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What does it mean to be a principal? A policy researcher's perspective on the last 30 years in Aotearoa New Zealand

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What does it mean to be a principal? A policy researcher's perspective on the last 30 years in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

In this article I reflect on research relating to school leadership and the use of research to support school leadership over the last 30 years in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1989 with its shift to school self-management saw more interest in understanding the size and nature of the principal role. More recently there has been interest among policymakers in using research to support effective school leadership, and revived attention to the place of school leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand's education system.

This article is also intended to provide future Aotearoa New Zealand researchers into school leadership with some references they can use to chart how things change if new policy settings and supports for school leadership are introduced as a result of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce's recommendations.

Keywords: *School leadership; New Zealand schooling system; Tomorrow's Schools; principal workload; principal development*

Introduction

School leadership practices are pivotal to the wellbeing and effectiveness of individual schools. School leadership also provides a lens to understand the wellbeing, effectiveness and equity of a schooling system. What do we ask of our school leaders, particularly our principals? How do we develop and support principals so that they can carry out this increasingly complex role well? How do we ensure that every school has a good principal? These are key questions that lie behind the leadership research and use of research that I have been engaged with over the lifetime of *Tomorrow's Schools*. I am responding to two of the questions put to authors in this Special Issue of the *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*: How are your experiences or understandings of leadership now different, compared to when you started? and What do you think needs to happen next in leadership practice, policy, and research? This article traverses some key research, ongoing themes, and challenges in the use of research to change things for the better.

The size of the school leader's role

In 1996 the NZ Principals Federation (NZPF) asked me to carry out a small study of what had changed in primary principals' roles since the "big bang" of *Tomorrow's Schools* shifted funding,

decisionmaking, and responsibility to the individual school level, and how principals now experienced their wider role. It was an opportunity to bring together quantitative data from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER)'s ongoing national survey, which we began in 1989 to track the changes and impact of this momentous resetting of our schooling landscape, with qualitative material from interviews with principals in a randomly selected range of schools, and three focus groups of principals to consider the emerging themes from our data. It was also an opportunity to review New Zealand research on the principal role in primary schools before 1989; I could find only a few studies.

The price of shifting decisionmaking and financial responsibility to each school without systemic support was a sharp escalation in the size and extent of the principal's role. A 1976 study of non-teaching primary principals in the Wellington area found that only 13% of them worked more than 50 hours a week (Coleman, 1976). In 1989, the first of NZCER's national surveys found 57% of primary principals worked more than 50 hours a week. By 1996, 90% of non-teaching primary principals were putting in these hours, a figure that has stayed much the same ever since, with increases in some key policy change years. The 2019 NZCER primary national survey showed 93% of principals worked more than 50 hours a week, with 36% working more than 60 hours a week (Wylie & MacDonald, 2020, p. 127). Secondary principals' workhours were even higher by 2018, with 65% working more than 60 hours a week (Bonne & MacDonald, 2019, p. 89).

I used a principal's summary of her role for the 1996 study's report title: *At the centre of the web* (Wylie, 1997). Principals in this study described the growth of administrative work, including budgeting and resource allocation, which some viewed positively as work to support educational leadership – if they had sufficient administrative support. It also showed principals often stepping away from direct classroom work with teachers. Principals could relish their wider role, but rewards were not evenly distributed. Challenges were greater for teaching principals, in small schools, often rural, for those who led schools in low-income communities, and where there was competition for students. Teacher shortages, shortfalls between government funding and school costs, and the poor state of many school buildings also played a part. There was more fragmentation of the workload. Support for principals was uneven, and their own networks were vital.

Bear in mind that there was very little systemic support for principals in the rapid switch to self-managing schools in 1989; that there were no national criteria to become a principal, other than being a registered teacher, and that their employment was decided by individual boards of trustees. Thirty years on, and there is still little ongoing systemic support, and individual boards of trustees with varied understanding and values are still making principal appointments and reviewing their performance. National criteria to become a principal were finally heralded in the Education and Training Act 2020: 31 years later.

Enjoyment comes with an increasing price

There is no doubt that most Aotearoa New Zealand principals enjoy their work—as do most teachers. Ninety percent of primary principals reported that they enjoyed their work in 2019, and 93% of secondary principals in 2018 (Wylie & MacDonald, 2020, p. 127; Bonne & MacDonald, 2019, p. 92). But there has been growing concern about what is expected of principals, and their wellbeing.

The first national picture of principal wellbeing was a survey in 2005 undertaken by NZPF, and analysed by NZCER (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005). Some key indicator items from this Hauora (wellbeing) survey have since been included in NZCER's national school surveys, which were undertaken annually for primary schools 1989–1991, then every 3 years from 1993 for primary schools, and from 2003 for secondary schools. Starting in 2017, NZEI (New Zealand Educational Institute, the union for primary school and early childhood education teachers, school administrative and support staff) has also funded an annual survey of occupational health and wellbeing undertaken by the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University, focused first on principals, and extending to senior school leaders and teaching staff, and PPTA (Post Primary Teachers' Association, the union for secondary teachers) is following suit for secondary principals and teachers.

In 2005, 40% of the 1523 principals responding to the NZPF Hauora survey said their stress levels over the previous week were high or extremely high. That proportion was echoed in the subsequent NZCER national surveys – but started to climb, to 49% of primary principals reporting that their typical stress level for the year so far was high or very high in 2013, to 59% in 2019 for primary principals. Stress levels among secondary principals rose from 44% at a high or very high level in 2015, to 57% in 2018. Primary principal morale was consistent at around 70% saying it was good or very good, until 2019, when 62% said this. Tiredness levels have increased, with a quarter of primary principals now experiencing tiredness that they thought impacted on their work. Secondary principal morale levels have also declined: 61% said their morale was good or very good in 2018, compared with 80% in 2012.

The 2005 survey also included a wide range of questions about the principal role, so that some analysis could be done of what contributed to principal stress and wellbeing. Principal workload and role balance mattered most, followed by support from government agencies and principals' professional organisations. The first NZEI occupational health and wellbeing survey in 2017 found that the main sources of principal stress were lack of time to focus on teaching and learning, the sheer quantity of work, government initiatives, and resourcing needs (Riley, 2017, p. 26). In the NZCER surveys, more time to focus on educational leadership is increasingly emphasised as a desirable change in their role (from 62% of primary principals in 2010, to 79% in 2019, and from 72% of secondary principals in 2012 to 83% in 2018). Other key changes sought are having more time to reflect or be innovative, reduce administration or paperwork,

have a more balanced life; and between a half and a third of principals want to reduce the demands of property and human resource management

Interest in becoming a principal appears steady

Despite these real tensions in the demands of the role, the NZCER national surveys show reasonably steady levels of teacher interest in taking on school principalship. Twelve percent of secondary teachers said they were interested in becoming a principal, with another 12% unsure in 2018; and 11% of primary teachers were interested, with another 19% unsure, in 2019. Interest is higher among deputy and assistant principals. I compared the numbers of senior staff who showed interest in becoming a principal as indicated in our national surveys, with the number of principal vacancies advertised in the Education Gazette in 2009 (Wylie, 2010, 5–6). On the numbers alone, there was not a supply issue. But these numbers do not tell us about suitability and readiness.

Principals' groups and the education unions periodically raise concerns about filling principal vacancies. No national data have been readily available to monitor the situation. The Ministry of Education has just published its first analysis of principal turnover, using payroll data from 2004 to 2019 (Jagger, 2020). Principal turnover is shown at around 14% before the global financial crisis in 2008, declining to 10% in 2009 before rising again; in 2018 it was 12%. Primary principal turnover is somewhat higher than for secondary principals. Three-quarters of those leaving their principalships in recent years also left the principal workforce; the rest moved to another school. Most of those leaving the principal workforce were in their 60s, and the trend is consistent. Over the last three years, around 330 principal appointments a year have been made, with about 100 of those appointments from current principals. About a third of our current principals have been in the role for 5 years or less.

NZCER analysed Education Gazette advertisements from 2008 to 2010, with a follow-up survey of school board chairs to find out more about the numbers applying, and employers' view of their short-list and appointment. Small and rural schools had higher principal vacancy rates than other schools. The median number of applicants was 10 in 2010, ranging from 1 to 46 (Robertson, 2011). In 2008, only 17% of board chairs thought the field of applicants was good to excellent, but they were much more positive about the quality of their shortlist, with 77% saying these candidates were of good/excellent quality. Twelve percent were not satisfied with the quality of their appointment (Wylie, 2010). Mind you, board chairs' reasons for their satisfaction with their appointment may not always have been related to educational leadership: while 44% said the appointee was the best person for the job, best fit for the school, or met the job description, 43% mentioned personal attributes, such as being young, male, energetic, confident, having a sense of humour, or innovative. Some of these criteria indicate discrimination on the basis of age or gender. Women were somewhat less likely to be appointed than men.

What of principal careers? The NZCER national surveys ask how many schools principals have led in their careers. Most principals' experience is limited to one or two schools: 49% of primary principals had led only one school in their career, and 28%, two schools in 2019; 67% of secondary principals had led only one school, and 26%, two schools in 2018.

The NZCER national surveys show a median range for primary principal experience of 6–10 years (20% in their first three years of the role, running up to 26% with 16+ years of being a principal). Fewer secondary principals have long-term experience, 17% with 16+ years in the role. Some feel stuck in the principal role, with no further local education career option (41% of primary principals in 2019, 22% of secondary principals in 2018). There is also growing interest in having more career options in education beyond the principal role (58% of primary principals in 2019, 57% of secondary principals in 2018).

We need to know much more about principal careers, and what goes into individual decisions to stay, apply, or leave. What is the role of commitment to a particular school and its culture, or relocation costs and challenges, for example? Aotearoa New Zealand principals have been largely on their own in this journey, relying on individual networks, dependent on finding themselves working with individual principals who have encouraged and mentored them. They have not been part of a system that could offer different opportunities for leadership development over time.

Preparation for the principalship

Over half of those shortlisted and selected for principalships in the NZCER 2010 study were first-time principals. Not all of these would have had school leadership and management experience: 6% of primary principals first appointed 2002–2007 had none. The proportion was much higher among those appointed before the mid-1990s: 35%. So, there has been some progress in recognising the importance of prior experience in leadership responsibility.

It was not until 2002 that the government funded a national principal development programme, contracting first the University of Auckland, and more recently, Evaluation Associates, a private professional development company. This has been a voluntary programme, with some “nudging” from an additional payment included in the national collective contracts for those who had completed the then First-time Principals programme. Almost all new principals do participate – but not all. A programme to help people develop their leadership, decide whether the principal role was for them, and send a positive signal to boards making appointments, was the over-subscribed Aspiring Principals programme, which was first piloted through a range of providers in 2008–09, then offered nationally for some years before ceasing.

The original First Time Principals programme and Aspiring Principals programmes had their supporters, and their critics, particularly around the right balance between “managerial” aspects such as financial acumen, human resources and education legislation, property;

educational leadership; and relationship management; and between a common curriculum and customisation to each individual, their school, and its community. The current national contract for Leadership Advisor support for beginning principals is largely customised, with educational leadership advice and support from advisors, and mentorship around “day to day” administration and management from current principals. Each region also has a management group to develop regional support for new principals, bringing together representatives of the providers, Evaluation Associates, the Ministry of Education, and local principals’ associations. No evaluations of this nationally funded support for new principals have been publically available.

The actual experience of being the person in a school who has the ultimate responsibility for its wellbeing and the wellbeing of all those who learn and work in it taxes the confidence of most new principals. Only half the principals in NZCER’s 2019 national primary survey thought they were well prepared for their first principalship. We need to know much more about what helps principals feel well prepared. Well-framed and responsive government funded development is important here.

So too is experience as part of an effective school leadership team or being an acting principal before taking on one’s own principalship. A recent analysis of Tennessee principals (elementary and secondary) found higher performance ratings for new principals who had high performance ratings in their previous role, and those who had worked in schools with highly rated principals (Grissom, Woo & Bartanen, 2020). In Aotearoa New Zealand, I have heard effective principals trace their “lineage” back to a particular principal or principals who nurtured and challenged them to grow: principals who saw their responsibility extending to developing leadership that would likely move into other schools. A horizon of responsibility that extends beyond one’s own school in this way also contributes to the strength of principal networks, feeding the mutual trust and respect from good experiences that make it possible for leaders to continue to work together on common challenges across different schools, and learn from each other.

For me, this sense of being well prepared for the first—and for around half, their only—principalship is a prime indicator of the health of our schools and schooling system. Higher levels of feeling well prepared for their first principalship would indicate principals who led well, understanding the value of developing leadership in their staff as a way to strengthen the school, their own leadership and the sustainability of their role. Higher levels of being well prepared for the first principalship would also indicate good professional learning and support to become a principal: not just after appointment, as with our current government-funded programme, but along the journey from initial interest in taking school leadership roles.

Starting the shift from “chiefs” to “leaders”

In 2007 I was asked to talk at the National Leadership Hui, an initial part of the Ministry of Education’s work on “Strong professional leadership” that began with participation in the OECD’s

Improving School Leadership work, and a country report that used what data there was for New Zealand to indicate the need for proper attention (<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/38740175.pdf>). This was a new government priority for action, that led to the first school leadership strategy for New Zealand, the Professional Leadership Plan, intended to ensure sufficient leadership supply, succession, and sustainability of leadership, and that every school had an effective principal.

I posed three fundamental questions that arose from the watching brief on policy and its effects on the quality and equity of our schooling system that has been a large part of my own work since I joined NZCER in 1987. That watching brief extended to an eye on research on other schooling systems, and policies that appealed to some politicians, such as vouchers and open school choice coupled with school self-management (Wylie, 1998). Some months before the National Leadership hui, this brief took me to Edmonton in Canada to understand why one of the few other self-managing schools systems, one which was well-regarded, had drawn back from its original model, which was much closer to the Aotearoa New Zealand positioning of schools as almost stand-alone (Wylie, 2007). Perhaps this recent and enlightening experience, which showed that school self-management did not have to come at the price we were paying, emboldened me to frame my contribution thus:

- Are principals citizens, consumers, or chieftains?
- Do we have a sprawl of do-it-yourselfers, and one-off events, or a learning system?
- Has self-management become an end in itself?

What I saw were the cumulative effects since the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms separated schools from the government agencies, giving them little grounds for ongoing relationships, and putting schools into competition with each other for students, additional resources, and inclusion in one-off programmes that offered more resources as well as innovative possibilities. Principals could bemoan national guidelines and resourcing formulae as not sufficiently recognising the unique nature of their school. Ministry of Education staff and others could bemoan principal self-centredness or complacency. Distrust lay behind interactions I saw or heard about, that ranged from staying polite and avoiding real sharing or discussion, to barbed polemic. So the work to bring people together around a school leadership strategy was no easy or straightforward task.

Core to the school leadership strategy was the seminal Best Evidence Synthesis of research on the relationship between school leadership and student outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). This synthesis has played a significant role in leadership development and thinking about leadership both here and overseas. It used both quantitative and qualitative research, providing analysis and examples that pointed to effective practices, rather than styles of individual leadership, and it gave less emphasis to principalship as a hierarchical peak. This synthesis went through a number of iterations to ensure that its findings were well communicated and exemplified: an essential move to counter the wariness of principals, who pointed to tensions between the breadth and demands of their role, and their ability to focus on the pedagogical leadership that was emphasised in the best evidence synthesis.

Principals were also wary that a new framework for leadership would mean new compliances, additional work when the workload was already taxing, and new ways to be judged. Progress was made over several years of increasingly collaborative work, culminating in the generally well-received common frameworks, *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (Ministry of Education, 2008), and *Tū Rangatira* (Ministry of Education, 2010) developed by and for those working in and with Māori-medium kura.

This progress toward a gradual improvement of the effectiveness and sustainability of our schools' leadership came to an end when the newly finalised leadership strategy was swept to the shadows by a change of government (Wylie, 2012, pp. 175–180). A focus on student performance (particularly the controversial national standards for student achievement) replaced the focus evident in the school leadership strategy on growing system capability and capacity: the essential elements for real improvement in student learning and outcomes (Wylie, 2011; 2012).

Using research to support effective school leadership

One of my enduring concerns as a policy researcher is to be of some use in improving student learning and outcomes. My role can only be indirect, aiming to provide understanding and insight which is accessible, relevant — and supportive while challenging. I feel fortunate that over the last 11 years I have been able to work with NZCER colleagues, other researchers, school leaders, and those whose work gives them a system lens, to provide useful research-based tools and frameworks. Also fortunate in that the tools and frameworks I describe next could build on each other: that continuity that can be progressive was possible, rather than the treading water re-invention or renaming we have seen far too often. NZCER has also provided the kind of environment needed: good statistical and design expertise, and a long-standing institution that is trusted by school leaders and teachers.

In the following section, I'll describe the Educational Leadership Practices Survey (ELP), its successor, the Teaching, School, and Leadership Practices survey (TSP), and the Leadership Capabilities developed to support the 2018 Leadership Strategy developed by the then Education Council.

Educational Leadership Practices survey 2009–2011

One of the fruits of the period of collaborative work focused on better supporting school leadership was the Educational Leadership Practices (ELP) survey. This was a free “smart tool” for English-medium schools, drawing on the “Leadership BES” and other aspects of the Kiwi Leadership Framework, focusing on practices linked with desirable student outcomes. This online survey asked teachers and principals to rate leadership practices at their school. It had a two-fold purpose. School leaders could have a useful picture for their review and planning with a report that included graphs comparing their own and their teachers' responses – particularly valued by principals – as

well as graphs of only teacher responses, so that they could use whichever seemed most helpful in context.

Data from participating schools could then contribute to a national picture of leadership practices, allowing progress towards the leadership strategy's goals to be reported and mapped, and action taken where concerns were identified. The ELP was seen as a tool that would provide common ground for discussion in the Professional Leadership Forum, which met regularly to further the leadership strategy, bringing together principals' representatives, teacher unions, NZSTA, professional development providers, researchers, the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office.

Viviane Robinson and I were charged with developing the survey to be piloted; NZCER carried out the pilot and its psychometric analysis, with the draft final survey critiqued by the Professional Leadership Forum. The ELP was first used for initial needs analysis and then evaluation of change in individual schools and across the Experienced Principals Development programme that ran 2009–11, similarly for both needs analysis and charting of change in the First-Time Principals' programme, and by individual schools. NZCER was contracted by the Ministry of Education to run the ELP, and to provide the first national picture in 2011. We were able to share some of these main national findings at the 2011 New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society (NZEALS) conference, and to publish them in JELPP (Burgon, 2012). But the full report remained unpublished because for a few years there was no-one in the Ministry who could give priority in their work to school leadership development and support, or ensure that the national picture of leadership practices was used to inform policy development.

The ELP national report is now available from NZCER (Burgon, Ferral, Hodgen and Wylie, 2011). I think it provides ongoing food for thought for those interested in the evolution of school leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand. The analysis in this report showed that levels of school leadership practices were positively linked with levels of teacher morale. It also showed that years of principalship made little difference to teachers' reports of their school's leadership practices (the analysis did not include new principals with less than two years' experience). The scales with the lowest scores were Māori Success, and Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development. Also standing out as aspects that were not strong nationally were practices related to feedback on performance and teaching effectiveness, providing timely challenge and support for teachers and students, including student voice, and supporting parental understanding of student achievement.

Multilevel modelling showed that school variables such as school decile, type, and support for pedagogical leadership, and barriers to its exercise, played a part in school overall scores on the ELP. Notman (2010) and Youngs (2011) had raised some questions about whether the ELP was as suitable for secondary schools as for primary schools, partly because

the Leadership BES's statistical analysis had had only a few secondary level studies it could use, and partly because of the more layered nature of secondary school leadership.

Our recommendations for the future of the ELP included research on how schools' ELP ratings related to student performance, and its revision within the next 5 years to ensure it continued to be reflective of current evidence.

Notman and Youngs (2016) surveyed 22 secondary schools to find out more about their use of ELP, following up with case studies in 3 schools. ELP was seen as a useful tool for leadership development and school planning, with the focus being quite context-specific. Principals also indicated they would value support to interpret and think about their school's ELP data.

Some groups of schools continued to use the ELP, and the First Time Principals programme used some of the items. However, it was frustrating to see the missed opportunity for research on effective leadership practices to be useful at both school and national levels, as Ministry of Education interest and support ceased.

Teaching, School and Principal Leadership survey 2017–

In late 2016 two new policy directions, Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako, and changes to Ministry of Education-funded professional learning and development led to the Ministry of Education commissioning NZCER to develop a new research-based online tool to be available by mid-May 2017. Kāhui Ako provided substantial new funding for schools to work collaboratively (Wylie, 2016). The new policy directions called for Kāhui Ako and schools to have good evidence in relation to identifying areas for improvement, and to use inquiry and evaluation more so that student learning would improve. This emphasis on using an evaluative lens to gain improvement also needed research-based evidence at the national level, to see what difference the new policies made.

The Teaching, School, and Leadership Practices survey (TSP) which resulted could build on the ELP, with the addition of a new section on Teaching Practices, work led by my colleague Sue McDowall. Our first task was to form an advisory group which brought together key organisation representatives and individuals who had contributed much to leadership development and understanding in Aotearoa New Zealand. Those we approached were keen to have a robust tool, and also keen to have the opportunity to come together to have real discussion, sharing their knowledge of relevant research, and of using research and evidence in school and policy contexts. We saw this advisory group as most active at the start, with an ongoing role to discuss the national picture each year, as a way to inform leadership development and support through the system, and through individual advisory group members' roles and networks. At the TSP advisory group's initial meeting in early December 2016 there was rich discussion of the survey's draft purpose and principles, and domains to include. The next TSP advisory group

meeting in early February 2017 reviewed the draft surveys, the reporting to schools and Kāhui Ako, and support materials.

Building on the ELP meant reviewing its domains, items and question stems in the light of the national patterns, users' feedback, and research on effective leadership undertaken since 2009–10. The ELP had used the item stem of the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership (VAL-ED), an instrument designed primarily for principal performance review, though the ELP was not intended to be used for this (unless principals chose to do so), or for accountability purposes. The ELP question stem asked teachers and principals to rate the effectiveness of school leadership in relation to particular school practices, asking, for example, "how effective is the school leadership in ensuring that every student experiences a challenging programme?". Teachers' questions about the ELP pointed to some uncertainty about which roles were included in the school leadership team (senior roles only? Or those who were their direct team leaders?), and about actions this team might have taken that individuals did not know about. That meant that some items had 10% or more of teachers not answering them.

My first task in developing the TSP was to review the research on effective school leadership that had been done since the Leadership BES. There was reassuring continuity, but some shift in emphasis. There was more evidence about the value of:

- collective leadership practices that foster professional community and capacity for organisational learning,
- moral purpose that was equity-oriented,
- caring for staff,
- coherence in practices so they developed people at the same time, and
- synergy between different foci.

Next I reviewed the ELP domains and items to identify gaps, overlaps in items, wording that could be improved. I checked consistency with ERO's school evaluation indicators, and the Education Council's Standards for the Teaching Profession. The NZCER team simplified the scale and made it less judgemental, so that people rated their school and principal's leadership on a scale that ran from "very like our school" to "not at all like our school". The TSP advisory group worked with us to finalise a set of items that we then trialled with a good cross-section of schools. At its next meeting, it considered the psychometric report of the trial, and our recommendations for the items to keep based on this analysis. The resulting smaller set of items was checked again to see that each domain had psychometric validity, and then the TSP was open for free school use, with its own website providing background and ideas for how to make best use of the reports (www.tsp surveys.org.nz). Schools could generate their own reports, so feedback was quicker than with the ELP. As with the ELP, we could not provide school reports for very small schools, since that could identify individual responses; and we recommended that the TSP was not used in schools in strife, since then it could potentially inflame a situation, rather than support productive inquiry.

In its first year, the TSP was well publicised by the Ministry of Education’s then evaluation team, who promoted it with Kāhui Ako. Principals were also encouraged to look at the TSP and use it through the TSP advisory group’s networks, and some PLD providers, including the Beginning Principals programme provided by Evaluation Associates. Springboard Trust, whose free Strategic Leadership Principals’ Programme has over 100 principals engaged each year as well as ongoing support for alumni of the programme to improve their leadership and schools, also encouraged principals to use the TSP. Some professional learning and development providers and advisers with their own leadership surveys and rubrics have been less supportive of its use.

In 2017, 403 schools used the TSP, and we provided a nationally representative picture from the aggregated data (Wylie, McDowall, Ferral, Felgate & Visser, 2018). In its second year, with less promotion, it was used by 265 schools. In 2019, with similarly low promotion, it was used by 249 principals and teachers at 236 schools. Interestingly, 54 schools have used TSP for all three years it has been available; we are following up with a small study of how they use the TSP data.

No Ministry of Education funding was forthcoming for the TSP in 2020; but NZCER has been granted the license to use it for 2021, there is certainly interest in it, and we are cautiously optimistic that the TSP can continue. We have had positive feedback from principals, those working with them, and from those in government agencies who see value in an ongoing national picture of leadership, school, and teaching practices.

There was considerable consistency in the TSP national picture 2017–2019. This is not surprising, since it was a period of consistency in terms of how schools were working and how they were supported. Principal leadership is generally well regarded; principals are more self-critical than teachers about some aspects of their role, including whether they asked staff questions that got them thinking, led and supported cultural engagement or promoted the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Principals who strongly agreed they could schedule enough time for the educational leadership part of their job (only 29%) rate their practices more highly than do other principals. How time is spent—whether it can be spent in ways that research would identify as effective for student learning and staff wellbeing and agency—also features in teachers’ reports of their school practices, with fewer than 25% reporting that they had sufficient time to discuss student progress and plan teaching together, for collaborative work, for teacher inquiry and evaluative work, and teaching time protected from unnecessary interruptions. It seems to me that “right-sizing” principal and teacher roles needs some boldness around the shape of the school day, and better guidance and development of the curriculum and sharing of effective practices so that individual teachers and schools are not continually left to re-invent wheels.

Variability between schools is also marked in the national TSP picture: too much variability for a system that has struggled to provide equitable schooling.

Educational Leadership Capability Framework 2018–

Leadership capabilities were identified as a key part of the draft Leadership Strategy developed by the Education Council with participation from leaders, those working with and for leaders, and teachers. NZCER was asked to develop a set of leadership capabilities for the final Leadership Strategy (Education Council, 2018). These are intended to be used as guidelines for leadership development within school or early learning services, and for individual use, and as dimensions within professional learning and development, such as curriculum, that were not specifically about leadership per se.

Sheridan McKinley, Kaiwhakahaere Māori—General Manager, Māori at NZCER and I looked across what was in the draft Leadership Strategy and the feedback from consultation, and at *Tū Rangatira*—an eye-opener for some English-medium leaders who now commented on its merit for all. We included what was covered in the TSP, with a check of the international and Aotearoa New Zealand research for fresh evidence. We also looked for similar frameworks overseas. Those we found were more like job specifications than a framework intended to encourage and inspire as much as describe. The Ontario Leadership framework(https://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/application/files/8814/9452/4183/Ontario_Leadership_Framework_OLF.pdf) came closest to what was wanted here. We looked across all these sources to identify key threads, and then distilled these into succinct descriptions, ending up with 9 capabilities. We described these capabilities for three different spheres of leadership: leading organisations, leading teams, and expert teacher, leadership of curriculum or initiative.

Our draft framework had valuable input from Robyn Baker, and feedback from leadership researchers and professional development providers, as well as the Education Council. One of the challenges with this work was to provide illustrations of the research behind the capabilities that was free for practitioners, and preferably from Aotearoa New Zealand. That brought home to me the need for more fresh and timely research, that is not behind a paywall or known and accessible only to academics. The Education Council's intention was to add new resources as they became available. The national Leadership Centre outlined in the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce report (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019) would certainly include active support for research, and its dissemination in ways that encourage good use. I would hope that there could be more connected work to identify priorities where we need new or deeper understanding, so that the limited resources in this country for educational research are put to best use.

Resetting principalship in Aotearoa New Zealand

I had the privilege of serving as one of the five members of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce in 2018–2019, charged with reviewing the provision of compulsory schooling with a focus on developing a schooling system that promotes equity and excellence for all. We encountered

the full gamut of our present system. In many respects ours did not seem so much a system as a collection of entities, gaps, temporary energy, and skeins of more personal than collective networks. We read much, listened much, asked many questions, and discussed and weighed options. It became clear to us that the status quo was not a viable option for equity and excellence. We made some substantial recommendations in order to give new life with an ecosystem of connection, more collective work and learning, and more trust.

Every school needs effective leadership, and to ensure that, the system needs to provide clarity about what this is, alongside ways to develop it, nurture it – and learn from it. The principalship needs to be connected. Hence our recommendations for every principal to be connected with a leadership advisor from the local Education Support Learning Network, providing customised support, and if persistent performance issues occur that cannot be resolved by the principal, leadership advisor or board of trustees working together, intervention from the Education Support Learning Network director. We saw these leadership advisors actively supporting the growth of new leaders, working with local principals, and supporting local principals to make a collective contribution; and we saw them feeding learning from effective local leadership practices into the national Leadership Centre so that they were shared more widely (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce 2019, 32–37).

The government's work programme in response to the taskforce report indicated that it would progress the Leadership Advisor role, along with the Leadership Centre (Ministry of Education, 2019). Work on the Taskforce recommendations has gone on the backburner in the Covid 19 pandemic, and the education dollar will have further to stretch now. Like others, I am concerned to see exactly what emerges from the Ministry's further work on our recommendations. Substantial change of this kind cannot be quick, but I would be dismayed if a policy researcher surveys the principal's role in Aotearoa New Zealand 10 years from now and continues to have to talk about chiefs, islands, reinventing the wheel, increased stress, declining morale, and insufficient time for educational leadership.

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