AT THE CENTRE OF THE WEB

THE ROLE OF THE NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL WITHIN A DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEM

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SUMMARY

This study of the current role of the primary school principal draws on interview, discussion and national survey data to chart the changes that have occurred since decentralization began in 1989.

Among the major findings are:

- Educational leadership is the most important part of the principal's role. It involves less direct teaching work or work with teachers than it used to, and more planning, facilitation, motivation and resource provision. Educational leadership work now includes guidance, advice, and motivation for the parents on the school's board of trustees as well as the school's teachers.

- Some aspects of administration are now commonly seen as part of educational leadership; particularly work related to resourcing the school or supporting teachers. However, administration is still competing with educational leadership for priority, and takes more of a principal's time.

- Although the pastoral aspects of the principal's role are largely ignored in official descriptions, it has become even more important for many principals, particularly those whose schools serve low-income and rural communities.

- Management of the school's roll, its reputation, and its buildings and grounds is more central to principals' work and concerns now than they were before decentralization.

- Administrative work has increased substantially with decentralization. Many schools are not adequately funded to allow the principal to delegate this work. Others depend heavily on the voluntary work of their boards of trustees.

- Principal workloads have increased since 1989 by an average of 10 hours a week. The average workload is now 59 hours a week.

- Teaching principals are particularly hard-pressed to balance the different aspects of their role. Their average workload is 5 hours a week more than non-teaching principals.

- Although many principals have enjoyed the challenge and stimulus of decentralization, only half describe their morale as good or high. There are clear signs that the continued high and intensive workload is taking its toll on principals' energy, and may be making the principalship less attractive to teachers.

- Principals are able to give less time now to their own professional development. Yet one important aspect of their current role now is to provide each other with mutual support and advice in the absence of external support. There is increasing interest in some external support system for principals and schools.

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But - as in keeping with so much of their role - this report owes itself to the principals who found the time in their pressed schedules to give to the interviews, discussions, and questionnaires. They did so because of their own interest in the changes in the role of the primary principal. I hope that they find in this report the description and analysis which does justice to their work.

1 INTRODUCTION

In 1989 the radical decentralization policy of *Tomorrow's Schools* entrusted each individual school with its own operational funds, responsibility for property and personnel decisions, and for staff development. The role of the primary principal was widened as a result, calling on new knowledge and skills. It was also intensified (Grace 1995:46), with greater workloads and a much faster pace.

The new framework within which principals operated also raised questions about the essence of their role. For those whose prime focus is on the legal accountability of each board for their individual school, the role of the principal was most comparable with the role of a director or manager of a business: in the final analysis, an employee of the board. Others feel that a principal's prime energy needs to be directed to serving the children in the school by providing educational leadership since the purpose of schools, to teach children and support their development as individuals and citizens, is more fundamental than their status as managers.

This study explores the extent to which change has occurred in the role of the primary principal, and the extent to which these two views of the primary principal's role are compatible. It looks at principals' own perceptions of their role, in the context of their schools, their work with their individual boards, their experience of the Ministry of Education and the Educational Review Office, their own professional development and support, and their workloads.

The heart of the study is a set of systematic interviews[1] in five different locations around the country with 25 principals from a good cross-section of small, medium and large schools in different communities, and one former principal, with three group discussions in three urban areas involving a total of 15 experienced principals. These discussions focused on the themes which had emerged from the individual interviews, and those taking part were asked to identify positive paths forward.

The material from interviews and discussions is complemented by quantitative material from NZCER's final national survey[2] of the impact of educational reform, July-September 1996, and data from the New Zealand Principals' survey of newly appointed principals. The quantitative material allows us to see how widespread patterns are, and to look at trends over time in terms of workload; the qualitative material from the interviews allows us to identify patterns and themes, and provides us with deeper insight into the processes and experiences behind the figures than the figures alone can supply.

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1 The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

2 This is a nationally representative sample of 10 percent of all primary schools. Principals, teachers, and trustees at these schools have been surveyed since 1989 to monitor the impact of educational reform, and parents at a subsample of 26 of these schools. The last report from this project was *Self-Managing Schools in New Zealand: the Fifth Year* (1994); the full results of the 1996 survey will be released in mid 1997.

Table 1 shows that the school characteristics of those who took part in the individual interviews cover the spectrum of major characteristics of New Zealand schools. The three discussion groups were largely composed of non-teaching principals of large or medium sized schools. Ten of their schools were in low-income areas.

The interviews took place over April to October 1996, and the group discussions were held in late November-early December 1996.

Table 1
School Characteristics of Interview Study

Teaching Principal	12
Non-teaching Principal	13
Rural school	10
Provincial town/city school	5
City school	10
Roll: less than 100	11
100-199	5
200-250	2
250-350	2
350+	5
SES deciles 1-3	7
SES deciles 4-7	10
SES deciles 8-10	8

The study was commissioned by the NZ Principals' Federation, which sought an independent report. To ensure its independence, none of the principals involved in the interviews or discussions were office-holders in the Principals' Federation, and the analysis and interpretation in this report are the researcher's own.

It is intended that the material in this report will provide a valuable base-line for a future replication of this work to analyse the impact of change on the role of the primary school principal five years from now.

2 THE ROLE OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL PRIOR TO 1989

Reading through the few descriptions and accounts[3] we have of the role of the New Zealand primary school principal before decentralization gives us a good indication of both change - and stability, and provides a context for the themes which emerge from the material gathered for this study.

Coleman (1976) traces the beginnings of the (then) head teacher's authority within his or her own school to 1904, when the responsibility for student classification, assessment, and schemes of work shifted from the inspectorate to the head teacher - the majority of whom were sole-charge. The 1963 regulations called for "steps to gain the co-operation of the parents and reporting to them twice a year". (Coleman 1976:23). Coleman's own research on the role of the principal was undertaken as a principal himself, he felt changes had occurred as a result of social changes, the increasing professionalism and education of teachers, and a more complex curriculum. He observed:

> No longer can the principal expect to be the "teacher of teachers" and acknowledged expert on curriculum content. Some members of his *[sic]* staff generally have greater expertise in certain subject fields, and the principal, though retaining the overall responsibility for what is taught in his school, must find the means to utilize the strengths of his senior teachers and other staff. The principal's role has become that of a **facilitator** *[my emphasis]*. He must provide an administrative organization which permits the specialized knowledge of his staff to be used to the utmost. (P.32)

It is interesting to see this emphasis on facilitation in observations made in 1976, and to see that even before decentralization, facilitation was linked with a responsibility on the principal's part to provide the organization or support which would allow the best use of what we might now call "staff resources". Facilitation or enabling is a dominant theme of current principals' understanding of their role. It encompasses perhaps a wider range of support than might have occurred to a 1976 principal: as well as organization, it encompasses staff development, encouragement, securing teaching resources, and monitoring workloads and stress levels.

Coleman surveyed 39 principals of schools with rolls of 230 or more in the greater Wellington area. All of these were non-teaching principals. He also surveyed teachers, Standard 4 students, and parents at 4 of these schools, selecting the schools to provide the full socio-economic spectrum. The teachers surveyed felt they had a freedom to teach and plan as individuals, but they also felt that the principal should be a facilitator for their work, and

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[3] Coleman (1976) lamented 'a dearth of past and present research concerning the principal's role. This is a serious omission, for the success of implementing departmental policy rests, to a large extent, on the ability of the principal.' (P.5). All he could find was the first Handbook for Head Teachers issued in 1964, and revised in 1976, and overview essays by Polaschek (1957 - included in the revision of the Handbook), and Watson (1965). The latter is remarkably visionary of subsequent developments in the principal's role. In 1989 Baty was drawing on only 5 more additional sources for information about New Zealand principals.

expected him or her to do some teaching and observing in classrooms Parents thought the principal need not be the school's best teacher. For them the principal was a "combination of administrator and teacher", and should teach regularly in a classroom.

The principals themselves were spending on average between 6 to 10 hours a week in classrooms - mainly assisting young teachers, working in specific curriculum areas, and releasing senior staff. A predominant desire was to "*spend more time in classes,.. prevented from doing so by interruptions and administrative trivia*" (p.57). Most spent more than 11 hours per week on "non-professional administrative functions" - which they would be happy to see handled by an executive officer. Just over half the principals were working 45 hours or less a week, and only 13 percent were working more than 50 hours a week. This provides a stark contrast with current workloads of non-teaching principals: the 1996 NZCER survey shows 90 percent working more than 50 hours a week.[4]

Coleman concluded with a call for more administrative support for principals - suggesting one officer to cover a geographic cluster of schools, so that: "*Principals, relieved of their non-professional functions, would be able to concentrate on educational matters, and hopefully, become more efficient and effective in their leadership roles*". (p. 64).

This is a common view of administration work as something separate from the professional role of principals; and as counterproductive if this more important role is to be fulfilled. This demarcation continues into current principals' perceptions of their work, and their continuing frustration that administrative demands keep them from putting most of their energy into what they perceive to be the core of their work, education.

Yet there is also a new strand emerging in current principals' thinking about this conflict in their roles. This reflects the wider government stress in the last 12 years on management as the key to good provision. In this new strand of thinking, the conflict is resolved to some degree by seeing administration as a necessary task within leadership. Perhaps this perception has been aided by the inclusion in operational grant funding of some allowance for administrative staff support, and by the gradual willingness of boards of trustees to ease back on their keenness to put money into children's direct learning - into classrooms - and increase administrative staff hours, often using locally raised funds.

Coleman's other conclusions are also relevant to an understanding of the current role of primary principals. He thought there needed to be much better preparation of principals for their role, and much more professional development available to principals. As well, they needed some say in staff appointments if they were to "*build up a staff to meet his school's requirements*" (p.69).

Some additional illumination about the hallmarks of the role of the primary principal comes from Galloway et al's 1982 study on stress amongst a representative sample of 40 primary school principals.

Sixty-four percent of the principals found their job moderately stressful, 28 percent mildly stressful, and 8 percent stress-free. The main sources of stress arose from management of time, including after-school time, administrative tasks (in which was included the organization of

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[4] To put this figure into the New Zealand employment context, only 19 percent of all those in full-time work were working 50 hours a week or more in 1995. (Source: Household Labour Force Survey data in table 14.4, p. 288, of the *1996 NZ Official Year Book*.)

staff development), and relations with staff and parents.

Higher average stress ratings were associated with schools serving low-income areas; lower average stress ratings with teaching principals, with satisfaction of the state of the school's buildings, with substantial help from parents, and with formal study being undertaken by the principal. There were no associations between average stress level ratings and principal's age, experience, or length of service in the current school.

This is not dissimilar from the picture which emerges from the current material on the role of principals after decentralization, with one glaring exception. Teaching principals now shoulder larger workloads than their non-teaching colleagues, and they appear to be under greater pressure, with lower morale. Principals in rural schools are also now working under greater pressure.

In 1979 Edwards studied five primary principals through observation of a morning's work, interviews, and questionnaires of staff and senior students. He gave a vivid portrayal of the way principals found their work days decided by others, and by unexpected situations. *"A substantial amount of a principal's work appeared to involve what may be termed "putting out fires."* (p.252) He also noted that many "somewhat menial" tasks were done by principals, at the cost of time for *"professional work with teachers or children"*. (p.253) As in Coleman's study, the principal's administrative load meant that teachers had come not to expect the principal to provide direct support with their teaching.

Thew's 1989 study of one principal provides further insight into the *"fragmented, interrupted nature of the working day, coupled with the high degree of personal interaction recorded"* (p.47). He noted that while interruption and fragmentation are inherently stressful, they also contribute to a frustration that the leadership aspect of the principal's role can rarely be given daily priority. In addition, even non-teaching principals feel that educational leadership should incorporate some teaching. The principal Thew studied was a non-teaching principal, yet he expressed disappointment that Thew found that only 3 percent of his time was spent teaching.

Principals feel they are appointed because they have demonstrated their teaching expertise and can support other teachers; they also feel that a fundamental requisite of the job is a liking of children. Thew gently suggested that these combined to make even non-teaching principals feel they should continue to engage in some teaching.

Payne's 1984 study of 10 teaching principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership role noted that *"Most of the literature* [largely overseas; but including the NZ official descriptions and advice] *on the role of a principal assumes that all principals are without the responsibility for an actual class"*. (p.19) But the principals he studied felt unable to provide a standard of instructional leadership they thought necessary because their full-time teaching responsibilities, administrative tasks, and *"continual interruption by visitors"* left them insufficient time.

The fact that the principal taught was important for his or her credibility with the school's teachers. They saw the principal's role as one of facilitation and support rather than day to day help, which they got from each other.

In 1987 the accounting firm of Ernst & Whinney visited 41 primary and secondary schools in Auckland, Hamilton, and Invercargill to provide the Picot taskforce with information on existing administrative costs, and the likely costs and effects if educational administration was

to be decentralized.

Their report gave predictions of the rise in administrative work which would come to schools with decentralization, and gave recommendations of the increases in administrative hours which would be needed.[5] It noted that the existing administrative workload was already being coped with only through principals working longer hours; through voluntary work, or *"entrepreneurial use of the present system."* (p.29). It gave its own analysis of the factors involved in coping with the administrative workload:

> If the Principal accepts that administration can assist in providing the best education for pupils then most schools cope satisfactorily. If the Principal does not recognize the role of finance and administration in this area and tends to be teaching oriented, then the level of administration of the School is not as good. (p.29)

Yet the report also noted that principals were keen to rid themselves of at least some of their administrative workload - and expected that the shift to school-site management would achieve this:

> With adequate funding and suitably qualified clerical assistance, principals and teachers will be able to spend more time in classrooms, because of the removal of their administrative load.

From an accounting perspective, the administrative aspects of the role of the principal must be given priority; yet from the principals' perspective, it is the teaching area which should be given their best attention, and which is interrupted by administrative tasks.

> Principals generally consider themselves as educators, not managers and administrators. Many are concerned at the possibility of becoming "Managing Directors" or "General Managers", and the additional responsibility this will entail.

Principals also expressed concerns to the Ernst and Whinney team relating to their proposed new role of budget manager: that bulk funding would not keep pace with inflation and rising costs, or with the capital investment needed for the new technology, and that there would be insufficient funding for property maintenance. They were also apprehensive about the effects on their schools if their budget could not cover emergencies.

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5 The Ernst and Whinney estimates are much lower than the interview and 1989-1996 NZCER national survey material would suggest. This indicates that there has been serious under funding of the administrative costs of decentralization since its inception.

3 THE OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE PRIMARY PRINCIPAL'S ROLE AFTER *TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS*

Ballard and Duncan (1989) identified *"a much clearer focus on the role of the principal"* as one of the three "basic" changes at the school level as a result of the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms. The principal was described as the school's "professional leader" (p. 5), carrying out three functions:

> Firstly, the principal will contribute to and implement the policy of the board so as to achieve the objectives set out in the charter.
> This is the principal's **executive** function.
>
> Secondly, the principal is expected to lead the staff of the school in the implementation of school programmes - the **instructional** function.
>
> Thirdly, the principal is expected to report on the achievements of the school - the principal's **reporting** function.

Under "executive" function the role of the board of trustees was described as the making of policy decisions. Using the curriculum area as an example, they emphasized that the principal's views should be given "careful consideration" (p 6), because the principal is the school's instructional leader. In other words, the (sub)role of instructional leader is to be the one which gives the principal credibility not only with teaching staff, but also with their employers.

In 1990 the Principals' Implementation Task Force produced a set of discussion documents to provide further guidance for schools on their new responsibilities and roles. Their description of the role of the principal sets out seven aspects, in the following order:

1. Management
   (In accord with the appropriate legal requirements, the school policies; and a recording of all delegated authority)

2. Professional Leadership
   ("The principal will manage the day to day educational, personnel, and administrative affairs of the school and will report to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis")

3. Educational Leadership
   (By establishing educational objectives, in consultation, and communicating these objectives to all groups; implementing policies and programmes to help the school achieve these objectives, and "In order to perform effectively as the educational leader of the school, the Principal should delegate enough of the daily operational administrative tasks."

4. Recommendations of appointment of staff to the Board

5. Teacher appraisal

6. Staff development programme

7. Adherence to the Charter framework's Code of Conduct. (1990, p.6-7).

Here we see some interesting shifts in emphasis. The legal responsibilities take precedence; professional leadership refers to day to day activities; instructional leadership is now widened to "educational" leadership, and is focused on coordination of objectives with activities rather than direct work with teachers. Staff development is seen as a separate area. The awareness that daily administration can distract from the work of educational leadership is clearly stated - as is the expectation that delegation of some tasks to other staff is a realistic option.

Pastoral work with students and families does not figure in this list of tasks, unless it is implied under "personnel" in the list of tasks under professional leadership.

The most recent outline from a government agency of the role of the primary principal is the Education Review Office's *Professional Leadership in Primary Schools*, 1996, in its series of Education Evaluation reports.

> All primary school principals perform a dual role. They manage the day-to-day operation of the school and lead the development of improved teacher performance and education quality. They are responsible for activities that extend beyond the management of teaching and learning in the school to a leadership function at the centre of the school community. (p.6)

The role of the primary principal is first compared to the role of a senior public servant, mainly in terms of responsibility for implementing government policy, and managing state funds and assets. It is also seen as comparable with the role of the manager of a private business. Stress is laid on the principal's status as an employee of the board (representing "stakeholders" in the school), profit compared to roll numbers, and staying in business compared to keeping the school viable, as comparable "bottom line" drivers.

Principalship is said to have much in common with the jobs of "many managers in the public and private sectors" (p.10):

> Managing a school, a private business or a government agency involves developing strategies, determining goals, providing means to achieve them, using resources efficiently, managing people, and ensuring the quality of outputs. (p.9)

Yet most of the 50 primary principals interviewed for the Education Review Office's report did not see themselves in this light, and did not describe themselves as school managers (p.22). The report identifies the aspects of the "professional leadership" role which suited them better:

- managing all aspects of curriculum planning, delivery assessment and evaluation;
- overseeing teaching programmes;
- monitoring and appraising staff;
- team building;
- providing the focus for school development programmes;
- encouraging and facilitating staff development; and

- being aware of current educational issues and thinking through the best way to deal with them.

Eight of the 50 principals preferred to call themselves "facilitators": "*delegating and encouraging rather than leading...providing a learning environment for other teachers.*" (p.22)

Our interviews showed the same emphasis on educational leadership rather than management. However, management was often seen as a support to educational leadership. The next section, using material from the interviews and group discussions, explores what educational leadership and management mean to principals, how they see them fitting together, and the situations in which a satisfactory balance between leadership and management is lost.

4 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The principals in our study described **Educational Leadership** as:

- driving or facilitating curriculum change;
- managing and motivating teachers;
- providing a vision, or direction, usually developed with teachers and board rather than by the principal alone;
- working with parents, board members to enlist their understanding of the vision;
- setting examples and giving inspiration to others by their own teaching , attitude, and conduct.

> I set the spark, but there are many other leaders in our school. I keep the momentum going, and motivate, I bring people back on track.
>
> Sometimes I think I'm the spider at the centre of the web.
>
> I'm the seed-sower, the promoter, the dreamer, I give the direction - and also make sure it's specific. I'm successful when other people come and tell me what's happening.
>
> I manage change - by working really quietly alongside the teachers, giving them information and opportunities to get on board. At first I had to really sit on my hands, which was frustrating, but things sped up, and everything's going really well now, they're keen and quite excited, they volunteer more. In fact I have to monitor their stress levels - they're taking on too much, and we can't afford to have them sick!

Thus educational leadership was associated with change, with novelty, with a sense of progress, and with the particular oversight and liaison role which distinguishes the principal from the other teachers in the school.

Management, on the other hand, is the "housekeeping": vital but less interesting, and often so relentless in its demands that it threatens the more fulfilling and key role of educational leadership. The principals used phrases such as "the status quo", "keeping the show on the road"; several noted that *"I didn't come into this job to become an accountant"*. Management was associated with the meeting of other people's demands: with the paperwork required to secure resources, or to prove that the school was operating satisfactorily. It also means now ensuring that the school meets the additional requirements of new legislation such as the Privacy Act, and changes to health and safety regulations.

Leadership often meant working with other people, working as a team; management could mean working as a team with senior staff or support staff, but it also had connotations of lone work.

But the principals also talked of the usefulness of having systems in place, and the importance of having this area of their work and the school orderly if they were to concentrate on educational leadership. Thus management could be seen as a support for educational leadership.

The principals who felt they had this side of their role under control tended to:

- be non-teaching principals; ("walking principals") and/or
- have boards who undertook substantial property and/or financial work; and/or
- have an executive officer or "secretaries" who undertook a large amount of their financial work, negotiations with the Ministry of Education, dealing with local suppliers and trades people, getting quotes for property work, insurance, and equipment, doing the personnel administration, and sometimes supervising and appraising other staff - and who opened their mail and dealt with most of it, and shielded them when they needed time to concentrate undisturbed.

Resource provision was therefore key to their ability to achieve some sense of balance in their role.

This balance was precarious for several of the principals, since it was unclear how long their boards could sustain the support hours needed, or, for principals in the "black hole" just short of the roll numbers needed to ensure a Ministry of Education funded non-teaching principalship, the employment of an extra teacher or additional teaching hours. One principal in this situation said that he was dreading the prospect of returning to teaching, since even though the school now had very good administrative and management systems, *"it's not enough to make a difference. You only get release for the classroom work - not the preparation and assessment and monitoring."*

Even in schools with satisfactory levels of the support outlined above, management dominated the workload if:

- the principal was new to the school; or a first-time principal; and/or
- the school's property needed attention - additional classrooms, new halls, technology suites, or the addressing of over-deferred maintenance; and/or
- the school's roll was declining, which could mean redundancies and efforts to attract students; and/or
- the board of trustees was unsupportive; and/or
- the school needed to focus on systems and policies to ensure a positive ERO review.

While achieving the balance between educational leadership and management was a challenge for most of the non-teaching principals, it was a tightrope walk for many teaching principals. A frequent refrain was the feeling of frustration that they *"could not do justice to both"* aspects of their role, could *"not get enough focus on either"*, though they were working extremely long hours.

Educational leadership for teaching principals includes regular classroom hours, usually the responsibility for one class. Those who gathered their release hours into a given day of the week, or a block of time spoke of the frustration of feeling that their class was getting a regular babysitter instead of a teacher, and that they still needed to prepare for that day's work. Those who could take their release hours every day by having another teacher take a particular curriculum area (or two), seemed more at ease with the balance in their workload. But it was still difficult for them to find the time to address both management and staff

development - to "walk" into other classrooms as much as they thought they should.

One principal who was now in a large school, and would prefer to be in a smaller school, said he would however, never return to a non-teaching principalship *"because I had little in life but being a principal"*. The demands of teaching principals appear particularly high for principals in 4-6 teacher schools. One ex-principal of such a school observed that:

> A job that destroys elements of a person's personal life has actually got a weakness in it. It's all very well to send that person on stress management courses and time management courses, but I'm not sure that that really addresses the issue. It's the structure of the job that needs looking at.

As well as educational leadership and administration, a third aspect of the principal's role which meant a great deal to some was the **pastoral** aspect of their work. This was particularly demanding for principals of schools in poor communities.

> If I don't do welfare work, then learning doesn't happen - the kids don't come to school and in the frame of mind to learn. This conflicts with my trying to be an educational leader for the school. I would like to delegate this role, but there are no other agencies to pick it up, there's no coordination of effort, and people like the visiting teacher and the public health nurse, they all have much bigger workloads now, so they can't give each child enough attention.

> I'm in an area where there a lot of young mothers bringing up young children on their own. Often they come with their problems, and you have got to listen, because you're giving them support and help at the right moment to make a difference to the partnership between them and the school, and that actually has a positive impact on the child. It's part of you being an educator.

> In a community like mine, the school is the one stable force in the community. A lot of other institutions and government departments have gone. I find myself in the role of the postmaster, or minister.

In all but a few very large primary schools, the principal is the only teacher without full classroom responsibilities: and thus the only one available within school hours to visit families without telephones, or deal with social workers and lawyers.

> We have a large number of children and families dealing with the Children and Young Person's Service. Their calls take time. A family in crisis can't wait. If they want to interview a child and the child wants you there, that's your whole afternoon shot, and if they can't go home that night, then you're here till late helping organise a place for them. One of the most stressful things for me is that I can walk into my office and what is sitting there on my desk at the start of the day is still there at the end of it because I haven't been able to sit at my desk all day.

Role Clashes

The roles of educational leader, manager, and providing pastoral support often clash because of limited time, and the lack of alternative people at the school to take on tasks. The lack of alternative people is largely due to a lack of funding, though some principals wished for stronger senior staff. Most of the principals in the study spoke with gratitude of the staff to whom they could delegate aspects of the school's work, and who would pick up particular tasks voluntarily when the principal was running behind, or caught with outside demands when he or she should be teaching. But they were also conscious of the teachers' own large workloads, and of the fact that office staff often worked unpaid hours, were underpaid for much of the work they now undertook, and had, in quite a few cases, precarious employment.

> I know of secretaries in this area who are virtually sacked at the end of every term but given holiday work to take home, and re-employed, so they're treated like casual part-time labour, but they're the life-blood of the school.

> We had the Board arguing the other night about paying our secretary $25,000. She does everything - first aid, accounts, looks after students, prepares stuff for the board, and they're saying, well maybe we don't need to pay that much. She had a job lined up last year for $34,000, but she said no, she wanted to stay - but she won't stay much longer.

One principal said of his school secretary:

> She's so useful - she does the school cleaner's job description and appraisal, she's the board secretary, she does the books, the school secretary, the library, she's computer literate, she wears several hats so she's got her finger on the pulse, she's very adept, and by way of thank you we're going to cut her job because of our deficit. That's brutal and unkind.

Most teaching principals were in schools which could only afford limited part-time administrative help, often less than 20 hours a week. Often, then, the principal was the person answering the phone as well as trying to teach his or her own class.

There were three other kinds of role clash reported by the principals. First, was the difficulty some experienced in cutting the teaching and learning cloth to suit their financial resources. Money was more of a problem for schools in poor areas than others; but all the principals were used to setting priorities and caps to their budgets.

The second kind of clash is also related to funding, inasmuch as decisions taken on moral grounds, within a framework of educational leadership that posits that every child has a right to education, can have repercussions on school resources, and the management aspect of the principal's role.[6] The case that emerged in our interviews was a decision to allow a child into

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6 The clash between educational values and the resourcing aspect of management which can occur under school decentralization has also been noted in the U.K. through the rise in school exclusions and reluctance to take children with special needs or behavioural problems; similar trends are apparent here.

the school who had a disruptive reputation at kindergarten. This is a particularly telling case, since the loss of the enrolments which followed was enough to tip the principal back from a non-teaching principalship into "the black hole" of the teaching principalship in a medium-sized school.

A third kind of clash occurs between the principal's role of educational leader, and their role as manager, where the board have different views from the principal, or from the staff as to the most useful process or result. For example, a few principals had found themselves "the meat in the sandwich" between teachers and their expectations of an approach to change which incorporated their perspectives and current position, and the board, who were focusing on results expected within a given time-frame.

5 THE RISE IN PRINCIPALS' WORKLOAD

In 1989, principals' average workload was 48.1 hours a week. It increased to 60 hours a week the following year, and has remained at that level ever since. The 1996 NZCER survey figures show 58.83 hours as the average. Thus - on average - the decentralization of education administration added 10 hours a week to primary principals' workloads, even with the growing use of administrative help. Teaching principals in 1996 had an even higher average of 61.27 hours a week, five hours more than non-teaching principals.

Sixty percent of the principals in the 1996 NZCER survey experienced a growth in the administration component of their workload during the previous 12 months. However, 39 percent also felt they had been able to undertake more professional leadership. Both these figures are much the same as in 1993, indicating that individual principals experience different balances of the two major components of their role year to year, related to some of the factors outlined in the previous section.

Forty percent of the principals were putting more time than the previous year into their work with their board of trustees. This increase may reflect changes in board composition as a result of the trustee elections in 1995.

Table 2 gives the average proportion of principal's time spent on six different aspects of their work.

Table 2

Allocation of Principals' Time

Area	Average time %	less than 10 %	10-19 %	20-29 %	30-49 %	50-69 %	over 70 %
Administration	31	2	16	27	34	18	2
Classroom Teaching	34	27	20	9	24	33	8
Educational leadership	18	24	34	27	12	4	0
Board of trustees work	11	46	43	10	1	-	-
Own development	6	77	22	1	-	1	-
Property Management/Maintenance	9	45	43	10	2	0	0

These 1996 NZCER survey figures are very close to the 1993 figures (also the year after a board election).

The lack of change over these three years in the overall pattern indicates that resource increases that are not dependent on school resources are necessary if principals are to spend more time on educational leadership.

Improving the balance between administration and educational leadership, reducing the

demands made of them, and increasing the support staff were the three most frequent suggestions principals made in the 1996 NZCER national survey for improving their situation. Even more striking is that a third of the teaching principals in the survey responded to this open-ended question with the suggestion that teaching principals become non-teaching principals..

Later on in this report we will also see how the cumulative effect of this workload is having an impact on principals' energy, morale, and willingness to stay within the profession.

6. PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN CURRICULUM

"Co-ordination", "oversight", "monitoring": these were the terms used by most of the principals interviewed to describe their role in curriculum. While teaching principals need to be as familiar as their teachers with each curriculum area, non-teaching principals in medium sized schools had direct responsibility for only one or two areas, and principals in the large schools no direct responsibilities for any particular curriculum area. In some small schools, the principal drafted the curriculum and then discussed it with the other teacher/s; in other schools the design of classroom programmes in line with the new curricula was done from the outset as one team, or in sets of small teams. Classroom teachers in every school now have responsibility for one or more curriculum areas, including budgeting and allocating resources.

The principal's role is to make the final budget decisions, encourage and resource staff development, and check that what is happening in the school meets either the curriculum documents goals, (*"to see whether we're doing the right thing"*) and/or the school's own goals. One new principal phrased her monitoring of the curriculum as making sure it supported the changes she wished to make to the school's culture, a focus on the covert rather than overt curriculum.

Most of the principals felt the new curricula gave them enough scope; only two expressed some frustration that the introduction of the new curricula had made it harder to develop ideas they had themselves to meet the learning needs of their particular students. Others, however, did find that the curriculum contracts which paid for teacher development over and above their own school budgets set the pace for their schools, whether or not the school wished to make that particular curriculum area its priority.

Several principals who had made Social Studies their curriculum priority for 1996 because of the contracts available, expressed frustration that the Ministry of Education's redrafting of this curriculum had wasted teachers' time, time which could have been more profitably spent on other curriculum areas had they known that the curriculum was not finalized.

However, the Ministry of Education's timeframes for the introduction of the new curricula were only being met in a few schools.[7]

> It damn near killed me trying to make everything work. It meant we had to adopt a scattergun approach, so we were going nowhere. We ignore the Ministry timeline now.

Most of the principals felt that only one or at the very most two curriculum areas at most could be properly addressed each year, and they expressed relief that the pace of change, or the Government's expectations of what schools could achieve, appeared to be slowing to a more realistic level. One principal who had managed to keep the school to the Government timeframe attributed this to her own close knowledge of the new curriculum, and staff stability:

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[7] Renwick and Gray (1996) also report this difference between official and actual timetables in the implementation of the Curriculum Framework.

I think that my involvement in the development of the new curriculum framework helped get the staff beside me so quickly when I started here. I could actually support them on classroom-based issues, more than a lot of the principals in my cluster who have found it quite difficult because they've become distanced from the curriculum, because they've been so busy bringing the new management structure into schools... I've centred the strategic plan around the curriculum, and we're running to target.

Another plus is that the staff have been here for a while, and there's not a lot of movement, so when you invest time, money and effort into curriculum, through staff development, we're not actually losing that person to someone else. I know schools that will have most of the teachers who were on a curriculum contract gone at the end of the year.

Another non-teaching principal who had delegated the curriculum responsibilities to his senior staff retrieved them once he had convinced his board to find the money to fund an executive assistant to carry out some of the administration and liaison work which had prevented him from taking a more active role in curriculum. He thought that his senior staff had difficulty seeing *"the whole picture"* as he could, simply because they had fulltime classroom responsibilities. To him, the whole picture meant more than monitoring what was happening. It meant *"making judgements about where it should be going."* In this case, the judgements were suggesting the need to integrate curriculum areas as much as possible, particularly technology, in order to avoid fragmentation and superficiality.

Other non-teaching principals were also reluctant to lose direct experience with the curriculum, and with teaching. They talked of "trying things out" with small groups of children (particularly in the areas of mathematics and technology), or about "the need to keep in touch". Some continuing teaching also helps maintain the principals' credibility with teachers. Even so, some felt they simply could not keep up with the changes.

One of the saddest things I have had to say recently was to a young teacher. I had to say to her, "don't look to me for credibility in the classroom any longer", because I can't stay up with the play with all the curriculum development. I can create the right environment in which you can do it, and I can do all the organizational stuff, but I find myself with an overflow tray.

Indeed, it seems that many principals no longer have time to work directly with new teachers. The Teacher Registration Board survey of beginning teachers (Mansell 1996) found that principals were the best source of help for only five percent of the new teachers.

As well, principals taught particular groups or subjects so that other teachers, particularly senior staff or teachers with curriculum leadership responsibilities, could plan their areas, or work with other teachers.

Curriculum development and translation into classroom programmes is a key part of teaching. It was not work which the principals felt they could do on their own, nor dictate to their staff.

My role is to coordinate a workable document within the school because if I started from on high and said, "this is what we will do", they would agree, but it wouldn't happen because they hadn't had a hand in it."

The principal's role in curriculum requires him or her to juggle several activities: providing guidance and direction to professionals whose own performance cannot be directly overseen, in curriculum areas that the principal might not be familiar with, or using new, and to the principal, unfamiliar resources; ensuring that the curriculum fits within the national framework; and ensuring that appropriate staff development occurs.

7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development is a key focus for principals. Only one had delegated the responsibility for overseeing this area to the school's deputy principal, and the principal still maintained the responsibility of approval. Most of the principals sought a match between individual staff development and school goals, but there were varied approaches to this which seemed to reflect:

- the availability of Ministry of Education funded contracts;
- the stability of staff at the school;
- the principal's desire to make improvements in a given area of teaching ; and
- the principal's perception of the value of allowing some individual latitude to teachers.

Some principals made a separation in the school budget between school development and individual teacher development in order to provide a balance. Appraisals of teachers furnished some principals with goals for individual staff development - including, in several cases, relaxation skills, time management, conflict management, and communication as well as courses related to the more direct work of teaching. Others talked of *"helping teachers plan for themselves."*

Examples of whole school professional development included classroom learning techniques and school development (including board members). Several schools were building or upgrading their libraries, and had all staff attending Infolink, and other information retrieval courses run by the National Library.

Curriculum contracts played a large part in the staff development plans of each principal.

> To some extent our curriculum focus is taken out of our hands by the Ministry contracts. If you don't get involved in the courses when they're running, then you miss out completely.

Most principals preferred to "talk with" staff about their plans, and use encouragement; others were more directive.

> Previously they went on courses for things they enjoyed and were already good at. Now they go on technology and that sort of stuff.

Besides external courses, the principals also encouraged in-house professional development, often using themselves and senior staff to provide in-classroom support or observation. Staff meetings were also taken as opportunities to provide more informal professional development, and to promote a "learning" culture for the adults as well as children in the school. The principal's role in staff development was "hands-on" for this kind of professional development. One principal who was new to a small rural school where there had been no professional development programme, and the teachers were reluctant to go on courses, made especial use of the staff meetings.

Principals also supported professional development of their teaching staff by taking classes, thus allowing them to work together or visit other classes or schools. This role of release, or

relief, was common, even amongst the non-teaching principals.

The cost of staff development and the need to find relief teachers for the courses which took place during school hours had some influence on principals' decisionmaking. Courses requiring the attendance of two staff at a time posed problems for small schools, particularly where they did not have good relief cover.

The amount of money set aside for staff development varied widely - for example, from $300 per teacher in a small school, through $600 in a school not much larger, but in a higher socio-economic area, up to $1,000 in a large school. One principal in a large school in a poor area where the majority of teachers were taking university or ASTU courses which were fully paid for by the school's board said that the staff saw such board support as a *"real perk"*.

Some principals also spoke of the encouragement and funding they had given to support staff to upgrade their skills, for example with computer packages, accounts management, or office management.

Finding the resources to fund staff development was a common theme in the interviews, managerial task. Looking at the staff development activity in the school to ensure that it provided value for money was seen sometimes in the context of the principal's management role, and sometimes in his or her educational leadership role.

8. RELATIONS WITH THE SCHOOL'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The relationship between a school's principal and the parent trustees on its board has been one of the most closely watched aspects of New Zealand's educational decentralization. From time to time there are calls from national representatives of principals or trustees for a legal redrawing of the boundaries between their respective roles of "management" and "governance", though not necessarily agreement about the form these new borders should take.

Principal and trustee views from the 1996 NZCER national survey show some interesting differences in perceptions of the key element of the trustee role. The table below shows substantial similarity in the proportions of the principals and trustees who see the key element as trustee representation of parents, or as the employer of the school staff. But twice as many principals as trustees feel that the board provides partnership with the school staff; and twice as many trustees as principals feel it is the board which provides the direction for the school.

Table 4
Perceptions of the Key Element of the School Trustee's Role

	Principals (n = 181) %	Trustees (n = 270) %
Partnership with school staff	64	30
Represent parents in the school	25	35
Provide direction for the school	19	40
Employer of school staff	4	5

It is interesting that the role of employer, which is most emphasized in the legislation and official descriptions of the role of boards is the element which matters least in the actual experience of principals and trustees.

Both principals and trustees were asked in the 1996 NZCER national survey about changes they would make to the role of the trustee, and whether there were areas where they felt trustees should be more involved, or, to the contrary, less involved, than they were at present.

Just under half the principals surveyed would like more involvement from their school trustees. Property management and maintenance was the major area mentioned: others were policy development, finance, and the curriculum. Only 11 percent of the principals thought their trustees should have less involvement in the school, mainly by having less to do with day to day management.

Only 11 percent of trustees thought they should have less involvement in their school - and only 16 percent thought they should have more involvement. Thus it appears as if

principals see a larger role for trustees - of practical support, or partnership - than trustees themselves do, even while they recognize that trustees often do not have time to give, or expertise. Curriculum was the main area mentioned by those few trustees who sought more involvement in their school. Finance, fundraising, paperwork and property were the areas mentioned by the few who would like to give up some of the trustees' tasks.

This suggests that the practical voluntary support given by boards of trustees has become essential to schools under decentralization.

The changes to their role that trustees would like centre on their workload, training for their work, and a desire for better support from the government agencies. Principals' suggestions for changes to trustees' role focused more on a clarification of overall roles, but also encompassed trustees' workload and training. They also saw the advantages of having trustees with practical expertise.

The NZCER survey data 1989-1993 showed that at any one time around 10 percent each of principals and trustees are experiencing some problems in their relationship, and around 7 percent would describe their relationship only as satisfactory. Two-thirds consistently categorize it as excellent or very good. The 1996 survey data finds only 5 percent of trustees and principals saying they have problems, and almost three-quarters of the trustees now describe the relationship as excellent or very good.

The main problem reported by trustees is that their principal is not a good leader; only one trustee mentioned the "gray area" between management and governance. However, the main problem areas identified by the small proportion of principals who were experiencing problems did include difficulties resulting from different interpretations of the board's role - as well as trustees lacking time for their work, and problems with individual board members' style or approach.

Our interview data provides some understanding of the situations in which this crucial relationship works well, and the situations when it starts to fray.

Principals feel positively about boards of trustees when they:

- provide practical support, particularly in the areas of finance, fundraising, investment, and property management (all areas which free up school budgets and staff time, especially the principal's, for teaching and learning purposes;
- make informed decisions;
- respect each other and the staff, so that there is trust and openness;
- have a chairperson who can work closely with the principal, keep meetings focused, and inspire the board to share the school workload and support the school;
- complete tasks agreed in meetings, without having to be chased up by the principal, or leaving the principal to do the work; and
- have some continuity between elections.

Four main types of board emerged from analysing the principals' descriptions. Most of the boards described by the principals interviewed fell into the first two types.[8]

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[8] Analysis of the interview material gives these categories, but quantitative research through a national representative survey would be needed to establish how prevalent each of them is.

- The supportive board - just that, but not a rubber stamp;
- The board which provides support "from the heart", but not in practical terms;
- The reactive board, which may provide suport, but which looks to the principal for guidance on both large and small matters; and
- The mistrustful board.

Here are some illustrations of each type:

The Supportive Board

They have job descriptions, their own portfolios, they carry out any responsibilities pretty well, they have confidence in me, that I'm managing the school to the best of my ability, things are generally going well - and if they didn't think so, then they would want to be more involved.

It's my job to keep them informed and to perhaps be the catalyst to inspire them to do things. They listen very carefully, though they don't always agree; they respect each other. We have an open, honest relationship. The chairperson and I sat down at the beginning, made it clear from the outset how we saw our roles, and revisit that through the appraisal system to see that it's actually happening.

Their attitude is: you're the professional, you're here to run the school, we'll come and see you if there's any problems we've got. We're here to help, but we're certainly not here to tell you your job.... they're supportive and they want to be kept informed. It's a stupid principal who takes his board for granted. Provided they're kept well informed and you share the rationale for what you want to do, there's no difficulty. They are the community aspect of the partnership that is Tomorrow's Schools, and if you ignore or override that then it's not a partnership, and you're going to have troubles.

The Board Which Supports from the Heart

It's a good relationship, we work well together, but it's a matter of getting them away from meeting situations to get things done. They've got skills, but you've always got to be there to support them, to make sure they're doing it right. You've got to keep chasing them up.

I get on really well with my board, they're good people, and we have an excellent relationship. They're not very pro-active, mainly because they're too busy, they're all working, they just don't have time, so unless I initiate and push it along it just doesn't happen. They make the right decisions to run the school, but they're not pro-active enough to get things done.

The secretary and treasurer was that in name only - it's a reluctant board, strong-armed to avoid having a commissioner in because we would have lost more kids. They're good people, but they haven't the time or energy to make a commitment. The chairperson's a professional, he has the vision - but not the time.

They've got good skills levels, but the bottom line is that there are probably three of them who are actually involved in assisting me. And they don't have the picture, they see things from their own personal point of view often, and that's all they can see often, especially when it comes to appointments.

The Reactive Board

More often than not the board say to me, "you do it and run it past us" - they prefer a written report and recommendation....a lot of my reporting to the board is on important issues like the English development we've done, or why we've been modelling things, why we're tackling things differently. Every term I give them an overview of where we're going, what we're focussing on, but they're not really interested. I want their support - I expect them to get behind us and sometimes I've had to say, `Come on guys, make a statement, say something!'

When they write a letter, it's me, when they have to put in an application for funding, it's me that does it, so sometimes you can think, why do we have them, it's just another meeting, but they're actually very positive and supportive , they have full trust in what's going on here, and that makes for the smooth running of the school.

In my last school I virtually ran the whole show myself because the people on the board had only just come onto it, and didn't have a clue of where they were coming from or where they were going, so I just went ahead and did the whole thing myself.

The Mistrustful Board

I don't respect my board. I believe in the principle of boards of trustees, but not in the them and us attitude which they have to me and the staff. The staff complain that they hardly see them – I tried to organize a shared social do – only two came. The treasurer dominates the meetings, they go on interminably, and the chairperson gives her role very low priority.

As a Counsellor, I have had to go into schools where people actually swear at the principal, and they don't give a damn what they say, a Code of ethics means nothing to them. They go straight for the jugular. It's all very saying there's a code of ethics, but if you've got a board member that flouts that code, there's very little that you can actually do as a principal, that the board chairperson for that matter can do to make that person accountable.

I worked with a person who wanted to be the defacto principal, and what happens is you end up spending 90 percent of your time guarding your back, and 10 percent doing what you're meant to be doing. You go into survival mode - it took three years until that person left, and then it was amazing, I could actually focus on development of the school.

Principals pursue a number of avenues to develop the capacity of their boards, and to keep or develop the spirit of partnership which is important to them.

- They approach the board with relevant information and well-grounded arguments;
- They keep their board informed on the school's activities and ongoing issues as a matter of course;
- They discuss their respective roles and expectations with the board chairperson;
- They involve board and staff together in strategic planning, policy development and review - and socializing, in order to build up solid trust on both sides, and
- They anticipate turnover in boards by encouraging potential candidates to join the board through sub-committees or co-option.

A key to all these initiatives was a view of their role as providing facilitative leadership - to parents as well as staff, to employers as well as employees, in a context of shared decision making. Few decisions on the boards were ever made by vote; most were by consensus.

There were hints in some of the interviews that principals might, left to themselves, come to different decisions; but most preferred to work with their boards so that the approach or solution to a given issue would be "owned" by the school at large, and thus have a better chance of enduring. Sometimes principals did not put forward ideas they thought their board would not see merit in; more often principals worked with their boards in the same way as they worked with their staff – working to persuade and motivate, rather than dictate. Sometimes this meant taking a much slower pace than principals would prefer.

Situations which were associated with reactive and "heart" boards were more likely to occur where board members were busy, where the "good" trustees had been exhausted (such as small rural schools), in schools in poor areas, or in schools suffering a decline in roll or reputation.

Situations associated with mistrustful boards included new principalships, and boards with members who appeared to be motivated by the need for personal power and status - particularly in the position of chairperson or treasurer.

Board members who had expertise in financial, property, and legal areas were valued - if they seemed to be on the board to provide the school with resources and support, rather than to pursue personal agendas, or exercise power over school staff.

> I've had some people who could barely read or write, wonderful people, top class, because they had good commonsense. They didn't try to run away from an issue. They stood up for what they believed in, what the school was trying to do, but also they had their own beliefs. Skills like accountancy are all very well and good, but if the person's bringing a whole lot of other garbage with them, then it's not worth the effort.

9. ACCOUNTABILITY

We have seen that the board's key official role as the employer of school staff is not the key aspect of trustee work, in the experience of both principals and trustees. Other differences between official emphases and the emphases of those charged with making the educational reforms work emerged in the 1996 NZCER national survey when principals and trustees were asked to rank a set of groups of people and organizations in terms of who they felt responsible to.

Table 4

Weighting of People and Organisations in terms of Responsibility felt by Principals and Trustees (between 1-9)

	Principals (n = 181)		Trustees (n = 270)
1	Students	1	Students
2	Staff	2	School
3	School	3	Staff
4	Parents	4	Parents
5	Board of Trustees	5	Board of Trustees
6	Ministry of Education	6	Future generations
7	Future generations	7	Ministry of Education
8	Education Review Office	8	Education Review Office
9	The Government	9	The Government

Thus both groups agree that students matter most. The school is slightly more important than staff to trustees – but only just, and staff are more important than parents, or the board itself. Although government agencies provide funding, in return for accountability, and make judgements on school performance, they do not feature largely in principals' and trustees' view of who their work is for.

The interview material provides some insight into the reasons for this ordering, and also shows that principals can experience conflicting demands in their accountabilities.

Children are the reason for the school's existence, they are there every day, sometimes in the principal's own classroom or teaching, they cannot always speak up for themselves, and they '*have to get a good deal from me*', or as one principal put it, '*If I made a balls-up of the job they are the people I'd feel I let down the most.*

Staff and parents usually featured next. Parents because they also have individual children's interests at heart, wish them to do well, and also, for some principals, because they could remove their child from the school if dissatisfied, or voice their dissatisfaction in the community, thus discouraging enrolments, and funding.

> The school has to serve the needs of children, bearing in mind parents. It's an affluent community, parents know what they want and how to get it. They got rid of the last principal, and that wasn't an easy thing to do prior to Tomorrow's Schools.

> I feel strongly that the parents dictate the school culture. Principals and teachers come and go. They don't dictate what's taught - 90 percent of that is decided by the Ministry, but they decide what sort of atmosphere they want in the school, whether they want uniforms, say, or a fairly flexible management style.

Principals feel they are responsible for securing resources for staff and kindling their enthuasism, because the children's learning reflects their teachers' effort, knowledge, and skills.

They also see themselves being responsible for sorting out any differences arising between staff and parents, within the "school culture".

Accountability to the board occurs because the board employs the principal. Although this accountability was often referred to as "on paper", or "according to the book", principals were wary of offending their board, and referred to tensions experienced in serving both children's needs and their need to meet their board's expectations. Others were more relaxed about their board, seeing them as the people the principal reported to, rather than the source of demands. They talked more of their "community". While this may seem a more amorphous relationship, it was not without a sense of pressure that the community had expectations of the school, or an awareness that others' expectations would count in how well the school was regarded.

Finally, the Ministry of Education was mentioned by a few of the principals interviewed because it was the source of the school's funding, *"I need to show the books are balanced"*, or because it was the vehicle for government policy. The Education Review Office only came to the fore at the time of an audit or review of the school.

Principals' views about the new requirement for Statements of Service Performance fit with this low priority accorded to government agencies. Only nine percent of the principals in the NZCER 1996 national survey viewed them positively; a further 7 percent were matter of fact, seeing it as simply another requirement of them, and 12 percent were unsure, since they did not know what it would be used for.

But most of the principals saw little value in the new requirements, citing the time they would take, the lack of benefit to children and to learning in the school, and the difficulties in measuring achievement in monetary terms.

Tension was felt during Educational Review Office visits partially because of the principal's feelings of closer accountabilities to the children and people who were at the school "day by day". But it was also felt simply because of the specific extra demands on principal's time.

At times the principals felt *"there are so many people, you don't know who the boss is - that's what stresses you out"*.

The overall picture one gains of principals' sense of accountability is that it is manifold, and that it forms another strand in their key activity of balancing competing needs and expectations, or finding ways in which several aspects of their work can be achieved in the same set of acts.

10. RELATIONS WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

In the 1996 NZCER survey, 13 percent of the principals responding described their experience of the central office of the Ministry of Education as excellent or very good. This relationship was satisfactory for 30 percent. Thirteen percent had minor problems, and 7 percent major problems. These are much the same proportions as in the 1991 and 1993 surveys. The main problem described was difficulty in getting access to staff, or encountering too many bureaucratic hurdles.

A similar pattern emerged for principals' experiences of the regional offices of the Ministry of Education.

The interview material shows that principals were more likely to have a positive view of the Ministry of Education if:

- they did not have rapidly rising rolls and accommodation problems;
- were high enough up on the priority lists for capital works (including funding to match community fundraising efforts);
- had positive experiences of the curriculum contracts;
- were in urban schools; and
- were experienced principals.

One new rural principal said, *"I don't know who they are. Whenever I ring there's only music"*. The difficulty of reaching Ministry staff for information or advice was a feature of the rural principals' comments on the performance of the Ministry of Education.

New principals needed more access to the Ministry as they came to grips with the circulars and funding arrangements.

> I'm never quite sure what they do, except the paper keeps coming to me, so I flick through, and if it doesn't affect my kids at the moment, then I put it away. If it's about money, then I apply, I apply for everything.

A few principals expressed reservations about the process of curriculum development - its pace, the quality of curriculum contracts, and the feeling that the Ministry was "dumping and running".

Some principals were strong in their concern that the Ministry's brief was too narrow in comparison to its former role of support and orientation towards schools. They felt that it took a "top-down" approach to schools, rather than a consultative approach, which resulted in inefficient decisions because of the need to make changes to policy and requirements of schools as problems with the decisions emerged.

But when principals spoke of financial problems facing their schools, they did not source these in the Ministry, but in political decisions.

11.THE EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE

The function of the Education Review Office (ERO), the manner in which it works, and the use made of its material have become the subject of growing uneasiness amongst school staff. This uneasiness is not, however, due to a large number of schools receiving bad reports. In the 1996 NZCER national survey, 18 percent of the principals responding found their last ERO review to have been very helpful, and 45 percent found it helpful. It made no impact on a quarter of the schools, and was found unhelpful by 9 percent of the principals. As a result of their ERO review, 70 percent of the schools made minor changes to their teaching, policies, and organization, and 7 percent made major changes. The main areas of change were student assessment (ERO looks for proof of learning), health and safety, and curriculum; other areas were personnel, policy, and equal opportunities.

Local newspapers had published a report of the ERO review in 22 percent of the schools, with a negative effect for a quarter of those schools whose reviews were published. This is 6 percent of all the schools in the survey.

Only one of the principals interviewed had experience of poor media coverage of their most recent ERO review - but concern about media coverage, and knowledge of the impact such coverage had had on other schools, was a dominant theme in principals' views of ERO.

> We had a negative report, particularly in terms of kids' behaviour in the classrooms. They were right, and it helped me to reinforce a number of things I'd been saying about the school for some time. ... but we had an unbalanced newspaper report, picked up by the radio, and a parent with a grudge went on the radio. The newspaper publicity following the ERO visit contributed to our roll decline - the "give a dog a bad name" syndrome.

> It doesn't take much to ruin your reputation. It's a real threat hanging over your head that it can be published. I don't deny the public right to know how the money is spent, but the perception of a school is almost impossible to change.

> The headline was great but the text of the article was mostly about the shortcomings, the items of noncompliance. The reference to this particular school was so good they photocopied it and sent it out to the community. But when other schools rang to say the report wasn't a fair reflection of their ERO reports, the newspaper's response was, "Oh, all schools always say that, they're never happy with what we do."

This concern about inconsistencies in media coverage, the difficulty of getting aspects of the school's work into perspective in the media (some areas of non-compliance should be more important than others), and the effect negative or sensational media coverage could have on schools trying to improve, linked in with other concerns about the "negative" focus of ERO:

- the lack of advice or support to work on areas of concern identified in the reviews;

  They weren't useful. They just made the recommendations I gave them. I'd prefer a flying squad, or an increase in reviews of less effective schools, and a decrease in the reviews of effective schools.

  All those things I'd put off the rest of the year got done in 6 weeks before the ERO visit. It helped everyone focus, including the board - that was a positive spinoff, and it identified weaknesses we could work on, though some were just nitpicking. I found the people who did the review helpful, because I picked their brains - but ERO itself is a shark without teeth. They come and put the boot into schools, and then leave. There's no back-up, no advice, no help.

- inconsistencies in reviews, either within schools, or between schools, so that principals knew of schools they thought as good as their own getting poorer reviews;

  We can sit here saying, "actually, we were one of the first positive ERO reports to be published in the local paper", and that's really great, but then I know of schools that haven't had a positive report that are doing a fantastic job. I think that the model has to be questioned.

  We have school wide systems, and the other rooms got ticks for those, while I got a cross - but we were doing the same things. They tick boxes on paper, rather than asking, "is the place humming?"

- the lack of credibility of some of the reviewers, largely because they had no primary teaching experience:

  One of the team was a secondary teacher who had only ever taught one subject, the other said she only did administrative things when they first came out, but 18 months later she's suddenly an expert. So how can they come out and criticise you? We still got a damn good review out of it - but I knew that I knew more about it than they did.

  They don't have the background, the sensitivity. Someone who arrives at this school with gold chains, gold wristwatch, gold earrings - the real yuppie look - shows they don't know how to relate to schools in low income areas.

Concerns about ERO emerged even where principals had found the ERO visit useful to prod their staff or board to make changes the principal had been encouraging in the face of resistance, or even where the ERO visit prompted a focus on systems and planning that was useful. They were also present where principals had in fact received advice from individual reviewers, as they were doing in one of the five locations of our interviews. The principals were grateful for this advice, but nonetheless saw it as unreflective of ERO's usual practice and emphasis.

Others had become either sceptical, or cynical about the value of ERO reviews.

They were a waste of time. We knew what we were like, and they sort of told us what we were like, and we thought we were doing a very good job, and they thought so too.

It would be much more useful if you could invite them in to do a report on an aspect of the school, for the board, not the public, so that if it was critical, people would accept it, they'd open up more. It's difficult too that they no longer report to the whole staff - because we all work together, the staff and board.

ERO dictates, they all have an idea of how schools ought to be doing something, whereas in our own system, we put more emphasis on curriculum, there is good feedback, but we're trying to do it with minimal paperwork.

12. SCHOOL ROLLS, REPUTATIONS, AND THE OPTIMUM SIZE

"Managing the roll is an important part of this job."

There have been previous periods in New Zealand education when school closures and amalgamations have been common: the history of New Zealand schools is not one of continual expansion or growth. Decentralization has included a greater emphasis on the efficiency of government spending on education, however, and thus greater attention to the costs of small schools, with encouragement of amalgamation or, for the very small schools, closure. Roll numbers trigger teaching staff numbers, and operational funding. On the face of it, the more students in a school, the better off it will be.

But in fact most of the principals interviewed were engaged in various juggling acts to keep their roll at an optimum size to fit the school's buildings and grounds; to keep class sizes reasonable; and to maintain the school's reputation.

> The community don't want the roll to increase, they don't want the school to lose its closeness, its family atmosphere.

> We've almost doubled our size in two years, through new subdivisions, and we've developed a good reputation, so some children are bussing in from outlying suburbs. We needed a certain amount of children to make the bus viable, but the community would like to keep the roll numbers down. They like the smallness of the school. And it's perfect at the moment because it's the lowest number possible to have three teachers.

> We actually grew last year, but we'd decided before then that we would not increase the roll, because we didn't have the grounds, and our size was a good thing, we didn't want to compromise it; and if we grew too much, we'd need more accommodation - but we couldn't guarantee the roll could be sustained.

Some found themselves caught between the board's desire for the school to stay a certain size and their own interest in reaching various thresholds for staffing.

> We've had an enrolment scheme the last few years – the board felt we were getting people from outside the district, and these children were not adding to the tone of the school, shall we say, and the children of the district were leaving because of it. Myself, I'd love the roll to increase because I might get a pay increase, become a non-teaching principal, but I just have to go with what the board wants.

Rural schools within easy distance of towns and cities became attractive to urban parents because, before the recent changes to staffing equalised ratios, rural schools were on a higher staffing ratio, and could offer smaller classes. Rural children also had a reputation for better behaviour. Small and medium sized schools in cities attracted parents on similar grounds. But while some growth was welcome, or acceptable, it would seem that concern develops in these

schools that the very features which attracted newcomers are in danger of being lost.

Schools which experience rapid growth also appear to reach a kind of saturation point, particularly if they have had to grapple with providing more classrooms or resources. Buildings may be provided by the Ministry of Education, but this requires skilful and persistent negotiation. Schools could not be assured that they would not have to meet the costs of providing extra accommodation themselves. Capital works also put pressure on the principal in terms of workload. Increased rolls without increased accommodation also increase class sizes.

One principal faced an interesting dilemma.

> We're still growing, and we'd like to stop. But we feel we need to keep the school zone the same size because we've fundraised the money for that school hall, the new information centre from parents within that zone - if you start shrinking that zone, how do those people feel after working so hard for the school and being shut out?

The other schools which were not actively marketing themselves were those with attractive student compositions: usually middle-class; sometimes Roman Catholic.

The schools which were actively marketing - or, as principals preferred - *promoting* - themselves were sometimes seeking increased numbers of students, often to refill classrooms left empty as a result of population changes in their area. Yet there were also tensions for these principals in their quest to increase rolls and thus, funding:

> The school's roll has grown rapidly, we've turned round its reputation for children behaving poorly, a tough school - our behaviour book has only 4 entries this year compared to pages in previous years - but there isn't enough money, we always have to go for second-best, or cut things short - though I'm getting the idea now that if we can't do it properly, we won't do it at all. We need 100 more children to make the school more viable - our basic running costs are consumed by the money we get - but if we get them, we could lose our atmosphere, we'll need to work really hard to keep the nice climate we've developed.

Such schools sometimes seek to attract more middle class students. Some principals felt that their school needed to establish itself as a successful school before it could gain a good reputation - but that it needed more middle-class, or successful, students, before it could become successful. Here is one principal grappling with this dilemma:

> We're developing a plan for positive publicity in our strategic plan, the board and staff together. We're revamping our literature, we're doing up the school entrance to make it more welcoming - though I'm not sure if we can fund that, and it's got a very low priority on the Ministry list. There's pressure from the Ministry to increase the roll because we've got empty classrooms when they're having to build at other schools. I think we can only turn it around by word of mouth, good teaching and learning, but when I take parents round to view the school, what they're doing it looking at the kids in the classroom, deciding whether or not my child will or will not fit in here. So it comes down to the kids in the classroom, are they the kind your child plays with?

Decentralization emphasized the importance of parental choice, in part as a mechanism

to improve the quality and diversity of schools. In a pure "choice" driven education system, the existence of empty classrooms in schools in areas where there are fewer children than formerly, or which have proved less popular than others, are a necessary (if sometimes expensive) side-effect. However, decentralization also emphasized efficiency (a prime reason for shifting most resource decisions to schools) - and thus the empty classrooms become a pressure on the school from the Ministry of Education, without, however, support from the Ministry to increase the school's roll. In such situations, principals can feel they are blamed for something which may be beyond their reach to remedy.

The principals interviewed were uneasy with the thought of "marketing" and competition as such. Where there were winners, there must be losers: and they did not want to feel responsible for another school's loss of students, staff, spirit. So their marketing activity was phrased in terms of information, publicity, and liaison.

Rolls were important to the principals interviewed. Many principals were faced with what can be thought of as positive dilemmas - dilemmas stemming from growth. Decentralization of New Zealand education coincided with a substantial spurt of growth in the primary-school aged population which is expected to peak in 2002. The principals of schools in the future may be more likely to face negative dilemmas associated with declining rolls.

13. ACHIEVEMENTS

Roll management also figured prominently in principals' achievements over the last few years - maintaining an optimum size, or increasing the roll, and, in cases of marked growth: *"this is the achievement, not just mine, but all of us - keeping our ethos of cooperation, teamwork, caring."*

The other kinds of achievement that principals talked of fell mainly into the realm of educational leadership, and their work with staff, children - and parents. Those who have undertaken capital works or moved into new technology mention new buildings, remodellings, or computers. Few mentioned the work associated with administrative tasks, "the housework" of their role. However, coming to grips with that as well as the role of educational leader was a significant achievement for several new principals.

> Nobody else really comprehends what you do, and I feel guilty about that, because I probably didn't support the past principal, or understand as much. I think we've ended up with a happy school environment when the school could have gone down the gurgler - not just me by myself, but everybody working together.

Asked what they would have liked to do in the past two years but could not, matters associated with educational leadership - or the reduction of demands from administration - were foremost. Quite a few would have liked to increase the pace of change - but in their own schools, not from changes made by government agencies! Their desire for a faster pace may reflect the fact that they are the ones in the school with the clearest picture of the total school, and the ones who have given most thought to what could be done.

> If you want sustained change, you need to go at a pace where people have ownership of it, which is sometimes slower than I would like.

> I would like quicker progress on some programmes that worked well, but the staff were under pressure from the curriculum documents - I didn't even open the English document for six months because the staff had had enough.

The dependency of the principal on others also emerged with those who found their boards to have different priorities than their own.

> I'd like to get a strategic plan in place, a long-term plan, but the board keeping tyring to push extra things on you, like developing an exercise trail, a native trees area. Their perception is if the school is beautiful then it's successful.

> I'd like to buy more resources in science and maths. But the parents' fundraising group, who decide how to spend the money, they may prefer a playground. It's the job of the principal to give them advice, not make the decision for them.

> I would have liked a programme for abled kids, in their strength areas, including music, sport, but the board wanted to make it available to every kid, so it became full of fish-hooks, and I never got it off the ground.

Some were frustrated by the lack of funding to sustain their innovations.

We paid for individual tuition twice a week for a number of children. If we could have kept it up, I could have guaranteed that no child leaving this school would be reading below their chronological age. That's a big frustration for me, we're told that schools aren't performing, but I know why it's not, we don't have the funding to complete the cycle. There are some children who are not group learners, they're not classroom learners, they need individual attention to bring them up to their potential. I don't have the funding to do that.

14. WHAT DO PRINCIPALS ENJOY ABOUT THEIR ROLE?

Good staff, good children, a good community: these form the trinity of principals' enjoyment of their work. What does goodness mean in this context?

Principals who mentioned the children at their school described them as *"open and natural"*, *"unspoilt"*, or *"easy to manage"*.

Staff were a positive aspect of their work if they worked together, supported one another and the principal, were keen, energetic, and good at their work.

Some principals saw their communities in terms of the support they gave to the school; others enjoyed their sense of the school being part of the local community, and of their role as principal of the school in forming community.

> Working with people – the staff, parents, community, the parish community, the PTA, the board – there's a shared rhythm to it, there's a real sense of a community growing stronger.

> Being in the community, being part of it. Schools have a role in pastoral care.

Principals also took pride in their achievements, including maintaining existing quality of their school, and in having a continuity of staff and community, as well as bringing about change.

New principals particularly enjoyed being in charge, being the school leader:

> I can take control now, I'm in charge, which is challenging, but I'm not in the position of having to nudge the principal to take action, I don't have to try to get change in an underhand way.

The variety of their work was also a source of stimulation for principals.

> I enjoy the thinkthink solvesolve planplan.

> It's never dull, even if it's hard.

15. THE DRAWBACKS OF THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Although principals are in control of their schools, they often feel they cannot control their own time: the demands on them are relentless. The cost is borne by their own families, and their own personal lives. Weekends were rarely their own; holidays often found them at the school, or doing school work at home. Principals talked of different measures they took to try to contain their workloads, but nonetheless these were only partially successful - whether or not they were experienced, new to principalship, whether or not the school had a good or poor reputation. They often live with the unease of not being able to attend to everything that should be done, not feeling expert enough in all the different aspects of their work (which often involve hands-on solutions, particularly for property), and of never being able to say that something is completed.

> Friday afternoon when the toilet was blocked and I couldn't get it to unblock. The frustration of trying to do about 75 things all on the same day when you know you've only got room for 15 things, that's the biggest negative thing. I've tried to cut out the things that are not absolutely essential to the running of this school. But as a teaching principal it keeps going right through the year, there is no time to yourself, no time to unwind.

> We've a new baby, and I've got no time to be with the baby. No time for my personal life. I reckon with the hours I work I get about $10 an hour. And I buy equipment for the school out of that. I'm finding it hard. Nothing's ever really finished, I'm finding it hard to be creative, to have fun, so much of it is drudgery.

> Parents have an expectation if you're a non-teaching principal that you're available all the time. They're unhappy if you're not in the school when they pass by. The other day I went home at 3 to work, and told my staff to say I was simply unavailable, because if they knew I'd gone home to work, they would ring me there, and I actually got a couple of hours uninterrupted time, got something done that I've been trying to get at for the last two weeks, and just haven't been able to. But I felt so much guilt walking out at 3pm.

> That's my biggest area of discontent, never being able to take time off. With a staff this size, there are 30 chances that at any one time someone will be having a personal crisis, so we try to anticipate, to defuse, to not allow these things to upset the whole equilibrium of the place. At the moment, for example, there's one teacher who's put a couple of parents badly offside, and I'm trying to defuse, to contain that situation.

> Since I've become a non-teaching principal my family life has improved, I've got time to reflect, I don't work 60-70 hours a week - I'm no longer just like a fly flying around in a jar.

> I want to actually start enjoying life. I feel the last ten years have been consumed by education night and day, with the changes and what was expected of us.

Current workload was the main drawback to the role of the primary principal. The thought that this workload would continue, without prospects for change was also a source of concern, as we shall discuss in more detail in the next section.

Parents whose expectations of the school were too high, or who might undercut the

reputation of a school by talking to others in a community rather than bringing their complaint to the school were another drawback. The school's reputation was a concern for principals with falling or fragile rolls.

Some principals felt isolated in their attempts to improve children's learning or home situations, and cited other government services' heavy workloads and their increasing unavailability (e.g. visiting teachers, resource teachers, health workers, the Children's and Young Persons' service, and the police).

16. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Only 16 percent of the principals in the 1996 NZCER national survey expected to remain at their present school in five years time. Thirty percent anticipated moving on to another school. Seven percent were thinking of taking a break from teaching. Thirteen percent would probably retire, and fourteen percent were thinking of changing careers.

Twenty percent were unsure, possibly a reflection of the lack of options they feel for further movement. For more experienced principals in particular, decentralization has meant the closing of opportunities to move on from schools to other educational work. The new government agencies are not attractive because their activities are perceived by principals as bureaucratic or ideological rather than oriented towards serving schools. Before decentralization, there were natural routes into the inspectorship, or areas of the Department of Education concerned with curriculum.

The average age of the principals in the 1996 NZCER national survey was 47 years. Several of the principals interviewed commented that though they thought they should move on, both for themselves and their schools, they were likely to stay at their school for want of other options within education, and because of the difficulty in making career changes at their age, unless they had managed to find the capital to underpin self-employment. They know all too well from their own experience of managing limited school budgets that few full-time educational consultancies are viable.

The stress[9] of maintaining the weight of the principal's workload - the hours, the continual demands from different quarters, and the sense of responsibility for things which are not in the final analysis under the control of the principal - came clearly through in the individual interviews. Older principals wondered where they could go; younger principals talked of moving out of education, or sideways, and sometimes downwards in salary terms, to advisory or specialist work (such as reading recovery training).

As we saw in the brief outline of research on the historical role of principals, some of these pressures existed before decentralization. What has changed is the intensification of the workload, the onus on the principal to maintain or achieve satisfactory roll size, resourcing, and reputation, combined with the lack of other options within education, and the feeling that boards of trustees prefer to appoint younger people.

> I can't do this for the rest of my life. You have to give so much of yourself. I can't do it long term.

> I can't sustain this vitality for another 17 years. I'm tired now. The rate of change is much faster, I have to keep reading, studying, the children deserve high quality - but I'm at the stage where I don't want to spend every weekend in study. There's no career structure now. No early retirement scheme - I have a friend, in his late fifties, he's past it, the school's falling apart, but he has nowhere to go.

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9 A recent article in the *Times Educational Supplement* notes the finding of a "leading industrial psychologist', Cary Cooper, that `teachers face as much stress in their jobs as policemen, prison officers and ambulance staff." (17 January 1997, p.11)

I'll be at a bigger school or out of teaching. I've been shortlisted for a G5 job, but if I got it - if I got the top job in the top school before I was 40 years old, what would I do for the next 25 years?

I'll be retired (at 50). If I'm not, I will have lost my sense of humour, from the pressure, the stress, from continually being accountable, having no buffer zones - the sense that everything's your fault.

It's very difficult to move out of a school in decline, so the school is a millstone for the principal. I'll probably be here. There's work to be done, I like the community.

I'll be 50 by then, too late to change. If the inspectorate existed I'd be there. Luckily there's challenge and variety, and I can't stagnate here.

I'll probably still be here. It's one of the problems of the present system, you get stuck in a school. It's not healthy for the school and person to stay too long. My age would go against me in job applications. You could transfer in the old system, but now there's no national scheme. There's nowhere for me to go to put my expertise back into the system.

Sabbaticals, revisiting the need for school support, offering something like the former inspectorate's role of advice, liaison, and support for principal and school development, and secondment were suggestions made to ensure ways of using principals rather than using them up. Early retirement was suggested as an option for those who found themselves used up.

At present these suggestions for individual, school, and system revitalization could not be met within individual schools' government funding.

17. MUTUAL SUPPORT AS A KEY ASPECT OF THE PRIMARY PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Professional development for their own role appears to be playing a smaller role in principals' workload. In the 1996 NZCER national survey, 77 percent of principals estimated it took less than 10 percent of their time, compared to 34 percent in the 1993 NZCER national survey.

Much of principals' current professional development for their role is met from operational grants, and their own pockets. Ministry of Education contracts are also significant.

Their own time is crucial, since a prime source of their professional development is their contact with other principals. This support for one another is now part of the role of many primary principals.

Most principals in the 1996 NZCER national survey had five different forms of contact with other principals: 90 percent were members of their local principals' association, 72 percent attended cluster meetings, 71 percent had informal contacts,[10] and 57 percent mentioned the Principals Federation. A quarter were involved with the NZEI Principals Group. Three-quarters of the principals found this gave them enough contact with their colleagues.

In the interviews it was clear that individual contacts with other principals were significant for principals, particularly those who were new principals, or new to an area. In areas where there was competition for students, principals might have more contact with principals from other areas than those close by. Contacts in other areas came from previous principalship, national Ministry of Education contracts, such as the reflective principal or school development courses, or from national conferences of principals' groups.

Some cluster groups met monthly; most met only a few times a year. Several principals felt that the advisors or facilitators who organized them helped make them useful (and took one demand off principals).

> We get together once a term with the rural advisor. It's very valuable, we look at new developments in schools, we chat about various problems, we moan and groan - and look at new things.

> We have a good support group here, we meet regularly. I think such groups have grown in the last 5 years because there's more need, and we're striking similar problems.

> Everyone's going through the same motions in every school, but you don't actually know that unless you're out there connecting with people to get support, get ideas, and share.

> One woman principal preferred her cluster group to the local principals' association:

> I don't go to principals' meetings, they're male dominated, and I don't fit in. I don't think it

[10] Including their own spouses, if the number of principals married to other principals in our interview sample is any guide! (4 out of 26)

makes a difference if you can hit with a cricket bat.'

Some principals found themselves more isolated than they cared to be because of their own school's demands; others because of the competitive nature of their area.

Several also observed gaps in a system which relies primarily now on individual contacts and networks, and on individual principals' time.

> When you're down, on a slippery slope, groups don't work because you're too vulnerable, so it's better to have the [Principals' Federation] helpline and one to one contact.

> Schools are more isolated now. One of the good things that happened in the past was that needs were identified by people other than the individual concerned. We wouldn't wait for children to identify all their needs.

> I don't have the physical time now to go into another school and help to any great extent. I rely now on a couple of my colleagues whom I respect. I don't know what's happening in other schools because I've lost touch, I'm no longer out and about, I probably only have contact now with the successful schools.

18. MORALE AND TURNOVER - SOME STATISTICS

In the NZCER 1996 national survey 14 percent of the principals responding said their morale was high, and 36 percent described it as good. A third of the principals said it was `not bad', 12 percent described it as low, and two percent as very low.

Morale tended to be higher for principals of large schools (69 percent saying it was high or good, compared to 46 percent for others); and for urban principals (64 percent compared to 41 percent of rural principals, and 50 percent of principals in provincial cities and small towns).

Only nine percent of teaching principals described their morale as high compared with 21 percent of non-teaching principals.

Twenty-three percent of principals in schools with SES deciles of 9 or 10 described their morale as high compared to 12 percent of principals in lower decile schools.

Twenty-three percent of the principals aged less than 30 also described their morale as low, compared to 13 percent for older principals.

Only five percent of the principals who described their morale as not bad, low, or very low intended to remain in their school over the next 5 years - compared to 42 percent whose morale was high, and 23 percent whose morale was good. They were also twice as likely as others to be thinking of making a career change.

The principals least likely to report high or good morale had 3-5 years experience as a principal (33 percent, compared to 68 percent of those with more than 15 years experience, 49 percent of those with 6-15 years experience, and 57 percent of those with less than 2 years experience).

Principals who had been at their school for 3-5 years (not always the same as those with 3-5 years total experience) also reported lower morale than others : 36 percent good-high, compared with 57 percent of those in their current positions for more than 11 years, 66 percent of those in their current positions for 6 to 10 years, but somewhat closer to the 51 percent of those in their first two years at their current school (a larger group than those who are new to principalship).

Teaching principals were more likely than non-teaching principals to express frustration with their workload, to feel they had too little time to provide educational leadership, and to feel time was against them in trying to make changes. They were more likely to have made changes to their assessment practices and recording than the bigger schools too, which can create considerably more work. While 37 percent of teaching principals in the Principals' Federation survey on ERO conducted in late 1996 had no staff losses, they were more likely to lose higher proportions of their staff than non-teaching principals: 24 percent lost more than 40 percent in the previous 12 months compared to 8 percent of non- teaching principals. Such staff turnover makes for considerable demands on principals. Teaching principals were less proactive than their non-teaching colleagues in arguing the school's case for funding or property with the Ministry of Education, politicians, or the media.

On the other hand, teaching principals were less likely than non-teaching principals to have felt the need to promote their own school as a result of other schools' activities or a sense of competition, they had experienced fewer changes of ethnic composition (though not

socio-economic composition), less difficulty with student behaviour, and less need to persuade staff or board of trustees before taking initiatives.

Age played some part in the principals' expectations of their position in 5 years time. Those over 50 were the group most likely to expect to remain at their present school, or retire, and the least likely to expect to move on to another school (13 percent).

The comparatively younger age profile of teaching principals (average age 44 compared to 50 for non-teaching principals; an average of 7 years experience as principals compared to 10.6 for non-teaching principals, and an average length of 5 years in their current position compared to 6 for teaching principals) shows in their expectations of their situation in 5 years time: only 8 percent expected to be at the same school, compared to 26 percent of non-teaching principals, and 37 percent expected to be moving to another school, compared to 21 percent of non-teaching principals. However, though their average age was lower than non-teaching principals, a sizeable proportion of teaching principals were aged 50 or more. More teaching principals would retire, 18 percent compared to 9 percent of non-teaching principals. But there were similar proportions for career changes or taking a break from teaching.

Women were slightly less likely than men to think about changing careers (9 percent compared with 17 percent). They are more likely to be appointed to rural schools, (though many do not come from rural schools) integrated schools, and to G1 positions). Seventy percent of the women in the 1996 NZCER national survey were teaching principals, compared with 48 percent of the men.

An analysis of material from the Principals' Federation survey of newly appointed principals described in Appendix 1 indicates that vacancies for principals are more likely to occur in rural schools, schools with rolls under 100 (teaching principals), and in certain regions; that few appointments are being made of people in their fifties; and that 44 percent of newly appointed principals are aged under 40, compared to 17 percent in the 1996 NZCER national survey of schools. A swifter rise through school grades, or the sidestepping of grades they would formerly have had to pass through, is occurring for some principals. This has implications for the support they need as new principals, and to continue as principals.

The low morale amongst young principals also needs attention.

The 1996 NZCER national survey asked teachers whether they were interested in becoming principals: 9 percent were; a third of these were deputy principals, a third assistant principals or senior teachers, and a third scale A teachers. Half the deputy principals in the survey were not interested in becoming principals, and a further quarter were unsure. This lack of interest in the principalship amongst deputy principals is striking; the lack of interest is even higher among assistant principals and senior teachers. The interview and survey data indicate that principals' workloads are a major deterrent.

There were no significant differences related to the age of the teacher, or their gender.

The Principals' Federation survey of newly appointed principals also asked them why the position had become vacant. A quarter of the principals gave reasons.

Table 5

Reasons for Principal Vacancies

	n=176 %
Promotion	44
Change of direction within education	30
Change of direction -outside education	24
Conflict	24
Retirement - age	22
Retirement - illness	14

Retirement for age reasons was more likely to occur in grade 4 and 5 schools. Rural schools were more likely than urban schools to lose principals because of promotion, changes of direction both within and beyond education, and because of conflict. Principals of integrated schools were more likely than their colleagues in state schools to make a change of direction within education, but less likely to be promoted.

The NZCER national survey also contains information indicating the turnover rate amongst principals. In the seven years between 1989, the first year of the reform, and 1996, 76 percent of schools changed their principal. Some schools had several changes of principal in that time. Between 1989 and 1991, 38 percent of the principals changed; between 1991 and 1993, 42 percent, and between 1993 and 1996, 47 percent. The last period covered three years rather than two, so it may be that there has been a slight decline in turnover. Given the material we have on principal morale and workload, this may well indicate difficulties in changing schools or finding satisfactory options which allow principals to remain in education, working with teachers and children in situations with less day to day pressure.

19. AT THE CENTRE OF THE WEB - OR THE MEAT IN THE SANDWICH?

It is clear from comparing what principals say about their roles in 1996 to previous accounts that their roles have changed with decentralization. The main changes are:

- An increase in personnel, property, public relations, and roll management, and, in some communities particularly, pastoral work.

- A shift in the way some administrative work is viewed. Administrative systems, budget allocation and resource allocation are now seen as work which can support educational leadership, if there is sufficient administrative support from other staff and board of trustees.

- A shift in the emphasis in educational leadership away from direct teaching, and, sometimes, working alongside teachers, to a role of providing direction, encouragement, and integration of the different aspects of a school's work. This now involves working with parents, as trustees, as well as teachers and other school staff.

- A marked increase in workload, and an increase in its liability to fragmentation and interruption.

While some of these changes have given many principals new sources of satisfaction and stimulation, they have also created problems. They have made the roles of principals in some situations more difficult than others. Teaching principals, rural principals, those in small schools, those in low-income areas, and those in areas of population change or competition between schools face greater challenges than others.

Teacher turnover and shortages of teachers and relief teachers, accommodation gaps, shortfalls between government funding and school costs, and the decay of many of the country's school buildings are additional sources of responsibility and workload for many principals. These are sources which are beyond their individual – and collective – control. The gap between official views of the principal's role, and the day to day actuality is also an irritant.

Finally, the workload takes its toll, rather more than it did before decentralization, but without offering options for use of the expertise developed as a principal that the education system used to provide, and be nourished by.

What can be done? Within the current context of decentralization, here are some possibilities:

- Increase operational grant funding for administration for grade 1-3 schools and schools in low income areas, basing the amount on a representative sample of actual workloads of principals, their support staff, and their boards of trustees; (cluster employment is unlikely to work so long as there is competition encouraged between schools);

- Slow the pace of curriculum, assessment, and administrative change; and include principals in the development of policy, curriculum and assessment so that implementation is more effective, and makes more efficient use of their time;

- Engage in medium and long term central planning to ensure sufficient supplies of good quality teachers, relief teachers, and prospective principals;

- Analyse the property management role of principals, to see whether some external support can be provided;

- Provide schools with greater support from other government services;

- Give more support to new principals;

- Develop a new role of principal-advisor, to provide advice and support for principals on an ongoing basis, and to provide a positive career option for successful principals;

- Increase operational funding or establish a national funding pool to cover options such as sabbaticals and early retirement;

Finally, it would help if

- School support was accorded greater priority by the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office.

APPENDIX 1

Who Are The New Principals?

The Principals' Federation has contacted all schools which have advertised for a new principal since early 1995, asking newly appointed principals for their previous school's name, their own age and gender, the number of applications for principalships they have made since January 1993, the number of principals positions they have been shortlisted for in the same period, and, since the reasons for the vacancy they have filled. NZCER has subsequently put this data onto computer, and analysed the material for information on appointment trends. The analysis covers replies to the federation's survey from 1994 to October 1996. There were 689 replies.

Comparing the school characteristics of these replies with the Ministry of Education's database as at 1 July 1996, we find that they are largely representative of all primary and intermediate schools, with these exceptions:

over-representation among the appointing schools[11] of:

- rural schools,
- schools with rolls under 100 (all teaching principalships); and
- schools in the Waikato, Otago, and Canterbury Ministry of Education regions.

and correspondingly **under-representation of:**

- schools in major cities,
- schools with rolls over 100, particularly those with rolls of 300 or more; and also
- schools in the Bay of Plenty, Manawatu-Wanganui, Wellington, and Taranaki Ministry of Education regions.

The average age of the principals appointed was 40.7 years, some seven years younger than the average age of principals overall. However, 44 percent of the newly appointed principals were aged 40 years or younger, more than twice the 17 percent of the principals in the NZCER 1996 national survey who were less than 40 years old. The figures for those in their forties are comparable, but while 38 percent of principals in the NZCER 1996 national survey were aged 50 or more, only 11 percent of the newly appointed principals were in this age group.

These differences in the profiles of newly appointed principals and the overall profile supports the belief expressed in interviews that it was much harder for older principals to win new posts. The difference cannot be ascribed solely to the smaller number of the traditionally most prestigious schools (and highly paid principalships) available, (the G5s), since many

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[11] These patterns are based on the replies; no analysis was done of the schools whose newly appointed principals did not reply. Thus these patterns may not be fully representative.

principals do not aspire to those schools, and the national survey data show 41 percent of principals of this age-group in schools of less than 200 students.

There was no significant difference between the gender profile of new appointments and principals overall.

However, the NZCER national survey data showed that women were more likely to have become principals in the last 5 years, 54 percent of the female principals, compared to 23 percent of male principals.

Trends

Decentralization appears to have given some principals a swifter rise through the grades of principalship than they could have expected, particularly for at grade 4 and 5 schools, though most appointments are still drawing from either the immediate grade below, or the same grade.

At least a quarter of the principals appointed to grade 1 schools were stepping into their first principalship, seven percent of those appointed to grade 2 schools, and one percent of those appointed to grade 3 schools. Unfortunately the survey did not ask new principals whether they had previously been principals, so it is not clear how many of the new appointments are promotions from senior staff positions. It appears, however, as if most promotions from teacher to principal are occurring in smaller schools, offering teaching principalships.

Just under half the principals appointed to Grade 1 schools were new principals, or from other Grade 1 schools. But the rest came from larger schools, including Grade 4 and 5.

By contrast:

- 39 percent of the Grade 2 appointments were from Grade 1 schools, and 26 percent from other grade 2 schools;

- 39 percent of Grade 3 appointments came from grade 2 schools, 13 percent from grade 1 schools, and 19 percent from the same grade;

- at grade 4, 43 percent came from grade 3, 20 percent from the same grade, 21 percent from grade 2, and 1 percent from grade 1;

- at grade 5, 44 percent came from grade 4, 29 percent from grade 3, 4 percent from grade 2, and 13 percent from the same grade.

The average number of applications made since January 1993, a period varying between two and three and a half years, was 4.3. Women averaged one less application than men.

The average number of times this group had been shortlisted for positions was 2.4. Women had a slightly lower average of times of being shortlisted, which may reflect their lower number of applications.

It is, however, difficult to tell from this data on applications and shortlisting whether or not it is more difficult for women to be appointed principals, of the schools they would like

to head.

The groups most likely to have made only one application - presumably the one which was successful and included them in the survey - were those under 30 years of age (34 percent, compared to 19 percent of those aged 30-40, 25 percent of those in their forties, and 15 percent of those in their fifties), and women (29 percent compared with 18 percent of men): the groups most likely to be appointed to small rural schools. Successful first applications were more likely to be in rural schools (33 percent, compared to an average of 24 percent for higher graded schools). Thus it is not clear whether their success with their first application is due to the school characteristics, and this group's willingness to apply for jobs which were the first rung on the ladder.

Age

People in their forties were the modal group for every grade - rising from 29 percent of appointments made to grade 1 schools to 69 percent of those made in grade 5 schools.

Not surprisingly, this age group is the most evenly distributed amongst the different grades, as the next table shows.

Table A1

Principals' Age and Grade of School

Age Group School Grade	less than 30 n = 53 %	30-35 n = 104 %	36-40 n = 147 %	41-50 n = 295 %	over 50 n = 79 %
G1	66	38	20	19	35
G2	21	34	37	22	20
G3	9	20	25	23	13
G4	—	7	13	20	16
G5	—	—	5	13	13

Eighty-six percent of the principals under 30 were appointed to rural schools, and 67 percent of those aged 30-35, 47 percent of those 36-40. Thus 55 percent of the appointments to rural schools are made from teachers aged less than 40. In the major cities, appointments from this age group are only 30 percent.

Schools with SES deciles of 7 or more were half as likely to appoint principals aged over 50 than other schools.

Schools with more than 15 percent Maori enrolment were slightly more likely to appoint people over 50 than those with less Maori enrolment.

Gender

Women were twice as likely as men to be appointed to G1 schools (42 percent compared to 18 percent), as likely as men to be appointed to grade 2 schools, but half as likely as men to be appointed to higher grade schools. Fifty-nine percent of the women appointed went to rural schools, compared to 42 percent of the men; and 27 percent went to major city schools compared to 38 percent of the men. It is interesting that the women did not all come from rural schools - only 39 percent did; and 41 percent had taught in major cities.
Men and women were appointed equally in provincial cities and small towns.

Women formed 14 percent of the appointments to intermediate schools, were under-represented in appointments to contributing schools, and over-represented in appointments to full primary schools.

Seventeen percent of the women appointed, however, were in their fifties, compared to eight percent of the men. Most of the appointments in this age-group were in full primaries.

Integrated schools were more likely to appoint women than state schools: 57 percent compared to 38 percent. These women had also come from integrated schools.

Thus it appears that some women are having to move to obtain principalships; that they fare better in the integrated schools, but that in both integrated and state schools they are striking a "glass ceiling" in terms of promotion to non-teaching principalships in the larger schools.

The 1996 NZCER national survey found that 70 percent of the women principals responding had teaching principalships, slightly higher than the 59 percent of the male principals responding.

APPENDIX 2

Interview Schedule for Study of Role of the Primary school Principal in 1996

In this interview I'd like to hear how you see your work as principal, what's important for you in your work, including your relations with the school board of trustees, workload, and so on.

1 How would you describe yourself - as a school manager or an educational leader?
Why?

What role do you have in curriculum?

What role do you have in staff development?

What practical support do you get in your work from other people in the school?

Is there any part of your work which you feel someone else could do?

- what are the things stopping that?

Who do you have most to do with on a day to day basis - support staff, senior management, "ordinary" teachers?

How much work do you have to do to service your board?

2 The Board:

What's the turnover on your board - did the last election give you a brand-new set of people?

What's the board like at making decisions?

What are your relations with them like?

How would you sum up their role?

Do they see it the same way?

3 Who do you feel accountable to?
Why?

4 Do you think the Ministry of Education is doing a good job for schools?

5 Do you think ERO is useful for schools?

6 Have there been any changes in the school roll over the last few years?

7 Is there any pressure on you to increase roll numbers? Market the school?
Who from; why

8 What do you identify as your main achievements over the last 2 years?

9 Is there anything you would have liked to be able to do - change, introduce, but weren't able to?

What stopped it?

10 What are the positive things about being the principal of this school?

- what do you enjoy most about your job?

11 What are the negative things about being the principal of this school?

- what do you enjoy least about your job?
- how could that be improved?

12 What contact do you have with people outside the school – the principals, teachers, colleges of education etc

13 What professional development have you had in the last couple of years?

Was it useful?
Why/why not?

14 Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

15 Will the principal of this school in 5 years time have much the same kind of role as you?

If not, what will be different?

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