THE ROLE OF NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL BOARDS

IN 1997

Report to the New Zealand School Trustees' Association

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

SUMMARY

The New Zealand School Trustees' Association commissioned this national survey of all its members to find out how New Zealand school boards of trustees see their role now, after eight years experience of school-based management. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research designed the questionnaire, and analysed the results. Responses were received from 1130 boards (48 percent of NZSTA membership), and provided a soundly based representation of all schools. Among the major findings are:

■ Most boards are confident about their work. They feel highly supported by school staff and NZSTA, and supported by parents and the local community, but not by government.

■ The main benefits of school-based management are identified by school boards as being able to meet community needs, having community involvement, setting the school's own budget priorities, and making their own decisions.

■ The main drawbacks of school-based management are identified by school boards as the workload and responsibilities undertaken by boards, trustees' lack of relevant knowledge for their work, lack of money, and the time needed to undertake board work. Sixty-two percent of the boards thought that too much time was expected of boards.

■ Most school boards use NZSTA's personnel/industrial services, and want them maintained. They also consider it essential that these services are extended to provide a general support service which is free to boards.

■ Seventy percent of boards have delegated some employer responsibilities to their principals, though they have usually kept the final decisionmaking power for themselves. Only 4 percent of boards wished to make any (further) delegations.

■ Ten percent of the boards responding were bulk funded schools, and 3 percent were considering taking up this option. To get the majority of boards to join them would need improved funding and guarantees that this funding would remain in place and increase with need, that adequate minimum staff:student ratios could be maintained, that responsibility for property would remain with the government, and that national collective contracts would remain in place.

■ Only 7 percent of boards thought that the school principal rather than the board should have the responsibility of making all the employment related decisions for a school.

■ Only 4 percent of boards are interested in taking on the responsibility for industrial negotiations with their staff (school-site bargaining).

■ Changes to the role of boards are given the lowest priority of the issues which boards would like government to address. Top of the list comes the need to address the adequacy of the operational grant, followed by the quality of teaching staff, teacher and principal workloads, and teacher supply.

THE ROLE OF NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL BOARDS IN 1997

1. INTRODUCTION

Boards of trustees have now been in place for eight years at each New Zealand state school. Next year will see the fourth election of boards. Decentralization of most decisions and responsibilities to school level is now taken for granted in the New Zealand school system, and works smoothly most of the time, in most schools. But research evidence also shows mounting concern about the level of resourcing available to school boards to carry out their work, the high workloads which have come with decentralization, and a continuing tension about bulk funding and further decentralization.[1] The Education Accord has recommended that some aspects of decentralization should be reviewed so that adjustments can be made in response to these and other continuing concerns.

 This independent[2] survey was commissioned from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) to provide a representative picture of how boards around the country currently see their role, how they see themselves in relation to their school staff, central government education agencies, and the government itself. The findings show that on the one hand, boards show a quiet confidence and determination to do what they can for their schools. On the other, there are clear signs of strain and frustration.

 The survey was sent to all members of NZSTA (88 percent of the country's state and integrated school boards) in April 1997. Responses were received from 1130 boards,[3] 48 percent of the NZSTA membership. This is a larger response than NZSTA has received from its usual canvassing of members' opinions, and indicates that the issues covered by the survey were seen as important by school boards.

 The responses were largely representative of the national school characteristics profile, allowing us to have confidence that the findings presented here do represent school boards as a whole. The survey responses are slightly under-representative of lowest decile schools and schools with less than 8 percent Maori enrolment on their roll. A full comparison of survey and national school characteristics is given in Appendix 1. The questionnaire itself can be found in Appendix 2.

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[1] NZCER has carried out a regular national survey of trustees, principals, teachers and parents at primary schools since 1989; 1993 results are contained in *Self-Managing Schools in New Zealand: the Fifth Year*, by the author; and 1996 results will be published in Spring 1997. Preliminary results which show the trends referred to here were given in a recent paper to the American Educational Research Association conference ("Do New Bottles Alter the Taste of the Wine? Long Term Trends in Systemic School-Site Management in New Zealand").

[2] The interpretation and analysis in this report are the researcher's own, and do not necessarily reflect NZSTA policy.

[3] Some boards sent several responses. Where this happened, only one response was randomly chosen.

This report gives the results from the survey, and also any statistically significant[4] differences between different kinds of schools. The characteristics we looked at were: school type[5]; location; whether the school was state or integrated; whether it was centrally resourced, bulk funded, or considering bulk funding; the proportion of Maori enrolment in the school, and the school's Ministry of Education socio-economic decile ranking. [6]

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[4] We report only those differences which have a statistical significance of less than 5 percent: in other words, they have a 95 percent probability of **not** occurring because of chance.

[5] Since school size overlaps considerably with school type, we looked only at school type.

[6] The socio-economic decile grouping of a school and the proportion of Maori enrolment have emerged in previous research as prime indicators of resources available to schools. Decile rankings go from 1(lowest) to 10 (highest). In this report, 'lowest socio-economic deciles' refers to schools with a ranking of 1-3. In referring to proportions of Maori enrolment, 'low' Maori enrolment refers to schools with less than 8 percent Maori enrolment, low-mid, 8-15 percent, mid-high, 15-29 percent, and high, 30 percent or more.

2. HOW BOARDS ARE DOING

Twenty-nine percent of the boards reported that they were on top of their task, and another 52 percent described themselves as making steady progress. Sixteen percent described themselves as coping, and two percent as struggling. These figures are almost identical to those given in NZCER's national survey of trustees in 1996 (forthcoming), and compare favourably with the results of NZCER's 1993 national survey, which showed 23 percent of trustees judging their board as coping, and four percent as struggling. Thus there appears to have been some growth in confidence amongst boards over the last four years.

Secondary school and contributing school boards were most likely to report that they were on top of their task. Full primary boards were twice as likely as others to describe themselves as coping or struggling. Urban school boards were less likely to describe themselves as (simply) coping, as were bulk funded schools (6 percent compared to 17 percent of centrally funded schools, and 21 percent of those considering bulk funding).

Confidence was also high amongst schools with low proportions of Maori enrolment (39 percent on top of task, compared to 21 percent of schools with high proportions of Maori enrolment). Boards of socio-economic decile 9-10 schools (the highest ranking) were most likely to report they were on top of their task (44 percent).

We asked boards to identify the **key** ingredients that enable things to go well for them. All but one of these aspects are internal to the school, and the emphasis is on teamwork.

Table 1

Key Ingredients in a good Working Board of Trustees

Ingredient	(N=1130) %
Teamwork, good communication, good working relations	78
Relationship between board and staff	31
Quality of the principal	25
Commitment of trustees on board	20
Quality of trustees on board	20
Community support	19
Relationship between board and principal	16
Experienced trustees/stable board	9
Funding or school's ability to fundraise	8
Clear delineation of roles	5

Other aspects mentioned by between 1 - 2 percent of the boards responding were: planning and review, support from the Ministry of Education, support from NZSTA, the quality of administrative staff, good information systems, a Christian attitude, determination, cynicism, and a good sense of humour.

Some differences emerged between schools: secondary school boards mentioned community support less than others (7 percent), and rural boards made more mention of community support (26 percent). Urban boards were more interested than others in board stability. Integrated school boards made more mention of the quality of trustees (32 percent

compared to 18 percent of state school boards). Mention of the quality of trustees on a board increased as the proportion of Maori enrolment in a school decreased. Mention of community support and the quality of trustees on the board increased as the school socio-economic decile increased.

Challenges for School Boards

When we asked boards to identify the three aspects of their work which provided them with the most challenge, both external and internal factors were mentioned.

Table 2

The Aspects of Board Work which Provide the Most Challenge for Boards

Aspect of Board Work	(N = 1130) %
Finances/budgeting	55
Keeping up with legislation, changes to requirements of boards	45
Amount of work and time	25
Paperwork	25
Personnel/industrial issues	18
Staffing shortages	13
Property	13
Board turnover, training needs, relationships	6
Discipline in school	6
Community - relationships, communication, support	6
Ministry of Education - communication	4
School roll	3
Curriculum	2
Planning	2

Other aspects mentioned were: providing for special needs children, the Education Review Office, gauging the school's effectiveness, school transport, school isolation, the competitive aspects of school-site management, and dealing with payroll issues.

Special school boards were most likely to mention funding (84 percent). Paperwork, making appointments and finding teachers, the time required, and keeping up with legislation were identified more by primary boards than secondary boards. Secondary school boards were more concerned with personnel and industrial issues, and school discipline. Rural school boards were least likely to mention discipline. Boards of the lowest socio-economic decile schools and those of the high Maori enrolment schools were more likely than others to mention staffing shortages.

4

Adequacy of Support for Boards

Some of these themes resurfaced more strongly when we asked the boards to tell us whether the support they got for their work from six sources was adequate. The graph below shows that the sources of support can be divided into three groups in terms of their adequacy: the professionals (teachers and NZSTA), the school community, and government.

Figure 1

Board Views of the Adequacy of Support for their Role from Other Sources

Adequate Support for Board of Trustees' Role
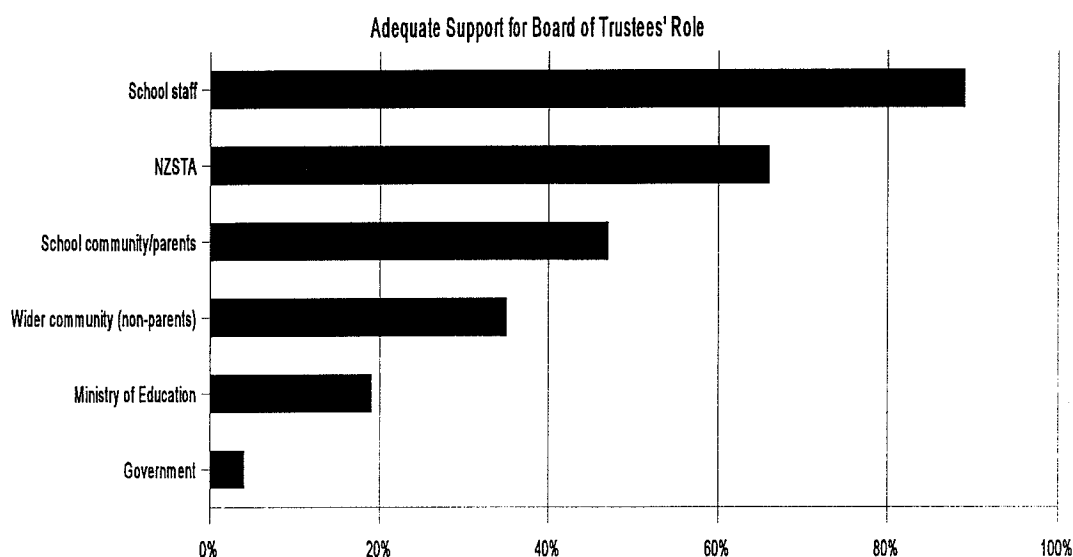
Special schools were most likely to report that Government support and NZSTA support for their work varied. Secondary school boards were also more likely to feel that NZSTA support varied. They and area school boards reported twice as much variation in support from school staff as did primary and intermediate school boards. Area school boards reported the highest variation in wider community support. Rural school boards reported higher levels of community and wider community support, and support from NZSTA.

Bulk funded schools felt they got more support from NZSTA than others (78 percent compared to 65 percent of centrally funded schools, and 58 percent of those considering bulk funding). Boards considering bulk funding felt least supported by government (79 percent), or by their school staff (71 percent).

Integrated schools also felt they received more support from NZSTA (80 percent compared to 65 percent for state schools), and from their school community (60 percent compared to 45 percent for state schools).

The higher the proportion of Maori enrolment, the lower was the support from the school staff and wider community. The higher the school socio-economic decile, the more likely was the board to feel supported by its school community (rising from 29 percent of the lowest socio-economic decile schools to 68 percent of the highest decile schools). Support from the wider community also varied in relation to socio-economic decile, with only 23 percent of the lowest socio-economic decile school boards reporting wider community support, compared to 40 percent for other schools. NZSTA support was also perceived to vary: from 60 percent

5

of lowest socio-economic decile school boards to 71 percent of the highest socio-economic decile school boards.

A slightly different overall picture emerged when we asked a related question about how well boards felt their work was recognized and understood. Government again emerged as the body boards felt showed the least recognition for and understanding of their work, but the Ministry of Education was here shown in a more sympathetic light. NZSTA and school staff remained the groups who showed the deepest understanding of board work.

Figure 2
Board Ratings of Others' Recognition and Understanding of their Role

Board Role is Recognised and Understood
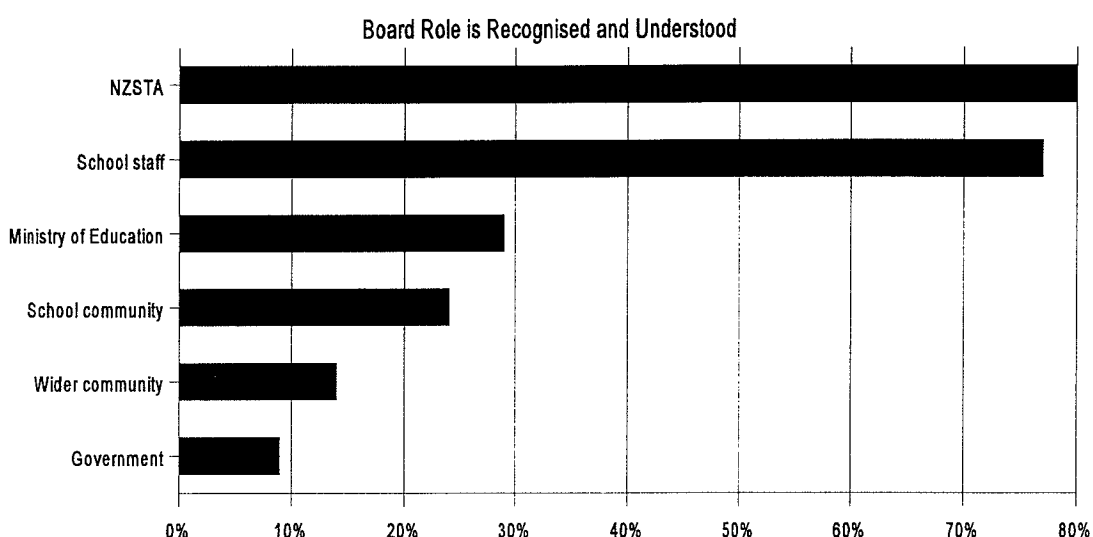
Special school boards were again more likely to feel that NZSTA understanding of their work varied, and, with intermediate school boards, to feel less recognition from the wider community. Secondary school boards were least likely to feel their staff understood and recognized their work (53 percent). Rural school boards were most likely to feel their staff recognized and understood their work (89 percent).

Bulk funded schools were most likely to feel recognized and understood by the Ministry of Education (39 percent, compared to 28 percent of centrally resourced schools and 24 percent of those considering bulk funding). Integrated schools also felt more recognized and understood by the Ministry of Education (39 percent compared with 28 percent for state schools), and less likely to feel that the government did not recognize or understand their work (52 percent compared to 66 percent of state schools).

Schools with the lowest Maori enrolment were most likely to feel their school community recognized and understood their work. The lowest socio-economic decile school boards felt less recognition and understanding from their school community (18 percent compared to 28 percent of highest socio-economic decile school boards), and from NZSTA (74 percent compared to 85 percent for boards from the highest socio-economic decile schools).

6

What kind of support are boards looking for? An increase in government funding was the leading suggestion (38 percent). Improved training was suggested by 17 percent (more by socio-economic decile 1-6 school boards than higher socio-economic decile school boards, and by twice as many high Maori enrolment schools as low Maori enrolment schools), help in meeting legal requirements or designing policies by 12 percent, and improving the quality of government departments by 10 percent. Between 4 - 7 percent each suggested: reducing trustee workloads, more government acknowledgement of the boards' contribution to education, or the value of education, more pay for trustees, and more support from the community. All but one of these suggestions are linked to government resourcing for education.

The majority of boards also want ERO to play a more supportive role.

Table 3
Board Views of Preferable Outcomes from the Forthcoming Review of ERO

	%
ERO should play a more supportive role for boards	80
ERO should play a more supportive role for teaching staff	74
ERO reviews should not be released to the media	39
The review format should be changed	27
ERO role should go to the Ministry of Education	15
Continuation of status quo	13
More frequent reviews	6
Less frequent reviews	5

What kind of recognition are boards seeking? Higher pay rates for trustees (27 percent), an acknowledgement of their workload (18 percent), improvement in the quality of government and Ministry of Education communication with boards (11 percent), a greater effort by government to understand the reality of board and school work (9 percent), and (the constant refrain throughout this survey), an unspecified "more money" were the main suggestions. Others were for improved communication between the board and its community, for "support" (unspecified) and for more board input into government policy and decisions. Again, these suggestions hinge on government resourcing - but also on government being willing to listen to boards and acknowledge that the reality of their situation may differ from its own picture of schools (or how they should be).

Use of Specialist Support from NZSTA

As the next figure shows, most boards have used the NZSTA personnel/industrial support service, support its continuation, and would like it expanded to provide a general support service for boards, which they could access without cost.

Figure 3
Board Views on NZSTA Support Services for Boards
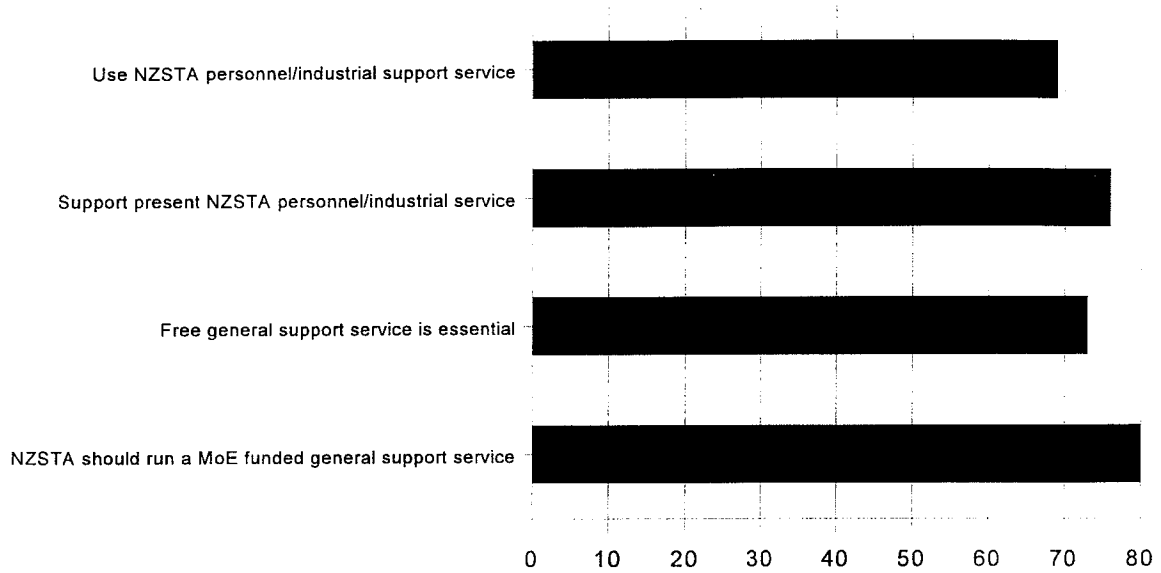
Seven percent of the boards would like a free personnel/industrial service, but provided by another organization. Fifteen percent would prefer to have the money for this service included in operational grants.

Estimates for the money which would need to be added to operational grants to purchase specialist personnel/industrial support were only ventured by a fifth to a quarter of the respondents. These varied widely - from $30 to $2 million (average $17,354), if the existing industrial relations framework (including national collective contracts) remained, and from $10 to $2 million (average $24,610) if boards were responsible for direct salary negotiation.

Estimates of the time this money would buy ranged just as widely - from 1 hour to 900 hours (average 57 hours) if the existing industrial relations framework remained in place, and from 2 hours to 5,400 (average 134 hours) if it did not.

Most boards felt that their ability to purchase personnel/industrial advice from NZSTA if it was no longer free would depend (presumably on resourcing). Twelve percent would do so in any event, and 11 percent would not.

Most boards are interested in NZSTA extending (or re-extending) its services to boards. A free general support service for boards was regarded as essential by 73 percent of the boards, and as desirable by a further 23 percent. Only 2 percent of boards did not see the need for such a support service. Rural schools were most likely to see a general support service as essential (78 percent), and boards in small cities least likely (61 percent).

Eighty percent of the boards thought NZSTA should seek a contract with the Ministry of Education to run such a service alongside its existing personnel/industrial advice service; 13 percent were unsure, and only 5 percent were not in favour of this move.

Boards were also keen to have NZSTA enter into negotiations to develop a common copyright license that they could then pay as a single licence fee with their NZSTA subscription: 65 percent in favour, 23 percent unsure, and only 7 percent against.

8

3. WORKLOAD, SKILLS AND SIZE

In describing the challenges to their role, boards described funding, keeping up with legislation, their industrial/personnel role, and workload. The next section looks at the results from specific questions about these aspects of board work.

Workload

Only 32 percent of the boards judged that the time they were spending on their work was "just right". Sixty-two percent thought that too much was expected of them. Only 1 percent thought that too little was expected in terms of the time they needed to give board work.

Comments made here mainly centred around the way the workload could fluctuate (11 percent), frustration that the board was working hard for little recognition (10 percent), or the high workloads involved for the board chairperson (8 percent), officeholders (4-5 percent), or principal (4 percent).

Secondary boards were most likely to feel that the time they spent on their work was about right (43 percent), and rural boards, least likely (24 percent). Integrated school boards were more likely to feel the time spent on board work was about right (42 percent compared to 32 percent of state school boards). Fewer boards in the lowest socio-economic decile schools felt the time spent was about right (25 percent), as did those from high Maori enrolment schools (26 percent).

Expertise and Skills

Most boards were confident about having educational expertise on their board, and, to a slightly lesser extent, property maintenance and repair skills, financial skills, and human resources or personnel skills. Even in these areas, however, they would like more experience and skills. They were less confident about having legal and industrial relations expertise.

Table 4
Experience and Skills on Boards

Area	Have %	Need %
Educational	88	18
Property maintenance & repair	78	22
Financial	73	29
Human resources/personnel	70	31
Industrial relations	36	45
Legal	19	57

Secondary school boards were twice as likely as others to report that they had legal expertise amongst their members; they had higher rates of industrial relations expertise (49 percent), and financial skills (88 percent). Special school boards also had a higher rate of legal expertise on board (26 percent). Not surprisingly given the higher level of financial skills amongst their members, secondary school boards were less interested than others in obtaining more financial

9

expertise amongst members – and this was the only area where secondary boards showed less interest than other schools in increasing expertise. Full primary school boards were the keenest to have more financial expertise.

Rural school boards had around half the legal and industrial relations skills amongst their members as schools in other locations, and fewer human resources/personnel skills.

Bulk funded school boards showed less interest in obtaining further skills on their board in the areas of property maintenance, financial skills, and human resources. However, they showed the same interest as other boards in industrial relations and legal expertise.

Integrated school boards reported more experience and skills than did state school boards in three areas: legal, industrial relations, and financial. However, they showed just as much interest as state schools in increasing their expertise in these three areas, though they were less interested in obtaining property skills or human resources/personnel skills.

The higher the socio-economic decile of a school, the more likely it was that the board reported skills and expertise in all areas but educational and industrial relations. Conversely, the lower the school socio-economic decile, the more interest there was in obtaining skills and expertise - in all areas. A similar pattern was evident for the overlapping characteristic of proportion of Maori enrolment.

Board Size, and Use of Non-Parents

Most of the boards did not see increasing board size as the solution to a need for particular schools: only 14 percent would like to increase board size. Two percent would like to decrease the board size (probably due to the difficulty of recruiting new trustees in some areas of the country), 6 percent were unsure, and 77 percent were happy to remain with the status quo. The boards most interested in increasing their size were the lowest socio-economic decile schools, schools with mid-high or high Maori enrolment, intermediate and special schools.

Integrated school boards were less interested in having more trustees, and more interested in having fewer members (5 percent compared to 1 percent of state school boards).

Boards do not see a solution in their desire for more skills in recruiting more non-parents: 15 percent would like to see more trustees on their board who are not parents of children at the school. Twenty percent were not sure, and 62 percent did not want to see more non-parents on their board. One exception is the lowest socio-economic decile schools: 21 percent of their boards would like to see more non-parents on the board (twice the proportion of other schools). Interest in having more non-parents also rose with the proportion of Maori enrolment (from 8 percent of boards of low Maori enrolment to 22 percent of high Maori enrolment schools). Integrated school boards, which usually have more non-parents on their boards than others, were more opposed to increasing their number of non-parents (81 percent compared to 60 percent of state school boards).

Rotation or Elections?

Most boards operate with a full slate of trustees. Yet encouraging people to stand as trustees has become more time-consuming. Rotation of trustees rather than a general board election has been suggested as one solution. Sixty-seven percent of the boards supported rotation rather than general elections. Twenty-two-percent did not, and 10 percent were unsure. Should elections continue, many trustees (63 percent) would like to stick with the status quo, of an election every three years. Nineteen percent suggested every two years, six percent would prefer every fourth year, and three percent an annual election.

Bulk funded school boards showed the greatest interest in two-yearly elections; integrated schools less interest than state schools, and area schools were keenest on rotation.

Changes to Board Responsibilities

There was more interest in making changes to the present responsibilities (34 percent), though 42 percent were comfortable with the status quo, and another 15 percent were unsure about making (further) changes. State school boards showed more interest in making changes (32 percent compared to 22 percent of integrated school boards).

Very few boards wanted more autonomy (3 percent). Most of the comments made here return to the themes which emerged in asking boards about the challenges they met in their work: a desire for government to recognize that board work is undertaken voluntarily, yet has legal and industrial responsibilities which are demanding for boards to fulfill - particularly if they lack the money to adequately fulfill these responsibilities. Boards also expressed the view that government was not meeting its responsibilities to schools.

4. DECENTRALIZATION AND DELEGATION - WHERE ARE THE LIMITS?

Benefits and Drawbacks of Decentralization

The next table shows board views of the benefits coming from devolution.

Table 5

Board Views of the Benefits of Devolution and School Self-Management

Benefit	%
School can meet community needs	49
Community involvement	34
School can set its own priorities within its budget	25
School can make its own decisions	21
School can appoint its own staff	15
More flexibility	8
School staff more accountable	3
More economical	3

There were some differences between schools which reflect differences which existed prior to the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms which created boards. Secondary school boards, for example, already made their own staff appointments, and so secondary boards were less likely to mention this benefit. However, full primary school boards and area school boards were half as likely as contributing schools and intermediates to mention staff appointments - perhaps because they have a higher rate of principal turnover[7], and are situated in sometimes hard to staff rural areas. Full primary schools are also often smaller than contributing primary schools. Rural school boards were less likely to mention the benefit of making their own decisions, or increased accountability for school staff. State school boards mentioned the ability to set their own budget priorities more than integrated school boards (25 percent compared to 15 percent).

However, the benefits have not come freely. The next table sets out the main drawbacks of devolution.

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[7] 46 percent of full primary boards and 41 percent of area school boards said they had appointed a principal in the last 2 years, compared with 27 percent of contributing schools, 30 percent of intermediates, and 36 percent of secondary schools.

Table 6
Board Views of the Drawbacks of Devolution and School Self-management

Drawback	%
Board workload/responsibilities	41
Trustees' lack of relevant knowledge	31
Lack of money	28
Time demands of Board work	18
Government imposes on Boards/does not sufficiently consult with Boards	11
High workload for school staff	8
Lack of support for work	6
Unnecessary 'reinvention of the wheel' work	6

Primary boards were more concerned than secondary and intermediate boards about workload, and the time required of them. Secondary school boards were more concerned that they were reinventing the wheel, and less concerned about the workload for school staff. Concern at the board time required rose from 13 percent of the lowest socio-economic decile school boards to 23 percent of the highest socio-economic decile school boards. Boards of high Maori enrolment schools were most concerned about trustees' lack of relevant knowledge.

Delegation of Board Responsibilities to Principals

Many boards (70 percent) have delegated personnel and legislative compliance work to their principals, as the next table shows. On average, boards have delegated 4 responsibility areas.

Table 7
Board Employer Responsibilities Delegated to the Principal

Responsibility	
Performance appraisal of staff	53
Staff discipline	46
Appointment of non-teaching staff	43
Appointment of teaching staff	42
Employment contracts with non-teaching staff	39
Compliance with Occupational Health and Safety(OSH) legislation	32
Handling of personal grievances	32
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) responsibilities	30
Appointment of senior teaching staff	28

There was a higher level of delegation to the principal in secondary schools in these areas: appointment of teaching staff (62 percent), appointment of non-teaching staff (54 percent), employment contracts with non-teaching staff (46 percent), handling of personal grievances (40 percent), EEO (46 percent), and OSH (47 percent). However, secondary school boards did not delegate appointment of senior teaching staff more than their primary school counterparts.

Rural schools were least likely to delegate OSH responsibilities to the principal.

In the context of the issue of whether any further shifts of responsibilities should be made to the school level, it is of particular note that bulk funded school boards did not have a higher level of delegation to their principal compared to centrally resourced schools.

Most boards were comfortable with their level of delegation. Only 4 percent wanted to delegate further authority to their principal, with another 14 percent unsure. There were no differences related to school characteristics: secondary schools and bulk funded schools showed no more interest in delegating further authority than others. Rural schools were least interested in further delegation (2 percent). The main comment made here was that principals were already overworked. Some boards noted that they relied on their principal to guide them in these aspects.

However, while many boards have made some delegations of responsibility to their principal, few have given the principal the final decision making powers.

Table 8
Final Decisionmaking on Personnel, Industrial and Legal Matters

|	Final decision by board	Final decision varies	Final decision by principal/ board committee
Appointment of senior teaching staff	67	6	5
Compliance with Occupational Health & Safety legislation	66	20	5
EEO responsibilities	63	17	9
Appointment of teaching staff	62	12	16
Handling of personal grievances	57	23	4
Employment contracts with non-teaching staff	52	17	22
Appointment of non-teaching staff	50	18	24
Staff discipline	41	36	14
Performance appraisal of staff	12	16	66

Rural school boards were least likely to delegate final decisionmaking to the principal for the appointment of staff (including senior teaching staff), staff performance appraisal and compliance with OSH legislation.

Thirty-six percent of the schools had appointed a principal in the last two years. The final decision on this appointment was made by either the Board, or a board committee. Two-thirds of the appointing boards had advice from another principal outside the school, with 22 percent of the appointing boards using an educational consultant, and 3 percent each using a personnel firm or other trustees. Only 14 percent of the appointing boards had not used any external advice. Half the rural school boards had had to make principal appointments in the last two years, compared to 31 percent of those in small towns, 29 percent of those in small cities, and 27 percent of those in urban areas.

Should Principals become the School Employers?

The next figure shows that few boards thought that principals should take over from boards the responsibility of making all employment related decisions for the school (7 percent). The majority were opposed to this shift (85 percent).

Figure 4
Boards Views on Principals having responsibility for all Employment Decisions
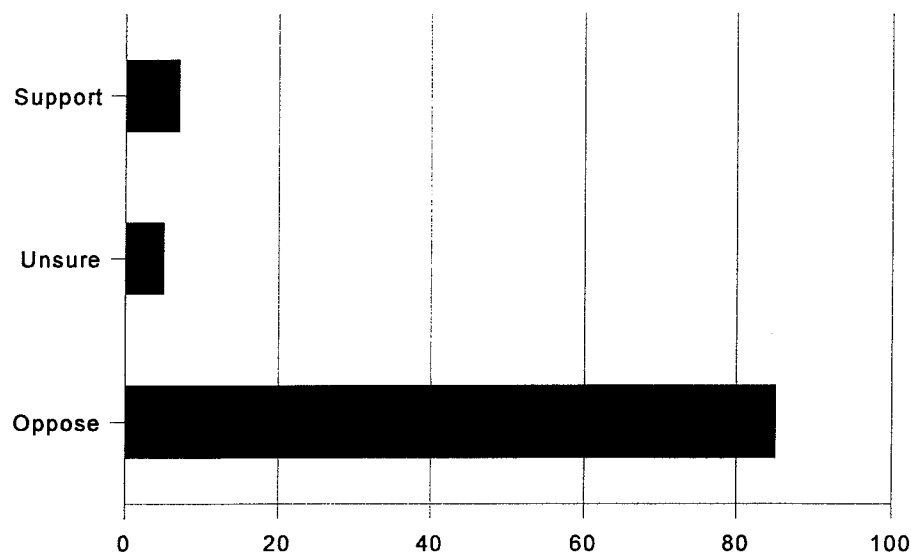
Secondary school boards showed more interest in handing on this responsibility (14 percent), as did urban school boards (9 percent). Bulk funded school boards and those considering bulk funding showed no more interest in giving the principal full responsibility than centrally resourced school boards.

The main comment made here was that the boards operated as teams, and that it was important for such decisions to be made within the team, as a group. Nine percent thought such a move would only be acceptable if the board retained final responsibility. Three percent noted that their principal had more professional expertise than the board in these matters. Wariness was also expressed that the principal could ignore community needs if he or she were given these powers.

Bulk Funding

Ten percent of the schools responding were bulk funded/directly resourced schools, and another 3 percent of the boards said they were considering this option. Flexibility in decision making and the fact that this option would bring the school more money were the main reasons for choosing this option (75 percent and 63 percent respectively). Boards were also interested in having more autonomy (28 percent), and some hoped by choosing this option to avoid the loss of staff (8 percent).

Intermediate schools were most likely to be considering shifting to bulk funding (12 percent, compared to 5 percent of secondary schools, 4 percent of contributing schools, and 2 percent of full primary schools).[8]

The majority of schools have chosen to remain centrally resourced. The table below sets out their (multiple) reasons. They arise from the resourcing difficulties many schools already

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[8] The survey figures for schools already bulk funded show 24 percent of area schools, 16 percent of intermediates, 13 percent of secondary schools, and 9 percent each of full and contributing primary schools.

experience; the team or partnership approach which is important to boards, and which emerges in their identification of the key ingredients of their work going well; the existing demands of their work, and their sense of distance from, if not distrust of, government.

Table 9
Reasons Boards give for their Choice to Remain Centrally Resourced

Reason	%
Concern that funding levels would reduce over time	65
Concern to maintain good relations with staff	58
Extra workload for board	55
School would lose money over time	54
Concern that national system of education would be eroded	46
Concern that it would lead to site-based bargaining	42
Extra workload for school staff	42
Concern that it would lead to boards having total responsibility for property	29
Lack of community support for bulk funding/direct resourcing	21

Primary school boards were more concerned about extra workload than secondary schools, and this may reflect the higher administrative funding received by secondary schools. Concern about a shift to site-based bargaining, having to take total responsibility for school property, and the extra workload that would be created for staff rose as the proportion of Māori enrolment in the school rose.

The school characteristic where there was greatest variation in reasons why schools chose to remain centrally resourced was the school socio-economic decile. Concern about site-based bargaining, having total responsibility for school property, extra staff workload, the erosion of a national system of education, and the reporting of a lack of support for bulk funding in the community were most strongly expressed by boards of the lowest socio-economic decile schools, and least by the highest socio-economic decile school boards. Yet highest socio-economic decile school boards were just as clear as others that extra resources and safeguards would be needed to change their minds.

Extra resources and guarantees related to staffing, capital works, and the retention of collective contracts would lead many boards to reconsider direct resourcing more favourably.

Table 10
Factors needed to make boards reconsider direct resourcing more favourably

Factor	%
Funding levels could be guaranteed to remain stable or increase with need	62
The school would receive substantially more money	57
Adequate minimum staff: student ratios could be guaranteed	56
Responsibility for funding capital works remained with government	55
National collective contracts guaranteed to remain in place	49

The main additional comments made here expressed distrust of the government, or inability to see any benefits arising from direct resourcing.

School-Site Bargaining

Uneasiness about school-site bargaining between boards and employees emerged in the replies about direct resourcing. A direct question about whether the board wished to have responsibility for directly negotiating salaries and employment conditions with its teaching staff showed even stronger opposition to taking on this additional responsibility: 4 percent were in favour, 80 percent opposed, and 14 percent felt it depended - on such aspects as the funding provided to cover the new responsibility, the collective contract remaining in place, and staff attitudes.

Secondary school boards showed more interest in school -site bargaining (6 percent), and were twice as likely as primary boards to say that their willingness to take responsibility for bargaining would depend on other factors as identified above. Here there was a difference related to whether or not a school was bulk funded: 7 percent of bulk funded school boards would like to see site-based bargaining, as would 24 percent of those boards considering bulk funding, compared to 3 percent of centrally resourced school boards.

Most of the comments added here addressed the board's voluntary status, its lack of expertise in this area, and the negative effects site-based bargaining would have on staff or the relations between board and staff.

School Board Priorities for Government Action

What are the issues that trustees feel government should be giving priority to? Not surprisingly, resources are the most important. Changes to the role of boards are least important.

Figure 5
Board Ranking of the Priority Government should give School Issues

17
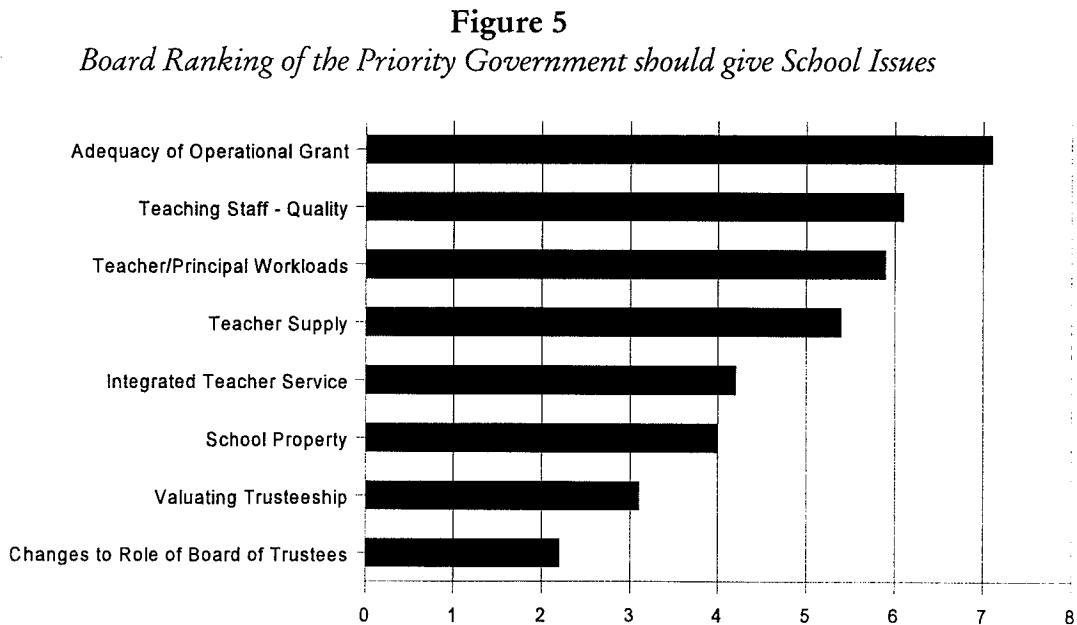
5. CONCLUSION

The results of this survey are consistent with previous research into the impact of the decentralization of education administration. They show that the prime issues which emerged some years ago still loom large for the people in schools who must make the reforms work - though in many cases these are not the same people who took part in the initial changeover to school-based governance.

It is now very clear that school boards need more resourcing to carry out their work, including the expansion of the NZSTA services used by most boards. It is striking that although boards of schools in better-off communities report more community support and more expertise on their boards, nonetheless they share in the general desire for better resourcing. If these boards have chosen bulk-funding, the (initial) additional money this option brings remains a prime reason.

The teamwork, partnership and mutual support between boards and school staff stand in stark contrast to their estrangement from central government and, to a lesser extent, the Ministry of Education. Some of this is due to the continuing ache of under-resourcing; but some of it is due to the continuing interest at government level in extending bulk funding, despite the lack of interest of the majority of school boards. The education reforms made much of the principle that those closest to an area affected by a decision should make the decisions. Yet boards' decisions related to how they see their role, and the responsibilities which they are confident from their experience can be delegated to the school level, seem to be ignored by those in central government.

Most boards would need increased resourcing and a number of guarantees related to staffing, property responsibility, and the continuation of national collective contracts to give bulk funding a more favourable reconsideration. Even the boards of bulk funded schools do not judge it appropriate that further responsibility and work is delegated to the school level – either to themselves, or from boards to principals.

In the light of the evidence contained in this report, it is clear that any further delegations are unwanted by school boards, and are the lowest item in their list of priorities for education that they identify as needing Government action to address. What boards do identify as the priorities for Government action are funding, teacher quality and supply, and teacher and principal workloads.

APPENDIX 1

Representativeness of Survey Responses

	Survey (N=1130) %	Ministry of Education 1996 National figures (N=2675) %
Location		
Main urban	44	48
Rural	36	35
Secondary urban	7	7
Minor urban	13	11
School Type		
Contributing primary	35	34
Full primary	45	45
Intermediate	4	5
Year 7-15	2	2
Year 9-15 (secondary)	9	9
Year 9-15 (attached intermediate)	1	1
Area school	2	2
School Ownership		
State	90	89
Integrated	9	11
School Socioeconomic Decile		
1-3	26	30
4-6	32	30
7-8	22	20
9-10	21	20
Proportion of Maori Enrolment		
less than 8 percent	26	32
8-14 percent	21	18
15-29 percent	27	23
30 percent or more	26	27

1997 SURVEY OF BOARDS OF TRUSTEES, THEIR ROLE, AND VIEWS ON CURRENT POLICY ISSUES

1. What's the name of your school? _____

[The New Zealand Council for Educational Research has been contracted by NZSTA to carry out this survey. Only their researchers will see the completed questionnaires. Your school's confidentiality is guaranteed.
We ask for your school name simply so that we can see if there are particular issues that concern different types of school e.g. primary and secondary schools, rural and urban]

2. How would you sum up your Board's overall situation at present?

❏ a) on top of our task   ❏ b) making steady progress   ❏ c) coping

❏ d) struggling   ❏ e) other (please describe)

_____

3. What are the 3 key ingredients that enable things to go well for your Board?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

4. What are the 3 aspects of your work which provide you with the most challenge?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

5. Do you feel you have enough **support** for your work as a Board from these sources:

a) Ministry of Education   b) Government

❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies   ❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies

c) NZ School Trustees Association   d) School community/parents

❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies   ❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies

e) Wider community (non-parents)   f) school staff

❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies   ❏ yes   ❏ no   ❏ varies

6. If you feel your Board needs more support, what suggestions do you have to give you the support you need?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

7. Do you feel the work of your Board is recognized and understood by these sources:

a) Ministry of Education

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

b) Government

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

c) NZ School Trustees Association

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

d) School community/parents

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

e) Wider community (non-parents)

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

f) school staff

❑ yes   ❑ no   ❑ varies

8. If you feel more recognition could be given to your Board, what suggestions do you have?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

9. Do you have experience and skill on your board in these areas:
[Please tick all the boxes that apply]

❑ a) property maintenance and repair   ❑ b) legal   ❑ c) financial

❑ d) human resources/personnel   ❑ e) industrial relations   ❑ f) educational

10. Do you think your Board needs (more) experience or skills amongst its members in any of these areas?
[Please tick all the boxes that apply]

❑ a) property maintenance and repair   ❑ b) legal   ❑ c) financial

❑ d) human resources/personnel   ❑ e) industrial relations   ❑ f) educational
other *[please describe]*

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

2

11. Would you like to see changes in the size of your board?

☐ a) Yes, more trustees   ☐ b) yes, fewer trustees
☐ c) no   ☐ d) not sure

12. Would you like to see more trustees who aren't parents on your board?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) not sure

13. Do you think trustees should be elected in rotation rather than having a general election for the whole board?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) not sure

14. How often do you think Board elections should occur?

☐ a) every 3 years, as now ☐ b) every 4 years ☐ c) every 2 years ☐ d) every year
☐ e) not sure   ☐ f) other

15. Is the overall amount of time your board spends on its work:

☐ a) about right ☐ b) too much expected of board   ☐ c) too little expected of board
(Comment)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

16. Are there any changes your Board would like to make to the present **responsibilities** of the board of trustees?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) not sure

If **yes, or not sure**, please describe:

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

3

17. What do you think are the **main benefits** of devolution and school self-management?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

_____

18. What do you think are the **main drawbacks** of devolution and school self-management?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

_____

19. Have you appointed a principal in the last 2 years?

❏ a) yes   ❏ b) no

20. If **yes**, who made the final decision?

❏ a) Board (including present principal)   ❏ b) Board (without present principal)
❏ c) Board committee

21. Did you have advice or help from outside the school in making the appointment?

❏ a) yes, another principal   ❏ b) yes, personnel firm ❏ c) yes, other trustee/s
❏ d) yes, educational consultant ❏ e) no
❏ f) other (please describe)

22. Which of the following board responsibilities as an employer have you delegated to your principal?
[please tick all that apply]

☐ *a) appointment of senior teaching staff*

Does your board make the final decision on these appointments?

☐ ai) yes   ☐ aii) varies   ☐ aiii) no

☐ *b) appointment of teaching staff*

Does your board make the final decision on these appointments?

☐ bi) yes   ☐ bii) varies   ☐ biii) no

☐ *c) appointment of non-teaching (including caretakers and cleaners) staff*

Does your board make the final decision on these appointments?

☐ ci) yes   ☐ cii) varies   ☐ ciii) no

☐ *d) employment contracts with non-teaching staff*

Does your board make the final decision on these contracts?

☐ di) yes   ☐ dii) varies   ☐ diii) no

☐ *e) staff discipline*

Does your board make the final decision here?

☐ ei) yes   ☐ eii) varies   ☐ eiii) no

☐ *f) performance appraisal of staff*

Does your board make the final decision on staff appraisals?

☐ fi) yes   ☐ fii) varies   ☐ fiii) no

❏ *g) handling of personal grievances*

Does your board make the final decision on these?

❏ gi) yes   ❏ gii) varies   ❏ giii) no

❏ *h) EEO responsibilities*

Does your board make the final decision on these?

❏ hi) yes   ❏ hii) varies   ❏ hiii) no

❏ *i) compliance with Occupational Safety and health legislation*

Does your board make the final decision here?

❏ ii) yes   ❏ iii) varies   ❏ iiii) no

❏ j) other (please describe)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

23. Are there any (further) delegations of authority which you would like to be able to make to your principal?

❏ a) yes   ❏ b) no   ❏ c) not sure

If **yes, or not sure,** please describe:

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

24. Do you think the principal of your school rather than the board should be responsible for making all employment related decisions at the school?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) not sure

(Comment)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

25. If **yes**, what role do you see your board then having in relation to the principal and the school?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

26. Is your school a bulk funded /directly-resourced school for teacher salaries?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) considering it

(If no, please go to Question 28)

27. If **yes, or you are considering it,** what is the **main** reason?

☐ a) more money for the school   ☐ b) more autonomy for the board

☐ c) more flexibility for the board   ☐ d) school facing loss of staff because of falling roll

☐ e) other (please describe)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

(Please go to question 30)

28. If **no**, what were the chief reasons you chose to remain centrally-resourced?

❏ a) school would lose money over time

❏ b) concern that funding levels would reduce over time

❏ c) concern that it would lead to site-based bargaining

❏ d) concern that it would lead to boards having total responsibility for property

❏ e) extra workload for board

❏ f) extra workload for school staff

❏ g) concern to maintain good relations with staff

❏ h) lack of community support for bulk funding/direct resourcing of teacher salaries

❏ i) concern that national system of education could be eroded

❏ j) other (please describe)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

29. Would your Board reconsider the direct-resourcing option more favourably if:
      [please tick all boxes that apply]

❏ a) the school would receive substantially more money

❏ b) funding levels could be guaranteed to remain stable or increase with need

❏ c) national collective contracts could be guaranteed to remain in place

❏ d) adequate minimum staff:student ratios could be guaranteed

❏ e) the responsibility for funding capital works remained with the government

❏ f) other

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

Comment

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

_____

30. Does your board wish to have responsibility for negotiating salaries and employment conditions directly with its teaching staff?

❏ a) yes　　　　　　❏ b) no　　　　　　❏ c) depends

Please give the reason/s:

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

31. Are there any changes you would make to the present level of support provided to trustees (including supply of Ministry of Education contracted specialist services delivered through NZSTA)?

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

32. Which option for access to specialist personnel/industrial support would your Board prefer?

❏ a) status quo - free service provided by NZSTA

❏ b) free service provided by an organization other than NZSTA

❏ c) no free national service, but money included in operational grant for boards to purchase own help as required.

33. Has your board used NZSTA's personnel/industrial support services?

❏ a) yes　　　　　　❏ b) no　　　　　　❏ c) not sure

34. If there was no longer a free national service, how much money do you think would need to be added to your operational grant to purchase the costs of specialist personnel/industrial support:

a) within the existing industrial relations framework
(i.e. nationally negotiated collective staff contracts) $_____

b) how many hours of such support does this estimate cover? _____ hours

c) if Boards were responsible for direct salary negotiations with their staff $ _____

d) how many hours of such support does this estimate cover? _____ hours

35. If free specialist personnel/industrial support was no longer available from NZSTA, would your board purchase this advice from NZSTA?

☐ a) Yes   ☐ b) No   ☐ c) Depends

36. How important do you think it is that a free general support service for boards on issues other than industrial/personnel is available?

☐ a) Essential   ☐ b) Desirable   ☐ c) Not necessary

37. Do you think NZSTA should seek a contract with the Ministry of Education to provide a free general support service to boards to run alongside its personnel/industrial support service?

☐ a) yes   ☐ b) no   ☐ c) not sure

38. Please rank the following current issues for schools in order (1st, 2nd etc) of the priority you think they should be given by government:

☐ a) adequacy of operational grant

☐ b) teacher supply

☐ c) quality of teaching staff

☐ d) school property

☐ e) teacher/principal workloads

☐ f) integrated primary and secondary teaching service (`Pay parity')

☐ g) changes to board of trustees' role

☐ h) valuing trusteeship

☐ i) other (please describe)

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

39.If you would like to make any additional comments on the role of boards or any topical issues, please do so:

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

Finally, we would like to seek your views on two other matters:

40. The Education Review Office is to be reviewed shortly. What would your board like to see happen as a result of that review?

☐ a) continuation of status quo   ☐ b) change to review format

☐ c) less frequent reviews   ☐ d) more frequent reviews

☐ e) ERO to play a more supportive   ☐ f) ERO to play a more supportive role
    role for boards   for teaching staff

☐ g) reviews not to be released to media

☐ h) return of the role of ERO to Ministry of Education ☐ i) do not know

☐ j) other

_____ 1 2 3

_____ 4 5 6

_____ 7 8 9

_____

_____

41. To date there are 4 agencies offering copyright licenses to boards:
CLL, for the printed word; APRA, for music; AMCOS for printed music, and AVCS, for TV broadcast and cable programmes.

Would your Board like NZSTA to enter into negotiations to develop a common copyright license covering all 4 agencies, with a single annual license fee paid with the NZSTA subscription?

☐ a) Yes   ☐ b) No   ☐ c) Not sure

**Thank you very much for giving us your time.
Please mail back to NZCER by Friday 16 May 1997**