

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

"THE CONCEPTS OF 'EQUALITY'
AND
'CENTRALISATION'
AND SOME OF THEIR IMPLICATIONS
IN THE
NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION SYSTEM"

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master ^{of Arts} in Education at
Massey University

Full Name John Donald Sievwright

Year 1974

ABSTRACT

The Concepts of 'Equality' and 'Centralization' and some of their implications in the New Zealand Education System.

SECTION A: Egalitarianism in New Zealand Education

This section sketches the development of the New Zealand statement of equality of educational opportunity, from its beginnings in England to pre-Provincial New Zealand, the several developments in the Provincial period, through the first national education system till the present day. The major relationship with Centralization is pointed out and a New Zealand definition of the concept is made.

SECTION B: Centralization in Education in New Zealand

The development in historical terms, towards a strongly centralised department, owing much to the fact of central funding is shown. Past and present problems associated with centralization are pointed out. The administrative system is discussed and the theory of centralization as it relates to New Zealand education is examined.

SECTION C: An Examination of Some Concepts of the Egalitarian Principle

The section begins with an analysis of Pater's concept of equality. There follows a comparison with that concept expressed by Lieberman and the section concludes with an examination of the concept in terms of New Zealand education.

SECTION D: Some Problems Associated with 'Equality' and 'Centralization'

In this section, the way the two concepts are seen to work in New Zealand education is examined. Examples are cited which indicate their shortcomings as a basis for an education system. A plea is made for an examination of principles upon which it might be possible to base New Zealand education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my grateful thanks to many people who assisted greatly over the time this thesis was being prepared.

To David Stenhouse who provided help, encouragement, interest and friendship - all equally valued.

To Beryl Rayner who typed the manuscript and took an interest in progress which, of itself, was of great value to me.

To my wife Betty, who carried on with all manner of things which were needed, put up with loneliness and debate, cared for the children and me with love and helped more than she could know with the continuing progress.

Despite the help from these and others, the faults are mine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface and Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	
List of Figures	
Section A	
Egalitarianism in New Zealand Education	1
Section B	
Centralization in Education in New Zealand	19
Section C	
An Examination of Some Concepts of the Egalitarian Principle	44
Section D	
Some Problems Associated with 'Equality' and 'Centralization'	76
Bibliography	93

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Page 25
Figure 2	Page 27
Figure 3	Page 31

EGALITARIANISM IN NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION

A basic presupposition of the educational enterprise in New Zealand is that of egalitarianism. This does not necessarily mean total equality in all its aspects, but rather the provision within a developing system of equality of opportunity. This has been expressed in many ways, but the most quoted and significant summary⁽¹⁾ is that of the Hon. E. Fraser, made in 1959

'Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of a kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his power.'⁽²⁾

The above statement has formed the foundation stone upon which the educational provision, in all of its aspects, has been built. Its origins can be traced back outside New Zealand and prior to the existence of an official system of formal education, as such, within our country.

In 18th Century England, a greatly increased social mobility, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and 'the spread of consciously egalitarian principles'⁽³⁾ led, somewhat belatedly when viewed from outside, to the 1870 Education Act. Although it might be argued that this Act was passed in part because of a perceived need for national survival, education of the masses was seen as a way in which this object could be achieved.

W. E. Forster said, in a preliminary speech introducing the 1870 Bill

'Upon this speedy provision of education depends also our national power. Civilised communities throughout the world are massing themselves together, each mass being measured by its force; and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or

among the nations of the world we must make up that smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual.'

Schools were provided and children were compelled to attend them. Prior to the new national provision, it was possible for a parent to obtain a good schooling for his children if he was prepared to pay for it. 'A sound education could be had in a day school for 2s. or 3s. per week, which would fit a boy for a respectable job in an office or counting house.'⁽⁴⁾ Religious groups also made some strenuous efforts to provide education, specially for the poor. The 'Sunday School' movement, 'Ragged Schools' and Church Schools were all provided as an outworking of Christian concern for those who were seen as being less fortunate but no less intelligent. Egalitarianism as an effect of economic nationalism will be examined in Section C below.

Since missionaries were among the first settlers of New Zealand, it is to be expected that these made some provision for education as part of the mission work. Also, because the first settlers in New Zealand came from an England in which the rise of a movement for educational provision had begun, it is clear that these people brought with them the ideas that caused the later developments in England, and translated those into a New Zealand setting. So the early background to the New Zealand education system is seen in the pre-Provincial period, the Provincial period itself and that first attempt at a national government at the breakdown of the Provincial governments.

In the pre-provincial period (until 1852) education was largely an individual concern, except for the government subsidised Mission schools which were seen by Grey as 'measures calculated to improve the condition of the Maori

people and to elevate them in the scale of civilisation. This was the only attempt at all systematic which was made to civilise, (that is, to Europeanize) the Maoris.' Thus they were hardly egalitarian in purpose. Neither were the private educational establishments which were beginning to spring up in the growing settlements throughout the colony. There is little doubt that education until the Provincial period was for the few, and was based on anything but egalitarian principles.

Among the special responsibilities granted to the Provinces upon their Constitution was the provision of education. Each province was charged with the job of making some attempt to "educate" its people. Yet by 1876,

'despite relatively enlightened policies in Otago, Canterbury and Nelson, they had failed in education. The second generation of New Zealand children was little better educated than the first. Only 58% of children aged 5 to 15 years were on the school rolls, while the average daily attendance was a mere 39% of that group in Massachusetts the average daily attendance was 73%'⁽⁵⁾

Thus the idea, summarised by Alfred Domett as early as 1849

'It will not be denied that in every community education ought to be universal. Where it is in the power of society to bestow it, every child has a right to the means of developing its moral and intellectual nature as well as its physical it is then, the duty of the Government to provide education and the wisest policy of Government to compel parents to give their children the benefit of such education when provided'⁽⁶⁾

had not yet been achieved, although the basis for such an education had been established in the best aspects of the

work done by the Provinces. In spite of the fact that education until 1877 was neither free nor compulsory, the twin ideas had been debated and in 1873 an Education Commission in Wellington strongly recommended the introduction of compulsory attendance but because fees were at this time an economic necessity, added somewhat reluctantly that compulsion was not then possible. Nelson, the smallest province was by far the most successful in providing an education for its children; in 1864 daily attendance had reached 70% in Nelson, while Wellington and Auckland, Otago and Canterbury achieved 54%, 46%, 53% and 46% respectively. This had a marked effect upon the other provinces and 'the influence of (Nelson) in hastening the movement to universal public education was out of all proportion to its size and wealth.'⁽⁷⁾

Throughout the Provincial period, the heart of the problem prohibiting the early introduction of free, compulsory education was finance. Even in the South Island, where the churches had endowed education with large land holdings, the cost of free, compulsory education proved to be beyond the Councils. The North Island provinces, lacking the endowments and impoverished by Maori wars, found the financial problems even more insurmountable. Despite these difficulties, the idea of universal education had always had some support and this sentiment grew and developed in the Provincial period. Only in the Maori Mission schools, thanks largely to Grey's 1847 ordinance which provided subsidies, was free education provided. However, the Maori Wars in the sixties largely removed any benefit which might have been derived from this advantage.

Thus by the end of the Provinces in 1876, there was, in general, a long way to go before free, compulsory education for all children could be achieved. But there had been

significant steps taken, mainly in terms of expression of ideas which, once voiced, had to be considered. The most significant problem was seen to be the very great differences which existed in terms of educational provision between North and South. 'In 1869, the provinces of Nelson, Otago and Canterbury were spending on the average £2.10s. for every child of school age as against an average of only 5s. in the rest of the colony and it was said that, compared with the South, the whole of the North Island was 'an intellectual desert.'⁽⁸⁾ Such a difference was seen as capable of solution only at the collapse of the provinces, because of the differences of opinion occasioned by religious questions at every attempt to introduce national education bills prior to 1876. But Parliament had established the seeds of the idea that whatever the sort of education provided, it must of necessity allow all children equal access and opportunity. True, the reason was that '..... the neglect of education of their people throws upon the colony an uneducated population, to become a dangerous element in the community.' (William Fox, Prime Minister, 1870)⁽⁹⁾ So, for reasons not far removed from safety, the 1877 Act attempted to provide a universal education, but still the religious questions, for so long and even still, a divisive factor in New Zealand's educational history, meant that, in reality, little true equality was evident in the resulting system. Because of the many compromises, resulting in amendments as a result of the long Parliamentary struggle, the 1877 Education Act was finally passed, not really satisfying anyone completely but clearly establishing universal primary education as a social necessity. Indeed, such was the concern for the social necessity of this education that for some years after the passing of the Act, any attempt to amend it led to an

outcry like that of Bowen in 1894 'We deprecate serious amendments which might imperil (the Act), until the habit and necessity of a national system of primary instruction had grown into the hearts and minds of the people.'⁽¹⁰⁾

Clearly then, universal education was seen as a social necessity and one of the fundamental principles upon which this should be built was that of egalitarianism. From the 1877 Act onwards the principle of egalitarianism was written into the framework of education in New Zealand and indeed has been taken and accepted as a 'given' in many discussions of education in New Zealand today. It is true that the egalitarian provision here was that of equality of provision of education. Equality within schooling will be discussed in Section C below.

But, there was by no means agreement upon the egalitarian principles. There were those who contended that the large mass of the people would not be able to profit from the provision of a freely available education since they did not have either the time or the intellectual endowment which would, perforce, be required. Such people argued strongly for a continuation of the elitist type education of the English Public Schools, on the basis that to spread an already inadequate teaching power over the broad spectrum of society would reduce that available for the really talented few who would be the intellectual leaders of the next generation. They held the view that 'more meant worse.' Not surprisingly, those who advocated this position had already had the benefits of education, valued it in their own way, and demanded such opportunity for their own. They were wealthy enough to make adequate provision for their children and often objected to having to make financial provision for education for children who they considered unworthy. However, the growth of state intervention in the

field of education was here, as in England, a reflection of the progressive abandonment of individualism and the corresponding acceptance of collectivism. Thus the elitists were seen by some to be obsolete in their thinking.

Education is not an enterprise upon which a government is by nature inclined to spend large sums of money without imposing checks and controls of a severity related to the size of the sum concerned. When the 1870 Act was first brought down, the per capita grant was to be £3.10s. but later, as part of the many compromises necessary to have the Bill adopted, this was raised to £3.15s. which was paid by the Government to the Boards. A comprehensive list of subjects of instruction was set out, each school was to be inspected by Board inspectors, not central Departmental officers and as a further result of the compromise necessary, the end product, which lasted from 1877 till the turn of the century, the system continued to be far from national, far from universal. Irregular attendance, inequalities because of earlier Provincial period provision, administrative factors - all combined to produce by the early 1900's a strong movement towards central control of education. This demand was a direct result of the basic principle of equality. The change was more social than educational.

'In 1870, the colonists were without the conveniences and in many cases comforts of modern civilisation. They had scarcely any railways, few telegraphs, insufficient roads, bridges and harbours. Education was not universal, and the want of recreation and human society was so great as to lead notoriously to drunkenness and coarse debauchery. New Zealand, by the end of the century was a pleasant and highly civilised country.'

It could be argued that such education as was provided helped to create such a change and this cannot be completely overlooked but it is more likely that the increased opportunity created by the better living standards, growing commerce and a burgeoning civil service, led to a new, much more accepted, much more generally supported, universal education.

A further reason for the comparatively slow growth towards universal education was economic. The 1880's saw the first of the recessions which have always been reflected in New Zealand education. Limits of provision and expansion were clearly imposed, in response to a period of great economic difficulty. But, if it produced a reduction in the growth of educational provision, the 1890 depression also gave a period for thought, and there arose many who demanded revision, a curriculum closer to life and for more humane methods. At this time, classes often numbered 100, teachers were wretchedly paid, success was judged by the percentage pass gained in each standard as a result of the annual inspection.

It is perhaps fortunate that as the spectre of depression receded, two men came together to make education in New Zealand into a pattern which exists unchanged and largely unchallenged to the present day. Richard John Seddon combined the Premiership with the Portfolio of Education from 1903 until he died in 1906. Such was the charisma of 'King Dick' that he was able to provide for change, much of which was realized even after his death. He, together with George Hogben, inspector general since 1899, a man who had particular strengths in organization and who almost alone, set about the expansion of the central department, had so great an effect that in 1930, it was possible to say 'no period in the history of the system is more important than that of Mr Seddon's occupancy of the Ministerial office.'⁽¹²⁾

Among the achievements of this Ministry were Teachers' Salary Acts in 1901 and 1905, and a fundamental change in the Primary Syllabus in 1904. This change is best expressed as a replacement of the formality and rigidity of the earlier period, by a new freedom and adaptability to the realities of life. But because of the reliance upon a still rigid Proficiency Examination, it was not until the 1928 Syllabus that the early promise came to its full flowering. Perhaps this can best be illustrated by the changes which took place in the teaching of Physical Education. In 1920 the New Zealand Department of Education published a syllabus which said

'The aim of this system (of instruction) is to secure the careful and well-balanced cultivation of the physical powers of each individual child.'⁽¹⁵⁾

Clearly, all were to be included and it was not seen as necessary to state the egalitarianism principle more openly. Indeed, it was not stated again until 1938 when Fraser made the statement with which this section begins.

Fraser's statement, conceived after the 1938 Education Conference, was seen as the one statement which seemed to sum up the essence of the feelings and sentiments aroused by such a meeting, and has since been accepted, almost as a divine edict, not to be tampered with and seldom, if ever, investigated. If this indeed be so, let us examine the statement in relation to the egalitarianism principle.

Fraser's statement puts equality on a political basis, since the nature of equality he is concerned about is clearly and closely linked to rights - the rights of each and every citizen both collectively and severally. This, therefore places the responsibility on the central Government to provide the same sort and quality of education to whosoever it must, without favour. But this is quite different from providing genuinely equal opportunity, since

the ease with which pupils in differing situations, be these social or geographical, desirable or deleterious, may accept the equal provision has led since 1938 (and indeed prior to that date) to differentiation in the provision of education itself.

The principle of egalitarianism is formal in the sense that it does not prescribe how in fact, anyone is to be treated. But it does have many practical consequences since it forces out into the open the justification for treating people differently because of some factor in their situation. Thus, far from being a principle which demands complete similarity of treatment, egalitarianism is, or should be concerned with differences. As a result of such differences, the various sorts and natures of provision would render the original differences (where they give either privilege or benefit or both) of less significance than might be the case, had the relationship not been altered. The argument is simple where the person considered has a physical or mental inequality in relation to the norm; he is simply assisted by any means available to make the best use of what natural endowment he has. Thus we have had established in New Zealand, special services in education like schools for the Deaf and Blind, Special Schools for Intellectually Handicapped Children, classes for the emotionally disturbed, reading clinics and the like, all provided in an attempt to allow the pupils for whom they exist to develop their educational potential to the fullest extent of their powers. The implications of differences of provision within an egalitarian system will be explored in Section C below.

Also, because of the particular local situation we have, in New Zealand, seen the development of Maori schools, country schools, District High schools and technical schools of several different types, for the reason that, at some

time, the basis upon which educational potential is to be built required such aids for the ideal of equality to be seen as real. The education of the total population to their fullest potential is seen as good for several reasons. The view that the people represent a natural resource which is available for utilization, suggests that to settle for anything less than the maximum development of this resource, is, in a very real sense, wasteful. The view based on national economic considerations, which suggests that, as a developing country, ours required the best use of the abilities of the whole population if the desirable educational developments are to come to pass, also sees an education system which actively seeks after maximum development of all potentials within the society as essential. The Christian viewpoint also supports the egalitarian principle since the development of human potential is seen as a national outcome of Christian living. 'To be one's best, to the glory of God' is an ethic which, at least at some time, brought from those who worked on behalf of education in New Zealand a wise nod of assent from many quarters.

Several unique features of our national system can be accounted for largely in terms of the egalitarian principle. The Correspondence School was established to meet a clear and obvious lack, seen as a result of the scattered, isolated inhabitants of many areas in rural New Zealand. The school operates a postal service for pupils not catered for within the State education system for reasons of location, but should courses not be offered in some schools to suit 'special' cases, those attending quite large secondary schools may receive their lessons through the Correspondence School system.

Special Education, under which classification is found special classes (for children selected through the Psychological Services as being intellectually limited), classes for the blind or partially sighted, for the deaf and hard of hearing, for the emotionally disturbed, reading clinics and other supporting but selective services, is often justified in terms of providing each child education of a sort best suited to his needs. It could be criticised in that, by the nature of the selection process formulated to protect admissions to such services and by the clear limits to enrollments, there are children prevented from attending such classes on grounds other than non-suitability. Thus, the principle of equality of educational opportunity has, in this area, a considerable limit placed on it - a limit which, although not denying that much of worth is achieved points to an area of intense concern (see 1962 Currie Commission Report - Chapter 40 for examples of the nature and scope of such concern).

However when equal rights or opportunities are advocated it is essential to make clear what it is thought equality should be related to, since equality is, by its very nature, comparative. In Fraser's statement (1959) the rights refer to the "kind" of education considered "best" for the individual concerned. This implies that there will be differing "kinds" of education for the differing individual qualities of those for whom it will be provided, and secondarily, that some judgement will be made, either by the individual himself or within the system of education, as to the "bestness" of this in relation to the individual. Fraser, in his statement, did not expose the criteria for this judgement but the implication is that they will be formulated probably but not necessarily, upon the presuppositions which exist within society.

In 1942 the Thomas Report expressed the aims of secondary education as follows:-

'All post primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying occupational ambitions should receive a generous and well balanced education. Such an education would aim, firstly, at the full development of the adolescent as a person; and, secondly, at preparing him for an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, home-maker and citizen In practice both personal needs and social needs have all too often been pushed into the background, especially by economic pressures.'⁽¹⁴⁾

Some 20 years later the Currie Report makes the point somewhat differently

'The sentiment, based on the idea of equality, demands the fullest educational opportunity for all citizens, (and) finds support and reinforcement from two other directions. in a world that has suddenly become more competitive, it will be necessary for any country which considers itself advanced to make every effort if it wishes to improve or even maintain its present position New Zealand is presently faced with a peculiar economic challenge which means that we must make the best use of the abilities of the whole population. Equality and expediency appear therefore to point in the same direction.'⁽¹⁵⁾

The above two statements have several clear points of similarity. Both imply that an egalitarian provision of education is being achieved. Both accept that this provision has a two-fold purpose; firstly to allow, even promote the development of the individual on a personal level and secondly, the purpose of maintaining the quality of life in the society as a whole. Both also suggest that the actualization of the

egalitarian principle has in fact because of financial considerations only been less than what might be desired. Clearly then, equality of educational provision is seen as desirable by the society but society has accepted a less than adequate financing of education to make this possible. This apparent contradiction has caused some disquiet. Phoebe Meikle in a speech delivered as Chairman of a Social Studies Refresher Course in Feilding in 1959 put the disquiet thus,

'All is not well with education; some of the values, and attitudes and the behaviour of a significant number of boys and girls and teachers have changed in a distressing way especially over the last eight or ten years.' 'Our egalitarianism which can too often be summed up in the aggressive "What's he think he is? I'm as good as he is," rather than in the humbler "But of course, he's as good as I am." Now this kind of egalitarianism has produced a lusty child - conceit.'

Perhaps it is this social background which prevents those charged with administering the system of education in our country from examining the nature of the egalitarian principles in action. As Disraeli said in 'Vindication of the English Constitution' (1835) "There are two kinds of equality; there is the equality that levels and destroys, and the equality that elevates and creates. The principle of the first equality is that no one should be privileged, the principle of the second equality is that everyone should be privileged." There is no doubt that national spokesmen would claim that New Zealand's education system is based upon egalitarianism principles of the second type rather than the first, but the continuing disquiet whenever these principles are exposed or discussed calls the claim into question. These two types of egalitarianism will be subjected to a more detailed examination in Section C.

The demand for equality in New Zealand tends to be rather extreme, sometimes truculent and aggressive, expressed as "I'm as good as he is!" As Phoebe Meikle contends,⁽¹⁶⁾ this may lie at the root of our alleged national feelings of conceit, and the difficulty which we have in admitting that we are wrong or in taking direct orders. This buried tendency flowers whenever authority, in almost any form, enters the picture. However whether this is demonstrably the case or not, let us now examine not where such a basic attitude as demand for equality has taken us, but rather where we might go from here and whether such an attitude might require some modification in its application, particularly in education.

Egalitarianism is highly regarded until it is applied to women. "Any man is as good as his neighbour, but women are not."⁽¹⁷⁾ Throughout the teaching service, as but one example, women, although receiving equal pay, seldom if ever have equal promotional opportunities. A woman principal of an Intermediate School is inconsistent with what New Zealand parents would regard as desirable. But the same parents demand for their daughters an equality of opportunity which may later be denied to them. The current rise in demand for equality by women workers may indeed indicate a growing awareness that the egalitarian principle, so cherished in the education system, but only in regard to the pupils, is not in fact seen in the society, except where it is not held to be dangerous. Furthermore, the equality of opportunity provided, so it is claimed, by the education system, is eroded by factors beyond the control of the Department charged with maintaining it.

The equality for which New Zealand has been searching and to which a majority would subscribe, is of opportunity, but clearly more than that alone. This is seen to include an equality of access to educational opportunity, that no

one should be denied the right to partake of the chance of education. The idea of life-long education, perhaps emphasised by the E.D.C. debates, is but an extension of the idea of equality of access, serving to elongate the time during which the access is equally available. There is a clear expression of opinion which holds, that because of the relatively short span during which formal education is available, and because, for a number of reasons, some students are unable to utilize this opportunity which, so far, is not again offered to them, the life-time concept has a great deal to offer. Thus the period of access to education would be extended so that any who would, can take the opportunity whenever they are able. The idea has gained a ready acceptance, because it has been based on the egalitarian ethic.

Another facet of this principle is that of equality of the distribution of the tools of education. These tools are seen as the facilities, buildings, staff, texts and all else used by the student within the education process except his own personal attributes. The method of ensuring the equality of this distribution of educational tools has been that of central control. It has been held, for reasons to be examined, that a single, strong, central administrative body would ensure, as nothing else has, that the basic educational tools would be equally provided throughout the country. The central financing of national education has supported the equality of educational provision as nothing else.

There is also that equality imposed by a common curriculum, decided by, extended by and provided for by, the Central Department. This has been argued for by reason of the high degree of internal mobility of the population, the scattered nature of settlement, the wide range of differing local resources, even the different ethnic backgrounds of the people of regions: but in the final analysis, the reason for the high priority given to central funding is that of equality of distribution of the tools of education, so that

even the methods of payment are seen as natural outcomes of the egalitarian principle. Thus the concept of 'geographical equality' has been established. This will be discussed more fully in Section C below.

The egalitarianism for which New Zealand would argue is that of wide, general equality of opportunity, coupled with an equality of access to education and a system of equal distribution of the basic tools of education. The implications of such a system as would be built upon this ethic are clear. Central funding, a national policy directed and determined for all and final responsibility located within the one, all-embracing Department. The principle of egalitarianism has been thus expressed in the outworkings of New Zealand's educational history.

References

1. Mitchell, F. W. (Ed.) New Zealand Education Today
Reed, Wellington 1968 P.48
2. A-J EI 1939
3. Wardle, D. English Popular Education 1780-1970
C.U.P. 1970 P.12
4. ibid P.61
5. Sinclair, K. A History of New Zealand
Penguin, 1959 P.152-3
6. Quoted in UNESCO Compulsory Education in New Zealand
UNESCO 1960 P.11-12
7. ibid P.14
8. ibid P.20
9. ibid P.20
10. ibid P.24
11. Quoted in ibid P.29
12. Necess Education Committee Report (Atmore Report)
Govt Printer, Wellington 1930 P.6
13. Educ. Dept N.Z. Syllabus of Physical Training for
Schools 1920 P.2
14. The Post Primary School Curriculum Report of the
Committee appointed by the Minister of
Education in November 1942. Govt Printer
Wellington 1959 P.5ff
15. Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand
Wellington, Govt Printer 1962
16. N.Z. Life and Education, Meikle, P. Education Vol. 8
No. 4 P.105 July 1959
17. Mitchell, F. W. N.Z. Education Today Reed, 1968 P.54

CENTRALIZATION IN EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

A central feature of educational administration as it has come to develop in New Zealand has been that of a clearly defined policy of centralisation. But this has not always been the case; witness the wide variety of standards extant during the provincial period and the real differences which were encouraged between the provincial administrations at that time. The fact that Nelson was able to develop an Education system significantly different in many respects from that of Auckland is indicative of an earlier policy of decentralized administration. Until 1877 'the provision of schooling was for a number of years almost entirely a matter of local effort.'⁽¹⁾ The denominational system developed and flourished in Auckland, Canterbury and Otago; Wellington depended on private teachers; Nelson alone strengthened and extended the public system of education.

'When the Provinces were established in 1853, nothing definite was laid down as to whether Education was to be the domain of the Colonial or of the Provincial legislatures; but Grey's action in calling the latter together first, and their immediate appropriation of the field, laid the foundation of the present (1930) New Zealand system of local administration in Education. The provincial systems then set up comprised, for the most part, the earlier local organisations, while Native Education continued to be administered by the Colonial Government made the denominational system. The later provinces adopted, in general, and so far as their resources allowed, systems based on those established by their older and larger neighbours.'⁽²⁾

'All accounts of our national system of education must agree on the importance of the year 1877, the

date of the passing of the Education Act which, revised and renewed in 1914 and much amended since, remains still the basic document on New Zealand Education.'⁽³⁾

'This Statute, as passed, was anything but the ordered organization of a national system of education. The original Bill had contemplated a system of divided control, with a small measure of local rating on a capitation basis Broadly speaking, the Bill laid it down that the professional side should be recognised as the special domain of the Central Department, while the provision of sites, buildings and equipment, and the general administration, including the appointment and dismissal of teachers was to be left to the local authorities. Since the fundamental principle of the Bill was that "a due control should be held by the power which gives the money - in fact, by this House," the provision of a national inspectorate was a vital feature of the scheme.'⁽⁴⁾

But, the passage from Bill to Act ran into strong Provincial opposition and

'the Act, as passed, set up a one-sided system under which the whole of the cost was thrown upon the Central Government, while almost the whole of the control including the control of the inspectorate was entrusted to the local educational authorities.'⁽⁵⁾

It is interesting, if somewhat fruitless, to speculate upon what might have been had the Bill become the Act. New Zealand could well have a system of Education with a considerably more local flavour which might, by this time have been able to provide local answers to problems arising

as a result of the special local needs. But the Bill was not passed and despite later attempts, notably by Hogben and the Cohen Commission in 1912, to revive the local education tax, this has not been proceeded with.

Under the 1877 Act, the Education Boards which controlled the Education District were themselves moderated by the local School Committees and the functions of the Central Department were seen as such as could be carried out by a very small staff. Between 1877 and 1895

'the average annual cost of the Central Department did not exceed £2,500 and the combined cost of departmental and Board administration at the end of that period constituted a comparatively small percentage of the total sum expended for the year.'⁽⁶⁾

But, the Education Boards had a trump card. No legal requirement existed which compelled them to finance education in the manner for which the funds had been appropriated. No Departmental officers existed to carry out checks on expenditure and Parliament did nothing to correct the situation. The local School Committees, under the Act supposedly capable of exercising controls over the peregrinations of the Boards, were in fact limited to control over one school and there existed little opportunity for united action aimed at influencing, let alone controlling, the Board.

All funds allocated by Central Government were distributed on a population basis alone. Thus, at least till 1899 when Hogben was appointed Inspector-General, those areas which had small, scattered populations, were worst off in educational provision.

'The movement towards greater centralization which developed after 1899, gained much of its strength from the obvious persistence of these inequalities in the midst of a national system of education.

The egalitarian principle began to show its latent power.' (7)

Hogben was appointed at just this time and he was able to utilize this 'latent power' in the direction of a broadly equal educational provision. The New Zealand Educational Institute, established in 1883, added its voice on behalf of teachers, for the removal of inequalities of salary, systems of appointment and equality of educational opportunity on a national basis. Hogben, with the real assistance of E. J. Seddon as Minister of Education, began the administrative changes which were consolidated in the 1914 Education Act. The more significant of these were associated with finance, and the control of the Inspectorate.

'At the inception of the national system in 1877, the Boards received from the Department an annual capitulation of 33.45s. per pupil.' (8)

which could be spent as the Board decided;

'in 1910, the revenue of the Boards was fixed at 12s. per pupil, and of this 5.8d had to be passed on automatically to the school committees.' (8)

'The Education Act, 1914, completed the transformation by transferring the inspectorate to the control of the Department and when the consequent Dominion grading system became the compulsory basis for all ordinary appointments, in 1922, this finally placed the Central Department in a position of effective supremacy over both the Education Boards and the School Committees.' (9)

In much the same way and for much the same reasons, the control of Secondary Schools also passed to the Central Department. An Education Amendment Act in 1920 established national staffing and salary scales for secondary schools and monies were released from the Department to meet these

costs. A national system of departmental inspection, introduced at the same time established the Central Department as the final controlling authority in post-primary as well as primary education. But this unification of control did not mean a reduction in administrative costs, in terms of administrative costs or expenditure. Despite the very real reduction of the powers of the Boards, their size was increasing, their workings becoming more complex and their administrative costs rising. By 1915 the cost of educational administration costs per head of population had increased enormously from that total figure of £2,500 mentioned earlier. In 1930 it was five times that of 1900. But at least by 1920 'he who paid the piper, called the tune.' The Department of Education had control over the allocation of monies, and was thus able to exercise a control over the way such monies were spent.

Between 1920 and 1929 there developed a very real and often acrimonious debate over the value of the Boards, now shorn of much of their earlier powers, and where the control of administration was effectively in the hands of the Central Department. The desire for effective economies was insufficiently strong to counter the community support for the retention of the Boards.

'The Atmore Report and the Education Bill 1938 (which was not proceeded with) both provided for a unification of the control of primary and secondary schools at the district level under new district boards, with the existing secondary boards reduced to the status of school councils with limited powers. Over the next ten years, departmental policy was undecided on this matter.'⁽¹⁰⁾

With the outbreak of World War II and the channelling of national resources to fields other than education, there arose stresses and strains upon the administration system which were

to lead to a need for swift action in the early post-war period. In 1948, the Department was re-organised internally with the appointment of an Assistant Director, and the later establishment of Regional Offices in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. The comments of the Currie Report P.90 are revealing

'The development of these branch offices was an administrative necessity; it has also brought with it some administrative problems, particularly as regards relations between the Department and the Education Boards.' Partly to relieve such problems a Standing Committee of Board and Departmental officers was established in 1956, which 'operates as a permanent working committee concerned to reconcile the interests of the Boards and the Department in the field of primary administration.'⁽¹¹⁾

Yet, despite the continuing shifts in the relationships which occur between the Central Department and the Education Boards, it is a fact that education is paid for by appropriations from Government funds raised by taxation. This has been used as an argument which, it is suggested, provided support for a strong central control over the expenditure of this money. Thus, the contention is that a strong Departmental control is not only necessary but also a moral responsibility. T. E. Strong's proposal to abolish Boards was considered thus:

'The public of New Zealand would rather bear the burden of the extra cost of the present system than change it for one of bureaucratic control, however much cheaper the latter may be.'⁽¹²⁾

Clearly, the fear of an all-encompassing bureaucracy is here expressed. But, in this regard, an examination of the structure of the Central Department (Fig. 1) may suggest

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WELLINGTON:
PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS

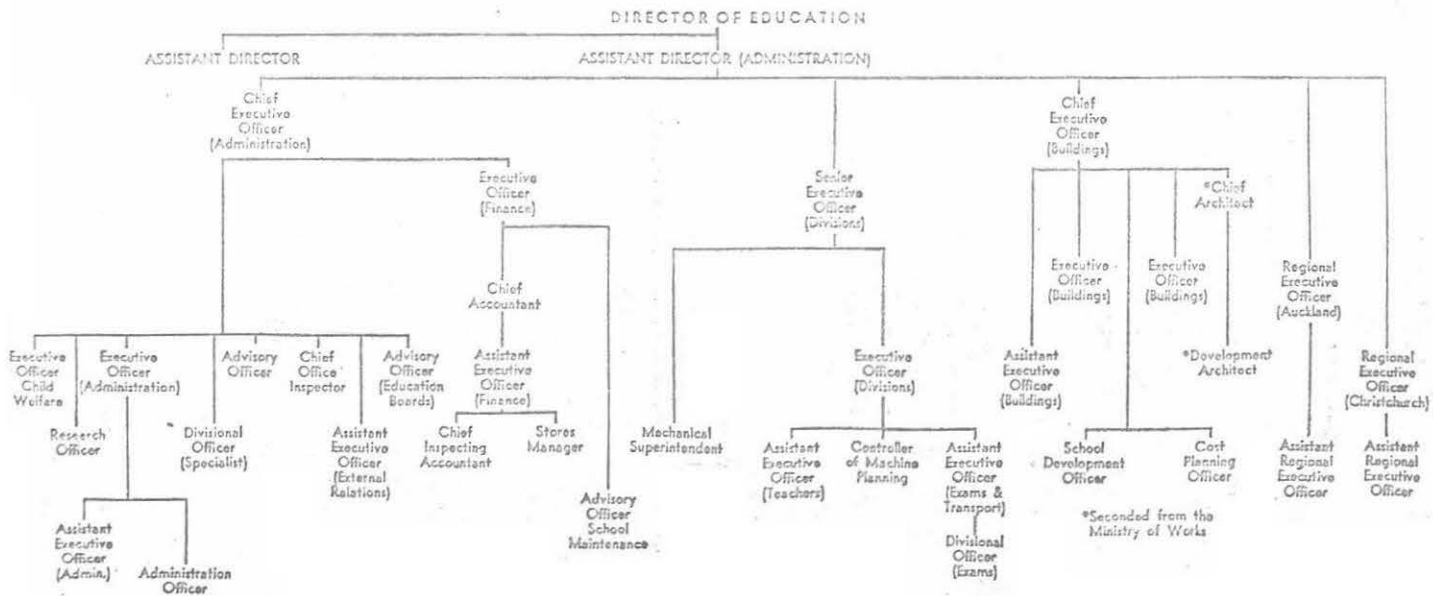
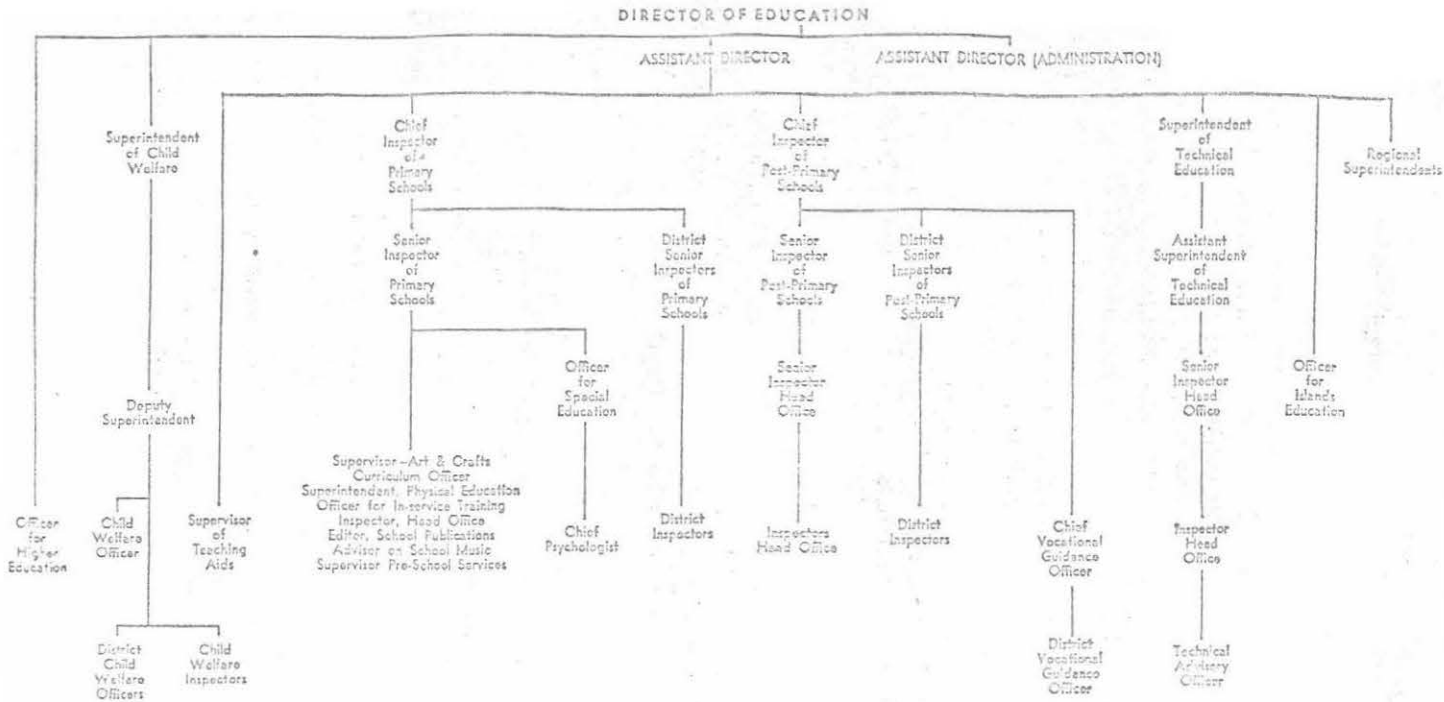


Figure 1 STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Source: Currie Report Government Printer Wellington
1962 P.120-1

to some that what was feared has arrived by a route not perceived by the guardians of the Citadel.

In 1962 the Currie Commission summarised the argument in relation to centralisation in financial terms, basing their opinion on the moral responsibility which central Government had to ensure the clear accounting for such funding. Thus the contention was that central Government would not entertain the funding of local or district bodies without strong controls having been established. A further argument against change was expressed in historical terms. The administrative system then in operation had evolved from a specific set of historical circumstances, and a particular social climate. It was claimed that a 'totally new plan of educational administration is not even thinkable.' The Commission went on to state a series of principles upon which recommendations were based. These principles were:

- (a) That education should continue to be centrally financed.
- (b) That local interest in education should be preserved and strengthened by the further development of local institutions.
- (c) That a balance should be kept between central and local power, and
- (d) That delegation of authority to the local institutions should be as great as possible under a system of central financing.'⁽¹⁴⁾

There then followed 27 recommendations nearly half of them devoted to major changes in the administrative structure at the district level. The nature and details of the suggested changes is best summarised in the diagram from the report (Fig. 2).

"Though the administrative changes advanced by the Commission were in many respects less radical than those advanced by the Cohen Commission and the Atmore Committee

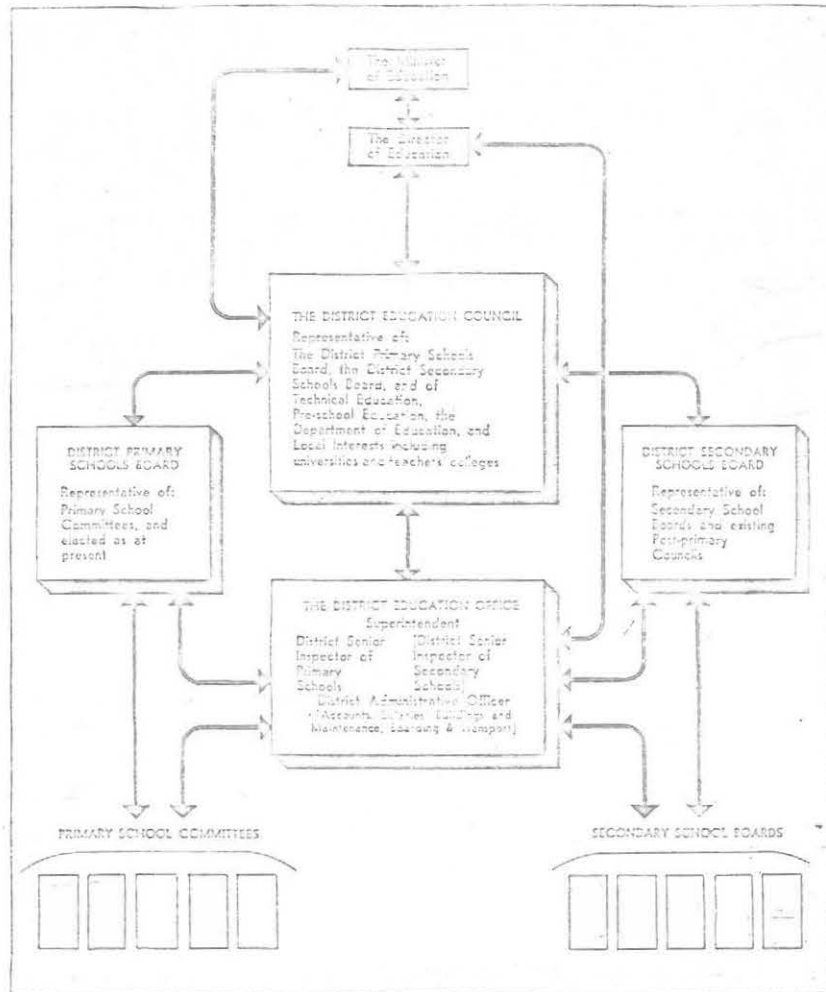


Figure 2 STRUCTURE OF THE SUGGESTED REORGANISATION OF EDUCATION

Source: Currie Report Government Printer Wellington 1962 P.780

they were received with little enthusiasm
There was no strong public demand for change.
in 1966 a Sub-committee of the Public Expenditure
Committee made its own enquiries within the Education
service during Parliamentary recess, and found little
support for, and some resistance to, the Commission's
proposals."⁽¹⁵⁾

For the above reasons, very few changes have been generated by the Commission's Report. In the main, the changes have been within the framework as it existed, rather than changes of the framework itself. Several new positions have been established within the Department, some readjustments in function have been adopted but the basic relationship between the Department and the local education bodies has not been materially altered. What has happened has been a marked proliferation of Departmental officers situated primarily in Wellington but also in the regional centres of Auckland and Christchurch.

'There is evidence that a number of professional officers are seriously overcommitted on matters, some of which are below their level of responsibility. Many of them work excessively long hours and forgo leave; but even so, there is a risk that their professional responsibilities, and especially their ability to plan ahead, will suffer because of the strain under which they are working. There is no single simple remedy for this situation The appointment of administration officers should help in this regard and also in inducting newly appointed officers into the ways of the Civil Service, and, at some points, more clerical support is needed for Senior Officers.'⁽¹⁶⁾

Statements such as the foregoing indicate the ways in which the Central Department has been and will be encouraged to grow even larger and perhaps more cumbersome.

But, the above statement also has within it other causes for disquiet. Overwork and lack of time for the necessary planning would seem to indicate that some organizational structures in the past and of the present have evolved without due consideration. Expediency has, quite clearly, been the basis of some decisions rather than a clearly thought out, well developed and widely accepted policy. The example of the continued re-allocation of ancient prefabricated classrooms rather than planned rebuilding serves to illustrate the point. There is, within the above statement the clear implication that some decisions at least, are taken in haste, perhaps ill-advisedly and possibly in ignorance of some factors which must necessarily be considered before any decision is taken. Also, the implication that the 'ways of the Civil Service' are such that some sort of special indoctrination course is needed before newly appointed officers are competent to work within this structure must give cause to question the validity of those ways in relation to the administration of the national education system. It is true that officers of the Department are selected from the ranks of the teachers appointed by and selected by the very system for which, upon their 'elevation' they are not yet ready or qualified to serve without further training. This calls into serious question the validity of the appointments made, the validity of the system under which the appointments are made and indeed, the validity of the Department itself.

Regional offices of the Department have been established in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, each headed by a regional superintendent and staffed by administrative officers whose purpose is to apply within each region the policies which have been centrally determined. Their function in relation to the Education Boards appears largely supervisory, checking that Board decisions and spending conforms to the rules and approving of Board proposals on behalf of the Central Department. The Superintendent is responsible to the

Director-General and is required to be the interpreter of general policy within the region. It could be seen as an anomaly, since he is virtually the only professional in what is an administrative function. But, with the triplication of the regional administrations, what has happened is that the place where, on some occasions, the decisions are made is seen as being removed, in place if not in effect, from the Central Department. In turn, the increasing dispersion of the Department of Education in Wellington (Fig. 3) has made a significant contribution to the feeling that the Central Department is so large and so removed from the place where the action really is, that a clearly defined procedure becomes difficult should a decision become required. The early fear, already referred to, in relation to an all encompassing bureaucracy appears to have been actualized.

'The history of educational administration in this country is littered with unsuccessful attempts to change the school system. They failed because the various reformers were unable to convince enough of the general public to overcome the entrenched pressures.'⁽¹⁷⁾

This is even more true of changes in administrative fields. For example, the powers of the Education Boards have been eroded considerably since their establishment. The Board's autonomy has been limited mainly due to Central Government funding. Likewise the School Committee's powers have been emasculated, since general policy is in no way originated by them. They could be seen as mere rubber stamps, doing the day to day accounting but always under the close scrutiny of the Education Board's officers.

The administration of Education in New Zealand as it has developed, can be seen as a system of levels. At the first level is the School Committee or Board of Governors who

DISPERSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN WELLINGTON

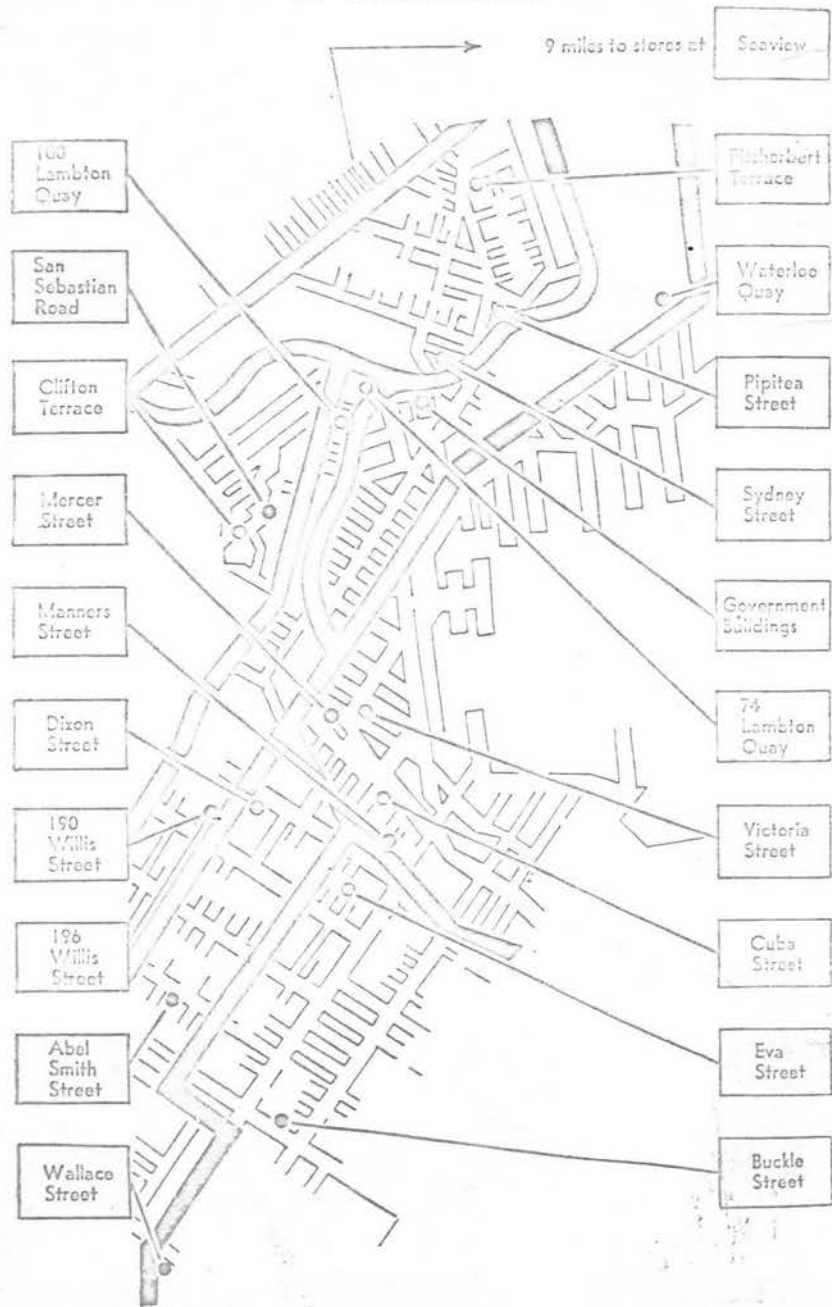


Figure 3 DISPERSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
IN WELLINGTON

Source: Currie Report Government Printer
Wellington 1962 P.780

are charged with the short term administration of individual schools or small groups of schools within clearly defined financial restrictions imposed from above. The second level is the Education Board, which exercises its control over the committees on behalf of the Central Department, but whose decision-making and policy-forming powers are limited by that Central Department upon whose behalf they are themselves required to act. Over and above the Boards are the Regional Offices, whose jobs appear to be one of liaison; to act as interpreters for the Central Department in relation to the local situation. At the head of the administrative body is the Central Department, and here long-term planning, decision-making in terms of realization of a philosophy and educational innovation on a national scale is contained. This, despite the already mentioned state of overworked, understaffed, time-pressed expedience which some claim prevails. Decisions made in Wellington may need interpretation by regional superintendents to the Board officers who may in turn feel the need to pass on this, or other, interpretations to the local area. There have been occasions where the delay generated by such a process has been critical. Similar procedures operate within the professional area. The Inspectorate have also accepted the role of interpreters of Central Department policy, and devote time to this function. Perhaps this is one of the ways of the Civil Service into which they have to be initially trained as suggested above.

Despite the fact of Central Department funding of education, there exists at the local level opportunity for the raising of additional finance, controlled by the School Committees or School Boards. Such funds may be quite large and have enabled schools up and down the country to develop a character significantly different from that of their neighbours. As a result of community involvement, developed

for any one of several reasons, the means of providing a different quality, and even a different sort of education exists for any community able to generate the sort of involvement which results in a monetary response. There are those within the community who see in this fact reason for grumbling complaint: those who benefit from such opportunity cannot be seen as having equality with those who lack access to such improved finance. Ergo: the Central Department should provide extra grants to balance the inequality. There exists in the community, the expectation that such a redressing of an unequal balance is the proper concern of the Department. The grounds for such expectation is rooted, apparently, in the wide general acceptance of a sort of egalitarian principle. So here is a very basic contradiction, which lies in the Department attempting to create a balance where in fact no balance existed. On the one hand schools are encouraged to provide the best facilities for their pupils, but should the difference between schools become too great, the Department is called on to create a situation of near equality. Thus, local initiatives can be seen as threats to a basic equality of provision, at the very least; a misunderstanding of one of the most basic assumptions of New Zealand Education in practice. There even exists in the community the feeling that it is not really the thing to provide too much additional finance by way of community activity of many sorts, for the reaction of those who have not done so is criticism, based on a jealous, possibly misunderstood, but none the less critical application of the egalitarian principle. The differences, apparent or real, which the community sees or accepts between the several schools in a district's provision of education, for example, can and have become elements of community disintegration, where time and effort is expended in attempts to justify disparities. The fact of the central funding principle gives to those who wish to use it, the argument that all

Educational provision should be provided from this central source. The concern of parents and others with an interest in the Education of the younger members of the community, which is expressed in the provision of additional finance so that the sort of education provided may more closely approximate the best available appears to be in conflict with the very principle which earlier in our history demanded a central funding policy.

History itself, translated into tradition, can and does provide additional evidence of educational inequality at the very least in degrees of opportunity. Those schools which have developed a tradition in respect of aesthetic activities and opportunities, can be seen to provide opportunities for their pupils which a recently-established school, for example, may not have had the time to establish. While this is not to say that other different and none the less challenging opportunities will not exist within the newer school, the tradition in the aesthetic field established and transmitted into the community by the older school makes the expectation of equality difficult to support. Such differences are not usually unacceptable and there may even be those who would choose the newer school on the grounds that, in the establishing of the new, resources similar to those developed by the pioneers may have the opportunity to flourish and pioneering qualities are valued for their own traditional merit. Thus, the equality of opportunity may be subsumed under a different sort of opportunity if it is hoped that other equally valued opportunities can be seen to accrue.

There is, therefore an ambivalent attitude to the central funding of Education. It does prove the egalitarian basis of New Zealand's Educational enterprise, yet the individual community is encouraged to overcome this equality by local financing on whatever scale the local community may see fit. The proviso that locally-raised finance may be

spent without reference to the central or even the regional authority is a democratic provision which is not seen as in conflict with the egalitarian principle.

The charge of bureaucracy has often been levelled at the Wellington-based Department, perhaps because of its spatial relationship with Government and government functions. But, when members of the Department of Education can see themselves, even in jest, as part of a paternalistic centralized bureaucracy which tells others what to do, then there is a very real danger that their performance may become more in accord with the picture often painted of them. The statement, referred to earlier, that newcomers often do not understand the ways of the Department and need indoctrination into these ways, lends some support to the idea that there is a difference in behaviour between the Central Department and those parts of it from which new recruits are drawn.

It is stipulated in the Act which governs the educational administration of the land that, in terms of policy making and financing such policy, the Central Department alone bears the ultimate responsibility. Thus, major changes in the curriculum must come from this source, since these would normally be costly to implement. In the same way the basic equipment of education, buildings and land, are provided at least initially, by the Department. In many schools, there are buildings or parts of buildings that have been added by local effort to the existing plant, but the siting of such additions must be in accord with the initial plan decided upon, even granting the fullest local consultation, in Wellington by some, often faceless, often anonymous Departmental Officer. Should the local community, for good, clearly-stated reason wish, for example, that the proposed addition be sited apart from the school, maybe even shared by neighbouring schools, as a

swimming pool might reasonably be, then the Departmental arguments against such a procedure would be final, on the grounds of a previously-decided policy.

Thus, because of the greatly increased functions which must be carried out by the Central Department, there has developed a large staff whose duty it is to do the various different jobs of administration and at a professional level which have evolved as the Department developed. The development, both in size and complexity, since the time of Habens, who ran the Department virtually single handed until today is closely related to the development and extension of the functions and decision-making of the Central Department.

The functions of the Department are seen in two major divisions: Administrative and Professional. Decisions affecting the practice of education throughout the country are made in one or other of these divisions. The various functions of the Central Department may be seen as Financial, Administrative, Curricular, Educational and Developmental.

Some of the financial functions have been discussed, but the major function of the Central Department must be distribution of the finance to the places within the System where the best use can be made of the amounts available, since the Department itself exists only as a channel to enable Education to be continued. The Department does little first-level teaching, (first-level teaching being that which occurs in the classroom on a continuing basis) but it is vitally concerned to ensure that the first-level teaching is provided. For this purpose, an administrative division exists, whose function is directly related to the continuance of the first-level teaching. The role of the administrative section is supportive of the Educational system and is often seen as

conservative in its workings. The staffing of these two sections has several associated problems, namely the blend between permanent Civil Servants and former teachers. This blend is necessary because

'the former teachers are engaged in administration but they bring to the task front-line experience which sensitises them to certain implications of the issues and proposals with which the department deals. An appropriate blend of administrative and professional officers is thus useful to the department.'⁽¹⁸⁾

The real problem, highlighted by the need for such a blending of functions is that of liason between and among the various officers. The division between administrative and professional concerns is seldom as clear as the structure of the department implies. The physical disposal of the department, already cited, makes this problem even more acute.

Staff recruitment has developed as a problem area (see the Currie Commission's Report) and in order to assist in this regard special courses have recently been established at Universities to provide a training in Educational Administration. Further, the professional staff of the Department is recruited from teacher ranks. Although they might reasonably be expected to have a clear appreciation of the professional aspects of the tasks to which they are appointed, there is little guarantee that they have had opportunity to develop any administrative ability. Thus, until this is developed, there are clearly periods when, in several sections of the department, newly-appointed officers are likely not to be in a position to make decisions; where such decisions are not forced if those who wish them are wise, for there is a danger that they may be ill-considered decisions due to the lack of wide ranging appreciation of the total problem which the

under trained newly-appointed officer can bring to the decision-making role. The solution to this problem lies, it has been suggested, ⁽¹⁹⁾ in a better allocation of work rather than in appointing more officers to 'cover' for those presently inadequate.

In the area of curriculum, the Department has an important function. In New Zealand the Education Act demands an identity of curriculum from North Cape to the Bluff. The job of establishing, researching and maintaining the curriculum rests clearly with the Department. A Curriculum Development Unit has been established, the function of which appears to be to concentrate on curriculum development in all its aspects, to act as advisors to the Department and to provide a resource upon which change, when seen by the Department as needed, can be based.

An Inspectorate has been maintained, indeed expanded, by the Department, whose initial function was to ensure the maintenance of a national standard and to act as judges, for promotion purposes, upon the professional and personal abilities of the teachers. As a consequence of these functions the advisory function of the Inspectorate developed. Now, the advisory function is seen as the major function of the Inspectorate.

'The central function of the inspector of schools is that of guiding teachers to serve the children in the schools.'⁽²⁰⁾

While recognising the advisory role as one of prime importance, the role as teacher classifier, although much reduced of recent times, both in frequency and compulsion, has still an important place. The problem of in-breeding, in that the inspectorate in large part determine those who will in turn become inspectors, has been recognised ⁽²¹⁾ and

so it is claimed, the recognition of this phenomenon should reduce its danger. (For an historical survey of the development of Curriculum in New Zealand see Education Vol.17 No. 3 1968 1.9-22). Nevertheless, the systematic changes are too recent (the latest was operative from June 1974) for their effect to be judged fairly.

A further function which forms part of the legal responsibility of the Department is that of curriculum. Thus the Department exercises its control over all aspects of the Education System, from eligibility of pupils, through selection and training of teachers, provision of educational facilities, maintenance of broad educational standards, to the selection of areas of content and initial screening of methods of teaching.

'The Department of Education is a State department under the control of the Minister of Education and is responsible to the Government for the administration of the Education Act and regulations made thereunder. All expenditure, except for a small amount from endowments, is from funds provided by the Central Government through the Department. Broadly speaking, the Department has a threefold responsibility: to determine educational policy; to see that standards are maintained throughout the country on an equitable basis; and to ensure that the community gets full value for the money the people, as taxpayers, contribute towards education.'⁽²²⁾

The Department exists then to ensure that whatever the Education is in scope and nature, its control remains firmly rooted in an administrative hierarchy, with a chain of responsibility reaching, in the ultimate, to Parliament. One of the major considerations, as stressed by the italicized

phrase above, is the equitable basis upon which the provision of education, in its broadest terms, is made. Thus, there is a clear sense in which it is true to say, that the centralized structure of Educational administration in New Zealand is an outcome of the egalitarian principle discussed in an earlier section. Because there has been a clearly felt need to ensure that education itself be available 'on an equitable basis', the Education Department has been established with the clear mandate to ensure that this should be so. The justification for the existence, and continual growth, of the Central Department has been based on this consideration, coupled with the need, expressed in the above quotation, to ensure that the taxpayer, who after all, is meeting the large majority of the costs, receives value for money. It is borne out by history that the departmental structure adopted in other governmental fields has been accepted as a suitable system for administration in education as well.

The centralization of the control of education has created a division within the system. There are, in effect, two divisions in the national education system, the educational practitioners (i.e. the teaching staff and those in advisory positions) and the administrative staff. The history, traced in outline above, describes how the latter has grown to the point where it is possible now to make a career of Educational Administration. Yet the question has been stated thus:

'One questions if we have the best personnel to lead the administration of this vast machine which spends almost the highest amount of the annual Parliamentary appropriation The situation demands training administrators of the highest calibre. We must avoid the growth of amateur administrators at any level.'⁽²³⁾

For, if the best people in administration are not available, the reason must be either that they do not exist, or

that the means of selection militates against their appointment to positions of administrative responsibility. Another possible explanation is that the best administrators are in some way prevented from doing their job in the best way once they have been appointed. Perry's question, above, hints that one of the problems is in terms of sheer size. In other words, Education on a national basis is big business with all the problems and complexities associated with big business. Real skill is needed in administrative positions and the well-meaning amateur is out of place, indeed, dangerous.

The realization that Education is 'big business' is clearly seen in the national policy of Centralization despite the recent development of Regional Officers in Auckland Wellington and Christchurch. (Auckland opened 1948, Christchurch 1960 and Wellington 1963). Policy decisions remain the responsibility of the Central Department and the Parliamentary appropriation is disbursed through their offices.

The policy of Centralization of Education is maintained in New Zealand on several grounds. It is supported by the egalitarian principle which underpins educational provision; it is supported on the basis of justice; it is supported on geographical terms, in that it is seen as advantageous that the Department should be sited close to Parliament which provides the necessary funds and since Wellington is central to an elongated island group; it has a history which has created a precedent for central control in that alternatives tried earlier could be shown not to have been successful and for the conservative, it is supported simply because it is already in existence and perhaps because it is so large and complex that alteration of the status quo would prove extremely difficult.

1. Atmore Report P.3
2. ibid P.3
3. Currie Report P.69
4. Atmore Report P.4
5. ibid P.4
6. ibid P.5
7. Currie Report P.74
8. ibid P.76
9. Atmore Report P.6
10. Currie Report P.87
11. Department of Education Submission to Currie Commission
quoted in Currie Report P.92
12. Currie Report P.93
13. ibid P.95
14. ibid P.130
15. Ewing, L. - The Currie Report - Ten Years Later
Education Vol. 21 No. 6 1972
Wellington P.19
16. Organisation and Administration of Education Report
of the Working Party E.D.C. Wellington
1974
17. ibid P.27
18. ibid P.118
19. ibid P.121
20. ibid P.124
21. ibid P.126

22. Pinder, B. M. The Department of Education in
Mitchell, F. W. New Zealand Education
Today Reed 1968 (italics mine)
23. Perry, W.A.C. The Administrative System in
Mitchell, F. W. (Ed.) New Zealand
Education Today Reed 1968 P.45

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME CONCEPTS OF THE
EGALITARIAN PRINCIPLE

The function of this section will be to examine various interpretations given to 'equality' and the operation of equal opportunity in education in New Zealand, since, as has already been shown, this is one of the essential presuppositions upon which the educational provision is based.⁽¹⁾

An initial examination will be made of the philosophical concept of equality, basing the discussion on R. S. Peters 'Equality' in Ethics and Education, Allen & Unwin, 1966.⁽²⁾

In Peters' chapter, the aim appears to be, to provide a philosophical basis upon which the principle of equality can be worked out within the education system. As justification for raising this issue, Peters says:

'Tackling issues to do with 'fairness' and 'equality' may therefore provide an approach to the ethical foundations of education, which is in accordance with the time-honoured educational practice of following the interests of the students.'⁽³⁾

He is hopeful of developing 'a particular form of argument to justify the manner and matter of education.'⁽⁴⁾

Peters' claim that this follows the 'interests' of the students is ambiguous, since he has not made clear whether 'interests' means 'those pursuits motivated by curiosity' as for example Smith's interest in medieval history or Jones' interest in ornithology, the interest in any subject, or 'the welfare or benefit from things' as in the long-term interests of children. This may appear to be hair-splitting, but the reason for this type of confusion is central to the argument Peters makes in the chapter.

Peters then proceeds to prove that 'as an empirical generalization, the statement that all men are equal is either

vacuous or patently false. It is vacuous because the term 'equal', like the term 'same', is a term for comparing people or things, and people or things can only be compared in certain respects.'⁽⁵⁾

The emptiness of the statement 'All men are equal' is proven, in Peters' terms, by stating that its 'logical function is to lay down a rule rather than to state a generalisation. It amounts to saying that men ought to be treated equally. It surely cannot mean that all men ought always to be treated literally the same.'⁽⁶⁾

Peters is contending that there exist but two possibilities; the same (i.e. identical) and not the same (i.e. different). There is, however, a third case not considered namely, 'different in some respects'. This is surely needful of consideration in this context. The fact that Peters omits the third possibility appears to be a major weakness in his argument. There also appears to be some confusion in his use of same and equal. In fact, Peters writes as if these two terms were synonymous, whereas this is not so. Two vehicles may be the same model, with identical settings throughout and yet their performance need not necessarily be equal. The third category, that of difference in some respect, whatever that respect may be, is clearly of considerable importance. Further, the idea of equality in New Zealand education appears to be based on this third possibility overlooked by Peters, namely, that of difference in some respects.

As Peters argues, (p.118) the real problem has to do with the outcome of the philosophical position arrived at, rather than the mere achievement of such a position. The concern expressed often enough in New Zealand, perhaps as distinct from the English arena of Peters', has to do with the treatment of those who are different in some respects,

rather than the discussion of means by which a philosophical position is elucidated. The concern is to present a case which permits differing treatments for those who can be shown to be different in some respects from others catered for by the education system, and then to make arrangements for the treatment of such cases.

Peters uses the principle of distributive justice, which lays it down that equals should be treated equally and unequals inequally. 'The first injunction refers to treatment within a category, the second to treatment between categories.'⁽⁷⁾ He goes on to state that grounds must exist upon which differences of treatment can be based, and that such grounds must have a 'relevance' which, for Peters, assumes the nature of a special quality. Relevance depends, for Peters, upon what is being distributed and on the point of distribution (P.120) and relevance (P.140-1) is determined by recourse to other principles. The only criteria put forward by Peters, albeit in part questioned, are those laid down by the British 1944 Act; age, ability and aptitude.

So, despite the claim that 'relevance' is of crucial importance to the issue of equality, Peters' claim that relevance is determined by principles apparently beyond the bounds of his treatment, since he makes more generalised statements concerning them, could be seen as begging the question. It could reasonably have been expected that he would have examined the criteria for relevance* in some detail at some point in this discussion. That he does not, and seeks, in an attempt to camouflage this weakness, to claim that the principles upon which relevance could be determined lie elsewhere, indicates a major area of weakness. He does suggest, by implication, that 'age, ability and aptitude' may fill the gap he has left. This in turn suggests that he

*I have used here and throughout what follows, the three concepts as developed by Peters: principles of justice, principles of relevance and criteria for relevance.

accepts tacitly, but nonetheless clearly, the existence of a large body of widely-accepted criteria which can be accepted without further examination. He gives evidence of the assumption, that behind practical discourse there lies a body of accepted principles which of themselves will determine relevance.

So, far from submitting the criteria for relevance to philosophical investigation, under a regime of logic and reason which would seek clarity, Peters falls back on a re-statement of an act of Parliament, almost as if to say that authority of the original makes any discussion subsequent to that of Parliament, unnecessary. For the reason that he has not exposed his criteria for relevance, Peters is drawn to the conclusion that:

'The situation postulated is one in which any individual, possessed of a public language, asks the question, "What ought I to Do?" There are alternatives open to him and he is asking for reasons for adopting one alternative rather than another. If he is going to choose one alternative rather than another, as distinct from merely 'plumping' for it, there must be some discriminable feature of A which B lacks, which constitutes a ground or reason.'⁽⁸⁾

The phrase italicised, which adds little to the argument and could have been omitted, is a further indication of an assumption Peters seems tacitly to have made. Its inclusion implies that, as the possessor of a 'public language' it behoves him to make a statement. It is as if this statement is to take on the cast and function of a political document, rather reminiscent of the Laws of the Medes and Persians.

When this is coupled with the dependence upon the English 1944 Act as an authority, the political function of the discourse becomes explicit. In this context, the question "What ought I to do?" implies a choice being available. But, because Peters has refrained from a systematic exposition of any criteria upon which relevance could be based, yet insists that the choice be made upon morally relevant grounds, the choice available is necessarily limited. Those 'discriminable features' need clear definition if the choice is to be real or valid; if the one doing the choosing is 'choosing rather than plumping.' Having dismissed the justification of individual fiat,⁽⁹⁾ Peters goes on:

'This is to assume that there are principles in advance which distinguish in general between what is a good or bad reason for doing something.' and 'there might be features possessed by either A or B which would make this choice correct or wise.'⁽¹⁰⁾

The contention that principles exist 'in advance' needs further examination. How are such principles established? How are they elucidated? Are they really present at all? If so, where did they originate? If such principles have already been authoritatively exposed, and that authority shown to have philosophical strength, then there is little point in continuing the discussion. Philosophical discourse is thus limited to talking about talk, since the real authority, and any possibility of action, lies clearly outside of and beyond its aegis. There is no point in subjecting the possible choices to scrutiny since no real, free choice exists.

Also, in the passage on P.122 quoted above, there is a proximity between 'good and bad' and 'wise and correct'

which makes the equation 'good equals wise and correct' one which must be considered as highly likely. Such an equation appears also to be based on the prior existence of an authority previously established, and is thus, supportive of the charge that Peters severely limits the function of philosophical discourse.

Peters' presupposition of the existence of such an authority is further indicated.

'If therefore, a person is ever going to be able to say truly that a course of action has a given feature, and that this feature is a reason for or against choosing it, then practical discourse presupposes general principles giving relevance to reasons.'

'There must, therefore, be general principles on which he can rely in making his choices.'⁽¹¹⁾

Peters cites as the authority, the formal principle of fairness or justice, or, as he restates it, the principle that there should be principles.⁽¹²⁾

In this context, this is taken to mean that unless relevant differences can be found, no differences can fairly be allowed in the treatment; or, as restated positively, difference must cause distinctions to be made. So again the key concept, indeed the lynchpin of the argument is 'relevance', which, Peters claims is decided on the basis of some other principles that he has not stated. Nowhere in the scheme which Peters develops is there taken into account the 'laws of nature' which are reasons why things happen or work the way they do. For example, mental defectives are separated out from the mainstream of educational provision for reasons which are clearly defined and generally accepted. Given their difference in intellect, the system has been forced to develop a means of providing what appears to be equality of opportunity for this group of pupils. In reality,

no such equality exists because the state of the mental defective is such that, although relevant reasons exist for difference of treatment, this difference in treatment does little to provide later equality of opportunity.

Peters also claims that 'choice cannot be a matter of individual fiat if there is to be a possibility of its being shrewd, wise, correct, intelligent, or far-sighted,'⁽¹³⁾ but he makes no effort, beyond his own contention, to prove that the possibility of individual fiat must be excluded. The categories of 'shrewdness', 'wisdom', 'rectitude', 'intelligence', and 'far-sightedness' have moral overtones and incorporate values which, for Peters, clearly assume significant proportions. It is as if these may form part of the spectrum of 'presupposed general principles' with which he makes much play. It has been held that people are honest when it suits their purposes. While it might be reassuring to assume that honesty pervades education, it is clear that this cannot be assumed to be the case. The reason lies in the realm of human nature. Personal and 'interested' motives, as in all other fields of human endeavour, are found in education. The individual will therefore choose, on grounds other than honesty to act in a certain way. While such a choice may not be correct it could meet the other criteria mentioned as 'impossible' by Peters.

As regards the discussion on the second-order character of justice which follows, Peters uses the statement 'that there is never an issue of justice if a situation is not in some way rule-governed'⁽¹⁴⁾ to prove that 'justice is a limited principle and acting on it is a virtue of limited character.'⁽¹⁵⁾ The limited nature of the principle is due to the fact that it makes no stipulation as regards the particular outcomes available. The principle of justice is abstract and general and thus is not capable of giving rise to details concerning particular actions. Here yet again,

the problem of 'relevance' surfaces, since it is necessary to have "relevant difference" considered in relation to particular distinctions in treatment as a test for the principle of justice. Thus, the principles giving relevance need to be clearly established, for Peters claims 'without such principles, moral discourse could have no application.'⁽¹⁶⁾ This is to say that unless relevance principles can be or have been established, the concept of justice, and therefore the concept of equality, has no meaning.

Having given the principle of relevance such priority in the argument presented, it must be seen as surprising, at the very least, that Peters makes no attempt to establish the criteria upon which such a principle might be based. It is claimed that

'Justification is tantamount to the demand for reasons (which is) the demand to base distinct forms of conduct on relevant differences If there is to be serious deliberation in relation to such possibilities, there must be principles picking out relevant aspects. These principles must be general.'⁽¹⁷⁾

Peters contends that there is a direct relationship between justification and relevance; unless the principles of relevance are shown, the principle of justification cannot be said to have been proven. Peters suggests that the criteria of relevance can be provided in advance of a decision being made. Put in an equation, what Peters is saying may be expressed thus; the principle of justice plus the principle of relevance equals the criteria for relevance.

'In its positive aspect if (the principle of justice) lays down that if there is a relevant difference, then there should be a rule for distinction in treatment. But the considerations which make a difference relevant cannot be determined by the principle of justice itself.'⁽¹⁴⁾

In the situation explained by Peters, either the criteria for relevance are identical to the principle of relevance, or the principle of relevance alone is not sufficient to predict the criteria for relevance. Since Peters has been unable to formulate specific criteria, this can only be because the general nature of the principle of relevance does not allow such specific indications. Thus, the principle of justice is required by Peters to supply such criteria in correlation with the principle of relevance. Even so, no specific criteria, capable of allowing particularization, have been laid down.

The principle of justice would lay it down that, because of the clear intellectual difference between most mongloid children and normal children, some difference in treatment of such children would be allowable. A consideration of relevance in this example would indicate that education is concerned with intellectual potential (ability) and a child with severe mental restrictions has not the 'aptitude' to cope with a normal classroom programme. Thus some relevant reasons exist for difference in treatment. Both principles indicate that difference in treatment is possible, indeed mandatory. Yet the particular nature of the different treatment cannot be postulated on these principles alone. Neither are there decisions in advance which indicate the specific nature of such programmes in action, unless they be a negation of either the principle of justice or the principle of relevance. Peters' general argument is thus not supported by this case.

Peters continues his argument thus:

'The principle of justice prescribes the making of general rules for distinctive forms of action where there are relevant differences and, once rules are made, making no exception to them unless there are relevant differences in the situations or persons

to which they are presumed to apply. The principle of justice in its negative and positive aspects is, therefore, a presupposition of the activity of justifying or searching for reasons of conduct. Far from its being an arbitrary principle, it is the very principle which condemns arbitrariness.'⁽¹⁸⁾

He then defines arbitrariness in this context, but he nowhere provides any form of guarantee, by way of argument, which excludes arbitrary decisions. They may, in his terms, be condemned, but condemnation alone does not necessarily lead to exclusion of arbitrariness. In a social context, the moral condemnation applied to the act of murder is insufficient to exclude it as a possible response. Clearly then, arbitrariness cannot be excluded but what Peters really needs to exclude from his scheme are considerations of fact which he clearly sees as 'arbitrary'; the reasons for action which are based on the laws of nature and thus only open to consideration as the result of an examination of those laws.

It is clear that the principle of justice, either on its own or in combination with the principle of relevance (which combination would provide criteria of relevance, in Peters' terms) is insufficient to exclude arbitrary decisions. Where the possibility of 'arbitrary' decisions is conceded, as I have argued it must be, and if 'arbitrariness' is 'Either acting without searching for reasons or making rules which are not based on relevant differences.'⁽¹⁹⁾ then actions could be taken which are outside both categories which Peters has argued.

Peters next indicates some implications of his argument. He claims that 'it can be inferred in advance that very little of a substantive sort is implied.'⁽²⁰⁾ and further, 'very little can follow from this principle (justice) alone

about the details of educational provision.'⁽²⁰⁾

If this principle provides such a minimal quantity of substantive obligations, these must apply as a result of principles other than those selected for examination. Such principles, or at least, 'clear decisions taken in advance,' are seen by Peters as having been made. This would, of necessity, seriously limit the areas open to the probings of philosophical discourse which is a claim supported by Peters later. (P.141) Indeed, such are the limits imposed by such an understanding that philosophical discourse becomes only talking about talk, since little of detail concerning educational provisions is seen as an outcome of the activity.

In an attempt to discover the 'other principles' which will provide content to the abstract form laid down by the principle of justice, Peters next discusses applications of the principle of equality. Two rule-governed situations are considered, the first the case of equality of the sexes in relation to voting, the second the problem of a 'just wage.' The difference between the two cases is seen as one showing different grounds for establishing criteria of relevance. These grounds are said by Peters to lie outside general categories, in a consideration of factors which give point to the activity.⁽²¹⁾ These factors are enumerated as the public interest, personal good, human dignity, individual welfare and self-development. They all involve relationships to objective reality, which might well account for their exclusion from Peters' consideration.

Having subjected various arguments concerning women's rights to vote to scrutiny, Peters concludes: 'arguments deriving from the consideration of interests clash with those derived from respect to persons,'⁽²²⁾ and claims that rules for criteria of relevance are not discovered as a result of conflicting arguments. Situational realities are cited to

indicate that total equality is in fact impossible, since other principles would sooner or later conflict with equality. But the plea for total equality; as Peters points out, has never really been made. What is required is the removal of particular distinctions made on what have been seen to be irrelevant grounds. These distinctions may have arisen due to a wide variety of presuppositions, but once attacked on grounds of relevance, some have been removed. Realities of the situation, it is implied, form part of the 'decisions taken in advance' which provide indications as to the nature of the criteria of relevance.

If realities of the situation are to form part of 'decisions taken in advance,' there would need to be argument against the proposition that the realities of the situation may only operate if the factors involved are based on inequality.

A clearly-defined class structure, for example, implies a basic inequality, and the realities here support an inequality in most aspects which lend dignity to human existence. Irrationality could be cited as sufficient reason for dismissing such a proposition, yet the fact that, for some time, such a situation was an historical fact, serves to indicate that irrationality as a human mode of behaviour, needs to be taken into account rather more than Peters is prepared to concede.

Peters now examines equality in education as a concrete example making two points initially. Firstly, 'justification is required of principles other than that of equality, and judgment is required to assess their relative importance as applied to a concrete situation'⁽²³⁾ and secondly, '(There exists) a contrast between a formal analysis of a situation in terms of what is prescribed by law, custom, or morality,

and what actually happens.'⁽²³⁾ But judgement must be based upon certain criteria which should be capable of being exposed. There is implicit in the two above statements the understanding that part of the essence of such criteria is included in law, custom, and morality; i.e. that it has already been decided, and can thus serve as an authority above, beyond, and superior to justification as a rational process. This is to claim that there are elements within the situation as it exists which are not based on any of the principles for which argument has been advanced.

Education is unlike the cases cited, particularly because of its intrinsic value. As Peters states, the problem of equality in relation to its availability has become a key issue. Two variations are outlined, that of U.S.A. and England. In U.S.A. Peters claims, the major area of dissent is found where there are seen to be those who are deprived of what is by law, available for all for irrelevant reasons. In England, it is stated that the problem lies in determining relevant grounds for different treatment. The one system is concerned with educational deprivation issues, the other with determining a 'just' way of making differing provision.

'In neither the U.S.A. nor in England have agitation about equality in education taken the form of abstract pleas for ideal systems in which education is to be distributed in accordance with clear-cut criteria derivative from unitary aims.'⁽²⁴⁾

All examples provided concern themselves with the particular rather than the general. There is also clear evidence that the particular national ethic of 'quality of life' will be mirrored in the nature of the education provided. Educational equality can be affected in two major areas, Peters states. The first of these is the manner of its distribution, the second the values held by the society for which the education is designed. These two fields

clearly provide many grounds for disagreement, but it is in contrasting formal arrangements with what actually happens which brings to the surface the major problems. Actual cases have, or appear to have greater immediacy and therefore more merit than arguments based on points of principle alone. Peters cites both Negro population concentrations and the English secondary modern schools as such cases where inequalities are real on several grounds and where argument is supported by easily discernible fact.

Having highlighted some areas of inequality in both U.S.A. and England, Peters continues:

'most English educationalists now query the basic presumption that inequals should be treated unequally,'⁽²⁵⁾ and 'most enlightened Americans are prepared to support Federal intervention in order to ensure that Negroes are not debarred from good schools and universities.'⁽²⁵⁾

Such statements are little more than statements of opinion, since 'most' is not quantified or supported by statistics, and 'enlightened Americans' may only be 'those who agree with me.' This severely limits the authority of the statements, and in a way which seems to be designed to delude the unwary.

On P.140, Peters quotes Lieberman's two meanings of 'equality of educational opportunity.' Lieberman concedes that the first is almost non-existent, but the qualification 'almost' should be remembered, and Peters claims that the second meaning is a sham. Lieberman's second meaning is 'A and B have it (equality of educational opportunity) when the material advantages which one of them possesses over the other in selecting or pursuing his educational goals, cannot be removed without endangering other important values.'⁽²⁶⁾

In this context, 'material advantages' can be seen as any and all visible attributes which contribute to placing people at an advantage over others. Thus wealth, family, language and geographical location may be seen, together with many other factors, as 'material advantages'. Such factors may be susceptible to change but the Criterion Lieberman requires before such change is initiated is that of 'other important values.' These other important values would be included among those for which Peters has been arguing and subsumed under his own 'criteria for relevance.' If Lieberman's second meaning is a sham in Peters' terms, then so too, for identical reasons, is Peters' search for criteria for relevance.

Peters claims Lieberman's second meaning of equality is a sham because it 'misrepresents the facts of life in order to retain a shibboleth.'⁽²⁷⁾ He continues 'the plea for 'equality of opportunity' is more properly understood as either an attack upon irrelevant aids to opportunity (e.g. wealth) or as a demand for replacing unreasonable by reasonable grounds for providing access to opportunities.'⁽²⁷⁾

Lieberman's second meaning (quoted above) implies that there will be differences in treatment because of the limiting 'other important values' which also impinge upon the situation. There are, then, some values which over-ride the strict imposition of absolute equality, and with this Peters is in full agreement. 'Descriptively speaking, there is no equality of opportunity and never can be.'⁽²⁷⁾ He adds some conditions which could, clearly, never obtain. Thus both definitions relate to some sort of equality. Peters has only considered one other possibility, difference. His omission of a consideration of a third possibility, different in some respects, is a weakness not evident in Lieberman's statement. Peters claims that 'what makes differences relevant is a very complex matter which necessarily involves

recourse to other principles.'⁽²⁷⁾ Both writers contend that 'other values' or 'other principles' are necessarily involved in any consideration of equality.

But, whereas Peters sets himself to prove that issues associated with equality are 'justified' in relation to factors related to 'relevance', Lieberman suggests a single yardstick against which judgements can be made differences in treatment can be accepted when individual advantage cannot be changed without affecting other important values. Thus Lieberman accepts 'difference in some respects' as third possible choice, and has postulated some means whereby it might be explained in terms of what is currently the case. Because Peters' 'criteria for relevance' are said to be decided in advance, there can be within them no real choice. It is as if some authority operates superiorly in the area of choice, serving to limit freedom. This, it seems, is part of the reason for Peters' concern with arbitrariness. He sees a need to exclude it, if he is not to be seen to subscribe to the idea of outside authority, which, by reason of its power gained from an ability to control what actually happens, exercises a limiting function on the extent and nature of really free choice permitted.

Thus, in part by reason of his failure to exclude arbitrariness, Peters is compelled to claim that equality based on philosophical principles is an impossibility. Because of his reliance on 'criteria for relevance', and because he claims that these criteria are, have been or will be determined in advance, his argument lends support to the idea of an 'educational power group' with whom decisions affecting equality and, indeed the 'criteria for relevance' rest.

This view is supported by the following statement:

'It has not been claimed that philosophical analysis or argument can show at what particular points such limits (on individual liberty) are to be set. This depends upon practical judgement which has to be exercised in the light of a multitude of contingent circumstances. Philosophers can only map the contours of such arguments; they cannot pronounce upon the details of the view.'⁽²⁸⁾

Just who exercises the 'practical judgement' and upon what basis? Peters hints that there exists, somewhere, a group or an individual which is able to exercise that function. Because he does not expose or discuss 'criteria for relevance', thereby providing a basis for judgement, it might be wondered if such a basis exists. If it is assumed that one does exist, then surely, in terms of the task Peters has engaged himself in, he had the responsibility of displaying it to public view. This he has refrained from doing.

The exclusion of philosophical discourse from the arena he has mapped out may provide a clue as to the reasons for the above failure. Decisions taken in advance are not susceptible to debate at the point when it becomes clear that they have been taken. The implied prohibition against philosophical argument in the matter of detail lends further support to the suggestion of exterior authority.

Here Peters would appear to take issue with those who see the role of philosopher differently to himself. In The Method of Knowledge in Philosophy G. J. Ducasse states

'Philosophy has a great constructive task which involves the reconstruction of what has been established by other disciplines and by general experience.'⁽²⁹⁾

This is clear evidence that the philosopher, and presumably philosophic discourse and argument, sees no such

prohibition as that stated by Peters. Investigation of the detail, in philosophic terms, should provide either support for, or denial of the bases for such detail. Peters seeks to impose upon Philosophy a factual approach which has been exposed as limited, if not weak.

In a section entitled 'Social Inequality', Peters contends that the complaint of 'inequality' is made more in response to social attitudes which accompany the type of provision made. 'This is often the result of categorization where "Different" is generalised to "worse" or "better".'⁽³⁰⁾ Peters calls into question whether attitudes of this nature in England spring from this system of categorization. 'It is more likely that this system simply provides clear-cut channels through which existing class attitudes can flow.'⁽³¹⁾ He supports this argument by claiming that

'in any social system some people are better at doing jobs than others, and some are capable of doing jobs requiring skills that are beyond the capabilities of others. There must inevitably be, too, some authority system which puts some in a superior position in a hierarchy to others.'⁽³¹⁾

These two statements are in clear contradiction. He cannot both claim the existence of a social system which creates a hierarchical structure and deny its effects. If the task set within society has ascribed to it a rank, and if the selection procedure for the task is fair, then clearly it is in the interests of the society to ensure that the best-suited candidate for the task is selected. What Peters seems to be saying is that the selection procedure is either unfair or non-existent, which is quite another matter. Where the selection procedure is unfair or non-existent, then clearly there can be no equality, and also little or no respect for those occupying the positions thus filled.

Peters has been at some pains throughout the chapter to show that equality in education, in terms that he has defined it, is largely a myth. He claims that 'the pursuit of equality may conflict with other principles.'⁽³²⁾ Yet the equation upon which he would see equality based, viz. principles of justice plus principles of relevance equals criteria for relevance, does not allow the possibility of specific prediction, and Peters himself has not identified any of the criteria which his regime might reasonably be expected to generate.

In New Zealand, it is claimed that there exists an equality of educational opportunity, but this appears to be based on an understanding of 'equality' not conceded by Peters. In New Zealand the idea of 'different in some respects' has been used to support the concept of equality of opportunity in education. We have an education system with broad general similarities throughout its geographic distribution, such as national curricula decided by a centralised department and implemented by means of basic equipment provided under financial assistance distributed by that department. Yet, 'different in some respects' allows the addition, in practice if not in theory, of extensive and often expensive supplementary material, should the school be able to generate the sort of community involvement which provides finance to allow purchases of this nature to be made. Thus, although there is claimed to be equality of opportunity in New Zealand, difference is tacitly supported.

What then are the various elements of equality of opportunity in New Zealand education? There is the element of economic nationalism which is related, in historical terms, to equality. There is 'geographical' equality as a result of the policy of centralization. There is the sexual difference which raises issues like equality for women. There is

equality within schooling and the opposing ideas of 'no one' and 'everyone' being privileged in educational opportunity. There is also the element of authority in education. If there is to be any rational theory of equality, it must be able to accommodate what is the case in this country or else, either point out clearly that equality is non-existent, or that current practices are in error, or both, together with reasons for whatever is shown to be the case. For equality is either a reality or a myth. It is not possible to have equality by parts.

There are, as has been pointed out above, but three possibilities in regard to equality: the state of identity, exact replication in every respect; the state of difference, i.e. total difference and the state of difference or sameness in some respects. It should be remembered that the 'consumer' in education is a human being, thus the first two possibilities must, of necessity be excluded. Even 'identical' twins do not have true, complete identity. Neither are humans totally different from each other. The only real possibility is difference in some respects, similarity in others. The question remaining is whether the similarities are sufficient to allow equality of treatment, or if the differences are so great that equality becomes only a theoretical and not a practical reality.

Intelligence, or ability to make use of educational opportunity is an attribute of the human being upon which educational provision is based. Without intelligence, education would be a wasteful enterprise. The question is whether the range of difference in human intelligence is sufficient to preclude identity of treatment. In practice, the answer would appear to be that this is so. The provision made in New Zealand for Special Education indicates

that different educational provision is seen as necessary, on account of this human difference. But is this difference an effective negation of equality of opportunity in respect of Fraser's statement with which this work began? In the statement, the prescription as to the nature of the educational provision is individual rather than collective. It is an education 'of a type to which he is best fitted.' However, as it has developed, the system of education is, in the nature of its provision at least, not individual but collective. The reason given for this is that, in developmental terms, there exists sufficient similarity in the pupils for an effective economy to be practiced. Pupils are thus grouped into classes which will vary in size and nature according to the task to be accomplished and the individual pupils which comprise the group. The expectation is, that within this regime, an equality of treatment and distribution of educational opportunity will be exercised. Is such an expectation capable of being met? In terms of intelligence, where some sort of selection or grading procedure has been used, the possibility of equality being practiced exists. But the problem is one best seen in practical, human terms. Selection for intellectual similarity is no guarantee that other human characteristics, of at least equal importance in education, will also be controlled. The practice of 'streaming' classes has been dispensed with in many schools because of this. Selection on similarity of intelligence appears to be a move against general equality of opportunity.

Age, like intelligence, is another human 'attribute' upon which grouping for access to educational provision has been made in the past. Although differences in factors other than age are accepted in practice, social promotion, the practice of promotion on grounds of common age alone, is seen in New Zealand as a valid system, which has its own set

of inter-reactions upon the provision of educational opportunity. But there is the clear acceptance that social promotion, or age promotion, serves ultimately to increase the difference between children, who upon this basis may be placed in the same class. This practice then, creates difference and makes equality of treatment less likely, since this more disparate group is still viewed as a collection of individuals - a class.

Any human attribute which might be selected only serves to increase the distinctions which it would be possible to make, since the starting point is, in the final analysis, a unique individual, for whom complete identity of treatment would not be possible together with other unique individuals. Individuality is itself a similarity shared by children. Thus the education system is designed to cater for, and capitalise upon this attribute. It is this apparent contradiction which forms part of the confusion in relation to equality. How can children who are uniquely individualistic at the same time be similar in some respects? It is unique individuality which they share, the similarity of human beings in general rather than in particular. Yet education must, sooner or later, make some statement in terms of the particular. What must be made clear by adherence to any egalitarian principle is, what a particular child will be permitted on a particular occasion, when such permission is not allowed children in general. Or, to restate the problem as a question: Is it equality if children are treated as individuals?

Following Lieberman,⁽²⁰⁾ children are seen to have equality of educational opportunity if the provision made available to one in the pursuit of his individual goals is not in conflict with the individual long-term rights of any other child. Thus the opportunities do not have to occur at

identical times; all that is necessary for the above to be filled is that the same general range of opportunities be available for all children. The range will be decided by considerations other than those to do with equality, since the content and ultimate purpose of education provided will be affected as a result of the nature of this range of opportunities.

The acceptance of an equally provided, common, general range of educational opportunities is thus suggested. An examination of New Zealand's provision of educational opportunity, concentrating by way of example, on the extreme ends of the intellectual scale, will show whether this suggestion holds true in this country.

Intellectually sub-normal children are not capable of profiting from the range of specific opportunities provided for the normal child. However, they are capable of profiting from identical general opportunities. They do not receive specific training in instrumental music, for example, but they do receive general opportunities to make music in concert with their peers. In this context, 'to follow the fullest extent of their powers' ⁽³³⁾ recognises the many limitations which will be present within the total educational spectrum. Difference in specific provision is thus accepted, if it can be shown that the 'powers' of those for whom the provision is made are limited.

The difference in provision noted when Special Class children, for instance, are contrasted with those who are recognised as intellectually superior is quite clear. It is seen first, and most clearly in terms of the financial grant made by the Boards to provide for these children. The intellectually superior child, who on several grounds could be seen as just as demanding as the sub-normal child, receives on his behalf into school funds from the Education Board a capitation grant of \$1.29 (1974 figures) whilst his Special Class neighbour, just next door, receives from the same source the

sum of \$3.45. The Department sees clear need to make such a distinction because of "the need for additional material" found in Special Classes. If class size has any relevance to the opportunity provided in schools, then the controlled roll size of the Special Class at 18, as against the 35+ in some normal classrooms, is a further clear difference. Staff appointments are also based on criteria which are different. Special Class positions are advertised separately and personal suitability is noted as being required, in particular, of the intending applicant. The distinction lies in the assumption that any teacher, properly qualified, is capable of teaching a normal class, which could have pupils of superior intellect among their members, while only selected teachers are able to teach Special Class children. This may be true, and it may also be true that Special Class children are more costly to educate than 'normal' children, but it cannot be that equality is served under this regime. The moralist view has been expressed thus: 'These children are less fortunate than others, so they need the best we can give them.'⁽³⁵⁾ This is almost as though the school is trying to redress the balance upset by cruel chance.

Within schooling then, there are many areas when the provision for educational opportunity is different, for a variety of reasons. Even from school to school within a town, differences will exist. This does not mean that such differences will, of themselves, place some pupils in a better or worse position in relation to others. Diversity is also of some worth. Specific differences of provision of educational opportunity are encouraged within New Zealand's education system as a result of the local financing of education by school F.T.A's and School Committees. These groups have the right to decide on the expenditure of funds they raise.

Whether such funds are spent on chalk or an Adventure Playground is a matter which is decided, not by the central department, although this will be consulted should the expenditure involve major capital works, but by the local committee itself. Should a school be placed in a community with greater average financial resources, and should these resources be tapped by the school to provide additional purchasing power, the school's children may have many advantages not able to be enjoyed by the majority of New Zealand school children. This may well account for some of the differences seen in the provision of education throughout the national system.

The idea that girls are in some way "less equal" than boys needs some examination. Mitchell (1968) has asserted that this problem is an unanswered one in New Zealand education. There is still a distinction made by sex in courses of Intermediate and Secondary schools. Girls almost exclusively take Shorthand, many boys never see a class in Home economics. But the crisis in equality of opportunity is best seen in the staffing of primary schools. Even in 1974, despite the Women's Liberation movement, there are very few promotional opportunities for women teachers to gain appointment as Principals of large schools. Thus girls are confronted with an example of inequality of which they are seldom aware, but which nonetheless indicates a community attitude which is reflected in the school and its curriculum. In this way social attitudes outside the classroom are impinging upon the opportunities of the girls, reducing their range of choice of action, in ways which are not always obvious. The social role of the female as the homemaker has permeated the curriculum to the point where some alternatives are not even admitted, let alone considered. For example, the community attitude towards career women as

those who are "less feminine" than mothers with children, has made choices for girls less comfortable and more confused than necessary.

Disraeli's comments regarding equality noted in Section A above, also have a bearing upon equality in New Zealand educational provision. Do we aim for an equality under which all are seen as privileged? What sort of changes would this imply, in terms of what happens now? The central authority already exercises a strong control over the sort of educational opportunity which is provided. The machinery for control exists, and it could also be the machinery for supplying equal opportunity where all are seen as privileged. If the machinery exists, what must be examined is whether all who are provided with educational opportunity are privileged. Or, put another way, is the education so provided in any sense discriminatory? Some specific examples will suggest that, for several reasons, discrimination is present to some degree. A child with a serious reading difficulty, who needs highly skilled treatment at specific times, stands less chance of receiving what he needs if he lives in a rural community in the South Island, rather than in Auckland, where several Reading Clinics have been established. Mentally handicapped pupils living in small country settlements, where there are often only one - or two-teacher schools, cannot take advantage of the Special Class provision made for their city-dwelling peers. There are some then, who are less privileged than others, for the simple reason that they live where special provisions, seen as necessary for their like in other places, are not provided.

It would be argued that the cost of privilege for all is prohibitive, since it would mean a replication of many major provisions in every school whatever its size. Economies of

scale could not be effected. So there must be some who will always be penalised or less privileged on financial grounds, unless the community accepts the additional financial burden implied by the changes which would be necessary to alter the educational provision.

There is a sense, however, in which it is true to say that all who have access to education of any sort are privileged. On an international basis, children in New Zealand are indeed privileged. But, given the national system and the tradition of New Zealand in terms of the demand for equality of opportunity in education, there remain children who are clearly in a less privileged position than others. At the other end of the scale, where parents can pay for education of a sort which meets their particular demands, there also exists a number of private schools which cater for pupils in ways not generally permitted in State Schools. There are many who would claim that, in the matters of religious instruction and moral education, the children in Private schools have some advantage, for which their parents must, of course, pay. Thus, despite the desire to remove financial inequality from education in New Zealand, the Private schools allow some differentiation on the grounds of wealth.

There is another, less obvious form of inequality in educational provision, which has to do with the teachers rather than the subjects which they teach. Some teachers are better at teaching than others and this is recognised throughout the system at all levels. Whether by accident or design is not clear, but it appears that the more highly motivated groups of children seem to be given a preponderance of the better teachers, both by number and by time. While it might be argued that those capable of making the

most progress and ultimately likely to make the best contribution to society deserve the best teaching, there are grounds for claiming that this differentiation is too common a practice to be based entirely upon chance factors. So the less well catered for children are also less privileged, if the content and quality of instruction is taken into account.

Over the whole country, there are areas clearly finding it much more difficult to attract and retain staff; there exists a Country Service salary bar which is an administrative device designed to assist in overcoming aspects of this problem. The difficulties of staffing give rise to some quite marked inequalities. Many children, through no fault of their own, have four or five changes of teacher in one year of primary schooling, while others are indeed fortunate to have a good teacher throughout the year. While it is conceded that some of these changes may be for the better, they do have bad effects upon some of the children involved.

Allied to the problem of staff change, there is the clearly established mobility of pupils throughout the country. Such mobility is, in fact, one of the justifications of a national system of education, in that those who do shift about the country are supposedly able to do so without great difficulty educationally. While this is so administratively, those children who have had a great many changes in their primary schooling are at some disadvantage, socially at the very least, in comparison with those who have been less mobile. The highly mobile pupil is less privileged in another way as well. He may well move from an area where there is a high local financial input into the school, to an area where such input is low, in terms of a national average. The less well endowed cannot match the provision of specialist equipment available at the more

fortunate school, and it is likely that a certain breadth of educational experience will be missing.

While it is true that, on balance, many of the difficulties cited are not marked, it cannot be denied that they exist. Some pupils in New Zealand are less privileged than others. In some cases, they themselves may have contributed towards this, but in other cases, there is little or nothing they they could have done about it. More importantly, they may not be aware of the nature of the differences involved.

The nature of the equality of educational opportunity in New Zealand cannot then, be claimed as specific. Too many differences exist for such a claim to be supported. General equality may be an alternative, as may a blend of the specific and the general. The degree of generality, however, may be so wide as to be meaningless in practical terms, for unless the general equality principle is capable of interpretation in terms of specific educational opportunity it becomes little short of an excuse for not examining what is the real state of equality. Such an examination must be in terms of the specific, since the basic unit in education is the individual child. If equality is to be a blend of the specific and the general, this implies that at some point within the national system, choices have to be made against some specific sorts of equality provision and for others. No matter what the basis of such choice, the result cannot be seen as equitable, since some cases have been excluded. In real terms, the problem is usually reduced to a consideration of the financial aspects involved, rather than an open assessment of the equality principle. The cost of a specific provision, demanded by equality, may, as has been shown, mean its rejection. Thus the claim for equality of educational opportunity in New Zealand education can be seen as a statement which says that there exists here a national system of education, with a unified structure in

most of its elements, with a high degree of similarity in content and method, and with similar broad, general provision. But, 'similarity in some respects' which places some children at a disadvantage in a haphazard manner is not enough to allow the generalisation to 'equality.' So, while the concept of equality of educational opportunity may be a highly laudable national aim, which reflects great credit upon those responsible for New Zealand's education enterprise, in practice it has yet to be achieved. Nor can it be achieved, because the principle of equality, without clear definition of how it is capable of translation into practice, comes to mean 'whatever can be allowed to happen.' Thus, expedience is served by adherence to an unexpanded principle and a logical basis for the day-to-day operation of a national system cannot exist. It is likely that, once exposed to full examination, the claim for equality cannot be supported. Only then will a true basis for educational provision in New Zealand be found.

1. See Mitchell 'Some Underlying Assumptions' in
N.Z. Education Today, Mitchell (ed) Reed
1968 P.48
2. I am indebted to my Supervisor for discussion of
several of the points in Peters'
chapter.
3. Peters Ethics and Education Allen & Unwin
1966, P.117
4. *ibid* P.117
5. *ibid* P.118
6. *ibid* P.118
7. *ibid* P.119
8. *ibid* P.121 *italics mine*
9. *ibid* P.122
10. *ibid* P.122 *italics mine*
11. *ibid* P.122
12. *ibid* P.123
13. *ibid* P.122
14. *ibid* P.123
15. *ibid* P.124
16. *ibid* P.124
17. *ibid* P.125
18. *ibid* P.125
19. *ibid* P.126
20. *ibid* P.126
21. *ibid* P.127
22. *ibid* P.128
23. *ibid* P.130

24. ibid P.134
25. ibid P.139
26. quoted in ibid P.140
27. ibid P.140
28. ibid P.141
29. Duncan, C. J. - The Method of Knowledge in Philosophy in University of Californian Publications in Philosophy Vol. XVI No. 7 1945, 143-158
30. Peters Ethics and Education Allen & Unwin 1966 P.141
31. ibid P.142
32. ibid P.143
33. Mitchell, P. W. (ed.) N.Z. Education Today Reed Wellington 1968 P.48
34. Circular from Wanganui Education Board Headed Incidentals Grant 1974-5 February 1974
35. Verbatim comment of parent of Special Class pupil School P.T.A. meeting 1973

SOME PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH
'EQUALITY' and 'CENTRALIZATION'

The function of this section will be to examine the two concepts, equality and centralisation, in education in New Zealand, to describe the manner of their operation in combination and to identify strengths and weaknesses caused thereby.

From among those currently writing about the equality of New Zealand education, there would probably be two major schools of thought. The first is expressed thus:

'I believe that the New Zealand primary teacher, while giving due regard to subject matter and educational values has, with considerable success, placed the child at the heart of the educational process. Gingerly perhaps, but at all times resolutely, primary teachers have taken up the challenge 'on the basis of knowledge of individual children, teachers must ensure each child is making steady progress and getting the best out of schooling.'⁽¹⁾

This expresses the view that, in many respects there have been major successes in the past and the prediction is that, with care and development, success will continue to be the outcome for education. The second general theme may be expressed thus:

'Reform in administrative machinery seems imperative. Searching investigation should precede it, and investigation is only meaningful if at this late stage in our national history we take time to assemble relevant statistical data and employ the necessary expertise to interpret it.'⁽²⁾

In other words, the time has arrived, if not already passed, to put the education system under close scrutiny and, by the wise use of all available resources, to make corrections to the system should the need to do so be proven by close examination.

The two quotations above highlight the dual nature of the problem which faces those who would change the education system today. While there is much of merit seen in past performance, visible weaknesses have developed and these need either repair or replacement. The problem appears to be capable of reduction into very simple terms. Do we patch and mend the old instrument or do we construct an entirely new model using the best of the old with the new? Both approaches have inherent difficulties. Should the decision be to repair the old, the question is whether the basis of the old is still sound. If the decision should be to build a new structure upon which an education system might be based, then it must be decided upon what principles this new structure will be founded. It is most unlikely than any new system will be based on anything but elements springing, in some way from the past experience of the nation. Thus, whether it is decided to repair or build anew, the past will provide part of the basis at least for both alternatives.

'Our old colonial ties linger on in our modelling of educational systems on English practice. England is a densely populated, heavily industrialised urban society with an educational system which reflects the nation's tortuous social and historical background. It is not surprising that the New Zealand education system in its infancy was moulded on the English pattern, for our forebears knew no other way to approach it. Less commendable is our present day propensity to run in parallel.

It is not unfair to suggest that drastic changes in New Zealand educational policy sometimes result from stealth. It can be asserted, indeed, that expensive and irrevocable changes in direction occur with a heavy commitment in capital expenditure with no public

debate on the implications. There are some indications, for instance, that New Zealand may already be committed to a binary system of higher education - that running parallel with university training of technologists there shall be a concentration at the apex of the technical education triangle of somewhat similar courses at similar levels. This may be precisely what New Zealand wants, but it is prudent to make sure and estimate the cost before the die is cast.

Schools at all levels are beset with problems often arising from scarcity of resources. The public is wary of pedagogic lament about class sizes, reluctant learners, staff shortages, inadequacies of salaries. Yet the complaints are real.

New Zealanders prize education highly. They also pay for it dearly. Continuing education needs personal involvement of leading New Zealanders in all walks of life.'⁽³⁾

Potter's purpose in airing the above problem areas is clearly to argue for a national conference, which he sees as being charged with the responsibility for coming to some conclusion, making some recommendations and generally plotting the course for New Zealand education in the future. The problems raised, for whatever reason, all relate in one way or another to the two major concepts under present consideration. The central department is charged with overall responsibility for providing educational opportunity on the basis of equality. That we have a national system beset with problems of cost, exhibiting signs of unplanned general growth and owing strong allegiance to a culture now greatly different to our own, can be directly attributed to the central department, which has almost total responsibility in each of the above areas.

The central authority, given wide powers in all aspects of education, is already exercising a strong control on the sort of educational provision which is available. There is some concern with standards, some claiming that these, generally, are falling, while others, equally convinced but perhaps not as convincing, claim merit for centralisation and the benefits it brings. It seems, however, that such concern is a non-argument, since it is impossible to assume that at every choice-point, the most suitable material (in the widest sense) is provided, the most useful distribution system is arranged and the most helpful training is provided in the use of such material. Factors such as cost, expedience, and the sheer size of the operation often assume far greater significance than a qualitative judgement like the value of the material available. An example to illustrate this claim can be found in the chapter of misfortunes attendant upon the national introduction of the 'New Maths' texts selected for use in New Zealand primary schools. Cost is clearly an associated factor with the introduction of a new scheme where some choice is available, and this accounts for the fact that the original series, selected as the best basis for New Zealand conditions (Modern School Mathematics) was not provided in toto, the more advanced and more costly volumes being substituted by Australian designed texts which were cheaper*. There were also several major differences in approach, and particularly of specialised vocabulary which gave rise to much early confusion. It should not be too much to expect that, in matters like a major change of approach in a major curriculum area, if the job is seen as necessary and important, it should be done as well as it can be, without regard to a pennypinching attitude. It would seem that, despite the clearly defined organisational

* The publishing history in Books 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the New Zealand series indicates the different origins of the books. An examination of the terms within Books 6 and 7 will confirm the difference cited.

structure, mediocrity is what is achieved rather than any degree of excellence. If education is an enterprise which the people of New Zealand value highly, and which certainly costs dearly, then in some aspects of its administration, the people are not being as well served as they might expect to be. Potter's suggestion of stealth in some actions of the central department may well be expanded into something much more sinister. If the enterprise of education demands the best in order that the high hopes held for it be fulfilled, then the time for an open, public, 'no holds barred' investigation of the actions, aims and procedures of the Department is well overdue.

The sense of unity provided by the existence and actions of the central department may be valuable. Yet this should not blind us to the possibility of workable alternatives. The 1930 attempt at reorganisation (Educational Reorganisation in New Zealand: Report of the Parliamentary recess Education Committee) met with little real success, despite the validity of many of the points raised in debate. True, the economic climate was not favourable, and vested interests ultimately triumphed in the maintenance of the status quo, but many of the then-visible ills within New Zealand's education system remain untouched today, some forty years later. Indeed, because they were able to survive the earlier attack, there is a sense in which, if they are to be removed, a considerable effort will need to be exerted to overcome the inertia provided by tradition. The administration anomaly of the Wanganui Education Board, which is in no sense central to the area it is designed to serve and with a majority of its areas of activity located closer to Palmerston North, is a case in point. Some argument in favour of continuing the status quo rests on the fact that,

only recently the Board spent large sums of public money updating its office and administrative buildings. There was little public debate over the proposal to build new premises, yet once they were erected, their existence was able to be used as a justification for not moving the Board. Perhaps this is an indication of stealth in administration to which Potter refers.

The Educational Development Conference, the most recent examination of New Zealand education, has among its terms of reference

'To assess what individuals and society want from education and how the system can respond effectively to these wants, with particular reference to what may be seen as its shortcomings.

To consider how far the needs of individuals and society are being met now and can be met in the future by the education system.'⁽⁴⁾

Inherent in the above directives is the assumption that a centralised system will remain. So engrained is this assumption that in the Appendix II to Educational Aims and Objectives EDC 1974 p.29-33, not one criticism of the Central Department as such, appears. Yet every shortcoming noted, all serious to a degree, is an implied criticism of the Department. Any administrative system should have been able to prevent many of the shortcomings from becoming established, had it not long ago assumed that its own existence was accepted by all as a continuing one.

What are the results of the egalitarian principle in action in New Zealand education? Ausubel, in The Fern and the Tiki, hints that a regression towards the norm in attainment and attitude is to be found in New Zealand schools, particularly the secondary schools. It is not seen as desirable that all should attempt to excell. Indeed, equal provision has

attendant upon its problems of scale which militate against the individual. Such administrative procedures as streaming, classification by ability, and 'labelling' are the natural result of attempting to retain a high degree of similarity in the treatment of large numbers of children. Since all are held to have equal opportunity under a uniform system, the fact that all do not have equal ability is often lost sight of, especially in the maelstrom of secondary education. Equality of opportunity of the sort which gives rise to selection procedures under which some pupils are selected out of education is an equality which levels and destroys.

The Departmentally-controlled School Certificate examination has acquired the function, in part, of a screening mechanism, providing the employers of the country with a ready yardstick against which judgements concerning employment opportunity can be made. So clear is this in operation that salaries are offered which favour those who pass the examination. Yet, in any one year, about half the candidates are sure to fail to gain the qualification needed to earn the higher salary. While it is recognised that standards have some value within the system, the statistical procedures appear not to be protecting standards, but rather to be ensuring that the same proportion of examination candidates succeed at each year, irrespective of standards. The Department makes many claims that general standards are being maintained and even raised, yet the validity of the examinations as a measurement of relative standards is not subjected to scrutiny of a type that would be necessary for say, a test of intelligence. The 1962 suggestion of check-points, made in the Currie Report has been proceeded with very slowly and in modified form.

The Report stated:

'If the system is to function efficiently, there is a special need to provide teachers and schools with tests and measures that will assure them with certainty that their individual pupils are making satisfactory progress in the basic subjects.'⁽⁵⁾

The requirement of the Commission was a series of standardised checks on levels of achievement in basic subjects in the Primary Schools. At the same time the Commission examined School Certificate, "the only existing national external check on pupils' achievements."⁽⁶⁾ Despite the fourteen recommendations for change, this examination, in which the candidates know before they sit roughly half will fail, continues to be the basis upon which increasing numbers of secondary pupils develop their education. How can this be equated with the provision of equal opportunity has never been satisfactorily explained. Indeed, this is one area within which the Department, charged with operating the examination, has been strangely silent. Some changes, like the removal of the English pass requirement and the 1968 single subject pass system have been made, yet the examination itself remains virtually unchanged. Twelve years after the Commission's report, School Certificate is still present. Internal assessment may be over the next hill, yet the time taken for this development assumes that we, as a nation have almost unlimited time at our disposal. It is almost as if the Department sees what it has created as inviolate.

Another interpretation of equality of opportunity in education leads to programmes of extension, where all the differences in pupils are catered for, supposedly to the full. There have been several such programmes commenced on a local basis, over the country, (for example the rash of so-called 'opportunity' or 'extension' classes for the

intellectually superior run within groups of schools out of normal school hours) but these have foundered, often on the cost factor, since it seems that equal provision, dear to the heart of the administrator, cannot be provided in the diverse forms required to meet the educational needs. Earlier, the aim of education to return to that equality under which all were seen to be privileged was questioned. It would seem that, despite the widely held idea that egalitarianism is a fundamental principle of New Zealand education, what has been achieved in practice has been far from equality. How was it that such a principle could have been thought to be a basis for New Zealand education? It comes down to a confusion between that which is provided and the ability that each individual has to take what is provided and profit from it or improve himself by it. The assumption has been made that, if equal provision, which has been held to be 'good', is made, then another sort of equality emerges as an end product. This loses sight of the fact that the child who accepts what is provided is not equal to his peers in many ways and therefore the product is not identical. The confusion arises for several reasons; a failure to formulate, in any sort of clear terms, the end product expected from the equal provision. How can the educational captains steer their craft if they are not even sure of its destination? There has been a failure to cater for significant differences in children and the acceptance that this may cause changes in what will have to be provided. Where schools exist in New Zealand in which the full range of pupils cannot satisfactorily be catered for, except in stop-gap, ill-conceived, poorly financed programmes, equal opportunity is denied all children. There has been a failure to appreciate that difference in itself is of some value, and that this difference, properly harnessed, may have as much if not more to offer than equality of opportunity.

But the major failure appears to be in the fact that there has been an unquestioned acceptance of equality however it was defined, as being good, without the necessary examination of the theory in practice. Too often equality has levelled and destroyed and no questions have been asked, no changes have been made. The cry, disguised by powerful, often emotive language has gone up, 'Don't rock the boat!' Cost is a factor in education, and a major one, but education is an investment and its end product is of vital importance. If the principle of equality of opportunity has led to anything less than the best, then the sooner it is exposed as wanting, ailing or falacious, the better. The link between equality of the New Zealand type and mediocrity is crystallising, perhaps because more children are travelling the educational course for longer than before and they demand to know its destination in terms which are meaningful to them. The principle of equality of opportunity in education appears to be something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is as if, through being associated with it in operation for a statutory length of time, its products cannot subpoena it into the court of reason.

The concept of central control of education in New Zealand has led to the development of a large central Department located, in the main, in Wellington.

'Its work can be only dimly perceived by reference to Acts and Regulations; because so much of what it does is determined, not by the Department's legal powers, but by the extent to which, and the way in which it consults the many groups directly concerned in the particular matters being considered; whether they require changes in the law or regulations; or whether they are concerned with solving problems or getting appropriate action under way.

W. H. Oliver in The Inadequacy of a Dependent Utopia says "The history of popular education in New Zealand is, in everything except the articulation of a structure, a history of frustration." I do not know why Oliver specially exempted from his strictures the articulation of the educational structure; that has always seemed to me to be perhaps the untidiest aspect of our public system of education. I certainly do not know any country that has as complicated administrative arrangements for education as New Zealand. (7)

It is clear from the above statement that the powers of the Department are wide and difficult to sheet home to a particular Act or Regulation. With the freedom allowed in the decision-making field, the Department is answerable only to the Minister. He, of course, answers to Parliament and ultimately to the people. But, if the people are not aware of the directions in which the Department is moving the education system, and there is evidence in the 'Topics raised in Discussion' following the presentation of Finder's paper (8) that there are omissions in making policy statements and explanations that would mean that people may be uninformed, then the democratic right to apply correction at a time and in a manner which is likely to be most effective, is denied the people. An example of this was highlighted by a circular letter, giving nation-wide distribution, from the Concerned Parents Association dated 9 October, 1974, which expressed concern over 'Human Development and Relationships in the School' curriculum. The letter states in part "It would appear that this material has been prepared and circulated on the assumption that the Department of Education will introduce the programme regardless of any expression of parents' opinion Parents are now asked to give their

decision by the end of the month, although there is no explanation available for such haste." While not necessarily accepting the views of the group in the curriculum area concerned, it must be conceded that the points of lack of consultation and parental rights which they raise have some validity.

The difficulty appears to lie in the assumption made somewhere within the Department itself, that in view of the wide, but in places ill-defined powers which it possesses, the Department must be able, not only to make policy decisions and provide the expertise to ensure that they might operate effectively, but to make such decisions without reference, if that course be decided upon. In other words, the Department gives the impression, at the least, of using its powers not only to consult concerned or expert groups, but also to avoid making such consultations should it so decide.

A further factor, alluded to by Pinder, is that of the sheer size of the administration. From its early beginnings, which conceived as possible the Department's consisting of an Inspector-General and an office staff, the Department has multiplied faster than any other section of the education system. As this growth has taken place, pressure has been put upon accommodation in Wellington, a city in which office accommodation is always at a premium. This has meant that the various physical sites from which education is administered have become more and more spread. The physical dispersal of the Department has been matched, it would appear, in a dispersal of function, which has led to the charge, hinted at in the letter quoted above, that final responsibility is difficult to relate to a particular office or a particular officer. Thus, what is perhaps the most personal concern of parents, the education of their children, has become increasingly impersonal. The question raised following the presentation of Pinder's paper concerning lines of communication

from the Department to the public, has been reinforced by the findings of various groups operating during the nationwide Education Development Conference earlier this year. It would appear that the danger of not having full and wide-ranging consultation at all stages of the policy-making, has a basis of fact. In addition to the area of consultation, there has developed within the Department an increasing group who run the risk of appearing more concerned with administration than they are with education. While there is a need for both functions within the Department, there is also an assumption that the necessary abilities are able to be found within those who are allowed by the system operated by the Department, to rise to the top. There is a real sense in which the Department can be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy. This comes about because of a particular combination of factors. The majority of those who find employment in the policy making and development planning sectors of the Department, not to mention the Inspectorate, gained their induction into education as a result of gaining qualifications for a teaching position. It has been assumed that those who possess the qualifications and skills which enable them to teach effectively, are also able, without a great delay or additional training over a long period, to take responsibility for the quite different functions exercised within the Department. It is also significant that the officers who are required to recognise excellence in teaching are also, tacitly, charged with the responsibility of using similar criteria to assess in the administration of education on a regional or national basis. The assessment of officers within the Department can be seen, in fact, as involved in the task of selecting their own successors; and they are doing this from a group which need not necessarily possess the best administrative or policy-making or public relations skills that are

available within the community. Teachers, or those trained to impart knowledge, often within specific and therefore limited subject areas, do not possess a lien on the sort or degree of skills necessarily required if education is to cater for the total range of the population of New Zealand.

The Department can be seen as big enough and as distant enough from the public, for whom it is expected to operate, to be an unapproachable juggernaut, which is so powerful as to be able to ignore all but the most stringent criticism of either its policies or its actions. This is not to say that all aspects of the Department in operation are bad, but rather that there are areas of administration, associated with the size and complexity of the enterprise which need close, public examination. Also needing investigation is the assumption that a centralised system, albeit historically of great utility, is for all time, the best answer to the present problems in education and to those which will develop in the future. If the nature of education is changing, and it is clear that it is, then it must be that the administration of a changing education should be changing too. The Department gives the impression of being conservative towards administrative change. Local involvement is permitted as long as it does not create too great a local difference. The assumption is that local answers can be provided on a national basis.

So there are several areas giving rise to concern. The first is the way in which the Department is in-bred, with those responsible for ensuring the continuance of its function, making their selection of personnel from comparatively limited fields. The second is the assumption, largely based on history, that central control of finance is the only way that the tax-payer can be sure of getting value for his money; this, despite the much earlier history of success in

some of the Provinces during the Provincial period. A further area is that of accountability. One of the principles involved here concerns the right of the people to call to account those responsible for making decisions. At the present time, in the field of Human Development Curriculum there is a valid complaint being made, one of the grounds of this being the inability of the people to identify or contact the officer or group of officers within the Department who are accountable for the policy complained of. Another problem of concern is the relationship which should exist between the community and education. The Department should exist as the servant of the people rather than as a powerhouse of educational expertise which dictates policy because all knowledge is contained within it.

What is required then, is an open debate on the two basic assumptions upon which the provision of education in New Zealand is made; the idea of equality of opportunity which has held sway since the 1930's and earlier, and the idea that centralisation is the only policy upon which education administration can be based. This examination must be of a sort which makes explicit the assumptions made which expresses assumptions as such, and provides a sound, logical and practical basis upon which New Zealand's educational programme, may be given the opportunity to provide the best education possible for those to whom Education and the system which supplies it, should serve.

1. Irwin, C. H. Primary Education in Looking Ahead in New Zealand Education Mitchell, F. W. Reed Wellington 1971 P.38
2. Potter, B. W. Technical Education in Mitchell, 1971 P.140
3. *ibid* P.138
4. E.D.C. Report of the Working Party on Educational Aims and Objectives Wellington 1974 P.4
5. Report on the Commission of Education in N.Z. Wellington 1962 P.260
6. Ewing, J. L. The Currie Report Ten Years Later Education No. 6 1972 Wellington F.29
7. FINDER, B. M. The Department of Education in Mitchell, F. W. N.Z. Education Today Reed 1968 P.11
8. *ibid* P.26

1. Adams, J. S. 'Planning for Curriculum Revision'
Education Vol. 21 No. 5 1972 P.26
2. Arnheilt, R. Education: New Horizons and Old Myths
Oxford & West London 1969
3. Tany, D. H. 'Inspecting in Schools of the 1960's:
Part I' Education Vol. 20 No. 9 1971
P.24
4. -----
'Inspecting in Schools of the 1960's:
Part II' Education Vol. 20 No. 10 1971
P.42
5. Britton, B. The Meaning of the Modern Mind Mentor
New York 1955
6. Cotton, D. O. 'Where Are We Going?' Education Vol. 22
No. 2 1973 P.9
7. Bell, C. I. 'The Education of Girls' Education
Vol. 21 No. 7 1972 P.24
8. Jarr, H. G. The Education Act 1944 University Press
London 1968
9. Dewey, J. Democracy and Education Macmillan
New York 1925
10. -----
Educational Reorganisation In New Zealand
Report of the Recess Education Committee
(Attore Report) Government Printer
Wellington 1950
11. -----
Educational Aims and Objectives: Report
of the Working Party E.D.O. Government
Printer Wellington 1974

12. Education Department Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools Government Printer Wellington 1928
13. Ewing, J. L. 'Curriculum Development in New Zealand' Education Vol. 17 No. 3 1968 P.9
14. ----- 'The Currie Report: Ten Years Later' Education Vol. 21 No. 6 1972
15. Farber, M. Basic Issues in Philosophy Harper & Row New York 1968
16. ----- 'First Impressions of the Report' Education No. 9 1962
17. Freeman L. & Appel D. The Wisdom and Ideas of Plato Fawcett New York 1962
18. Gross, R. (ed.) The Teacher and the Taught Dell New York 1963
19. Hallak, J. 'Interview - Educational Planning' Education Vol. 21 No. 7 1971 P.14
20. Harre, W. 'Some Sidelights on the Maori Schools Service' Education Vol. 17 No. 5 1968 P.16
21. Harris, A. Thinking About Education Heinemann London 1970
22. Hunn, J. K. Report on Department of Maori Affairs Government Printer Wellington 1960
23. ----- Improving Learning and Teaching: Report of the Working Party E.D.C. Government Printer Wellington 1974
24. Kidson, H. F. 'Teaching in Edwardian New Zealand' Education Vol. 14 No. 5 1965 P.3

25. Kneller, G. F. Introduction to the Philosophy of Education Wiley New York 1964
26. Laqueur, W. & Mosse G. L. (eds) Education and Social Structure in the Twentieth Century Harper & Row New York 1967
27. Lawrence, D. H. 'The Ideal of Equality' Education Vol. II No. 8 1962 P.12
28. Leach, E. A Runaway World? O.U.F. London 1968
29. ----- Let's Talk Education: A Booklet for use by Discussion Groups E.D.C. n.d.
30. MacIntyre, A. A Short History of Ethics Routledge & Kegan Paul London 1967
31. Meikle, P. 'The Function of External Examinations' Education Vol II No. 8 1962 P.6
32. ----- 'New Zealand Life and Education' Education Vol. 8 No. 4 1959 P.104
33. Mitchell, F. W. (ed.) New Zealand Education Today Reed Wellington 1968
34. ----- Looking Ahead in New Zealand Education Reed Wellington 1971
35. Morgan, J. E. 'The Hidden Handicap' Education Vol. 16 No. 1 1967 P.16
36. Morris, B. 'The Personal Foundations of Education' Education Vol. 9 No. 6 1960 P.162
37. Niblett, W. R. Education and the Modern Mind Faber & Faber London 1954
38. ----- Organisation and Administration of Education: Report of the Working Party E.D.C. Government Printer Wellington 1974

39. Peddiwell, J.A. The Saber-tooth Curriculum
McGraw-Hill New York 1939
40. Peters, R. S. Authority, Responsibility and Education
Allen & Unwin London 1960
41. ----- Ethics and Education Allen & Unwin
London 1966
42. Phenix, F. H. Realms of Meaning McGraw-Hill New York
1964
43. ----- The Post-Primary School Curriculum
Report of the Committee appointed by
the Minister of Education November 1942
(Thomas Report) Government Printer
Wellington 1959
44. Raymont, L. Modern Education: Its Aims and Methods
Longmans London 1953
45. ----- Report of the Commission on Education in
New Zealand (Currie Report) Government
Printer Wellington 1962
46. ----- Revised Syllabuses The Primary School
Curriculum School Publications Branch
New Zealand Department of Education 1950
47. Rollason, B. 'What the Settlers Found' Education
Vol. 16 No. 1 1967 P.3
48. Rollason, R. B. & Beresford, H. B. 'Education on
Board Early Emigrant Ships' Education
Vol. 15 No. 3 1966 P.3
49. Sheen, K. J. 'Centennial of the Maori Schools Service'
Education Vol. 17 No. 5 1968 P.2
50. Simpson, M. 'One Hundred Years of Maori Schooling'
Education Vol. 17 No. 5 1968 P.3

51. Sinclair, K. A History of New Zealand Penguin London
1959
52. Smith, B. O. & Ennis R. H. (eds) Language and Concepts
in Education Rand McNally Chicago 1961
53. ----- Syllabus Revision and
Curriculum Development Education Vol. 22
No. 1 1973 P.2
54. Talboys, B. E. 'The Future of Rural Education'
Education Vol. 21 No. 1 1972 P.4
55. U.N.E.S.C.O. Compulsory Education in New Zealand
U.N.E.S.C.O. Paris 1952
56. Utting, S. 'The New School Certificate' Education
Vol. 17 No. 1 1968 P.8
57. Valentine, J. A. 'Reminiscences of James A. Valentine'
Education Vol. 17 No. 4 1968 P.2
58. ----- 'More From the Journal of James A.
Valentine' Education Vol. 17 No. 5
1968 P.21
59. ----- 'Further Reminiscences of James A
Valentine' Education Vol. 17 No. 6
1968 P.2
60. Ward, W.E.F. Educating Young Nations Allen & Unwin
London 1959
61. Wardle, D. English Popular Education 1780-1970
University Press Cambridge 1970