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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN TORONTO
A Description

By
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Appendices.....	5
Preface	
The Purpose.....	6
The Methodology.....	9
The Format.....	10
PART I : The Demographic Context.....	12
PART II : Historical Perspective I.....	17
Pre-Constitution, 1807 - 1867.....	17
The Entrenchment of Separate Schools.....	21
Confederation.....	22
Post-Confederation to 1904.....	24
The Early Twentieth Century.....	27
The Metropolitan School Board.....	29
The Metropolitan Separate School Board.....	29
The Ontario College of Education.....	31
The Curriculum.....	31
The Robarts Plan.....	32
Private Schools.....	35
Summary of Historical Perspective I.....	38
PART III : Historical Perspective II.....	40
The Introduction of the Credit System.....	40
Curriculum Guidelines.....	43
University Entrance.....	44
Modification of the Credit System.....	45
Textbooks.....	46
Educational Legislation.....	47
The Administrative Structure of the Board of Education for Toronto.....	47
The Secondary/Post Secondary Interface Studies.....	53
Collective Agreements.....	58
Regulations Governing Teachers' Qualifications.....	58
Declining Enrolments.....	58
Constraints on Secondary Programmes.....	58

PART IV : Educational Policy Development.....	60
Precipitating Factors.....	60
The Format of the Secondary Educational Research Project.....	63
The Goals of Secondary Education.....	65
The Secondary School Programme for 1984 and Beyond.....	67
Diploma Requirements.....	68
Levels of Difficulty.....	68
Grade 13.....	69
Provincial Certificate of Education.....	70
Curriculum Guidelines.....	71
Ontario Assessment Item Pool (OAIP).....	73
The Ontario Student Transcript (OST).....	74
School Atmosphere and Discipline.....	74
School Course Calendars.....	75
Private Schools.....	76
PART V : The Administration of Secondary Education in Toronto.....	78
The Ministry of Education.....	78
The Curriculum.....	78
School Attendance.....	79
Funding of Schools.....	80
Teacher Education and Certification.....	86
Teachers' Contracts.....	94
The School Year.....	95
The Toronto School Boards.....	96
The Metropolitan Toronto School Board.....	96
The Board of Education for the City of Toronto.....	97
Terms and Conditions of Employment.....	103
Salaries.....	103
Staffing Levels.....	104
Procedures for Implementing Staffing Levels.....	105
School Staffing Complement Procedures.....	105
Professional Development.....	106
Teacher Evaluation.....	106
Teacher Workloads.....	107
Redundancy.....	107
Board Policies for Promotions.....	108
The Metropolitan Separate Schools Board.....	111
Funding.....	112
The Schools.....	113

Independent School Boards.....	114
The Principals and Their Schools.....	117
PART VI : Some Current Issues.....	124
Ability Level Streaming.....	124
Funding of Independent Schools.....	129
Public Representation, Accountability and Local Autonomy.....	133
SUMMARY.....	137
Curriculum and Assessment.....	137
Trustee Representation and Decentralisation.....	139
Funding.....	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	141

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A

A1	Letter to the Toronto Board of education.....	148
A2	Letter to Mr. Wells of Jarvis Collegiate Institute.....	149
A3	Letter to Sr. Corrigan of St. Patrick Catholic Secondary School.....	150
A4	Letter to Mr Barton of Upper Canada College.....	151
A5	Letter to Mr. Molyneux of Castle Frank High School.....	152
A6	Interview Schedule for public school principals.....	153
A7	Interview Schedule for Upper Canada College.....	159

Appendix B

B1	Transcript of Interview with Mr. Molyneux.....	164
B2	Transcript of Interview with Mr. Wells.....	170
B3	Transcript of Interview with Sister Corrigan.....	182
B4	Transcript of Interview with Mr. Adamson.....	195
B5	Map Toronto with Schools Interviewed Marked.....	206

Appendix C

C1	Toronto Board of Education - Administrative Organisation.....	208
C2	Special School Programmes and Packages.....	209
	(p5 of <u>Your Choice</u> published by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto)	
C3	Basic/General/Advanced Level Programmes.....	210
	(p4 of <u>Your Choice</u> published by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto)	
C4	Weekly Circular #89-90:22	211
	(Promotion procedures for HODs)	
C5	Promotion Procedures for Vice Principals.....	213
	(BECT Policy T2)	
C6	Promotion Procedures for Principals.....	215
	(BECT Policy T1)	

Appendix D

D1	Distribution of MSSB Schools Throughout Metro Toronto.....	218
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THE PREFACE

The Purpose

This paper is an attempt to describe the administration of secondary education in Toronto. As New Zealand is making a dramatic change in the administration of its education system, it could be useful for New Zealand teachers and administrators, struggling to interpret, and reconcile, the intentions of the government, the demands of lobby groups and the instructions of boards of trustees, to take a brief look at another system. The major change in Tomorrow's Schools from the system that predated it, is the locus of control. The degree to which control, over a significant number of facets of the education delivered in the classrooms has shifted, is remarkable in itself, but the fact that the shift occurs in a single event, makes it more so.

In the past, New Zealand has been cautious and conservative in its approach to educational change. It had not embraced the progressive decentralisation of many aspects of educational administration seen in Australia, Canada, United States and Britain over the last twenty years. Then in one act, New Zealand has created what could be described as one of the most decentralised systems of school management of all of these countries.

The Toronto route has been very different. It's present system of educational administration was arrived at through a gradual evolution, punctuated by a few major initiatives. A description of the Toronto secondary scene can be useful to New Zealanders for the comparisons it offers:

1. The goals of the two systems are comparable as are the two societies they serve.
2. The representational structure offering two levels of electoral accountability, government and community, for the delivery of the community's educational services, is similar to New Zealand's.

as well as the contrasts it offers:

1. The Toronto system has been relatively stable over the last decade.
2. The methods of student assessment and certification differ especially when it comes to a concern with inter-school and inter-subject comparability.
3. The routes by which they each arrived at their current structure differ.
4. The compulsory, all-pervading, system of academic streaming operating in Toronto together with the course selection flexibility contrasts with the one stream, largely academic, senior secondary school curriculum of New Zealand.

The focus of this paper is control. Control can be defined in many different ways. The sense in which it is used here, is the authority to make decisions. In a democratic system, that authority originally flows from the electorate to its representatives. The more complex the system, the more the representatives must delegate their authority to employees. This delegation is seldom uniform. The subject matter of the decisions will often determine the level and degree of specialisation of the those, to whom the authority is delegated. Decisions about the curriculum guidelines, the order in which topics will be taught, the promotion of teachers, the teacher pay scales, the allocation of students to classes and the qualifications necessary to be employed as a teacher, will likely be made at different levels of the system, by specialists in different fields.

This description is not so concerned with the decisions that are made, but more with **who** has the power to make **which** decisions. The major thrust of Tomorrow's Schools is the transfer of these decision making powers. In the Picot Report, it is stated that the aim of such reforms is to move this authority as

close as possible to where the effects of the decisions will be felt¹. The final impact of an educational system is felt, first, in the classroom, and second, in the life-chances of its clients. Each aspect of the education system will have its own special influence on that impact.

In recognition of this, the paper will attempt to describe, what the writer considers, the key elements of any education system, the control of which, endows those who exercise it, the power to influence both the classroom experience and the life-chances of the children served by the system. These elements are:

1. The curriculum and the amount of choice
2. Teacher education and certification
3. Evaluation and promotion of teachers and administrators
4. Funding and expenditure controls
5. Electoral representation and accountability
6. Students' assessment and certification.

A snapshot can never convey as much information as a video of the events leading up to the snapshot, even when the video is played on fast forward. Consequently, this description includes a brief summary of the history of educational administration in Toronto. Knowledge of a system can only be enriched by knowing where it came from, what it tried, what it retained and what it discarded.

¹ Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education (1988) p42 para 4.2.3.

Finally, for a paper such as this, it is necessary to restrict in some ways the scope of the description. There are three specific aspects of the Toronto Secondary education system that will be all but ignored. They are:

1. the existence of French language schools and French immersion programmes in otherwise English language schools;
2. the English as a Second Language Programmes and Native Language programmes;
3. Special Education programmes and delivery.

This is not to diminish the importance of these aspects, nor to suggest that New Zealanders could not learn from an examination of them. The description had to be limited in some way and these features are more dependent on the system than is the system dependent upon them.

The Methodology

The information contained in the description comes from three sources. The primary source is a review of the available literature, reports and studies written mainly for the Government of Ontario or the Metropolitan Toronto School Board over the last twenty years. For information on the development of the system before that time, the writer has relied upon a number of histories, written by various authors, for a variety of purposes. The writer has relied upon these authors for their research of the original documents upon which their histories are based. However, for the description of what currently exists, the author has used original documents such as the copies of teacher contracts, the Collective Agreement between the Board and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, relevant Provincial Government legislation and regulations and various public information documents published by education boards and the Provincial Government.

In addition, the writer has prepared three interview schedules and

conducted interviews with four Toronto secondary school principals². The schools were selected to provide a sense of the range of secondary schools available within a small region of Toronto³. They were also selected on the basis of their administration: two are administered by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (Castle Frank High School and Jarvis Collegiate Institute), one is administered by the Metropolitan Separate Schools Board (St Patrick Catholic Secondary School) and the fourth is an Independent, non-denominational school (Upper Canada College). The four schools selected, also provide a contrast in the programs they offer. Two offer "advanced level" classes only, (Jarvis Collegiate Institute and Upper Canada College) and the other two offer all three levels of tuition, "advanced", "General" and "Basic".

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a principal's perspective of the degree to which boards of education delegated decision making powers to the school level. One of the major contrasts between the Toronto system and that being implemented in New Zealand, is the level of trustee representation. In New Zealand, trustees have the responsibility for the running of just one school, whereas the trustees on the Board of Education for the city of Toronto, are responsible for 161 elementary and secondary schools attended by 72,000 students and staffed by 4,500 teachers. The administration of such a large organisation could lead to the adoption of many bureaucratic controls limiting the decision making power of principals in their schools.

The Format

The description is divided into five parts. Part I serves as an introduction to Toronto and its place in Ontario and Canada. It provides a demographic context for the description that follows. Part II provides an historical perspective of the early period of development of secondary education in Toronto from the beginning of the 19th century through to 1967. Part III is concerned with the development of high school diplomas and the introduction of the "Credit System"

² See Appendices A and B

³ See map in Appendix B5

into Toronto's secondary schools which occurred between 1967 and 1980. Part IV follows the policy development process by which the current system of curriculum, assessment and awards was chosen and implemented and incorporates a detailed description of the situation as it exists today. Part V describes distribution of powers and responsibilities for the delivery of secondary education to Toronto's children in areas other than the curriculum and assessment. It examines the role of the Ministry, the education boards, the trustees, supervisory staff and school-based educators. No politically controlled public organisation remains static and Part VI examines some of the current educational issues being debated in Toronto and gives some insight into possible, future developments. A final summary in Part VI highlights some of the lessons New Zealanders may gain from the Torontonion experience.