



## NEW ZEALAND by Carol Mutch

Mutch, C. (2012). New Zealand. In C. L. Glenn & J. De Groof (Eds.), *Balancing freedom, autonomy and accountability in education: Volume 3* (267-286). Tilburg, NL: Wolf Legal Publishers.

### Overview

New Zealand's adoption of market-led principles to radically restructure its education system in the 1980s has attracted world-wide attention. Langley summarises the intentions behind the reforms as: "greater simplicity, more accountability, greater transparency, more responsiveness to national and local needs, more flexibility and less bureaucracy." He continues:

The implied philosophy of the reforms was that stand-alone institutions, governed primarily by parents, and competing for students, would inevitably lead to better teaching and learning, and hence a better quality public education.<sup>1</sup>

A recent OECD report describes New Zealand education as "one of the most devolved school systems in the world,"<sup>2</sup> although Alcorn suggests that the Australian state of Victoria is a more extreme example of the self-managing school ethos.<sup>3</sup> Twenty years on from the reforms of *Tomorrow's Schools*, the report card is mixed. Commentators in a recent publication (*Tomorrow's Schools – 20 years on*, Langley, 2009) outlined some of the successes as: providing an "important foundation for a modern and more responsive school system"<sup>4</sup>; "increased independence and flexibility [enabling] New

Zealand principals to put new ideas into practice quickly”<sup>5</sup>; “excellent gains in the professionalism of principals and teachers”<sup>6</sup>; “principals more mindful of their parent communities and [who] relished their decision-making powers”<sup>7</sup>; and smooth running boards of trustees.<sup>8</sup>

Each of the commentators also maintained that a self-managing school system had not provided all the answers. While they suggest that no one would wish to return to the system prior to *Tomorrow’s Schools*, it is timely to reconsider the areas that were unsuccessful and to find a way forward that meets the needs of an increasingly diverse school population and ever-changing global context. Langley (2009) summarised the issues raised by the commentators in this 20th anniversary publication. One is the *fragmentation of the system* with so many decision making points as each Board of Trustees sets up their own policies and protocols and so many agencies each oversee their own parts of the system. Allied to this is the *lack of policy coordination* with no mechanism for linking the agencies together. Another issue is the *dominance of managerialism* and increasing levels of compliance and this, in turn, impacts on *industrial issues* such as teacher workloads. *Variation in capacity* at the local level has seen some schools and some boards of trustees more successful than others and the intention to have schools compete rather than collaborate has had *unintended consequences* for the most vulnerable populations. Overall, the most striking outcome is that there is no comprehensive evidence that standards of teaching or levels of student achievement have risen as a consequence of the reforms. Langley concludes with his prediction for the future, which he sees as passing through three stages:

The first is the realisation that improvement in the achievement of children, and especially those children who are missing out, does not necessarily occur simply because administrative reforms occur. It occurs largely as the result of the quality of teaching. The second is a gradual move away from the relentless external accountability created by a doctrine of managerialism, and towards an accountability through the development of professional standards, ethical standards, and focusing on evidence-based best practice. The third is the process of collecting and examining evidence about what works and what does not work in teaching and learning, and using this as a basis for policy and practice. This stage is, in most respects, the most difficult but also the most important.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of where people stand on the success or otherwise of the education reforms, they would agree the most pressing problem in New Zealand schools is characterised by uneven student achievement. While international comparative studies (such as Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS], which assesses the readiness of fifteen-year olds to apply to real the world what they have

learned in school), place New Zealand students up with the best in the world, there is a “long tail of underachievement” which falls along ethnic and socio-economic lines.

It is the problem to which everyone refers – but the suggested solutions vary markedly and the debates often fall along ideological lines. Those leaning to the left (teachers, their unions and left-leaning politicians) suggest less compliance and more professional development on how to engage diverse and disaffected students; conservative members of the public and politicians want more compliance and accountability through mechanisms such as National Standards; and neo-liberal politicians and free-market business leaders want to free up the system even more and introduce new ‘charter schools’ which will be government-funded but free of government constraints.

New Zealand is a small, sparsely populated country in the South Pacific. Its location, history and size have led to a unique set of education policy developments over the past twenty years as it has been influenced by international trends but adapted these to local conditions. These developments have faced a contested trajectory, with proponents and detractors often settling along ideological lines. This chapter outlines the current situation, including a discussion of New Zealand’s educational context providing commentary on why developments around freedom, autonomy and accountability have happened in the way that they have. It is followed by discussion of the structure of the schooling system and its legislative framework before outlining the variety of options within the system. It closes by returning to the theme of accountability before putting current issues and debates into their present and future context.

In 2010, a team from the OECD visited New Zealand as part of the *Review of Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes* series. In preparation for the visit, a team of writers from the four education agencies (the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the New Zealand Teachers Council) prepared a country background report (Ministry of Education, 2010). This background report, plus the OECD’s final review report (OECD, 2012) provide a detailed account of the aims, structure, problems and proposed solutions for the New Zealand schooling sector – and much of the material in this report will be drawn from these sources. Both documents highlight the strengths of the system and the current concerns – and the fact that, sometimes, a particular policy, such as devolution, can have both positive and negative consequences.

The executive summary of the Ministry’s country background report summarises important matters this way:

New Zealand's education system is characterised by a high level of devolution. Responsibility for the governance, administration and management of individual schools rests with an elected Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees employs all school staff, manages property, controls school finances, and sets the policies that govern the school.... The self-managing school model supports flexibility, responsiveness to local communities and innovative practice but this also places significant expectations on principals and school leaders.<sup>10</sup>

The OECD report on assessment and evaluation describes the New Zealand situation as follows:

New Zealand's approach to evaluation and assessment combines central control over policy development and standard setting with a large measure of devolved responsibility for the implementation of evaluation and assessment. Schools benefit from considerable autonomy in the organisation of the various components of evaluation and assessment at student, teacher and school level. At the same time, schools have multiple accountabilities – to their communities, the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office (ERO), the New Zealand Teaching Council and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, student achievement in New Zealand schools, as measured by international comparative studies such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), is high. New Zealand students score significantly and consistently above the OECD average, with a high number of New Zealand students in the top five per cent. What these studies show, however, is that among the high-achieving countries, New Zealand has the widest dispersion of scores from highest to lowest and that while *Māori*, Pacific and students from low socio-economic settings do appear in the high range, they are over-represented in the lower range. Another interesting factor revealed by these studies is that there are more pronounced differences *within* schools than *between* schools – leading commentators to highlight the difference that individual teachers make to student achievement.

Over the past ten years, considerable resources have been put into collating and analysing international and national research, such as the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Synthesis Programme*, in order to determine the factors that will impact most on reducing these disparities and lifting school performance. These have informed the Ministry's *Statement of Intent*, which has as its overall vision: "A world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills

and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century.” The goals include increased participation in early childhood education, improved literacy and numeracy, relevant skills and qualifications, integrated tertiary education and labour market needs, and “Māori achieving success as Māori”, through a “capable, efficient and responsive” Ministry.

The context in which the system has evolved has led to structures similar to other countries but with particular local variations. Factors leading to such variations include location, history, size and politics.

New Zealand’s location in the South Pacific means that it was initially inhabited by Polynesian travellers, who settled in the islands about 800AD and became known as Māori. They lived virtually undisturbed until the arrival of European sealers, whalers, missionaries and settlers in the late 1700s/early 1800s, leading to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 between Māori chiefs and the British Crown. The Treaty gave Māori the rights of British citizens but they were to retain sovereignty over their lands – issues that have been largely unresolved until recent moves to provide land reparation and compensation. New Zealand is a mainly bi-cultural society (in 2009, European New Zealanders making up 68 percent of the population and Māori 15 percent) with a growing multicultural population (9 percent Asian and 7 percent Pacific Island origin). This diversity is predicted to increase within the next five years when over half the school-age population will be from mixed or non-European heritage.<sup>12</sup> This will change the face of schooling and impact on future educational policy making.

New Zealand’s educational history has been strongly influenced by the structures and traditions of the early settlers from the British Isles but adapted to a less class-based division of society. The 1877 Education Act set up primary years schooling that was to leave some of the excesses of class privilege and religious disharmony behind with a system that was “free, compulsory and secular”. By the early 20th century, more comprehensive secondary, rural and correspondence schooling options were also available. In the 1930s, the following statement by the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, became the cornerstone of New Zealand’s educational philosophy for the next forty years:

The Government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system.<sup>13</sup>

The social upheaval of the 1960s and the economic downturn of the 1970s led to a re-evaluation of the education system as it appeared not to be delivering its promise. This coincided with similar calls to review education worldwide, for example, Callaghan's Ruskin College speech (1976) in the UK, and *A Nation at Risk* (1983) in the US. In 1984 and 1987, the New Zealand Treasury briefing papers stressed the necessity for reforming education. Policy papers *Administering for Excellence* (1988) and *Tomorrow's Schools* (1988) set these recommendations in motion and the 1989 Education Act completely overhauled the administration of education – a decision that has been well-documented.<sup>14</sup>

Another factor in New Zealand's context section is size. The current population is 4.4 million (Statistics New Zealand, 2012) distributed over two main islands with less than 15 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The small size means that it has been easier to enact policy changes more swiftly than in a federalised system such as Australia or the United States, or a highly bureaucratic system such as Japan or Korea. The low density means that seeking local solutions by devolving responsibility to individual schools, many with school populations less than 300 students, means that there are fewer barriers encountered in implementing rapid change.

A final factor is the impact of politics. New Zealand has a uni-cameral parliament which is democratically elected every three years. The leader of the party with the most seats (or most able to create a coalition government) becomes Prime Minister. Lack of a second house of parliament and no formal constitution are seen by some commentators as not providing the necessary checks and balances in government decision making, but this also allows for governments to act quickly and responsively, especially if they only have a three year term in which to do so. One of the negative aspects of the short governmental term in office is a lack of coherent long-term educational planning. Recently, for example, a Labour (centre-left) government conducted a comprehensive ten-year consultation and revision of the curriculum and streamlined the Ministry's oversight, delegating even more curriculum decision making to schools. When the National party (centre-right) came to power, they quickly implemented National Standards (curriculum benchmarks), bringing more control back to the centre, which contradicted the curriculum autonomy that schools had just been granted. The balance between giving schools freedom and autonomy but ensuring quality and accountability is a tension that the system has not yet fully resolved.

In summary, the New Zealand system is characterised by centralised control over education policy, including funding provision, curriculum, assessment and evaluation with delegated responsibility to schools and their Boards of Trustees for school budgets, staffing, resources, teaching and learning. This provides high levels of local autonomy and decision making but increased responsibility, complexity and

workloads, with New Zealand principals having higher workloads than those in other OECD countries. Maintaining consistency within and across schools to provide equitable outcomes for all students has been also highlighted as a concern and has led to increased compliance and accountability.

## *The structure of schooling*

The 1989 New Zealand Education Act dissolved the Department of Education and it is regional boards and replaced them with a stream-lined policy-focused Ministry of Education. Governance and management of individual schools was devolved to Boards of Trustees elected by the school's parent community. There is no intermediate layer between the Ministry and individual schools.

It is compulsory for children between the ages of six and 16 to attend school but most children begin on their fifth birthday and students can remain at school until age 19. Schooling in New Zealand is provided free through state (national government) owned and operated schools. 85 percent of schools fit this category. A further 11 percent are 'state-integrated' schools which receive government funding, teach the national curriculum, and whose students participate in national assessments and qualifications. These schools have a defined 'special character' which they can retain in their approach to teaching and learning. Private (fee-paying) schooling is an option which is taken up by schools with a particular religious or philosophical stance who wish to retain their independence but only 4 percent of schools fit this category. Within the special character provision are over 20,000 students in Maori-medium schools. More detail on these options is provided later.

The schooling system is divided into three levels: early childhood, primary and secondary (although there are overlaps in rural areas, some school types or special character settings, which are explained in more detail later). Early childhood education goes from birth to five. Current government policy aims for 20 hours per week of subsidised early childhood education in approved centres. About 95 percent of children have some form of early childhood education before attending school. Options include kindergartens, play centres, *Kohanga reo* (Māori language settings), Pacific language centres, Montessori, home-based and a range of commercial enterprises. This sector has its own curriculum and set of regulations.

Primary education is available from ages 5-12 (year levels 1-8). In 2009, there were approximately 2000 primary schools with about half a million students. Secondary education goes from ages 13-18 (year levels 9-15). In 2009, there were over 300 secondary schools with about 300,000 students.

## *The legal framework*

The education reforms of the 1980s set up the key pieces of legislation relating to education – the State Sector Act (1988) and the Education Act (1989). The State Sector Act is the overarching legislation that defines the agencies that constitute the State Sector, their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. It gave the State Services Commissioner the responsibility for appointing chief executives to government agencies, such as the Secretary for Education (the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Education) or the Chief Review Officer (the Chief Executive of the Education Review Office). These chief executives are accountable to the State Services Commissioner who conducts their performance review against government priorities. The Act also made provision for school Boards of Trustees to become ‘Crown Entities’ ultimately responsible to the government of the day. The Education Act more specifically covers the responsibilities of the education agencies and their staff. The Act replaced the Department of Education and its regional offices with the Ministry of Education; formed ‘self-managing schools ‘ by giving governance to Boards of Trustees; established the Education Review Office to evaluate and report on the quality of education provision within state- funded pre-tertiary education institutions and services; and created the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to oversee the development and monitoring of a credible secondary assessment and qualifications system.

Currently, the government of the day sets the direction for policy in all areas of the State Sector. The State Services Commission oversees the implementation of these directions and priorities through its Managing for Outcomes accountability framework. The government of the day also appoints a Minister of Education (and the legislation allows for a Minister of Tertiary Education separate from the Minister responsible for schooling and another Minister for the Education Review Office). Currently one Minister holds both the Education and Education Review Office portfolios. The Minister of Education, together with the Ministry of Education, set a work plan for the next five years. This is updated each year in the Ministry’s Statement of Intent. The Ministry reports annually against its *Statement of Intent* to Parliament.

The Ministry and other agencies meet these priorities by focusing on particular functions. The Ministry’s key functions are oversight of education policy, curriculum, assessment and schools or students at risk. They also provide schools with their buildings, operational budgets and teachers’ salaries. Schools receive their operational budgets based on student numbers, year levels of students, the socio-economic status of the school’s community (called decile ratings) and location (whereby isolated schools receive an adjusted allowance to cover their distinct needs).



State schools and state-integrated schools are governed by individual Boards of Trustees, the members of which are elected every three years from, and by, the school's parent community. The Board also includes the principal (who is employed by the Board), a teacher representative and, in secondary schools, a student representative. The Board oversees the school's charter (the document that sets out the characteristics of the school, its vision and the goals and targets it sets for student achievement). From that overarching document, it prepares annual and longer term plans, sets school policy (within the framework of the national guidelines), and reports annually to the school community and the Ministry of Education. Boards of Trustees employ all school staff, manage school property, control the school's finances and set policy priorities, in conjunction with the school principal, as the school's chief executive. The work of Boards is audited each year by the Office of the Auditor General for financial probity and reviewed on average every three years by the Education Review Office for adequate governance.

### *Freedom to establish non-state schools*

Despite the small size of the country's student population, which is less than would be found in many cities in the rest of the world, there are a wide variety of schooling options. Only 4 percent of schools are fully fee-paying private schools as it is possible to meet the needs of different religions, philosophies and communities through the state or state-integrated system. Private schools (or independent schools, as they prefer to be called) are often high status religiously-based schools. They are governed by independent boards, own their property and set their own fees. About 25 percent of their income is subsidised by the state. They can teach to the *New Zealand Curriculum* or other programmes such as International Baccalaureate. Recent reports indicate that independent schools are struggling in the current economic climate despite government subsidies and that some will either need to close or to integrate into the state system. Independent schools are seeking more government support. If their schools do close, the government will have to take responsibility for their students on a full-time basis and therefore, they say, supporting independent schools would be a more cost-effective option.

The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (1975) was set up to allow for schools to maintain the best of both worlds – they could receive state funding and yet maintain their particular special character. Eleven per cent of schools now take up this option. They are subject to the same requirements as state schools, for example, to teach the *New Zealand Curriculum* and be reviewed by the Education Review Office, but can maintain their own religious or philosophical basis. State-integrated schools receive the same funding per student as state schools and the government meets

the cost of teachers' salaries. The school's buildings and land are privately owned and schools can charge attendance fees to meet their property maintenance and development costs. A designated proprietor, for example, a church or trust, who owns the school, is responsible for setting and maintaining the school's special character. Some features of the Act are that: (a) a private school can become part of the state education system while retaining its special character as reflected through its teaching and practices; (b) the school receives state funding when it integrates into the state sector but can continue to teach religious education or a particular philosophy; (c) the school can limit entry to the school to pupils whose parents subscribe to the school's special character;

(d) key teaching positions can be 'tagged' which means that a key factor in the process of appointing someone to this position is their suitability in terms of the special character of the school. The later 1989 Education Act allowed for schools to be set up with a special character provision without having to be a private school first. The largest group of state-integrated schools are from the Catholic Education System but there are also other Christian denominations, Jewish, Muslim, Montessori, Steiner and alternative schools.

## *Homeschooling*

Students living more than 5 kilometres walking distance from the nearest school (or public transport to school) may be exempted from attending school but will be required to enrol in *Te Kura*, the Correspondence School, or they can be home schooled. Many schools contract public transport operators to provide school buses that deliver students to the school gate in the morning and home again at the end of the school day. This became especially necessary after many small rural schools were amalgamated in the 1990s.

For students in isolated locations, or at home recovering from illness, travelling overseas or temporarily unable to attend their local school, *Te Kura*, the Correspondence School, provides teaching in both English and *te reo Māori* from early childhood to Year 13. The curriculum is provided through various electronic means and, where possible, face-to-face opportunities for students to get to know their learning advisors and liaison teachers. *Te Kura* also accepts dual enrolments, where a student enrolled in another school can take an option not available at their local school. Originally set up in 1922 to cater for the most isolated students, by 2009, it had about 4000 full-time students and 11,000 dual enrolments. These also included teen parents, students excluded from school, students attending regional health

schools and students with special education needs. *Te Kura* is a state-funded school and is reviewed by the Education Review Office.

As it is compulsory for students between the ages of 6 and 16 to be enrolled in a school, it requires an exemption from the Ministry of Education to school students at home. In 2009, approximately 3500 families took up this option, educating nearly 7,000 students from home. The reasons included dissatisfaction with the formal schooling system, religious or philosophical beliefs, or concern for children's safety, for example, from bullying. The requirement for exemption is quite open although the forms require detail about the proposed curriculum, timetable and teaching space. Parents must satisfy the Secretary of Education that their child will be taught 'as regularly and as well as in a registered school'. The Ministry of Education issues exemption certificates and advises the Education Review Office that these students are being home schooled. ERO undertakes occasional reviews to ensure that students are receiving an education appropriate to their needs and that they are not being disadvantaged by being educated at home. Parents are required to update their home schooling intentions every six months. A small supervisory allowance is available to supplement teaching materials and activities. Some parents use this to purchase teaching support or materials from *Te Kura*, the Correspondence School, or to buy other ready-made curricula.

### *School choice not limited by family income*

Most New Zealand schools are run by the State (85 percent fully state schools and a further 11 percent state-integrated). While there is no legal requirement for students to pay fees, parents pay for stationery and other course-related costs, school trips and outdoor education activities. Schools often request a school donation which can be tax deductible for parents. Many schools choose to have distinctive uniforms but these are not compulsory. International students holding valid student visas can also be enrolled in state-funded schools, provided they pay the appropriate international student tuition fees. A number of schools use international student fees to supplement their state funding.

Within the state-funded system there are a range of school types. At primary school level, a student could attend a full primary (Years 1-8); a contributing primary (Years 1-6), an intermediate (specialising in Years 7 & 8 – most common in larger centres), a middle school or junior high (Years 7-10), or a composite or area school (Years 1-13 – most common in rural areas). At secondary level, a student could attend a secondary school (Years 9-13), an extended secondary school (Years 7-13) or a senior high school (Years 11-13) as well as the options that span both primary and secondary years. These options have

developed over many years depending on the size of the community and are adapted as local populations increase or decrease or in response to particular community preferences.

State schools are co-educational at the primary level, and may be either single sex or co-educational at the secondary level. State-integrated schools usually follow this pattern but private schools are more often single-sex. With recent concerns about boy's education falling behind, some schools are choosing to have single- sex class options.

The medium of instruction for most state-funded, state-integrated schools and private schools is English. There is an English-medium curriculum (*The New Zealand Curriculum*) for state and state-integrated schools. These schools can also provide full immersion *te reo Māori* units or classes or bi-lingual English/*te reo Māori* classes, in which case they will follow the *Māori* language curriculum (*Te Maurautanga o Aotearoa*) or a mixture of the two. The 1989 Education Act allows for the establishment of full immersion schools which teach in *te reo Māori* and have a distinctive cultural approach. *Kura Kaupapa Māori* are state special character schools where teaching is in *te reo Māori* and the school's aims, purposes and objectives reflect the *Te Aho Matua* philosophy or that of the local *iwi* (tribe). *Kura Kaupapa Māori* can either be primary, composite or secondary schools. Approximately three percent of students participate in *Māori*-medium schooling.

The flexibility in the system allows for a range of pedagogical approaches. Montessori, Steiner and *Kura Kaupapa Māori* have already been mentioned. Other schools within the state system, such as Discovery One (a primary school) and Unlimited (a secondary school), in Christchurch, are more experimental in approach. They do not have traditional classrooms or teachers but flexible spaces and learning advisors who negotiate learning tasks with students and their families. Until the Christchurch earthquakes, these two particular schools were located in the heart of the city and used the public facilities such as libraries, parks and businesses as integral parts of their curriculum and students learned through an inquiry approach.

The policy for students with special education needs is that they can enrol in the school of their choice (in as much as children with regular needs can). Students are assessed as having mild, moderate or high needs. For students with high needs, particularly severe disabilities, there are special schools available but parents can still choose to have them in a regular school situation, either in a special unit attached to a school or in a regular classroom. Funding is available to support schools to provide adaptations to buildings and specialist support. Most students with special education needs receive the support and services from the school they attend, although parents of special education students report they do not feel welcome at

all schools and that the quality of support varies. Schools can arrange for specialist teachers to provide services, or make a referral to the Ministry of Education's Special Education unit who can assess the child's learning needs, to determine if additional services and resourcing are required, such as special equipment to help them learn or move around. Assessment is done by the class teacher and school staff with specialists from appropriate agencies. This information forms the basis for the student's Individual Education Programme (IEP). A range of specialists work with children with special education needs, including specialist teachers, speech-language therapists, special education advisors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists and advisors on deaf children. Students with special educational needs or disabilities can stay in schooling until they turn 21.

Gifted and talented students are also catered for within regular classes and schools. Schools choose various ways to respond to the needs and interests of these students. Schools have largely discarded the practice of streaming (placing students in streams according to ability) but organise students in a range of flexible groupings within and across classes. Gifted and talented students may be scattered across classes but brought together for enrichment programmes, clustered into particular classes for specialist teaching, or placed in an accelerated class or programme.

State and state integrated primary schools do not normally have boarding (live-in) options although schools often arrange home-stay opportunities for international students. Secondary schools can have boarding facilities, many of which were set up for students from rural areas who wished to come into a larger school or population centre. Private schools might have boarding facilities at both primary and secondary levels.

While outsiders studying the New Zealand might already consider New Zealand as a system of charter schools, the term has quite specific meaning here. An educational commentator outlines his understanding of the international meaning:

Charter schools receive public money but are not subject to some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, which are set forth in each school's charter. Charter schools are opened and attended by choice. Where enrolment in a charter school is oversubscribed, admission is frequently allocated by lottery-based admissions systems. Some charter schools provide a curriculum that specializes in a certain field — e.g., arts, mathematics, or vocational training. Others attempt to provide a better and more efficient general education than nearby public schools. Some charter schools are founded by teachers, parents, or activists who feel restricted by traditional public schools — others are established by non-profit groups, universities, and some government entities or companies.<sup>15</sup>

In March, 2012, the leader of the ACT party, one of the government's coalition partners announced that 'charter schools' would be set up in Auckland and Christchurch to lift student achievement. What was meant in this case was not what was already available through the current options but a new variation – government-funded but privately-run schools. A government advisory committee has been set up and a business consortium has already shown interest in setting up a primary and secondary school under this scheme. Opponents have raised concerns that this has been done without consultation, is targeting vulnerable populations, especially given the Christchurch earthquakes, and has not been proven to be successful elsewhere. How this policy will play out will be watched with interest from both sides of the debate.

### *Decisions about admitting pupils*

Most school students attend the appropriate school closest to their home but they can enrol at any state school which does not have an enrolment scheme. An enrolment scheme (The Education Amendment Act 2000) is designed to avoid the overcrowding of popular schools. Under the scheme, students have the right to enrol if they live within the home zone determined by the school. If they live outside the zone, the school may set criteria in order to select students before opening up places to ballot. Students who live outside the school's home zone can be admitted, if there are places available, in the following order of priority: special programmes; siblings of currently enrolled students; siblings of past students; children of past students; children of board employees and staff; all other students. If there are more applications than available places then selection must be through a randomly-drawn ballot.

State-integrated schools can expect parents of students wishing to attend that school to support their faith or philosophy. It is not unknown for parents wishing to enrol their child in a popular school out of their zone for them to move to a rental property within zone to gain enrolment. For highly popular schools, properties for sale or rent will be described as being in the school zone, and will often be more expensive than nearby properties that are outside the school zone.

Aspire Scholarships are provided by the government for up to 50 students from low income families who would like to attend a New Zealand private secondary school. The scholarship can only be used at fully registered private secondary schools (that is, independent schools). It cannot be used at state or state-integrated schools. The scholarship contributes up to \$15,000 per year for school fees and up to \$1,500 per year for course related costs.

## *Decisions about staff*

Staff who teach in state-funded schools must be registered by the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC). They must be of good character and fit to be a teacher; a satisfactory teacher or likely to be a satisfactory teacher; proficient in English or *te reo Māori*; and committed to the *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers*. In order to gain registration they must have trained in a pre-service teacher education institution registered by NZTC and meet the Graduating Teacher Standards or, if they received their training overseas, have their qualifications recognized by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). A newly-qualified teacher then has a two-year supervised induction programme in the school before being fully registered. Once fully registered, a teacher must meet the Registered Teacher Criteria in order to maintain a practising certificate, issued by NZTC. The school attests, through the teacher appraisal system, that each teacher they employ meets the 12 criteria under the headings of ‘professional relationships and professional values’ and ‘professional knowledge in practice’. Staff in schools (teaching and non-teaching) must also undergo a police check to ensure that they are safe to be around children and to work in a school environment. Teachers arriving from overseas who had not reached full registration or staff without qualifications but with particular skills (such as teaching *te reo Māori*) can apply to NZTC for a Limited Authority to Teach certificate.

The Ministry of Education determines staffing numbers appropriate for the size and needs of a school but schools can use money from their operational grant to employ further staff if they see the need. Teaching staff have their salaries paid by central government and set by a collective contract between the appropriate union and the Ministry.

Independent (private) schools are not bound by the requirements of NZTC or the teacher union collective agreements but use these as a guide to make their own staffing decisions. If charter schools are introduced, they will also be free to make their own staffing and salary decisions. Schools of special character can ‘tag’ positions to ensure that successful candidates support the particular religion or philosophy of that school.

## *Accountability for school quality*

While schools have high levels of autonomy and freedom, they are also subject to high levels of accountability and compliance. The *Managing for Outcomes* framework sets

the high level goals by which the State Services Commission reviews the education agencies. The four education agencies (the Ministry, ERO, NZQA and NZTC) all have accountability and improvement functions. Each agency deals directly with schools and their Boards of Trustees in relation to the matters within their purview.

The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluates the quality of early childhood and school education, including *Māori*-medium, home schooling and other alternative options. Private schools, which are covered by different provisions, are evaluated but not to the same level of detail as state-funded schools. The Education Review Office also evaluates the quality of leadership and governance provided by each school.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) manages the New Zealand Qualifications Framework which is the register of all secondary and non- university tertiary qualifications. These include Unit Standards (modular vocational assessments) and the two external assessments for secondary students – the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and the New Zealand Scholarships. NCEA is available at three levels and is gained by passing enough credits through achievement-based internal (but externally moderated) and external assessments.

The New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) establishes and maintains the standards for teacher performance by monitoring teacher education programmes, registering teachers and promoting the code of ethics for the teaching profession. They also deregister teachers who have been found guilty of misconduct or incompetence.

At the individual school level, the regulatory framework for schools is set by two sets of guidelines – the *National Education Guidelines* and the *National Administration Guidelines*. The *National Education Guidelines* include national education goals, curriculum policy, curriculum statements and, most recently, a set of National Standards for reading writing and mathematics. The *National Administrative Guidelines* outline the requirements related to (a) the provision of teaching and learning programmes; (b) school-wide planning, self-review and reporting; (c) employment and personnel management; (d) financial and property management; (e) the provision of a safe physical and emotional environment; and (f) other legislative requirements such as student attendance.

The functions and roles are as follows: *system accountability* is managed by the Ministry through the collection, collation and analysis of aggregated data, and supplemented by ERO who conduct focused cross-sector evaluations of particular



areas of interest. *School accountability* is maintained by charters, planning and reporting requirements, roll returns, targets and analyses of variance, all of which are forwarded to the Ministry of Education by individual schools; schools conduct their own self review and are externally reviewed and publicly reported upon by ERO; the Auditor-General carries out financial audits; schools are required to report to their local communities; and NZQA gathers and reports on matters related to assessment and qualifications in secondary schools. *Teacher performance* is overseen by individual schools through their attestation and appraisal schemes; teachers are police-vetted and registered by NZTC; and teachers are observed and interviewed as part of ERO school reviews (but not individually assessed). *Student achievement* is monitored and assessed by teachers who feed achievement data to senior management and Boards of Trustees to inform school-wide decision making; the processes by which students are taught and assessed are reviewed by ERO; students' achievement data is recorded by the school, the Ministry, NZQA (if relevant), and shared with students and their parents through written, oral and/or electronic means.

State-integrated schools and independent (private) schools can have further accountabilities relating to their proprietors, international affiliations, religious order or local *iwi*. Catholic schools, for example, are reviewed every three years by their diocese to assess the way in which the Catholic faith is upheld and fostered.

To date, New Zealand has resisted high-stakes national testing. Up to Year 11, there are no nationally administered common assessments. At primary school level, the focus is on formative assessment (assessment *for* learning) rather than summative assessment (assessment *of* learning). Teachers use a wide-range of data-gathering tools from learning conversations, student work samples and portfolios to nationally-normed tests to come to an 'overall teacher judgement'.

Several external measures are used to gain a system-wide understanding of well New Zealand students are achieving. One is the comparative data available from international comparative studies such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Such international comparisons have had a major impact on government policies and Ministry strategies. The Minister of Education states in the Foreword to the *2010- 2015 Statement of Intent*:

New Zealanders are rightly proud of our education system. We are home to some of the best schools, the best teachers and the best students in the world. But the gap between our high performing and our low performing students is one of the widest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and this government is determined to address underachievement in our schools, and to drive improved educational performance right across the system to improve education outcomes for all New Zealanders.<sup>16</sup>

Another external measure is through a programme called the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) which subjects a randomly chosen but representative sample of school students at Years 4 and 8 to a series of assessments including individual pen and paper tasks, one-to-one demonstrations and group activities. The tasks aim to measure achievement, skills and attitudes. Each curriculum area is assessed on a four-yearly cycle. To support the improvement of assessment practices, some of the NEMP assessment tasks are released to schools for their own use or to support the design of school and classroom-based assessment (others are kept back for longitudinal comparison). Teachers involved in the administration and marking of these tasks also receive valuable professional development in assessment.<sup>17</sup>

With a change to a centre-right government in 2008, a third measure, National Standards, has been introduced into primary schools. There are several reasons for this new policy. The first is to give parents understandable assessment information that gave them a clearer idea of how their children compared to other students should achieve at each level of their primary schooling. The other is to make teachers and schools more accountable for how well their students are achieving. National Standards have been introduced in reading, writing and mathematics for English-medium schools and the equivalent in *te reo* for *Māori*-medium schools with the addition of oral language, given its central place in *Māori* culture.

At secondary school, up to Year 11, schools use a similar range of assessments while also introducing students to formal examination-style assessments. From Year 11, students enrol in NCEA to gain credits in the achievement standards nearly 100 subjects or in unit standards which are vocationally-related (or both). Level 1 is usually achieved at Year 11 (age 15), Level 2 at Year 12 (and meeting a particular set of achievement standards grants entry to university) and Level 3 at Year 13. Particularly able students can also sit the New Zealand Scholarship examinations in Year 13. These recognise excellence in each subject area and reward high-achieving students with financial assistance towards their university studies. There are 33 subjects available at Scholarship level. School results in NCEA and Scholarship are

made publicly available. Although the Ministry does not rank schools, newspapers often publish lists of school rankings based on these results. Other publications use student achievement as only one measure and use more complex criteria to publish 'value-added' rankings.

ERO reports are also made publicly available and provide a measure of school quality. ERO reviews schools using evaluation indicators based on 'six dimensions of effective practice': student learning, engagement, achievement and progress; effective teaching; leading and managing the school; governing the school; a safe and inclusive school culture; and engaging parents, *whānau* (extended families) and communities. While ERO do not rate, rank or label schools, (for example, as 'failing') and reports are expressed in developmental terms, the return schedule for a school is often taken as a *de facto* rating. Where schools are struggling, ERO might return in 1-2 years. Where schools are meeting the review criteria and conducting their own self review well, ERO might return in three years. Where a school has an on-going record of high quality self and external review, ERO might return in 4-5 years.

With a change of government in 2008 from centre-left to centre-right, a range of educational concerns were raised. One policy was able to combine several solutions. Introducing national benchmarks as part of the drive to improve numeracy and literacy achievement and combining this with easy-to-understand reporting to parents and gaining large-scale data on student achievement to identify poor performing schools and teachers could all be achieved through the National Standards policy. This initiative was met with hostility from schools, including teacher unions, principals associations and individual Boards of Trustees – concerned that the standards were untested, unnecessary and had not been successful in other countries in lifting achievement. They argued that comprehensive information was already available through a range of assessment tools and parents were well-informed on children's progress. A further concern was that the results could be used to produce school 'league tables' or be tied to teacher performance pay. The legislation tied National Standards to school's charters and the planning and reporting requirements. The standards themselves, along with exemplars, were provided to schools. Some schools refused to implement the standards and resistance was met with including a school's compliance as part of their ERO review.

## Teaching of values

Although state schools are secular, the legislation covering the New Zealand education system allows for other philosophies and beliefs to be taught in state-integrated and private schools. Some state schools also have optional religious teaching from which parents can withdraw their children. The *New Zealand Curriculum* outlines the vision, principles and values that underpin the curriculum. The vision is for young people who will be: “confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners.” The principles, “put students at the centre of teaching and learning, asserting that they should experience a curriculum that engages and challenges them, is forward-looking and inclusive, and affirms New Zealand’s unique identity.” The section outlining values also discusses developing understanding of one’s own values and tolerance for the values of others. It states, “Values are deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable. They are expressed through the ways in which people think and act.”<sup>18</sup> The curriculum goes on to list the values that “enjoy widespread support” as: excellence; innovation, inquiry, and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological sustainability; integrity; and respect for themselves, others and human rights. It is expected that these will be integrated throughout curriculum content and pedagogy.

## Conclusion

New Zealand’s education system has attracted considerable interest over the last 20 years as the results of the education reforms of the 1980s have been observed and evaluated. The New Zealand ‘experiment’ has had successes in involving parents in school governance, giving school leaders more decision-making power and opening up a series of schooling options for a wide range of communities. It has made little difference to the achievement of New Zealand students overall, who still perform in the top quartile of international comparative studies, nor to the ‘long tail’ of underachievement. One of the side-effects of the reforms has been increasing compliance as governments seek ways to address the underachievement issue but find that many initiatives they implement are not necessarily welcomed by the education or academic communities. How to resolve the philosophical and ideological differences and bring together diverse education stakeholders to build on the evidence about ‘what works’ in education and put coherent and cohesive long-term planning and resourcing in place is the issue that needs most attention if New Zealand is to continue to be a country followed with admiration for its commitment to education.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Langley, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute, p. 10.
- <sup>2</sup> OECD (2012), *Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand*, Paris: Author, p.13
- <sup>3</sup> Alcorn, N. (2011). Meat in the Sandwich: The Impact of Changing Policy Contexts and Local Management of Schools on Principals' Work in New Zealand 1989-2009. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, Volume 8, Issue 2, 122-140*.
- <sup>4</sup> Fancy, H. (2009), Re-engineering shifts in the system. In J. Langley (Ed.), *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute, p. 41.
- <sup>5</sup> Bendall, M. (2009), A leadership perspective. In J. Langley (Ed.), *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute, p. 107.
- <sup>6</sup> Hattie, J. (2009), Tomorrow's schools – yesterday's news: The quest for a new metaphor. In J. Langley (Ed.), *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute, p. 121.
- <sup>7</sup> Wylie, C. (2009), Getting more from school self-management. In J. Langley (Ed.), *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute p. 135.
- <sup>8</sup> McQueen (2009), Towards a covenant. In J. Langley (Ed.), *Tomorrow's Schools: 20 years on*. Auckland, New Zealand: Cognition Institute p. 21.
- <sup>9</sup> Langley (2009), p.15.
- <sup>10</sup> Ministry of Education (2010), *OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes: New Zealand Country background report*, Wellington: Author, p. 1.
- <sup>11</sup> OECD (2012), p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2010) retrieved from [www.stats.govt.nz/](http://www.stats.govt.nz/)
- <sup>13</sup> Cited in Alcorn, N. (1999), *To the fullest extent of his powers: C.E. Beeby's life in education* Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, p. 99.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Butterworth, G., & Butterworth, S. (1998). *Reforming education: The New Zealand experience 1984-1996*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press; Fiske, E. & Ladd, H. (2000), *When schools compete. A cautionary tale*, Washington: Brookings; Langley (2009); Thrupp, M. (1999). *Schools Making a Difference: Let's be Realistic! School Mix, School Effectiveness and the Social Limits of Reform*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Guerin, D. (2011). The NZ Charter Schools Debate #1[a weblog]. Posted December 6th 2011 on Ed Blog: Tertiary education news and views.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education (2010), p. 2

<sup>17</sup> Gilmore, A. (2008, July). *The NEMP: More than just a role in accountability and monitoring change over time: a powerful resource for building teacher assessment capability and providing assessment resources*. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Test Commission, Liverpool, United Kingdom.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Education (2007), *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Author pp. 8-10.