

**NEW ZEALAND
SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION**

IN OUR CHILDREN LIES OUR FUTURE - E TIPU, E REA



**School Governance:
Board of Trustees
Stocktake**

**Report of Findings
July 2008**

© New Zealand School Trustees Association
Level 3, Aurora Chambers
66 – 68 The Terrace
Wellington New Zealand
18 July 2008

Contents

FOREWORD	4
INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STOCKTAKE.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
<i>Terms of reference</i>	6
<i>Findings</i>	6
SECTION 1: THE HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE.....	8
<i>The Picot Report: “Tomorrow’s Schools”</i>	8
<i>Administering for excellence: the 1990’s</i>	8
SECTION 2: THE STOCKTAKE - SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	12
<i>Comments on existing support (training and industrial)</i>	13
THE PROCESS	13
<i>Consultation with Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura a Iwi</i>	14
<i>Submissions</i>	15
SECTION 3: FINDINGS	16
FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH	16
<i>Engagement and retention</i>	17
<i>Importance of quality achievement information</i>	17
<i>Other responsibilities continue to dominate</i>	17
<i>Rural and low-decile schools</i>	18
<i>How governance affects student achievement</i>	20
<i>Implications for research</i>	20
FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATION	22
<i>The survey</i>	22
<i>Ministry consultation with principals, ministry staff, limited statutory managers, school commissioners, and board trainers</i>	24
<i>Results of consultation with kura kaupapa Māori</i>	27
SECTION 4: DISCUSSION POINTS FROM FINDINGS AND FEEDBACK	29
<i>Support for evidence-based decision making</i>	30
<i>Aligning government policy-making and regulation</i>	30
SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
<i>Overall, school governance in New Zealand is generally in good shape</i>	32
<i>Trustees are clear about their roles and functions</i>	32
<i>Responsibilities for school administration are not always suitably balanced between school boards and the Ministry of Education</i>	32
<i>Current arrangements for determining board composition do not need strengthening to ensure schools have sustainable and competent boards</i>	33
<i>Current arrangements are not suitably flexible for the 21st century to allow for multi-school boards, multi-site schools, and shared governance arrangements</i>	33
<i>Trustees and boards do have the skills and knowledge needed for effective governance</i>	34
<i>Training and support should be made more accessible to all boards</i>	34
<i>How can we assist schools to more easily access important areas of expertise, such as legal and personnel management expertise?</i>	35
<i>How else can school boards of trustees be better supported to focus on directing and supporting student achievement and retention in their school?</i>	35
REFERENCES:	36
APPENDICES	

Foreword

It is with pleasure that I present “School Governance: Board of Trustees Stock take”.

The introduction of “*tomorrow’s schools*” gave practical recognition to the rights of local communities to have a real say in the running of their local school.

In 1999 NZSTA commissioned a history of the Association, published under the title of *Our Community, Our School*. The history of the Association is of course integrally connected with the work that trustees around the country do for their students and their school. In introducing this book, Owen Edgerton and Ray Newport commented that “underpinning this history is the passionate involvement of local school communities, their commitment to the good governance of their local school, and a dedication to the achievement of the best possible educational outcomes for their students.”

This passion and commitment is evident in the results of this stock take. And we must all acknowledge that it is a passion and commitment shared by a vast number of people involved in every aspect of running our school system – parents, principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, communities, Ministry officials, the students themselves and including the government.

It would be easy to use an opportunity such as this to take potshots at the aspects of the system that are most under pressure. We have chosen rather to take a strengths-based approach, and to focus on the shared desire we all have to make our schools the best they can be for our children.

While it is disappointing that the Ministry of Education did not feel able to see their commitment to the stock take through to completion, their contribution to the consultation process and the conclusions reached has been significant and much of the final report remains as it was drafted by the Ministry members of the project team.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Ray Newport, Mary Hall, Elaine Hines and Colin Davies for the many hours of discussion, drafting, and redrafting that we undertook, the Ministry of Education for their contribution and the participants who made the time to be part of the consultation process.

E tipu, e rea – in our children lies our future.

*No reira
Na,*

Lorraine Kerr

Introduction: Purpose and scope of the stocktake

In 1989 the New Zealand school system took on a new look with the introduction of the Picot Report's radical proposals for change, commonly known as *Tomorrow's Schools*. School governance was one of the most important areas addressed in these reforms. The purposes of this change were to promote a community's ownership of their local school, establish accountability for the school to its community, and simplify administration. Since that time our schools have been governed by locally elected boards of trustees, rather than a central government agency.

Generally speaking the reforms have worked well, with most boards managing their governance responsibilities well and with local interests reflected in their decisions. However, given it is 18 years since *Tomorrow's Schools*, and the education sector has continued to evolve, Cabinet agreed it was timely to take stock. The resulting stocktake focuses particularly on how school boards relate to the broader national educational goal of improving student achievement.

The key question identified by Cabinet for the stocktake of school governance was:

to examine "the extent to which boards are currently supported to focus on directing and supporting student engagement, achievement, and retention in their schools, and what more needs to be done to assist them in this task."

This was supported by a series of subsidiary questions, which are addressed in this report, to establish an overall response to the key question.

The government's expectations of the school system to deliver better outcomes for students, particularly those who are doing less well, have resulted in greater demands on boards to be accountable for student achievement. It can be argued that the sector is still in the process of managing the transition from organisational imperatives to student achievement. These changes present challenges to the system which are highlighted in this report.

The Ministry of Education conducted the governance stocktake up to the completion of the survey and consultation with stakeholders in partnership with the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).

Executive Summary

It is 18 years since *Tomorrow's Schools*, and the education sector has continued to evolve. Before 1989 schools were run by the Department of Education. Tomorrow's Schools devolved administration to schools themselves and promoted greater community accountability. The most significant change was the establishment of community-based boards of trustees.

Terms of reference

The key question addressed in the stocktake is:

the extent to which boards are currently supported to focus on directing and supporting student engagement, achievement, and retention in their schools, and what more needs to be done to assist them in this task.

Terms of reference established by Cabinet for the stocktake noted that the government remains committed to the existing system of boards of trustees as autonomous crown entities governing their schools. Reconsideration of the school governance model itself is not on the table. Operational funding questions, which have been the subject of a separate report that is currently with ministers, were excluded from the stocktake as were the Ministry's current training and support contracts (in which NZSTA has a commercial interest).

The stocktake process has involved:

- a literature review,
- focus groups
- an electronic survey of school boards
- submissions from individuals and groups
- interviews with kura.

Findings

1. Overall, school governance in New Zealand is generally in good shape. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in some areas.
2. On the whole, trustees are clear about their roles and functions.
3. Responsibilities for school administration are not always suitably balanced between school boards and the Ministry of Education.
4. Current arrangements for determining board composition do not need strengthening to ensure schools have sustainable and competent boards.

5. Current arrangements are not suitably flexible for the 21st century to allow for multi-school boards, multi-site schools, and shared governance arrangements.
6. Trustees and boards do have the skills and knowledge needed for effective governance.
7. Training and support should be made more accessible to all boards
8. We can assist schools to more easily access important areas of expertise, such as legal and personnel management expertise by ensuring boards have access to a broad range of quality proactive support (especially for principal appointment and performance management) at least to the level currently provided for personnel and industrial relations.

The consensus among stakeholders consulted for the stocktake is that improving the effectiveness with which boards of trustees govern our schools is “not rocket science”. Rather, it is a matter of providing the agreed resources and information in a timely and effective manner, and being responsive to the variances that schools experience.

Section 1: The history and context of school governance

The Picot Report: “Tomorrow’s Schools”

Before 1989 schools were run by the Department of Education. The Picot Report found the system over-centralised, overly complex, without effective management, and lacking in the necessary information people need to make good choices at various points of the system. The result was that “almost everyone feels powerless to change things that need changing.” (Picot et al, 1988, p.xi)

The key proposal of the Picot Report was that learning institutions should be run as a partnership between professional staff and the community. When these reforms were implemented by the government the landscape of school administration was changed forever.

Tomorrow’s Schools devolved administration to schools themselves and promoted greater community accountability. The most significant change was the establishment of community-based boards of trustees, giving responsibility for the governance of schools to a largely parent-representative body. No other jurisdiction in the world has devolved school management to this extent.

Although the focus of the report was school structure and administration, improved student outcomes were clearly one of the downstream benefits anticipated:

While there are risks in any change, we believe the benefits far outweigh the risks. In our view the proposed structure will be responsive and flexible; it will promote improved performance and results for learners; and it will enhance job satisfaction for those who work in education.

(Picot et al., 1988, p xiv)

Administering for excellence: the 1990’s

During the 1990’s boards focused on coming to grips with their governance role. Their concerns were largely to do with the operational aspects of running a school; finance, property, health and safety, and staffing. Boards operated autonomously with little or no direction from the centre and were expected to develop their own policies and plans to reflect local aspirations and meet legislative requirements.

Local Ministry of Education officials provided advice when it was sought, but this was generally limited to a board’s administrative responsibilities and rarely had to do with teaching or learning. Board training, advice, and support in the 1990’s, delivered through Ministry contracts, supported this focus.

Section 28 of the *Education Act, 1989* established the Education Review Office (ERO)

in place of the old inspectorate. Where the school inspectors had focused solely on teaching practice, ERO's brief was to review school performance more generally, as well as the educational services they provided.

These changes exposed strengths and weaknesses of the system that had been less evident under the earlier centralised decision-making regime. Schools were certainly made aware of their shortcomings and what they needed to do to improve, but in practice they were not well supported if they got into difficulties.

Continuing evolution... embracing the 21st century

In 2001 the *Education Standards Act* signalled a significant shift in focus from government with student achievement becoming the most telling indicator of a school's organisational success, superseding the previous focus on basic structure and administration.

This Act introduced the planning and reporting framework known as the *National Education Guidelines*, comprising a range of guidelines in both administration and curriculum development.

Schools were required to analyse achievement data in order to give better attention to the needs of students, and in particular those of Māori students, those with special needs, and to give a general higher priority to achievement in literacy and numeracy.

School boards were also required to engage with principals in strategic planning and setting student achievement targets, monitoring progress towards those targets, and to report directly on this to parents.

The present scene

The national school system is now a vast community network of 2,469 state and integrated schools. Over 100,000 people from a wide range of professional and cultural backgrounds including district court judges, business leaders, fulltime parents, and professional educators have now served on a school board of trustees at some time since 1989¹.

In the 2007 triennial elections a total of 14,327 people stood as candidates and 201,261 valid votes were cast.

While the extent of interest and participation from the community bodes well, the large proportion of new and inexperienced trustees presents a challenge for continuity and maintaining high standards of governance.

¹ Hon Steve Maharey (October, 2006): Launch of the 2007 school trustee elections. NZSTA membership information.

Just under half of parent representatives were newly elected² to the board in 2007. That is, they were not a current representative standing for re-election, nor were they co-opted³ or appointed⁴ members of any school board standing for election. 20% have been on a school board since the previous triennial elections in 2004 and 6% have been on a school board since 2001⁵. This makes it a network with a high demand for constant professional development and support to cater for its many, varied and complex roles.

Mid-term elections (also known as “staggered elections”), in which up to half of a board’s elected positions are filled, were introduced in 2002 to promote continuity. Only a small number (around 300 schools, or 12 %) have taken this option. Some boards have indicated there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of mid-term elections and whose positions are to be contested. Some who have run staggered elections have found that the increased frequency of change and other costs of running elections every 18 months instead of every three years have outweighed the advantages and have opted out. New trustees elected at mid-term are also at somewhat of a disadvantage in that new trustee training tends to be offered soon after the main triennial elections.

Other boards have developed their own succession planning processes for ensuring that institutional knowledge is retained through times of high turnover such as triennial elections. These include strategies like informal agreements to overlap incoming and outgoing terms of office, or co-opting experienced trustees to provide continuity and support for new boards through the first few months of their term of office.

In 2007 ERO reported that 60% of all school boards are managing their schools well. In another 33%, the board is managing well overall, but ERO identified “aspects of governance practice that could be strengthened”⁶, most commonly school self-review and the use of student achievement information. ERO noted that “regular, targeted board training is needed to build and sustain governance capability”. Only 7% of boards are struggling to achieve good governance.⁷

In many of those 7%, ERO identified governance as needing significant improvement due to trustees’ lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which affected their ability to govern. Poor personnel management, lack of quality achievement data,

² Parent and staff positions on the board of trustees are filled by elections.

³ A trustee who is *co-opted* is invited to join a board of trustees whose elected vacancies are already filled. Co-option is often used to fill a perceived need for specific skills on a board.

⁴ A trustee who is *appointed* sits on the board to represent the views of the proprietor. Appointed positions are not filled by elections. Only integrated schools have appointed members on their board of trustees.

⁵ Ministry of Education, *Education Counts* website. Accessed Feb 2008. Results of the school board of trustees elections: 2007 - Experience of trustees. Available from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/results_of_the_school_board_of_trustees_elections/results_of_the_school_boards_of_trustees_elections/results_of_the_school_board_of_trustees_elections_2007

⁶ ERO (2007) p.17.

⁷ ERO (2007) p.17.

poor self-review, and a breakdown in relationships were identified as other issues.

Section 2: The stocktake - scope and methodology

In July, 2007, the Minister of Education Hon Steve Maharey asked the Ministry of Education in partnership with NZSTA to conduct a stocktake of school boards of trustees to answer the question:

How can school boards of trustees be better supported to focus on directing and supporting student achievement and retention in their school?

The Ministry's brief also identified a set of subsidiary questions relating to the larger question:

- whether trustees are clear about their roles and functions;
- whether responsibilities for school administration are suitably balanced between school boards and the Ministry of Education;
- whether the current arrangements for determining board composition need strengthening to ensure schools have sustainable and competent boards;
- whether the current arrangements are suitably flexible for the 21st century to allow for multi-school boards, multi-site schools and shared governance arrangements;
- whether trustees and boards have the skills and knowledge needed for effective governance;
- how board training and support can be improved;
- and how we can assist schools to more easily access important areas of expertise, such as legal and personnel management expertise.

While these questions were not reproduced in their entirety in the focus group meetings and the trustee survey they have provided a consistent framework for the stock-take process.

Not considered

The governance model

Terms of reference established by Cabinet for the stocktake noted that reconsideration of the school governance model itself is not on the table. The government remains committed to the existing system of boards of trustees as autonomous crown entities governing their schools.

Funding

Nor did it consider operational funding questions which have been the subject of a separate report that is currently with ministers.

Comments on existing support (training and industrial)

As NZSTA is a major provider of advisory and professional development services, the trustee survey prepared for the governance stocktake did not ask respondents to comment in any detail on boards of trustees professional development or industrial and trusteeship support provided by NZSTA as part of the Core Contract with the Ministry of Education through national and regional advisers.

The Ministry received separate advice on the Ministry's current training and support contracts (in which NZSTA has a commercial interest) from MM Research late in 2007 as part of its regular review of Ministry contracts. While some of the details of that report are commercially sensitive, some of the overall conclusions are incorporated into the discussion of training and support in this report. Comments from NZCER research (Wylie, 2007 (a), Wylie 2007 (b)) and the trustee survey are also taken into account.

The process

The stocktake process has involved:

- a literature review, with the ministry conducting a meta-analysis of existing reports, local and international research, survey results, and election data;
- focus groups held with boards of trustees, school principals, Ministry of Education staff, board trainers, limited statutory managers, school commissioners, researchers, and national sector stakeholder representatives;
- an electronic survey of school boards based on information gathered from meetings facilitated by NZSTA;
- submissions from individuals and groups.

The information has then been synthesised to provide a clearer understanding of how school boards have evolved in the modern school environment, what the school boards of trustees system looked like in 2007, and its current strengths and weaknesses. The focus has been on boards' collective experience. There has been no particular attempt to articulate variations in views between different groups of

trustees (e.g. elected, selected,⁸ and appointed; staff, student, and parent; primary and secondary) although any variances identified are reported.

Feedback was sought through two stakeholder consultation processes facilitated by the Ministry of Education and NZSTA. These were largely conducted in parallel but had some overlaps. For example, some principals were part of the NZSTA-facilitated board consultation process and others were present at Ministry-facilitated focus groups.

1. **NZSTA facilitated 28 focus groups** with boards of trustees throughout the country. Feedback gathered at these meetings was used to inform an electronic survey that was sent to all school boards in New Zealand. A summary of the survey information is included in Appendix 4.
2. **The Ministry of Education facilitated 23 meetings** from Kaikohe to Invercargill with principals, ministry staff, limited statutory managers, school commissioners, and board trainers, to listen to participants' views and experiences in order to understand current issues from a range of perspectives. Participants were asked to consider:
 - What are the strengths of what we have got now?
 - What isn't working well?
 - What could we do better?
 - What would help to make the system work better?

Consultation with Kura Kaupapa Māori and Kura a Iwi

Ministry staff from offices around the country visited Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Kura a Iwi⁹, to consult kanohi ki te kanoni with board members and principals. Feedback was also sought from the director of Te Runanga Nui, an advisor to kura based in Auckland, and the chairperson of Ngati Porou School Trustees Association.

Consultation with other stakeholders & sector commentators

National education sector stakeholders and sector commentators were consulted at two points in the stocktake.

⁸ A trustee who is *selected* is asked to fill a vacancy that would otherwise be filled by election.

⁹ The foundation document for Kura Kaupapa Māori is *Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori*. It identifies principles and provides a philosophical and values base identifying the special character of kura kaupapa Māori. Te Aho Matua is intended for inclusion in the charters of kura and it is the first point of reference for creating and reviewing charters. (http://www.tki.org.nz/r/governance/ftpp/module1/kura_kaupapa/introduction_e.php) Other kura (Kura a Iwi) are aligned with tikanga Māori, but do not use the terms of Te Aho Matua.

There was strong support for the intent behind the purpose and scope of the stocktake. Stakeholders indicated a willingness to contribute to the stocktake and a commitment to working with the Ministry on what was considered an important and timely piece of work.

In addition to the initial round of focus groups, Ministry staff organised follow-up meetings with key stakeholders to discuss the feedback gathered at the ministry-facilitated meetings with school principals, board trainers, limited statutory managers, school commissioners, and Ministry staff. A list of key stakeholders approached by the Ministry of Education for comment is included as Appendix 1.

Submissions

Several written submissions were received. They are listed at Appendix 1.

Section 3: Findings

Findings from research

Since 1989 much has been written about the impact of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. Researchers agree that the impact of the reforms on student achievement is complex and difficult to isolate from all the other factors which affect student outcomes. However, research both here and internationally has begun to establish that effective governance is associated with measurable improvements in student achievement.

Summarised below are the most common findings from national and international research relevant to the stocktake question. In particular, we draw evidence from research undertaken by NZCER researcher, Cathy Wylie, who has studied the impact and effectiveness of the reforms since their introduction in 1989, and from successive ERO reports on the quality of school governance.

Overall quality of governance

The quality of governance in New Zealand schools is generally good. (ERO, 2007; Office of the Auditor General, 2007; Wylie, 2007)

ERO's September 2007 *School Governance Overview* reports that 60% of schools are governed well, 33% have positive aspects of governance as well as an area or areas for improvement, and 7% need significant improvement. Some of these schools have themselves requested guidance from ERO on governance matters (p.5).

In schools identified as needing improvement, the most common deficiencies relate to school self-review and the use of student achievement information to guide target setting and decision-making (p.17). In many of the schools where governance was not working well, personnel management was an issue, especially in relation to the performance management of the principal and teachers (p.2).

ERO's data suggests that boards have shifted their attention to focus more on student achievement, but there are constraints that distract or prevent boards from maintaining that focus. (p.1) The distractions most often cited were property and finance, managing compliance requirements, and personnel issues.

It was also evident that boards interpret their governance role in different ways. This can depend on a number of things, including size of the school, location, school socio-demographic context, past history, and the relationship between the principal and board chair. Governance is practiced in different ways depending on the type of school.

In particular, differences were identified and discussed in relation to Kura Kaupapa Māori primary, intermediate, and secondary schools; and urban and rural schools.

Boards are now more focused on student achievement

In the NZCER 2006 survey of secondary schools, 67% of secondary trustees identified having a greater focus on student achievement as one of their main achievements in the past year (Wylie, 2007, p. 20).

Using student achievement data to set realistic targets and underpin decision-making is a key element in ERO's assessment of good governance. ERO identified the quality and effectiveness of use of assessment data being generated by professional teaching staff as being a major issue in many schools. The quality of boards' decision-making from assessment data is heavily reliant on the robustness and interpretation of the assessment data that boards of trustees are provided with.

Engagement and retention

Improving student retention and engagement is the main focus of the Schools Plus initiative announced in February 2008. It is unclear at this stage what impact Schools Plus may have on the work of school boards of trustees.

Importance of quality achievement information

The extent to which a board can plan for and monitor improved student outcomes depends on the quality of the achievement information it receives. In its 2007 report on the collection and use of assessment information in schools, ERO found that only 44 % of the schools analysed used good assessment information to give an accurate picture of the achievement of students across the school. This suggests that the capacity to focus on improving student outcomes is not just a challenge for boards, it is a challenge for the wider system.

Other responsibilities continue to dominate

Despite this progress the research also suggests that other responsibilities take up a significant amount of board time and still tend to dominate. Robinson and Ward (2004) found that although there is evidence that boards are now focusing more on student achievement, the many other things for which boards are responsible still tend to dominate what they do.

In a survey of primary school trustees (NZCER 2007) boards reported being "most likely to spend more of their time on financial management, followed by property/maintenance, and monitoring school progress." Hands-on property and financial management are not properly the core business of governing boards, however schools often lack other support to ensure these tasks are done, and so they fall to the board by default. As noted elsewhere in this report, the risks associated with

failing to deal with them, even at the expense of the board's governance role, is often unacceptable.

The NZCER secondary schools survey found that while trustees see benefits from their work for the school, 61% now think that boards have too much administrative responsibility and they show no signs of wanting to take on any more. (Wylie, C., 2007, p. 43).

It is important though to distinguish between the work that board members do as part of their governance role and their other role as active members of their school community. Board members may also volunteer as parent helpers, fundraisers, or in other roles around their school. It is unclear at this stage how clearly this distinction has been reflected in survey design to date.

This suggests that boards are very aware that the time they spend on practical management of school business such as finance and property is inappropriate, but may be unable to find suitable alternative ways of ensuring they are dealt with satisfactorily.

Rural and low-decile schools

Schools in rural and isolated areas, and those serving students in low socio-economic areas, are more likely than other schools to have difficulty in a number of areas, including recruiting the right mix of people onto their boards. An ERO report on small primary schools (1999) identified a number of challenges often faced by small schools, among them the relatively small pool of parents from which trustees could be drawn.

The challenge is exacerbated in very small schools with teaching principals who can find themselves carrying much of the administrative load unaided (Ministry of Education, 2007). In those circumstances the combination of stresses on school leadership at board and principal level can leave a school especially at risk.

Low-decile schools in other areas can also find it difficult to attract people with the skills needed to govern effectively for the same reasons. (Wylie, 2007)

Building leadership capacity

While school leadership, both at principal and board level, is a major factor in improving student achievement, there is now substantially more research into the impact on student outcomes of different leadership styles and focus in principals than in boards. Robust enquiry into the contribution boards can make to student success has not yet been undertaken in New Zealand at the same level as the current BES research into effective principal leadership. Evidence-based policy to promote effective board leadership is therefore missing from the New Zealand scene. Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2007), who have studied the variables that combine to make principals effective, identify five dimensions of school leadership that make a positive impact on learning outcomes:

- establishing goals and expectations
- strategic resourcing
- planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
- promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
- ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

The most important finding of their research is the significant impact on students of instructional leadership achievement over other styles of leadership by principals. They found that the more the professional leader of the school is focused on the core business of learning, the better the outcomes for students.

Principal appointment and performance monitoring

One of the key tasks for a board as the employer of the school's staff is appointing and managing the performance of the school principal: drafting the principal's job specification, establishing performance criteria against which to measure performance, and following up with regular performance appraisal. Most boards seek external assistance with at least some of these tasks. (Wylie 2007 ERO 2007)

The 2006 NZCER survey of secondary trustees found that 96% of boards that had appointed a principal sought external advice. ERO (2007) identified that this is generally being done well. However, boards must find their own advice and support for principal appointment and appraisal. Some boards report having difficulty knowing where to go for quality support. Work with others indicates that the quality and consistency of the advice they receive can vary.

The quality of applicants for principal positions was raised as a concern in the NZCER secondary survey. Less than half of the secondary boards that had gone through a recruitment process were pleased with the quality of applicants (Wylie 2007). Concerns about the quality of applicants for principal positions must raise concerns about the ability of boards to deliver the high quality outcomes they are accountable for. A board that has any doubts about the capacity of its principal to undertake the role - whether or not they were the best candidate available - may have serious difficulty maintaining an effective governance role. This may be especially true for small, isolated, and rural schools, where the impact is less likely to be mitigated by compensating strengths in other senior staff.

Researchers both here and internationally point to the tensions implicit in appraising the principal when he or she is both a member of the board and an employee of the board (Carver & Carver, 2001; Dean et al, 2007). Although this is not unusual in the world of corporate directorships it is unique in the context of educational management. There is tension between the need for a good working relationship, and the need for honesty and challenge, as indeed there is in any relationship. Good practice

guidelines for boards in conducting principal appraisals¹⁰ have been circulated to schools in 2007. It is too soon to identify the effect of implementing these guidelines.

How governance affects student achievement

The relationship between governance and student achievement is complex and its transmission is indirect (ERO, 2007).

Traditionally, research such as the meta-analysis by Rentoul and Rosanowski et al (2000) found little empirical evidence of a direct causal relationship between school self-governance and improved student outcomes, or of superiority in terms of educational outcomes for any particular governance or ownership model. Given that this study was published the year before the Education Standards Act (2001) enforced the current focus on student retention, engagement, and achievement that result is perhaps not surprising. Their analysis does, however, identify positive, if indirect, effects of school governance on educational outcomes. These include:

- increased teacher involvement and enthusiasm for reforms
- sense of involvement and empowerment among stakeholders
- increased flexibility in use of resources and involvement of the community
- strong interest in professional development and a culture of improvement.

More recent evidence is now appearing which suggests there is a direct link between governance and student achievement. (Rice et al, 2001.) International studies are also beginning to highlight the importance of school culture and ethos in determining the broader and longer-term impact of schooling on student outcomes over their lifetime in areas such as health and citizenship (OECD, 2007).

Implications for research

New Zealand based evidence shows that good governance does contribute to student achievement, as well as the culture of a school, and good boards work as a team. (Wylie, 2007, p. 15) A key feature of well-governed schools is a strong focus by trustees on student learning and achievement. "Improving student achievement is central to successful governance. ...However, poor governance is more likely to correlate with lower than expected levels of achievement" (ERO, 2007 p. 1).

This suggests that the government's stance of holding boards of trustees accountable for student achievement is valid. If governance was found to be unrelated to student achievement, it would be hard to justify holding Boards accountable for it.

The leadership Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) is now producing useful evidence-based conclusions about the specific role of principals in the New Zealand education sector. Although a link between school governance and student achievement has

¹⁰ The Ministry of Education, NZSTA and experienced appraisal practitioners, including Associate Professor Eileen Piggot-Irvine, Murray Fletcher and Tim White, developed and agreed on the framework to guide boards in effective practice when managing their responsibility for principal appraisal.

been hard to establish to date, it is difficult to know whether this is because the links are insubstantial or because researchers have simply not been asking the questions that would identify them.

It is tempting to conclude that the findings of the BES give a steer about what boards should focus on in order to direct and support quality student outcomes and that the board's main impact on student retention, engagement, and achievement is in their responsibility for recruitment, appraisal, and professional development of the principal and staff. All of these do have an impact on the quality of teaching and leadership. However, discussion of the board's role is not yet based on similarly rigorous evidence, but is informed largely by the incidental findings of research focusing on the principal's role.

Overseas research on how governance affects student outcomes

Overseas, similar research that has focussed on the impact of governing bodies on student outcomes has begun to show that governance at the board level does impact significantly on student achievement, engagement, and retention (Rice et al, 2001).

In 2002, a US research team studied the role of five Iowa school boards in student achievement over a five-year period. The research team studied changes in school conditions that support improvement, changes in beliefs, and changes in student achievement. The preliminary analysis, after three years of collaborative work with the pilot districts, revealed significant information about key behaviours of the board/superintendent team that appear to positively influence district efforts to improve student achievement.

As a result of this work, the research team has been able to define:

- five main roles of the board;
- seven key areas of board performance that boards assume as they carry out these roles;
- the knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for boards to perform in these ways; and
- board development strategies that appear to be effective in supporting boards in performing the five roles.

New Zealand research on how governance affects student outcomes

New Zealand policy makers are still working from a relatively limited knowledge base compared to the evidence collected about the role of teachers and principals. We simply have insufficient evidence to understand the role boards play in the observed differences in student achievement between schools in New Zealand.

Findings from the consultation

The survey

Focus questions for the groups facilitated by NZSTA were:

- What are the strengths of the present system?
- What is not working well? What could we do better?
- What would help to make the system better?
- Do we need to raise the value of trusteeship?

Answers were used to develop the survey to all schools. Feedback from the focus groups aligned very closely with the responses received from the wider survey.

The survey was sent to all boards of trustees via the principal and chair. Because of the tight timeframes initially set for the stocktake, responses were required in two weeks from the launch date¹¹. Respondents were able to answer the survey as individuals or agree on a single response from their board. A number of email responses were also received that expanded on or substituted for the survey form. These have been considered along with the questionnaire responses. A full analysis of the responses is provided at Appendix 4.

Q1: Are trustees clear about their roles and functions?

Responses indicate that most trustees are confident that they and their colleagues understand the role of the board well. When asked to identify what boards need to do to be effective rather than their actual role, 96% of respondents say strategy and governance, and 93% say monitoring the school's overall performance.

When the question is reframed in terms of the board's actual role at their school, the number of responses relating to governance and strategic management drops to 87%. In other words, even when boards are clear about their role and responsibilities, they may still be frustrated in their desire to focus on high level governance if they perceive that the basic day-to-day needs of their school are not being met.

Trustees are generally very confident that their principal has a sound understanding of the board's role, but less confident that parents and staff do. Respondents identified this as one area that has the potential to significantly improve their ability to govern their schools effectively.

Q2: Are responsibilities for school administration suitably balanced between school boards and the Ministry of Education?

Respondents most often identified those areas where contracts or policies are centrally developed by the ministry and then devolved to individual boards to implement, such as staffing, as having room for improvement. Other areas identified

¹¹ Standard NZSTA practice is to allow a minimum of 6 weeks for board surveys, to enable boards to include the survey in their meeting agenda, consider it at their next monthly meeting, and respond.

are property management, processes for resourcing of government initiatives and policies and support for administrative and regulatory compliance tasks.

This suggests there is room for improvement in the way responsibilities for administrative compliance are managed between boards and the Ministry of Education. However, since boards are self-managing, and therefore, by definition, responsible for everything that happens in the school, it was noted by some that “balance of responsibilities” was not the most useful frame for addressing these issues.

Q3: Do the current arrangements for determining board composition need strengthening to ensure schools have sustainable and competent boards?

Responses indicate the current arrangements are generally adequate, particularly where schools are able to co-opt or select trustees with specific skills onto the board. There is sometimes tension between the democratic process of electing trustees to boards and the need to ensure a full complement of the skills and experience that boards need to bring to the governance role. These are largely addressed by co-option of trustees and professional development for trustees new to their roles.

Although the provisions for co-opting, selecting, and /or appointing board members seem to be adequate in the majority of cases, some schools, in particular small and rural schools, more often identified difficulty in accessing the full complement of necessary skills and experience to meet the increasing expectations for good governance. (See also Q5 below)

Q4: Are the current arrangements suitably flexible for the 21st century (this will allow the stocktake to consider multi-school boards, multi-site schools, and shared governance arrangements)

Survey responses were not particularly helpful in answering this question. It is apparent that some boards are not completely aware of the flexibility that already exists in the system to vary the size and composition of their board.

Q5: How can we ensure that boards have the skills and knowledge needed for effective governance?

Responses indicate that current provisions for co-option of trustees with specific skills are meeting the needs of many, but not all schools. It is evident that not all boards are aware of the full range of options available to them. It was suggested that more proactive measures, such as a regional pool of specialist advisors or field staff, who were available to work with individuals and boards and attend their board meetings, would help to ensure the full complement of skills and experience is available to all schools.

Q6: How we can improve board training and support?

There is a general consensus that trustees need both formal short-course training and on-the-job training in the form of mentoring and on-site professional development to be made more widely available. Trustees and potential trustees should be more actively encouraged to access professional development opportunities. There are

also issues about the consistency of messages that boards receive from different sources, including national and regional representatives of the Ministry, NZSTA, ERO, Unions and other contracted trainers.

Q7: How can we assist schools to more easily access important areas of expertise, such as legal and personnel management expertise?

According to the survey trustees believe there are several areas where they can be better supported to govern effectively.

- **Improve public awareness.** Over half of all respondents (57%) believe better understanding in the community of what boards can and can't do would enable the board to govern more effectively. 24% want more support from the community.
- **Provide benchmarking and accountability tools** that enable boards to measure whether they are doing a good job (53%)
- **Make trustee professional development more available.** Trustee professional development is currently targeted to schools at risk of failure. Many respondents believe that a boost in training provision will help them operate more effectively, whether by providing more training for all trustees (38%), making it compulsory for all trustees (29%), compulsory before you can become a trustee (16%) making it available earlier (24%) or providing more training for board chairs (25%).
- **Provide more access to advisers.** A significant number of responses identify having an 'expert' adviser or mentor available to attend meetings (36%), more formal networking with other boards (32%) more contact by way of peer support from other boards (24%), or help with how to write policies (22%) as useful strategies for improving board effectiveness.
- **Improve communication.** Trustees would like clearer guidance on how to undertake the things they are expected to do (36%), clearer guidance on what to do (33%), more specific instructions from the Ministry about what to do (26%), fewer specific instructions from the Ministry about what to do (17%), and help with understanding educational language (31%).

Less frequently identified mechanisms for supporting the work of boards are more training for principals (19%), help with managing relationships (16%), or a single board for a cluster group of schools (12%).

Ministry consultation with principals, ministry staff, limited statutory managers, school commissioners, and board trainers.

Feedback from stakeholder groups was recorded as a set of indicative issues, not quantitative analysis. Feedback from these groups suggest that boards have shifted

their attention to focus more on student achievement but there are constraints that distract or prevent boards from maintaining that focus. The distractions most often cited were property and finance, managing compliance requirements, and personnel issues.

It was also evident that boards interpret their governance role in different ways depending on a number of factors including (but not limited to) the size of the school, location, school decile, past history, and the relationship between the principal and board chair.

At every meeting participants agreed that the strengths of the system also have the potential to be weaknesses. For example, the value that trustees have added was cited as one of the strengths of the system, but lack of consistency in the capacity and capability of trustees was cited as a weakness.

Most consistently identified strengths

There was general consensus among participants at every meeting that the main strengths of the system are:

Responsiveness

- decision making close to where the students/children are
- schools reflect the aims and aspirations of their communities
- flexibility, diversity, and innovation
- schools are able to influence their community
- schools are accountable to the community.

Community engagement and ownership

- trustees committed to, and supportive of, schools
- trustees representative of the school community
- partnerships established between communities and schools
- local parents and the community being more involved in schools.

Trustees add value

- a diverse range of skills and abilities
- experience that has built up over time
- working in partnership as a professional team
- the provision to co-opt for particular skills.

Most consistently identified weaknesses

There was general consensus among participants at every meeting that weaknesses of the system are:

Variable capacity and capability of trustees

- rural, isolated, and low-decile schools more often say they experience difficulty recruiting trustees;

- high turnover can undermine sustainability and continuity on boards;
- if a board lacks governance-related skills and experience then trustees can struggle with their role; and
- there can sometimes be too much reliance on principals for board induction.

Impact of tensions in the board/principal relationship on effective governance

- can make it difficult to establish clarity between roles and functions of a board;
- can undermine the ability for boards to make decisions;
- can result in the principal acting as a gatekeeper and withholding information from the board;
- can mean that decision making often becomes more focused on management issues rather than strategic governance; and
- can place greater demands and expectations on principals, especially in terms of reporting.

Principal appraisal and appointment

Participants identified this as an area that can “go wrong”. Particular issues are:

- professional/education knowledge to inform decision making;
- consistency and uncertainty around the use and quality of advisers;
- appointment processes; and
- professional development for principals.

Most consistently identified opportunities

Build the capacity and capability of trustees

- give boards access to a pool of expert advisers/field officers
- make training compulsory for all trustees
- provide pre-election training for potential trustees

Improve current trustee training

- develop standards and minimum requirements
- provide more targeted, tailored, and in-house training to boards
- train boards and principals to share and analyse student achievement data
- train principals on communication skills and relationship management
- provide training that leads to a qualification (accreditation)
- support boards more proactively through mentoring
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of boards
- make the Ministry of Education more proactive about providing leadership and direction.

Provide boards with more tools and system support

- improve access to information and student achievement data
- provide best practice models and templates
- provide feedback on annual reports
- make it easier for boards to access more informal support to get help early before things go wrong.

Strengthen the process for principal appointments and appraisal

- education professionals undertake principal appraisals
- ensure rigorous processes by establishing standards and protocols
- encourage/enforce boards accessing professional advice

Enhance board composition

- stagger elections or increase the term of the board
- promote alternative board constitutions
- review board fee structures and financial incentives to be a trustee
- encourage broader membership of boards, e.g., ECE parents.

Results of consultation with Kura Kaupapa Māori

The themes and issues most commonly raised during consultation with kura were:

Invest in effective leadership. Many people asked for greater investment in leadership development for principals and board chairs. Effective leadership from the principal and board chairperson is critical if a kura is to be effective in raising achievement.

Enhance training and support for Māori boards. There are few people with knowledge of both tikanga Māori and good governance who can advise boards. Te Runanganui provides some support to boards of kura kaupapa Māori, but for kura which do not operate under Te Aho Matua there is no dedicated support.

Recognise different models of whanau involvement. Boards of kura negotiate with their communities about how to undertake their governance roles to reflect their tikanga.

This last point almost always includes involving whanau in decision-making. The extent of involvement varies. Some kura operate like a mainstream board, with trustees seeking input from whanau but being delegated by their communities to make governance decisions. Other kura operate a *whanau whakahaere* model in which whanau are expected to attend all meetings, decisions are arrived at through consensus, and the board acts as the legal entity which signs off decisions made by the whanau.

Some kura are interested in alternative governance arrangements in order to formalise their whanau-based ways of working. The Education Act allows considerable flexibility

for schools to propose alternative governance models, however like their mainstream counterparts, many kura appear to be unaware of this option.

Consultation with other stakeholders and sector commentators

All participants indicated their support for the way the consultation had been conducted, and for the direction of the stocktake feedback they were shown. Stakeholders generally indicated their agreement that the issues raised in the focus groups were consistent with their own or their organisation's views and did not contain any particular surprises.

Section 4: Discussion points from findings and feedback

It became evident through the consultation that there is considerable interest in the general health of school governance in New Zealand. There is also a significant interest in continuing the dialogue with government to find constructive ways to move forward on some of the issues identified.

Continuous Improvement

A culture of continuous improvement is well established among boards. The expectations that trustees and others have of board performance have evolved significantly since the inception of Tomorrow's Schools.

This is reflected in the change in emphasis from the early "*anyone can do it*" to the current emphasis on filling a portfolio of governance skills. A 2007 publication by the Ministry of Education and NZSTA noted that the collective competencies a board is expected to demonstrate include: visionary leadership, strategic thinking, analytical thinking, practical skills, communication skills, team skills, financial and legal understanding, risk management, people management, knowledge of education environment, integrity, curiosity, interpersonal skills, commitment, and a genuine interest in the schooling community and its students¹². Trustees can no longer be regarded simply as well-intentioned volunteers, but are evolving – in many cases have already evolved – into confident boards governing crown entities.¹³ Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in some areas.

- Schools that are poorly governed require targeted assistance.
- All boards and perhaps even the pool of potential trustees in the wider community need better information, better clarity within the education system, better recognition (not necessarily financial) of their skills and the value of the work they do, and access to ongoing professional development to help them continue to raise their game.

As with any electoral system, boards of trustees also face significant risks associated with high membership turnover, particularly at election time. The risks associated with this "constant churn" can however be mitigated by targeted and ongoing professional development and support for members throughout their trusteeship.

¹² NZSTA & Ministry of Education (2007). *A Board's Guide to Effective Succession Planning*. p7

¹³ Although school boards of trustees operate within the not-for-profit framework, each is a duly constituted official crown entity, and accountable directly to the government for the effective use and maintenance of community assets, the effectiveness and welfare of its employees, and the effective implementation of government policy, including student achievement. This legal accountability to the crown is balanced by boards' moral accountability to their communities.

Support for evidence-based decision making

Although boards have been charged with governing our schools for 18 years, the explicit focus on student achievement as the prime indicator of performance is much more recent. While there is considerable evidence that schools are adapting to the change in focus from organisational efficiency to student achievement, the tools and information to support this focus are still being developed.

To heighten the level of evidence-based decision-making that is now expected of boards, a whole school approach to collating and interpreting formative assessment data is required. Teaching staff need to be given the support and professional development to collect and interpret the information required, principals need to be able to collate and present it appropriately, and trustees need to continue developing their ability to interpret and query the information presented to them to inform their decision-making.

Aligning government policy-making and regulation

As noted elsewhere in this report, while the policy discourse suggests that high-level governance is the proper focus of professional development and support for boards, the risks associated with losing focus on the daily tasks that schools struggle to stay on top of appear to be unacceptable to a significant number of boards.

Government policy-making and regulation aimed at crown entities is often poorly tailored for schools. The resulting poor fit of policies and regulations can increase the compliance burden on schools.

Valuing trusteeship

Trustees responding to the governance survey identified a perception that their role is not valued. Although research and academic discourse about schools are beginning to recognise the contribution boards of trustees make to the success of their school, there is a tendency still to limit discussion of school leadership to the principal and senior staff, rather than acknowledging the partnership between staff and board. If boards are to provide strategic leadership in schools then they need to be more consistently recognised as part of the leadership structure. Research studies focusing on the nature of the linkages between good governance and student achievement will help here.

Trustees responding to the governance survey also indicated that there needs to be a greater awareness among the community at large of the board's roles and responsibilities. It may be that a higher profile for boards of trustees would increase the pool of local people with expertise who are available to assist boards. In some cases an increased awareness of trustees' role in the community at large would also help to mitigate the competing pressures on the board from inappropriate community expectations.

Some way of formally recognising the skills that school trustees are expected to bring to the role, and the value they add to their school, might be a useful way of promoting this. While some trustees believe that there should be greater financial recognition for their role¹⁴, there appears to be an equally strong perception that the contribution skilled trustees make to their schools would be trivialised by defining it in that way.

The stocktake has identified a need to make governance more visible, to be clearer about valuing the governance role in our schools, and find ways to acknowledge the skills and experience that trustees bring to their role.

¹⁴ Boards are free to set their own meeting fees for trustees. However, the standard meeting fee for school trustees has remained at the \$55 per meeting (\$75 for board chair) originally specified in 1989. This compares with a standard \$250 meeting fee for tertiary or health boards.

Section 5: Conclusions and Summary of Finding's

Overall, school governance in New Zealand is generally in good shape.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in some areas. This section summarises the areas identified in this stocktake and suggests some practical responses to address them.

Trustees are clear about their roles and functions

On the whole, trustees are clear about their roles and functions. Their ability to fulfil those roles and functions are constrained by systemic issues such as the frequency of change in board membership, the continuing evolution of the board's role to match changing expectations, the availability of quality assessment data from principals and staff on which to base decisions, resourcing issues, mixed messages from central government, and compliance requirements.

What can we do better?

- **Improve consistency and clarity** of communications from government agencies and contractors.
- **Provide ongoing professional development for trustees** to mitigate the effects of high membership turnover and assist in sound decision-making.
- **Provide ongoing professional development for principals and teachers** to improve consistency and availability of high quality student achievement data to inform board decision making.
- **Undertake a program of research** at the same level as the current BES and focused on effective school governance to support evidence-based policy promoting continuous improvement in school governance and leadership at board level.

Responsibilities for school administration are not always suitably balanced between school boards and the Ministry of Education.

School administration tasks, particularly in property and financial management, are consistently identified as detracting from boards' ability to focus on high-level governance and improving student achievement. Compliance issues may be generated by other government departments and agencies, which often seem to be unaware of the implications for school boards of trustees.

What can we do better?

- **Reduce administrative requirements** around property and financial management, and/or provide additional support to individual schools or local service centres to assist with these tasks

- **Ensure that boards of trustees are consistently recognised** as a significant group of crown agencies, and that boards of trustees are routinely consulted early and thoroughly enough on initiatives which may create compliance issues for schools.

Current arrangements for determining board composition do not need strengthening to ensure schools have sustainable and competent boards.

Reports from the Office of the Auditor General and the Education Review Office consistently indicate that the majority of school boards of trustees are managing their affairs well. The stocktake has found no evidence to suggest that the current arrangements for determining board composition need to be changed.

As with any electoral system, boards of trustees face significant risks associated with high membership turnover, particularly at election time. The risks associated with this “constant churn” can be mitigated by targeted and ongoing professional development and support for members throughout their trusteeship.

What can we do better?

- **Provide ongoing professional development** for all trustees throughout the election cycle
- **Review the staggered elections process** and the quality of information surrounding it

Current arrangements are not suitably flexible for the 21st century to allow for multi-school boards, multi-site schools, and shared governance arrangements

The status quo is not sufficiently flexible to allow for different governance structures. Changes are required in order to remove administrative barriers to the continuing improvement and evolution of effective school governance arrangements to meet the demands of the 21st century.

For a large number of schools the traditional governance, management, and administration structures are adequate for their current and anticipated needs. However, those schools which are for a variety of reasons outside the mainstream find that there are practical difficulties in implementing alternative governance structures. These difficulties range from being unable to nominate more than one principal on multi-school sites, to identifying appropriate accountability structures for kura where there is more direct whanau involvement in governance.

What can we do better?

- **Reduce obstacles** for schools wishing to implement 1-to-many or many-to-1 governance structures within the current model of self-managing schools.

- **Develop and adopt a future-focused definition of school** that is not defined by its physical campus
- **Amend the existing classification system for schools** (eg, primary, contributing, area etc) and other aspects of the Ministry's administrative framework as necessary to provide sufficient flexibility for different types of schools to emerge.
- **Develop a seamless administrative framework for the school sector** that minimises the obstacles to innovative and future-focused school governance and administrative arrangements.

Trustees and boards do have the skills and knowledge needed for effective governance.

On the whole, boards and their members have appropriate skills and knowledge and govern their schools effectively. There is however a small minority of schools in which the governance role is not sufficiently well understood and discharged. Current strategies for identifying and intervening to provide appropriate support for "at risk" boards short of statutory intervention need strengthening.

What can we do better?

- **Provide ongoing professional development for all boards** to enhance the emerging culture of continuous improvement.
- **Provide boards with better tools** for assessing their own performance.
- **Continue to identify and support boards at risk.**
- **Provide earlier and more comprehensive advice** and support for boards who request assistance (self-refer).
- **Provide more practical support** for boards through a network of trusteeship advisers or field officers.

Training and support should be made more accessible to all boards

Training is currently provided free of charge only to trustees new to their roles, or to boards considered to be "at risk". There are questions about the adequacy of coverage of free-to-boards training, the consistency of governance messages being delivered, and whether those who elect to attend sessions are necessarily those who most need it. Compulsory training for trustees and training before taking office were suggested in a number of forums throughout the consultation.

What can we do better?

- **Strengthen the culture of continuous improvement** by prioritising ongoing professional development for all trustees, rather than those deemed to be already "at risk".
- **Strengthen support services** to boards by developing field officer advisory networks along the lines of existing personnel / industrial advisers.
- **Develop a shared understanding of effective governance** and what it looks like in New Zealand schools, to match the developing understanding of effective principalship.

How can we assist schools to more easily access important areas of expertise, such as legal and personnel management expertise?

Because New Zealand schools are self-managing, it is important that support for boards is provided in ways that are consistent with boards exercising that autonomy. The field officer model will work well in this context, whereas attempting to regulate board behaviour will not.

The Ministry of Education contracts NZSTA to provide practical support for boards in the personnel / industrial relations area through the provision of local advisers who are available to provide on-site support, and through an 0800 trusteeship telephone help line. Boards of trustees have evolved substantially in the past two decades and many boards now have access to high quality professional advice over a range of areas. However this is not universally the case.

What can we do better?

- Develop a nationally consistent approach for **ensuring boards have access to a broad range of quality proactive support** (especially for principal appointment and performance management) at least to the level currently provided for personnel and industrial relations.

How else can school boards of trustees be better supported to focus on directing and supporting student achievement and retention in their school?

The findings of the stocktake suggest that boards of trustees can best be supported by ensuring a clear and streamlined institutional framework for them to work in and providing sufficient advice and support for them to do their work.

The consensus among stakeholders consulted for the stocktake is that improving the effectiveness with which boards of trustees govern our schools is “not rocket science”. Rather, it is a matter of providing the agreed resources and information in a timely and effective manner, and being responsive to the variances that schools experience.

What can we do better?

- **Streamline and synchronise** government initiatives in the school sector to enable boards, principals and staff to respond effectively.
- **Develop more proactive processes** for consulting boards and responding constructively to the issues they identify as presenting barriers to effective governance and student achievement.

References:

Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling*. Best evidence synthesis. Wellington, Ministry of Education.

Carver, J. and Carver, M. (2001). Carver's policy governance model in non-profit organisations, *Gouvernance-revue internationale*. Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 30-48.

Dean, C., Dyson, A., Gallannaugh, F., Howes, A., and Raffo, C. (2007). *Schools, governors and disadvantage*. Manchester, York Publishing Services.

ERO (1999). *Small Primary Schools*. Wellington, Education Review Office.

ERO (2007). *School Governance: An Overview*. Wellington, Education Review Office.

ERO (2007). *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information in Schools*. Wellington, Education Review Office.

Fiske, E., and Ladd, H. (2000). *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale*. Washington D.C, Brookings Institute Press.

Ministry of Education (2007). *New Zealand country report on improving school leadership: OECD background report*. Available from <http://www.leadspace.govt.nz/leadership/oecdreport.php>.

Office of the Auditor General (2007). Central government: Results of the 2005/06 audits. Part 7. Available from <http://www.oag.govt.nz/central-govt/2005-06/part7>

Picot, B., Ramsay, P., Rosemergy, M., Wereta, W. and Wise, C. (1988): *Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education*. Report of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration, Wellington.

Rentoul and Rosanowski (2000): *The effects of school governance, ownership, organisation and management on educational outcomes*. Christchurch, College of Education Report to the Ministry of Education.

Rice, R., Delagardelle, M., Buckton, M., Jons, C., Lueders, W., Vens, M. J., et al. (2001). *The lighthouse inquiry: School board/superintendent behaviours in school districts with extreme differences in student achievement*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association 2001 Annual Meeting.

Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., and Lloyd, C. (2007): *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why*, Draft for International Quality Assurance.

Wellington, Ministry of Education.

Robinson, V. and Ward, L. (2005): Lay governance of New Zealand schools: An educational, democratic or managerialist activity? *Journal of Education Administration*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 170-186.

Robinson, V., Ward L., and Timperley, H. (2003): The difficulties of school governance, *Educational management and administration*. Vol. 31, No. 3, 263-281.

Wylie, C. (2007): *School Governance in New Zealand - how is it working?* New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington.

Wylie, C. (2007): *A snapshot of New Zealand primary schools in 2007 - some key findings from the NZCER national survey.* www.nzcer.org.nz