

**EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN
NEW ZEALAND 1989-1999:
Is there any evidence of success?**

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ABSTRACT

After a brief discussion of the background to the educational ‘reforms’ from 1989, the paper brings together the available data which might allow an evaluation of the success of the reforms. Under **FUNDING** we present data on the changing nature of funding for early childhood centres, schools and tertiary institutions. It is clear that in all sectors, parents and students have been required to pay an increasing share of the cost of education. In the tertiary sector fees have increased dramatically while government grants have declined: under the loans system, students now have large debts. Under **CHOICE, RESOURCES AND EQUITY** we examine the interaction between the two agendas: one for more equity and the other for more choice. Data indicate that under the choice model followed since 1991, equity considerations have taken second place. There has been a polarisation of schools: middle class parents have deserted schools in poorer areas; the poor (particularly Maori) have been left behind. Under **RELATIONSHIPS AND MORALE** we summarise available data on the morale of teachers and the relationships between Board members, principals and teachers. Although the evidence does not show a huge erosion of morale, the morale is not good and there are some startling statistics on the number of teachers who would like to leave the profession. Under **PARTICIPATION AND ACHIEVEMENT** we examine the data on the participation rates of young New Zealanders in education and the extent to which the ‘reforms’ have led to improvements in learning. Participation rates have improved but are still rather low by international standards. There is little hard information on achievement but there are data which suggest that, in the opinion of many principals, learning has improved. Finally, under **DEVOLUTION AND DEMOCRACY** the paper asks whether the massive changes have led to a genuine devolution of decision making. Overall, it is clear that, despite talk of ‘devolution’ (and some moves in that direction) the system is in many ways more strongly regulated from the centre than before the ‘reforms.’

BACKGROUND

In 1984 a Labour Government was elected and, in a manner not foreshadowed in its bland manifesto, instituted radical changes to the economy. These changes and their results (social and economic) have been detailed elsewhere on this website. There are obvious links between these issues and education. Poverty, hunger, illness (mental and physical) and poor housing damage individuals and family relationships and have direct and indirect influences on children's behaviour and achievement. For the first three years the education portfolio was held by Russell Marshall who followed progressivist policies typical of earlier Labour administrations: broadening the curriculum, making education more accessible, and attempting a curriculum review which stressed non-sexism and non-racism. There is evidence, however, that education policy was seen to be out of step with the market-liberal (New Right) reforms of Finance Minister, Roger Douglas, and this was conveyed to the prime minister, David Lange. During 1987 Lange, under pressure from Douglas and the Treasury, instructed Marshall to set up a Taskforce, chaired by a businessman, Brian Picot, to investigate and make recommendations on the administration of education. The Treasury, in a Brief to the incoming government (1987), set out a new approach to education which stressed the centrality of economic rather than "educational" objectives. Treasury feared the latter for they might be at variance with the government's economic objectives: "Formal education is unavoidably part of the market economy" and government must therefore be concerned about the "effectiveness and 'profitability' of its expenditure." After the 1987 election which Labour won, Lange himself took on the education portfolio and hence, the educational 'reforms' are associated with Lange rather than with Marshall. The Taskforce (1988) reported in May 1988 and the resultant policy document "Tomorrow's Schools" (Lange, 1988a) was implemented on 1st October 1989. In the Early Childhood area there was also a taskforce report (Department of Education, 1988a) and a policy document "Before Five" (Lange 1988b); similarly the tertiary area was substantially reformed by a report (Department of Education 1988b) and a policy document "Learning for Goff, 1989). This paper will concentrate on the reforms as they affect the compulsory school sector though the other sectors will be mentioned when there are parallel developments and available data.

ANALYSIS

When we were planning this paper, we intended to document the objectives of the “reforms” and examine the objective data as to their success. After all, one of the main messages of the reformers has been that in education and in other spheres, objectives must be stated clearly and assessed objectively and those responsible should be held accountable. Unfortunately, in the reports and policy documents, there were plenty of (usually unsubstantiated) criticisms of schools and other educational agencies but we found it almost impossible to isolate clear statements of the goals of the “reforms.” Accompanying this (and no doubt connected logically with it) was the dearth of sound information as to whether the “reforms” have been successful. Incredibly, there seemed to be no Ministry database which we could draw on. As an example of the problem, the 1987 Treasury Brief used data by educational sociologists to indicate that the much vaunted aim of equality had been only imperfectly achieved before 1988 and that, consequently, a new system was required. We might infer, therefore, that the “new system” (market driven) would drastically improve equality. But if this was an aim, it was not clearly stated, no time-lines were set and no agency was charged with ensuring that the aim was progressively achieved. Those in favour of the ‘reforms’ seem to have been more keen to ‘market’ them than to analyse them. On the other hand, those opposed to the ‘reforms’ seem in the main more interested in criticising the underlying “ideology” (as they put it) than in conducting empirical research. In the absence of clear aims and objective data we had to make our own interpretations of the objectives of the reforms and to resort to assembling for ourselves the data available, whether from research or from popular opinion. The main sources of empirical data are the various ministry reports (which have to be quarried for evaluative findings) and the series of studies carried out by Wylie for the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (Wylie,1997a). For the first five years, the changes in schools were monitored by a team at Waikato University, but their findings are now rather dated (*Hear our Voices*, 1993). Other research is referred to where appropriate.

Peter Ramsay, a member of the Picot Taskforce, has pointed out (1993) that there were two rival agendas: one, favoured by the educators, was for a partnership between parents and the fostering of equity (‘parents as partners’); the other, favoured by the Treasury and the business people,

was for competition and choice (“parents as customers”). Both these agendas appeared in the reports and the policy documents and, to this day, they are in tension with each other. As an early example of the conflict, Picot recommended an Education Policy Council composed of both lay and ministry people; this clear cut example of lay involvement did not survive into ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’. For a time the partnership agenda dominated but, on the election of a National Government in 1990, the other agenda came to the fore. The Parent Advocacy Council and the local Community Education Forums were abolished. From the beginning, the reforms have been implemented at such a pace that there has been insufficient time for informed public debate, consultation, research or evaluation. The reform process has been bureaucratic and “top-down” rather than democratic and consensual. The Picot Report was released on 10 May 1988 with only 6-7 weeks allowed for public submissions. By the time ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ was released on 7 August 1988, 20,000 submissions had been received. Clearly, there was insufficient time to process this number of responses. Predictably, respondents in the *Monitoring Today’s Schools* study were generally critical of the way the reforms were implemented and of the reform process itself. Their criticisms centred on inadequacies of information flow, excessive demands on the participants, and poor “resourcing of new *Hear Our Voices*, 1993, p.122). In 1991 subtle changes were made to the composition of the Boards of Trustees. The original rationale had been that members of the Board (other than the principal, teachers’ representative and student representative) must be parents of children attending that school. The 1991 change allowed parents’ representatives to be non-parents. However, despite fears that parental involvement would decrease, Wylie (1997a) found that in 1996 67% of schools had only parents on the Boards, the same proportion as in 1991 (Wylie 1997a).

In the remainder of this paper we bring together the available data under the following headings:

1. Funding
2. Choice, Resources and Equity
3. Relationships and Morale
4. Participation and Achievement
5. Devolution and Bureaucracy

1. FUNDING

The Picot report (Taskforce, 1988) recommended that schools be directly resourced in two funds: one for the day to day running of the school and minor teaching relief and one for teachers' salaries. The former was implemented in 1990 by the institution of the operations grant. The bulk funding of teacher salaries has been a major area of controversy. Proponents argue that it is a necessary development if schools are to be truly self managing. Opponents see it as a way of cutting back on funds, eliminating a national standard of teaching and subtly moving to privatisation. Despite intense support from the National Government since 1990, only some 10-14% of schools opted for bulk funding until quite recently. In the 1998 budget, the government set aside 220 million dollars to encourage schools to enter the "Fully Funded Option" as it is now called. This money was available only to schools which opted in rather than distributed to all schools through the operations grant or targeted to schools with special needs. To date some 30% of schools are bulk funded. The Labour Party, which in 1989 supported the bulk funding proposal, has withdrawn its support and has undertaken to cease bulk funding of teacher salaries if elected in 1999. Whether they are in a position to do so (i.e. form the government) and are able to do so in the face of enormous pressure, remains to be seen. In 1996 New Zealand First had a similar policy (as did Alliance and Labour) but in coalition it went along with the policy of National.

There has been some research on bulk funded schools (e.g. Dixon and Edwards, 1993; Hawk and Hill, 1994). Typically, schools which are bulk funded in these studies reported that they were quite happy with it though there was no control group of non-bulk funded schools. In the NZCER studies, trustees in favour of bulk funding were more likely than others to think that their school was adequately funded and better teacher morale was reported in bulk funded schools (Wylie, 1997a). A recent Ministry funded research study (Wilson and McAlevey, 1999) compared a small sample of directly resourced and centrally resourced schools (n=19). The researchers found little difference in the ways that the two types of schools allocated resources to activities; but directly resourced schools self-evidently had more discretionary funding at their disposal. They used this additional money in a limited number of ways, most notably to, "change or extend the teaching resources used within the school, with common strategies

involving employing more classroom teachers, more specialist teachers and/or more teacher aides and other ancillary staff” (p. 34). On this analysis, bulk funding per se appeared to have no direct effect on the nature or quality of education being offered within the school; rather, the increase in government funding essentially allowed these schools to do more of the same. This suggests, as critics of bulk funding have argued all along, that what is needed by all schools is more resources not direct resourcing. Interestingly, the researchers found that bulk-funded schools raised more money locally than non bulk-funded schools and suggested the tentative hypothesis that the principals of bulk funded schools might be more entrepreneurial.

Wylie (1997b) found that 14% of school Trustees favoured bulk funding at the time of her survey. Reasons for opposing it were: concern that funding would reduce over time (65%), preserving good relationships with staff (58%), fear of extra work being loaded onto Boards (55%), erosion of the national system (46%). Only 4% of Boards are interested in taking over wage fixing for teachers.

The early childhood and the tertiary sectors are fully bulk funded and fees are charged to make up the shortfall. Two studies of the impact of bulk funding on kindergartens were conducted in the mid 1990’s. NZCER undertook national surveys in 1992 and 1993 (Wylie, 1993) which concluded that bulk funding had had a direct impact on the quality and organisation of kindergarten education, notably “more paperwork for the adults involved, more use of untrained parents to fill in for sick staff and to take the place of the relievers who would have been there formerly, and more stress showing on the faces of teachers and volunteers” (p. 30). Wylie also found that a clear link between the parents’ socio-economic status and the resources available in each centre. Wilson et al (1996) reported on the financial and operational increase in institutions’ income over the period of the study, most of which was attributable to parental donations. “[F]actors such as the socio-economic characteristics of parents and their skill at fundraising” (p. 57) had led to large differences in the total amounts of funds raised between individual kindergartens. In addition, although over 80% of total funding came from government, and had remained relatively constant in dollar terms, this proportion was reducing over time as local funds increased. Moreover, half of the kindergarten associations surveyed reported a decline in voluntary help which was partly attributable to bulk funding.

The operations grant began in 1990. In 1992, a survey by the NZ Trustees Association (NZSTA) cited in the *New Zealand Annual Review of Education 1992* (an annual publication hereafter referred to as ARE) reported that twenty percent of schools found their operating grants inadequate. In December 1993, the Minister of Education announced that there would be “no adjustment to schools operating grants (set in 1990) until 1995 at the earliest” (ARE, 1993). In contrast, between 1992 and 1995, the locally funded component of school finances reportedly “rose 50%; in 1995 it accounted for 11.5% of schools’ overall finances” (ARE, 1997). It appears that since 1995 the government has increased the money spent on schools:

FIGURE 1. ESTIMATES OF PER-STUDENT AVERAGE EXPENDITURE BY GOVERNMENT ON TEACHERS’ SALARIES AND OPERATING GRANTS IN STATE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS: 1990-1998 (EXPRESSED IN EQUIVALENT [1998] DOLLARS)

Source: NZ Schools, 98 Figure 6, p. 46.

There are some intriguing features of this Figure. For one thing, it is hard to believe that the figures for the early 1990’s are “not available.” One needs only the budget for education and the number of students. The text may be more honest: “Government funding...has risen substantially

in recent years despite being eroded by inflation in the early 1990's." Leaving aside the 'inflation' excuse, the situation in the early 1990's is borne out by other official figures: Educational expenditure (in 1994 dollars) was: \$4565 million in 1991, \$4581 million in 1992, \$ 4563 million in 1993 (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 4). Using the material in Figure 1 it is clear that until 1997, the "gain" was simply getting back to the 1990 figures. It must also be pointed out that there has been an increase (hard to quantify) in the expenses diverted from "the centre" to the school. That is to say, the operational grant has to cover more expenses than before. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of funds which schools have had to raise locally (by 'voluntary' fees, fund raising, sponsorships and fees from overseas students).

The globalisation and commercialisation of New Zealand's public education system have grown rapidly under successive National governments. In the early 1990's, state schools were actively encouraged to recruit overseas students to supplement government grants. In 1994, fees for these students were set at \$7-8000. Foreign student numbers in schools had increased by thirty two percent in the previous year (ARE, 1994). Overall, the number of overseas students quadrupled between 1990 and 1994 and in 1994 brought in \$131 million of foreign exchange. Of this, South Korea alone contributed an estimated minimum of \$44 million per annum (ARE, 1997).

GRAPH 1

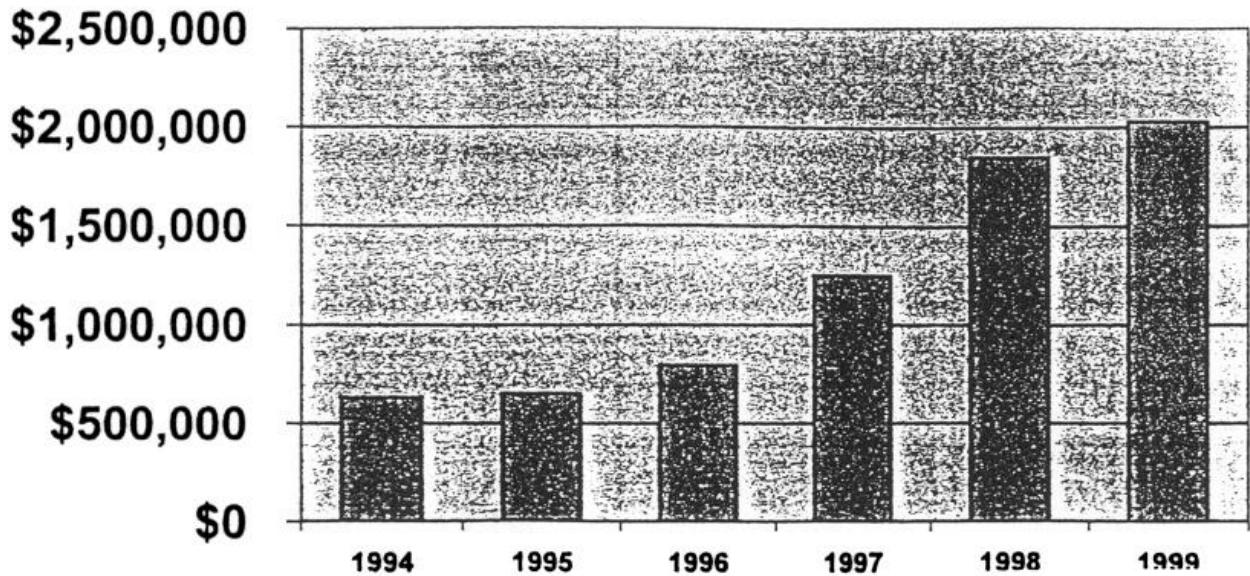
Sources: NZ Schools 1995 (Table 12), 1996 (Table 13), 1997 (Table 16)

GRAPH 2

Sources: NZ Schools 1995 (Table 12), 1996 (Table 13), 1997 (Table 16)

In her final study Wylie (1997a) reports that in each of her surveys the number of principals and trustees reporting under-resourcing has steadily grown: from 20% of each in 1990 to 73% of principals and 62% of Trustees in 1996. Larger schools showed least satisfaction. There has also been a gradual decline in the proportion of teachers who consider they have enough for their programmes: from 50% in 1991 to 41% in 1996. The government funding for private schools has been steadily increased since 1991. Between 1996 and 1998 the total state grant to state schools for operations and salaries increased by 12.29%, for integrated schools by 14.34% and for private schools by 109.59% (ESRA, 1999).

GRAPH 3 GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TO A PRIVATE SCHOOL 1994 to 1999



Source: Ministry of Education: Information supplied in response to a Parliamentary question

This school has substantial assets and charges fees of some \$9000 per year. Its income is estimated at \$11,000 per student compared to \$4,000 in a similarly sized state school. Labour's school policy for the 1999 election is to "cap" the funds to private schools at the current rate. In the early childhood sector, private centres have increased from 300 in 1990 to 716 in 1998 (Cook, 1999). In contrast, Parliament's Education and Science Select Committee recently expressed concern that the funds allocated to the Education Review Office to conduct reviews of pre-school providers has been cut by 17% (Education Review, 1999a, p. 5).

Government bulk funding of tertiary sector private training establishments (PTE's) is a recent phenomenon which began in very modest fashion with the announcement for the 1996 year of \$1million for EFTS places (ARE, 1995). It is a clear sign of the privatising agenda of the current government that two years later, the government announced that from the year 2000 private training establishments are to be funded identically with state universities, polytechnics and colleges of education.

Under the Labour government in 1990 tertiary fees were raised from \$120 per year to \$1250. National campaigned on a pledge to abolish this fee but in fact instituted a new funding policy. Under this policy, fees have risen steadily as shown. The student loan scheme was introduced in 1992 to provide all students with access to funding for tertiary study. Under the system of tertiary funding introduced by the National government in 1992, all students were required to pay significantly higher tuition fees. At the same time, the extension of parental means-testing meant that most students (around 70%) were no longer eligible for state-provided living allowances. Consequently, the vast majority of students are dependent on the loan scheme, their families and/or paid employment to finance higher education.

The loan scheme enables students to borrow the full amount of tuition fees being charged at a recognised tertiary institution - Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Wananga. For students at Private Training Establishments, borrowing for fees is capped at \$6,500. From 1999, up to \$500 for course-related costs which can be verified with receipts can also be borrowed. From the introduction of the loan scheme in 1992 until 1998, this figure was \$1000 with no requirement for verification. Students may also borrow a living allowance of a maximum \$150 per week for the length of their course, minus any state-provided student allowance they may be eligible for. Interest is charged from the day the loan is taken out, calculated on a daily basis and becomes payable above the income threshold of \$14,716.

By 1997, MoE figures showed that students had borrowed \$2.05 billion through the student loan scheme, with an average student loan of \$21,831 (ARE, 1997). In August 1999 the total student debt reached \$3 billion (Education Review, 1999b) and is expected to reach 25 billion in the next 20 years. According to briefing papers prepared for the Minister of Inland Revenue, the projected number of students on the scheme was estimated to be 200,000 by March 1997. By 2024 the total debt was projected to be 10% of New Zealand GDP (Ibid.). In 1995, a report released by the Education Coalition Aotearoa and the YWCA showed that the average woman would take 38 years to repay her loan, compared with fifteen for the average man (ARE, 1995). Curiously, the government lists this debt as an asset.

A case study (Dominion, 11th August 1999) presented Mark, a double Arts graduate, earning \$27,000 in his first job. He owes \$59,000 for his education. In the first six months he repaid \$600 at the compulsory tax rate and the interest for those six months amounted to \$2102. According to a ministerial answer in the House to Dr Gordon (Alliance spokesperson on education) the average debt level of students (or former students) who have remained in NZ is \$11,625; for those who have left New Zealand the average is \$14,089. The highest debt of a person living overseas is \$103,000. \$101 million is owed by at least 3,840 people living overseas and, according to Dr Gordon, this number is increasing by 1000 per year (MUSA News, 26 July, 1999, p. 4).

GRAPH 4

Sources: ESRA Associates (data from various sources)

In Wylie's research in the primary school sector, "Parental estimates of their spending on their children's education (including transport and school trips) gave averages of \$187 in 1991, \$304 in 1993, and \$491 in 1996: an increase of 163 percent over five years. The increase in the

consumer price index over the same period was 11.5 percent. Parents in professional occupations were spending an average of \$647 per year, compared with \$431 for those in skilled and semi-skilled work, \$450 for those in unskilled work and \$377 for those whose “parents were receiving state benefits” (Wylie, 1997a, p. 33).

2. CHOICE, RESOURCES AND EQUITY

As suggested earlier in the paper, the choice agenda has gradually overtaken the equity agenda. It is, however, often defended on equity grounds: i.e. more choice will enable all parents to choose a good school for their child. Dezoning or open enrolment was introduced in 1991. Under this scheme, schools which cater for students from lower socio-economic (SES) backgrounds have suffered losses in roll while those catering for students from higher socio-economic areas have increased their roll (“middle class flight”). “Popular” schools are able to operate an enrolment

GRAPH 5

Source: Ministry database

GRAPH 6

Source: Ministry database

The available data suggest that Maori and Pacific Islanders have not benefited from “choice” policies.

Source: Ministry database

Note that although Maori and Pacific Island students comprise 25% of the total school population they are under-represented in high decile (8-10) schools and over-represented in low decile (1-3) schools.

Early in the period of “choice” Liz Gordon of the University of Canterbury studied the operation of boards of trustees in 11 Christchurch schools. Although this was in national terms a small study, it was a study of “a local market”, an idea much lauded by the reformers. Gordon concluded: “Overall, this small study has shown the development of alarming inequalities between schools in the four years since boards of trustees were first elected” (Gordon, 1993, v). A study from Canterbury University (Education Policy Research Group, 1993) indicated that in Christchurch, “choice” was leading to increases in the rolls of schools in higher socio-economic areas and decreases in those in lower socio-economic areas, particularly when these include large numbers of Maori and Pacific Island students. That is to say, schools were being seen as “good” or “bad” not in terms of their standards but in terms of the areas they serve. Evidence suggests that schools with enrolment schemes disproportionately select students from higher SES and dominant ethnic groups even when achievement levels are similar (Lauder et al, 1999).

The Smithfield project, commissioned by the Ministry, indicated that (1) schools with the lowest SES mix experienced the greatest decline in roll at Year 9; (2) for lower SES parents there is a significant gap between the school they would prefer to send their child to and the school they actually attend; (3) education markets polarise intakes and create “spirals of decline” which have more to do with the nature of the intakes than with the quality of teaching; (4) students from lower SES backgrounds are less likely to bypass their local school for another (Lauder et al, 1994; Lauder et al, 1995, Lauder et al, 1999). Recently, some of the interpretations of the Smithfield data have been challenged (Gorard and Fitz, 1998).

Fowler (1993) studied the factors influencing the choice of secondary schools in Christchurch. While 67% chose their nearest secondary school, the effect of choice on the roll of some schools has been dramatic. This had profound effects on the schools’ “social mix” which, some argue, is a factor in school effectiveness.

It has been argued that in the NZ situation it is schools which exercise choice not parents or students. Wylie (1997a) reports that 23% of schools had “an enrolment scheme” (which allows them to exclude children). 11% of schools had in fact excluded one or more applicants. Such schools tend to be large city ones serving affluent populations. Prominence is often given to cases in which a pupil is declined enrolment in a school a few metres from her home. Wylie, however, reports that 85% of parents got the school of their choice. This means, nevertheless, that 15% did not and the government has found the matter sufficiently persuasive to make a change in law which requires “over subscribed” schools to have a zone: no one is compelled to attend a particular school but those within the zone are to have an absolute right to attend. Predictably, however, there has been a good deal of “gerrymandering” particularly by élite schools in Auckland. In many ways, this has just re-instated the unsatisfactory policy of “selection by mortgage” which “open enrolment” was supposed to eliminate.

Similar issues of choice and equity are reported from other countries where these sorts of policies have been implemented. Thus two of the leading American researchers sum up the research in their country: “Increasing parental choice is likely to increase separation of students by race, social class and culture even when the system is specifically designed to remedy inequality” (Fuller and Elmore 1996, p. 189). After examining choice-based policies in six countries, the OECD was optimistic about their value but suggested that special provisions have always to be made for those traditionally badly served by the system. Thus, the successful schemes in the US seem to go to great length to focus on equality first and to use choice to help to achieve it. They are not free market schemes but schemes which involve careful planning to minimise segregation (OECD, 1994).

As a result of reportedly poor achievement in South Auckland and East Coast schools, the government recently provided extra money to be devoted to improving all the schools in those areas. This can be seen as a move away from the “market model”.

There are many, of course, who argue that the defects in the reforms arise because they have not been implemented fully enough; if there were complete choice, it is argued, there would also be equity. Conversely, it has been argued that the market model will always limp since certain

features of schools are part of the ethos which they want to keep and which makes them attractive. Thus Whitty argues, “Elite private schools in England did not choose to expand during the 1980’s despite the demand for their product from the nouveau riche of the Thatcherite era. Although the government has provided the possibility of expansions for successful and popular [state] schools, some have already indicated that they are not interested in this option because it would threaten the ethos they have developed” (Whitty, 1993, p. 13). Schools are not supermarkets which can expand indefinitely; their size and their clientele are themselves features of the education they offer.

3. RELATIONSHIPS AND MORALE

Prior to the “reforms” comparatively congenial, collegial relationships existed between successive governments, the Department of Education and teachers’ professional associations. (This was acknowledged by the reformers themselves: they saw it as too cosy for strict accountability). The reforms, on the other hand, have been characterised by protracted and ill-tempered disputes between government as employer and teachers as employees.

Successive national governments, urged on by the State Services Commission, the Treasury, the Education Review Office and the Education Forum (a right wing lobby group) have attempted to impose far-reaching changes to teachers’ pay and conditions of service while at the same time requiring them to implement large scale curriculum and assessment change. An agenda of bulk funding of teachers’ salaries, performance related pay schemes, casualisation and site based bargaining has been repeatedly advanced by the government throughout the 1990’s but with mixed success. While the take-up of bulk funding stalled in 1995 at approximately 10% of schools (until the recent increases) and although the collective employment contract remains in place for classroom teachers in primary and secondary schools, most primary and all secondary schools principals are now employed on individual employment contracts with salary increases and individual bonuses subject to an annual performance review by the Board of Trustees.

Similarly, professional associations have secured comparatively large (by public sector standards) salary increases for primary and secondary school classroom teachers since 1995 but, in order to achieve this, they have made major concessions on performance related pay and conditions of service. In the primary school sector (where 80% of the workforce is female), teachers and principals have only recently achieved a government commitment to pay parity with their secondary counterparts. In the early childhood sector (99% female workforce) the Shipley government passed legislation under urgency in 1997 which forcibly removed Kindergarten Associations from the State Sector Act 1988 and required Associations to negotiate salary and conditions directly with employers, in effect making them part of the privatised early childhood sector. Finally, the numbers and range of support staff (again mostly women) in schools have increased substantially since the reforms of the late 1980’s. Research conducted by NZEI (1995)

revealed, for example, that nearly two-thirds of these ancillary and para-professional staff work unpaid hours each week and their rates of pay compared unfavourably with similar posts in the private sector.

In a report commissioned by the State Services Commission and the Treasury, Schick (1996) has argued that the new forms of accountability in the state sector have placed too much emphasis on performance outputs to the neglect of a form of accountability based on responsibility, judgement and leadership. This has eroded Public Service values such as trust, the sense of obligation and professional commitment (p 23-25).

Livingstone (1994) found that NZ primary teachers work on average 54.5 hours per week with an average weekend load of six hours. He also found that 38% of primary teachers would leave teaching if they had a choice. 79% of these attributed decline in health, family life and leisure to the increased demands of the job. They complained of class size, increase in paper work, poor salaries and lack of recognition.

Bloor and Harker (1995) found that secondary teachers spent 54.3 hours per week in term time on school related activities. Management teams work on average 59.8 hours per week in term time. Compared to their counterparts fifteen years ago (Department of Education, 1983) management teams in 1995 work on average an extra 10 hours per week, middle management an extra 8 hours per week and assistant teachers an extra four hours per week. 61 percent of these secondary teachers stated that they would leave teaching if they had a choice.

Harker et al (1998) reported that teachers found most satisfaction in helping students and in other professional work. The less satisfactory features were lack of government and community support, inadequate resources and excessive workloads.

Wylie reports (1997a) that high workloads, particularly of principals and senior teachers, continue to mar the achievement of school based management in New Zealand. High workloads are associated with decreased job satisfaction and a negative view of the reforms. The early

satisfaction with having control of funding allocations and the like has now worn off and the extra administrative work is irking more.

Wylie (1997a) reports that, in 1990, 43% of BOT members got their job satisfaction from “making decisions about the school” and none attributed it to “seeing the school well run”. In 1996 these figures were 24% and 23%. Interestingly the importance of school-community relationships never figured highly (9% in 1991) and has now vanished. For those who sought self management precisely for this reason, this finding is sobering. 53% of the teachers who had been teaching prior to the reforms report a decrease in job satisfaction since the reforms; 23% reported an increase. 17% said their job satisfaction remained unchanged (Wylie 1997a).

Consistently over the years, teachers in the Wylie studies report that their major source of satisfaction is working with children: “It is the work and relationships with individual children that lie at the heart of teachers work satisfaction” (Wylie 1997a, p. 88).

According to Wylie (1997a) 13% of principals and 7% of teachers describe morale as high; 35% of principals and 30% of teachers describe it as good; 32% of principals and 40% of teachers describe it as not bad; 12% of principals and 17% of teachers describe it as low and a tiny percentage of both describe it as very low. One way of interpreting this is to say that less than half of principals and teachers expressed enthusiasm for the morale of their school. She found, however, that bulk funded schools reported higher teacher morale than schools not bulk funded.

Wylie (1997a) reports that 76% of the schools surveyed had had a change of principal at least once in the seven years since *Tomorrows Schools*. 37% of principals would like to be able to give less time to administration and more to educational leadership.

In Wylie’s most recent study (1997a) 71% of parents reported some involvement with their child’s school. However, while 62% of parents were satisfied with the level of parental involvement, only 29% of Trustees were. 64% of Trustees wanted parents to get more involved in fund raising as against 26% in 1993. Wylie (1997a) reports that it was widely held in 1989 that the “reforms” would enable parents to exercise more say in the curriculum of the school.

This has not happened and only 16% of current trustees see it as desirable. Overall there has been a slight drop in parental involvement but it is too early to say that this is a trend.

With respect to relationships, Wylie's data show that 56% of principals and 43% of teachers describe the relationship between principal and staff as excellent or very good; 37% of principals and 29% of teachers describe it as good; 2% and 12 % as satisfactory, while a small percentage report minor problems. 90% of Boards and 91% of principals viewed as good or very good the relationship between principal and board (Wylie 1997a). While 60% of trustees thought they had good relationships with teachers, only 40% of teachers thought so. Nevertheless neither teachers nor board members could identify any significant problems and overall more than 90% of all "players" were at least reasonably happy. Most teachers reported that they were involved in or consulted on school matters and only 16% thought that they were excluded from areas they felt they should be involved in. Given the worries which teachers had in the early days of the reforms, this is consoling.

The education of young people is, self-evidently, a social process and during the period of the education reforms a number of broader social trends have emerged which influence participation, retention and attainment rates.

Family poverty is a chronic problem. It has been noted for example that severe reductions in welfare entitlements undertaken in the early 1990's have had the most detrimental effects on one-adult households with one or more children, and two-adult households with three or more children (Easton, 1995; Johnston and Pool, 1996). Between a quarter and a third of all children live in the poorest twenty percent of the population; the proportion of children in the poorest ten percent is even higher (Easton, *op. cit.*). A small scale study of multicultural high schools (Hawk and Hill, 1995) reported evidence of the "re-emergence of diseases of poverty" among the student population in these areas, together with poor health, diet, nutrition, vision and hearing, sexual health, substance abuse, dental problems and hygiene.

According to the United Nations, New Zealand has the highest teenage suicide rate among the industrialized countries, and suicide levels among 15-19 year olds trebled in the twenty years to

1994. Among the 15-19 age group male suicide is 26.9 per 100,000, and 3.6 for females (Drummond, 1996). Between 1984 and 1995 annual youth suicide rose from 76 to 152 deaths (Drummond, 1999). Other “at risk” behaviours among adolescents are of equal concern: truancy, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse (Ibid., 1999).

Respondents to a 1993 survey of 350 secondary schools estimated 18% of students were at risk, of which 20% were truants. Under the *Tomorrow’s Schools* reforms, responsibility for the truancy services formerly provided by regional education boards and visiting teachers was transferred to an independent government social services agency (Ibid.), since when no reliable national figures for truancy rates have been available. Since 1994, the government has allocated approximately \$10 million in resources for truancy programmes (Ibid.). Pregnancies among those aged under 20 in New Zealand in 1995 were mid-range (34.0 per 1000) compared with other Western countries (Netherlands: 5.4 in 1993; United States: 60.0 in 1994) (Ibid.); figures for alcohol and substance abuse and deaths related to these among young people in New Zealand continue to give cause for concern and have been the subject of a number of targeted government campaigns and education programmes (Ibid.) during the past few years. Suspensions and expulsions have increased each year. Maori suspension rate is more than four times that of pakeha.

TABLE 1 SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS 1994-1998

	SUSPENSIONS			EXPULSIONS (indicative)
	Specified (1-3 days)	Unspecified	Total	
1994	5 031	2 460	7 491	50
1995	5 931	2 919	8 850	77
1996	6 545	3 471	10 016	117
1997	7 335	4 104	11 439	152
1998	7 973	4 090	12 063	154

Source: NZ Schools 98 Table 11, p. 35.

TABLE 2 SUSPENSIONS BY ETHNIC GROUP AND GENDER, 1998

Ethnicity	Male n	Female n	Total* n	Rate per 1000
European/Pakeha	3 798	1 263	5 089	11.4
Maori	3 708	1 713	5 458	38.9
Pacific Islands	693	296	1 001	19.0
Other	387	121	515	10.1
TOTAL	8 586	3 393	12 063	17.5

*includes suspensions where ethnicity and/or gender is not specified

Source: NZ Schools 98, Table 12, p. 35.

Truancy rates are disturbingly high and government has voted more than 5 million dollars for a truancy initiative (*NZ Schools 98*, 1999, p. 33). In the Wylie study, eighty two percent of the parents surveyed were generally happy with the quality of their child's schooling (Wylie, 1997a). This is precisely the level of satisfaction reported in 1988, prior to the "reforms".

4. PARTICIPATION RATES AND ACHIEVEMENT

It is a truism that the “reforms” were meant to lead to the improvement of student learning and this motivation was explicit in the reforms (e.g. in David Lange’s introduction to *Schools*). Unfortunately we do not yet have any direct evidence to enable us to say whether this has been achieved.

A very innovative National Education Monitoring Project based at Otago University has begun and will provide comparative evidence in the future though it will not be able to compare the situation before the reforms with that after them. This Ministry funded project is based on “light sampling” of schools. Thus it will reveal changes across the nation as a whole but will not provide any data for comparing schools or teachers.

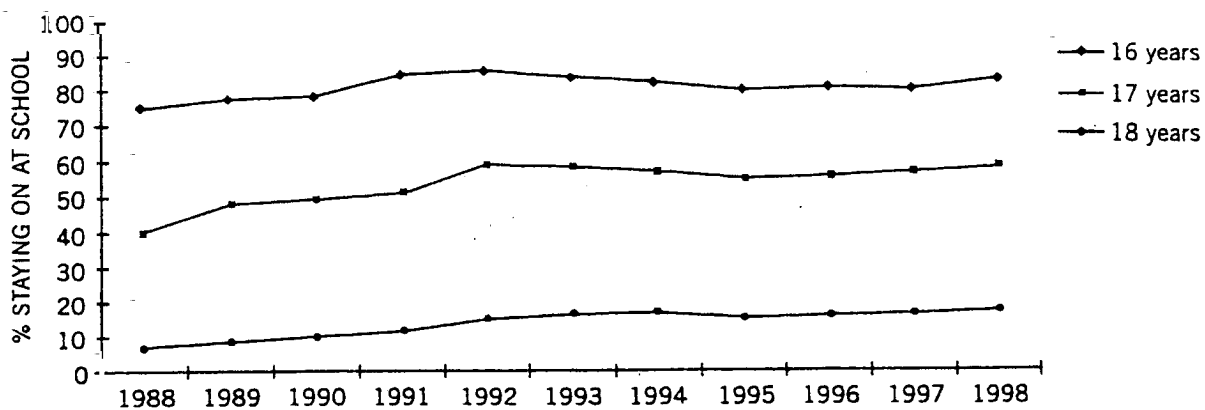
Respondents in the *Monitoring Today’s Schools* study (carried out during the first three years of the “reforms”) were very sceptical about the prediction that educational outcomes would improve and even the less ambitious claim of Lange that the reforms would lead to improved learning opportunities (*Hear Our Voices*, 1993, p 120). Nevertheless, the NZCER studies (Wylie, 1997a) since 1990 have reported a steadily growing belief that the reforms have had a positive effect on student learning. In 1996, 60% of principals saw substantial positive impact in many ways including teaching content, teaching style and pupil learning. However, more than 30% of principals saw no connection between the reforms and anything that has happened at their school and around 12% report a negative effect for most variables including teaching and learning. Only 20% of schools reported that they were in competition with other schools and half of these describe relationships with them as friendly.

Principals who described their relationships with other schools as cooperative also reported more positive learning gains for children (43% vs 26%). Conversely, principals who reported their schools as being in competition with others reported negative impacts on learning (22% vs 8%). (Wylie, 1997a). In the Wylie study (1997a) a quarter of the principals whose roll had decreased substantially thought the reforms had had a negative effect on teaching content, compared to one percent of all other schools. According to Wylie (1997a), teachers’ views on the impact of the

reforms have shifted over the years from neutral expression in 1989,1990 and 1991 to more positive views in 1993. In 1996 they were even more positive about improved learning though they felt that job satisfaction had decreased. Overall, 40% reported minor or major improvements in learning though 36% were neutral and 8% thought that there had been negative change. Senior staff were more likely to report positive effects than junior staff.

One of the motivations behind the reforms was that schools would diversify their curriculum and cater for a wider range of needs. None of the New Zealand studies reveal whether this has been achieved. A new national curriculum has made such diversity unlikely in the compulsory years and the focus of the NZQA seems to be tending towards a narrow skill-based vocationalism in the post compulsory years. The English evidence suggests that it is unlikely that schools will diversify while there is competition. Thus Gewirtz et al (1995) argue that one effect of the educational market in Britain has been a narrowing of the scope of education in that “almost exclusive emphasis [has now been placed] on instrumental, academic and cognitive goals” (p. 174). Whitty and associates found that even the new City Technology Colleges were appealing to parents not for their technical image (the original rationale), but because they were seen as the next best thing to the academic grammar schools (Whitty et al, 1993). The market tends to make schools more similar, not more diverse. Many of those involved in schools in New Zealand have formed the same impression but there is a need for research on this. Young people are staying at school longer and participating in tertiary education to a greater extent than before. To some extent, this is the result of the raising of the school-leaving age in recent years.

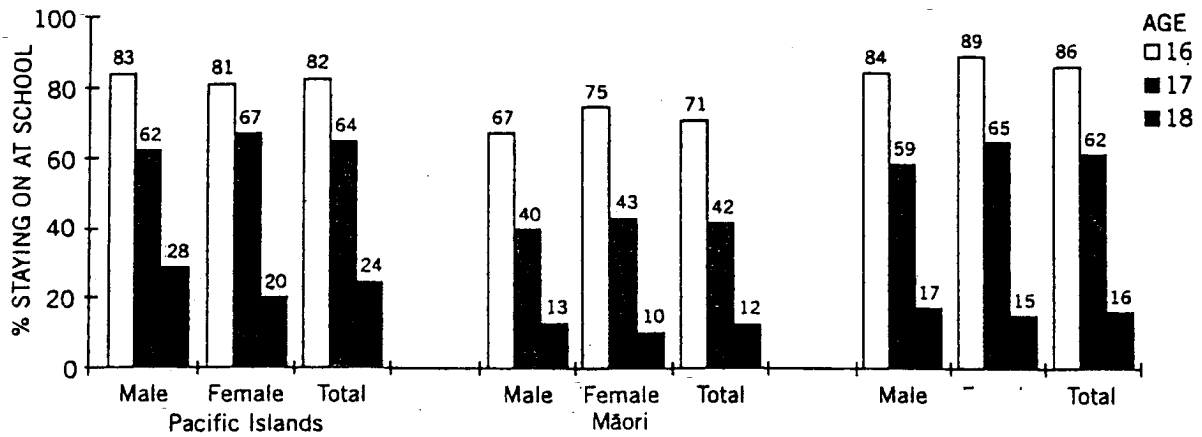
FIGURE 2 ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF ALL STUDENTS STAYING ON AT SCHOOL, BY AGE, 1988-1998



Source: NZ Schools 98, Figure 8, p.68.

This is differentially true for different SES levels and for Maori vs pakeha.

FIGURE 3 ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS STAYING ON AT SCHOOL, BY AGE, 1998



Source: NZ Schools 98, Figure 9, p. 69.

NZ still lags behind most OECD countries in the percentage remaining in secondary school beyond the compulsory age (*NZ Schools 98*, 1999, p. 69) and it has been noted (ARE, 1997) that, according to an OECD survey, participation rates in tertiary education in New Zealand had fallen dramatically in the previous five years in comparison with other Western countries. Those years were marked by: the introduction of means testing of parental income, a market rate student loan scheme, reduced government subsidies and increased student fees.

New Zealand research has shown a strong link between socio-economic status and achievement at school. A quarter of students in their third year of secondary school at deciles 1-3 did not sit

School Certificate compared with only 4% of deciles 8-10. And even then, their success rate is inferior.

FIGURE 4 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF 1998 SCHOOL CERTIFICATE GRADES, BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Source: *NZ Schools 98*, Figure 13, p. 84.

According to Gilmore (1998) research based on analysis of entry competencies of 6500 children indicates that in numeracy 62% are competent, and 18% expert. In literacy 53% are average, 7.5% are good and 39% are modest. In oral language 49% are mixed, 18% are high, 33% are low and “in need of particular support”. Overall, Asian and pakeha scored much better than Maori, and Maori better than Pacific Islanders. Gilmore also found (p. 6) that even with new entrants, “children in high decile schools performed better than those in low decile ‘schools’”.

Obviously educational inequality begins very early. Many look to early childhood education to remove or reduce these inequalities but the increased participation in early childhood care and education over the past ten years is accounted for mainly by centres for child minding rather than for education. 56% of all under fives are in licensed centres, but 42% of these are receiving care rather than education and half of these centres, are private “for profit” centres (Cook, 1999).

A feature of the reforms was the establishment of NZQA with a mandate to validate all tertiary qualifications except those offered by universities and to approve degrees in non university institutions. To date some 160 new degrees have been approved. In secondary schools, competence or unit standards assessments validated by NZQA have been trialled alongside

existing School Certificate and Sixth Form credentials. It was originally envisaged by government that competence based assessment would be portable nationally between providers, would entirely replace existing credentials and would form part of a seamless credentialling system between secondary and tertiary sectors. According to the evidence of one small scale study undertaken in Christchurch, however, “there are very real concerns about the culture that is developing amongst students with regard to study habits and skills, due to the structure of unit standards, and specifically as a result of the pass/fail formula” (Priestly, 1997, p. 389). Anecdotal evidence suggests that unit standards are also time consuming and bureaucratic to administer. Despite these and other shortcomings (e.g. Elley, 1996), standards-based assessment has proliferated as a result of energetic marketing by NZQA. NZQA was established as a revenue generating, self-financing quango and thus has a vested interest in ensuring the widest possible development and take up of unit standards based assessment.

In February 1999, there were 52 recognised Industry Training Organisations each separately developing and validating 550 nationally recognised vocational training courses, all registered on a single National Qualifications Framework administered by NZQA on behalf of accredited providers including schools, polytechnics, wananga and over 500 private training establishments (NZQA, undated). As at 1 June 1999 the following framework statistics operated:

Registered qualifications	590
Registered unit standards	13,541
Accredited providers	1,020
Schools with NQF accreditation	401
PTE's with NQF accreditation	583
National qualifications awarded	24,331

(Education Review, 1st August 1999)

In his report on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework for the Education Forum, Professor Smithers (1997, p. 11) warned of the logistic difficulties of such a rapid, laissez-faire pattern of growth. He noted that the number of learners “hooked on” to unit standards had grown from 62,385 in 1996 to 161,511 in 1997; the number of registered unit standards from 5,513 to 9,161 and the number of national qualifications awarded from 1600 to 4138.

Thus, as with the British version of unit standards, although the number of learners involved has expanded rapidly, there is a very real concern that many of these students will not end up with useable qualifications. Moreover, although “three quarters of the awards have been at levels 1 and 2, reflecting the early thrust to help the unemployed and those who have missed out at school” (Ibid., pp. 14-15) there is little evidence to date to suggest that these credentials enjoy the necessary support and confidence of employers.

One clear and obvious result of increased competition is that in teacher education four year degrees have been replaced by three year degrees. This has been achieved either by reducing subject studies (the content to be taught) or contextual studies (providing a historical and critical perspective on the profession) or both. Similar reductions have been made to other professional qualifications such as those for nursing. Institutions which have made these moves would deny that they represent a lowering of standards but, if length of study means anything, there must be some loss in learning opportunity. And it is difficult to argue that tomorrow’s teachers need to know less about the subjects to be taught or the social and historical context in which they work.

5. DEVOLUTION AND BUREAUCRACY

Prior to 1989, New Zealand had one of the most centralised educational systems in the world. (As a young ‘colony’ with a widely distributed population base which reached three million relatively recently, this may have been quite a sensible policy.) The system was controlled by the Department of Education in Wellington, though in the case of primary schools, control was exercised through seven elected education boards and, in the case of the universities, through the University Grants Committee and individual Acts of Parliament for each university. Secondary schools had individual Boards of Governors and Colleges of Education and Polytechnics had Councils but all were very much controlled by the Department of Education. Despite this centralised system, however, the OECD examiners pointed out that teachers especially had a high degree of involvement particularly in the design and trialling of new curricula. It was felt, however, that decision-making was cumbersome and that parents were not as fully involved in schooling as they should be (OECD, 1983).

After 1989, intermediary bodies (Education Boards, UGC) were abolished and the individual school, early childhood centre and tertiary institution became the “basic unit of administration” (Lange, 1988a, p. 3). The former Department, widely held to exercise too much bureaucratic power, was divided in three: a Ministry, the NZQA, and the Education Review Office. Each of these is now quite large and each exercises a great deal of control over educational institutions: the Ministry by a centralised curriculum and the purse strings; the ERO by its mandate to “evaluate the performance of all registered schools”; and the NZQA by its rigid criteria for all national certificates, diplomas and degrees. In addition to these there are the Specialist Education Services, Career Services, Teacher Registration Board and Skill New Zealand. Within the latter there are 52 Industry Training Organisations to “oversee” the development and refining of qualifications, a Youth Training Programme, A Skill Enhancement programme, and an English for Migrants service.

It seems unlikely that there is less bureaucracy than before and the findings reported earlier about workloads draw attention to the increased paper work faced by teachers and, especially, principals. As the 1999 election approaches, the Labour Party has announced that it will set up a

“tertiary education commission”. The Ministry “would be left in the shadows” since, according to tertiary spokesperson, Steve Maharey, “The Ministry is providing unresearched dogma and calling it policy” (*Sunday News*, 1st August, 1999).

Charters

The charter was intended to be a ‘lynch-pin’ of the reforms, providing a key mechanism for both devolution and accountability. The charter was to be “a *contract* [emphasis ours] between the State and the institution, and between the institution and its community” (Taskforce 1988, p.46). By 1990, however, charters were no longer defined as “contracts”, or even as “agreements”, but as “undertakings” through which Boards of Trustees would undertake to meet the requirements of the national education guidelines. The State no longer had any reciprocal obligations to the schools or the Boards of Trustees. By 1993 the “partnership” aspect of the charter had been almost completely eliminated. Just over half of the respondents in the *Monitoring Today’s Schools* study did not endorse the power of government to override the charter. “Those opposed to government overriding charters saw this as being contrary to the devolution promised by Tomorrow’s Schools (*Hear Our Voices*, 1993, p. 106).

Boards of Trustees

The NZCER carried out research on behalf of the School Trustee’s Association. (Wylie, 1997b)
The survey went to all BOTs and 1130 Boards replied. Among the findings:

1. Most schools are confident about their work and feel supported by staff, parents and teachers but not by the government.
2. 70% have delegated some employer responsibilities to principals but retain the final decision making responsibility.

3. 10% were bulk funded and 3% were considering it. The others would consider it only if adequate resources were assured, and the national teachers' collective agreement remain in place.
4. Only 4% are interested in determining teachers' salaries by site bargaining.
5. Boards believe that the main changes needed relate to increasing the operations grant, improving the quality of teachers, and improving staff and teacher workloads.
6. The BOTs wanted more support work from ERO for the BOT (80%) and for the teachers (74%); 70% also want changes to ERO's mode of operating (such as its policy of releasing reports to the media).
7. 50% believe that the main benefits of devolution is that they can meet the needs of local communities and 34% mentioned the advantage of community involvement.

Overall, BOT's like the status quo and want the government to give them more resources but not devolve more responsibilities to them. According to Wylie (1997a) trustees, principals and teachers were united in believing that the major problem is resourcing; the need for more adequate funding was paramount.

The Education Review Office

Prior to *Tomorrow's Schools*, teaching performance was monitored by the inspectorate employed by the Department of Education. It had been criticised for being too "tame" since it was made up of former teachers and principals. The ERO was set up on a different philosophy (external audit with no advisory function) and, in turn, has been subjected to strong criticism relating to its "independence", its methodology and the ethics of publishing reports in situations where they are readily misunderstood.

The *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms (Lange, 1988) confirmed the recommendation of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration (1988) to “establish an independent body - the Review and Audit Agency [later the Education Review Office] to ensure that institutions are accountable for the government funds they spend and for meeting the objectives set out in their charter” (Lange, 1988, p. 20). Each institution was to be reviewed on a two-yearly cycle. The review teams were to be made up of “multidisciplinary 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” (Ibid., p. 21). Significantly, the original intention of both Lange, as Minister of Education, and the earlier Taskforce, was that the review should be “a co-operative attempt to improve the quality of the education being provided, in the same way that an institution will from time to time engage consultants to provide a wider more impartial and informed assessment of its progress towards its objectives” (Taskforce, 1988, p. 61).

One early assessment of its effectiveness (Mitchell, 1992, pp. 40-41) suggested that there was a generally positive attitude to the agency among schools, that the relationship between schools and ERO was characterised by goodwill and that the role of ERO was perceived to be assisting rather than inspecting. However, this partnership model of review was soon to be dismantled. Just as the original democratic potential of school charters was rapidly diluted by government regulation, ERO's focus and purpose changed markedly from its explicit commitment to “educational improvement and social justice” (ERO, 1990, p. 11). As a result of a review (greatly influenced by Treasury and the State Services Commission) of the administrative reforms undertaken barely six months after their implementation (Education Reform Implementation Process Review Team, 1990). This review, known as the Lough Report, recommended a significant reduction in staffing and budget for ERO, and the introduction of a standardised review methodology with the narrowly focused purpose “to directly rectify deficiencies in the operational administrative practice within schools” (Ibid., p. 32), concentrating on “outputs and outcomes” (Ibid., p. 34). Subsequently the Minister of Education announced two “output classes” of review to be undertaken by ERO; first, assurance audits “to examine the extent of compliance with contract requirements including the quality of service delivery” (Smith, 1992, pp. 4-5); and, second, effectiveness reviews which would “evaluate the

contribution made to student achievement, in terms of both standards and progress, by the quality of teaching services, management systems and practices of the institution” (Ibid.). Consistently, between 1992 and 1997, when ERO’s review format changed, considerably more attention and funding was devoted to ERO’s policing or audit function than to its educational effectiveness role, as the following table illustrates:

	1994		1995		1996		1997	
	N	\$	N	\$	N	\$	N	\$
Assurance Audits	2421	5.632m	1155	9.554m	924	9.006m	1073	8.633m
Effectiveness Review	425	5.169m	343	3.912m	314	4.325m	359	5.184m

Source: ERO, Annual Reports 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998.

ERO’s dominant emphasis on audit proved contentious. In addition, reportedly poor relationships between ERO and the Ministry of Education, and between ERO and schools, professional concerns with the review methodology and the uses to which individual school reports are put, and the abrasive, populist style of the current Chief Review Officer have prompted a number of government reviews of ERO’s work since it’s inception (Education Reform Implementation Process Review Team, 1990; A Review of SES, 1991; Achieving Excellence, 1997) and professional association (Yeoman, 1995; Robertson et al, 1998).

In spite, or perhaps because of, the continuing controversy and uncertainty which surround ERO’s precise role, the office has managed to maintain both its independence from direct ministerial intervention and its monopoly position. In a decade dominated by market liberal reforms, the latter is particularly surprising given that as long ago as 1991 it was suggested that ERO’s review functions might be made contestable, with ERO acting as “reviewer of last resort for Government” (A Review of the Education Review Office, 1991, p. 8).

From Wylie’s (1997a) study, it appears that few respondents (principals, teachers or Board members) wanted to return to the old system. She does, however, find two exceptions to this. The one of direct relevance here is that many desire something like the old inspectorate which

offered informal support for principals and teachers. The other is that many would like to see again the inclusion of teachers in the development of curriculum policy, a strong feature of pre-1989 educational practice in New Zealand.

Nevertheless, Wylie (1997a) found that 60% of principals believed that their most recent ERO report was helpful or very helpful; 25% felt it had had no effect and only 8% thought it had been unhelpful. Teachers were a little more negative but more than 50% rated ERO positively. 83% of schools had made some changes as the result of reviews though most (70%) were minor. Small schools reported finding the reviews helpful; large schools tended more to find them unhelpful.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority

This was a new initiative of the 'reforms'. NZQA is charged with developing a framework for qualifications, reviewing standards, and administering national secondary qualifications and some tertiary ones. It has been subject to much criticism from widely diverging quarters: the Universities have resisted having their degrees delivered in terms of unit standards, elite private and state schools have fought to retain national examinations and, in some cases, have put students forward for international qualifications rather than those of NZQA. Academic educationists who specialise in assessment have been united in condemning the approach to assessment in the Qualifications Framework (see e.g. Elley 1996). They have been joined by normally unlikely allies in the Business Roundtable and its educational wing, the Education Forum (Irwin, 1996). The Education Forum engaged Professor Smithers from England to conduct a review of the Framework. In a far ranging discussion he advised that New Zealand should stop trying to apply one assessment model to all types of learning and instead do some hard thinking about first principles (Smithers, 1997). It seems that this constant criticism is having an effect. In its current proposals on restructuring the tertiary sector, the government plans to set in place another structure above NZQA and the moderating bodies set up by universities, polytechnics and Colleges of education. This is to be called QAANZ. Despite the enormous sums of money spent on the qualifications framework and the development of unit

standards, QAANZ is to take a more liberal approach and is to seek assurance from several “validation bodies” (of which NZQA is to be one of many) that quality systems are in place. The stress is now to be on quality processes not on standardised procedures for all situations.

Tertiary Developments

The Government has recently done “a U Turn” in regard to tertiary policy. The market based White Paper has been set aside and a new “hands-on” approach is promised. In the new model the government plans to encourage students to take science and technology, to treat universities rather more favourably and to move policy away from undergraduate to post graduate education. As a popular paper puts it: “Ministers are worried about the proliferation of substandard tertiary qualifications. They say the contribution of universities to a smart economy should be recognised, instead of trying to level the playing field between universities and the new training institutions down the road” (*Sunday Times*, 1 August 1999).

From one point of view, it is good that our political masters are prepared to learn from their mistakes. From another point of view, it is worrying that for some ten years, the arguments of knowledgeable critics were ignored and millions of dollars wasted on experiments which, in the mind of many informed people, were doomed to failure. The demise of unit standards alone is a sober reminder that other policies (e.g. bulk funding, degrees outside universities, and the ‘marketing’ of schools) will probably need to be revised or reversed after great damage has been done to education, to learners, and perhaps to society as a whole. (For example, a recent TV programme highlighted the likely demise of the study of the arts and humanities under current policy).

Policy Changes

We note, in summary, several ways in which New Zealand seems to be back-tracking on some key features of the “reforms.”

1. The qualification structure is being re-examined and the unit standards down-graded in importance.
2. The NZQA is to have a new organisation, QUANZ, imposed above it, creating another level of bureaucracy.
3. The Labour Party has turned against its own policy of bulk funding teachers’ salaries.
4. In its 1999 policy the Labour Party is advocating a Tertiary Commission to give advice, since the Ministry is “providing unresearched dogma and calling it policy”. The Labour Party believes that there is need for a new body which is prepared to make rational decisions about institutions. This is a strong attack on the Ministry set up by the Labour Government in 1989.
5. The government is developing clusters of schools in an effort to improve their quality. This contrasts with the notion of a basic autonomous school unit and the market model in which poor quality schools were to close.
6. The government is having a radical re-think of its tertiary policy.
7. After allowing teacher training programmes to blossom where they would, the government is now talking about imposing, through ERO, a quality control mechanism.
8. The Labour Party (which used to talk of abolishing ERO) is committed to “reviewing” it.

9. There is also talk of a review of institutions offering degrees to ascertain whether they are truly research oriented, as the law requires, though NZQA have turned a blind eye to the requirement.

Interested readers should take look at the (now public) research record of institutions which provides degrees outside the university system: it will be obvious how little research backs up the so-called 'research based degrees.' All in all, cracks are appearing in the market model which for many years was beyond criticism except for those individuals characterised as "dinosaurs". Yet there is still life in the "market model". The Treasury recently commissioned a report on schools as businesses: entitled "The Structure and Dynamics of Schools and Business: Do they face similar Issues?" This 100 page report provides no data on schools or on anything else and cites no educational research. (A solitary bibliographical reference to Wylie mentions her 1994 report. The authors appear to be unaware of her on going evaluational work which has greatly informed our discussion in this paper). It merely translates educational terms into business terms. The point of all this is far from clear. The authors, however, say "Drawing parallels and distinctions between business and schools has the capacity to provide useful insights and to expand the set of potential solutions to contracting and evaluation problems inherent in schooling" (p. 94). This, though rather enigmatic, sounds ominous.

CONCLUSION

After studying school reforms since their beginning, Wylie's main conclusions are that the self management policy has brought new energy and focus into schools and helped teachers become clearer about what they are doing. In the view of most principals and teachers it has improved learning for the students. It has been much less successful in achieving equality for children from disadvantaged groups. The new direction was probably under- resourced from the start and the gap between income and need has widened greatly. The major problem, according to Wylie, does not lie in the relationship between BOTs, principals and teachers but that between schools and the government.

“It is the growing gap between schools and government that is one of the saddest features of the reforms. If we can close that gap, New Zealand has the best chance of making the most of self managing schools” (Wylie,1997a, p. 180).

Overall, the purpose of the “Tomorrow's Schools” educational reforms has proved frustratingly difficult to identify. It is even more difficulty to assess their success. According to a number of researchers in New Zealand, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom there is scant evidence of any tangible improvements to teaching and learning as a result of site-based management (Education Review, 1999b). Despite a decade of market liberal reforms, continual classroom change and constantly shifting central government priorities there is little evidence of success. As we said at the beginning of this paper, a feature of the reforms has been a demand for clearly specified objectives, objective measurement of results and strict accountability. In these terms, the zealous reformers of the 1990's have failed to measure up to their own professed standards: the aims of the educational reforms were far from clear and have fluctuated wildly; few clear measures of key variables have been stated by the agencies concerned; as a consequence, though they demand accountability of others, they do not provide the means of securing it of themselves.

In the years ahead, rigorous research needs to be done to ensure that changes to schooling lead to improvements in student learning. “Reformers” who are committed to accountability should be to the fore in encouraging such research.

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All the authors have a connection with Massey University: Raymond Adams and Ivan Snook as emeritus professors; Diane Pearce as a post-doctoral fellow; the others as current staff members in its College of Education. In the data which follow reference is made to the “decile level” of schools. In order to facilitate the provision of compensatory finance, each state school is given a decile (10 percent grouping) rating. Schools in the lowest deciles (1-3) draw their students from communities with the lowest level of socio-economic advantage while those in the highest deciles (7-10) draw from communities of greatest socio-economic advantage. “Poor schools and rich schools” to put the matter (more bluntly).