraisal, the annual school planning cycle, and ERO reviews every few years.

The principalship can be a lonely job, especially where principals have yet to grow professional learning communities where the leadership can be distributed, or where they do not have close and open professional relationships with other principals. How do principals know if they are doing a good job?

Boards are responsible not only for appointments, but for principal appraisal. They have guidelines for both processes, and many boards employ people with relevant educational experience to advise them on appointments, and (in around half the country's schools) to undertake the appraisal. But they do not always take good advice where they get it, and they do not always get the advice or quality of appraisal they need. The guidelines for both appointment and appraisal are broad.

Principal appraisal provides an annual occasion for reviewing school progress and looking forward, and for providing principals with a framework for their work. Yet primary principals' responses to a question in NZCER's 2007 national survey indicate that these annual occasions are not working this way in many schools. In their last performance appraisal, only 65 percent said they had agreed on goals that would move the school forward, and 61 percent had goals that would move themselves as principals forward. Only 40 percent had had the opportunity in these appraisals to have frank discussion of issues or challenges at the school, and to have joint problem-solving or strategic thinking. Only 28 percent had gained new insight from their appraisal into how they could do things. Bear in mind that around half of principal appraisals are carried out by educational consultants or other principals. Previous experience – without collective

knowledge-building and wider accountability – is insufficient to ensure that these people have the knowledge and skills to provide principals with the kinds of professional discussion they need. This is true in any profession.

What support/challenge comes from ongoing work between principals and the school's governing board? The majority of trustees and principals in the NZCER 2006 secondary and 2007 primary national surveys had largely positive views about the degree of trust between their school's board and principal, and trustees were positive about the quality of information they received from their school's principal. But only 76 percent of secondary principals and 54 percent of primary principals said that their board regularly scrutinised school performance; and only 56 percent of primary principals said their current board chair challenged them in a useful way. Just under half of both primary and secondary principals have experienced problems in their relationship with a school's trustees. While we could undoubtedly put more emphasis in boards of trustees' training and support on ways to analyse and discuss school performance, their perennial turnover poses an ongoing difficulty, and the distribution of knowledge that could usefully challenge and support principals is not systematic. It will not be available on every school board.

There are two other regulated ways in which principals can be held accountable, and supported/challenged in our current system: the planning and reporting cycle, and ERO reviews. Since 2003, schools have been required to add to their annual financial statement an analysis of variance account of their progress towards their school targets. The principle of school self-management was invoked to allow schools to set their own targets, in relation to the particular nature of their school community and the school's own trajectory; and to provide limited guidance to schools about how to set targets, and analyse school data. These annual accounts occur within a financial management regime: they go first to the school's auditor (who will not be able to analyse the educational 'accounts'), and then to the regional office of the Ministry of Education. In 2006, only 19 percent of secondary principals said they had professional discussions with the Ministry of Education on the

school's annual report and targets that they could feed into school discussion of strategies related to student achievement. Another 35 percent would like such discussions. In 2007, comparable figures for primary principals were 16 percent, with another 44 percent wanting such discussions. So the planning and reporting framework is minimally used for support and challenge. Yet what is of considerable interest here is that over half of the principals would like or had such discussions, even though there remains a considerable legacy of distrust of the central government agencies from the 'hands off' stance and limited engagement on joint issues during the 1990s.

ERO has been positioned as an agency separate from both schools and the Ministry of Education. It is the sector's auditor. At first ERO concentrated on schools' compliance with the new legislation. It then took on a role that provided criticism of the sector. In 2002, it shifted to 'advise and assist' reviews. These reviews no longer try to cover every aspect that schools are legally responsible for, but focus instead on aspects of particular interest to government at the time, and aspects that individual schools identify that they would like reviewed.

The reviews' new name is less developmental than it might suggest. Recommendations can provide advice, as can the report's descriptions of the good practice seen in a school (but not in every classroom in that school). Principals also talk of individual reviewers not simply identifying an area for improvement, but giving them specific information on a school they could visit that had successfully tackled a similar issue, or a reliable professional development provider whose work they have seen in other schools. But this is talked of as 'under the counter' information. ERO has offered post-review advice sessions to schools, in which few schools have shown interest. There has also been more systematic discussion between ERO and the Ministry of Education to ensure that ERO's findings are used with Ministry of Education material, mainly financial and school roll data and teacher turnover data, to identify schools where the school management does not appear to be managing, schools where the Ministry of Education might decide to intervene.

> *The New Zealand system is not without some regulated occasions and processes, then, when principals can be both supported and challenged.*

Primary principals in 2007 largely felt affirmed by their school's ERO review. Thirty percent said that they saw some things in a new light, and that the review did lead to some positive changes; 28 percent said it helped them get some needed changes in their school. A quarter said it gave them something they could use to promote or market their school. But around another quarter thought that they had gained nothing from the review, or felt under pressure to make changes they thought were not warranted. The main theme from open-ended questions we asked about how principals would most like their school to be accountable shows how self-focused schools have become in one sense: accountability is seen mainly to the school community of students, parents and the board, and the role of external review is largely seen as welcome or valued if it means that external knowledge is harnessed to the school's own journey.

The New Zealand system is not without some regulated occasions and processes, then, when principals can be both supported and challenged. But consider how disconnected these occasions are, and how many of the initiatives that individual ERO and Ministry staff take to work with principals occur in 'gray' territory. Consider, too, how much a matter of chance it is that principals get well-informed appraisal, or that individual ERO and Ministry staff are both well-informed and able to communicate in ways that a principal will both take heed of and learn from.

Principals can also learn from voluntary professional development, from working in Minstry-funded clusters, and from their relations with other principals. However, while there is now more funding for such professional development, it does remain voluntary, and the quality of professional development, and the degree of openness in sharing with others, may be variable.

So how could we improve our situation? If we want to make real progress towards the goal of having every school well-led in ways known to impact on student learning, we need to support all principals to have good support/challenge. We need to think about making sure that principals do have regular

professional discussions around school progress and goals with people who are well-informed, and who want the principal to do well – who have some stake themselves in the success of the leadership of the school.

The Edmonton school district model has much to commend it. It offers three annual professional discussions between central (district) office directors and the principals they work with, focused on the school's own plan and reporting against that plan. The central office is oriented to providing support and advice, but it also takes the responsibility to finally remove principals who continue to really struggle in the job. It also ensures considerable interchange among principals, and between principals and the central office, so that professional relationships are built and used. In addition, the building of collective understanding is nourished and principals have roles in collective problem-solving, as well as responsibility for an individual school.

Our closest parallel is the regional offices of the Ministry of Education. On the one hand, I can see great gains for our self-managing system if these regional offices were structured and staffed so that their prime role was to work with schools – to support, challenge, and hold accountable. I see in this a way that we could ensure a consistent quality of advice to principals and boards, a consistent quality of appraisal, and a real (rather than superficial) use of the planning and reporting framework to keep improving schools. We could also ensure a better use of principal knowledge and experience. Principals could take roles within the regional offices as part of the educational leadership career structure. While working as principals, they would play a role in collective problem-solving and building forward, to provide something of a balance to the sometimes self-limiting and self-regarding focus on one's own school only.

On the other hand, one salient difference between the Edmonton model and our own situation is that the district is not part of the Alberta Ministry of Education. This frees it from some of the tensions that could exist with a service-accountability school focus in the regions, and a public service

> *After 20 years, we have come up against the limitations of our approach to self-managing schools. If we continue without making some adaptations, then a book like this in 2029 will be reporting the same trends.*

agency whose first responsibility is to its Minister. Another difference is that we have split the school accountability function between individual boards, the Ministry, and ERO. I am suggesting that we make accountability clearer, but lodged within a framework of development (support/challenge). If the tension with the function of serving the Minister is insurmountable, this function could be provided through ongoing purchase agreements with either a national non-profit organisation which is regionally based, or a set of regional non-profit organisations whose agreements include core public values, and incentives to work together and with the Ministry, in order to ensure the national coherence and ongoing collective knowledge-building that we have lacked.

If we adopt something like the approach suggested here, which is more likely than the current 3–5 years between ERO reviews to resolve issues before they become too large, and to support ongoing school development, then what role could ERO play? I think it would be more productive to use much of the capability currently invested in ERO in a different way, transferring staff who have the appropriate knowledge and skills to the regional offices or districts which have the support/challenge/accountability role. ERO's national role would be to review the effectiveness of the regional/district offices, providing an independent monitoring and national picture which would support ongoing development of this support/challenge/accountability role.

After 20 years, we have come up against the limitations of our approach to self-managing schools. If we continue without making some adaptations, then a book like this in 2029 will be reporting the same trends. But I am hopeful that there is enough commitment to our radical experiment, and enough desire to improve, that we are ready to engage in informed discussion of options that could really address the kind of infrastructure of connected support and accountability that we need to make the most of self-managing schools.

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# Chapter 12

## Tomorrow's Web for our future learning

*Derek Wenmoth and Phil Coogan*

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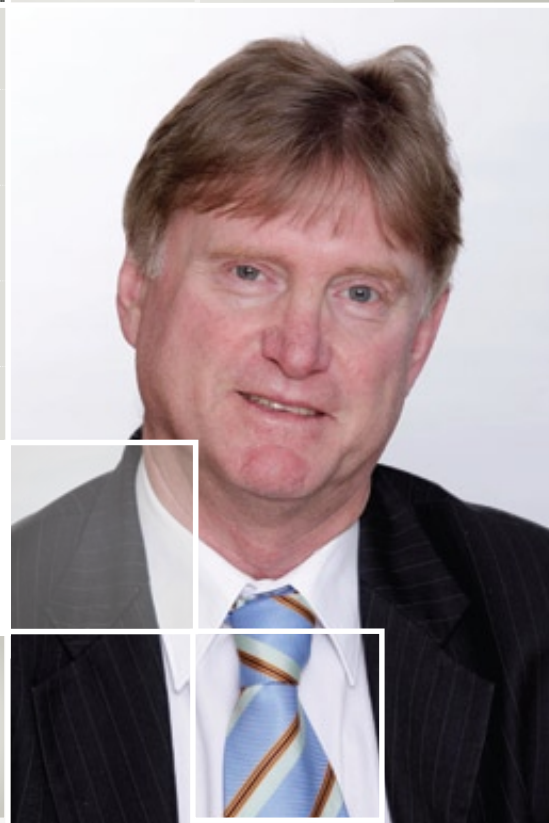
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### Introduction

Over the past 20 years, information and communications technologies (ICTs) have arguably had more influence on New Zealand classrooms than any other development. Of these technologies, the World Wide Web (the Web) is proving to have the most profound impact on access, selection and creation of resources for learners and teachers, and also on educational collaboration, networking and community building.

This article provides a brief overview of the development of the Web over the past 20 years, including the changing ways it has been used to support education. It then focuses on the New Zealand context, showing how the Web fits into a broader picture of supporting 21st century learning and teaching. It concludes with suggestions about how the Web might be viewed as the key content and collaborative tool over the next 20 years of New Zealand education.

### The emergence of the World Wide Web

The implementation of Tomorrow's Schools late in 1989 occurred only months after Tim Berners-Lee wrote 'Information Management: A Proposal', the beginning of the idea that was to become the Web. This meant that the thinking leading up to the implementation of Tomorrow's Schools occurred with little awareness of the significant effect this disruptive technology would have on so many aspects of education. While Tomorrow's Schools anticipated greater diversity in how schools provided programmes of learning for students, no-one was prepared for the paradigmatic changes that have occurred as a result of the introduction of the Web.

When it first emerged, the Web was seen primarily as a publishing medium, providing an efficient way of easily sharing content with a wide audience. Tim Berners-Lee had, from the start, envisioned a read/write Web, but what emerged in the 1990s was essentially a read-only medium. This was evidenced in the proliferation of catalogued lists of links to websites (portals), and the perception of the Web as a place to go to look for information. The Web's initial orientation can be seen in the adoption of the term 'URL' or Uniform Resource Locator, for the 'address' used to locate a resource on it. Getting content 'up' on the Web at that time required specialist skills, and content creation tended to be something that was done away from the Web itself, then uploaded for distribution to others.

Towards the end of the 1990s, changes in both technology and user behaviour began to impact on the way the Web was being used. Increasingly, people were using email lists and discussion forums to engage with each other online, often using email attachments to distribute digital content. By the early 2000s, new tools and technologies such as wikis, podcasts and blogs emerged, making the development of digital content easier, so more people were able to become content creators rather than simply content consumers. Further, new tools and environments made it easier for people to interact with and re-purpose content, and to develop content collaboratively.

A decade after it was first introduced, the Web had evolved to the point where it began to fulfill the original vision of its creator as a read-write medium, and the term Web 2.0 was widely adopted to describe this next generation of use. The Web has moved from being a channel for content distribution to an environment where users can create, share, comment on and co-construct educational content and resources.

*When it first emerged, the Web was seen primarily as a publishing medium, providing an efficient way of easily sharing content with a wide audience.*

## The Web in New Zealand education

In New Zealand, Ministry of Education funding of 'official' websites for teacher professional development began in the late 1990s with the Assessment Resource Bank developed under contract by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, English Online (Unitec) and NZ Maths (Otago University). Each was initially sponsored by a different section within the Ministry of Education, with little planned strategy.

In Interactive Education: A National Strategy for ICT in Schools (1998), the Ministry proposed an overarching website for teachers, then known only as 'The Online Resource Centre'. This 'portal' was launched in August 1999 under the name Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI). When TKI and the other portals were first established, the processes used to select and share content on them reflected the publication traditions of the print era. The resources themselves were generally intended for the passive user, not someone who would want to manipulate, contribute to or critique them. TKI grew to become a central plank in the Ministry's ICT strategy, providing the focal lens through which other officially funded sites and many other teaching-related, Web-based resources were provided. This focus on providing a centrally managed 'clearing house' and one-stop-shop for teachers held great promise, particularly in its early phase, when available search engines were relatively unsophisticated and unlikely to return the sort of accurate results they do today.

The early concept of TKI as an internet portal embraced the notion of educational content as 'stuff', a portal as a place where the 'stuff' is stored and organised, and the Web as a channel for accessing and delivering it. This approach was heavily influenced by the production of print based materials, such as those produced and distributed by Learning Media, which had dominated resourcing for schools up till the 1990s. Learning Media materials were subject to a quality assurance process which stressed author credibility, rigorous editing and reasonably high production values.

Before long, however, the adoption of a tightly managed approach to the selection and management of resources began to constrain how quickly new resources could be made available to teachers. Resources were being developed at a far greater rate than could be passed through this 'gate-keeping' process. The desire for more immediate access to, and shared responsibility for, the sharing and selection of resources soon emerged among users of the site.

English Online, NZ Maths, ESOL Online, Social Studies Online and Arts Online are examples of other, subject-specific sites that were developed at the same time, or soon after, TKI. English, Social Studies and Arts Online in particular were more open in their approach to content sharing, making available user generated content through a managed professional development process, or through the establishment of teacher resource exchanges. These sites featured thriving professional communities conducted via email mailing list, and also provided many collaborative projects for students, most notably English Online's Writer's Window, through which thousands of young people published and commented on each other's writing.

## Beyond the print paradigm

Around the turn of the century, multimedia developments, including colour, animation, 3D effects, and audio and video streaming media, drove a dramatic shift toward a more visual online environment. As a result, content became more engaging, capable of conveying complex ideas more simply, and catering for a different range of learning styles. However, the fundamental principles of the traditional publication and quality assurance processes still applied, and teacher use of resources tended to be similar to the ways in which textbooks were used in a traditional classroom.

A good example of this can be seen in the work of the Learning Federation, a collaborative initiative between the Australian and New Zealand governments, established in 2001. The result has been the development of a pool of quality online content tailored for the purposes and needs of Australian and New Zealand schools, known as digital learning

objects (DLOs). These are based on a common set of standards addressing interoperability and distribution issues. While there is ample evidence of the beneficial use of these DLOs by teachers and students in New Zealand schools, the approach is not entirely unproblematic. Since the project began in 2001, the concept of a learning object itself has become contestable, with many advocating smaller, more granular elements of content that teachers and students can more easily re-purpose and re-use in different combinations to suit different needs and contexts. This illustrates a limitation of applying the traditional publication and quality assurance process and philosophy to content development in the digital world.

## From consumers to creators

For many years, it has been recognised that there is an enormous resource potential captured in the folders and storerooms of individual teachers; however, the medium it is captured in is a barrier to it being shared more widely. The combination of greater access to intuitive multimedia, plus access to collaborative tools and online environments, has seen teachers increasingly moving from being passive consumers of resources to becoming involved in the creation, sharing and re-purposing of their own resources.

> 66 *The early concept of TKI as an internet portal embraced the notion of educational content as 'stuff', a portal as a place where the 'stuff' is stored and organised, and the Web as a channel for accessing and delivering it.* 99

This intent was captured in the design and operation of some of the sites mentioned above. Originally English Online (and later Social Studies Online) were developed around the idea of working with classroom teachers who would each develop a unit of work to be published on the site for the use of others. Facilitators worked with the teachers to enhance the units, embed where possible the use of web-based resources and ICTs, and provide overall quality assurance. The result was the publication of several hundred units of learning, which helped to popularise these sites.

However, the shifting emphasis toward personalising learning, and planning learning experiences more closely matched to the needs of particular groups and classes, brought about a change of emphasis. As a result, both English Online and Arts Online developed 'interactive unit planners' (IUPs), which provided curriculum-aligned, online templates to support more

individualised teacher planning. This more flexible, teacher generated and individualised model of planning support has proved highly popular, with just on 10,000 English and Arts units having been developed to date.

The success of the IUPs underscores the need for web-based resources to be able to meet the changing needs of teachers to cater for the diverse needs of their students, as reflected in the New Zealand curriculum. The traditional 'publication' process is being replaced by a more user-driven approach.

## Community and collaboration

The notion of the Web as simply a content repository was also challenged by the rapid growth of online communities. From about 1998 onwards, teachers and organisations quickly leveraged available tools (most notably email mailing lists), to exchange ideas, opinions and comments about all aspects of their professional activity – including resources. From 1998 to 2008, Arts, English and ESOL Online engaged approximately 5000 teachers in professional online communities, conducted via listserv. With deliberate impetus from facilitators, these communities have been quietly evolving from simple resource exchanges, or sources of quick fix advice, to sites for more reflective exchanges which increasingly focus on pedagogy and policy.

*" The Curriculum Online project was established in 2004 to encourage the education sector to participate in shaping the New Zealand curriculum. "*

The growth of these communities highlights the high value placed on online professional collaboration, especially among teachers in relatively isolated situations (by dint of either geography or learning area). It has also demonstrated that the simpler and more accessible the tool used for collaboration, the more likely it is that the community will succeed, hence the ongoing popularity of email based communities. Such communities need planned leadership and facilitation (which should be increasingly dispersed), and they need to meet teachers' day-to-day survival needs before they can successfully engage them in the luxury of reflection on their practice.[1]

More recent developments supported by the Ministry of Education have embraced Web 2.0 functionality to support the development of online community. Centre4 began in 2003

as a development of the Information and Communications Technologies Professional Development (ICTPD) programme. Various attempts had been made at regional level to engage teachers in the ICTPD clusters to share information and resources. From these, the concept of Centre4 evolved to provide a national online environment within which teachers could collaborate in the sharing of resources, experiences and issues related to their practice. In 2009, membership of this community has grown to include 131 cluster spaces and over 3000 members. User control and configuration characterises this community, which enables members to participate in a range of sub-groups, contribute resources, and choose how they are notified of new content and events.

The Curriculum Online project was established in 2004 to encourage the education sector to participate in shaping the New Zealand curriculum. This participatory process led to the growth of professional communities and the forging of new connections between groups. The site has adapted to support the changing phases and needs of the Curriculum Project and, following its publication in 2007, the Implementation Project. Between 2004 and 2007, more than 15,000 students, teachers, principals, advisers and academics contributed to developing the draft New Zealand curriculum through this community. The success of these communities is a strong indicator of the value teachers see in online communities, particularly when they are provided with intuitive tools with which to participate.

## Looking forward

The concept of personalisation has been embedded in educational philosophy since the writings of Dewey in the early twentieth century, but it has proved difficult to implement in an industrial model of schooling. Limitations of time, place and space determined much of this; so too did the limitations of technology. The early use of the Web in education modelled the behaviours and approaches of traditional classrooms, and the use of resources tended to reflect the traditional approaches of the publishing and library domains.

The development of Web 2.0 tools, including social networking sites (e.g. Ning, Facebook, Twitter), are a realisation of the vision of the read-write Web. By democratising the process of knowledge creation and sharing, and by enabling individual access to creative and connecting tools and environments, they have expanded possibilities exponentially. Individuals are now able to create their own communities and to create and deploy their own content, incorporating graphics, audio, video and multimedia. In addition, we are already seeing the use of virtual reality tools, such as Second Life, where users can 'enter' the online environment rather than simply contribute to it.

Such developments create their own challenges, especially in the management of the multiple community spaces and environments that individuals participate in. This has led to the emergence of a range of 'aggregation' tools and applications that enable individuals to bring information from a variety of sources to them, rather than linking to those sources. Examples of this can be seen in the functionality of social networking sites, and in other sites dedicated to aggregation, such as PageFlakes or NetVibes. By taking advantage of the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) links on many sites, and the embedding feature that is now becoming common in sites such as YouTube and SlideShare, individuals can integrate content from other places into their own online environments.

*In the early days of computing, the desktop computer determined how we thought about what a computer could do and what we could do with it.*

This personalised approach should have a significant impact on how future Web-based services will be supported by the Ministry of Education. While there is undoubtedly a role for the Ministry to support the development and distribution of educational resources and content, the manner in which this is done must shift from 'one-stop-shop' thinking to embrace the sorts of technologies and channels of provision that are evident in the social networking sites. Indeed, the very term 'web services' has evolved in meaning to define the range of applications, tools and services that can be accessed online, and generally configured or combined to meet the needs of an individual. Future planning of web services must consider three key access issues: what can be accessed, through what devices, at what speed?

*The emergence of a variety of devices that can be used to access the Web, particularly mobile devices, provides another impetus for change.*

In the early days of computing, the desktop computer determined how we thought about what a computer could do and what we could do with it. Each machine had a hard drive on which we installed the software and stored content. This often occurred on a server that was a part of the network, but effectively it was the same thing – copies of the software or content were stored independently on these machines. With the evolution of the Web, we are seeing more data stored on servers that are not a part of any particular network, but can be accessed from anywhere. They are, as it were, in the 'cloud', with 'cloud computing' a term coined to described the concept of many networks joined together, yet operating as a single entity over the Web.

With the emergence of the cloud, there is less of a requirement to maintain separate applications or copies of content on each unique network, as these remain accessible to anyone who has access to the Web. Content that has previously been 'locked away' can now be made available through the cloud – for example, the collections of the National Museum (Te Papa), the National Library, and the National Archives. Additionally, applications that previously needed to reside on a computer or individual network can be accessed via the Web – for example, Google Docs.

The emergence of a variety of devices that can be used to access the Web, particularly mobile devices, provides another impetus for change. In future, applications and content available on the Web will need to be developed to cater for the increasing number of users wishing to access them on a mobile device. Ubiquity of access will be paramount. Imagine a student who begins her work on a school computer, continues to work on it on her mobile phone on the bus ride home, and then completes it at home via an internet enabled television.

A third change driver is the emergence of an advanced network across the country, operating at speeds hundreds of times faster than our current broadband networks, enabling the rapid distribution of large multimedia files and streaming media. As a result, schools will be less likely to purchase copies of software or content, instead, for example, subscribing to online educational television channels.

As such networks and their usage grow, schools will come under pressure to ensure that their own networks are designed to enable ubiquitous access to content and services. Careful thought will need to be given to issues of security and online safety. Current solutions to these problems tend to be based on a 'walled garden' approach, aimed at keeping those on the inside safe from outside 'marauders' (such as spyware, viruses and stalkers). Although this was appropriate while a school's internal network remained the place within which all activity took place, in the age of the cloud, some of the strategies (e.g. firewalls, perimeter security, etc.) are now acting as barriers to much of the content that is 'good', but stored on servers in the cloud. A current example of this can be seen in the number of schools where it is impossible to access much of the very useful educational material available on some streaming media sites (e.g. YouTube or TeacherTube).

Looking forward, these concerns will have to be moved beyond the boundaries of the schools, into the cloud itself, with the emergence of different types of virtual private network. However this occurs, it must create an enabling environment where the primary driver is making access easy, rather than making it difficult.

A final future consideration is the changing role of the teacher. Popularised as the shift from 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side', this represents only part of the picture. Teachers are going to have to become increasingly knowledgeable in their use of the internet, not just in their heads but also in their actions. As life-long learners, they will increasingly use these environments in order to participate in their own professional development. Teachers will also need to adapt their programmes to cater for the increased personalisation that is enabled by these environments, and to accommodate learning more seamlessly outside of the school and school hours. So too for the practices of assessment, particularly high stakes assessment in our secondary schools. With such ubiquitous access to information, assessment will need to focus on the individual's ability not just to access information, but to engage with it in constructive, critical and creative ways. It is already desirable that, in any assessment activity, students have access to the range of information sources available to them.

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## Conclusion

Twenty years ago, we experienced what was arguably the most comprehensive change to the New Zealand education system in its history. These changes were orchestrated at government level, in response to the perceived need for radical change in the way schools were administered.

In the intervening years we have been experiencing a second significant change, with the introduction of a technology similar in magnitude to the printing press. So far, educators' response to the Web has been largely to accommodate it within the existing structures and ways of working in our schools.

We are now at the cusp of yet a third significant change. It is poised to transform the essence of our school system more fundamentally than the reforms of 1989, and simply will not be able to be accommodated within existing frameworks, as it will challenge the very existence of these frameworks. At the heart of this change are internet developments that are facilitating deep shifts in the power dynamics of our current systems, creating authentic opportunities for participation, contribution, choice and ownership of learning. The value is no longer in the content itself, but in the dialogue around and engagement with the content. As Jane Gilbert argues, knowledge is no longer a noun but a verb.[2]

While we are unlikely to see schools disappear, their existence as stand-alone entities, characterised by structures such as timetables, knowledge organised into subjects, the allocation of teaching tasks only to 'teachers', the classification of students into year groups, and the concept of the classroom itself, will be challenged. So how should those responsible for policy making in these areas respond?

*Looking forward, these concerns will have to be moved beyond the boundaries of the schools, into the cloud itself, with the emergence of different types of virtual private network. However this occurs, it must create an enabling environment where the primary driver is making access easy, rather than making it difficult.*

The lessons from the past 20 years provide us with two valuable insights. First, change is a constant. No matter how thorough our strategic planning may be, we must be prepared to be adaptive and embrace the unexpected. Patterns of thinking and behaviour that served us in the past may actually impede our adaption to the changes that occur. Our solutions can quickly become the problem, and today's technologies quickly become the tools for yesterday's schools.

Secondly, we must understand the integrated nature of our educational ecosystem, and of the world we live in. We must understand that technological change is not additive, it is ecological. A new technology such as the Web doesn't just change something – it changes everything.[3]

The introduction of Tomorrow's Schools heralded a radical transformation of our school system, focusing on the management structures as the point of change. But the planning did not account for the impact of the Web, and the emancipation of the learning process that this has enabled, making many of the planned management changes redundant or outdated.

No-one knows what the next 20 years may hold, only that there will be more change, which will undoubtedly be impacted by technology. Our hope must be that we have an education system robust and adaptive enough in its approach to prepare our future generations to cope with that change.

> *"No-one knows what the next 20 years may hold, only that there will be more change, and that that change will undoubtedly be impacted by technology."*

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## Notes

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