

Walking the Tightrope: the role of school leadership in the new climate of New Zealand education

Herbison Lecture
NZARE/AARE Conference
Deakin University
November 23, 1992

Noeline Alcorn
University of Auckland

Massive changes to the administration of New Zealand education were officially implemented on October 1, 1989. Ostensibly these reforms were to increase both efficiency and equity by abolishing layers of local bureaucracy and making each school self-managing, governed by an elected Board of parents. The Department of Education was replaced by a policy oriented Ministry and its inspectorial functions shifted to an independent Review Office charged to measure performance against the terms of school charters, or contracts between Boards of Trustees and the Ministry. The reforms were driven by contradictory impulses: left wing critiques of education based on theories of social reproduction, cultural capital and hegemony, underpinned by Marxist and critical theories; right wing critiques sharpened by a perceived fiscal crisis and led in New Zealand by the Treasury, based on theories of individual choice and a belief that the New Zealand educational system suffered from "provider capture". Ironically, both called for greater equity and community responsiveness though their interpretation of these terms and their methods for achieving them were very different. In addition to these theoretical positions, both heavily influenced by overseas research and analysis, there was a longstanding and deeply entrenched New Zealand view that schooling is not only a right of all citizens but a means of achieving greater equality. A series of reports and enquiries throughout the 1970's and 80's had called for greater community and parental involvement and consultation in educational decision making.

Background and Context to the Reforms

Since 1939 New Zealand education has officially given allegiance to a much quoted statement written for the Ministerial Annual Report by the man who went on to direct the system for the next 20 years, Dr C.E. Beeby. It reflected both his own background in the progressive theories of J.J. Findlay as moderated in New Zealand by Professor James Shelley and the strong socialist concerns of his Minister Peter Fraser. It was a reaction against the elitist view of education especially at secondary level which had prevailed until the election of the First Labour Government at the end of 1935. It reflects a holistic thinking about individual schooling needs

and is part of the post Depression establishment of the Welfare State in New Zealand. The statement reads in part:

The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers. (AJHR, E1, 1939)

From this distance it is easy to note the problematic nature of this statement but it reflected a genuine belief on the part of the reformers in the personal and social benefits of education and a desire to provide for equality of access to the basic stages at least. At secondary level it signalled a commitment to providing a more diverse curriculum to cater for a wide range of individual needs. As Beeby himself has noted (1986) the statement provided a sustaining myth for teachers and policy makers for

over 25 years. It also raised expectations that increased free access would continue, through decades in which more students enrolled in secondary and then tertiary studies, their numbers swelled even further by the post war baby boom which increased resourcing difficulties.

The statement was followed by major curricular changes during the 1940's, reforms that were professionally and centrally driven. Beeby's Department set up complex systems for consulting teachers on issues of curriculum reform and teaching methods and appointed advisers to help more conservative members of the profession adopt new attitudes. The abolition of the proficiency examination at the end of primary schooling in 1936 also allowed for greater professional autonomy. At the same time they tried to foster teacher professionalism by decreasing the reliance on the annual inspectorial grading. Professional leadership also came from the New Zealand Educational Institute, in particular through its monthly journal *National Education*., though its pages also revealed that many teachers still took a pragmatic and technicist approach, wishing for nothing better than clear guidelines for teaching rather than the exercise of professional judgement.

As a number of commentators (Shuker, 1987, Jones et al, 1990, Openshaw and McKenzie eds, 1987) have pointed out, the system developed in the Fraser-Beeby era was increasingly under attack by the 1970's. It faced challenges from several directions, in particular, the Maori community and the feminist lobby, both of which claimed it had served to marginalise and disadvantage significant groups of students. A massive community consultation process, the Education Development Conference, helped to raise community expectations about greater consultation and negotiation over the goals and purposes of schooling. Discontent was exacerbated by the economic setbacks caused by events like the oil shocks of the mid 70's, the gradual disappearance of traditional markets as Britain turned to Europe, and rising unemployment. By the mid eighties critics from right and left

were claiming that the goals of educational equality on which the system claimed to be based had not been met. Inevitably central government was blamed by pressure groups. In 1987, the Labour Government which had already revolutionised economic development through deregulation set up a Task Force, the Picot Committee, to review the administration of education. Its recommendations were largely accepted by the Government, published as *Tomorrow's Schools*, and implemented on October 1, 1989.

The political and economic context within which the Task Force worked and its recommendations implemented is important and significant. During the first term of the Labour Government, elected in 1984, there had been massive changes in official policies over the role of government, the beginning of a major shift in New Zealand from a welfare to a minimalist State, a glorification of individualism and enterprise as against collectivity, and a dramatic downsizing and restructuring of the Public Service. Several government departments were privatised or converted to State owned enterprises, driven primarily by a profit not a social need or service imperative. Schools which in the 70's had been urged to be caring and supportive were now urged to pursue achievement and efficiency as a means to increased equity as well as higher achievement.

There has been much comment on the wider aspects of the 1980 reforms (Codd et al, 1988, Access, 1988, Snook, 1989, Barrington, 1990, Lauder et al, 1988, Boston et al, 1988). In this paper I shall outline continuing concerns with the problematic nature of the administrative changes as they affect schools and their principals, in particular the emphasis on managerial efficiency and control as against professionalism. I shall go on to look briefly at alternative models of educational management and leadership, and to suggest possibilities for enhancing truly educational leadership within self-governing schools in their relations with government and local communities.

What is happening in New Zealand schools?

It is obvious that the role of principals is crucial in the move to school based management. Principals are the nexus between schools and parents., between staff and board, between school and outside agencies. Their role gives them shared responsibility for setting policy and determining school goals, but full responsibility for the successful implementation of these goals. They are urged to work collegially with staff while at the same time taking responsibility for appraisal as well as motivation and professional development. They are required to develop new skills in finance and property management while retaining their professional responsibility for curriculum and pedagogy within the school. Some of the tensions of the position are inherent in management and leadership roles but are exacerbated by the nature of schools as organisations and the current climate of control and accountability. They are at the centre of competing demands for accountability, and have to balance their commitment

to an ethic of caring against official demands for managerial efficiency. National confusion about educational aims, criticism of current practices, and rapid social and economic change have also added to the problems principals face.

Changes caused by the implementation of Tomorrow's Schools vastly increased the personal workload of most principals. Charter writing and the accompanying community consultation, increased paperwork, the requirement to provide written policy statements covering a range of issues within a short space of time, coping with responsibilities in hiring staff, servicing Boards of Trustees and financial management were all stressful and time-consuming. Once the changes were in place the workload could have been expected to stabilise. Evidence shows it has not. (Wylie, 1992). A recent informal survey in Auckland revealed working weeks between 50 and 80 hours. Principals complain that bureaucracy has not gone away - its demands have merely shifted into schools. Overworked principals are unlikely to provide stimulating leadership, initiate new projects or developments or be humane and responsive in dealing with those who make demands or approach them for help. They are more likely to suffer from stress and burnout symptoms.

What are principals doing in the long hours they spend working? Obviously this varies from school to school but property management and a variety of accountability issues loom large on most lists. For many there has been a shift away from what they see as professionally productive activity to work they feel could probably more effectively be done by others or to work defending and explaining the teaching programme and the reasons for adopting specific policies. Stress and frustration are exacerbated by uncertainty about national policies, changes and requirements.

School based management leaves principals with responsibility for finance, works and maintenance, under delegation from their Boards of Trustees. Many are exhilarated by their new freedom to allocate resources and determine property priorities in the light of local needs. But the practical realities may be tedious and time-consuming. A number query the logic of requiring each school to develop or hire expertise in dealing with property functions, feeling it would be better to have such knowledge available at regional level. Deciding whether to replace the guttering or reseal the carpark seems remote from educational decision making and professional expertise. This is particularly a problem for smaller schools with fewer resources. Another irksome task is the effort to comply with government audit office requirements for financial accounting. Over the past fifteen months schools there have been three changes to the official guidelines and schools are unclear about the expectations on them for the first three months of next year. As a result many principals opt for a somewhat cynical compliance, reporting what they consider to be trivial but measurable and therefore acceptable, so they and their Board will escape criticism. They also resent auditors' quibbling over single items of expenditure for professional purposes. Conversely they are puzzled that that there is no official requirement to report on significant educational

initiatives which cannot be quantified.

The Picot Task Force envisaged additional administrative support services within schools. Informal observation suggests that schools are making what use they can of technology and hiring additional assistance to help cope with the increased loading self-management has brought. But small schools and those in poorer areas find this difficult since their budgets have less flexibility. Principals often feel that their task is to protect their staff from bureaucratic interference to free them for their professional and teaching role and hesitate to delegate. Often the capacity of Boards of Trustees to provide practical assistance is limited. Their members work full time in demanding jobs and those with accounting and management skills may be the least likely to assist. Though some trustees are spending more than six hours a week on school business, surveys show that his level of involvement is unlikely to be sustained without resentment. (Wylie, 1992)

Communication has also assumed a new significance. Whether principals enjoy supportive, mixed or uneasy relationships with Board members they face a major role in keeping them informed and in clarifying issues. There are often differences of opinion ranging from open conflict to mild disagreement over the appropriate ways of rating pupil and teacher achievement, for instance. Overt accountability has also forced schools to be more open to the community and to parents. Principals estimate that parent interviews now consume a high proportion of their time. For many this has been a useful and healthy exercise, providing substantial information about social and community issues. But explaining the reasons for their decisions in ways that make sense to lay members of the community demands high level skills in communication. The new public relations roles are made more difficult by claims reported in the media that education is in crisis, that schools are failing. Some New Zealand principals feel embattled. While some of the criticisms of education mirror those that teachers themselves have made regularly their unthinking and simplistic reiteration and the attacks on teachers that accompany them are demoralising, especially as responsibility has been so firmly sheeted home to individual schools.

At the same time principals are facing demands for more demonstrable accountability, for measurable evidence of children's learning performance. Testing and assessment are issues which excite controversy, create misunderstandings, and frequently generate more heat than light. Assessment of pupils' learning is an essential professional task. It is also one of the most difficult since precise measures are lacking and the variables in any learning situation are so diverse. Schools have always reported to parents on their children's learning, some more effectively than others. Now that the responsibility for assessment, like so many other tasks, is squarely placed on the principal there is scope for conflict with Boards and parents and a danger that rigid schemes will be set in place which in fact inhibit learning and narrow the curriculum to

the imparting of measurable skills and knowledge.

The pressure on individual principals to demonstrate that they have raised the level of achievement of their pupils is also considerable. Such demands, too, appear deceptively simple and straightforward. Yet not only are learning patterns unpredictable but all too often the demand is to improve performance in relation to other schools, to engage in open competition. Leaving aside the question of the desirability of such an ethic, such demands ignore the fact that achieving superior results in purely academic terms has been shown to be highly dependent on the intake of students. (Wilms, 1985, Snook, 1991. Lauder and Hughes, 1991) Thus the way to improve educational outcomes overall would be to ensure greater social mix. But if the achievement of schools is rated in a competitive way principals and Boards may be encouraged to compete also for particular types of student whose abilities will indeed enhance performance levels, but at the expense of achievement in other schools. This may seem to apply more to secondary schools than to primary at present but it is becoming an increasingly important issue for the entire system.

All principals now have the responsibility for selecting their own staff.

While secondary principals have always done so, it is a welcome change for their primary colleagues. They also have a new, overt and inescapable responsibility for staff appraisal, the assessment of teacher performance. Many would be happier to concentrate only on staff development. There is evidence that large numbers of Boards are supportive and that teachers are encouraged to take advantage of budgeted funds to attend courses, visit other schools or acquire new skills. (Alcorn, 1990, Wylie 1991). The new freedom in this area has led to a number of innovative and creative approaches. There have been widespread attempts to encourage individuals and teams to engage in self-evaluation. Staffing decisions imposed by falling rolls may, however, mean that the present cautious and gradual approach will prove inadequate and the establishment of formal appraisal systems be faced quickly. Here principals face further dilemmas. The current atmosphere of uncertainty is not the most desirable climate for the introduction of programmes which need stability and trust as well as time and resources. At a time when many teachers feel that they are being punished for the shortcomings of the system, there are inappropriate models being promoted by non-educationalists. As Fullan and Hargreaves (1990) observe, appraisal schemes that implicate all staff in order to detect a small percentage of incompetents are a waste of time. Yet principals cannot ignore claims of professional incompetence or arrogance. There is also a tension between developing a professional scheme, driven by educational as well as managerial needs, with staff involvement in planning and implementation while at the same time ensuring that reviews are not inward looking and self-congratulatory.

Even where principals are excited by their new freedom, ongoing change imposed by government determinations still takes its toll. Kanter (1990)

emphasises that change by its very nature tends to create overload. Her study of successful entrepreneurial organisations showed that their staff felt they were in control of innovation; stress resulted when they felt uncertain, anxious or relatively powerless. In New Zealand schools uncertainty continues to create anxiety. Changes may be first heard of when leaked to the media or revealed without preparation at a public event. Anxiety has been particularly high over the implications of the proposed bulk funding of teachers' salaries, opposed by a majority of teachers and boards but enthusiastically endorsed by the Minister. Many principals fear further cuts and less rather than more flexibility. They also fear for the fate of less well-off schools. The recent cancellation of the pool reliever scheme which operated in a number of difficult to staff areas in low socio-economic districts has served to deepen these suspicions. They know, too, that most Board of Trustee members have neither the time, inclination or expertise to make personnel or salary decisions, and that they resent the fact that their performance in carrying out such unwanted tasks would be officially audited.

The rhetoric for Tomorrow's Schools promised that the new system would deliver greater equity through targeted funding and through strengthened local input in curriculum. This was widely challenged by teachers' organisations and academics who believed that the differences already obvious between more and less advantaged districts would become greater. Their predictions are now being realised, in spite of a steadily increasing Vote Education. Rather than narrowing, the gap between more and less advantaged schools is widening. It is the less advantaged who feel that their government grant is inadequate. (Wylie 1991). They are less likely to own expensive resources for classroom use such as science equipment, computers, audio-visual equipment and musical instruments. They are less likely to own a computer to help with administration. They are more likely to have deferred maintenance. They are less likely to have members of the Board with financial expertise and more likely to need to purchase help with this work. This means they have less money to spend on teaching and resources. They are also less likely to be able to raise money through fees and less likely to make money from local fundraising. Though many schools are grappling courageously with equity issues most of these are far wider than can be addressed at local level. Nevertheless much of the responsibility has been shifted there.

Principals may face ethical/equity issues in responding to parental demands. Some members of the communities schools serve may be competitive, racist or sexist and may expect their covert values to be expressed in the curriculum and climate of the school. Even where the pressures are less extreme and principals feel their schools have been winners under the new system, they face equity dilemmas. Do they respond to parent pressure to provide the type of education which will help their children gain entry to private schools? How do they provide expensive extras which will put pressures on families with limited resources? Do they attract so many

children to their exciting new programmes that the school down the road is forced to close? Do they opt for retaining children who might otherwise have moved on? How do they determine priorities among the differing needs of children in their care? What kind of response do they make to charter statements about the Treaty of Waitangi, to biculturalism and the partnership between Maori and Pakeha? What kind of staff do they hire? Maintaining long term professional goals may not be easy in the face of community pressure and economic restraints.

The members of the Picot Task Force had as an ideal a vision of community schools, serving local needs. They believed that local parents should be the ones to decide what special character the school would develop. They assumed a diverse group of parents whose values might be incompatible could work towards agreement. But the concept of school community in New Zealand is changing. In cities, at least, proximity may become less important than perceived ethos or character. Parents shop around for a school they feel will be suitable for their children, which meets their own criteria. Often these parents are intelligent, well-informed, and affluent. Some principals spend a considerable amount of time interviewing prospective parents, explaining the opportunities and values their school offers. There is much that is positive in this activity. Schools are forced to ask themselves what things they do especially well and find ways of communicating these strengths to the community. They may well decide that they need to sharpen their performance in certain areas and allocate budget finance accordingly.

Principals concerned about wider social equity may have to resist pressure from Boards demanding a highly competitive atmosphere within the school or the establishment of restrictive zoning policies. Already in larger cities there are areas where professional co-operation between schools is evident and others where the competitive ethic sees each institution competing for market share. Especially in areas where the community is imbued with a success ethic based on the failure of others, or population trends are causing rolls to drop, there is a temptation to push one's own attractions to the detriment of other nearby schools. Some schools Boards have disenfranchised nearby children from areas which might be seen to detract from the image of the school. Too often primary or intermediate schools give parents advice about secondary education based on inadequate and second-hand information. The need to attract students may tempt principals and Boards to adopt a single set of values reflecting the norms of what is still assumed by many in the media to be the one best model: tight discipline, uniforms, an emphasis on high academic performance within a traditional monocultural curriculum. Ironically, it could also result in adoption of low parental and student expectations.

Concentrating on the needs of a particular school community can be a healthy exercise. It can also lead to parochialism and narrowness of vision, a lack of awareness of what is happening in the system as a whole. This could well increase if observed trends towards internal appointments at senior level and more static staffing in general continue. Schools need

the challenge of fresh perspectives. Otherwise congruence and consensus may become uncritical and stultifying. Principals can also find that their Boards are anxious for them to concentrate their energies on running their particular school and will be less than sympathetic to activities which take them out of it: organising the music festival, the sports competition, the speech contest, acting as a professional mediator or

counsellor, or a consultant to nearby schools. The challenge to principals is the need to maintain professionalism and to preserve a vision wider than that of the local community. Although New Zealand has examples of significant educational movements that have remained outside the official education system, especially in the field of early childhood or pre-school education, most important advances in either curriculum or teaching method have been initiated by education professionals. Public opinion has tended to lag behind though parents familiar with schools were readier to accept changes than members of the public who were not.

The current suspicion of teacher unions by politicians and certain influential groups is worrying for those who value national professional links. Teacher unions in New Zealand have always been active both in industrial negotiations and in the advocacy of educational reform. Now their commitment to the latter is being questioned - by bodies who seemingly cannot conceive of interest that is not self interest. The official Ministry position is that teacher unions can have no official status with them since their members are employees of Boards of Trustees. At the same time the implications of the Employment Contracts Act of 1991 are forcing teacher organisations to adopt a more combative mode. Many principals, themselves members of the union, are caught in the middle. A further complication arises from the recent recognition of the newer principals' organisations by government. The secondary body has been granted finance to release its president from school duties at the same time as the primary teachers' union has lost this long-standing privilege. The Ministry's viewpoint is that consulting this group, representing management, is appropriate. Ironically these principals' associations, whose members are both employees and members of Boards of Trustees, are already seeking representation at industrial negotiations.

Principals and teachers have worked to implement the changes in educational administration out of sense of loyalty. Their concern was not more efficient systemic administration but more resources in the classroom and more effective teaching. Their key question has been: Are the changes going to improve outcomes for students? Increasingly their verdict is that the changes have made little difference inside the classroom. New developments there are not the result of new freedoms but have grown from earlier practice. Many principals and their staffs are cynical that the reforms were sold with promises that teaching and learning would improve

through greater availability of resources and responsiveness to parental wishes. They believe the community was misled into thinking that children were being shortchanged. Many now regard their paramount task is to shield and buffer their pupils, to maintain continuity and stability in spite of the upheavals in administration. (Mitchell et al, 1991)

Management v Professional Leadership

I have outlined some of the difficulties and dilemmas school principals in New Zealand have faced since the implementation of school based management. Some of these are intrinsic to managerial leadership roles and call for the exercise of informed professional judgement. Other dilemmas, however, are rooted in the disjuncture between the managerial efficiency model being officially propounded and the professional service model to which many educators subscribe. Whereas educational leadership theories have moved towards a goal of schools as communities of reflective practitioners, working collaboratively and in partnership with parents where appropriate, official policies increasingly appear to regard teachers as human resources to be managed and controlled. Boards are elected to exercise this control and principals appointed to implement their policies. The logic of this position is that self-managing schools could exclude teachers from participating in policy formation. This is not yet reality in New Zealand, but many official statements seem to imply its desirability.

School based management has forced many New Zealand school principals to focus almost exclusively on the management aspect of their roles and on the implementation of changing policies determined by central organisations, such as the Ministry and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The new salary structures which differentiate their positions from those of the staff make it difficult for them to consider themselves any longer as merely the head teacher, a colleague working on the same task. But as school autonomy and responsibility grows it is leadership rather than management that needs to be stressed. Principals are increasingly held responsible for articulating a vision for the school, for being innovative and proactive in seeking improvement in teaching and learning. There is an urgent need to conceptualise the role in a way that is both realistic and meaningful.

The Picot Task Force saw the role of the principal as instructional leadership and posited collegiality as a key element of management style. This was in line with the consultative way they expected schools to interact with their communities. Since then, the official rhetoric has changed considerably, reflecting an external climate in which key values are commercialism, labour market flexibility, dismantling of a welfare state alleged to cause dependency, and a distrust of professionals which has both populist and official backing. The Lough Committee, set up in 1990 to evaluate progress on the reforms, expressed its regret that many principals saw themselves as instructional leaders rather than managers. The role of the Education Review Office (ERO) has evolved from assessment of progress towards global charter goals such as equity, through

educational reviews, to the current assurance audits designed to check that Boards of Trustees are fulfilling their obligations to supply the National Curriculum and complying with other regulations such as hours of attendance. Staff in the Ministry, ERO, the Qualifications Authority and other government agencies are expected to view themselves not as public

servants - for the will of local communities is no longer given much cognisance - but as agents of the collective will of government. The emphasis is increasingly on control, checking, measuring, and limiting, rather than on fostering professional independence. One of the most disturbing features about school based management as it seems to be envisaged from the central bureaucracy is that it sees teachers as problems to be managed or as resource units to be acquired as cheaply as possible rather than as colleagues whose professional knowledge and skills are central to the learning process which is the purpose of schools. Such attitudes may ensure a minimum standard is maintained: they are unlikely to produce the excellence which is so often quoted as the goal of administrative reforms. As Sergiovanni (1992) points out emphasising competent management and skilled human relationships has more to do with keeping schools from failing than with encouraging them to excel.

There are alternative models of leadership which are more promising for schools which wish to concentrate on becoming true learning communities, responsive not only to national bureaucracy but also to the local community and to the wider profession. Some of these theories stress the moral dimension of educational leadership and seek to establish valid bases for judgement. (Evers and Lakomski 1991, Hodgkinson 1983, 1986) Others recognise the contestable nature of assumptions and values (Greenfield 1979, 1980, 1991) and seek to find ways in which democratic processes can be followed as well as power or coercion. Bates (1992) stresses the importance of commitment to a vision of the future which places "civic virtue and social need at the heart of the educational enterprise". (p.24) Some seek to conceptualise the complexity of the role (Bolman and Deal, 1992). Others, (Barth, 1990, Fullan and Hargreaves 1991, Sergiovanni 1987, 1991), look for ways in which school leaders can empower staff, students and community members to take appropriate leadership roles, and establish a leadership density in the organisation. In the current climate this is difficult since it could well lead to conflict with official expectations for school organisation, curriculum delivery and assessment. Many models also stress the imperative for critical reflection and/or action research. They contest the assumption that the way to improve schools is to control or punish teachers, believing that teachers and principals are motivated as much, if not more, by altruism, commitment to ideals and a desire to do good as by self-interest. (Barth, 1990, Sergiovanni, 1992, Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992).

Educational leadership is neither a fixed ability nor a skill which can be simply acquired, assessed, and then practised. Nor is it a set of characteristics which can be discovered by researchers, studied in

isolation and prescribed. However in the period since October 1, 1989 in New Zealand there has been a proliferation of management training and inservice programmes at varying levels, the formation of new national principals' organisations, and the establishment of a variety of support groups for school leadership. The response to such initiatives suggests principals and others feel a need for education and support. Yet though there are fine counter examples much of this activity and concern has focused on entrepreneurial business management techniques, fails to read the culture of schools which is necessary for student development, and serves to deny the professionalism of most teachers.

What, then, do school principals need to learn and what sources of support do they need to develop to survive and function effectively as educationists in the new climate?

The easy and immediate answers seem to be taken from the business management model I have already suggested is inadequate: skills in time and stress management that will help them to survive. But even these skills are not the simplistic issues many texts and programmes suggest, though there are undoubtedly useful techniques to be learned. How principals and other leaders spend their time depends on their sense of what is important, what aspects of their work they have to perform personally, cultural perceptions about the nature of time, distinctions

between work and leisure. To use time wisely they will need to conceptualise their roles and establish priorities.

It is also true that many principals need to develop further skills in communication, in human relations, group interaction, and the handling of conflict. Their initial training and their experience as teachers gives them a wide repertoire of skills for dealing with students of different ages, less for interaction with adults who are also skilled professionals or with diverse groups of parents. They know a great deal about child and adolescent development: understanding themselves and those they work with is equally important. Their communication skills have been geared to work with students not in the advocacy and negotiation necessary in school leadership.

The concept of instructional leadership focused attention on the prime role of the school in promoting student learning. This calls for principals with a broad knowledge of educational and social concerns and the ability and desire to attract reflective and well qualified staff. Many schools are responding to this challenge by examining their practices critically and designing new programmes and practices. To do this they need to draw on past experience, research on learning processes, community expectations, and a knowledge of social change. But the principal's role demands more than a knowledge of education and management. Instructional leadership must be defined broadly if it is not to impose a narrow focus on delivery and measurement of a received curriculum.

Those who become principals in the new era must also become politicised, aware of the ways in which both government policies and their own behaviour can determine the extent to which our state education system contributes to social justice on the one hand, or on the other the extent to which it reinforces or increases social division. As they contemplate the difference between what is happening in New Zealand now and the rhetoric that the new system would promote greater equity, many principals have already developed a new sense of awareness about the operation of our system. Snook (1991) challenged teachers and principals to look critically at various forms of external assessment being proposed and ask questions about their educational effects, noting that in teacher education programmes so far assessment, when treated at all, has generally been treated as a technology rather than as a political activity. Yet lobbyists demand assessment so they can criticise and compare schools and blame them for the unemployment of individuals.

Politicisation also demands the building of alliances and professional links. This is a crucial task at a time when the official emphasis is on divisiveness, competition, and concentrating on the local scene. The preservation of existing professional bonds and the development of new ones are essential to retain a sense of allegiance to education and to the profession as well as to local schools and institutions, a sense of being part of a national and international teaching service. Remaining critical and maintaining a perspective wider than that of an individual district is an easier task for those who have peer support.

The other and crucial alliance for principals is with parents. Recent New Zealand research (Wylie, 1992) shows that most are not unhappy with what is happening in to their children at school. There is little perceived parental concern over curriculum or discipline, though many Maori parents query monocultural bias. Informal evidence shows that most parents and Boards want to be able to share with and support teaching staff not to control schools. But parents too need to be politicised. In recent years they have been told constantly by the New Zealand media that schools are performing badly, that there is cause for grave concern, that the changes in administration will give them a greater say in the schooling of their children and that this will improve performance. The Chicago experience shows that the links are less simple than that. (Hess, 1992) Parents need to be informed and consulted about what is happening in schools, they need to be convinced that staff are concerned about their children and

knowledgeable about their achievements. They need to be assured that the processes and practices followed in schools are both rigorous and nurturing, that the skills their children are taught are relevant for the world for which they are being prepared. Sallis (1988) claims that only a coalition of parents and educationalists will be able to influence governments to provide the necessary resources to schooling and to support the professionalism of teachers. The alliance is a natural one: teachers

and parents share an immediate concern with the learning and development of pupils.

In our society universities have a dual task: they act as repositories of past knowledge and as creators of new knowledge, recognising that those living in the present must be aware of both the future and the past. Schools have to maintain a similar balance. In New Zealand Maori people challenge Pakeha to acknowledge their inextricable links to ancestral ties and obligations. Often our pattern has been to discard the past in the name of progress as in the recent reforms to our educational system, while at the same time clinging to value patterns of countries on the other side of the globe. On the other hand we are only slowly beginning to adopt flexible educational structures in response to the implications of technology, changing world patterns, and the demands of lifelong learning, abandoning lockstep structures imposed by traditional learning levels. With so much responsibility for learning organisation now resting at school level, principals need to retain an awareness of where we are coming from as well as articulating the directions they hope to move towards.

We cannot turn back the clock to earlier organisational patterns and there appears to be consensus that few schools would wish to do so (Wylie, 1991). Nor can we slow the pace of social and technological change, though many schools and their principals may hope for a return to stability after the upheavals of the past few years. Educational leadership thus demands enhanced skills in future scanning, information retrieval and analysis as well as a capacity for critical reflection. School principals need to be willing to let go of the familiar, to set out on a journey without knowing precisely what the destination is. The mission of Star Trek's USS Enterprise "to go boldly where no one has gone before," may be a metaphor as important for management as for researchers.

The role of school principals in New Zealand in 1992 is complex, time consuming and demanding. It is also challenging and important. It is demanding because of its diversity and because the work is never completed. It is complex because the environment is constantly changing. It is difficult because there is little agreement about values and purpose in society as a whole. Schools receive contradictory messages. Education is attacked and yet claimed to be of vital national importance. Schooling has become more overtly political than before and schools more overtly accountable. Yet they have little control over the level of resourcing they receive to do the job.

In this new era school leaders have to find ways of maintaining a sense of equilibrium as they confront the multiple roles of educational leadership and management. They need to hold firm to their sense of purpose and to an educational philosophy that refuses to adopt simplistic certainties. Goal setting is a healthy exercise: so is the acknowledgment that outcomes cannot be exactly controlled or measured. The task of school leadership is no place for those who believe that they must always be right. It was comforting to hear the Chief Executive of one of New Zealand's largest

companies express the same view of business leadership recently. Leadership demands the ability to remain comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, the attitude of minds John Keats labelled negative capability. It demands the insistence that diversity and difference are to be welcomed, not eliminated in the name of uniform standards. Principals must learn to work with those who do not share their values while remaining true to themselves. They must refuse to be controlled and they must accept accountability and responsibility for their principles and practices. They must look forward without losing sight of the past in which their ideas

were shaped. True education is about wisdom as well as knowledge and skills. It is a quality much needed by those who lead and manage schools and those, including researchers, who help to prepare them for the task.

References

Access 7 (1988) Special Issue. Picot and Beyond. Education Department, University of Auckland.

Alcorn, Noeline (1990) One Year On: The New Role of the Principal in New Zealand Schools. NZ Journal of Educational Administration 5, 7-14

Barrington, John (1990) Why Picot? A Critique and Commentary. NZJEA 5, 15-17

Barth, Roland (1991) Improving Schools from Within: Teachers, parents and pupils can make the difference. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bates, Richard (1992) The Emerging Culture of Educational Administration and What We Can Do About it. Paper presented to the National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Administration, Darwin, July.

Beeby, C. E. (1986) Introduction to Renwick, W.L. Moving Targets: Six Essays on Educational Policy. Wellington: NZCER.

Bolman, Lee and Terence Deal (1992) Leading and Managing: Effects of Culture, context and gender. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28:3, 314-329.

Codd, John, Liz Gordon, & Richard Harker (1988) Educational Administration and the Role of the State: Devolution and Control Post Picot. On Wylie, C. Proceedings of the First Research in Educational Policy Conference. Wellington: NZCER.

Evers, Colin (1987) Philosophical Research in Educational Administration.

In McPherson, R (ed) *Ways and Meanings in Educational Research in Educational Administration*. Armidale: University of New England Press.

Fullan, M & A. Hargreaves. (1992) *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?..* Buckingham: Open University Press in conjunction with the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation.

Greenfield, T.B. (1975) *Theory About organisation: A New Perspective and its Implications for Schools*. in M Hughes (ed) *Administering Education: International Challenge*. London: Athlone Press, 71-99.

Greenfield, T. B (1980) *The Man Who Comes Trough a Door in the Wall: discovering truth, discovering self, discovering organisations*. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 16:3, 26-59.

Greenfield, T.B. (1991) *Reforming and Revaluig Educational Administration*. Whence and Where cometh the Phoenix, Paper presented at AREA Conference.

Hess, G. Alfred (1992) *School Restructuring, Chicago Style. A Midway Report*. Chicago: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance

Hodgkinson, C. (1983) *The Philosophy of Leadership*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Jones, Alison, et al (1990) *Myths and Realities: Schooling in New Zealand*. Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.

Kanter, Rosabeth M (1989) *When Giants Learn to Dance*. New York: Simon and Schuster

Lange, David (1988) *Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Educational Administration in New Zealand*. Wellington: The Government Printer

Lauder, Hugh and David Hughes (1991) *Human Capital Theory and the Wastage of Talent in New Zealand*. *NZJES*, 23:1, 5-20.

Lough Committee (1990) *Today's Schools: A Review of the Education Reform Implementation Process* mimeo). Wellington: The Government Printer.

Mitchell, David, Richard Jefferies, Paul Keown and Robin McConnell (1991) *Monitoring Today's Schools: A Scorecard After 18 Months*. *NZJEA* 6, 48-61.

Openshaw, Roger and David McKenzie (1987) *Reinventing the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*. Wellington: NZCER.

Sallis, Joan (1988) *Schools, Parents and Governors: A New Approach to Accountability*. London: Routledge

Segiovanni, Thomas (1987) *The Principalship: A reflective Practice Perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Sergiovanni, Thomas (1992) *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shuker, Roy (1987) *The One Best System?* Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press

Snook, Ivan (1989) *Educational Reform in New Zealand: What is going on?*. Access, 8:2, 9-18.

Snook, Ivan (1991) *Schools at Work: Making Decisions about Learning*. Keynote Address to the International Conference of the New Zealand Principals' Federation. Palmerston North. July.

Taskforce to Review Educational Administration (1988) *The Picot Report. Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education*. Wellington: The Taskforce.

Wilms, Douglas (1988). *The Balance Thesis: conceptual effects of ability in pupils' 0-grade examination results*. *Oxford Review of Education* 11, 33-41

Wylie, Cathy (1991) *The Impact of Tomorrow's Schools in Primary Schools and Intermediates*. 1990 Survey Report. Wellington: NZCER

Wylie, Cathy (1992) *School Autonomy in a National Education System : Three Years of Tomorrow's Schools*. NZJEA 7, *Walking the Tightrope*:

NZARE/AARE Conference
November 23, 1992