

Decentralisation, Devolution and Equity: Lessons from New Zealand

Elizabeth Hatton

Department of Social, Cultural and Curriculum Studies

University of New England

Armidale NSW 2351

Ph (067) 73 2564 (Direct)

Ph (067) 73 2560 (Message)

Ph (067) 71 2103 (Home)

Fax (067) 73 3350

Paper prepared for presentation at AARE/NZARE Joint Conference,
November, 1992

Decentralisation, Devolution and Equity: Lessons from New Zealand
New Zealand's decentralisation and devolution initiatives are advanced as changes 'in administration which will lead to more effective delivery of education by devolution to the community, and the promotion of excellence and equity in the areas of ethnicity, gender and class' (Marshall and Peters, 1991: 46). Case study data are presented from one setting to show that the notion of community on which these initiatives are premised, is flawed. Community participation in schooling is not a panacea for injustices in the education system. Consequently, significant injustices continue. The paper concludes with an discussion of some serious implications for Australia.

Decentralisation, Devolution and Equity: Lessons from New Zealand
Elizabeth j. hatton

Introduction: Reforms to Compulsory Schooling

The reforms which affect compulsory schooling in New Zealand are spelled out in a government policy document, Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Educational Administration in New Zealand (August 1988), and were foreshadowed in a report of a ministerial working party known as the 'Picot Report' but formally titled, Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in New Zealand (April, 1988). Some foreshadowing of the Picot Report also appears in Volumes 1 and 2 of Treasury 'briefs' (1987a and 1987b). In these reforms, 'responsibility for the administration of primary and secondary schools, previously controlled by district education boards and regional offices of the Department

of Education, was substantially decentralised to newly formed boards of trustees (see discussion below) of individual schools. The basic unit of education administration is now the individual school. However, this 'new self-managing focus is balanced with the maintenance of a national curriculum, national standards and some central policy making and administrative functions' (Ministry of Education, 1992: 19). Two features of the self-managing school are significant; namely, the board of trustees and the school charter.

The 1989 Education Reform Act legislation provided for the establishment of boards of trustees to govern primary and secondary schools. The idea here is that 'the running of the institution will be a partnership between the professionals [teachers and principal] and the particular community in which it is located. The mechanism for such a partnership will be a board of trustees' (Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Educational Administration in New Zealand, 1988: 1). The Education Act (1989) determines the composition, election and appointment of members of boards of trustees and allows for co-option of members (Ministry of Education, 1992: 19). Current membership requirements for board of trustees are as follows:

The boards of trustees elected for each primary and secondary school give five to seven elected parent representatives, who are no longer required to be parents themselves, numerical dominance. The principal, another staff member, and a student representative (not compulsory) in secondary schools are also board members with voting rights. There is provision for the board to co-opt up to four new members from the community if initial board elections do not produce a satisfactory ethnic, gender or socio-economic balance or provide enough parent representation with the wider range of skills the new school-based management structure requires.

(Ministry of Education, 1992: 19-20)

One important function of the board of trustees is to 'ensure that there is a written charter of aims, purposes and objectives of the school approved by the Minister of Education. The school charter includes the National Educational Guidelines (including national curriculum, equity principles and recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi) and local goals and objectives which reflect the particular aspirations of individual schools and their communities' (Ministry of Education, 1991: 9). Thus charters are 'a means for achieving the desired mix of central and local responsibility' (Ministry of Education, 1992: 19).

The charter is 'a legal undertaking by the board of trustees to the Minister of Education to ensure that the school is managed and organised for the purposes set down' (Ministry of Education, 1992: 19). In developing charters, schools are obliged to 'consult with their communities and establish with them the particular features of the school its community, and the kinds of educational outcomes desired for the students' (Ministry of

Education, 1992: 19). The idea is that the requirement of a charter approved by the Minister for each educational institution which receives Government funding, is a key accountability mechanism and 'is a critical part of the process of devolving authority to schools. It balances the greater autonomy which schools now have to make their own decisions with the requirement by Government that national standards and national objectives be upheld' (Irving, 1990: 7).

The Reforms as an Equity Measure

There is allegedly a major underlying commitment to greater equity underpinning the reforms. Irving (1990: 2) points out that equity as one of the underlying goals and key principles of reform involves '- the principle of access to education for all; - the removal of barriers to equality of opportunity so that all learners can achieve their potential in education; - equal employment opportunities for those working in education', and, - 'a recognition that the Treaty of Waitangi has a special relevance for education.' The reform aims to contribute to this by improving administration of education by providing more effective management and greater community control of and participation in schools ' (Irving, 1990: 1 - emphasis added).

Thus the reforms which have taken place in New Zealand's education system have been 'advanced as changes in administration which will lead to more effective delivery of education by devolution to the community, and the promotion of excellence and equity in the areas of ethnicity, gender and class' (Marshall and Peters, 1991: 46). In the Charter framework, it is clearly stated that the board of trustees is to 'ensure that equity principles underpin all activities of the school' (Department of Education, 1989: 4) and that 'the school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both sexes, for rural and urban students; for all students irrespective of their religious, ethnic, cultural, social and family and class backgrounds, and irrespective of their ability or disability' (Department of Education, 1989: 4).

Decentralisation and devolution to the community is an alleged panacea for injustices found within the New Zealand education system. The community is believed to be best placed to address its needs, whether they concern the problems of 'clustering of failure' (Task Force to Review Education Administration in New Zealand, 1988: 36) in working class schools or the disproportionate representation of Maori and Pacific Islander children in failing groups (Task Force to Review Education Administration in New Zealand, 1988: 35; Irving, 1990: 10 and Fergusson et al., 1991: 50) or cultural insensitivity (Task Force to Review Education Administration in New Zealand, 1988: 4) or the lack of control working class parents have over their children's education (The Treasury, 1987a & 1987b). The question

this chapter considers whether the faith the Government has placed in the community as the appropriate point to address equity issues in education is justified. Will shifting decision-making as close as possible to the point of implementation necessarily necessarily bring the benefits the government intends (Task Force to Review Education Administration in New Zealand, 1988: 42) or will the same problems persist? This chapter suggests the latter outcome is the more probable and suggests that the reform is premised on a flawed understanding of New Zealand (or any post-industrial, capitalist) society.

The Social Context of the Study

Salisbury is a country town in the North Island of New Zealand with a population of approximately 11- 12 000. It has an English village-like atmosphere with a quaint band rotunda, many antique shops, and tennis, polo and bowls clubs. Tourist publicity for the town suggests that there is a great deal of civic pride taken in the town's sylvan setting; elm and plane trees abound. The area is serviced by several primary schools but only one

secondary school. The secondary school population has a relatively small number of wealthy families which might be thought of as upper middle class. The majority group is affluent middle class. There is a growing working class population which consists in families in which one or both parents are doing unskilled work, and those dependent on social welfare (for example, the unemployed, solo parents). Maoris make up nine per cent of the school population and most of them are working class. This study is concerned with working-class Maori and pakeha (non Maori) parents relations to the secondary school in Salisbury. Attendance at secondary schools in a larger neighbouring town is an option only for those parents who are able to afford the bus fares. Three sets of parents and several of their children were interviewed intensively about their relationships with the school. The parents and students had experience of the school both under its previous governance by a less powerful Board of Governors and its current Board of Trustees. All six parents took an active interest in their children's schooling, all were concerned that their children should achieve to their full potential, all attended the school on any occasion they were requested or required to, all were willing to give help to the school particularly in the form of service, all six parents saw their children leave school early without adequate qualifications and all felt the school, through its Board of Trustees, was not working for their children. They felt the inequality they saw as in other aspects of the life of the town was clearly being played out in the school;. In what follows the data are presented in three sections; namely, Salisbury: A Community Divided, Community Divisions and Differential Treatment in School and Parental Participation in Schooling. This is followed by an analysis of

the data and a consideration of implications for Australia.

Salisbury: A Community Divided

Each of the families in this study spoke of Salisbury as a divided community; a town in which they and their children had experienced considerable difficulty in settling in, making friends and being accepted. The children uniformly found succeeding in school difficult despite, in some cases, an earlier history of success in school. While some of the interviewees talked in terms 'class structure' and 'prejudice', others employed less formal terms such as the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' or the 'rich', the 'not so rich' and the 'others' to indicate that the community was divided and unequal. Heather, who is a pakeha, and her husband Tiari, who is Maori, sum up the difficulties they encountered. First, Heather suggests the status hierarchy she encountered is one in which people are divided on the basis of wealth or lack of it as 'haves' or 'have nots'. Race was also an important stratifier. She says, 'there's a [racial] prejudice within the community too ... The Maoris are the second rate citizens according to the white people here.' When questioned about the positioning of her family given that her husband Tiari is a Maori, Heather responded

some people would just about divide my family and me. I'd be 'white have-not' and they'd be 'brown' have-nots ... And seeing Tiari, a lot of people, I think were surprised that I was married to a Maori, sort of. It was - it's just something you pick up. I mean, things were said to me at work, like, you know, talking of running Maoris down, which was very very nasty, the way they did it - the girls I worked with. And then they'd turn and say: 'Oh, we don't mean Tiari, of course, because he's educated' - but the fact that they said that to me meant that there was a difference. If there isn't a difference, why do you say that? You know?

Heather explains how this status hierarchy affects everyday aspects of life in the town; in this case she refers to her previous employment as a receptionist in a large medical

practice: 'I found that the people with money were run after by the receptionists ... It was all who had and who was. And I found the Maori community were very shabbily treated. Quite often just about ignored at the counter unless I served them. I found it was shocking. I felt embarrassed.' Heather noticed that 'the Maori community used to quite often ask for me on the phone, or ask for me at the counter' because 'I took time with them ... I would speak to them, and to the have-nots of the community that were white. You know, the ones - the solo mums and the ones everybody was down on. Because that was another form of prejudice here with the have-nots. [Single parents] were garbage. Very much so ... within the reception. Not within the

-not with the doctors. I mean the doctors never said that, but you know, the people in the office I worked with, yes very much so, you know.' Heather's was merely one of several stories about differential treatment by class and race in various workplaces. Another example of the the status hierarchy was what Heather saw as unjust racist stereotyping: 'there are people who are very, very degrading about Maoris. And not really with any reason for it. They just look at perhaps a dirty scruffy little Maori walking along the road and they're all like that, you know?'

So racism was another notable feature of life in Salisbury. Heather and Tiari's children found ways of striking back at the racism they encountered because they identified as Maori, particularly through the use of the term 'pakeha' as a pejorative term or put down. While Tiari could see why his children might be inclined to try to fight back against racism and classism, it went against the philosophy he had tried to teach them: 'I've tried to teach our kids that people are people. You know, it doesn't really matter who they are, we all die, and we all go the same colour when we die. And, ah, worms aren't fussy, you know. So, in the end it doesn't - doesn't really matter who you are, or what you are. It's how you yourself carry yourself, if you like. You know, how you behave'.

Even the process of getting a job demonstrated Salisbury's stratified nature. Wikitoria, oldest daughter of Heather and Tiari, explains the process: 'Everyone picks [jobs] up through a friend, through a friend, through a friend. You know, it's who you know, not what you know ... And if someone puts in a good word for you, you're in.' Linda, daughter of David and Mavis, adds that it only after a job has actually been filled 'then it's advertised in the paper 'if it is to be advertised'. However, since friendship networks are stratified Dennis adds, families like their's 'obviously ... only hear about the labouring jobs, the lower - sort of middle. We wouldn't hear about the bank tellers jobs and all those sort of jobs'.

So, one significant stratification distinguished between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. All the students in this study encountered similar stratification in school. Moreover, all families in this study believed the school took their status as have-nots as indicative of the worth of their families. They talked in terms of the school responding to good families and bad families. Good families were those in which both partners were pakeha and who fitted into the category of the haves on the basis of wealth or an outward show of wealth. Bad families were families such as the ones in this study who were clearly engaged in unskilled work, whose incomes were relatively small, and in the case of Heather and Tiari, who were also in a Maori/pakeha marriage or a Maori marriage and the families of the unemployed or solo parents.

Community Divisions and Differential Treatment in School

The group who were most accepting at school of the children in this study were the children of the 'have-nots', the 'haves' were only rarely part of their friendship groups. Wikitoria points out, 'Well the kids were - like everyone's really snobby, you

know. Salisbury is like that, so it's really hard to fit in with people, but - so you kind of find the ones that are kind of trouble makers, you know, and you just kind of hang out with them, and get yourself in a whole lot of shit and stuff'. When things went wrong at school, especially if there was an incident which involved a child from a so-called good home, the parents were quickly made to realise where they stood. For example, in one incident involving Wikitoria and another student, the Dean of Girls made it clear that the other student 'was a girl from a good home and they believed her'. Heather, who on this occasion was defending her daughter's innocence, pointed out that she did not typically take the line that her daughter was invariably innocent as she felt the Dean of Girls was implying: I just turned around to the headmaster and I said: "When have I ever walked in here and said, you know 'What are you accusing my girl of? She wouldn't do it?' He said: "Never." And I said: "Well, I'm not about to." But this was a girl from a good home, and when they said to me, you know, this is a girl from a good home, and I said: "Well, what the hell is my daughter?" Other parents supplied similar stories.

Heather claimed that on numerous occasions the bad home label was made patently clear to her :

Every time I was called before the headmaster, or every time the children were called before the headmaster before I was, it was: 'Is there a problem at home? Is your father violent? Are your parents fighting?' This was being said to the children without my knowledge, and then it was being said to me and the children, and I got very annoyed about it ... But, it was always - whenever there was a problem, whenever the kids were in trouble, Wikitoria or Ariana, and they - well they were caught smoking or caught doing those kinds of things - it was, you know: 'Is there a problem at home? Have your parents been fighting? Has your father been violent to your mother? Has your father been violent to you?' You know.

Heather was clear that there was almost an automatic assumption that hers wasn't a wealthy home and there being something amiss at home. Heather reports, 'one time I got really annoyed with the headmaster and I said to him: "Look, the only time there is an argument is when there's been an incident like this. You know, when they do something daft at school, then of course there is an explosion." I said, "It's natural for parents to growl." I said, "If we didn't growl we wouldn't care."' However, in this case there was another dimension to the bad home label: I was married to a Maori and as far as - the headmaster was

concerned that there was obviously marital problems. There was obviously violence, possibly drink related. You know - I don't know whether he thought drugs, but I know drink was mentioned at times ... We were sent over to a counselling type thing - an education - I don't know whether it was an assessment or a psychological thing or ... We were sent over and we were asked all the things that we'd been asked through the schools over the years [in Salisbury] about the marriage and the mixed races and the - you know, were there problems in the home and, you know, what kind of home did we run, and were the kids fed and clothed, and what kind of parents were we, and were we home with our kids, and all the usual things that you were asked to see whether you were actually good parents, basically, and to see if they could explain why the kids had problems.

Heather points out that they had 'never ever been asked or questioned at another school', however, in Salisbury there was a linkage made between the fact that the marriage was a mixed one and the home being a bad one. While Heather answered the questions about her marriage, she did not feel happy about being obliged to do so:

it annoyed me to answer them. They got very short answers out of me. I felt insulted, and I felt it was just - just not the thing

to do. I felt that, you know, I shouldn't be asked those questions. They were not relevant. And why should they be relevant because I had a mixed marriage. Why should I be questioned about these things? ... I didn't like the excuses they made that this behaviour was because the children were of mixed marriage and the fact that home was possibly violent, and they had an identity problem, they didn't know who they were. You know, it was all a load of garbage.

That inappropriate behaviour could be explained through the fact that the children had an identity problem was an explanation Heather found wanting, since the children clearly choose Maori as their identity: 'They say they are Maori. ... Sometimes, when you asked them that question, if someone asked them that question in front of me, they'd look at me almost apologetically and say: "Maori". And I'd say: "No, say what you feel". Just do it. Say it.' Heather points out that the issue of identity had never previously been an issue, however at Salisbury, 'it was the excuse for the behaviour'.

Heather explains the impact on her of the realisation that the school believed her home was a bad home:

I felt very degraded. I felt very cheap. I used to leave the school, and I'm not a person who cries easily, but I used to feel - I used to feel like I was dirty when I left the school. I used to feel like I was garbage. I actually got to the stage where I felt like I was garbage walking in there and garbage walking out always clean, always well presented, and I was always looked the

headmaster straight in the eye, which is something that he found a wee bit disconcerting, and he said so did the staff. He said you always look people in the eye, he said, and you always - a spade is a spade with you, he said, and not a lot of people can take that ... But they just made me feel like I was garbage and I thought you're not doing this to me. I'm not garbage. I come from a good home. I've never neglected my children. Never abused them. I'd been strict.

The 'bad home' label had other consequences. For example, Heather reports that both her daughters are asthmatics. When they had to be away from school for extended periods, she would contact the school for work. However, when she went to collect it the work was not forthcoming and her attempts to secure it were fruitless. Consequently, 'the kids would get into trouble because they [then] couldn't do the work that was given[in class] and a lot of their reports say they're behind in work. Work wasn't handed in. But I tried to get that work for them. I tried to have it for them so they could do it, and I just was bashing my head against a brick wall. It used to frustrate me.' Moreover, during the children's absences t Heather always ensured that the school were supplied with medical certificates which she delivered to the school . However, 'behind our backs, they rang the doctor' who was 'disgusted ... he was quite disgusted that the fact that he gave me sick notes that were taken to the school, were not enough'.

Heather tried to show her interest and concern for her children through a policy of assuring the school that she was always available to them.. Her position was I am 'only a phone call away'. She had an arrangement at work whereby she was allowed to leave immediately should there be a problem at school. She says, at the most the time delay between receiving a phone call and being at school was

less than five minutes from that phone call ... I was available and they knew that, and yet a lot of the time when things happened, they didn't ring me until everything blew up. And I'd say: "Well why wasn't I notified?" Even though I was a working parent - and I was working nine till five ... it was out of necessity I was working nine till five. I mean, I was always available. There was no reason why I couldn't come. I would go

up for meetings in my lunch hour and forgo lunch. Whatever. However, while the principal showed some willingness on occasion to take advantage of this, usually situations were allowed to escalate before any contact was made. This was usually through formal letter containing lists of complaints about Ariana, and once she had turned fifteen, a message to the effect that it was the view of the school that it was time she left school and got on with the next phase of her life. Rick and Monica also

complained that in the case of their daughter Virginia, things were allowed to escalate too far before they were contacted despite their plea to be contacted immediately so trouble could be 'nipped in the bud'.

Labelling of other kinds, which added to the oppression felt by these students and families was also commonplace in Salisbury. Heather points out: 'actually there were several references made regarding Ariana and how she looked and behaved. There were actually sexual comments made about her at the high school by [male] teachers, about how - how was it said? ... Sort of almost like she was giving people the come-on in her behaviour.' This is interesting when matched up with Ariana's own account of her relationships with teachers. For example, the principal often said to her

'You think you can just bat your eyelashes at teachers and get away with anything'. I mean I wouldn't - I wouldn't dare. I - the last thing I ever did with teachers was grease. There was no way, man. And I mean, 'bat my eyelashes', I mean, they didn't even like me, and I knew they didn't. I mean I wouldn't try to weasel out of something, you know. If they were going to give me a detention, I would just say: 'Yeah, give it'. But, [greasing] is totally not me, man. I just don't - I just would never have done that.

Ariana, who was expelled by the Board of Trustees in her third year of secondary schooling, is convinced the school did not want students like her; a fact for which she finds it difficult to forgive the school and its teachers:

To me they weren't even worth - they - they weren't worthy of kicking me out. But they did anyway ... I mean, they were meant to be adults, you know. They were meant to be moulding our minds and shit. They were just so scatty and immature it wasn't funny. You know, they were just pathetic. They weren't there to teach us, you know. They were there to teach the people, the kids, that were really, you know, into their homework and didn't have a social life and, you know, school was all there was ... But kids like us, man - kids like me - I don't know, they just - I think they actually, you know, got off on it in a way.

Ariana's view, therefore, was that the teachers only wanted to teach those kids who were easy to teach and wanted to get rid of those who were less committed to school and questioned instead of conformed: 'Oh they just wanted them to get out - get out my face, you know. If you're not going to sit there and be a good kid, Moreover, once you'd really gotten a name for yourself you couldn't get rid of it'.

Ariana linked her difficulties in school to what she saw as the distinctiveness of Salisbury:
altogether, it's not a good place. Attitudes ... Just real bad, low attitudes, you know. Umm ... every school that I've been to in Salisbury, the teachers have been real pain in the arse; think real lowly of kids.. that's what I said to that one that kept me

behind after school, after that PE thing. He - he was like he was talking to animals. Obey and do what he says and, you know - you know how animals, like dogs, the more you kick them the more they'll obey you? You know, the more harshly - he was like that, and I told him not to treat me like an animal. I remember saying that.

This teacher behaviour was restricted to two groups of students which frequently overlapped: 'the trouble makers, you know?

They got treated like animals. And the ones that didn't put up - some of them - like their parents had told them, "if you think you're right stick to it", right! And if they did, then they were scum. If they stuck by their principles'.

Ariana was clear that the assumptions that were made about her were 'low'. She said that teachers thought 'that I'd just leave school, get pregnant, you know. I don't know, just be a nothing. They didn't - they didn't really seem to - it was like - they had the kind of attitude that, 'oh well, if she's like that, well bugger her', and 'just forget her', and, 'on with the next'. You know, they didn't try and keep me on at school. They didn't try and keep me in school. They didn't even want me there ... I was told the teachers didn't like me.' Ariana's attitude to letters written to her parents when she was fifteen recommending that she leave school and get on with the next phase of her life was 'What a stupid thing to say! I mean, I was just a kid. I was - you know?'

Ariana admitted that there was one teacher who seemed to have some faith in her, however, she played this faith out in a way which undermined her intentions

ey want to do is to do school work, and all that kind of stuff, you know.

Ariana's response to this was, 'Oh I just - yeah, well I didn't push myself for her. I just did my work and that was it'.

Ariana had definite views about what constituted good and bad teachers. Bad teachers

liked to stand at the front of the class, tell you when to sit, tell you when to stand, and to talk and all that kind of stuff.

So like, in class I was really - I was a little shit-head, because they just bored me, hey! They just didn't - they couldn't hold anyone's interest, you know. They were just like really boring. They didn't want to have any kind of relationship with you apart from, 'do your work or you're going to get a detention', and all that kind of stuff.

Ariana's complaint was that 'most teachers did not see kids like her as people, man. They saw us just little irritations, hey!'

Ariana claimed that she 'just wanted to be treated with respect, because that's what they expected from me. Where teachers

'didn't respect me - I treated them the same as they treated me, with no respect. And I was always the one who came out with the shorter end of the stick, because of course, I was only the pupil.'

Lack of respect for pupils was a frequent and repeated theme from parents and their children alike. Tiari recounted an incident in which he had tried to address this issue with a teacher when he came home early from work and found Ariana at home because she had 'got kicked out, told to come home' because she refused to do sport with an injured wrist and left when the teacher took a 'hardline attitude, you know: "You do as you're bloody told"' Tiari went to the school and had a meeting with the teacher and reports that it began with the teacher saying

"Whatever she told you, is wrong!" I said: "What did she tell me?" And he said: "Well, whatever it is", he said, "because those little bitches tend to lie." I said: "You're talking about my daughter pal." He said: "They all lie." He said: "All the girls around that age and that group, they all lie." ... And I said: "What group? What sort of bitches? What are you talking about?" You know. And I was waiting for him to say: 'Maoris', but he didn't. He said: "The - all the girls [who were exclusively Maori] that Ariana knocks around with." And he said: "There's a little group of them", and he says, "and they instigate things." And he says: "And Ariana, she has a name for herself as an instigator ... And this guy told me that. ... I said: "Getting back to what happened today", I said, "you didn't take time out to listen." And I said: "I'm getting a wee bit sick of you teacher's attitudes where whatever you say goes." I said: "You've got to - you've got to listen to some of these kids." And I said something to the effect of they're young adults, you know, and they should be treated as such. And he said: "They've got to learn to respect teachers first." That's when we got onto this respect thing. I said: "I think you've got the wrong end of the stick." I said: "You don't think, just because you're a teacher, you're entitled to respect. You have to earn it." I said: "They may respect your position, but they've certainly got no respect for you." And I don't think he quite grasped it, you know. In the end he told me I was wrong word means." I said: "You just take it for granted that because you hold a position of authority, that you're entitled to it." I said: "You're not." I said: "If um - if you feel good about yourself, and if you respect yourself anyhow, it overflows onto these kids, you know." I said: "They, they must look at you as someone that 'well he's all right, you know', and they might even give you a chance." I said: "But the way you operate", I said, "stick full of shit, eh".

Tiari felt that this incident typified his interactions with the school. He says, 'they tend to - a lot of them had that sort of

attitude, where this is - this is my little kingdom, this is how it should be run, and no one else is going to tell me how to do it'.

The families indicated numerous occasions on which they believed the school operated differently for so-called good and bad families. They were unanimous in the view that the school operated in the interests of so-called good families and were unconcerned about the education of their children. There was considerable support for the view expressed by Ariana. This issue is the one that concerned the parents most. They felt that the teachers simply did not care about the academic progress of their children. They believed that teachers had very low expectations of their children and barely noticed when they were under-achieving. For example, David points out that the clearest thing that shaped his view of Salisbury High school was that 'nothing happened. This was the biggest thing ... Both kids, Linda and Peter, learned nothing in the whole time they were at that school ... Both left at fifteen. They had two years secondary'. Linda, daughter of David and Mavis, says the teachers 'didn't really have a lot to do with you, really. They were just in there teaching the class and that was it. They didn't care if we were there or not ... they - well they were there to teach the class not, you know, to help anybody individually or anything. They just sort of went in and did their work and went out again.' When a job offer came along, David encouraged Linda to leave on the grounds that she was 'learning nothing' at school. However, the parents remained disappointed because they felt Linda had some talent for academic work a fact which David believes 'they just didn't notice.' But, while the school didn't notice that capable students were not learning, 'they soon noticed if you didn't wear the right socks or the right shoes or had one sock up and one sock down'. These matters were the ones the school seemed preoccupied with. Moreover, it seemed to these parents that the school seemed singularly lacking in activities that might include a wider range of students so there was little incentive for many students. Rick also claims also the school neglects and loses certain students it should retain . The problem is that these students are not made to feel they have a place in school: 'perhaps with a bit more interest or the children being made to feel that the system actually cares about their well-being ... that they wouldn't have drifted off. Yeah, it was a place - there was a place in that school for those people. And I'm afraid that I don't think that they're given this impression. They're sort of - "oh they're a problem so let's sweep it under the carpet, push it to one side, and hope it will go away."' Moreover, Rick believes there is a cultural bias built into schooling which works against Maori students. He says, there's some brilliant Maori children out there that aren't being given the chance to learn the way they should be learning, and

they're rejected because they're: 'Oh they're lazy. They're a Maori. They don't want to learn.' Some of those kids are crying out to learn, but because of the way that their whole - the racial - their racial side of it, is not geared towards this high pressure learning system. And I think there's a lot of Caucasian kids that could benefit from having this more laid back attitude. There's too much emphasis on, you know: 'You have to do this by such and such a date', and, 'if you don't pass this you're going to do so and so'.

One clear example of differential treatment concerned parent-teacher evenings. The parents described how they waited in queues in the school hall and watched teachers interact differently with wealthy parents compared to the way they interacted with them. Mavis reports that 'it was so obvious You'd spend five minutes with the teacher, and some of these wealthy families would spend up to half an hour and keep everybody

waiting. You know, you had your allotted time and you'd only be there a few minutes.'

Mavis was adamant that there was a clear attitude of deference to wealthy people. Not only was there no attempt to ensure they stayed on schedule Mavis notes that the teachers 'seemed to be on very good terms with them. Friendly, you know, as if they were friends outside of teaching as well'. By contrast, when it was Mavis' turn, while the teachers were 'very nice, very polite', they conveyed a 'we're in a hurry' sort of attitude - get this through' - 'if there's any questions you want to ask, ask them now'. Moreover, the interview was non-informative: 'And then you're sort of told, "Oh yeah, they're doing all right. You've got no worries there" ... but there was nothing specific and they wouldn't go into detail about anything you asked them about'.

Mavis got the impression of being on a conveyor belt 'just being pushed through. You came out - you came away from the school not knowing any more than what you did when you went there'.

The parents were also clear that punishments and rules which applied to their children were applied differently for children from wealthy families. They gave accounts of cases in which gross misbehaviour resulted in minor punishments whilst their own children and children like them were consistently punished, sometimes severely, for minor misdemeanours. For example, Heather says

Well there is one incident where a boy from a good home, who was on the Board of Trustees as the student's representative; he was in Australia on a tour, on a sports tour for the school, and he was accused of a alcohol theft. He was gaoled in Australia, and he came back to New Zealand - and this was all kept very hush hush ... but this boy was gaoled in Australia. He came back to New Zealand. ... He was taken off the Board of Trustees. He was not suspended. He was not given any form of punishment ... And

he was gaoled in Australia for this theft. He was locked up for this theft. And he was not given any form of punishment that I know of. I was told of an incident, and I don't know whether it's him, but one boy had to pick up rubbish in his lunch hour. I'm not sure whether it was him that actually ended up doing it or whether it was another boy. But as far as we know there was no suspension, no [appearing] before the Board of Trustees, no nothing.

It is worth noting fthat being caught smoking was an offence punishable by suspension. Wikitoria and Ariana, Heather and Tiari's daughters, and Virginia, Rick and Monica's daughter, had all been suspended from school for this offence. Other stories of this kind were commonplace. Rick believes that the school functions in the interest of the wealthy but that this only 'comes to the surface when there is a problem, and then it sort of goes away'. Others supported the view that the school operated for the wealthy. Rick suggests, his impression is that 'if you are a fine upstanding member of the community - whether you are upstanding or not is totally - probably totally irrelevant, but if you've got the money ... then the school seems to bow down and do anything in their power to maintain your kiddie's elevation and - there's a pecking order in all the schools. And I've often said - if you've got the money it doesn't really matter what your kids does.' Rick attributes this to the ability of wealthy parents contribute money to smooth over difficulties. Monica's view was slightly different: 'I don't know if it's even - you know, whether money has to change hands here. I think it is just ... it is a thing in New Zealand, I think, just - "she owns this" or "they've got'" - you know, "they own that" sort of thing' therefore you take notice'.

Parental Participation in Schooling

The parents uniformly saw the school as hostile territory in which there was little respect for them and their children. Mavis indicated that part of this was the way in which, when

trying to participate in the life of the school, she had been made to 'feel like an outsider. Like, people like us were outsiders and the others were all part of - they just fitted in'. An example offered tinvolved parent participation on school camps. Mavis points out that the parents who are most frequently involved 'seem to be ... the fitting in ones - it's always those parents that go to these school camps ... invariably it's all the people who can afford to go.' Her experience was that the wealthy parents were not welcoming. Indeed, she was made to feel 'like an outsider, that I shouldn't have been there. The ones that were there were really, "we know what we're doing, you can just step aside". That's the attitude'.

Mavis pointed out that at no time when she participated in the life of the school did she feel her contribution was valued in

the same way as the contribution of wealthy people. Rick described the relationship of the school towards those wealthy parents as 'dicky licking' by which he meant that no effort was spared to accommodate the views and perspectives of wealthy parents. The other parents thought this was no exaggeration and agreed with Tiari's suggestion that although it was inappropriate and wrong, it was unlikely to change because 'it's being going on for that long now that. ... and nothing has been done about it'. Tiari held the view that school is 'supposed to operate in a vacuum ... uninfluenced from the outside'; a state of affairs he felt that did not obtain in Salisbury.

Tiari felt that, as a parent, 'teachers were not interested' in what he had to say 'Because it was their territory, their kingdom'. He claimed the principal had a way of putting people down, you know. He's one of these guys who could never look you in the eye when they tell you anything, you know'. While Tiari readily acknowledged that this was not planned policy, it was more a consequence of having no other strategies for dealing with 'anti-parents, you know. Parents who were - who were - had a beef with the school, you know - that was the only they knew how to handle them'. While parents might want to negotiate with the school and set an unfortunate situation to rights, Tiari felt the school viewed parental approaches as 'just an irate person coming into tell them off, you know. They don't really see it as someone coming in to sort of help them settle a situation ... and I doubt that they ever will. I - I don't know now, but I hope they - I hope they do.' Tiari went on to add that in his view, 'the only contribution that [the school] wanted was tangible stuff - money.' Community input, he argued, had been imposed on the school rather than being sought by it.

Tiari's view was that in interactions with the school parents certainly weren't supposed to win the arguments ... I don't think any parents here went up to the school to win anything ... It was just to try to get their kids to get back to school, you know, and hopefully learn something, or be taught something. But a lot of the kids here - I've had the impression anyhow, that a lot of kids in Salisbury were just pushed off. It was only the kids who were showing promise and whose parents had a bit of influence, if you like. They were the ones who were sort of taken care of, you know.

One of the saddest comments had to do with the way in which Tiari saw the school responding to his daughters: 'Yeah. And as for the actual way our kids were treated at school, I don't - I'm not saying that our kids are little angels, you know. They can be proper little arseholes, and - like anybody's kids. But, that doesn't mean to say you've got to - you know, because they've got a bum you are going to keep on kicking it. In Tiari's view this is precisely the way the school responded 'Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you know. 'Ah shit, there's an arsehole, give it a boot!' It's just that, you know?'

Most of the parents found their face to face interactions with the school unsatisfactory, particularly when they approached the

school over a situation they were concerned about. They felt they were constantly being fobbed off and important issues frequently remained unresolved despite the fact that the parents were assured they would be addressed. As Tiari said of the principal, 'Yeah, he - he knew how to sidetrack. He shouldn't be - he shouldn't be - he should be a politician instead of a school principal, because he was one of these guys who could answer a question without answering a question, you know. He had a way of - he could make you feel important - for some unknown reason I never ever felt that way [before]. I felt that he used to treat us like he treats his kids. Tiari suggested a lot of the time they were 'talked down to' and that 'we were just there because he felt like humouring us. You know, if - if he didn't give us the interview today, we'd have rung up and wanted one tomorrow. If he didn't do it then, we'd just carry on until we got one. He says: "Oh, may as well get it over and bloody done with!" You know?' On other occasions, when the school initiated the contact, Heather described the principal's approach as 'in boots and all'.

Rick and Monica's experiences were almost identical. They felt the principal avoided interaction with them. They were required to 'sit there like a dummy and virtually given no power to speak whatsoever. You were just there to listen. That's the impression that you got ... so the last time I thought, "well to hell with my humiliation," and I just gave him a parting shot through the door and said: "Well that's the last time you'll ever see me here, because you've done nothing for me, you've done nothing for my wife and nothing for my kids."'

One issue which frequently gave rise to bad feeling between these parents and the school was the cost of "free" schooling. It appeared as if school policies and rules were formulated without much regard for the economic realities of some of the parents. (This should come as no surprise for as will be evident presently the previous Board of Governors and the current Board of Trustees did not contain representatives from this sector of the school population.) For example, all the parents commented that the school changed its uniform frequently and how their children were required to wear the new uniform from the date of the change. Failure to do so resulted in considerable harassment and punishment (usually by detention but sometimes by suspension) of the students. This, of course, meant the replacement of relatively unworn parts of the previous uniform. Not only did this impose considerable financial difficulty on these families, it also went against their cultural predispositions, born of straightened circumstances, towards financial canniness. The school did apparently offer some parents the opportunity to pay

off a uniform through a loan system which was paid back by 'drip feeding' the school; that is, paying a dollar or two a week. Similarly, when students lost items of school uniform which their parents couldn't immediately afford to replace, failure to be in correct uniform also ensured certain punishment. In Rick's eyes the reaction of the school 'was petty - bloody things that should never ever have got to the stage that they get to'. Indeed, the parents were able to recount numerous incidents in which incidents like this did seem to escalate in absurd ways. For example, Heather and Tiari reported an incident in which their son lost in quick succession two pairs of new school uniform shoes. When they could not immediately replace these shoes, their son was excluded from school. The incident left Heather wondering about the school's priorities: 'it was just, you know, so frustrating. ... they were more concerned about a pair of shoes than how he got on with his education, and [I thought] they weren't a very good school, because to me it was more important to be at school than to worry about whether you've got the correct pair of shoes on.' There was a general feeling amongst this group of parents that many of the offences for which their

children were punished were silly. As Rick puts it, 'a lot of those suspensions, to my way of thinking, were totally unnecessary.'

Another significant concern for these families was the way in which the school was governed either by the former Board of Governors or by the present Board of Trustees. One reason was that the people before whom they had to appear when their children were in trouble at school were people who exerted considerable power in other aspects of their life. For example, Monica pointed her embarrassment in discovering their bank manager 'was on the Board of Governors.'

Rick says that in his experience with governors or trustees, 'I've not yet struck the average - your average working bloke ... It always seems to be professional people, or people that are considered to have very good standing in the community, because they must be upright citizens, therefore able to deal with problems that arise at school.' Monica pointed out that they were usually people with a 'home life vastly different' from people like them. Rick's view was that while 'sixty thousand a year plus', might make community members home life 'different', it did not make it any better, however, he was clear that there was a predisposition in education circles to equate the two: it seems to be in the eyes of - a lot of the education areas, that if you've got money you must be better. And I think it's a fallacy, but as I say again, you go along to these things and you're Joe Bloggs and you look round and there's your bank manager and there's so and so and Mrs so and so and that lady there - she's well up on something else. And you think well -

you know, it doesn't worry me. I mean, I'm a bit naughty as far as that's concerned. I don't even think - I don't consider the Queen of England to be any better than I am. She's just another person.

Despite this view, Rick points out 'it must be terribly intimidating to some of the kids ' and Monica adds, 'Well it was intimidating to me. I felt that. I felt I was inferior'. And Rick adds, 'I was angry to think that here - here I am being dragged along to the school when one of my kids has got a problem, and I'm having to sit here and bare our personal things in front of people that I have to work with, or people I have to approach in my course of work ... in the community'.

Moreover, there was an air of formality which made these parents uncomfortable. Monica says, 'they were all dressed up to the nines, suits and ties, the lot, and I just felt, really, that you know, it's not a ... private school, where you know, you pay the money. Why couldn't it have been more a relaxed atmosphere?' In Rick's view, 'It was almost like a mini-courtroom' ... [in which] 'you were sort of tried and - and the sentence was passed before you ever went through the door.' Monica was left feeling a sneaking admiration for her daughter despite 'all the trouble my daughter has got into, I do take my hat off to her for the guts that she has had in standing up to these people.' Nothing was done to break the atmosphere of formality and intimidation. As Monica puts it, 'like we couldn't sit down like we are now, you know' to discuss the issues.

In Rick's view the parents had a clearly defined role both in relation to either the Board of Governors or the Board of Trustees:

Well we just felt that when you entered the room, that the whole thing had been discussed previously, and the verdict arrived at, and that you were just going to sort of go through the motions, and look repentant and say that you would do your utmost that your child won't do this again, and sort of: 'Please can she come back to school?'

Heather says her experience in appearing before a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees was similar. She was made to listen to one propertied trustee 'rav[ing] on about how marvellous her

child had been and blah, blah, blah.'

The Board of Trustees had a co-opted Maori representative.

Tiari, had actually offered himself for this position on the grounds that he actually wanted a fair go for other kids just like [Ariana], you know?' However, because his job involved shift work, the Maori community decided that there was some risk that Tiari might have to miss some meetings. Nevertheless, Heather and Tiari participated in all the cottage meetings that led to the selection of the Maori representative. Subsequently, their daughter Ariana was expelled by the Board of Trustees.

Significantly, although Ariana is a Maori, the Maori representative on the Board of Trustees was unaware there was a problem in Ariana's case despite the fact that he was frequently in the school to teach the Maori culture group. In other words, the one trustee who might have been able to prevent an expulsion was kept uninformed by the principal and the other trustees. It is clear that the parents were not informed about their rights by the school, nor were they well-informed about procedures. The parents did not realise that when they were called to the school they were to appear before a discipline committee which was a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees which actually had the power to expel their daughter. They assumed that they would be appearing before a group much like the Board of Governors who, at most, could recommend expulsion. Heather claimed that it was obvious throughout the meeting that a decision had already been made regarding Ariana's expulsion. She read the expressions on the faces of the female trustees when the Maori trustee was indicating that a decision was yet to be made and that Ariana might be able to return to school for a fresh start. The news of the expulsion came via the Maori trustee who was in Heather and Tiari's home within half an hour of the family leaving the meeting. The Maori Trustee was very distressed. Very upset. The chairperson was going to ring us and he said: "I do not wish the people to hear the news this way, I am coming to speak to them. I will go myself and talk to them." And he was very very upset. In fact, he looked almost like he was going to cry. He was quite upset. He was quite embarrassed, because he had not known of Ariana's problems. No-one had made him aware, and he had never seen the problems in the dealings he'd had with Ariana.

While Heather knew that the point of having a Maori representative is to give the Maori people somewhere to turn to ... And he takes under his wing anybody that the headmaster or principal advises has any problems. And he takes them under wing and just sort of tries to guide them and help them in any way he can. Talk to them, talk with the parents, talk with them and the teachers. Be a liaison, whatever he can do.

However, 'he was not made aware of Ariana. And this kept coming up [at the discipline committee meeting] You know, "why didn't I know?"' Heather adds, ' Yes, and I'm not sure how much knowledge and notice of that meeting - because he came in very late'.

Moreover, he seemed surprised to see the family there.

Analysis: Conceptual Inadequacies Built into the Reforms

These data demonstrate that there are conceptual inadequacies in the reforms, which ensure that disadvantaged students in schools like Salisbury remain disadvantaged and also run the risk of being further disadvantaged.

The notion of community on which the reforms rest is one which suggests residence in a particular area 'implies both a

commonality of interests and a consequent unity of purpose' (Moss, 1990: 140). Thus in the Picot Report one reads 'of the "particular needs of the community" (p. 44), "community educational needs", "wishes of their community" (p. 52), and "communities said they believed" (p. 55). There are more than thirty instances in which, arguably, the word is used in this

sense' (Moss, 1990: 140). As Moss (1990: 140) suggests, this is not necessarily a view of 'the way New Zealand society currently functions. Rather this is New Zealand the way the taskforce wants it, an ideal society, but an ideal that is presented as achievable with virtually no structural changes'. Communities are treated as 'harmonious wholes' as though there are no divisions by class, gender or ethnicity (Moss, 1990: 140) and 'power is regarded as equally distributed, or at least potentially so, amongst members of the community, and the commonality of their interests ensures that they can come together to articulate uniform and coherent views' (Moss, 1990: 141).

Jones (1990: 96), in an analysis of influential Treasury 'briefs' (1987a, 1987b), similarly points to the lack of attention to the fact that 'New Zealand "society" is structured by a capitalist economy which is constituted by unequal class, race and gender relations and has been since before 1840'.

Moreover, she suggests:

The authors seem to want us to believe that if groups of people are left alone to administer their affairs they will reach 'optimal solutions', presumably optimal for all groups. This stands in contradiction with the vast body of scholarly research and argument that shows that, without intervention, the most powerful groups are invariably enabled to reproduce a situation which benefits them. This might be optimal for dominant groups, but hardly for anyone else whose interests do not coincide (Jones: 1990: 98).

The qualitative data shows how flawed is the utopian view of community evident in Picot and the earlier Treasury 'briefs'. Far from there being a commonality of interest and uniformity of purpose arising from residence in a common area, the data demonstrates the divided nature of interests and purposes in the Salisbury community both inside and outside the school.

Moreover, the absence or presence of social power is crucial in determining which sector of the community has its needs met within the school. In this study 'optimality' for dominant groups was often achieved at the expense of members of the working class. For example, powerful parents were allowed to monopolise teacher time in parent- interviews. Less powerful parents not only felt hurt by the more cursory treatment they received, they were less able to adequately address the issues that concerned them. Differential playing out of school rules

and differential treatment of groups within the school was such that those who were already advantaged by class and race furthered their advantage. Those from disadvantaged groups were shown the school was a situation in which there was no concern or respect for them or their parents. Indeed, the intrusion into the private lives of selected families through contact with medical practitioners and questions about family life premised on an assumption of 'deviance' of mixed marriages, or more generally working class marriages, demonstrates the extent to which the school conceptualised certain people as social objects devoid of feeling and incapable of being hurt and humiliated through these interrogations.

Even if it were the case that power were equally shared in a village-like community, it is also true that social relationships are no longer 'dictated by geographical proximity (if they ever were) and there are few institutions which might provide a focus for them' (Moss, 1990: 142-3). Of course, the school is one such possibility. However, 'schools could hardly generate communities of quite the kind the taskforce seems to have in mind' especially given that 'the 1986 census indicates that the median population of the community for primary schools (that is, those living in an area served by a school) is in excess of 2000 and for secondary schools is in excess of 12 000. Such figures preclude the face - to face interaction of those who might be said to constitute the

community. Furthermore, it is only with extreme difficulty that one could conceive of such groups interacting with any unity of interest or purpose' (Moss, 1990: 143).

Salisbury has a population of 11000 to 12000. One anecdote will suffice to show that social relationships are not dictated by geographical proximity. Heather tells the story of an event soon after Ariana's expulsion:

we were at a party and talking to ... people [who] ... weren't friends. They were people my husband worked with and we started a discussion about the high school. And I found that there were other parents - and they were ... white parents, but working class - had problems with the school and weren't very impressed. I was actually surprised because I'd never heard about these children. I mean, I didn't - I didn't know the people. Tiari worked with some of the husbands and that's the only connection we had, and it was actually the first time I'd ever met them ... and I found that there were a lot of very dissatisfied people out there, that you know, weren't very impressed with what was going on and the way people were treated. Parents were being told things like their kids were too dumb: 'You might as well get them out of school', and different things like that. Most of these families lived within walking distance of each other. Nevertheless Heather was surprised because she had not known other families were engaged in similar difficult struggles

with the school. She says: I was sort of taken back, because I sort of - I couldn't believe that this was more general than it was, because I just felt like - the way I was treated, I felt like I was just a leper that had come to the school.' Her isolation from similarly placed others was such that she felt 'we'd failed' despite the fact that 'we'd always been pretty good as far as parents go.'

It is hard to imagine how the community might be well-placed to meet its needs, particularly equity needs through devolution of decision to local schools. The case study data presented above indicate that far from being a 'harmonious whole' Moss (1990: 140), the community is a site of significant conflict in which power is not shared equally. The Board of Trustees represents the interests of powerful upper and middle-class parents. Rather than operating to fulfil the obligations of its charter, the Board of Trustees co-operates with administrators in the school to allow the systematic exclusion from schooling of students from pakeha and Maori working class backgrounds. The practices of the past continue and flourish under the very structure which was said to be the best means of addressing issues of equity. Indeed, one outcome of the greater power given to boards of trustees, compared to that held by the former boards of governors in this area, at least, is a significant increase in suspensions and expulsions for pakeha and Maori working class children. Thus devolution, as it has been played out in this school, is inconsistent with social justice. A socially just situation would be one in which there was both equal access and equal use of the school.

Policy such as that in Tomorrow's Schools, in which there is devolution of administration of schools from central agencies of the state (department of education) to organisational units within civil society (that is, the boards of trustees) will have social effects. It is clear from the data that state policy and civil society interact in ways which enable the interests of dominant groups within the school to prevail. Simply declaring that school boards should be representative of their communities does not address certain social realities such as the fact that particular kinds of skills and competencies are unevenly distributed among individuals within a community like Salisbury. Those with would call cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) are likely to capture the positions available on the boards of trustees since these are the people who are most likely to see

themselves, and be seen by others like them, as having appropriate skills, knowledge and capacities. (Recall that the working class parents did not necessarily concede these people were better equipped for these positions than 'ordinary working blokes'.) Significantly, the provision for co-opted members of disadvantaged groups does little to address this imbalance as a

co-opted member of a marginalised group may, in circumstances such as those that prevailed in Salisbury, be divested of any potential they have to do socially just work because they can be marginalised and outvoted by the dominant group. Consider here the way in which the Maori trustee appears to have been kept unaware that a Maori student was in serious trouble in the school and that a decision regarding her fate was already made. Moreover, what does not seem to be addressed is that, class as much as race, is a basis on which injustice may be played out. It is interesting to note that no attempt was made to co-opt working class parents to the board of trustees to attempt a closer reflection of the composition of the community. However, what the parents in this study shared was their positioning as members of the working class. The lack of working class representatives ensured that the Maori trustee was thoroughly isolated from any other person in remotely similar circumstances. That is, he was left to work alone against the hegemonic social relations of civil society. Not surprisingly, he was not having much success. Thus the Board of Trustees has little opposition to the view that it is normal, and in the best interests of the school, that those students who have not traditionally been part of the post-compulsory cohort should leave as quickly as possible. Racism and classism continue unabated and uninterrupted. And ordinary people take the brunt of this as they have to deal with the effects of their children's anti-school responses that constantly disrupt their lives. Speaking as a representative of parents in this group Rick puts his perception of the process this way :

Yes. You have your kids and the first day they go to school ... and you go off to work and think, 'first day at school', you know. All the things that they'll learn, and what - now all the aspirations and dreams that you have, and then slowly it's all eroded and chiselled away. And sometimes I sort of really look and think, 'well had the system been different or more fair or geared towards helping some of the ones that do have a problem' It was because there was nothing left of interest or a compelling nature that they wanted to go along. And to me, school should be somewhere that kids think - get up in the morning and think.... "Great, yeah. Off to school" .. it seems to me [however] that there's an awful lot ... of these petty politics that go on behind the scenes, that seem to have these major interrupting lapses that sort of reach into the classroom and just sort of pull a blind down and call a halt to the learning process.

Implications For Australia

If teachers and schools genuinely want to make a difference in the lives of the disadvantaged kids, then they are going to have to make sure that the 'erosion of aspirations and dreams' is not

the end result of the schooling process. The devolved structure, in place in New Zealand which makes the board of trustees the mechanism for the link between school and community, is unlikely to bring about that end. Indeed, it is clear that state policy has set up the very conditions which allow the middle classes to co-opt the school and make it almost their exclusive property. This process of co-option appears to facilitate the exclusion of disadvantaged kids. Indeed, one might be well advised to be cynical about state policy which shifts responsibility for social justice in a capitalist society to the local level. One might reasonably ask 'Whose interests are being served?'

There is, of course, an obvious potential for school councils in Australian schools, particularly those in country towns, to be monopolised by the most powerful parents in the area. As we have seen, this social bias in the composition of school councils or boards of trustees is unlikely to promote social justice. This places considerable responsibilities on teachers to prevent the hastened exclusion of disadvantaged students from the schooling system. To act in a socially just way, schools must not only provide equal access but ensure equal use of schooling. Teachers, in other words, must act as a bulwark between the students they teach and the school councils.

Teachers must take responsibility for ensuring the respectful treatment of both parents and students. They must be prepared to listen to their students and to the parents. They must eschew the ethnocentrism evident in the view that class position, race and so on dictate the worth of one's contribution to the schooling process. Indeed, the parents in this study had many important insights which could have not only enhanced the education process for their children but could have made teachers working lives much more productive. Similarly, every student in this study told a story which indicated they or their fellow pupils were only moved to misbehave in situations in which they were blatantly maltreated or taught so badly they were bored. They all recognised and respected those few teachers who cared about them, who built their lessons to involve them and considered they had a contribution to make. Their deviance in other words was socially constructed. It was not an inevitable result of their class or race.

References

- Education Act, 1989. Government Printing Office, Wellington.
Charter Framework, 1989. Department of Education, May.
Fergusson, D. M. Lloyd, M. & Horwood, L.J. 1991. Family Ethnicity, Social Background and Scholastic Achievement - An Eleven Year Longitudinal study, *Journal of Educational Studies*, 2 (1), pp. 49-63.)

Irving, J. 1990. Reform of Education in New Zealand: Quality Review and Accountability, Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand, October, pp. 1-11.

Jones, A. 1990. 'I just wanna decent job' Working class girls' education: Perspectives and policy issues. In H. Lauder & C. Wylie (eds), Towards Successful Schooling. London: Falmer Press.

Ministry of Education (1991) Education in New Zealand. Wellington, September

Ministry of Education, 1992. Devolution in the New Zealand Education System. Wellington, New Zealand, March.

Marshall, J. & Peters, M. (1991). Educational "Reforms" and New Right Thinking: An Example from New Zealand. Educational Philosophy and Theory, 23 (2), pp. 46-57.

Moss, L. (1990). Picot as Myth. In S. Middleton & A. Jones (eds) New Zealand Education Policy Today: Critical Perspectives. pp. 139-149. Wellington: Allen and Unwin.

Report of the Task Force to Review Education Administration (Picot Report), 1988. Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education. Wellington: Government Printer.

Rt Hon David Lange, 1989. Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand, Wellington: Government Printer.

The Treasury 1987b Government Management: Brief to Incoming Government 1987, Vol. I. Wellington: Government Printer.

The Treasury 1987b Government Management: Brief to Incoming Government 1987, Vol. II: Educational Issues Wellington: Government Printer.

Decentralisation Elizabeth j. Htown suggests sing-class Maori and pakeha (non-given [inren's absences ensured that school
~~~~~  
is worth noting involved priorities  
weren't responsibility constructed disorder for you, you're in.'  
Linda Davidt

ue. The paper concludes with aot Report' but formally titled n Volumes 1 and 2 of Treasury 'B'sion of the Treaty of Waitangi ) , ,he Treasury, 1987a & 1987b). T placed in the community vance or anyof or of  
1

Endnotes1. Pakeha refers to people of European (mainly British) descent. , ,is it

which both partners were ,olo parent familiesingInot in terms of the children having Althoughists of complaints about Ariana,,

Tiari shifted the discussion back to the events that day and



said:"Y

The teacher responded with 'earn to respect teachers first.'

Tiari's response was:

tions with the school. He says: felt was her participation

participation it was inappropriate and wrong. They believed

concerned how

comed the current Board of Trusteesincludeout her embarrassment

o,of