

NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL CHARTERS AND POLICIES

- THREE YEARS ON

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TE WHANAU O AKO PAI KI TE UOKO O TE IKA

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ABSTRACT

This paper, which reports on part of a larger research project  
Monitoring Today's Schools undertaken by Waikato University,

focuses on the perceptions of parent trustees, principals and teachers on selected issues concerning school charters and policies. The tension between the role of the charter in maintaining national education goals including equity, and its role as an expression of local values and goals is considered. Ways in which the roles and responsibilities for governance and management have settled between parent trustees, principals and teachers is examined in the context of school policy development.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 School Charters and Policies

The reforms of educational administration in New Zealand brought about shifts in power and responsibilities between the state, the school, and the community. Many of the operating responsibilities of the former Education Department and now abolished Education Boards were devolved to boards of trustees which consist largely of parents of children currently attending each school. These boards were given responsibility for controlling the management of their own school and for employing the principal, as chief executive, and the teachers.

One of the key concepts in the Picot Report (1988) was the school charter, which, as John Codd and Liz Gordon (1990) suggest, "seemed to give concrete meaning to the abstract notion of partnership between government and community". New relationships between trustees, the community, and teachers were suggested by provisions of the Education Amendment Act 1989, and by various guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education for ways in which the charter and the ensuing school policies would be developed, approved, implemented and monitored. More detailed information about the development of school charters can be found in Report No 3 of the Monitoring Today's Schools Research Project, Charters; The Development and Approval of Initial Charters by A. Hall and C. McGee (1991).

The government set out a form for the charter which included compulsory goals and objectives relating to community consultation, equity, Treaty of Waitangi, personnel, finance and property. For each of these goals, schools were required every year to develop their own policies. Further local goals were identified by each school in consultation with its own community.

The requirements for policies for personnel, finance and property management represented the devolution of responsibility for these management functions to each individual school. The requirement for policies for community consultation expressed the ideal of

partnership between each school and its community which had been described in the Government policy documents. The emphasis on equity, including gender and disability equity and on the Treaty of Waitangi was seen as the state's way of establishing some basic safeguards required for a national education system, and reflected the commitment of the Labour Government to promoting change in these areas.

Parent trustees in the Monitoring Today's Schools Research Project, interviewed soon after their election, gave substantial support to the compulsory goals and policies for equity and the Treaty of Waitangi. (Middleton and Oliver, 1990).

During 1990, doubt had been cast on the future of the compulsory nature of the equity and Treaty of Waitangi goals in school charters. The National Government which was elected in October 1990 had emphasised in its electioneering the need for the New Zealand education system to build an "enterprise nation" and reject Labour's emphasis on equity as "social engineering". Shortly after being elected, the new Minister of Education Dr Lockwood Smith announced that he intended to make the equity requirements in the school charters optional rather than compulsory. At the time of writing, (October 1992) no change has yet been made to the charter requirements.

## 1.2 Governance, Management and Policy Development - Advice Given to Schools.

The trustees, principals and teachers interviewed for this study were working in a political context which provided a framework for the relationships within each school. The way in which schools were expected to develop their policies, whether compulsory or optional, and the roles of the players were suggested in a number of ways.

In 1989, at the beginning of the devolution process, the government brought to New Zealand two educators from Australia, Jim Spinks and Brian Caldwell, who conducted seminars around the country for principals and later for trustees. By attending these seminars and reading their book, *The Self Managing School* (1989), principals and trustees learned of a model for policy development and writing which would "demonstrate that the school is being operated in an efficient and businesslike manner... ensure uniformity and consistency in decisions and operational procedures,.. foster stability and continuity, ...provide a framework for planning...and assist the school in the assessment of the instructional programme." (p 93)

Caldwell and Spinks suggested that policies would be developed

by a "policy group" made up of both parents and staff who would consult more widely. "Programme teams" consisting of teachers were responsible for the "delivery". There was little discussion of the relationship and specific roles of these groups in initiating policy or allocating priorities.

The experience in Australia of Caldwell and Spinks did not include anything like a school charter. In giving advice to New Zealand trustees and principals, they were not able to take full account of the influence of the charter as a base document, arrived at through wide community consultation, from which policies would be derived.

The Australian models which formed such a central part of the initial training provided by the New Zealand government had no reference to biculturalism or to equity goals which were supposed to underpin charters and policies in this country.

Further advice was given to principals and trustees by consultants Terry Kilmister and Malcolm Menzies, who also offered a range of seminars and workshops to newly elected boards. They had developed a model for charter and policy development which they believed took account of New Zealand values such as equity, biculturalism, and the working partnership between teachers and parents which already characterised many New Zealand schools. To avoid confusion, they tried to keep their model consistent with that already publicised by Caldwell and Spinks.

Kilmister and Menzies, with a background in non-profit organisations, were concerned that schools should follow this way of establishing and implementing policy rather than follow models of boards in profit-oriented businesses. Their model distinguished the governance and management functions, with the board responsible for policy - the "ends", and the principal and staff responsible for implementation, or "means". Their definition of policy was limited to establishing broad goals, and the details of specific policies were thought to be the province of the management of the school - the principal. (Kilmister, 1990).

Boards of trustees and principals received "official" advice carefully distinguishing their governance and management roles in a paper "The Role of the Principal and Trustees in Tomorrow's Schools" (Ballard and Duncan 1989) which was sent to each school by the Department of Education. It carried some weight as one of the writers, Ballard, was at the time the Director of Education.

Other commentators and educators such as David Stewart and Ivan Snook (1990) have suggested that the distinction between governance and management is not a tenable one for schools, because in education it is neither possible nor desirable to separate policy making from policy implementation. They advocate a working partnership for policy making between boards and teachers, where the teachers, perhaps with some involvement of the board and community, work through a number of problem solving stages to prepare draft policy which is then submitted to the board to consider and eventually legitimize.

In the course of a number of professional development courses for principals from 1990 onwards, such as the Reflective Principal

courses organised by Wellington College of Education, the distinction between ends and means of education, and the setting of boundaries between governance and management have also been challenged. It has been suggested that in a school where there is a climate of trust and mutual respect between parents and staff, and where all are pressed for time and energy to do the work, the boundaries of responsibility for many of the tasks such as working on policy are able to be blurred and people in these schools can indeed work together in partnership to get the work done by whoever can do it well in that particular setting.

In 1990, a year after the reforms were in place, a committee set up by the government and headed by Noel Lough, a former Treasury officer, produced a review, *Today's Schools* (Education Reform Implementation Team, 1990), which claimed that many principals were not coping well with their increased administrative workload. In response to this, more detailed guidance on their role was given through a series of booklets and seminars on School Management prepared by the Principals' Implementation Taskforce and published by the Ministry of Education in late 1990. One of these, *Governance and Management*, (1990) outlined the principles on which the relationship between the boards of trustees and the school principals should be based. This booklet gave a clear reminder that the governance role of the board required it to "establish school policies after due consultation with the principal, staff and school community, monitor and evaluate their results and review the policies regularly." (p 2) It goes on to define a policy as

an agreed statement of purpose on a particular matter. It states the general aim or purpose, and the broad guidelines within which procedures or programmes will be developed.

It seems to allow a flexible approach to the governance and management roles:

Approval of policies is the responsibility of Boards of Trustees. They may delegate the task of developing policies to groups of staff, individual trustees, parents, students and other members of the school community. Indeed it will be of considerable importance that people with direct interest or expertise in an issue are involved in the development of a particular policy....an important part of the Board's goal-setting function is negotiating these changing priorities, in consultation with the principal, staff, parents, students and the school community. (p 2)

The taskforce reminded principals that to retain the distinction of the approved governance and management roles of trustees and staff, they should require clear definitions of tasks for any policy sub-committee, and a reporting process either to the principal or the board. The booklet goes on to remind schools that while the board is responsible for writing policies, it is the principal and staff who are responsible for developing and

monitoring the appropriate procedures and programmes. The booklet makes some concession to the blurring of roles which was already happening, by suggesting that it may be necessary to negotiate the dual roles of governance and management.

### 1.3 Underlying Theories

The school charter, as Codd and Gordon (1990) describe it, "seemed to give concrete meaning to the abstract notion of 'partnership' between government and community...gradually, however, as the reforms proceeded the charter came to signify the power and control of the state". Codd and Gordon locate the concept of the charter within a theory of the state which will "alter the nature of state power through a contractual relationship and by binding emergent alliances and social networks to new strategies of political control".

A group of related economic theories have been described by Boston et al (1991) as underpinning public sector reforms in New Zealand. Each of these has interesting expressions in the concept of school charters.

In line with public choice theory, which seeks to minimise the role of the state, curb the functions of government agencies and maximise liberty for consumers, the charters were a mechanism for shifting responsibility for maintaining quality education from a paid bureaucracy to volunteer parents.

A related theory which underpins the school charter concept, agency theory, rests on the notion that social and political life can be understood as a series of contracts between a principal and an agent. Through the school charters, the board of trustees is an agent of the government, at the same time as the school principal is an agent of the board. The ultimate power and control of government is retained. School principals and teachers are mere employees who must be kept relatively powerless, as they are, according to this theory, likely to attempt "provider capture" and monopolise decision making and control of resources at the expense of the consumer parents.

The mandatory clauses of the charter are clearly an expression of this purpose, as the then deputy prime minister wrote "The centre must set national objectives...the key to the Picot proposals is the charter which binds those who are responsible for each institution and which marries the community goals of that particular institution with the national goals" (Palmer 1988).

Managerialism is another set of ideas which has influenced the Tomorrow's Schools reforms by reducing the role of the school principal to that of chief executive who is there merely to implement policy set by the board, a purely instrumental activity concerned with means not with ends. This is the concept which was promoted by Ballard and Duncan (1989), reinforced by the Lough Report (1990), and which has been challenged by educators

like David Stewart and other tutors in principals' development courses run since 1989 by colleges of education.

All these theories rest on an assumption that individuals are motivated solely by self interest. There is no recognition of altruism or of service to the community as motivators of human behaviours, or of any element of trust between partners in an enterprise.

While the notion of school charters contained clear elements of these theories imported from other countries, they were interwoven with other agendas which are specific to New Zealand. These include the history of open and constructive partnership between parents and teachers in New Zealand schools, respect for school principals as professional leaders who generally use collaborative leadership styles to share responsibility with teachers and parents for both setting and achieving the educational goals of the school, and New Zealand's long-standing commitment to equity, (Middleton and Oliver, 1990, Middleton 1992, and Ramsay, Oliver and Harold 1992)

Analyses such as those by Boston et al and Codd and Gordon are useful, as Middleton suggests (1992) " in making visible some of the social and economic theories behind educational restructuring, and also in making connections between the restructuring of education and policy changes in other agencies of the state." Middleton goes on to affirm that "if we are to gain a wider understanding of educational restructuring, we need to augment textual analyses with studies of how the restructuring processes are lived and thought about in specific local..schools... We need studies that explore relationships between the theoretical assumptions of government policies and the ideas of those who are involved in the everyday implementation of those policies within the school." This present study has attempted to do this by "giving voice" to those who have initially been most affected by the reforms, the parent trustees, the principals and the other teachers.

#### 1.4 The Present Study

This study is part of a three year longitudinal research project, Monitoring Today's Schools, undertaken by Waikato University and funded by The Ministry of Education. The overall purpose of the project is to monitor the implementation and impact of the reforms in educational administration, which have taken place in New Zealand since 1988. The research has been carried out by a team of eighteen people. Fifteen schools have been studied in depth, thirteen in the Waikato region and two in Wellington. The project is focussing on six primary schools, two intermediate schools, four secondary schools, two bilingual schools, and one area school, with locations varied between rural, small town and city.

In the final phase of the research project on which this paper is based parallel interviews were carried out with the principals and a sample of board members and teachers within the fifteen schools. The interviews were carried out between August 1991 and April 1992. Data for this report were obtained from 12 principals, 68 trustees other than the principals, and 11 teachers. The matters dealt with in the interviews were derived from analyses of the issues schools had been dealing with and the questions which formed the basis of the project's contract with the Ministry of Education. Each interview covered a range of issues, of which those reported in this paper were only a part. A full report of this part of the project, (Mansell, 1992) continues the story of school charters begun by Hall and McGee (1991).

For the present paper I have selected parts of that report which help to illuminate the reactions of people in schools to some of the shifts in power between central government and individual schools and between parent trustees and teachers. In the first section, I describe and comment on the perceptions of trustees, principals and teachers of what the status of the charter should be, and whether they think the Minister of Education should be able to override their charter. As the charter serves as a base document for the development of school policies, my second section reports and discusses the perceptions of these groups of the process of policy development and monitoring, with particular emphasis on the evolution of the relative roles and responsibilities of the trustees, the principals and the teachers.

2. What status do you think the charter should have?

Principals

Principals in these fifteen schools on the whole said they strongly supported the charter as a key document for their school, some suggesting that the real value will be seen over time.

It's fundamental. One of the really big plusses in the whole process of educational restructuring.

(Secondary school principal)

Over a long period of time it should develop into the school's underlying philosophy document. I don't believe that in its current form it should be over-emphasised until it has had time to mature like good wine or cheese.

(Secondary school principal)

It's the blueprint for the school.

(Area school principal)

The more I use it, the more status I think it should have, it has become a very workable document.

(Primary school principal)

It's been a good starting point - acts as a foundation to future developments.

(Primary school principal)

It should be the lynchpin of what you do - the protection of EEO should be there.

(Primary school principal)

It has the advantage of being public compared to school schemes. It has been the catalyst for the Tomorrow's Schools movement. It is the weaver, it brings the fabric together.

(Intermediate school principal)

One principal sounded a note of reservation:

It should not be pre-emptive. It's just one of the group of documents - charter, prospectus, staff handbook, schemes, policy statement, budget.

(Secondary school principal)

Teachers

Other teachers besides the principal also accorded high status to the charter, though they expressed more reservations.

About three quarters of the primary teachers interviewed said that the charter was, or should be, central, of high priority, or a focus for what happened in the school.

It's an umbrella document. We put more weight on the syllabus, but the charter is there as the "ultimate" document.

(Primary school teacher)

It should be central. It's the vision.

(Primary school teacher)

That is what the school is, the central theme, but not a threat over your head.

(Primary school teacher)

It's the basic general document for parents to read and get a broad picture if they're thinking of coming to that school - they get an idea of the school culture.

(Primary school teacher)

High status - should be the reference and pivotal point. If there is conflict, then the charter needs to be looked at again, because it needs to reflect a shared vision between the Board, staff and community of what the school should be.

(Area school teacher)

A number of the teachers saw the charter in more pragmatic terms than the principals, as a way to get what the school needs.

It really is the basis in terms of us getting support from the Ministry and getting finance, and if that is supported by the community and the teachers then I think we have got a good leg to stand on in terms of funding and our special needs as a total immersion school. And that really needs to be in place to give us that sort of power.

(Primary school teacher)

Several teachers identified the source of status of the charter as being the expression of what the community expects of the school.

It's a reflection of the school and community working together.

(Primary school teacher)

It's significant because it's the basic underlying philosophy of what the school is about.

(Area school teacher)

A number of primary teachers pointed out the relationship of the charter to the school scheme that they had before Tomorrow's Schools.

It is similar to our school scheme - the basis of our organisation, the school runs because of this.

(Primary school teacher)

Like the school schemes, you thrash it out, that's the most valuable part, then it's all over, and no-one refers to it again. The process is important, so if it's unconscious, it's in tune with what you're doing.

(Primary school teacher)

A small number of primary teachers said they were unsure what the status of the charter was or should be, and a few felt it was irrelevant to their work.

You become far removed from it in the Junior School, because reading skills etc. are prominent, and over-riding. We are dealing with the practical as opposed to the philosophical.

(Area school teacher)

Secondary teachers were a little less likely than those in primary or intermediate schools to see the charter as of very high status, but still over two thirds accorded it central

status.

It's an important document, for Polynesian pupils in particular.

(Secondary school teacher)

The compulsory element has a unifying purpose in New Zealand education. It's not too domineering or oppressive.  
(Secondary school teacher)

Overriding directional status - very important  
(Secondary school teacher)

About one fifth of the secondary teachers said that the charter had very little or no status.

The whole thing is a load of rubbish.  
(Secondary school teacher)

It's irrelevant, window dressing. Everything in it was being done before we had the charters.  
(Secondary school teacher)

It's just the status quo.  
(Secondary school teacher)

#### Trustees

When trustees in the fifteen schools were asked about the status of the charter, about half, from both primary and secondary schools, identified this as high, central to the school, or a focal point.

I think the charter should be the basis for everything you are going to do in your school - everything you hope to achieve for preparing that child for future development, whether it be educational or social or what, the charter should actually say that.  
(Primary school trustee)

The charter is the thing the school runs on. It should be a high priority.  
(Primary school trustee)

I think people, every three years or so, ought to be compelled to put in writing statements about the purpose and objectives of the school. And I think there needs to be somebody in a position of authority who reviews those

charters and says, "Yes, this fits in with what our national goals and policies are."

(Primary school trustee)

It's in the back of your mind all the time, a framework to refer to.

(Primary school trustee)

A totally integrated part of how the school operates, reflecting the day to day running of the school. It is a living document.

(Secondary school trustee)

Other parents expressed reservations about the power of the charter.

The status should be one of a guideline. Not a bible. Something to support you when you want to see something or want change to take place in the kura.

(Primary school trustee)

It should be there, but not the be-all and end-all of everything, not the Bible - just to refer back to when needed.

(Primary school trustee)

It should be used as a backstop that can be referred to, but it should not inhibit the management and running of the school.

(Secondary school trustee)

A number of parent trustees said, like many teachers, that the charter expresses what the school was already doing anyway.

For this individual school I don't think it really matters. It was doing everything anyway. But we need a national set of rules and for this reason the charter is a very good idea. It gives aims nationally.

(Primary school trustee)

I don't know that it actually needs to have a role, in a kura like ours. Perhaps in other kura, for Maori people they need to have something built in to safeguard them. It hasn't played a big role in our school.

(Primary school trustee)

It doesn't really worry me for our school because our school will still carry on with the same kaupapa, built

around our children.

(Primary school trustee)

The education thing is going along the same lines as what it used to be but it is actually written down for each school...It was there all the time..it wasn't needed to be written down before because the government were running the schools by themselves.

(Secondary school trustee)

A few parents felt that the status of the charter had been limited by the way the Government had handled it:

In reality, it could suffer from lack of respect because people weren't happy with its "imposed" nature.

(Area school trustee)

### 3. Should the government be able to override the charter?

This question highlighted the expectations raised by the reforms that each individual school would "own" their charter and the possible paradox which arises if the national government has a right to require charters to support certain national goals such as equity and bi-culturalism.

#### Principals

Only one third of principals stated that definitely in no circumstances should charters be overridden by the government. Of those which gave a reason most referred to the principle enshrined in Tomorrow's Schools of schools as self governing, autonomous entities.

No. Once that happens you lose your autonomy. Most schools are conservative now and are not going to let radicals overtake the school.

(Intermediate school principal)

In self-governing schools the Minister should not be able to override the role of the charters. What is in the charter should have been done automatically.

(Intermediate school principal)

The other two thirds of the principals believed that there are some circumstances in which government should be able to override

charters, that charters were a matter of negotiation between boards and government, or that government should step in if the charter was not in line with accepted national goals. Some based their reasons on government's ultimate responsibility to ensure a high quality of education for children, and some on the right of government as the funding agency for schools to determine what they did.

Yes, to ensure equality is happening. The charter should be able to be used to bring back people to being accountable. If the overall format of the charter has to be changed, I'd prefer to see a community forum do it rather than the Minister, even though that's cumbersome. If it's going to mean something to people in their communities, it must be changed after consultation. I'm not keen on a school having an absolutely free hand on the charters - I can see cases where equity would go out the window .

(Primary school principal)

If it's harmful to children's learning outcomes, then maybe, but only then. They would have to have a strong measure about what is harmful.

(Primary school principal)

The school is a state funded organisation, therefore the Ministry does need to be there as a safeguard...Some communities may overlook or avoid some issues. The Ministry needs to be there to bring schools back to these issues. It's a difficult area though, as policies have come where a need is seen by staff or board.

(Secondary school principal)

Legally it is a contract between the board and the Minister. Therefore the Ministry has a responsibility to the taxpayer and where it is a legal matter it is quite proper for the ministry to intervene. But I'm distinctly uncomfortable with altering what has resulted from community consultation. Charters are important, but much of the real power resides in Wellington.

(Secondary school principal)

The value of the charter went down markedly when the minister placed it in concrete.

(Secondary school principal)

## Teachers

Of the teachers, nearly half of those from primary schools and two thirds of those from secondary believed that charters should definitely not be overridden by the Minister.

What's the point of a charter if ..schools can make up their own charters but the Ministry is still able to have a say on the make-up and content. It's a contradiction in terms.

( Primary school teacher)

The Ministry gives with one hand and takes away with the other. There should be guidelines put out at the start rather than altered or overridden later - as long as you follow that, then they shouldn't be overridden.

(Primary school teacher)

Tomorrow's Schools was based on community input and the needs of the community, the needs of the children. If you get halfway down the track and the Ministry says "You can't do this, you can't do that" ...what is the point of having a board of trustees when the Ministry can just turn around and change it just like that...I think that defeats the purpose of Tomorrow's Schools.

(Primary school teacher)

I wouldn't like to trust the Minister in this - you could have a national group that looks at cases where a charter is forced through as bulk funding has been, against the staff and community. Recognition of cultural and sex equity is essential, and needs to be covered in charters. I see the Ministry of Education totally captured by Cabinet and Treasury.

(Secondary school teacher)

No, I don't think the Minister knows what's going on around here, he doesn't live here.

(Secondary school teacher)

He has no right to stick his nose in, as the charter comes from the school and the community.

(Secondary school teacher)

Those teachers who did believe that there were circumstances in which Government should be able to override charters gave similar reasons to the ones put forward by their principals, although they expressed them in different terms.

Only if the charter was being unfair to a section of the community - and being bigoted or against the views of the community.

(Secondary school teacher)

Yes, because if you have crackpots in the school who introduce funny ideas it is very bad. We must avoid crackpot boards abusing their power.

(Secondary school teacher)

Trustees

Of trustees, about two thirds of those in the secondary schools and half of primary trustees thought that charters should never be overridden by the Minister.

I don't see how they can, given that they don't know the circumstances under which our particular school is operating. Given that the sorts of things that we are doing in terms of language immersion and kaupapa, what we are following is fairly new to a lot of these people that are in the Ministry. I don't think they should be able to override or alter charters.

(Primary school trustee)

No! Especially when we worked so hard at it!

(Primary school trustee)

No. The charter is the work of the staff and community. For the Ministry to override this is a put down to those who did the hard work.

(Intermediate school trustee)

No. That's what they put boards of trustees there for...we do all the Ministry's work and that shouldn't be. The decisions of how things are run should be given to those people that are put there to do it. The government runs our country, although they might not be doing a good job of it and although we voice our concerns and opinions about it they still have power to make those decisions, and so should the board.

(Primary school trustee)

About half of the primary school trustees and a third of the secondary trustees considered that there were some circumstances in which the Government should be able to override charters.

Yes, in the interests of students, a national standard should be adhered to.

(Secondary school trustee)

Yes, as long as they do it for the right reasons. We need to prevent nonsense getting into some charters.

(Secondary school trustee)

Some trustees at the two bilingual schools offered their own perspective:

They shouldn't be able to override things that have been democratically discussed around with the community but I think they would need to have that power over the school. If the school had a charter that had been put together solely by the principal or by the board and there was something that went against the principles of natural justice. If there was a racist statement there or something like that there would need to be some way that the Minister or Ministry could come in and say, "Look, this isn't on", and cite the Human Rights Commission act or whatever.

(Primary school trustee)

Yes, I can imagine schools that would send statements that would be unacceptable to the Maori portion of their community and somebody needs to be able to say no.

(Primary school trustee)

The charter has got to be fair, and it's got to represent the community's views, and it's got to be legal. It should have the best for the kids at heart. So maybe the Minister should be able to have some say...to intervene when protecting the interests of parents, teachers and children.

(Primary school trustee)

Differences between the attitudes of people in secondary and primary schools, whether trustees or teachers, were again noticeable in the responses to this question. Secondary teachers and trustees more often expressed wary or negative attitudes to the government, and felt it inappropriate that the Minister should interfere with their school. Responses from primary schools more often recognise that the school is part of a wider educational community, and that the state has some responsibility for ensuring that standards of fairness are upheld and that children are protected from possible extremist views of some boards.

4. How were policies developed?

The responses to this question illustrate the ways in which the relative roles of principals and trustees has evolved.

## Principals

All the principals in this survey claimed that they were the ones who generally initiated policy development. In a few cases, in bigger schools, they then delegated the following-through of the task to the deputy principal. Trustees from one third of the schools said that the board took some initiative for some policies.

When asked what their own role was, principals commented:

Fairly central. I initiated most and took part in most draft committees.

(Primary school principal)

I set the pattern, went through the charter to list things we needed to cover. The staff were not overly concerned with policy development.

(Primary school principal)

My role was to nudge along and support and make it functional and relevant.

(Intermediate school principal)

My role was vital. I read every policy and it had to be acceptable to me.

(Intermediate school principal)

I briefed the committee or the convener on current policy, and considered new policy accordingly.

(Secondary school principal)

My role was identification of a need or a ministry requirement. Hence the initiation.

(Area school principal)

My role was to instigate, to give an initial lead, to work as part of most writing teams, to present draft policies to the community, help organise consultation with the community, ensure that the board, staff and community were kept informed at all stages.

(Primary school principal)

## Trustees

The principals' views of their own involvement in policy development were reinforced by the trustees' responses. Most said that the principal initiates, guides and supplies technical or professional information. A few trustees, and a bigger proportion in secondary schools, said that the principal after initiating the process, then delegated the work and took a back seat. Trustees in a range of different schools said of their principals:

She plays quite a big role. She has a lot of information that we need. As Tumuaki (principal) she needs to have a big role ensuring the policies they put in place are able to be handled.

(Primary school trustee)

Very much involved, but as a participant; not holding the fort though he keeps an eye on the direction. He has a gift with English language. He has said the Board could have written all the policies but our process has been developmental and beneficial. I've found some policy work quite stimulating.

(Primary school trustee)

The principal took a leading role but didn't have a final say. Where controversial issues arose he was able to clarify and explain a few points but he definitely wasn't dominating.

(Primary school trustee)

The principal is the organiser, facilitator, the guiding light. She delegates who leads the work on each policy.  
(Primary school trustee)

The principal is very helpful - a guiding force. He's our leader and that's the way it should be. He assists and guides us and gives us information to make life easier for us.

(Primary school trustee)

He actually didn't have a very big role, it was the deputy principal who did most of the work.

(Secondary school trustee)

The principal brings a sense of practicality to the Board, as the professional.

(Secondary school trustee)

The role of the board in policy development seems to have varied from school to school. In a number of schools the board took more responsibility for those policies they saw as in their sphere of experience or influence, such as property,

In a few schools the board members said that they had some role in writing some of the policies, usually with some staff members working in small groups.

It was always shared around amongst board members or different staff members. Everybody just took their share of the responsibilities, for writing a draft, or leading a discussion group or letting the board know about it when the board has to approve policies then the board make sure the consultation takes place.

(Primary school trustee)

Another trustee at this school said:

Sometimes the board have initiated some policies. The board ran a wananga (seminar) at the beginning of the year on policy writing. The board has access to the policy before it is set.

(Primary school trustee)

A trustee at another school said:

There's good value in rubbing shoulders with the teachers. I'm anti that publication that came out with a set of policies already done.

(Primary school trustee)

They (the board) are at the infant stage. A lot of our board members still don't know how to write a policy or what the purposes of a policy are. So we have to take them through a process before they can actually get into it. So that's the same for our staff members.

(Primary school trustee)

Most trustees however saw their role mainly as ensuring that suitable procedures for policy writing were followed, possibly being consulted on a draft, and then giving final approval to the finished policy.

After consultation, the meeting at board level will bring out what was discussed, then there is a general consensus to it.

(Primary school trustee)

The board's role is one of judgement, and incorporating the expectations of the parents into the policies proposed by the principal.

(Secondary school trustee)

This is left to the professional leadership, particularly the principal as CEO.

(Secondary school trustee)

The board agreed with information presented by the staff and principal.

(Secondary school trustee)

The actual work of drafting policies was done more by staff than by parents. A typical situation was described in one of the primary schools where it was intended that a small sub-committee of staff and parents would meet to jointly prepare a policy for approval, but in fact it turned out to be very difficult to find a time to meet which was convenient to both groups, and eventually most of the work was done by staff, and was later approved by the board.

Almost all the schools arranged for some opportunity for consultation with parents other than board members. In about two thirds of the schools meetings were held, at least initially, to which parents were invited. They were not generally well attended, and some schools gave up on this form of consultation. Some schools published draft policies in a newsletter and asked for comments, and some simply notified parents through a newsletter that draft policies were available for perusal at the school.

One of the bilingual schools worked in a way they felt was comfortable and effective for the Maori community.

At the beginning of the year we had a wananga (seminar) for the board to look at policies. There are quite a few policies that were drawn up at that wananga that are in draft form. Other policies that we have followed through with have usually come from staff and are in draft form. From there they go out in panui (newsletter) form to the community and an invitation for the community to make comment. Then it will be taken to our whanau hui where it is discussed again and those comments will be collated and brought to the board meeting where they will be discussed in line with the policy and then the board would pass it

making a ratified policy of the kura.  
(Primary school trustee)

A trustee from the other bilingual school said:

We were supposed to have committees working on policies and people just don't have the time.  
(Primary school trustee)

Other schools generally used a procedure similar to this one:

We have a sub-committee for each which draws up a draft. The principal usually organises this. One person with an interest in the area takes responsibility and makes up a sub-committee. The board then discusses the draft. It goes back to the sub-committee with recommendations. Then it goes to the community through the newsletter. If it is OKed by the community it then goes back to the board to be ratified.  
(Primary school trustee)

A few schools followed the suggestion of Caldwell and Spinks (1988) that they deal differently with issues that are contentious:

We set up a pattern of contentious and non-contentious areas and dealt with the latter ones first. Board members led small community teams to write drafts which eventually came to the board for approval. The principal convened the discipline policy one. We had a schedule with deadlines and kept to this.  
(Primary school trustee)

We set up a couple of brainstorming sessions with staff and board. A couple more sessions where the board formulated some policies. Parents may have been invited - I can't remember. Mostly there has been a lack of time and commitment to getting them done. We haven't got a set procedure for getting them all done. I'm worried they won't be done before the election, but parents don't have that much time.  
(Primary school trustee)

Basically the board consulted the community and set things up from there. Depending on the policy there was more or less consultation. There was a lot on religious instruction because it was contentious.  
(Primary school trustee)

Some trustees reported a lack of response to their attempts to consult.

The meetings were open to the community and very little or none at all attended.

(Secondary school trustee)

#### Teachers

When teachers were asked about their role in developing policies, there were significant differences between primary and secondary schools. Over half of the primary teachers in these schools said they were fully involved in all policies, compared with less than a tenth of secondary teachers, most of these being the deputy principals. Consistent with this finding, primary school teachers as a group were able to name about twice as many specific policies of their schools as the secondary school teachers could.

These primary teachers' responses were typical:

I've written a number myself - for example Maori language teaching - and have been involved with other teachers to put forward ideas for the policies, review drafts, and give more input before they go to the board.

(Primary school teacher)

I was in a committee to draft the reading and children with special needs policies, where I had direct input. All the drafts were brought to the staff meetings, and we were able to alter it before it becomes final policy.

(Primary school teacher)

In each curriculum area this year, people have taken responsibilities and we have identified policies that may get written this year and we have looked at five or six and came up with three that were actually written. Time seemed to be the limiting factor, But I've been on the maths curriculum, and I've been on the music one, and the staff

appraisal policy, also minor ones like the PE, retrieval and maintenance of equipment from the PE shed and guitars.  
(Primary school teacher)

Secondary teachers reported more limited involvement which often seemed to take the form of being consulted rather than actually working on the policy:

I was involved as part of the whole school on teacher only days.

(Secondary school teacher)

I could have put in a written submission  
(Secondary school teacher)

We had general discussions about policies e.g. on alcohol, at staff meetings.

(Secondary school teacher)

They were publicised and I had the opportunity to comment.  
(Secondary school teacher)

The few who reported playing a more active role generally referred only to policies directly connected with their own teaching area.

We have a lot of say, in our Department, on what we teach.  
(Secondary school teacher)

I was involved with ESL and Pacific Island policy.  
(Secondary school teacher)

Many secondary teachers simply responded "nil", or "not so far".

5. What is the board doing to ensure that policies are being implemented?

One of the responsibilities of boards of trustees is to monitor the implementation of their schools' policies. The responses to this question could provide further information on the ways in which the expected roles have evolved in practice. At the time of the survey, however, the energies of trustees and staff were still being directed to developing further policies as well as all their other tasks, and the issue of how to monitor them does not seem to have been considered fully. The responses indicated few expectations of how this responsibility will be handled in future. Some responses also reinforce the perceptions noted earlier that charters and policies have merely expressed in writing existing goals and practice.

Trustees

Formally we've done nothing. There's nothing written down that wasn't already happening in the school.

(Primary school trustee)

We don't encourage a policy unless it is really part of school life. Policy stems from the existing culture of the school. We don't act as policemen.

(Primary school trustee)

We monitor through visits to the school, meeting with the staff and the principal's appraisal.

(Intermediate school trustee)

Through observation - our next step will be to set up a formal review process.

(Intermediate school trustee)

Some trustees felt that monitoring was part of the management role of the principal, and the board would oversee this by means of the principal's monthly report to the board.

To be frank, we're not specially watching out but there's a lot of trust in there, and it's worked damn well. We don't have any groups that provide a threatening environment to the trust we have. Boards should not be pushed to do all that which is the job of the teachers. I'm prepared to give the authority to the principal, but if things weren't working then I'd have to look at the facts and get it sorted out.

(Primary school board chairperson)

We rely on feedback from the principal and the staff.

(Secondary school trustee)

Not an issue. We're aware of the work within the school from the staff report given each month.

(Primary school trustee)

A few trustees felt that perhaps they should be doing something more formal about monitoring, but were either unsure how to within their time constraints, or reluctant to play this role.

There needs to be some monitoring, and I'm reluctant to go in and do monitoring because of the time involved. I don't know what would be the easy way to do it.

(Secondary school trustee)

A few boards incorporated review and evaluation of policies in their reports to parents.

When we do our half yearly or end of year reports we are always checking back.

(Primary school trustee)

One trustee was unique in mentioning

...an equity sub-committee, which has a designated duty to review policy annually to see how effective it is in the school.

(Intermediate school trustee)

## Principals

Principals in the survey schools all felt that the board relied on them to monitor the implementation of policies.

They generally trust the principal and staff to ensure that they are. There isn't any policing of them - there doesn't appear to be a need.

(Primary school principal)

Nothing - they don't seem to care. Principal and staff are ensuring policies are carried out.

(Primary school principal )

They are not doing any monitoring. The chairperson is the only person with any concern, interest or support. This was increased through the need to do the principal's appraisal. There has been one visit of 2 hours by the board in their term of office and they were pressured by the principal to do this. There is a lack of board interest and it is not because the principal excluded them.  
(Intermediate school principal)

The monitoring role is a very important step. Quite a few schools have boards who have not clarified their role vis-a-vis the principal and the community. One way of doing this is through the principal reporting monthly and annually. The board is also willing to ask questions. Individually, board members feel responsible for bringing concerns to our notice.

(Secondary school principal)

I have taken steps to refer to and publish policies at different times of the year, e.g. Education Outside the Classroom in February, to make staff and parents aware of their responsibilities.

(Primary school principal)

## Teachers

When teachers were asked what the board was doing to ensure

policies were being implemented, their responses confirmed those of the parent trustees. Of the secondary teachers, about four fifths said either that they did not know, or that the board were doing nothing. One teacher mentioned visits by board members to the school as a way to keep in touch with what was going on. One mentioned a briefing in connection with a forthcoming visit from the Education Review Office. The rest said that they thought that monitoring was delegated by the board to the principal.

One secondary teacher said;

I think it does, but how it does it, I have no idea! I have nothing to do with the board.

(Secondary school teacher)

Primary teachers also were most likely to say they did not know what monitoring was being done, and a similar proportion to the secondary teachers thought this responsibility was delegated to the principal or the staff representative on the board. Another group of five teachers mentioned informal visits by board members.

Typical responses from primary teachers were:

I don't really know...we are left pretty much to ourselves to run the school by our policies and our charter.

(Primary school teacher)

If there are no complaints they leave it up to the principal to ensure it is being implemented.

(Primary school teacher)

At this stage, because it is still early, the board is still trying to find their feet, there hasn't been much feedback in terms of that, but there has been a lot of feedback in terms of teacher/parent rather than teacher/board of trustees, and I guess if there were any problems parents would get back to the board of trustees.

(Primary school teacher)

Nothing that I can sense personally. The board was at school again recently, though, and leaders of our teaching teams - curriculum areas and levels of the school presented reports on progress with the educational plan and other areas such as staff development.

(Primary school teacher)

I really don't know. I assume they get feedback from the principal in general terms, or if something goes wrong. The chairman comments on some aspects when he visits the school, but the rest of the board wouldn't be too informed, would be my guess. They probably just have faith in the principal's leadership and the professionalism of the staff.

(Primary school teacher).

## 6. Equity and Treaty of Waitangi Issues

The compulsory part of the charter framework required all schools to address these issues and to develop their own policies by certain dates. These should have been done by the time of the interviews. It is therefore interesting to see whether these goals have been accepted as a living part of the school charter and policies. The interview schedule on which this part of the Monitoring Today's Schools study has been based did not ask any questions specifically referring to equity or Treaty of Waitangi charter goals or policies. Any mentions of these issues, therefore, spontaneously came from the trustees or teachers themselves. An analysis of the comments about equity or Treaty of Waitangi reveals very few.

When the principals in this survey responded to the questions about the use that has been made of the charter in various aspects of school planning and operation, about half of them made some mention of these equity or Treaty issues, most making only one mention. The only examples of two mentions by one principal were in relation to children with special needs.

The interviews with 111 teachers threw up only 13 mentions of equity, and 22 mentions of Treaty of Waitangi.

Trustees mentioned equity even less often, with only 4 out of 68 interviewed referring to equity, and another 9, most from primary bilingual schools, mentioning Treaty of Waitangi or non-racist goals.

Those that did mention equity or Treaty of Waitangi issues tended to come from a small number of the schools surveyed. The following comments offer a sample of the range:

Acceptance of equity and Treaty of Waitangi goals has meant that those issues have received much attention in our school since 1989, i.e. for staff development on all aspects of equity, consultation on EEO, and implementation of Maori language and cultural programmes.

(Intermediate school trustee)

(This particular trustee from an intermediate school with a very low proportion of Maori students made a number of other references to EEO and other equity issues throughout the interview, but few other trustees and only one of the teachers at that school did so)

Teachers and trustees at an area school with about a third of its students being Maori mentioned equity and Treaty issues a number of times.

We are making sure the Treaty of Waitangi is implemented.  
We have two chairpeople, one Maori and one Pakeha.  
(Area school teacher)

Policy writing is based quite a bit on the charter, e.g.  
Treaty of Waitangi and the policy for the bi-lingual unit.  
(Area school teacher)

The charter was used for staff development recently on  
Treaty Day  
(Area school trustee)

Consultation on policies was on a district caucus approach,  
e.g. Treaty issues - specific consultation with the Maori  
community to check. We're a hell of a lot more sensitive  
now.  
(Area school trustee)

A few teachers at one of the secondary schools said that in  
relation to staff development:

The Treaty of Waitangi was one subject.  
(Secondary school teacher)

and

We had equity issues awareness.  
(Secondary school teacher)

One secondary school teacher in each of three schools said that  
the charter was used in appointments to ensure a gender balance.

A few teachers at one of the primary schools said that Treaty of  
Waitangi goals in the charter were a basis for the appointment  
of a Maori language teacher at the school.

The references of principals to equity were often related to

gaining funding:

The charter is important. We use parts of what we put in the charter for special needs funding, for backing up debates on the needs of the school.

(Intermediate school principal)

## 7. Conclusions

Listening to the protagonists in the unfolding story of the school charters, it seems that most still see the charter as the base document for their school. There is some suggestion that just as the beliefs, values and philosophy expressed in the charter were already, before the reforms, the driving force for the policies and practices of the school, so too most policies were already in place either as school schemes or as unwritten assumptions.

No base-line data has been established that would enable us to compare the present charters with previous school schemes or other expressions of the culture of the schools. However surveys such as the first stage of Cathy Wylie's (1990) and earlier reports of the Monitoring Today's Schools project (Middleton and Oliver 1990) suggest that most parents were happy with the perceived goals of their school and the way it was operating, and one of their aims in offering their services as a trustee was to protect and maintain what they saw as a generally good education system.

In noting the mainly positive attitude to charters expressed by people in the fifteen schools in the present study, it must be remembered that these schools have, for the past three years, been involved closely with the lecturers and researchers from the Monitoring Today's Schools Project with frequent visits and discussions about their progress in dealing with all aspects of the reforms. Some of the fifteen schools have also had active involvement with other staff from the local university and college of education, through special school development

initiatives and other research projects. It is possible that the awareness of people in these schools of the the importance of the charter has been raised, and that their skills of consultation have been supported through these contacts, not available to all schools in New Zealand.

Remembering the claim by Codd and Gordon (1990) that the charter had come to signify the power and control of the State, it appears that parents and staff in a number of the schools in this study have ambivalent feelings towards this control.

People in schools seem determined to make the best use they can of their charters to justify what they believe is needed for the children's advantage. Experience with funding shortfalls and the suspicion that funding for schools will continue to be reduced, has led many to value the charter for its perceived power to justify the resources needed in future. Boards are wary of what they see as a devolution of responsibilities without the power needed to achieve them.

While boards are reluctant to allow the charter to restrict what they do, some still hope that charters will safeguard some of the values they believe in, such as equity and biculturalism. Many of the principals and some of the parents believe that the responsibility for the achievement of these national goals cannot be delegated entirely to individual schools but must be set in a context of national social and economic policies. Tension was revealed between a commitment to the devolution of goal setting to each school, and the maintenance of national standards, for example those concerning equity and Treaty of Waitangi obligations, through government's right to override charters when necessary. The group which supported the latter most strongly was the principals, who seemed to anticipate possible threats in future from boards with different views on equity or Maori rights.

However, the minor influence which the equity and Treaty of Waitangi goals of the charter are having on policies and programmes in the school, as perceived by the people interviewed, could be indicated by the small number of times these issues were mentioned spontaneously without prompting with specific questions. By this rough measure, principals appear much more conscious of both these issues than either trustees or teachers.

The government expected that boards of trustees would play a leading role in developing policy, in line with its theories of a separation between governance or policy making and management or implementation, and that the role of the principal and teachers would be mainly that of implementation.

However, it is clear from this study that in practice the roles are much more blurred. Each school worked out for itself who was best able to do the job of writing policies, and in many cases this fell to the principal and staff. A number of schools reported satisfying collaboration between parent trustees and

teachers. None of the parents' responses indicated any resentment or fear at teachers taking over their role. It seems that people in schools adapted this aspect of the reforms in ways

that made sense to them in an environment of mutual respect, confidence and goodwill between teachers and trustees.

A number of theorists of school leadership such as Tom Sergiovanni, (1991) have been writing recently of the notion of school culture. These ideas are being discussed in the early 1990s by school leaders in a number of professional development courses being offered by colleges of education and universities in New Zealand, (Lovegrove, 1992). Participants in these courses have frequently contrasted their own experience and their beliefs with the theories based on distrust, suspicion of "provider capture", and assumptions of pervasive self interest, of the New Right economic theories identified by Boston et al (1991) as underpinning the reshaping of state structures in New Zealand.

The cultures of the schools in this study, built from the beliefs and values of the different groups with an interest in the schools, have proved to be dynamic and flexible. The new managerialism with its rigid separation of the functions of policy making and policy implementation seems in these fifteen schools, so far at least, to be tempered by the more collaborative negotiated leadership style which is still strong in New Zealand schools.

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