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WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THEY MAKE?

A study of equity policies in contributing primary schools

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Educational Administration**

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Abstract

This study investigated the writing of equity policies in ten contributing primary schools, both rural and urban. These policies are at present a compulsory feature of all school charters which boards of trustees are required to complete. Seen in terms of the larger ideological, political and economic agenda on which the educational administrative reforms in education in New Zealand are based this study draws on theories of the state and cultural reproduction to explain the attitudes and actions of boards of trustees.

Forty interviews were conducted with boards in ten schools. These interviews canvassed the policy writing process, personal knowledge and training received for both equity and policy writing, as well as the relevance that particular policies have in schools.

Equity is about values, while present policy writing processes used in schools are based on management systems. This study concludes that while writing equity policies can be made compulsory, if boards' understandings are not complete, if the charter language used is inhibiting and the purposes of the policies are in conflict with trustees' own personal beliefs, then the exercise is meaningless and will have little effect on our schools.

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