What can we learn from the last twenty years?

**Why *Tomorrow's Schools* could not achieve key purposes,
and how we could do things differently with
self-managing schools**

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I am honoured to be asked to provide the Herbison Lecture at this year's NZARE conference. There are two connections that are particularly pertinent for me and for the themes in this lecture, and which mean that while I stand here as an individual, I am mindful of those who have made possible the insights I hope I bring to you today.

Jean Herbison chaired the NZCER Council when I first joined NZCER, back in 1987. I appreciated her thoughtful and informed comments, and her warm interest in the work I was doing. I was most appreciative of her openness to the questions I had, as a social anthropologist who had worked in the university, government, and the public sector union at a time of great change in the public services, about the meanings teachers, students, and government officials working in education made for themselves, the things they took for granted, and the role that institutions and frameworks played in what was taken for granted, what framed the education realities. And Jean Herbison placed great value on improving educational opportunities for students who did not start their learning journey with the sense of entitlement, ease, or welcome that others enjoyed.

My doctoral thesis work on how different päkehä New Zealanders constructed different meanings of equality (and freedom) linked to the things they placed store in to signal their identity as individuals had given me some insight into the emotional freight equality carries in this country, and why we continued to limit ourselves when we focused on just the literal meaning of it, in terms of theoretical access to something deemed to be the same.

Equality of educational opportunity was a strong thread in many of the vigorous discussions around the direction of educational policy at the time. The NZCER Council that Jean Herbison was part of, and Ian Livingstone, the then director of NZCER, were supportive of my desire to contribute to these discussions, first through coordinating a literature review on the fairness of New Zealand education, and then acting as the Manager, Education, for the Royal Commission on Social Policy, and writing the chapter in its report on the issues for our educational system. That latter role also gave me insights into the work of the Picot taskforce as it was arriving at its conclusions.

Once *Tomorrow's Schools* was government policy, it seemed to me that NZCER as the country's only national, independent educational research organisation, with its statutory role of providing research and advice, should undertake ongoing research on the impact of this radical reform. Thus in late 1989 we began the series of national surveys of primary schools

which have provided a longitudinal backbone to the work of tracing changes in roles, relationships, and perceptions over the last 20 years, and of testing out the assumptions behind the reforms. These surveys, and other related projects I've led on the reality of school leadership, school governance, relations with government agencies, the nature of school decisionmaking, sustainability of school development, and the forms that competition and accountability take, have not been projects that a lone individual can undertake. These projects have needed statisticians, fellow researchers raising questions both through their own work and direct questions, and reviewing my work, library staff who find and retrieve, research assistants who coordinate mass mail-outs and reminders, who code, and data-enter. They have needed an organisational continuity to build on previous work. There is no way that I could have pursued the meaning of our radical reform over the last two decades, and what our efforts have achieved, without being part of NZCER. It was good to hear Linda Smith's reminders to us the other day that growth – individual and collective – so often needs collective participation.

That sense of what can be achieved through collective work is also an important theme in this paper, because I believe that unless we tackle things differently, we will move even further from the equality of educational opportunity and improvement of outcomes that we need in this country. We have gained some important knowledge about educational opportunities and their framing by teachers and school leaders that we did not have 20 years ago. We also have evidence about the effectiveness (and efficiency) of the framework around our self-managing schools model. We stand right now at a critical juncture in New Zealand education. We need to exercise leadership ourselves to ensure that that knowledge is used, rather than find ourselves going round in decreasing circles looking at constantly receding goals. My aim today is to bring some of this knowledge and evidence before you, to strengthen that willingness to take the initiative. As Beeby said in 1983,

> …to have any influence at all on the future you have got to know, first, where
> you've been, and next, the direction you want to go. (Beeby 1983, p. 17).

A radical reform

What was radical in 1988 and 1989 is taken for granted now by the many teachers and students who came into education since, who have known no other way to provide public

education in New Zealand other than through self-managing schools. It is still thought of as radical by many overseas visitors, since although *Tomorrow's Schools* has attracted a lot of international attention, none of those visitors has adopted our model. We remain unique in having stand-alone schools that operate on their own, without being part of a school district, or a local authority. And we cannot point to any great system-wide gains in student performance or learning, new approaches to learning, or greater equality of educational opportunity that have clearly arisen from taking the radical path.

Today I want to explore the reasons why we have less to show for the hard work of the last 20 years than we would like, because these reasons have implications for what we might be able to achieve in and through education, unless we are prepared to think and act differently.

I'll start by revisiting the intentions of the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy that set up our self-managing schools, and what resulted originally. Then I want to think about the two phases in our experience of self-managing schools. First, the separation and distrust of the 1990s, with some forays into grafting new ways of working together from the late 1990s. Second, a focus on developing capability and capacity and shared ownership from the early 2000s. Neither of these phases is clearly distinct; the second phase is coloured by legacies from the first that are the source of ongoing tensions, and misplaced assumptions. Finally, I'll venture some thoughts on our current situation, where we stand poised to either reinvent the last 20 years, or use the knowledge we have gained to do things differently, and allow our system as a whole to show some progress.

Tomorrow's schools: the noble intentions

It's instructive to refresh the memory of what was actually hoped for from our reforms, in David Lange's introductory remarks to the *Tomorrow's Schools* document.

> When the report of the Picot taskforce, *Administering for Excellence*, was released on 10 May, I acknowledged the broad merits of the model it proposed. It seemed to me to be a good mixture of responsiveness, flexibility, and accountability. It placed decision making as close as possible to the point of implementation….. The Government is certain that the reform it proposes will result in more immediate delivery of resources to schools, more parental and community involvement, and greater teacher responsibility. It will lead to improved learning opportunities for the

children of this country. The reformed administration will be sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet the particular needs of Māori education. (Minister of Education, 1988, p. iii and iv)
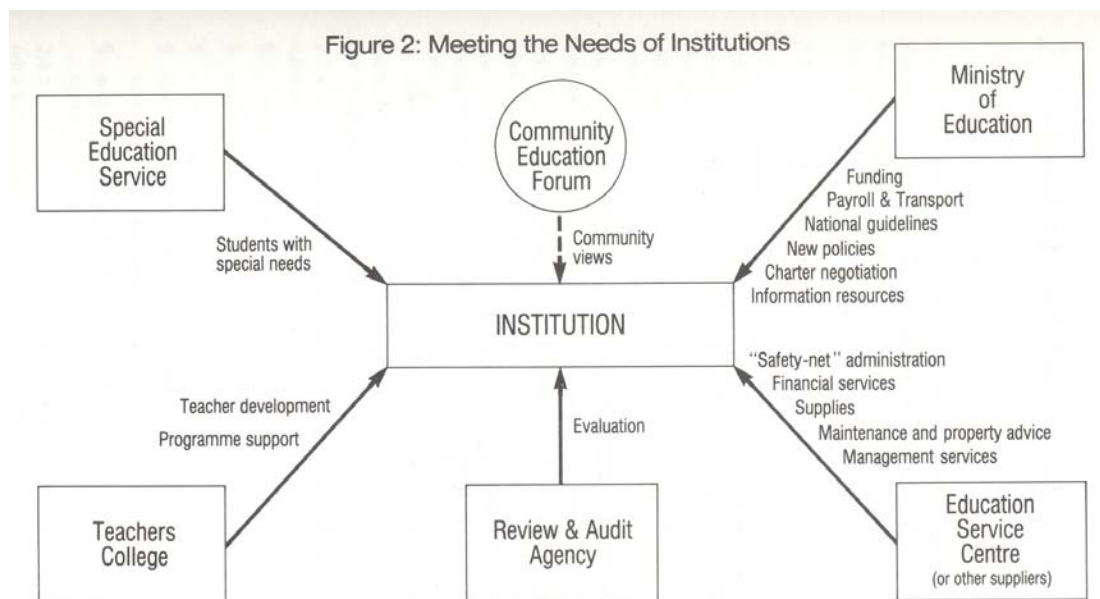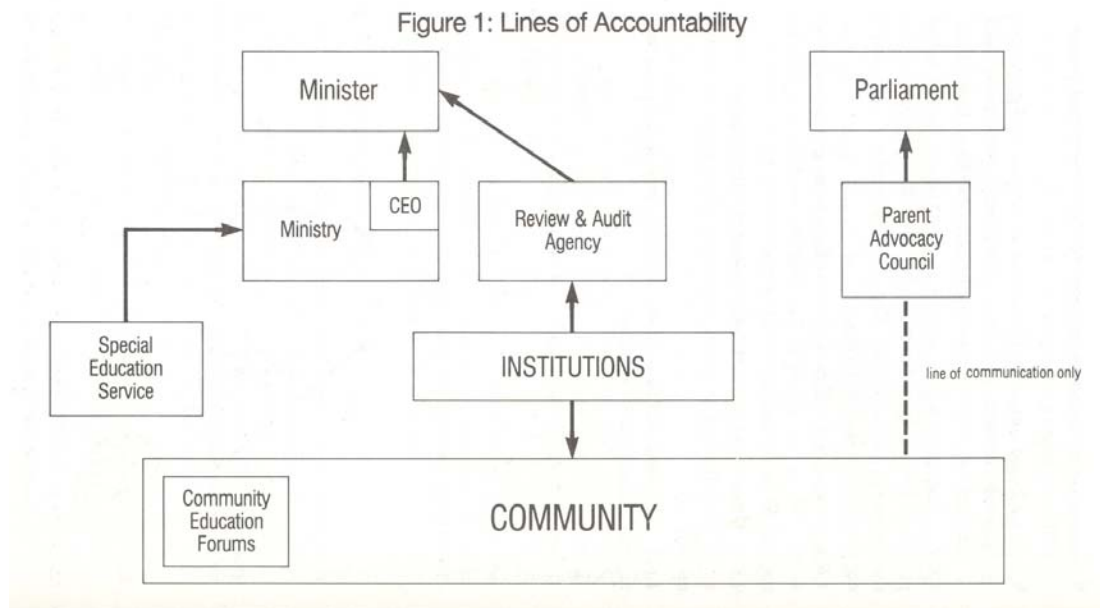
The hopes of using local knowledge to meet needs, of involving parents and communities in education, in order to improve learning opportunities, and meet Māori educational needs, do not seem misplaced today. But these hopes also do not seem enough to grapple with the complexity of improving learning opportunities, or meeting Māori educational needs.

We would want to say much more now about what we mean by learning opportunities, what we have learnt through research and development and venturing, particularly in the last decade, about ways to engage students in learning, and about the purpose of learning. We would want to focus much more on how we build school cultures of inquiry where teachers work together, sharing and building collective knowledge that does mean more students make progress, in ways that build strong learning identities.

Hopes are nothing without processes, relationships, materials, and structures to bring them to life. But it is these that are the thinnest elements of *Tomorrow's Schools* as it eventuated. If we were undertaking the same work now, we would not, I think, leave so much untended. Why were these things left untended then? The framework within which schools operated from 1990 owed much to the New Public Management reframing of public services, underpinned by separation of functions, contractual relationships, and accountability arrangements related to contracts and reporting on outputs, a model that was drawn from institutional economics, and its "positivist, mechanistic and linear-rational assumptions of bureaucratic behaviour" (Gregory 2003, p. 43). Indeed, our public service reforms enacted on this theoretical basis were put together in such a way that—as with our education reforms—has attracted international fascination, without emulation of the totality (Schick 2001). And just as education struggles to overcome the fragmentation that came with the reforms, and to find ways to tackle shared issues collectively (Eppel 2009), so have the calls increased from within and outside the public service for more "joined-up" thinking and "cross-agency" purpose and work to tackle complex social, environmental, and economic issues (Norman and Gregory 2003, State Services Commission 1999).

The sense of separation which prevailed in the first phase of school self-management, over the 1990s is well illustrated by the diagrams showing the new system in the *Tomorrow's Schools*

document. For a start, note that there are two diagrams: accountability and support do not appear together.

Figure 1: Lines of Accountability

Minister

Parliament

CEO

Ministry

Review & Audit Agency

Parent Advocacy Council

Special Education Service

INSTITUTIONS

line of communication only

Community Education Forums

COMMUNITY

Figure 2: Meeting the Needs of Institutions

Special Education Service

Community Education Forum

Ministry of Education

Students with special needs

Community views

Funding
Payroll & Transport
National guidelines
New policies
Charter negotiation
Information resources

INSTITUTION

"Safety-net" administration
Financial services
Supplies
Maintenance and property advice
Management services

Teacher development

Programme support

Evaluation

Teachers College

Review & Audit Agency

Education Service Centre
(or other suppliers)

The links between organisations are of accountability, providing a service, or providing a framework. The only line of *communication* exists between the (nebulous) community, and the Parent Advocacy Council. Note in particular that there are no links of communication between the Review and Audit agency (ERO's first name), and the Ministry of Education.

This was probably because the Review and Audit agency originally had the role of commenting on the "ministry's provision of policy advice and overseeing of policy implementation (as it affects the performance of institutions)". But the lack of ongoing communication between the two agencies was to be a marked source of tension by the mid 1990s. There are no links between the Ministry of Education and the organisations providing support to individual institutions—another source of tension. The Special Education Service is accountable to the Ministry of Education, but delivers to schools. There are no two-way links between schools and the Ministry of Education. Schools are accountable to the Review and Audit agency—not to the Ministry of Education.

I had forgotten until I went back to the actual *Tomorrow's Schools* document to write this paper that the Review and Audit Agency was originally intended to have a much closer relationship with schools, and a relationship that combined support and pressure, as recommended so often in recent years as a way to improve educational opportunities and performance (e.g. Elmore 2004, Wylie 2009). Here was the potential for some real learning at local level, if not beyond, and in the development of expertise and relationships that could see and serve beyond the individual school.

> 2.3.3 The Review and Audit Agency will review institutions through multi-disciplinary teams with expertise in curriculum, financial and management support, equal employment opportunities, and equal educational opportunity. Each team will also have on it a community representative, and a principal co-opted from another institution.
>
> 2.3.4 There will be regular reviews on a two-yearly basis…
>
> 2.3.5 The regular reviews will be a co-operative endeavour, aimed at helping boards to meet their objectives and review their own performance. After an initial visit—which would include input from the community—the review team will produce a report which identifies strengths and weaknesses of the institution and its administration, and makes recommendations for improvements. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the report and make changes to its teaching and management. A second visit will be made one term later. A subsequent, detailed report from this review will make recommendations for any changes deemed necessary. If the report sets out serious deficiencies in the management of the

institution or in the achievements of its students, notice will be given of a third review six months later. This further review could lead to the dismissal of the trustees, if the deficiencies have not been dealt with in ways that produce significant improvement. (ibid, p 21).

We would find this approach luxurious, and indeed in its original development the new Education Review Office shifted to 3-yearly reviews, and what look like much smaller teams, using just ERO staff. The review would begin with a discussion of the school's charter "and finding out about aspects that will be of major interest to the institution", as well as explaining the review procedures to the principal and "perhaps the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees". This original approach also adhered to the *Tomorrow's Schools'* principle that decisionmaking should be local: ERO district offices would develop their own review procedures within national principles and guidelines, so that "reviews will closely fit the needs and priorities of schools and learning centres in the district" (ERO 1990). This developmental and localised approach was halted in its tracks with the *Today's Schools* report from the Lough review in 1990 that sought to reduce educational spending and ensure that the educational reforms fitted with the wider public sector changes.

Other checks and balances, or structures and processes to deepen shared understanding of education and tackle systemic issues, were suggested by the Picot taskforce. The taskforce's ministerial advisory committee on education, independent of any government department, did not make it into the *Tomorrow's Schools* document (such overview standing advisory committees are rare in any government policy area, which raises some interesting questions about the limitations of democracy if citizen involvement is simply a single vote every few years). The Parent Advocacy Council and Community Education Forums did survive, but they were gone two years later, and the latter never provided the real forum for resolving local issues, as well as channels for "flax roots' issues to be discussed with the central government agencies, that was intended by the Picot taskforce.

So our reforms bequeathed us with some powerful and important goals, but our progress towards those goals has been greatly limited because of the minimal thought given to the nature of those goals, and therefore to designing the weaving of processes and structures that would be essential to develop the adult capability and capacity to really change learning opportunities and outcomes.

The two phases of self-managing schools

To provide these sketches of the two phases that are evident in our experience of self-managing schools, I'm drawing not only on the research that I have been involved with, but on studies by colleagues in and beyond this room, and on government agency reports.[1] While I can wish that we had more longitudinal studies of the reality of change in schools and learning over time, and more studies of the nature and operation of government agencies and their impact, we do have better access now to some of the "gray" research literature. One new resource that I would like to recommend to save some reinvention of the research wheel (and make more of our still small numbers) is the thesis database available through NZCER, which originated in the Best Evidence synthesis work programme.[2]

Separation and distrust: the 1990s

The summary below does not aim to cover all that occurred in the 1990s as schools found their feet—and identity—in the new environment. I've confined myself to some illustrations of some key dimensions that continue to colour the way our system works, particularly those that inhibit adult learning and inquiry, and the kind of collective sense-making that we need to tackle the complex challenges of education.

Forming identity

I've learnt something about the long-term shaping of identity and the importance of early opportunities to establish useful or otherwise habits, through the longitudinal *Competent Children, Competent* Learners study (e.g. Wylie, Hipkins & Hodgen 2008). That focus on identity is a useful one when thinking about what our schools have become over the last twenty years.

One of the first tasks for schools in the new environment was to define themselves, through their charter. This was to be the "contract" between the school and its community on the one hand, and its funder, the Ministry of Education, on the other. Many approached this by

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[1] The references at the back are intended to provide some core pieces of work, that will also take readers to other studies and reports; they are not intended as a comprehensive database.

[2] This searchable database, with many theses now available electronically, can be used at http://www.nzcer.org.nz/NZETadvanced.php.

looking for things that made their school distinct, and arguably it laid the ground for school leaders to later emphasise the uniqueness of their schools, sometimes as a reason to be left alone: exercising freedom 'from' rather than freedom 'to' create together.

Self-definition also occurred as schools made spending decisions. Property refurbishment loomed large in many schools, partially because the reforms occurred in a period when there was a large backlog of "deferred maintenance"; partially because the look of a school became important. It is easy to tie this concern with the look of a school to the concern to attract students, when operational funding and staff numbers were more tightly tied to student numbers than before, and parents were reminded of their ability to choose their child's school. But focusing on property also provided tangible evidence of the school's new decisionmaking powers, and its distinctiveness, its stand-alone identity.

The first Community Education forum foundered on the rock of individual schools taking advantage of their separateness to extend the year levels they covered, at some cost to the rolls of other local schools (Mansell 1993). It was an early lesson in the scope available to an entrepreneurial rather than collegial approach.

Similarly, lessons on the ways in which schools could define national guidelines for themselves were also learnt by many with the mandatory parts of the charters, which were phrased as objectives. Because they were to be used as the yardstick to assess school performance by ERO, such objectives were reframed at the school level as abstract statements rather than specific goals, and often described existing practice, things that the school felt safe with. The charter framework did set equity issues and the Treaty of Waitangi before boards of trustees, parents who took part in consultation, and school staff, and there was some opposition to the mooted removal of the equity sections of the charter in 1990. But there was little material from the Ministry of Education, and no processes, or relationships to inform school discussions of equity and the Treaty of Waitangi—nothing that might have challenged prevalent beliefs that equity was about access, not outcomes. While there were people in the implementation unit of the outgoing Department of Education, supporting the transition, who hoped that charters might contain clauses with teeth—that could change practice— they had no mechanisms or relationships to work with schools, to encourage the new adult learning or challenging of what was taken for granted.

Also, given the pace at which schools had to take on their new responsibilities, it is not surprising that school leaders were cautious about setting stretch goals, and cautious about change in actual teaching practice. Nor in most schools were they being asked by boards or parents to make changes in practice. There are a number of reasons for this, particularly the high level of trust we had in our teachers and schools before the reforms; and general parental caution about innovation in education (Wylie 1998). This parental caution continues to have ongoing implications for assumptions that more parental choice of school would foster innovation.

Principal work hours soared, with just under half working more than 60 hours a week in 1990: a proportion that has stayed much the same ever since. Principals took on new administrative roles with minimal training and support. The hours our principals spend on administration remain the highest in international comparisons; and while many principals have relished much about their decisionmaking, the price has been a growing sense that this has come at the cost of their ability to focus on educational leadership. Principals and trustees also had to come to grips with the new role of the board of trustees. Much time was spent working on the policies each school was required to have and that ERO would be reviewing—not a bad thing in itself, where the policy area sparked investigation and collective thought, but the volume required within compressed time frames meant that often this did not occur, and that "paperwork" headed the list of trustee and principal dissatisfactions with their work (and has remained a source of ongoing frustration).

Supports for schools

After the initial flurry of professional development sessions—most in groups, in seminar format—most of the ongoing support for individual schools came in generic written form, with little customising. The NZ School Trustees' Association received some government funding to provide advice to individual schools as well as to produce handbooks and the like. The school advisory services now located at the colleges of education, also provided guidance and some support. Locally, NZSTA, the teacher unions, and the principals' groups did provide support and step in, usually informally. But one of the growing refrains was that those who most needed help were least likely to seek it, or seek it too late. And school leaders did not like to be seen as needing "help". "Help" becomes an issue where there is no

systematic ongoing support, where there is not an understanding that institutions do not work at their best with their doors closed.

In the 1990s, most schools interacted with the Ministry of Education in relation to their allocation of resourcing: there were no processes for ongoing communication, and no joint work. Educators were brought in—contracted—to work on the new curriculum documents, with core decisions already made, rather than working with Ministry of Education officials as partners in the original conceptual design.

The Ministry of Education did work with the nine percent of schools which entered Safety Net support, whose highest level was the appointment of a commissioner, used for only 19 schools between 1994 and 2000; and, sometimes overlapping, the 10 percent in 16 schooling improvement clusters. Originally, this support was intended to be limited to three years, but in most cases it took this long to build relations between schools and partners, including the Ministry of Education and some innovative partnerships with iwi. Three of these clusters arose from area-focused critical ERO reports, that aroused much anger, distrust and defensiveness.

In general, people in schools regarded ERO with wariness, expressing concerns about the variability of reviewers and criteria, the focus on documentation and policies, which framed the reviews in terms of compliance rather than educational quality, and ERO's release of results before discussing them with the school. But they did take notice of ERO reviews, and often made minor changes to school practice and procedures as a result.

Interestingly, principals wanted more advice from ERO in relation to its analysis and recommendations. This is one of the signs that many were keen for discussion, for insight, for connections to other schools or programmes which could improve teaching and learning for the school's students. Yet the competition between schools that came to the fore with school self-management seemed to inhibit educators initiating such connections, or sharing their successes. While many principals attended sector organisation meetings and conferences, there did not seem to be much visiting of each other's schools, or the development of cross-school curriculum networks of teachers. The secondary subject association groups which had provided such networks lost some of their strength, arguably as there was less connection with the Ministry of Education as collective organisations, and as school focus grew more internal.

Nonetheless, this more inward focus did not seem to lead to more collective work *within* schools. When we began the national NZCER surveys, I looked for indicators of school effectiveness that could be used in such surveys. The influential *Junior School Study* had recently been published in England, and one of the indicators that emerged from that was whether teachers had some non-contact time, to plan and work together. Rather than this indicator improving over our first decade of self-managing schools, it stayed static, and then declined. Perhaps the volume of change in this period played a part—but the lack of change here also shows that simply making schools self-managing did not often raise fundamental questions about school knowledge and practice that led to action at the school level.

Tomorrow's Schools interrupted the development of a draft national curriculum framework, based on substantial community and educational discussion, to replace a collection of subject specific syllabi and guidelines that were developed gradually and individually. When work resumed, "curriculum policy shifted from a focus on content, experiences, and activities to curriculum policy based on outcomes" (Ministry of Education 2002). The New Zealand Curriculum Framework was published in 1993, but not gazetted; the eight curriculum statements that followed in fast order for implementation from 1994 to 2003 were gazetted, and they described outcomes in terms of broad achievement objectives. Schools were not left alone to make sense of the statements; professional development relating to each curriculum statement was centrally funded.

The NZCER national surveys showed a link between teachers' views that the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms had improved children's learning, and their participation in curriculum professional development and use of the new statements. This link made some sense, particularly when the surveys showed that teachers were experiencing some isolation. Very few teachers said that they had had to abandon some of their own school's curriculum initiatives. Yet the cumulative volume of curriculum statements, the volume of the achievement objectives within each of these statements, the need to switch to focus on a new curriculum area every year or two, and the focus of the professional development on the interpretation of the new statements, mitigated against developing depth, or the integration of the essential skills contained in the Framework. Bolstad (2005) notes also that the volume of change and the nature of the professional development may have made teachers less confident that they could use the framework's scope to shape their school's actual curriculum.

ERO reviews used the new curriculum statements, and looked for evidence of student achievement. Primary teacher work hours jumped markedly between 1996 and 1999, particularly increasing the time spent on assessment. There were suggestions that they were probably over-assessing, using a mix of their own assessments using the achievement objectives, and standardised assessments. ERO in 1999 commented on the lack of nationally referenced curriculum-linked tools for assessing student progress and achievement, highlighting the difficulty of simultaneously developing new curricula and assessments to match. Teachers were certainly interested in having more assessment resources, and guides for specific curriculum areas.

The late 1990s also saw the start of contestable funding pools to encourage innovation in teaching and learning. These increasingly funded voluntary clusters of schools to work together, particularly around ICT. Many schools took part primarily to gain additional resources for their own separate use, but some schools did develop habits of communication across schools, and even joint projects. Some rural clusters were also funded to share administrative support. But the only national use of clusters to provide ongoing support to schools was with the allocation of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour in relation to students with moderate special needs. School principals manage these clusters. The variability in the allocation of this resource and its usefulness was evident in 2000 (Wylie 2000), and remained a concern in 2009 (ERO 2009): an object lesson in the difficulty of sharing resources when so much of the learning for schools since 1989 has been that their responsibility is to themselves.

Patterns at a system level

From a bird's eye view, our education system by the end of the 1990s seemed more uneven than it had in 1989. So much of what happened at individual schools was indeed down to the capability and capacity of those who made a particular school: not just the educators, but the students, their parents, and the community around them. Our system seemed more stratified: enrolments increased in the high decile schools, and fell in the lowest decile schools, making it harder for those who served the most educationally needy of our students (Fiske & Ladd 2000, Harker 200a & 2000b, Lauder & Hughes 1999, Pearce & Gordon 2005, Thrupp 2007a and b, Wylie 1998 & 2006). Low decile schools attracted good teachers—there is still a strong moral purpose among many of our educators—but they also lost them over time to schools

where the ask was less (or different) (Ritchie 2004); and they were more subject to the vagaries of teacher supply, more likely to do have to do more than their share of working with provisionally registered teachers, or immigrant teachers used to different educational approaches. Some schools continued to struggle to attract and then retain experienced principals, particularly small schools, those in rural areas, with high Māori enrolment, or that were low decile.

There was some evidence that this increased stratification depressed qualification levels in the lowest decile secondary schools (Fiske and Ladd 2000). And our performance on the international tests did not improve, either in terms of reducing the number of low achievers, or closing the gaps between students related to home resources. This led to the mathematics and science taskforce, and the literacy taskforce: collective projects to identify issues and propose new paths forward, that brought together educators, researchers, and Ministry officials. A review of ERO led to some procedural improvements, such as discussing a school's report with it in draft form, allowing some changes to be made before its public release.

Per-student funding was insufficient to support the development of kura kaupapa Māori— whose popularity was undermined by the lack of capability and resources, both of which needed national supportive mechanisms to create and increase. Per student funding was also inadequate when it came to improving educational opportunities for students with special needs (Wylie 2000).

Phase 2: Developing capability and capacity and shared ownership

However, seeds had been sown towards the end of the first phase for central initiation of more supports for primary schools, with a greater focus on teaching and learning, rather than administration. In primary and intermediate schools, this second phase has a more spacious feel about it than the first. Central initiatives allowed more time, with more inclusion of ongoing discussion with educators in schools, professional developers, and researchers, and a more developmental approach coupled with ongoing evaluation or review, which allowed for that learning to be used in making changes to the supports or frameworks that schools would use. This includes the accountability framework of planning and reporting, which had school self-review and analysis of progress at its heart, aiming to shift schools from thinking of accountability in terms of compliance (or in terms simply of assuming quality from student

roll numbers), to thinking of accountability in strategic terms of ongoing development—real self-management.

The two taskforces paved the way for a more coherent approach to professional development, based on existing knowledge or understanding of what was likely to improve professional capability in schools, but also building in ongoing evaluation and openness to using the results to change the approach: a collective work rather than pre-decided. Mathematics practice has changed in many schools as a result of the Numeracy Initiative, with some achievement gains apparent. Literacy practice nationally has seen more variable change and gains, since there was not a single project and a smaller number of schools have been involved. Some of these projects have been centrally funded through professional development contracts (e.g. the Literacy Professional Development Project); others through partnerships of researchers and schools, funded through schooling improvement budgets, or the Teaching and Research Learning Initiative (TLRI). Where gains in achievement are most marked and sustained, there has been a deliberate building of school capacity for evidence-based inquiry in literacy (Lai, McNaughton, Timperley and Hsaio 2009).

Schools are using more evidence-based analysis of student performance because they have better access to sound, contemporary curriculum-linked assessments, which include national benchmarks. The Ministry funded the development and availability of AsTTle in mathematics, reading and writing; the development and availability of the Assessment Resource Banks, in English, mathematics, and science, the development of curriculum exemplars, and most recently, the literacy progressions. Work on the uses of assessment for learning, including the formative use of achievement and progress information, has been included in centrally funded professional development through the ATOL programme, with some gains for achievement. Such professional development has not been available to all schools.

The curriculum stocktake in 2002 went beyond a simple evaluation of "implementation" to look at the nature of the curriculum and its meaning, and paved the way for the development of a much more coherent and richer framework that asked for more collective work both within and across schools. There was meaningful involvement of educators along the way, in discussions, in working with the draft to experiment with changes in teaching practice and ways of working in schools, particularly around the key competencies, and in sharing

experiences between schools so that by the time of its introduction this year, the New Zealand Curriculum has become "owned" by most educators.

This more formative approach to the New Zealand Curriculum contrasts with the rapid introduction of NCEA in the early and mid stretches of this second phase. The new secondary qualifications followed more the compressed model of curriculum introduction of the previous decade, at the cost of initial sector ownership of the new qualifications, and then of vulnerability to criticism, even though it seems to have contributed to some gains in qualification achievements, particularly for Mäori and Pasifika students.

Mäori student engagement and performance moved more to the forefront in this phase, as Mäori made it more pressing, through the Hui Taumata Matauranga in the early 2000s, and the development of the analyses that led to the Te Kötahitanga professional development that has had a powerful impression on practice in some secondary schools, and contributed to the growth of much greater attention in New Zealand to the role of teaching practice in encouraging active student engagement in their learning.

I think we might look back on this phase as a particularly fertile one for the contribution of educational researchers to teaching practice, particularly where they have worked alongside teachers in iterative inquiry-based models, and where they have synthesised research findings on the relationship of practices and student outcomes (e.g. the best evidence syntheses, Hattie's *Visible Learning*) in ways that support cultures of inquiry rather than mechanical emulation. Central support and some vision that schools needed such evidence-based but not prescriptive support, aimed at building the capacity that embeds a desire for ongoing action at school level have been crucial to most of these contributions.

This phase also saw the spread of school clusters, more focused than before on collaborative work, rather than using the cluster as a means to gain additional funds for each school to use separately. The EHSAS clusters may have begun as a way to show support for medium and high decile schools, to counter complaints that underfunding was an issue for all schools, not just the low decile schools that had benefited most from the redistribution of the money that had previously gone into bulk funding, at the end of the first phase of the reforms. These clusters did not all have the sharp focus on student achievement and quantifiable results that might have continued their funding past the end of this year. The clusters that seemed to move fastest in terms of working on joint inquiries were those that had already developed trust and

processes through earlier contracts to work together. It does take time to develop cluster trust and shared understandings, and the early EHSAS clusters generally received no professional development or facilitation around this.

Such professional development, work on the new curriculum, and the EHSAS and ICT clusters allowed some new networks to form and grow, with teachers and principals sharing knowledge, starting to visit each other's schools, and becoming more interested in evidence of learning and how that related to changes in teaching practice and school organisation.

But alongside all these promising new approaches, with inquiry, good tools, and collaborative approaches, the original principle of separation between individual schools, and schools and the government agencies remains intact. The core unit of the self-managing school, operating on its own, remains intact. Schools are conscious of competing with each other for students, particularly in urban areas. ERO reviews have become less compliance focused, with recommendations usually related to learning and teaching, but not providing the specific advice that some principals seek. The annual school reports arising from the changes to the planning and reporting framework have not occasioned deeper communication between the Ministry of Education and schools, or ways to provide support so that schools can avoid getting into difficulties. We see in the NZCER surveys an increasing desire on the part of principals—and boards—to have more advice and support, to have meaningful discussions focused on the school's goals, progress, and issues. Trustees also show more interest now in having Ministry of Education support around the appointment of principals and their appraisal. The Audit Office has recently criticised the lack of Ministry of Education support for boards of trustees. When you look closely at our mechanisms for accountability at the school level, you see disjuncture rather than coherence (Wylie 2009).

In the second phase of self-managing schools, we have learnt much about the importance of the way we frame opportunities for learning for students, and the importance of how assessments occur and are used to support both knowledge acquisition and the capacity to use that knowledge productively. We have learnt much more about the value of habits of dialogue, of taking part in collective purposes with people who bring different experiences and skills. But we do not apply these principles to the way we structure our education system. We do not think about ways in which we can enlarge a sense of responsibility to the system as a whole, beyond one's own school. We do not ask principals to work together on thorny local

issues; the pockets where this does occur, e.g. ensuring that students who repeatedly clash with school management at one school are found another local berth, remain pockets. We do not ensure that enrolment schemes are equitable, and do not exacerbate social segregation; we do not think and plan systematically about how to provide educational opportunities equitably within local areas. Few schools are sharing resources; we are still often trying, and failing, to provide the variety or depth of curriculum paths that are needed. Relations between schools continue to have a competitive undertow which too often results in resources allocated to the "bright and shiny" rather than useful change to teaching and learning. We do not weave some new processes and relationships around our self-managing schools so that we counter the solipsistic legacy of the first phase of *Tomorrow's Schools*. And it is possible to do so, as I found when I visited the Edmonton school district (Wylie 2007). We can build on what we have, on the strengths that a focus on school culture and decisionmaking can contribute. It is not the case that either we have our current system, or we have bureaucracy, the spectre of "recentralisation" that some raise.

A new era for self-managing schools?

I am not alone in seeing an increasing disjuncture in our system. The PPTA and others suggest a review of our system. The recent Cognition Institute seminar (Langley 2009, ed) showed a sometimes surprising commonality of desire for change, an awareness that our structures and processes are being outstripped by the real challenges we face in improving learning, particularly for those for whom the reforms were originally intended. Our structures and processes are also, at a system level, being outstripped by what we know now about the nature of learning—for adults as well as children and adolescents—and the essential contribution of collective learning and action (e.g. professional learning communities, distributed leadership) and the attention that must go to developing and supporting capability and capacity.

These are indeed pivotal times, where we need to be particularly creative and strategic to put that knowledge we have gained to good use. It's hard not to read the Treasury recommendations for improving educational productivity (Treasury 2009, p. 48), without a tired sense of déjà vu. These recommendations rely on superficial mechanisms that systematic analysis of the educational research evidence both here and overseas from the last two decades

shows cannot improve learning outcomes at a systematic level, cannot offer greater efficiencies, and are likely to only provide a more inegalitarian system that will result in static or declining system performance. We do need to realise that government funding for education will not increase further, and indeed may decline, but we need deeper collective thinking about how to make the most of the public funding available, and not (again) distractive and ineffective applications of generic approaches that don't fit education.

The sense of déjà vu is sadly also present in the way the introduction of the national standards has occurred at breakneck speed, with little inclusion of the sector in overall design. As with the development of the curriculum statements and qualifications in the 1990s, there has been some sector involvement, but often piecemeal, for particular tasks. We can feel fortunate that in the design of the national standards some of the lessons from countries that have marched down this track have been heeded; but there are some critical aspects that need collective work still. And while some of the framing of the work around the standards at school level uses the knowledge gained over the past decade in relation to inquiry cycles, the opportunity does not seem to have been taken to frame the national use of national standards as a systemic learning, an inquiry that would result in changes as we collectively investigated whether and under which conditions the use of the national standards supports what we know about good learning and the development of strong learning identities.

 If I could wave a wand, I would put in place a deliberative process of system reengineering that put this learning at the heart of its purpose. What would it take to ensure that we were indeed really able to provide strong learning opportunities for every child and young person in New Zealand, particularly those who have struggled most to learn, or leave school with not enough of the knowledge, skills – and understanding – so vital to continued wellbeing, so that we as a country benefited long-term? I would ensure this process was well-informed, and engaged people in meaningful ways.

I suspect such a process is unlikely to occur in the next few years. But it is important to take what opportunities there are—more than take, indeed to make them—to bring these principles to bear in the work that we do, as researchers, as educators, as those who are here because we do care about the quality of learning, and do care about improving the equality of our education system.

Researchers have a responsibility to bring what we have learnt and why it matters in the framing of education policy to the attention of those who make policy. We need to seek policy that would reduce some of the inequalities that arise from self-managing schools, and be clearer about which decisions and processes cannot be left to individual schools, e.g. enrolment schemes, enrolment of students with special needs; which resources might be more efficiently and effectively pooled; and which supports government agencies will provide schools as a matter of course; and which relationships and processes need to be in place to ensure that our schools have the combination of support-pressure/challenge that is most likely to support ongoing development.

The introduction of the national standards poses a deeply ironic opportunity for our self-managed school leaders to not be simply reactive, or to feel that they must revert to the overt compliance of the first phase of self-managing schools. We have had different experiences in the last decade, and we need to make the most of those. The opportunity is there for school leaders to take the initiative—building rather than just defending. The opportunity is there to work together collectively and supportively, to build on the clusters that have developed trust, creating a framework that treats the standards as a work in progress, tests out the potential to use them constructively within the New Zealand curriculum, and makes its own reports on issues and costs, that educates boards, parents and communities about the reality of assessment and measures, and their prime value in ongoing inquiry action cycles, rather than as ends in themselves. We have some powerful learning to guide us in taking the initiative. And taking the initiative around learning, buttressed as it will need to be by more sharing across schools, and more joint work, including with researchers, will also start to reshape our system in more satisfying and productive ways.

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