

**BOARDS OF TRUSTEES' SELECTION PRACTICES OF
PRINCIPALS IN NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS:
WILL THE FUTURE BE FEMALE?**

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of one aspect of New Zealand's self-managing reforms on the changing and predicted gender profile of the principalship in primary schools. The research is a national study of boards of trustees' selection practices of principals and data was collected in 2002. It examines how trustees interpret and act upon often contradictory and conflicting official discourses from self-managing policies and Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) legislation, as well as populist discourses mobilised by the media. Using feminist discourse theory (Bacchi 2000) I argue that the reforms have not contributed to a significant shift in the gender diversity representation of the principalship.

Introduction

The reforms that transformed governance of schools in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, were part of the public sector reforms known as New Public Management, designed to increase responsiveness and flexibility. In New Zealand, the 1989 Education Act devolved administrative and governance responsibilities to boards of trustees of 2,700 individual schools, comprised of elected and co-opted parent or community members, the school principal and one staff representative. Unlike the governing boards of the English state school system who included LEA representatives in their membership, there were no officials representing Ministry of Education interests included in boards of trustees in New Zealand.

The current gender representation of the primary principalship in both countries reflects, to a degree, this crucial difference in the composition and ensuing degree of autonomy of the governing bodies. In England and Wales where the local education authority monitors and moderates the decision, the representation of women is more proportional. Women were 84% of the primary workforce and comprised 61% of the heads (Fidler and Atton 2004, p. 109), and according to Southworth (2002, pers. comm.), "the future of leadership in primary schools will be female and collaborative".

In New Zealand the future does not look so optimistic. Here where boards have total control over their choice of principal, men are disproportionately represented. In primary schools women represent 82% of the workforce, but are disproportionately under-represented in leadership, occupying only 40% of principal positions. Seen from another perspective, 60% of principals are appointed from the 18% male pool of the workforce, (Ministry of Education 2002). Men are six times more likely to win a principal's position disregarding experience or qualifications, than women. In addition 80% of senior management positions in primary schools (assistant and deputy principals) are held by women (Ministry of Education 2002), indicating that there is a very large pool of well-qualified and experienced women who may be hitting a glass ceiling. (Livingstone 1999).

The reforms gave new roles, powers and functions to New Zealand boards of trustees, which in the case of recruitment of the principal were more unregulated than in any other country with similar policies (Wylie 2002). The high degree of autonomy that boards have in the principal's appointment means that this function is localised and not subject to any form of central control. In addition to appointing whomever they like, there is no accountability required at any level by central government in the appointment process. Boards are also protected against grievance claims from discontented applicants under the Employment Relations Act (Government 2000), which only allows a grievance to be taken out against an employer of the applicant, rather than a potential employer.

Compounding these problems, is the unregulated pool of applicants to the principalship with no mandatory credentialing required (Stewart 2000), so that first or second year teachers have been known to win principal positions (Whittall 2001). Board training in the protocols and processes of appointments is also not provided, and yet it has been consistently reported in my research and others (Notman 1997; Wylie 1997b; Hague 1998; Martin 2001; Kyle 2002), that this is one of the most stressful tasks of a board of trustees.

My research has found, however, that dominant discourses emerging from the policy environment significantly influence board appointments to primary school principalships. It is this area that is the focus of my discussion in this paper.

The Research Approach

The New Zealand policy context surrounding principal selection has been confusing for boards of trustees over the past fourteen years. As a way of illuminating this I have found Carol Bacchi's (2000) notion of 'policy as discourse' useful, which draws on the new sociology of policy. She argues, as does Ball (1990), that policy sets up certain discourses at national level, but these are picked up and adapted or rejected at local level. What these discourses are and how they are picked up, adapted or rejected by boards in their thinking and decision making around appointments explicates how local principal appointments are made, largely to the detriment of women.

Bacchi's methodological approach requires an analysis of discourses that are relevant to the field. Some are identified from policy documents. A discourse analysis of the legislation around principal recruitment reveals three dominant discourses which are sometimes contradictory. Managerialist discourse as expressed in the Lough Report (1990), underpins the Education Act 1989, section 75 (Government 1989), which gives boards "complete discretion to control the management of the school as it thinks fit" and defines the principal as "the Board's chief executive in relation to the school's control and management" (section 76). The second dominant discourse is market discourse (Lauder, Hughes et al. 1994), which has operated for a decade in relation to de-zoning and parental choice of schools, and the option of bulk funding teachers' salaries under the Education Amendment Act 1991 (Government 1991). These market measures have only recently been abolished by the 2000 Education Amendment Act (Government 2000).

The third discourse that ironically has had little effect in increasing the gender diversity in the principalship, has been the discourse of equity and social justice. EEO provisions in the State Sector Amendment Act 1989, and equity objectives were devolved to boards in the original charter framework of 1989 (Ballard 1989), but these were watered down significantly in the 1993 National Administration Guidelines. In the context of restructuring the responsibility of equity has been decentralized to the local level, and boards have articulated these policies in a variety of ways, which I show suit a range of local purposes that are not based on merit or equity. The research findings reveal considerable inconsistencies by boards in the interpretation and outcomes of these policies.

Methods

The discursive effects of these policies influencing board's decisions about principal selection, emerged from my analysis of conversations and discussions with board chairs and principals during the research. I held eleven focus group interviews (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1996) with a total of 36 board chairs, 30 principals and 14 advisors to the

board, from around New Zealand, representing schools from a range of socio-economic and cultural differences. Size, location, decile rankings and ethnic populations of schools were considered important variables for selection, derived from earlier research. Wylie's (1998) research shows that women have a much higher chance of being appointed to a small school than a large one; to schools with high Maori and Polynesian rolls; to rural schools; and to schools with lower decile ratings (i.e. socio-economic status). Therefore I selected:

- board chairs from large schools who had appointed a male principal
- board chairs from large schools who had appointed a female principal
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- board chairs from small schools who had appointed a female principal
- male principals from large schools
- male principals from small schools
- female principals from large schools
- female principals from small schools
- advisors to the board from three different regions

In the focus groups, semi-structured interviews (Taylor and Bogdan 1984) were used to determine whether boards were using fair, consistent and appropriate processes in the appointment process. As a guide to my questioning, I asked similar questions to those used in the only other study found on this topic in the New Zealand literature (ERO 2001). These covered procedures used in appointments such as advertising, use of advisors to the board, application packs, use of referees, criteria and person specifications, short-listing, interviewing and questioning. The ERO study was a quantitative survey that numerically reported on self-reporting boards of trustees. My qualitative study probed at a deeper level using in-depth interviewing (Ely, Vinz et al. 1997) and discussion to identify the dominant discourses influencing boards. To gain greater understanding of how these discourses were interpreted I selected three boards involved in appointments or recent appointments to undertake case studies (Yin 1994). One was about to begin the process of appointing a principal; one had recently appointed a man; and one had recently appointed a woman. In the case of the first case study, I gained permission to be an observer throughout the entire appointment process.

Also included in the project, but not commented on in this paper, were interviews with four 'elites' (Marshall and Rossman 1995) at the policy level, telephone interviews with eleven women applicants, and a postal survey sent out to 150 boards to ascertain numbers of women applying for the principalship.

Discussion of Findings

At a surface reading my data appeared reasonably consistent with the ERO survey findings. All the boards I interviewed were doing what they considered was their best, and all were putting exhaustive amounts of time and commitment into the task. Most boards were consulting principal advisors; most were advertising appropriately and out of the local area; most were sending out application packs; most were working to a set of criteria and person specifications; most were requesting referee's reports; most were short-listing and interviewing these applicants; and most were using the same set of questions for each interview. However on a closer analysis the data revealed that while these processes were in place, the final decision often had little to do with them. Factors other than those appearing in the criteria or person specifications were influencing decisions.

An analysis of the discourses identified from the interviews revealed the influence of the market, managerialism and gender influencing the decision of 'the best person for the job'. These official discourses then intersected with populist media discourses so that boards made decisions using "local logics" (cf. Barth's 1990 concept of "list logics"), that took into account their local community, context and location of the school and who best 'fitted' their school. The concept of "local logics" covers a wide range of factors that are most easily encapsulated under the term "community fit", or what in the literature has been called "fitness for this school" (Morgan 1986). One trustee alluded to this by stating:

'...but also what was actually extremely important was being able to fit in and be accepted by the community. Say sort of having values that worked in the community'.

(Female board chair of small school with woman principal. 13/24)

"Local logics" privileged the personal qualities that board members felt were important about their chosen candidate that suited their particular school or community and ensured a comfortable fit. These qualities typically remained undiscussed as criteria or person specifications, until they emerged at the interview stage. Often however, they were the factors or qualities that tipped the balance in the decision making stage. One advisor to the board described this process "as loose as a goose"!

Findings also revealed that the official policy discourse sometimes converged and sometimes conflicted with the populist discourses drawn on by school boards. As the school boards took up and interpreted the official discourse, they integrated it with the prevailing discourses mobilised by the media influencing their local communities, and either adapted, selected or rejected, what best fitted their circumstances and 'local logics'. The data that emerged was highly variable and complex as the discursive effects of various policies were played out in a range of idiosyncratic board appointment practices. Gendered patterns also emerged from these recruitment procedures.

In this paper I focus on two of the dominant discourses that emerged from the data. While managerialism has dominated the educational context generally since the reforms, it has not penetrated the recruitment function of boards where control remains with boards. It is therefore not surprising that it did not appear in the data as frequently as the market discourse did. I begin with a discussion of the market discourse and then move on to the discourse of gender equity.

Discourse of the Market

The boards that had been the most profoundly influenced in recruitment procedures by the market discourse, revealed business practices of competition, choice, entrepreneurialism, contractualism and marketing. These were mainly the urban schools, governed by board members who themselves worked in the business world. In the focus groups the chairs of the boards who used these discourses were nearly all high-flying, male, business executives. Some were chief executive officers of their own companies. They were also almost all from high status, high decile, large schools in big cities.

Competition is particularly significant in the market discourse, and in the education employment field this was drawn upon in the discussion about 'quality' schools, or more specifically a hierarchy of schools. The following response from a board chair illustrates

how attracting a pool of high quality applicants is necessary to retain the school's competitive edge:

M – 'We are a decile ten, 720 roll. We had fifteen applicants and I have to say that the majority of them were of a very high standard. It was probably one of the top jobs being offered over the recent months in the market. The standard was high and it was really hard to get down to five, very, very difficult to give them all justice. Quite a challenge really.'

(Board chair of large school with woman principal 17/7)

Competition is closely aligned with the concept of choice in market discourse, the principle being that choice creates competition. Initially it came as a surprise to find the boards who had appointed women principals to the large schools, such as that just mentioned espoused the strongest market discourse. This appeared to contradict some past research (Middleton 1990), where the individualism of the market has been seen to work against women, and (Blackmore 1993a), where the concept of managerialism is seen as highly masculine. However, there was an important proviso to this finding, which explains the decisions and which counters the contradiction. All the board chairs stated their appointee was the best person for the job, '*but in a disappointing field of applicants*'. In other words their choices were limited, so therefore they interpreted this as a lack of competition and a failure of the market.

M1 - 'We were disappointed with the level of candidates. One person stood out and we found it difficult to even have people almost on the short-list to stack one up against it. It was certainly a problem for us, but we then faced do we re-advertise, and in the end we stuck with the person...

M2 - 'We had the same thoughts. It would have just been nice to have actually had somebody else, to sort of say, well there is at least a game to play here. But it wasn't that to be honest.

Int. - 'So the first question I asked everybody was why did you appoint a woman. In your case it was...?'

M3 - 'The best person got the job. I have to say there was considerable feeling amongst a lot of the parents that they would have actually preferred a male to be appointed...'

(Board chairs of large schools with women principals 17/8).

The board chairs stated that these women were '*head and shoulders*' above any other applicant, but the chairs appeared to be surprised and dissatisfied there were not any equivalent male applicants to choose from. It was implied that they had got the job by default. On interviewing the women, it became clear they were indeed outstanding candidates for the principalship, and of a much higher calibre than the average. Of the eight women, two were enrolled in PhDs, four had or were nearly finished Masters, one had an MBA and had published overseas, which was an interesting business choice. All were constantly professionally reading, all but one had over ten years of teaching experience and senior management experience, and most had been principals before. One woman who applied for a job, won it the second time round after the board had re-advertised, and commented:

F – 'Then they gave it to me the second time around...but I get the feeling that they would have liked me to have been a man. They would have liked a male

with my background, my qualifications, my knowledge of the community and my profile.'

(Woman principal from large school 11/8)

The close market association of reputation and parental choice is evident in the following chairs' dialogue, as they discuss the qualities needed to satisfy their parent clientele:

M –'If we have someone, for example, who can't relate to a community, then the community either takes kiddies out of school or they just create difficulties. So I think that's why I would say our – the people who applied, didn't all meet the expectations that we had.

M – Well I think our expectations of principals are now quite high and in a community like ours we expect high educational standards and we want someone who's got very strong leadership in terms of education. So that's important. You want someone who's got vision for education. You want someone who has demonstrated good management skills. You want someone who can relate to a board, and that can be difficult. And you want someone who's got very strong skills in relating to a community and particularly in our case, a community of pretty well educated people who've got a choice in terms of the private schools and have got very high expectations of what they get out of that school. Now when you put all of those things together.....

Interviewer: You want God?

F – We get **him** [sic].'

(Board chairs of large schools with **women** principals 17/9)

Competition and parental choice also provide boards with the constant worry about roll growth or decline as the market fluctuates with the fickleness of public perception about quality schools and programmes, and the performance of students, teachers and principals. In both rural and urban areas where there is a choice of schools, boards can be profoundly influenced by the threat of these effects of the market. Marketing the school for roll growth becomes a critical activity because all other factors - financial, staffing, resources, in fact the continued existence of the school in some cases, depend on the number of students at the school. In the employment of a principal, someone who has the entrepreneurial vision, the skills and energy to pursue this and the status or mana to convince prospective parents becomes a critical criteria. This is commented on by the principal advisors:

Adv.-'A rural school I helped and a semi rural school appointment recently, both were about maintaining roll or increasing roll. They wanted somebody who was going to be able to protect their roll, promote the school, you know.

Int. - Marketing?

Adv. - Yes to a degree it was, yes, but I think more about having a good quality person in there who was going to attract or maintain the roll through that, but also being able to get out there and fight big brother down the road whose flogging (poaching) their kids sort thing, as they see it. Being a school not far out of the urban area'.

(Principal Advisor 21/14)

Other schools have been influenced by the superficial notion of image marketing, where they believe that by upgrading physical aspects such as the appearance of a school and its pupil's uniforms, clients will be attracted to enrol their children. Since the beginning of the reforms millions of dollars have been prioritised to upgrading the exteriors of schools (paintwork and grounds) or administration areas (the public front piece of the school or the principal's office), in order to attract new clients, often at the expense of overdue upgrades to teaching blocks, new equipment and resources:

M – 'Making the place more attractive, because it's out of town just a wee bit, we're trying to make it look more upmarket and attract more people to the school. It has got a good name and ever since we started the bus run to this school, even though it's only two kms here, all the outlying kids had to go to 'Central' Primary because that's where the buses went. But now we find we've got more coming to the school. It's a word of mouth thing'.

(Board chair of small school with woman principal 4/10)

The effects of the market discourse also drive appointment decisions according to niche markets. In the case of a school with a large Maori student roll, the school attracted students because of the immersion Maori language programme it offered. This is an example where 'difference' becomes a marketable product. Appointing a principal who would promote this difference was a high priority for one board:

F – It always had to be someone that was completely bilingual with the Maori language. I think we decided quite early on that that was essential, that the person could speak Te Reo, the lingo, and could work well with the unit, the Maori immersion unit. That's all. Because it's just growing and growing, that unit.

Int: - So does the school have a reputation locally where people hear about and want to send their kids here, particularly for the Maori immersion?

F – Yea.. We got an amazing ERO report, so we've got a few more kids through that'.

(Board chair of large school with woman principal 10/7).

The Maori woman principal of this school had been influential in building up the immersion unit previously to becoming principal, and was committed to the cultural and educational values of the unit. However, she recognised the niche marketing that was happening, was a means to an end.

'This school has a very special and unique character. It's in the heart of the central city that basically is becoming more and more a yuppie, middle class, pakeha environment. So to us it's really important that we maintain our culture. So to do what needs to be done is going to take a lot of work. So it's about saying, "Right, how can we cater for the community to retain our diversity". It means that if we want to retain that, then how do we attract Pacific Island people and Maori people? Well we are doing that in terms of the Maori immersion unit.'

(Woman principal of large school 9/13)

Discourses of Gender Equity

The official discourses of equal employment principles, Human Rights and gender equity were frequently acknowledged in interviews, but often quite blatantly disregarded or

subverted in subsequent actions or decision making. Comments such as "we appointed the best person to the job..." or "gender didn't come into the decision..." signalled an awareness of the official discourse, but the transcripts also revealed considerable evidence of sexism, gender prejudice against women, homophobia, homosociability, as well as examples of racism and ageism.

Two 2002 advertisements for senior management positions that appeared on the same page of "The Education Gazette", a Ministry publication (Ministry of Education 2002b), demonstrate a disregard for the official EEO discourse. The sexism of both is overt, as is the blatant preference for a male. One asks 'Have you got the balls to do this job?' and then goes on to develop a metaphor of a juggler in the rest of the text, while the other calls for a 'Headmaster' of a co-educational boarding school (N.Z. Education Gazette 2 Sept. 2002, p. 69). I should qualify that this blatant sexism is not the norm for "The Education Gazette", which is usually much more professional in its editing.

The following discussion illustrates the discursive effect of populist discourses around masculinist heroic leadership and its relationship to ideas about discipline, team sports and outdoor education, subverting the official EEO discourse. A preference for male principals was articulated using these competing discourses:

M1 - 'Gender didn't come into it. Well, O.K. the discipline thing, her size and that type of thing probably would have counted against her with dealing with some of the characters we've got. Some of the board did have "we want a man, no matter what" attitude, but the process we went through to appoint, we just had the person that we wanted... Well put it this way, when we read the CV's and everything, the male was not even considered. It wasn't until we actually met the guy. O.K. he had qualities there – from the CV, he had qualities there that we wanted. For starters he hadn't been teaching for more – I think it was that he'd only had four years teaching experience...but a big thing was that he'd actually done a lot of work with young people coming out of prison on an Outward Bound¹ type of course, so that meant that there was a big discipline thing there and ...

M 3– Suit some of your kids! (Laughter)

M 1 – Yea, some of them. Actually probably a big percentage of them. Honestly that's where some of them were heading. There's no doubt about it. At the age of ten you could pick them out and say you've got five kids that are well on the way to being criminals'.

(Board chair of small school with male principal 15/3)

There is evidence of the populist discourse of 'failing boys' in this dialogue, with its compensatory culture of aggression (Jackson 1998; Reay 2001) which is positioned against the discourse of women and leadership styles. Board chairs also talked about the importance of the principal having an interest in and ability to encourage and coach team sports, by which they appeared to mean boys' sports as there were no references to girl's sports. The media privileges male team sports, and this discourse is linked to hegemonic masculinity (Skelton 1999) and a gendered construct of discipline, presumably as an acceptable vent to excess energy and an outlet for channelling highly charged testosterone levels. The Australasian obsession with male team sports,

¹ Outward Bound is a military styled adventure course teaching extreme survival skills / pushing personal limits.

provides a public stage through the media for national heroes as well as a stage for legitimised aggression. National male sporting heroes frequently arise from the 'failing boys' camp in schools, and so sport is seen to be important as one area where these boys can achieve success. Unsurprisingly then, some boards rate male teachers and principals highly for their interest and aptitude in team sports:

M2 – 'It was just something – O.K. we'd had female teachers and we identified that we were lacking in the sports side of things. The physical education type of thing. The kids were out on the tennis court doing exercises every morning, that was good, but they wanted to play the team sports thing and that wasn't happening.

M3- So the male.....

M2 – Brought in the team sports. He brought in the discipline.

M3 –That was on the basis of his skills and his background, not on the basis of him being male?

M2 – No.

F – See that was the same for us. I mean our ex-principal was good at the team sports. He spent every Saturday with teams of one sort or another at the various soccer tournaments etc.

(Board chairs of small schools with male principals 15/13)

Principal advisors also reported on boards' privileging of team sports and outdoor education in gendered ways. In the literature this is seen as a male prerogative (see Sharp, 2001) with more men than women experiencing success in outdoor education courses. One advisor spoke of the frequency of references to 'exciting outdoor education experiences led by male teachers', remembered by women trustees on appointment panels. They wanted their own children to also experience this and thus favoured male candidates.

There were a number of other discursive effects that emerged from the official gender discourse competing with "local logics". Media provoked moral panic around 'feminised schooling' and 'failing boys' discourses produced appointment decisions based on role models for boys (Smith 1999):

F - 'The connection to the perceived lack of male role models was very much an issue in our community as to why they wanted a male principal. There has to be those male role models.'

(Board chair of small school with woman principal. 13/2)

Redressing the gender imbalance on the staff was the most common reason reported by boards who had appointed male principals. This is a clear example where the official EEO discourse is subverted to their own ends. The gender balance of the teaching workforce has become more skewed as older males retire and fewer young men enter teaching every year. This is seen as undesirable because schools it is widely believed, should be reflecting society. In an attempt to rectify this, one of the women principals spoke about her recent frustrating attempts to appoint men to her teaching staff:

F1 – ‘Six men applied for this school, and I’m quite into positive discrimination at the moment. If I can get a good male - I’ve got good females. I’ve got one, but I would like to see one more male in the place if I could, as this role model for boys...

F2 - And it’s lonely with one.

F1 - Yea, it is. But six males – how they chose their referees, who knows! But six referee checks and I just became more and more despondent. “Well they kind of leave school at five past three – that one he won’t do sport, just be aware of that”. (These are the referees)." No great flair." The next one was, "very nice person, but terribly boring”.

These are our principals of the future! (Grimace and laughter)
(Women principals of large schools 16/34)

Populist discourses of women and leadership were drawn upon by boards to justify appointment decisions, sometimes in contention with official discourses of equity as legislated in the Human Rights Act. Aspects such as marital and family status which it is illegal to discriminate against, were used both positively and negatively to rationalise decisions, in conjunction with the "local logics' or requirements of the community. One board appointed a man over a single woman because of their concerns for her safety, living alone in the school house. Asked if they would have had the same safety concerns for a single man, their response was "*only if he was homosexual*" (15/23). Another appointed a married woman because she was a settled resident in their community and would provide the much needed stability their school required.

M - 'We've had six principals in twelve years at this school. This time we wanted to make sure that we would get one that stayed. We didn't want a fly-by-nighter, which a lot of them had been.'

(Board chair of small school with woman principal 4/4)

An advisor to the board reported why a woman with children won a principal's position over an unmarried woman without children because, "she knows what it's like to be a mother" (Principal advisor 8/6). Apart from the illegal status of these reasons under the Human Rights Act (Government 1993), it is difficult to imagine males being subjected to this reasoning.

Ageist practices were reported frequently by both male and female principals and by board chairs, but the sexism/ageism dynamic appeared to be particularly prevalent, again contravening the official discourse of the Human Rights Act:

M - 'The two that we finally interviewed, one male and one female, the female was at an age where she was looking for a comfortable job to work through to her retirement and that didn't suit us.'

(Board chair of small school with male principal 15/3)

The women principals' focus group added their touch of ironic realism in a discussion about gender and age, and who would win the principal position:

F1 - 'I really believe - if you are a fifty year old man and you're a fifty year old woman, put the two up, the man has got far more chance (of winning the position) than the woman, if you take other things out.

F2 - I'm going to have a face-lift. (Laughter)

F1 - But I mean, a middle-aged man is distinguished. A middle-aged woman is....

F3 - Tired.'

(Women principals 16/36)

Conclusion

The discursive effects of the market appeared to be as influenced by "local logics" as the discursive effects of gender equity. Contextual, local, historical and cultural aspects of the school and community all contributed to decision making around the principalship, along with the official discourses. The merit principle - 'the best person for the job' - derived from EEO discourse, intersected with local understandings and official discourses to produce different gender preferences. Male principals it appeared were preferred overall, but if the market failed to produce enough competent male applicants, the highest competitor was appointed. Women appeared to be doing quite well in a "failed" market environment. Where there was a choice though, boards chose to subvert the official gender equity discourse resulting in male appointments. The boards who did appoint women in these cases did so because of "local logics" which indicated disillusion with previous male principals. The 'fly-by-nighters' example cited in this paper, is one of very few such examples that appear in the data.

My research indicates that restructuring has not opened up new leadership opportunities for women in primary schools in the way one might have expected, and is unlikely to do so in the future under the current policy environment. It has created opportunistic gaps for women to fill when either the market or male credibility has failed, but even then there has not been a significant shift considering the high proportion of women in the workforce, compared to men. Women are applying and being short-listed for the principalship in roughly equal numbers to men (Brooking, Collins et al. 2003), but the autonomy, power and "local logics" employed by boards, is effectively gate keeping the masculinised culture in place. It is a sad indictment and national injustice that the Picot Report (1988, 7.3.18) warning has come to pass:

'Given that our terms of reference place some emphasis on transferring responsibility to local units in the system, we were told that this could put progress in equal employment opportunities back some years unless safeguards are built into any locally delegated responsibilities.'

The gender disproportion of the principalship persisting since the restructuring indicates that the old masculinised culture of leadership has not changed. Considering one of the aims of the Picot Report (Picot 1988), was to free the system from bureaucratic systems, it is ironic that new opportunities of leadership have not emerged to the extent that might have been expected. At the same time responsibility is handed down to local school boards to deal with matters of social justice, for which they are ill-equipped and untrained. It is hardly surprising that with such contradictory sets of policies there hasn't been a more significant shift in the gender diversity of the principalship.

(A copy of this paper is available from me at k.j.brooking@massey.ac.nz)

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