Appraisal policy and implementation issues for New Zealand schools

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Abstract

The failure of schools between 1990 and 1995, to respond to the imperative to establish systems for staff appraisal resulted in the Ministry of Education in New Zealand prescribing guidelines for schools to follow from 1996 onwards. This paper explores forces which shaped national policy in the framework of the reform movement, describes the policy development process and a national training programme for its introduction and examines challenges presented for principals who are expected to be accountable for policy implementation. National policy (which frames problems and solutions in structural terms) is analysed to show how it can fail to address dilemmas at the heart of staff appraisal activity. Problems inherent in attempting to mesh dual purposes of appraisal are identified, and the requirements of a ''dilemma management'' approach are explained in relation to the role of the principal.

Antecedents of reform: forces that shaped national policy

Introduction

The New Zealand reform agenda for education administration in the compulsory schooling sector was contained in the policy document, *Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand* (Government of New Zealand, 1988). One major expectation of the reform was its potential to deal with the complex issue of restoring public confidence in professional accountability and the quality of teaching. The other overriding concern was to make education more cost-effective in a period of stern economic rationalisation. The starting point for this radical reform can be found in proposals contained in the *Scott Report – Report into the Quality of Teaching* (Parliament of New Zealand, 1986), and in the Treasury Brief – *Government Management: (Volume Two) Educational Issues* (The Treasury, 1987). The reforms had both a strong monetarist agenda and a strong accountability agenda directed by ''New Right'' economic policy. This advocates a consumer approach to education pervaded by an ideology of managerial accountability (Codd, 1993).

Two key principles of the new structures were those of making schools accountable and responsive to their communities. This was achieved by disbanding a hitherto distanced, unwieldy and unresponsive bureaucratic structure and devolving decision-making to the local level, with system control maintained through School Charter objectives and the National Educational Guidelines (NEG) (Ministry of Education, 1993). Schools are governed by elected boards of trustees, representative of parents and staff. Boards are required to comply with national guidelines and to take responsibility, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, for the establishment and oversight of school policy (which is implemented by the principal) and for the performance appraisal of the principal. The Education Review Office (ERO) established by the reform as a central audit agency, monitors and reports overall school performance.

A focus on accountability

The issue of accountability for teacher performance can be traced as a force that shaped the priorities of the reform agenda. I have argued elsewhere (Cardno, 1994) that the Scott Committee's recommendations about teaching quality influenced the way accountability was formulated in the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy. The committee stated that the achievement of quality in teaching was hindered by inadequate control of professional performance and recommended that the profession should assume a more active responsibility for its own accountability. As well, the Treasury (1987) recommended that there was a need to establish ''clear systems of incentives and managerial accountability, which are enforced through effective quality control measures'' (p. 42).

The Scott Report (Parliament of New Zealand, 1986) however, had no discernible impact on the system. Capper and Munro (1990) and Macpherson (1989) assert that the reform policy was strongly influenced by an increasing impatience, both public and political. This was directed towards the pre-reform Department of Education who had not acted to make teachers more individually accountable for their performance. Certainly, the Treasury influenced the actions of the fourth Labour Government which resolved to establish and act on the recommendations of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration (1988).

Concurrent with education reform, was public sector reform in the shape of the State Sector Act (Government of New Zealand, 1988). Section 77c of this act made it a requirement for employers in schools (boards of trustees) to assess teacher

ovision for the Ministry of Education to prescribe
matters to be taken into account by boards of trustees in assessing the performance of teachers. This provision of the act was not utilised by the Ministry until late in 1996, following several less formal attempts to exhort and support principals to take action on implementing systems for appraisal
processes.

Support for principals in a new role
A considerably expanded role was mandated for New Zealand principals by these reforms. As the board's chief executive, the principal is charged with implementing policies including those related to the challenging dimension of managing the human side of the organisation; and being responsible for staff performance which encompasses, "the development of performance objectives and measures to assess that performance" (Government of New Zealand, 1988, p. 11). Although the new role of the board and the principal were clearly documented under *Tomorrow's Schools* policy and in the *Education Act* (Government of New Zealand, 1989), research indicated a high level of practitioner concern regarding the appropriateness and adequacy of training and support provided to enable principals and boards to actualise their roles, especially in relation to managing staff appraisal
(Alcorn, 1989, 1990; Peel and Inkson, 1993; Macpherson, 1989).

The findings of the Education Reform Implementation Review Team (1990), confirmed a lack of understanding of trustee and principal roles; and, in the area of personnel management, a lack of skills on the part of principals and trustees. Furthermore, there was an apparent absence of planning to implement appraisal policy. The report, therefore, recommended a support initiative to assist principals to carry out new tasks – the establishment of a Principal's Implementation Task Force (comprising leading principals) which was required to write guideline manuals on areas of school operation. The resulting document: *A Guide to Personnel Management* (Ministry of Education, 1990) provided a comprehensive model of appraisal as a "developmental, supervisory and evaluative activity" (p. 31). This model, which is pertinent to educational performance appraisal, has been used in many schools as the basis for developing a policy for staff appraisal.

Developments between 1990 and 1995
Peel and Inkson's research (1993) which reported findings of a survey of 102

secondary schools in the North Island revealed that only 30 per cent had made a start on conducting formal performance evaluations of staff.

The Education Review Office, established in 1989 as a department of state, investigates and reports on education in New Zealand schools. The content of regular reports related to the overall performance of schools is derived from the aggregated findings of review activities carried out by the office. In autumn 1995, the office published: *Managing Staff Performance in Schools* (Education Review office, 1995). This report was intended to highlight characteristics of the current performance arrangements in schools sampling relevant sections from 54 reports on schools (approximately 80 per cent primary and 20 per cent secondary) that had been reviewed between March 1994 and March 1995. The overall findings are reported as follows:

> Most of these 54 schools have addressed to some extent a performance management system for their teaching staff. [...] In most cases staff appraisal is performed by the principal but it may also include elements of peer and self-appraisal. The most common purposes for appraisal in these schools are to target professional development for the following year and to improve performance through the provision of feedback.
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> Only three of these schools do not have any form of performance management system: in three others the system is still in the development stage. In some cases, however, the developed system has never functioned or has been suspended for some reason (p. 16).

It is regrettable that there was a failure to deepen analysis. Few useful data emerge about the level of involvement of schools in actual appraisal policy implementation.

A research project conducted in the same time period by Piggot-Irvine (1996) drawing on the experience of a group of 60 senior managers in primary and secondary schools, provides a perspective on degrees of policy actualisation activity. Using Fullan's (1986) theory of change stages (initiation, implementation and institutionalisation) to determine the actualisation of policy implementation degree, Piggot-Irvine reports that approximately 70 per cent of schools indicated involvement in initiation activity (raising awareness of purposes, policy and system design consultation). Implementation activity (policy development, document development and the planning and trialling of new appraisal events such as job description negotiation, monitoring of performance and formal interviews and appraisal training) was evident in approximately 60 per cent of schools. In the arena of institutionalisation of

appraisal activity (systems are up and running, constantly monitored, and lead to effective appraisal feedback becoming a norm in the school) the results of Piggot-Irvine's study show that only 48 per cent of respondents would claim this level of change.

All three studies indicate that some action towards implementing appraisal policy was evident in schools, but the interpretation of what constituted effective appraisal was disparate in the extreme. In some schools there was evidence of appraisal activity that constituted a range of events backgrounded by job descriptions and leading to professional development planning. Other schools operated only self-appraisal or only peer-appraisal-based systems or had non-functioning policies (Education Review Office, 1995; Piggot-Irvine, 1996). Peel and Inkson (1993) highlight the differences they found in their study between what principals purport to believe about importance of performance evaluation and how their beliefs are made manifest:

> In practice, however, schools have vastly different systems in operation, ranging from no systems at all to relatively sophisticated systems with clear administrative functions (p. 138).

The statement of government policy on assessing teacher performance in the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms and in subsequent publications designed to support the implementation of performance management practices in schools, as well as exhortations from the centre to act on these directives, did little between 1990 (the period of reform introduction) and 1995 to hasten school compliance with the provisions of the *State Sector Act* (Government of New Zealand, 1988). However, by bringing political pressure to bear on the debate surrounding re-negotiation of principals' employment contracts in 1995, the ministry, together with the State Services Commission, heightened the demand on principals and their boards to take steps to comply with the requirement to appraise teachers by signalling that the Government would invoke its powers under the act to prescribe national policy for the performance appraisal of teachers (Minister of Education, 1995). In a further effort to accelerate the introduction of performance appraisal, principals were offered a salary incentive if their board could attest to the fact that they had the basic elements of an appraisal system in place.

Structural solutions and complex problems
The approach to change taken in the education reforms at the beginning of this decade has been characterised by a framing of problems in terms of structure, legislation and procedure. Consequently, solutions have focused on restructuring organisational processes, providing mandates for accountability, and guidelines for policy implementation. It is my contention that the considerable degree of inaction, on the part of school managers to implement appraisal policy, can be related to what Bowe *et al.* (1992) refer to as the constraints and possibilities of policy implementation which are confronted and contested at the point of policy-in-use. In their terms, policy process is influenced by three interrelated contexts:
1 the context of influence (what various groups want in intended policy);
2 the context of policy text production (the actual policy stated in legislation or other documents); and
3 the context of practice (policy-in-use at national or local levels).

Efforts to support reform implementation, particularly in the arena of performance appraisal policy, have been designed to explain and urge application of legislation and consequential guidelines. They have, as yet, failed to address the crucial factor of the competency (or otherwise) of school managers to deal with the deeper issues which were implicit in the reform agenda. These include school-based responsibility for making teachers individually accountable for their performance in ways that attend to both the development needs of individuals and the administrative needs of the organisation.

Structural approaches to problem resolution, based on the assumption that national policy directives will address the problem of teacher quality and lead to greater teacher accountability, are problematic in themselves because they ignore the complexity of appraisal problems and the interpersonal processes involved. There is no acknowledgement of school conditions, leadership factors or interpersonal issues that militate against controversial policy implementation. For example, the conclusions of the Education Review Office report (1995) draw attention to developed systems which have never functioned or have been suspended for some reason. The causal factors associated with these scenarios remain unexplored. Peel and Inkson (1993) draw attention to the underlying difficulty of meshing accountability and developmental purposes in appraisal systems and foreshadow the promulgation of mandated requirements when they say:

> If the Government believes that schools are failing to implement personnel policies appropriate to a thorough-going managerialist agenda, further legislation or regulation might be forthcoming (p. 139).

Staff appraisal *per se* is by no means a new phenomenon in New Zealand schools. Education Department inspectors evaluated teachers in the pre-reform era and schools have had to develop evaluative and support systems for beginning teachers to meet the requirements of the Teacher Registration Board. In addition, teachers engage in many collegial improvement activities which constitute informal appraisal practices. The major demand of the new requirements, however, is a formalising of practice in a systematic way to make school leaders at all levels more accountable for the performance of staff.

An alternative way of viewing what is problematic for principals requires a revisitation of factors which prevented the pre-reform inspectorate from meeting dual obligations to assess and advise staff. In other words, school inspectors (and the principals they supported) in the old system had both accountability and development responsibilities. Their ineffectiveness to improve the quality of teaching was attributed to the difficulty of the task because their advisory and monitoring roles conflicted. They were also considered to be inadequately skilled (Parliament of New Zealand, 1986, p. 42).

A paradox of the reform is that the constraints that attended past problem-solving efforts related to teacher appraisal (and in particular, efforts to weed out incompetent teachers) have been transferred to the school level. These constraints are related to the tendency to ignore the inherent challenges in appraisal activity which often manifest as dilemmas when leaders must deal with multiple goals, conflicting expectations and difficult people-related problems.

While structural solutions might include teaching principals how to interpret policy text and how to plan for implementation, solutions in a dilemma management framework go straight to the heart of the matter. They explore the reasons why policy implementation and institutionalisation intent is often unrealised, and examine whether the essential leadership dilemma (a tension between doing what is best for the organisation and maintaining collegial relationships), and the principal's style of managing conflicting expectations, might be part of the problem.

National appraisal policy development and support for implementation

Introduction
In 1995 the Ministry of Education mounted a national project to design and promulgate guidelines for performance management in schools. Wide-ranging discussion with trustee, principal and teacher groups resulted in production of the consultation document: *Draft National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1995). It must be noted here that although the ministry chose to use the term ''performance management'', which has a much wider scope than performance appraisal, the focus of this initiative was on evaluative and development practices that improved staff performance. The guideline booklet stated that:

> The intention of an effective performance management system is to support, assist, and encourage employees to achieve a high level of performance in all areas of their work, consistent with the direction of the organisation. For this reason, the prime focus of performance management is on the communication between the person whose performance is being evaluated and developed (the appraisee) and the person responsible for ensuring this evaluation and development takes place (the appraiser) (Ministry of Education, 1995, p. 5).

Nation-wide issue of the draft guidelines was accompanied by notice of training opportunities which would be offered to all school boards and principals in 1996 and 1997 by a range of providers selected by the ministry. This first phase of a national training programme was intended to serve several purposes. First, it was to further consultation activity related to the draft guidelines. Second, it was to heighten awareness of the requirements for schools to comply with a specific aspect of the *National Education Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 1993); the clause related to the promotion of high levels of staff performance. Third, it served to encourage schools to review their current practice against the intent of the guidelines.

Delivery of training in 1996 contributed to modifications which were incorporated in the final policy text: the gazetted mandate for *Performance Management in Schools* (Government of New Zealand, 1996). Throughout 1997, the ministry produced a series of five statements to supplement the guidelines, each dealing with an aspect of performance appraisal. The titles of these additional, comprehensive policy texts on performance management systems (PMS) are listed below:

- *PMS 1, Performance Appraisal,* February, 1997.
- *PMS 2, Issues for Rural Schools and Small Schools with Teaching Principals*, March, 1997.
- *PMS 3, Appraisal of the Principal,* May, 1997.

- *PMS 4, Teacher Registration*, July, 1997.
- *PMS 5, Appraisal of Teachers in Specialist Positions,* November, 1997.

Thus, by the end of 1997, all New Zealand schools had been given the opportunity to become aware of both the mandated requirements and policy development and implementation expectations. The mandatory requirements as prescribed by the Secretary for Education are provided as an appendix to this paper.

Delivery of contract programme by UNITEC: emerging concerns for principals and facilitators

The School of Education at UNITEC Institute of Technology was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to deliver part of the first National Training Programme in Performance Management Systems to all secondary schools in the Auckland and Northland areas. Of a total of 103 schools invited to participate, 80 schools (77.5 per cent) were involved in the programme which included meetings for information sharing, follow-up visits to schools to assist with self-review of current practice, and workshops to assist with the implementation of new or improved systems. The aim of the programme was to assist schools with the implementation of performance appraisal guidelines and the prescribed gazetted requirements for performance appraisal. Contracted providers across the country delivered similar programmes with nationally and locally developed resources.

The implementation activity in this programme was limited to reviewing the status quo against the mandated requirements and school initiatives to collaboratively establish staff appraisal policy. Of the 80 schools UNITEC worked with in this contract, only six (5 per cent) were operating at a level where our facilitation contributed to resolving problems related to actual implementation practice. In all other schools our efforts were directed to assisting with initiation or establishment issues as a precursor to implementation of policy-in-use.

Concerns for principals

Feedback from participants were recorded at all stages of the programme and a summary of key issues and concerns raised by participants (who were trustees, principals and senior managers) follows:

Summary of participant concerns
- Confusion persists about the use of the term "performance management" when in fact the draft guidelines are about performance appraisal.

- Significant concerns have been expressed about the resources schools will need to provide time and expertise to introduce and maintain systems.
- The signal in the draft document that a hierarchical approach to appraisal is consistent with meeting accountability requirements concerns schools where purely developmental systems and exclusively peer appraisal approaches are current practice.
- Confidentiality and trust issues (especially in relation to appraisal reporting and who has access to data) have loomed large for almost all schools.
- Schools want clarification about the implications for performance pay and merit pay which are implicit in the document but are not explained.
- On-going training, which extends to all staff in the school, is seen as the key priority and one which needs to be funded by the ministry, at least in the short term.

It is contended that at this stage, the general concerns of principals related to structural and procedural matters rather than the more complex and demanding interpersonal issues that arise once the policy-in-use phase of appraisal is activated. As the principal stated in one school where appraisal processes were operative, the setting up of the system was the easy part. Once processes were operating, they created further demands which this principal was experiencing. He said:

> I have a very difficult issue to deal with because now that our appraisal system is operating, and I have been given formal feedback by staff and students, and also some parent complaints, I realise that organisational goals for improving this department cannot be met unless I deal with the incompetence of the head of department. I guess you could call this a typical dilemma (and I'm not looking forward to what I've got to do) because I have known this teacher personally, as a family friend, for years. Yet now I have to do this thing right for the school. At least I'm clear. It's a very complex issue and I'm going to need some skill in dealing with it. (Secondary school principal.)

Concerns for facilitators

In our work with schools endeavouring to implement performance appraisal policies, and as a consequence of research and consultancy work that we undertake with several individual schools, we are aware of the inertia that often attends the actualisation of appraisal activity compared with the espoused intentions of school leaders to make things happen and to carry out agreed practices in this arena. Involvement in the national training programme confirmed

these research-based findings (Cardno, 1994, 1995, 1997) and consequently the following recommendations were made to the ministry at the end of the project, and at a time when the ministry had indicated its intent to continue to provide assistance and training for schools to support the implementation of performance appraisal policy.

Recommendations for on-going training programmes
- A focus on school-based consultancy and support for the training of key staff in schools to train and support others should be a priority.
- Schools will need to be funded adequately to release staff to participate in on- and off-site training through school support funding that meets at least 50 per cent of the actual cost of releasing teachers to participate.
- A flexible and multi-choice approach should be adopted to the broad design of national programmes to allow schools to select the most appropriate means of accessing advice and training.
- All change initiatives require a balance between pressure and support to sustain momentum. While it is imperative that schools develop intrinsic ownership of the goals and processes for performance appraisal, it is also likely that the impetus for institutionalising this innovation will be lost if positive conditions and external pressures for change are not maintained.
- To establish positive conditions there must be a commitment from schools to make funding available for appraisal a priority.
- Training for appraisal should recognise the complexity of this activity and prepare participants to manage dilemmas.

Ministry of Education response to concerns
The ministry has been responsive to the needs of schools for further support to sustain implementation initiatives. In 1998, all schools will have the opportunity to participate in the second phase of a national training programme which focuses on developing appraisal skills for teachers. The ministry has also responded positively to facilitator evaluations and has negotiated contracts for 1998 with at least three programme providers who will use the principles of dilemma management in contract training design. The foundation of UNITEC's successful proposal for training in 1998 is a model centred on dilemma management and interpersonal effectiveness. Contractors in Northland and Otago are also

training their facilitators to adopt this approach in their programmes.

The specific aim of the 1998 UNITEC programme in 85 secondary schools, is to assist teachers with the implementation of mandatory requirements by developing the following skills in a framework of dilemma management theory and practice:
- establishing appraisal systems and documents to record performance expectations and development objectives annually;
- the essential components of classroom observation;
- self-appraisal;
- techniques for professional dialogue and feedback; and
- appraisal interviews and reporting.

All contract programmes have a school-based focus, building on current practice. Teacher release funding is provided by the ministry to a degree that is viewed as adequate by schools in our programme, and this support, coupled with external pressure in the form of ERO evaluation of school practices meets one fundamental for positive change (Fullan, 1991). The ERO has clearly stated the evaluative criteria to be used by review officers during their investigations and in forming judgements about the quality of the school's education services. In the area of management of staff performance, the following criteria will apply.

The school has implemented a performance management system in which:
- performance expectations have been documented for all staff;
- appraisers are identified;
- professional development goals are systematically identified;
- links with in-service training are specified;
- expectations for self-appraisal are stated;
- confidentiality is ensured;
- feedback is provided;
- poor performance is addressed;
- excellent performance is encouraged;
- incentives and sanctions are clear and lawful (Education Review Office, January 1998).

The UNITEC programme is characterised by a particular emphasis: the focus on enabling practitioners to confront and deal with the complexities and challenges of appraisal so that change implementation becomes institutionalised in ways that create new norms of practice in the school. The normative position adopted is clearly articulated by all our facilitators who understand and teach the curriculum of dilemma management as central to effective performance appraisal. In short, norms of confronting rather than

avoiding difficult problems are advocated. Leaders at all levels are challenged to understand the nature of appraisal dilemmas and their own typical responses so that they can learn and model norms of productive, rather than defensive, reasoning to collaboratively achieve high performance standards.

Re-framing problems in terms of dilemma management

Appraisal dilemmas for principals

The expectations now held of New Zealand principals and other leaders in the school who appraise staff, create the greatest challenges at the point where they must mesh the needs of the organisation with the need to maintain positive collegial relationships with teachers while implementing change that is intended to impact on the quality of learning and teaching. New leadership competences are demanded which go far beyond the administration and management of the technical aspects of personnel management, such as recruitment, induction, teacher registration, budgeting for professional development and the setting up of appraisal systems and procedures.

It is in the realm of interpersonal effectiveness that the need for new competences is surfacing, especially those skills associated with effective implementation and institutionalisation of norms related to performance appraisal practices.

Research has shown that the arena of staff appraisal creates contexts where the conflicting goal tensions between organisational demands and collegial relationship concerns give rise to complex interpersonal problems that recur and create considerable challenges for school leaders (Beer, 1987; Bridges, 1992; Cardno, 1995; McLaughlin 1990).

Problems related to failure to implement effective staff appraisal policy can be framed in other than structural ways. Such approaches require education to consider why school leaders avoid the intrinsic challenges associated with difficult "people problems" in appraisal contexts. This reframing of problems calls for an orientation on a leader's interpersonal skills in complex, conflict-ridden situations. Appraisal is a complex issue and the newly-mandated requirements clearly indicate that it has multiple purposes related to accountability and improvement requiring activity that is both evaluative and developmental.

When schools have to implement new practices that challenge the status quo, by requiring attention to accountability issues that impinge on teacher autonomy while simultaneously requiring pressure and support to bring about change (Fullan, 1991), a common consequence is the surfacing of dilemmas for a leader. When such problems arise, it is suggested that a critical and collaborative approach to problem solving offers a viable alternative to problem avoidance. Moreover, when training associated with appraisal skills includes the development of competences that enable practitioners to deal with dilemmas, it engages participants in theorising. This theorising encompasses becoming knowledgeable about the theory and practice of school management related to performance management, and the theories of action that guide their current practice. Practitioners must be able to distinguish between their espoused theories (what they say they do) and their theories-in-use (what they actually do), and then examine, and if necessary alter, their theory of action when dealing with dilemmas (Cardno, 1996; Robinson, 1993).

The curriculum for dilemma management

Appraisal dilemmas which are characterised by tensions between goals and values that are either organisationally or individually oriented are most commonly avoided rather than confronted. Typical approaches to dealing with dilemmas involve polarisation of concerns for collegial relationships on the one hand, and organisational needs on the other. Consequently, only one strand is attended to and while the presenting problem may be partially resolved or suppressed, dimensions of the problem invariably resurface. Leaders must be able to adopt an alternative theory of action when confronted with dilemmas. The conscious choice to deal simultaneously with both horns of a dilemma requires the internalisation of double-loop learning values. It is this choice which ideally is the new norm that guides practice (see Table I).

Single-loop and double-loop learning modes are differentiated by Argyris (1977) on the basis of the values that guide problem-solving attempts. An example of single-loop learning is the ability to learn a new strategy for suppressing conflict in an effort to be effective governed by values of winning and avoiding unpleasantness. This is a defensive approach to problem solving. In a double-loop learning approach a new learning loop which extends to a re-examination of fundamental values is evident. The value base in double-loop learning focuses on increasing valid information and internal commitment, and on a wish to seek and monitor solutions jointly. This is a productive approach to

Table I
Dilemma management curriculum

Dimensions	Competences to be developed
Dilemma origin factors (problem understanding)	Understanding norms of effective dilemma management
	Recognition of problem complexity
	Recognition and articulation of a dilemma
	Awareness of resistance to innovation
Dilemma maintenance factors (theory understanding)	Understanding typical responses to dilemmas
	Understanding defensiveness in self and others
Dilemma resolution factors (self-understanding)	Understanding norms of effective theories of action that address dilemmas
	Evaluating defensive responses in self and others and unlearning skills which are defensive barriers
	Learning new skills, practising and internalising productive responses
	Using critical dialogue skills in all challenging encounters

problem solving. The instinctive urge to avoid unpleasantness and exert unilateral control which attends single-loop learning and dilemma avoidance must be overcome. A new set of solution strategies is based on quality information and commitment to change that is generated bilaterally.

Training which engages leaders in theorising about their theory-in-use requires the teaching of a complex curriculum. Teaching people how to manage dilemmas presents a challenging adult learning problem for the facilitator because of the defensive barriers that are raised by learners to cover up dilemmas, to resist the unlearning of instinctive skills, and to block the learning of new skills (Cardno, 1995; Robinson, 1993; Rossmoore, 1989). These facets of learning can be viewed as three interrelated and inseparable dimensions of a learning system that must be mastered by those who wish to use double-loop learning organisationally and interpersonally to resolve problems of appraisal practice. Underpinning this learning should be the conviction that norms of effective practice need to be restructured in the light of a theory of effectiveness that offers an alternative to dilemma avoidance.

Potential and pitfalls of a dilemma management approach
A dilemma management approach has the potential to enable leadership learning that impacts on complex, recurring problems; that addresses those problems which practitioners typically relegate to the "too hard basket". If leaders are prepared to embark on this learning journey they are inevitably going to be challenged cognitively and emotionally. This is because such learn-

ing is both intellectually demanding and at the same time disquieting, revealing as it does that the very skills we are adept at using in some situations backfire on us in others. For those who are highly motivated to improve problems of appraisal practice in their schools, and are prepared to persist in mastering a complex dilemma management curriculum, the benefits of internalising productive rather than defensive responses to dilemmas outweigh the pain of the learning process.

In summary, the benefits of the approach are the:
- surfacing, rather than the suppression, of dilemmas so that they can be managed;
- examination and alteration of theories of action through a conscious choice to engage in double-loop learning;
- evaluation of one's theory-in-use and the theory-in-use of others;
- incremental removal of barriers to individual and organisational learning related to problems of practice;
- development of an essential leadership competency, i.e. critically reflective practice.

The dilemma management approach is not without its attendant difficulties. These are summarised as follows:
- leaders must be highly motivated to learn and the learning makes both cognitive and emotional demands to unlearn skills which have, in the past, contributed to their success as highly capable people;
- facilitators must be capable double-loop learners themselves if they are to teach and model the skills of critical dialogue;

- the facilitator must balance the need to support and monitor the practising of skills with the need to develop learner independence;
- learning the skills and internalising them takes time.

Conclusion

Structural problems associated with appraisal system and policy establishment lend themselves to structural solutions. Overall, the provision of support for the performance management initiative in New Zealand schools has been well managed and well resourced by the state. But the solutions offered have been structural in nature. I believe that what is also needed is an extended understanding of what is likely to be problematic once school activity moves beyond initiation of new practice into a phase of sustained implementation that ultimately leads to an institutionalisation of the change initiative. At this point, the focus must shift to the deeper issues and constraints that have rendered appraisal practice ineffective in terms of dealing with really difficult performance issues that impact on the quality of learning and teaching in schools.

The type of management development training that school leaders should be experiencing to prepare them to be effective problem-solvers in the context of staff appraisal activity requires a focus on the development of a new set of competences that requires them to look inward; that demands then that they examine their theories of action to discover what is problematic in the course of learning how to participate in dialogue that is simultaneously critical and collaborative (Cardno 1997; Robinson, 1993). Such training requires an analysis of personal practice related to dilemmas in school-based contexts. The focus must be on a framework in which the learner cannot fail to make a connection between their own theories of action and theories of effective performance appraisal (Cardno and Piggot-Irvine, 1997). A dilemma management approach could effectively institutionalise effective appraisal practices in the schools of tomorrow.

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Appendix. Mandatory requirements for performance appraisal in New Zealand schools

Performance appraisal in New Zealand schools

As provided for in the State Sector Act (1988), the Secretary for Education has prescribed the following in the *New Zealand Gazette* (12 December, 1996, pp. 4725-27).

A: Principles of performance appraisal

Boards of trustees should ensure that policies and procedures for the appraisal of teacher performance:

1 are part of an integrated performance management system operating within the school;
2 are appropriate to individual teachers, the school and wider community;
3 are developed in a consultative manner with teachers;
4 are open and transparent;
5 have a professional development orientation;
6 are timely and helpful to the individual teacher; and
7 give consideration to matters of confidentiality, including the provisions of the Privacy Act and the Official Information Act.

B: Features of the appraisal process

The process must include the following elements:

• the identification of an appraiser, in consultation with the teacher concerned;
• the development of a written statement of performance expectations, in consultation with each teacher;
• the identification and written specification of one or more development objectives to be achieved during the period for which the performance expectations apply;
• for each development objective, the identification and written specification of the assistance or support to be provided;
• observation of teaching (for those with teaching responsibilities);
• self-appraisal by the teacher;
• an opportunity for the teacher to discuss their achievement of the performance expectations and the development objective(s) with their appraiser; and
• an appraisal report prepared and discussed in consultation with the teacher.

C: The aspects of teacher performance to be appraised

The performance expectations for teachers must relate to the key professional responsibilities and key performance areas of their position.

Key professional responsibilities/performance areas are:

- *teaching responsibilities* (such as planning and preparation, teaching techniques, classroom management, classroom environment, curriculum knowledge, student assessment);
- *school-wide responsibilities* (such as contribution to curriculum leadership, school-wide planning, school goals, the effective operation of the school as a whole, pastoral activities and student counselling, and to community relationships); and
- *management responsibilities* (such as planning, decision-making, reporting, professional leadership, resource management).

Source: *New Zealand Gazette*. 12 December, pp. 4724-25.