

Emerging Issues in Formalising Principal Preparation in New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper presents a background to the New Zealand context, in which pre-employment preparation for the principalship is being shaped, by drawing on international literature and policy responses that identify challenges likely to attend future policy development. It reports a small study conducted to examine the perceptions of practising and potential principals regarding issues related to the formalising of pre-employment preparation. The study found that whilst participants (primary and secondary principals and deputy principals) agree there is concern about the adequacy of preparation and are in favour of some form of compulsory preparation they do not favour restricted entry to the profession based on assessment of potential. Lessons from abroad and close to home in the form of recent recommendations from Education Review Office research indicate that establishment of a regulated environment may well be inevitable. The major issue identified for the profession, the employing boards and for government is formulated as a strategic dilemma that questions whether adequate and compulsory provision can be provided without avoiding a central regulatory feature: selecting candidates for the role. This dilemma demands a strategic consideration of the issues of policy borrowing and the nature of mandated pre-employment preparation for future New Zealand principals.

Keywords: pre-employment principal preparation; policy; practitioner perceptions

Focus of Principal Preparation Study

This study focuses on *pre-employment preparation for the principalship* (PEPP). The term ‘preparation’ denotes that the focus is on the professional development of the principal prior to taking up this position. The wide variety of continuing professional development activities that principals may engage in after being employed is not included in the scope of this study. Preparation programmes for the principalship fall into two broad categories: (1) pre-employment preparation encompassing selection, formal qualification programmes and/or training, and (2) post-employment preparation which comprises induction into the role. Within both the pre-and post-employment categories there are directed and self-directed forms of preparation and formal

and informal aspects of elements of education, training, development and mentoring. Table 1 illustrates the scope of preparation activity.

Table 1. **Scope of Principalship Preparation Activity**

PRE-EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION	POST-EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION
<i>DIRECTED</i>	<i>DIRECTED</i>
Directed assessment of potential for entry to system training/education programmes	
Directed engagement in formal educational management qualification programme	
Directed formal training provided by the system	Directed participation in induction programmes provided by the system
Directed formal mentoring schemes provided by the system	Directed engagement in mentoring as a form of induction
<i>SELF-DIRECTED</i>	<i>SELF-DIRECTED</i>
Self-directed engagement in formal educational management qualification programmes	
Self-directed engagement in professional development activities	Self-directed participation in induction training
Self-directed engagement in mentoring	Self-directed engagement in mentoring

Appointment of New Zealand Principals

Since the advent of *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms (Government of New Zealand, 1988) an elected board of trustees has been responsible for the appointment of the school principal. Appointment to a principalship in New Zealand is not currently contingent upon any formal educational management qualification or training prerequisites. In a primary school study it was concluded that on the whole, principals learn to do what they are required to do on the job and from their peers (Education Review Office, 1996, p. 29). This study recommended that the government and the profession take steps to attend to the issue of "availability of high level tertiary courses or qualifications that focus on the leadership and management of New Zealand primary schools" (p. 30). In a secondary school study, principals' own experience in senior and middle management positions was viewed as valuable preparation (Education Review Office, 1997, p. 34.). It was also noted that, "Boards of trustees of secondary schools should expect to appoint a principal with university and management qualifications" (p. 35). Furthermore the study concludes that "the challenge to the profession is to develop in their cadre of aspirants for the position of secondary school principal the knowledge and skills that will provide the highest possible quality of professional leadership" (p. 36).

In the most recent relevant study *The Appointment of School Principals* (2001) conducted by the Education Review Office (ERO), 230 school boards responded to a questionnaire seeking information about a range of appointment issues including processes for selection and

appointment and the qualifications and/or training of applicants. The report states that whilst the "great majority of boards [...] appear to be satisfied with the process they followed to appoint a principal and with the choice they made" (p. 14 of 17), the findings of the report "have implications for the role of the Government in establishing a regulatory environment that supports the appointment of high quality principals in New Zealand schools" (p. 15 of 17).

These findings are significant because this theme of formalising pre-employment preparation has appeared in a series of reports from the ERO since 1996. The report concludes:

The findings in this report reflect those in previous ERO studies that recommended the establishment of more formal systems of training for principals.

For example, in *In-Service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools* (2000) ERO found that most principals of New Zealand schools had not had specific training to prepare them for their role. Many aspiring principals chose to undertake academic study on aspects of educational management, but the knowledge and skills that they obtained through these programmes of study varied widely.

[...]

There should also be incentives for aspiring principals to gain high-level qualifications in school management before they were appointed and to continue to undertake appropriate training and education after appointment.

This report has found that boards are faced with an almost impossible task in trying to assess candidates' knowledge through interview. The task of boards would be made considerably easier if applicants for the position of principal had to hold an appropriate qualification in school management and leadership that proved that they had adequate knowledge of all aspects of school management. (p. 16 of 17)

It would appear that this latest study strongly recommends establishing a regulated environment in which formal preparation for the principalship in the form of an appropriate educational management qualification is viewed as a solution to the perceived problem of appointing effective principals. The problem of how to prepare principals adequately for their role has always existed. It has been thrown into prominence in New Zealand by the demands that a self-managed school system makes on the principal in terms of a new and expanded role. A similar trend is evident in international settings where research into effective schools and reform imperatives have created a need to find viable solutions to the 'preparation for the principalship' problem.

Lessons from Abroad and Closer to Home

Effective Principals - Effective Schools

There is a large body of literature that supports the view that the effective achievement of educational goals is highly dependent on the capability of a school leader. As Anderson (1989, p.84) states, "The principalship is probably the single most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education". Smith and Piele (1989) assert that the very goal of educational leadership is effective schools. These authors refer to a seminal study in school effectiveness (Austin, 1979) that confirms 'strong principal leadership' as a key factor in

school effectiveness. If there was little doubt at the conclusion of the 1980s decade that the principal had "emerged as a key person in the effort to achieve excellence in schools" (Smith & Piele, 1989), then I contend that there is even less doubt now. This is especially evident in the context of the implementation of radical education administration reforms that have impacted on the role, performance and development of principals in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. In each of these settings momentous policy changes have been introduced under the umbrella of school self-management or local management of schools. This centralised-decentralisation model has provided schools and their governing bodies with greater degrees of accountability, simultaneously placing principals in the spotlight in terms of both community and systemic expectations of effective professional leadership of schools.

In New Zealand principals are challenged by having to assume a new role between educational imperatives and market forces (Codd, 1993), managerial complexity and professional isolation (Robertson, 1998). In tandem with additional and unequipped for responsibilities they face dilemmas of managerial versus instructional leadership (Rossow & Warner, 2000) and increasing accountability (Middlewood & Cardno, 2001) versus decreasing autonomy (Thrupp, 2001).

It is assumed that in both the United Kingdom and Australia (although maybe to a lesser degree because in these systems there is a tier of accountability between national and school level that does not exist in New Zealand) principals have been equally challenged. It is also apparent that public concern about the effectiveness (and leadership) of self-managed schools has fuelled a need for policy to address this issue.

Policy and Reform Response

An analysis of international policy solutions and their relevance to the New Zealand context is essential in order to provide a backdrop to the scene unfolding in this country. Where imperatives to tighten accountability and quality assurance are enacted through sweeping reform of the administration of education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995) there is an unmistakable trend of government intervention of a particular kind in relation to the development of school leaders. For example, the pattern of policy development in England and Wales (Bush, 1998) forecasts one way in which solutions to address education quality concerns could well be formulated in New Zealand. Ribbins (1999) asserts that, "England and Wales are widely regarded as having taken an important lead in the evolution of a distinct, and possibly transferable, strategic approach to the initial preparation and continuing development of Headteachers" (p. 81).

It is perhaps unsurprising that education policy in New Zealand is likely to be influenced by policy trends in the United Kingdom. In the context of policy migration, Levin (1998, cited in Edwards, Nicoll & Tait, 1999) has identified certain globally common themes in the construction and substance of school-level education policy developments. Two that are pertinent relate to firstly, an increasing criticism of schools' alleged failure to deliver what is required; and secondly, an increased emphasis on standards, accountability and testing (pp. 623-624). It is contended that policy responses to these issues, which in New Zealand have followed close on the heels of government interventions in the United Kingdom, could well be viewed as what Dale (1999) terms "policy borrowing". In such cases one country seeks to imitate a particular

policy from another (p. 9).

Whilst formal principal preparation is not yet a *pre-employment* requirement, a pattern of international policy development and strong recommendations from the ERO suggest that government intervention is likely to change the status quo. For example, the most recent policy response in New Zealand is in the area of post-employment preparation. This is the development of a national induction programme for first-time principals to be delivered over the first year of their appointment (Ministry of Education, 2001). Prior to the announcement of this initiative, the Ministry of Education contracted the HayGroup to conduct a research project that identified the skills, knowledge, attributes and competencies needed by first-time school principals to be effective in their position (HayGroup, 2001). The Ministry's stated intent is to begin delivery of the nationwide induction programme in 2002 to the anticipated 180 new principals appointed each year (Ministry of Education, 2001b).

Table 2 illustrates how similar quality concerns have given rise to almost identical policy responses embedded in major reforms in these two countries. These government interventions are identified in three broad areas of concern related to: school effectiveness; the performance of principals; and the preparation of principals. The table simultaneously pinpoints the gaps that suggest areas where policy development in the United Kingdom might well foreshadow similar policy development in principal preparation in New Zealand.

Table 2. Similar Trends in Policy Development (UK and NZ)

QUALITY CONCERN	POLICY RESPONSE UNITED KINGDOM	POLICY RESPONSE NEW ZEALAND
a) School effectiveness	Education Reform Act 1988 Local management of schools OFSTED inspection framework	Education Act 1989 School self-management Education Review Office school accountability reviews
b) Principal performance	Principal appraisal Development of principal performance standards Development of competency framework Establishment of Teacher Training Agency and Regional assessment centres (1997)	Principal appraisal Development of principal performance standards Development of competency framework
c) Principal recruitment, selection and preparation	Pre-employment preparation mandated Establishment of National College for School Leadership (1999)	National induction programme

In both these settings, self management of schools has increased accountability and the complexity of the work of principals and required external review of school effectiveness. Nationally mandated systems for the appraisal of principals have been introduced and these are linked to professional standards of performance. Principal preparation has been formalised and in

both cases competencies have been researched to form the basis for assessing training needs.

Significance of Competence Models and Assessment Centres for Principal Preparation

According to Brundrett (2000), competency-based management training and development has had a strong impact on programmes designed specifically for school leaders in the United Kingdom. He asserts that:

[...] one of the most influential ways in which the competence paradigm impacted upon school leadership in England and Wales was in the growth of the 'assessment centre' movement in educational leadership. (p. 356)

In the United Kingdom the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) charged with the task of developing a range of programmes for preparation and the continuing professional development of principals in the 1990s, demonstrated a commitment to a competency-based model underpinned by national standards for headteachers.

Regional Assessment Centres for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) were established to act as the first point of contact for candidates who undertook a compulsory 'needs assessment' and also as the last point of contact in supervising a final compulsory assessment. Because the NPQH qualification is now to be administered by the National College for School Leadership it is assumed that such centres will endure (Brundrett, 2000, p. 358).

In Australia and New Zealand, there is evidence of the competency movement gaining prominence in recent developments to improve the provision of training and development for principals. A common feature of developments in the UK and the antipodes is the work of the international management consultancy firm Hay-McBer in developing competency frameworks that are used for needs analysis as a basis for planning training to improve the competence of practising and potential leaders. Such 'leadership capability frameworks': a) obviously underpin the preparation programme in the United Kingdom; b) have been developed for the Australian states of Queensland (Education Queensland, 2001) and Victoria in the 1990s; and c) now exist in New Zealand for first-time principals (HayGroup, 2001).

It is interesting to note that although in existence, the *Standards Framework for Leaders* has not been actively used in principal preparation initiatives in Queensland. Whether or how the competency framework developed for New Zealand principals will be utilised within the bounds of the proposed national induction programme for first-time principals is yet to be determined.

Researching Principals' Perceptions

Aims of the Research

This study was conducted to ascertain the views that practising and potential principals hold about issues related to pre-employment principal preparation. It is guided by a belief that policy to reform the nature of preparation for the principalship in New Zealand is in the making. There is already evidence of governmental intervention in the form of providing funding for a substantial national programme for the induction of first-time principals. There is strong and

recent recommendation from the government review agency for a *regulated* environment for principal preparation. Against this backdrop of pending further intervention it is imperative that the voices of the professionals are recorded at a point in time when the winds of change are gathering to blow. Hence the research examines the perceptions of professionals around those issues that could be contained in future policy if the government intervenes in a manner that is predicted on the premise of global policy borrowing influencing further reform in this arena in New Zealand. All in all, it is a timely investigation. To date there are no researched publications of practitioners' perceptions of the issues surrounding these imperatives in New Zealand.

Methodology

The opportunity arose to survey small groups of principals and deputy principals (primary and secondary) in the course of attending professional gatherings during the period May 2000 to August 2001. Twenty-two primary principals in the central Auckland area were surveyed during a training forum (10 returns). A group of twenty secondary principals from all parts of the country, attending a residential management development course were surveyed (16 returns). At a conference in Christchurch thirty-two primary deputy principals were surveyed (12 returns) and fifty-five secondary deputy principals in the Auckland region were surveyed at a professional meeting (30 returns).

New Zealand has 2,270 primary schools and 458 secondary schools (composite or area schools are included in this grouping) so this research has sampled only a small slice of the national population of 2728 principals (Ministry of Education, 2001). In all 129 questionnaires were administered and 68 were returned (53%). Profile data confirms that there was a fairly even spread of those recently appointed to the role and those who have been in service for up to or over a decade.

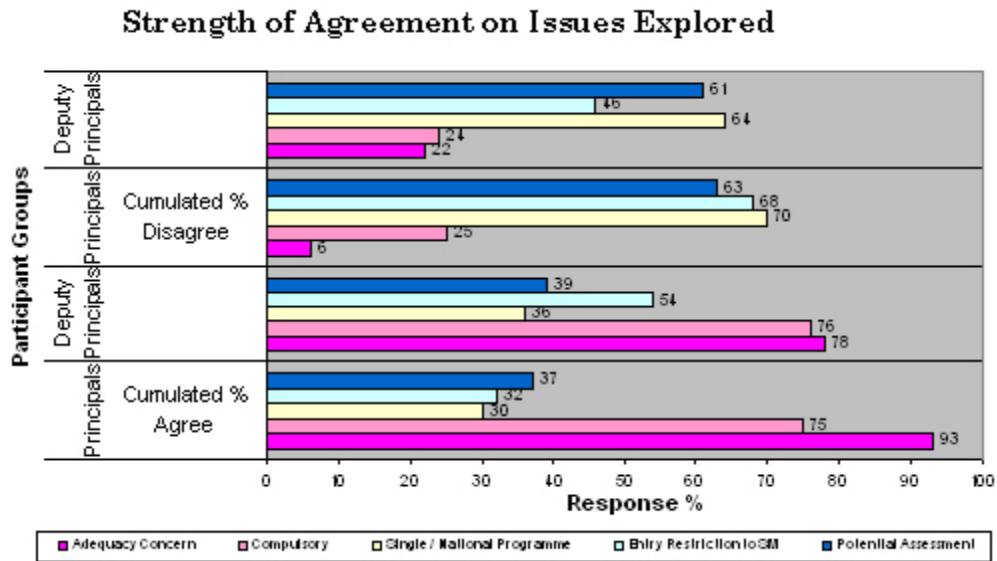
The questionnaire was designed to elicit response (strength of agreement on a four factor Likert scale) to clusters of questions about current and future pre-employment preparation. Question clusters dealt with the following key issues:

- 1) whether there was concern about the adequacy of current pre-employment preparation;
 - 2) whether there was need for a compulsory pre-employment preparation programme;
 - 3) whether a single national programme was desirable;
 - 4) whether entry to such a programme should be restricted to practising senior managers; and
 - 5) whether entry to programmes should be selective and contingent on assessment of potential.
- In addition respondents were asked a range of open-ended questions related to these same key issues.

Findings: Degree of Agreement on Key Issues in Survey

The data collected in the Likert scale survey were analysed to determine strength of agreement on each of the five broad issues for principals (primary and secondary) and deputy principals (primary and secondary). Figure 1 illustrates strength of agreement as a percentage figure.

Figure 1. Strength of Agreement on Issues Explored



In the commentary on these findings below, excerpts from the respondents' answers to the open-ended questions are integrated to provide a deeper orientation on practitioners' perceptions.

Verbatim comment was coded with transcript numbering and the following identification codes:

SP: Secondary Principals

PP: Primary Principals

SD: Secondary Deputy Principal

PD: Primary Deputy Principal

• ***Concern about the adequacy of current pre-employment preparation***

Principals were more in agreement (93% overall of which 64% strongly agree; 29% agree) about the need for concern regarding the adequacy of current provision for principal preparation than were deputy principals (78% overall of which 35% strongly agree; 43% agree). Whilst only 6% of principals disagree with the view that this is a concern, overall 22% of deputies disagree (2% strongly disagree; 20% disagree).

It could be conjectured that some deputies are now being better prepared for principalship than those who are incumbent in the position or that, waiting in the wings, they do not as yet have an appreciation of what they need to be prepared for.

Principals' Perceptions

Secondary principals' comments on the issue of adequacy of their preparation reveal that the role is often more challenging than anticipated:

(1/012.SP) I believe I was grossly inadequate with the big picture leadership for at least a year after my appointment.

(1/008.SP) I thought that having worked through all positions as a teacher, Dean, AP and DP that I was well prepared. I was mistaken.

(1/015.SP) I was unprepared. I had been an HOD for four years. Then a DP for eighteen months. I found it very difficult to divorce myself from the teaching role.

Secondary principals also indicate that they have taken the initiative in arranging their own preparation through formal study, on-the-job training and mentoring. Accordingly, their voices captured in comment show that they were:

(1/014.SP) Well prepared through studies in management at the Diploma and Masters level.

(1/009.SP) Reasonably well prepared but only because I had made considerable personal efforts to become prepared.

(1/012.SP) Ready but not well prepared. I had completed three papers in an educational management diploma. This was the best PD I had had. Preparation sometimes depends on leadership opportunities provided from previous schools.

(1/016.SP) Very grateful for the development opportunities provided by a former principal with whom I had worked. Those, the models (other principals) I had observed and previous professional experience (most notably as Head of a large faculty - in many ways closer to the principal's role than AP/DP) were the experiences I relied on/felt conditioned by.

(1/009.SP) Great mentors were very important.

Primary principals generally mirrored the same preparation experiences as their secondary counterparts as the following comments show.

(1/052.PP) My first year was very traumatic. Each year has become easier. I was not very well prepared but learned fast.

(1/044.PP) Not well at all. However, programmes in educational management were not available at that time.

(1/049.PP) Very little preparation to meet the diverse nature of the role. Being in the primary sector I had the chance to progress through a series of 'larger' more demanding positions. I think my on-the-job and service opportunities prepared me for those steps.

(1/051.PP) Fortunately the principal had been mentoring me in a collaborative management team beforehand.

Deputy Principals' Perceptions

When asked about the extent to which their current role prepared them for principalship both primary and secondary deputies indicated a similar trend. Whilst several comments indicated that the role opened access to a wider view of the school, there were also comments about the limitations of the role in terms of total preparation for the principalship. Many more limitations were identified by secondary deputies in terms of role-sharing and information-sharing in contrast to primary deputies who highlight collaboration as a main feature of succession training.

o Advantages of role in preparation for principalship

Primary deputy principals made the following comments about how their current role was preparing them:

(1/063.PD) I am being prepared to quite a strong extent. I work closely with the principal in many matters.

(1/061.PD) I have a principal who fully involves me.

(1/067.PD) I feel my current role prepares me reasonably for principalship. I have a supportive sharing principal who involves me in all school decisions.

Secondary deputy principals said the following about how their current role was preparing them:

(1/019.SD) Quite well, particularly when acting principal.

(1/028.SD) I am fortunate in having a principal who encourages me to be fully involved in all aspects of school management.

(1/026.SD) Partly, in terms of covering the plethora of policy that impacts on day to day running of a big secondary school.

(1/016) As DP the individual gains an in-depth knowledge about a range of school matters.

But secondary deputy principals also highlighted the many limitations that did not feature to any great extent in the primary comments.

o *Limitations of role in preparation for principalship*

Primary deputy principals commented as follows about the extent to which they were being prepared for principalship:

(1/058.PD) Partially, not fully.

(1/062.PD) Prepares well for leadership aspects but not management especially financial/property type activities.

(1/064.PD) Certainly not in any financial or administrative way. Due to having full-time class contact very little time is available to practice or learn or have responsibility in areas of admin which principals do.

Secondary deputy principals said:

1(1/017.SD) To a limited extent.

(1/021.SD) Not at all. I am being held back and not able to use skills at all.

(1/024.SD) Not very much. Lots of areas that we are excluded from.

(1/027.SD) Not sufficiently because certain aspects of a principal's role are not delegated to senior managers even when in acting principal role.

(1/032.SD) Only very superficially. Particularly as can always 'opt out' of final decision-making role.

• ***Need for a compulsory pre-employment preparation programme***

In relation to the issue of whether some sort of pre-employment preparation should be compulsory for aspiring principals, the response of principals in agreement (75% overall of which 32% strongly agreed; 43% agreed) and deputy principals was very similar (76% overall of which 24% strongly agreed; 52% agreed). Yet in comments related to the form that preparation could take (in response to open-ended questions linked to this issue) principals across both sectors favoured an eclectic, flexible approach where prospective principals could choose from a wide range of options that spanned induction, formal courses, mentoring and continuing professional development. Comments below capture this range of preparation activity.

(2/032.SD) Induction I believe is more important than mandated pre-employment preparation.

As one secondary principal stated, it was on-the-job training that was likely to be more relevant than ‘ticketing’ principals in anticipation of them getting an appointment.

(9/005.SP) Pre-employment? When? What if you got it four years ago and you've got your ticket to become a principal. How relevant is what you learnt four years ago? You never know when a job will come up so the timing is unpredictable. Get the job, spend a few months at it, get the training.

Others commented on the nature of preparation that ranged across management education (qualification programmes) and management development courses.

(2/034.SD) A formalised course in school leadership and management.

(2/045.PP) At the minimum a diploma in educational management. At least some tertiary qualification in the field and a Mentor - like student teachers, so preparation is not merely theory.

(2/004.SP) A course or qualification that can work through a number of optional modules in areas where prospective principals feel they need development.

- ***Single national programme***

In responding to the view that a single pre-employment programme should be provided nationally, only 30% of principals overall agreed (16% strongly agreed; 14% agreed) and 36% of deputy principals overall (11% strongly agreed; 25% agreed) favoured this approach.

In complete contrast with the general agreement that some sort of preparation should be compulsory - it would appear that both principals and deputies eschewed the notion that a single national programme should be the way in which compulsory preparation is approached.

(9/044.PP) We need to acknowledge courses already in place and those of quality more often and more intentionally.

(9/006.SP) To me it would be regulating where we need de-regulation, restrictive where freedom of choice is needed. A better scheme would be that all principals newly appointed should go through a training programme if they have not already been through one.

- ***Entry restricted to practising senior managers***

Principals are evidently in favour of staff other than senior managers having entry to principalship preparation programmes. Only 32% overall of principals agreed that entry should be restricted (7% strongly agreed; 25% agreed). Overall 54% of deputies believed that entry should be restricted to senior managers (16% strongly agreed; 38% agreed).

I suggest that this response could be linked to the very positive comments made by primary deputy principals in relation to deputy principalship providing a sound training ground for progress to principalship. It does not however mesh with the negative views of secondary deputies in relation to the position being one that prepares them for a wider school leadership role.

- ***Selective entry contingent on assessment of potential***

The majority of principals disagreed (63% overall of which 34% disagreed; 29% strongly disagreed) with the notion that there should be selective entry to preparation programmes based on an assessment of potential for effective principalship. Similarly, deputy principals were also opposed to this notion with 61% overall disagreeing on the necessity for selective entry contingent on assessment of potential (45% disagreed; 16% strongly disagreed).

A consolidated analysis shows the following:

- *There is a very high level of agreement that there is indeed a need to be concerned about the adequacy of current preparation for principalship in New Zealand.*
- *There is also a high level of agreement that preparation for principalship needs to be compulsory.*
- *There is a high level of disagreement with the notion that a single national programme is needed for principalship preparation.*
- *There is a moderate to high level of disagreement with the idea that entry needs to be restricted to practising senior managers.*
- *There is a high level of disagreement with the notion that entry to preparation programmes should be based on assessment of potential to be an effective principal.*

Practitioners in this study have voiced their beliefs about some aspects of principalship preparation (both current and prospective), and confirm that both practising and potential principals are not satisfied with the status quo. However, whilst on the one hand they favour a degree of regulation to ensure that principals are prepared for the role, they do not, on the other hand, favour over-regulation in terms of a national programme and restrictive selection of programme participants based on assessment of potential. This raises the issue of how the first need (for adequate preparation) can be met without acknowledging that it is dependent on a second need being satisfied, namely, the creation of a regulatory environment in which preparation for the principalship is strategically planned, resourced and assured.

Discussion

Emerging Issues for New Zealand

This study (albeit limited by the small sample) has illuminated a dilemma for the profession in terms of meeting needs for formal preparation yet at the same time limiting the degree of regulation in the attempt. In seeking ways to resolve this dilemma two issues emerge. These are the issue of aspects of direct policy borrowing and the nature of pre-employment preparation that is appropriate for the context.

Issue: A Strategic Pre-Employment Preparation Dilemma

The complexity and value tensions inherent in this issue could be expressed as a strategic dilemma for New Zealand. On the one hand principals (practising and potential) recognise and strongly agree that they need some form of compulsory preparation for principalship. On the other hand, they express strong disagreement with the notions of regulating entry to pre-employment preparation programmes and consequently to principalship. There are several

stakeholders who will be implicated in the management of this dilemma: the profession, the employing boards, and the government. The question is who will take the lead and when?

Issue: Direct Policy Borrowing

Questions must be asked about the extent to which policy for principal preparation in the United Kingdom for example will be borrowed by New Zealand. I have shown in Table 2 that in the area of principal accountability (demonstrated by the development of standards, competency frameworks and mandated appraisal) there are considerable similarities between the policy responses of the two nations. Given that the most recent recommendations of the Education Review Office (2001) call for more formal systems of training for principals and the establishment of a regulatory environment, it is highly probable that the policy lead taken by the United Kingdom will influence strategy to formalise principal preparation here. If this is so then the profession should be taking considerable interest in the pattern of development and its critics in the country from which borrowing could occur (Brundrett, 2000; Bush, 1998).

Issue: Contextual Appropriateness of Regulated Preparation

Practising and potential principals in this study generally favoured some preparation that is compulsory before appointment. They also commented that the nature of preparation should be flexible and should take into account a range of professional development activities. In addition they did not support a single national programme. This view meshes with that expressed by Ribbins (1999) who argues for an approach to principal development which, amongst other features, provides core training but also supports development opportunities at all stages of a principals' career and involves a range of providers (p. 87).

We should take account of the critics of the compulsory national training programme set up and operated by the TTA in England and Wales. They warn that there are limitations that must be addressed in adopting a narrow functional competency method of training for management development (Bush, 1998; Ribbins, 1999). Furthermore, they draw attention to the fact that several valid alternatives exist but these have been ignored in the approach adopted to mount the NPQH.

For example, Bush refers to the structured Masters programmes in educational administration that must be completed in the USA before a candidate can apply for a principal's position. He also highlights the successful model adopted in Singapore where prospective principals are selected to participate in a one year full-time diploma programme funded generously by the government.

Here, of course, one must confront the issue of selection for preparation which does not currently exist in the New Zealand context. Principals and deputy principals in this study did not favour selection into programmes based on assessment. If, in the future, New Zealand policy is strongly influenced by global trends then this may not be an option. In fact, this is a central element of the dilemma. Regardless of the type of preparation programme, this is a central feature of a regulated environment.

In the United Kingdom the NPQH qualification is intended to be a tough qualification based on selection through assessment. In the words of the Chief Executive of the TTA, Anthea Millett, it aims to:

[...] provide a demanding and objective assessment that will sort out those who are ready to be leaders of schools from those who only give the appearance of being ready. (Millett, 1996, quoted in Bush, 1998, p. 327)

It is hardly surprising that practitioners are not attracted to such approaches. However, the reality is that the notion of screening candidates for principalship prior to preparation is by no means new. It has been employed to regulate entry to the role in the United States since the 1950s in the form of internships and Assessment Centres, according to Pashiardis (1993).

From a completely different stakeholder perspective, that of the employing Boards of Trustees, the research recently conducted into aspects of principal appointment concludes that major difficulties arise for Boards at the point of selection. The conclusive finding is that the task of Boards would be made considerably easier if applicants held an appropriate qualification in school management (Education Review Office, 2001).

Conclusions

It is recommended that the policy community pay close attention to the solutions illuminated by the literature and global policy responses in the area of developing effective principals. I suggest that the spotlight should now be directed to the strategic dilemma of pre-employment preparation. It is strategic because the quality of New Zealand's principals must be seen as paramount in achieving effective schools, effective learning outcomes and consequently competitive advantage in a global market. It is essential that leaders in the self-managed school context are supported in the future to move to successive leadership levels through the implementation of a comprehensive plan for management development. Such a plan would have dimensions that impact at the level of the system, the school and the individual.

It would appear that implementation of some systemic parts of this plan might be underway already - although the full picture has yet to be revealed. At least two aspects of principalship preparation have been accorded attention and considerable resourcing at long last. I am referring firstly, to the nationwide induction programme that now prepares newly appointed first-time principals for this role during their first year of principalship. Whilst participation remains optional, this is a considerable step forward and one that should be viewed positively by all stakeholder groups given the concern for adequate preparation voiced by participants in this study. But this is of course a *post-employment preparation programme*. Secondly, another initiative, more in keeping with *pre-employment preparation* endeavours, is being funded by the Ministry. This involves an investigation and pilot of effective professional development programmes for aspiring and potential principals. It could be conjectured that this might well be a precursor to a pre-employment requirement that all candidates aspiring to principalship will have participated in some form, or even in a particular sort of preparation programme.

What is urgently needed now is agreement by all stakeholders to developing a strategy for pre-employment preparation of the future principals of New Zealand's schools. Principals, those practising and those aspiring to the role, should be involved in this process as key players along

with other major stakeholders. Devising how this is to be achieved and determining the shape of future pre-employment preparation for New Zealand principals require more research to be done in this area.

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