

# POLICY Quarterly

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## The crisis in tertiary education funding\*

This special issue of *Policy Quarterly* focuses on education policy issues in Aotearoa New Zealand. Particular attention is given to the compulsory sector. But just as our schools face many serious financial, pedagogical, and technological challenges, so do our tertiary education institutions.

Currently, most of the nation's eight universities are running deficits and are planning substantial staff reductions (e.g. over 10 percent in some cases). Large staff cuts are also underway at Te Pūkenga – The New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.

For tertiary sector staff, conditions are stressful and uncertain. Indeed, at least one of the guest editors of this special issue risks losing her job.

Why is there a tertiary education funding crisis? And why has it not been averted, or at least better managed, by the Tertiary Education Commission – a Crown entity established in 2003 (on advice from a governmental body on which I served during 2000-01) – to provide competent oversight and stewardship of the tertiary sector?

No doubt, indifferent management and unwise capital expenditures have contributed to the financial problems in several tertiary institutions. But the fundamental cause of the current sector-wide crisis is the tertiary education funding framework?

For several decades the framework's deficiencies were masked by growing enrolments of domestic and international students. But this long period of expansion ended several years ago. With the passing of the 'golden weather', the framework's imperfections have been vividly exposed.

First, for many years the increases in tuition and training subsidy rates for domestic students have fallen behind the rate of inflation. For instance, the increase in subsidy rates was a meagre 1.2 percent in 2022 and 2.75 percent in 2023. Meanwhile, the consumer price index (CPI) rose by 7.2 percent during 2022, and is expected by the Treasury to rise by more than 6 percent in 2023.

The cumulative impact is telling: public funding per domestic student declined by close to 16 percent in the decade to the end of 2022; it is likely to fall a further 3-4 percent in 2023, bringing the total to around 20 percent. This is a large reduction in real per capita funding. Bear in mind that tuition subsidies constitute about a third of our universities' income.

Second, governments have long regulated domestic students' fees. For instance, the annual maximum fee movement rate was limited to 1.7 percent in 2022 and 2.75 percent in 2023. Hence, tertiary institutions have been unable to compensate for the falling real value of their tuition subsidies by raising their fees (in a context where domestic fee income is almost a fifth of their income).

Third, somewhat unexpectedly, domestic enrolments in the country's universities fell by around 5,000 (or close to 4 percent) in full-time equivalents in 2022. They are forecast to fall by a similar amount in 2023, with minimal medium-term growth expected. This outlook reflects various educational, demographic, and economic factors.

Fourth, the pandemic and related travel restrictions dramatically reduced international student enrolments. Revenue from this source within the university sector fell to about a third of pre-COVID levels in 2022. Admittedly, enrolments are increasing again, with applications for new first-year international students being similar in 2023 to pre-Covid levels. But overall enrolments are unlikely to return to pre-Covid levels for 3-4 years.

Fifth, the tertiary sector has been hampered by the country's abysmal level of research funding as a percentage of GDP. Despite repeated promises by multiple governments to improve overall investment levels, little has changed. To be sure, our tertiary institutions have access to a range of research funds, including the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF). But total expenditure by our universities on research per full-time equivalent student (at about US\$4,000) is barely two-thirds the OECD average. And governments have consistently failed to increase funds like the PBRF to reflect CPI movements, improved research performance, or student enrolments.

Finally, our tertiary institutions have only small endowments. They thus lack the financial buffers available to many long-established universities elsewhere. The University of Auckland, for instance, has the largest endowment of our eight universities. But at around NZ\$300 million in 2021, this is tiny compared to the endowments of, say, the University of Melbourne (about NZ\$1.5 billion), the University of Oxford (about NZ\$13 billion), or Harvard University (about NZ\$80 billion).

What are the solutions? Currently, the government controls nearly 80 percent of tertiary institutions' revenue. Hence, only policy changes can rectify the funding shortfalls.

In June 2023 the Labour government promised an extra \$128 million for the tertiary sector during 2024-25. Including the increase of 5 percent announced in the 2023 budget, tuition subsidies in 2024 will be about 9 percent higher than in 2023. While welcome, this response is totally inadequate.

Five additional policy changes are urgently needed: the comprehensive indexation of tuition subsidies and key research funds to the CPI and/or other relevant indices; a substantial increase in the PBRF (e.g. from around \$315 million per annum to \$500 million); adjustments to tuition subsidy rates to better reflect the costs of provision; the removal of caps on domestic fees (or at least provision for significant medium-term increases); and a more collaborative approach by tertiary institutions to the provision of vital programmes with modest student enrolments (e.g. foreign languages).

Equally important, we need far better stewardship of the sector by the Tertiary Education Commission and the Ministry of Education.

Meanwhile, the country risks losing many talented academics. Without question, this constitutes a lamentable policy failure.

Jonathan Boston – Editor

Bronwyn E. Wood and Joanna Higgins

# Complex Education Policy for Complex Times?

## Introducing this special issue

Any glance at education in New Zealand right now reveals a multitude of issues. In the schooling sector the declining rates of literacy and numeracy have been in the news, following a 2020 UNICEF report which found that only 64.6% of Aotearoa New Zealand 15-year-olds had basic proficiency in reading and maths (Hood and Hughson, 2022). Covid-19 has had a negative impact on students' wellbeing and also contributed to significant declines in learning, especially for lower decile schools and children in Auckland (Education Review Office, 2021). While students' wellbeing

has improved somewhat in 2023, the loss of learning is still significant, with more than half of principals reporting concerns with writing, and growing behavioural issues and inequalities in student achievement (Education Review Office, 2023). Covid has also had an ongoing impact on attendance, with regular attendance still only around 51% in mid-2023 (Devine, Stewart and Couch, 2023; Education Review Office, 2023). Early childhood, primary and secondary teachers have been involved in protracted strikes and pay disputes in the first half of 2023, citing burnout, workload and staff shortages as current issues (McCulloch, 2023). And in the tertiary sector, alongside deficits (\$86 million) facing Te Pūkenga, the new national polytechnic, as many as five of the eight New Zealand universities are facing deficits and staff and programme cuts following the fall in international and domestic student numbers during the Covid-19 pandemic and in 2023 (Gerritsen, 2023).

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While it is hard to say exactly why these problems have emerged to such an extent right now, it is clear that education policy plays a crucial role in explaining both where we are at, and where we are going.

Explanations of the current situation frequently include reference to multiple global crises. However, Max Rashbrooke (2023) recently warned of overclaiming a ‘polycrisis’ that includes the challenges of the pandemic, climate change and democratic governance, among others, and reminds us that our times are not radically different from previous eras, such as the first part of the 20th century, when major challenges were encountered and worked through.

In this special issue of *Policy Quarterly*

2017). In a classic study of school-based policy implementation, Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) found that identical policies were interpreted and ‘translated’ in completely different ways in four British secondary schools – and with differing levels of success – according to local school culture, teacher beliefs and local contexts. So, while policy change may appear to be the ultimate solution for an educational issue, this study reminds us that policies merely ‘create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set’ (Ball, 1994, p.19). And as Lucas (in this issue), a principal of a large state secondary school in New Zealand for

## In New Zealand, neoliberalism has taken a particular shape as a result of the Tomorrow’s Schools policy since 1989 and the associated quasi-marketplace competition it established between schools.

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we invited authors from across different sectors to reflect on some of these contemporary education policy issues from their perspective as educational researchers, principals, policymakers and educational experts. Our intention was to interrogate contemporary education policy issues and contribute evidence-based and thoughtful reflections that could address the current ‘gaps’ in the research–policy–practice nexus.

We recognise at the outset that while it is easy to poke sticks at education and find problems, it is so much harder to fix it. Education issues are highly complex and require complex policy solutions. Education institutions sit within highly varied social, cultural and demographic communities and are in many ways microcosms of these communities, with all of their strengths and challenges (Mutch, 2006). In addition, successful policy outcomes depend not only upon designing good policies, but also upon managing their implementation (Bryk et al., 2015; Le Fevre, 2020; Viennet and Pont,

2022). 22 years, reminds us, the ‘churn’ of constant policy change is highly challenging and a strong and productive relationship between policymakers and school leaders is vital if a policy is to succeed.

In addition, policies can have completely unintended outcomes. A recent New Zealand example was the Better Public Services targets of the John Key National government, which aimed for 85% level 2 NCEA pass rates of all school students (Public Service Commission, 2018). While this policy appeared to advocate for higher student attainment, the unintended consequence was that schools became cleverer at shifting students towards ‘lighter weight’ achievement standards, which led to higher success rates in level 2 NCEA almost every subsequent year between 2011 and 2017 but, in sharp contradiction lower rates of University Entrance (Collins, 2019). This illustrates how education can be ‘gamed’ when encouraged by perverse policy. Unless policy also creates incentives for intended behaviours, it also fails.

With this in mind, we turn to some of the complex educational policy issues raised in this special issue.

One of the most enduring issues is the persistent inequalities that sit within and across New Zealand’s education. Despite the famous statement of C.E. Beeby, our longest-serving director of education, and Minister of Education Peter Fraser in 1939 that ‘every person, whatever his 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 the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers’, New Zealand education has never been entirely equal, nor entirely free. John O’Neill takes up this often-cited quote and asks the question: ‘can [this] statement still serve as an aspirational and inspirational call to action?’ For, despite the Beeby-Fraser ideal for education to be a public right for all, the principles of neoliberalism and ideas of education as a ‘private good’ and an ‘economic good’ have become pervasive.

In New Zealand, neoliberalism has taken a particular shape as a result of the Tomorrow’s Schools policy since 1989 and the associated quasi-marketplace competition it established between schools. As Barker outlines, Tomorrow’s Schools has led to high levels of local autonomy in New Zealand schools, but has also opened up schools to competition, marketisation and growing inequalities. Even the professional development offered to teachers today is marketised under this model and schools can pick and choose between facilitators and professional development directions (Smardon and Charteris, 2017), thus undermining any potential for cohesive messaging to teachers. Barker and O’Neill both look at the review of Tomorrow’s Schools (2018–19), which offered a chance to rework this deeply competitive model through substantial ‘cultural and structural transformation’ (Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019, p.11) in school governance, resourcing and structures. Both, however, reflect soberingly on this missed opportunity which resulted in a ‘reset’ rather than a ‘restructure’.

Education appears particularly prone to adopting new fads – and small nation states such as New Zealand appear even more capable of rapid (and often uncritical)

adoption of ‘new’ ideas (Stray and Wood, 2020). For example, our schools’ rapid adoption of digital technology across the education sector has led to New Zealand teens being some of the highest users of the internet in the OECD, with only Denmark, Sweden and Chile higher than their average of 42 hours per week online (Gerritsen, 2021). Data is now emerging that shows that aside from a few specific situations, device use at school is generally associated with poorer academic outcomes, even after accounting for students’ backgrounds (Sutcliffe, 2021). Policymakers would do well to ‘wait for the evidence’ before promoting the latest shiny new thing – as Dodgson highlights here in his critical essay on the rapid development of

artificial intelligence in the form of ChatGPT during the past year. In this article he reflects that while ChatGPT gives the perception of intelligence, it merely predicts what the next word will be. He cautions that humans’ propensity to anthropomorphise makes us gullible – susceptible to believing that this technology is delivering something that it cannot.

Not all that is happening in our education system is bad news. The revitalisation of te reo Māori in kōhanga reo, kura, wānanga, mainstream schools, polytechs and universities is something well worth celebrating. Mercury outlines how far Māori language policies have come since the 1970s, and reflects on what it might take to provide all New Zealand

schoolchildren with the ability to learn te reo. Using a ‘future-focused’ policy analysis, she anticipates the incremental steps it might take until this becomes exactly the ‘right thing’ to do. As her article shows, policymaking requires strategy, ‘radical incrementalism’ (Halpern and Mason, 2015) and courage.

As the articles in this special issue attest to, educational issues are complex and there is no silver bullet. Effective education policy matters and the future of our society and economy depends on tackling these enduring and emerging issues in ways which preserve human-centred education and create greater educational equality, outcomes and wellbeing for all students.

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John O'Neill

# The Beeby-Fraser ideal is it time to abandon it?

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## Abstract

In 1939, C.E. Beeby, the director of education, alongside the minister of education, Peter Fraser, made a statement that has endured in New Zealand educational folklore: that 'all persons, whatever their ability, rich or poor, whether they live in town or country, have a right as citizens to a free education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers'. This has underpinned aspirational visions of inclusive and egalitarian education in the past 80 years, but to what extent has this vision been realised, and is it still worthy of being an inspirational call to action? In this article, this statement call for a socially just education system is revisited, especially in light of the review of Tomorrow's Schools (2018–19).

**Keywords** inclusive education, Beeby, Fraser, Tomorrow's Schools, social justice

## Introduction

The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his 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 the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. (Fraser, 1939, pp.2–3)

In his speech to an education sector conference in 2003 about the fifth Labour government's policy statement, *Education Priorities for New Zealand*, the associate minister of tertiary education, Steve Maharey, observed that the government had drawn on the famous 1939 Beeby-Fraser statement (above) to challenge the prevailing ideology of marketisation and commodification of education. He glossed the statement by noting that Beeby was a visionary thinker and that 'his famous quote establishes a public good and right-of-citizenship basis for the education system' (Maharey, 2003). In 2018, launching the first of two national participatory democracy-style summits to 'co-design a common vision for the future of education and learning' for the next 30 years, then minister of education in the sixth Labour government, Chris Hipkins, similarly channelled the Beeby-Fraser statement and its origin story as a major

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inspiration for the Education Conversation  
| Kōrero Mātauranga.

In 2023 it seems clear that, irrespective of the wording of any idealised vision for education, it is now firmly positioned as both a public and private good by governments of the centre-left and centre-right. Various groups in society continue to argue vocally for an education that better fits their particular needs and aspirations, and the extent to which there is a commonality of vision for education is highly debatable. It therefore seems appropriate to question the assumptions that underpin the education system as it is being enacted today, rather than as it was imagined to become in 1939.

Should state education be free at the point of use? Should it be a common state education for all children and young people? And should it be provided solely by the state? In the decades following the Great Depression and the Second World War, as our modern welfare state emerged, the answer to all these questions seemed to be an unambiguous 'Yes'.

Over the last 35 years, views have changed. We have a workfare not a welfare state. Government now provides a partial subsidy towards the cost of early learning, schooling and post-compulsory education, while the proportion of user pays charges increases year by year. The politics of race, culture and faith demand highly differentiated approaches to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Devolved governance, decision rights and fundraising imperatives have led to a constant questioning of the authority of the state.

So, can the famous Beeby-Fraser statement still serve as an aspirational and inspirational call to action? If not, with what shall we replace it?

#### The review of Tomorrow's Schools

Four years ago, the final report of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, *Our Schooling Futures: stronger together* | *Whiria ngā kura tūātinini*, made only one oblique reference to the famous Beeby-Fraser statement, and that to the second sentence of the statement, not the first. The report stated as its first premise that te Tiriti o Waitangi and the rights of the child must be foundational to the governance, management and

Beeby  
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administration of the schooling system; that this 'cannot be allowed to remain a pious platitude'; and that the schooling system needs to be 'reoriented' so that learners/ākonga and their whānau are at the heart of decision making (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019, p.4).

Further on, the report reiterated that te Tiriti o Waitangi was both a moral and practical foundation of the schooling system. And further on again, that the 'legacy of system failure to invest the necessary resources in achieving equity and excellence for all learners/ākonga is an education debt that we must commit to repay' (p.13). The report acknowledged that 'there is no quick fix to addressing the disparities in educational outcomes that schooling has contributed to. Significant system transformation is required' (ibid.). The overview concluded with the judgement that, given the state of the schooling system in 2018, it would take 'five to ten years to build the capability and

capacity required' (p.6). It was hoped that the report's recommendations would help build a workable consensus on core aspects of the system, and promote a harmonisation of schooling policy development, resourcing and implementation.

But there was also a realpolitik in the report's commentary. It acknowledged that '[t]oo many people in the schooling system do not trust each other or understand the contribution that each makes to the whole' (p.4); that the system lacks a middle layer that sits between central government and the schools; that 'schooling policy and system change have for too long been driven by partisan politics and a three-year electoral cycle'; and that '[w]e also attempt to do far too much change at the one time' (p.5). In other words, the system is atomised, structurally and relationally, and so does not encourage or permit meaningful learning by the social actors within it.

Even allowing for a global pandemic, the consequential effects of a new European regional theatre of war, and multiple cataclysmic weather events locally, four years on from the taskforce's final report it seems reasonable to ask whether there is evidence of a reduction in pious platitudes and a reorientation of the system as a whole towards greater fairness, equity and justice. Where can we see signs that we are actively building the capability and capacity we need to repay our legacy education debts? Are we any closer to trusting each other or understanding the contribution that each of us makes to the whole? Do learners and whānau now have foundational decision rights that materially shape their educational experiences?

More broadly, in terms of those in our society who have benefited most from the structural adjustments of the 1980s, and who have had their socio-economic and ethnocultural privilege even more deeply entrenched over the last several decades: do they accept that ensuring for all the right to a free education for which one is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of one's powers, requires them, morally and practically, to give up some of their now multi-generational schooling gains? Moreover, what does it say about our education system settings when advancing justice has to rely on the most privileged in society agreeing to give up the advantages

they were never intended to acquire in the first place through the Tomorrow's Schools reforms?

Beeby concluded his 1992 *Biography of an Idea* (i.e., the myth of equality of opportunity) by saying that 'since I cannot comment on both left and right, I shall comment on neither, except to say that whichever policy wins, if it lasts long enough it is destined to become a myth' (Beeby, 1992, p.304). He was referring to the periodic pendulum swings in education sentiment (from conservative to progressive and back again) across the professional education polity and civil society that he had witnessed since leaving the directorship of the former Department of Education in 1960. Beeby also commented on the observation of a later director general of education, Bill Renwick, that the goal of 'equality of opportunity' of the early Beeby years had since been displaced by the goal of 'equality of results'. But in Beeby's view neither of these goals addressed the central question: 'What weight shall be given to the respective claims of the rights of the individual and the rights of the community?' (ibid., p.300).

Today we have the advantage of being able to look back at a further 30 years of myth-making efforts and attendant rhetoric about educational goals. At first glance, we certainly seem still to be obsessed with the goal of equality of results, and to have elevated the claims of the individual way over and above those of the community. Just as significantly, we appear to be struggling to accommodate the recognition demands of an increasingly fragmented and heterogeneous society amid a diminishing resource base to provide the public services required to address those disparate demands (see Barker in this issue for more on the history of Tomorrow's Schools).

The interim taskforce report in 2018 attempted to argue for a substantial rebalancing of the system and its administration from the rights of the individual towards the rights of the community (i.e., not the individual school). Unfortunately, based on the weight of feedback from the public consultation phase of the review, the final report pragmatically had to concede that the community – or at least its most vocal and

To return to the statement and the myth, we would do well to consider the likelihood that its continuing appeal lies both in its semantic abstraction and the consequent moral and practical wriggle room it grants to actors in all parts of the education system.

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activist lobbies – was not yet ready to accept that the system was so unequal and so inequitable, so unjust that a radical transformational shift was needed (i.e., the system works well for most students so 'don't throw the baby out with the bathwater'). On that basis, we have to consider the likelihood that the shared core assumptions (albeit in different proportions) of both the political centre-right and centre-left have won out and become the hegemonic governance, management and administration education myth for our age – effectively a blend of quasi-market liberalism and New Public Management steerage mechanisms.

If the assumptions and operational mechanisms of neoliberal structural adjustment in education are not in fact widely questioned, but instead at least tacitly accepted by a silent majority, then the only option is to attribute any

inequalities of opportunity and results to the failings of some of the system actors and their interactions – some governments, some state agencies, some local communities, some educators, some families, some learners. But the corrosive problem inherent in that sort of analysis is that without enough of the shared social capital of relationships, confidence and trust, each of us ends up blaming some 'other'.

For instance, when we chant the mantra that 'the system' does not serve certain groups of learners well, are we speaking of the need to transform the marketised public education system, or the panoptic compliance system of New Public Management planning, monitoring, review and audit, or the system of social transfers so that it reduces rather than increases the number of people forced to live precarious lives? Or, more likely, are we simply pointing the finger at what we see as the performative shortcomings of someone or some group other than ourselves?

To return to the statement and the myth, we would do well to consider the likelihood that its continuing appeal lies both in its semantic abstraction and the consequent moral and practical wriggle room it grants to actors in all parts of the education system. From the perspectives of fairness, equity and justice in education, therefore, the statement's greatest strength may also be its greatest weakness. As Michael Couch has observed:

Beeby's vague myth of equality of opportunity can, retrospectively, partially explain why there has not been more egalitarian reform throughout the twentieth century. The apparent contradiction arises from the observation that a vague myth like Beeby perpetually put forward was able to be used as a catch-all phrase for any reform in the decades following his Directorship. That is, by embracing the myth of equality of opportunity subsequent governments could evade having to made [sic] specific, measurable reforms because of the inherent vagueness in the myth ... The outcome of Beeby's mythmaking has been to provide a way for governments to make a range of promises without necessarily having to



demonstrate deep-seated commitment to educational equality. It has also enabled non-egalitarian reform to be enacted in the name of equality. (Couch, 2017, p.197)

Couch's approach to Beeby's directorship might reasonably be described as dispassionately critical, not deferential or instrumental, and the insights it provides may be rather unsettling in professional education circles where, for many of a liberal social democratic persuasion, the Beeby-Fraser statement remains both touchstone and cornerstone of one's commitment to freely available public education.

#### A socially just education system

In part, Couch's proposition is alerting us to what the American philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser refers to as the 'redistribution-recognition dilemma' in pursuit of justice (Fraser, 2008a), where redistribution concerns the economic structures that deny people the resources they need to interact and participate fully with others, 'in which case they suffer from distributive injustice or maldistribution'; 'On the other hand,' she writes, 'people can also be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing; in that case they suffer from status inequality or misrecognition' (Fraser, 2008b, p.277).

A practical dilemma arises, says Fraser, when individuals and groups need both (economic) redistribution and (cultural) recognition in order to remove the structural obstacles that perpetuate injustice. Furthermore, she notes that a feature of contemporary political struggles for justice is that 'identity-based claims tend to predominate, as prospects for redistribution appear to recede. The result is a complex political field with little programmatic coherence' (Fraser, 2008a, p.13).

Fraser suggests that, for the most part, as a society we have opted for the safety of affirmation rather than the uncertainty of destabilisation that system transformation requires. On Fraser's schema, affirmation in a distributive justice sense involves the liberal welfare state 'making surface

In the real world,  
the last four  
decades have  
seen society  
becoming ever  
more polarised,  
and its public  
institutions ever  
more degraded  
under the  
combined effects  
of quasi-markets  
and New Public  
Management  
controls, despite  
the overwhelming  
evidence of their  
harmful  
consequences for  
the most  
disadvantaged  
sections of  
society.

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reallocations of existing goods to existing groups which supports group differentiation but can also generate misrecognition' (ibid., p.34). Affirmation in recognitive relations comes in the form of multiculturalism and involves 'surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups while supporting group differentiation' (ibid.). But affirmative forms of redistribution and recognition can generate conflict and work at cross purposes when acted on simultaneously (e.g., the targeted allocation of resources to previously unacknowledged

and excluded groups, which generates accusations of unfairness to the majority and deficiencies in the groups). It seems to me that this is the danger we find ourselves in following the review of Tomorrow's Schools: that we simply affirm surface reallocations of existing goods, and accord surface allocations of respect to those groups that do not enjoy parity of esteem or equal moral worth, without addressing the deeper education structures that continue to generate those economic injuries and cultural insults, as Fraser puts it.

Fraser defines justice broadly as 'parity of participation':

According to this radical-democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction. (Fraser, 2008b, p.277)

On this view, justice requires transformational redistribution, recognition and representation in order to overcome institutionalised injustice. Affirmative redistribution, recognition and representation also serve to leave power in the hands of dominant groups to grant or withhold these surface allocations of goods and respect as they see fit.

#### Conclusion

I suggest that we know perfectly well what is required to remove structural and institutional obstacles to overcoming existing injustices in education; there is just not the necessary political or civil society will to make the necessary transformative changes. As people with a working interest in education, we may also be committed to doing far more than simply affirming those who are prevented from participating on a par with others. However, the realpolitik issue is how do we persuade the most advantaged groups and communities in society who continue to benefit both from the current education system settlement, and from what Michael

Sandel (2020) calls ‘the tyranny of merit’ that defines success today, to give up their individual family privileges in order to advance broader and deeper community justice? And in this regard, is the Beeby-Fraser ideal more help or hindrance?

In the real world, the last four decades have seen society becoming ever more polarised, and its public institutions ever more degraded under the combined effects of quasi-markets and New Public Management controls, despite the overwhelming evidence of their harmful consequences for the most disadvantaged sections of society. This suggests that it would be futile to attempt to create a ‘veil of ignorance’ from behind which already advantaged families in society help design the policy settings for an imagined fair and just education system without knowing whether they and their children will be among those who mostly do very well in it,

or those who do not (Rawls, 1972). Yet this is not all that different from what both the Kōrero Mātauranga and the review of Tomorrow’s Schools attempted to do in their intent and approach: co-design and redesign for the collective good. Arguably, the intent and the approach were naïve because they assumed that the most advantaged families and groups in society would be prepared to propose and accept changes to a system that could compromise the considerable privileges that the schooling status quo confers on them and their children.

Something more ambitious that destabilises status quo privilege and advantage is needed if justice is the end. For example, the interim taskforce report recommended a doubling of equity funding allocated using the new Equity Index to the most disadvantaged schools to 6% of total resourcing, applied across

operations, staffing and property. The final report recommended increasing this to 10% of total school funding in order to achieve meaningful change in existing inequalities of educational outcomes. The government has since taken first steps to proportionately increase operational equity funding to schools and to consider the feasibility of extending the Equity Index to early learning services. Such affirmative action may, over time, reach the point where it can be evaluated as ‘radically incrementalist’ public policy that works (Halpern and Mason, 2015). On Nancy Fraser’s view, however, such policies and actions can never be transformative because, essentially, they would leave unaltered the institutionalised structural arrangements that generate economic injury, cultural insult and exclusion of minoritised and marginalised groups from full parity of participation in education.

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Michael Barker

# When Tomorrow Comes: contextualising the independent review of Tomorrow's Schools

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## Abstract

The Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1989 fundamentally changed primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand. While the devolved nature of Tomorrow's Schools has enabled higher levels of local autonomy, it has also been criticised for opening up schools to marketisation and contributing to inequality between schools. Around 30 years after the original reforms, a significant government-sponsored review was undertaken into whether the compulsory schooling system was still fit for purpose under the Tomorrow's Schools settings. This article finds that there is a mismatch between the recommended structural reform and the resulting 'reset' of Tomorrow's schools.

**Keywords** Tomorrow's Schools, education, policy, reform

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Education policy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand can be complex and highly contested, with multiple and diverse perspectives (Cherrington et al., 2021). This is not surprising: education is generally the third-largest expense for government after welfare and health (Treasury, 2022), and most people in Aotearoa New Zealand will interact with the compulsory schooling system at some point in their lives. Some of the most significant, albeit contested, changes to compulsory schooling came about through the Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1989. Some 30 years later, the government established the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce to assess whether the provision of compulsory schooling was still fit for purpose (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019, p.8). This article begins by situating the Tomorrow's Schools review within the broader history of education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and then considers the implications of the government's response to the review. (See also O'Neill



in this issue for further insights into the roles and aims of the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce.)

### Three key shifts for education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand

Since the Second World War, the New Zealand education system has broadly shifted through three distinct eras or 'ways' (Power and Whitty, 1999). It is useful to understand these high-level shifts when considering the independent review of Tomorrow's Schools as it helps to contextualise some of the underpinning philosophies behind educational reforms (see Openshaw, 2009 and Wood, Thrupp and Barker, 2021 for further discussion).

broad consensus for such a system during this period: a fully-funded state education system was fundamentally seen as a public good. Having an educated population was better for everyone and the economy, and it followed that the state should intervene to provide this (ibid.).

### *The 'second way' (1984–99)*

When the fourth Labour government was elected in 1984, it embarked on large-scale neoliberal reforms. Humpage (2017) has described this as New Zealand transforming 'from the land of milk and honey to the land of me and money' (p.132). These reforms made major changes to New Zealand society, not least through the mass

competitive marketplace in which some would 'succeed' while others would 'fail' (Davies and Bansel, 2007). However, Codd (2005b) has argued that neoliberalism reduces education 'to a commodity, a private rather than a public good [where] the central aim of education becomes the narrow instrumental one of preparing people for the job market' (p.196). The neoliberal reforms to education involved two distinct and contradictory policy agendas – a 'process of simultaneous devolution and control' (p.194).

### *Some state control was devolved ...*

During the late 1980s and 1990s, successive governments sought to transform New Zealand's education system through 'devolution' of some state control and opening up the system to marketisation (Dobbins, 2010), as the education system was perceived by many to be outdated and inflexible (Openshaw, 2009). One of the most significant changes to education from this period is what is commonly referred to as Tomorrow's Schools. Following the Picot Report in 1988, the fourth Labour government was persuaded to transform New Zealand's education system into one based on the market-driven ideas of devolution, efficiency and choice (Codd, 2005b). Tomorrow's Schools decentralised New Zealand's education system, and the power to govern schools was devolved to individual schools. Schools became self-managing entities governed by boards of trustees, and were able to differentiate themselves from one another in the education 'marketplace'. One of the main selling points was that communities would have much more say in their local schools.

However, the underlying assumption of Tomorrow's Schools was that what works for business will work best for education – particularly the idea that increasing school choice for parents, and increasing parents' ability to influence school governance, will lead to better educational outcomes. Haque (2014) has critiqued the lack of robust policy analysis at the time to address this assumption, which was not helped by the speed at which the reforms were implemented. Tomorrow's Schools saw schools opened up to increased marketisation; schools were forced to compete with each other for students and

... the underlying assumption of Tomorrow's Schools was that what works for business will work best for education – particularly the idea that increasing school choice for parents, and increasing parents' ability to influence school governance, will lead to better educational outcomes.

### *The 'first way' (1945–84)*

After the Second World War, New Zealand enjoyed what Cotterell (2017) describes as the 'Post-War Long Boom' (p.164). New Zealand's economy was performing well, and the Keynesian policies of successive governments ensured that New Zealand remained a highly controlled welfare state up to the mid-1980s (Humpage, 2017). This period can be described as the 'first way' (Power and Whitty, 1999). Education policy throughout this period was highly centralised (led by the Department of Education) and interventionist. Compared with education today, this prescriptive approach made it difficult for schools to tailor what they taught, and how, to meet the needs of their communities. It was also difficult for local communities to have a say in how their schools operated (Dobbins, 2010). That said, there was

deregulation and privatisation of assets and services that were previously held, or delivered, by the state (Openshaw, 2009). While much has been written on this transition from a welfare state to a market-driven state, it is important to recognise that these reforms took place during a period when social cohesion was being challenged by high inflation, a growing distrust of government intervention, and calls for progressive law reform and greater recognition of te Tiriti o Waitangi (ibid.).

For education, there was an increasing expectation that the education system needed to be less 'one-size-fits-all', more responsive to the needs of local communities, and more equitable. It was in this context that neoliberal reforms to the administration of schooling were proposed, which led to major changes that transformed the education system into a

resources, while the governance, management and administration of schools were based on ideas from business (Adamson, 2022). Many have criticised the impacts of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms (Dobbins, 2010; Harris, 2017; Openshaw, 2009; O'Neill in this issue), particularly the way that they create 'winner' and 'loser' schools and therefore exacerbate the achievement gap between low- and high-decile schools (see Box 1).

The Tomorrow's Schools reforms were followed in the 1990s by additional devolution of state control to the market: for example, further steps away from school zoning, 'bulk funding' of teacher salaries, and the introduction of user-pays tertiary education. This period therefore saw even more competition and local autonomy in the sector.

*... but new controls were put in place*

Simultaneously, there was an increase in managerialism and accountability ('control'), primarily conducted by 'steering at a distance' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013, p.716). An outcomes-based approach centred on targets and measurable results in school charters and strategic plans, accompanied by external monitoring from agencies such as the Education Review Office and the Tertiary Education Commission, was used to ensure that objectives were met, amid some emerging concerns about the unevenness of educational experience between schools.

This highlights the paradoxical and contradictory nature of 'devolution and control' (Codd, 2005b). The neoliberal reforms reduced the role of the state in education (and thus exposed the education system to the free market), but also introduced more intense forms of managerialism and accountability (Sahlberg, 2011). Education in Aotearoa New Zealand became 'more responsive locally to market forces' and 'more accountable centrally for measurable outcomes' (Codd, 2005b, p.194). Such accountability mechanisms were particularly encouraged by the Tomorrow's Schools reforms: in this new, devolved environment, there was an increased need for schools and teachers to be managed and held accountable, especially now that schools and teachers were the 'providers' of

## Box 1 Challenges faced by low-decile schools as a result of Tomorrow's Schools

- Low-decile schools have far more educational and social challenges than higher-decile schools.
- Low-decile schools often attract fewer high-quality teachers than high-decile schools.
- Many low-decile schools find it harder than high-decile schools to attract board members with the required skills.
- High-decile schools often draw more motivated students from low-decile schools.
- Many parents think that placing their children in a high-decile school will improve their life chances.
- Low-decile schools are more likely to be penalised by the Education Review Office, and yet they have limited financial or personnel resources to address the issues they face.
- Low-decile schools are overwhelmingly populated by Māori and Pasifika students, have more social and discipline issues than high-decile schools, and therefore are not attractive options for some families.

Source: Haque, 2014, pp.79–81

education for their 'consumers' (teachers and parents). These mechanisms create a 'culture of performativity', where schools, teachers and students are judged on their performance against targets (Ball, 2003). Some have argued that such performance-based policy is 'based upon a culture of mistrust' (Codd, 2005b, p.194).

### *The 'third way' (1999–)*

In response to this period of rapid social upheaval, the fifth Labour government sought to pull back from the extremes of the neoliberal reforms. Under the leadership of Helen Clark, and inspired by similar shifts happening in the US and UK, the fifth Labour government set out to follow a 'Third Way' for politics, which sought to renew the emphasis on social cohesion, while still allowing for economic freedom and individualism (Codd, 2005a); that is, 'neoliberalism with a social conscience' (Thrupp, 2018, p.11).

### *Building a 'knowledge economy'*

For education, this Third Way primarily manifested as policies influenced by the 'knowledge economy' discourse. Education was seen as the vital link between economic prosperity and social cohesion (Codd, 2005a). It was argued by proponents of the Third Way that the way to achieve this was to move away from the divisive individualism of the 'second way' and instead focus on building a 'knowledge

society' or 'knowledge economy'. Lauder et al. (2012) have described this transition as a process of drawing up a 'new informal social contract between citizens and the state' through which 'the state could achieve both economic competitiveness and social justice' (p.1); that is, reframing education as a way to ensure that New Zealand will be economically competitive in the age of globalisation (Codd, 2005a). The knowledge economy discourse aligns tightly with Third Way politics, for it appeals to the idea that education is for the benefit of the individual *and* society.

While the knowledge economy approach softened the neoliberal extremes to some extent, it still perpetuated an individualistic and competitive approach to education. Wood and Sheehan (2012) have summarised the key ideas that underpin a knowledge economy as: a shift from content to processes (from knowing what to knowing how); an individual (learner-centred) approach to learning; and life-long learning. There is insufficient space to critique this discourse here, but others have written about the influence of this discourse on education policy, particularly its impact on knowledge and the teaching profession (Roberts, 2005; Young, 2012; McPhail and Rata, 2016; Hirschman and Wood, 2018).

Education policy throughout this period was influenced by this discourse, including the introduction of the National

Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in 2002, and the New Zealand Curriculum in 2007. Many argued that the old 'norm-based' ranking system pre-NCEA was no longer appropriate for 21st-century learners, as it prohibited many from further study, thus reducing the number of educated citizens required for a knowledge economy (Strachan, 2002; Hipkins, Johnston and Sheehan, 2016). NCEA was designed to meet the needs of a broad range of students, allowing more people to gain the skills needed to be economically competitive within a knowledge economy, and encourage life-long learning through the way that credits can be gained and retained for life (Strachan, 2002). Similarly, the influence

by the state but operated outside the state system – effectively, 'publicly funded private education' (McMaster, 2013, p.527). They did not need to follow the New Zealand Curriculum, nor employ qualified and registered teachers. However, partnership schools remained a niche – only a small number of partnership schools were established – indicating some Third Way restraint.

Similarly, the government's Investing in Educational Success policy encouraged schools to form clusters called 'communities of learning'. Each community of learning was enabled to work in a collaborative way to address the education needs of their community. While schools were encouraged to be collaborative within a

Haque (2014) reflected that Tomorrow's Schools had been 'watered down' over time, but 'its bedrock philosophy remains based on individual schools acting to further their own interests' (p.79).

#### Independent review of Tomorrow's Schools

When the sixth Labour government took office in 2017, it sent a clear signal that education was in for a shake-up; indeed, it promised to 'revolutionise education' (Ardern, 2017). The government appeared particularly concerned with what it saw as the big issues facing the sector: an overworked and under-appreciated teaching profession; a general over-reliance on market-driven policy; a culture of testing, measurement and accountability; ongoing equity and access issues; and a lack of urgency in preparing students for the 21st century (Barker and Wood, 2019). To address these concerns, the government established an education work programme in 2018 (refreshed in 2021) consisting of large-scale reviews (e.g., the Tomorrow's Schools review, updating NCEA, refreshing the New Zealand Curriculum), various strategies and action plans (e.g., the Early Learning Action Plan, the Learning Support Action Plan), and standalone policies (e.g., removing National Standards, integrating partnership schools back into the state system proper, adding New Zealand history to the curriculum, reforming vocational education, shifting from a funding model based on socio-economic status (decile system) to an 'equity index' based on individual indicators of risk). This list is by no means exhaustive, but it reflects a scale and pace of change not seen since the Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1989 (Cherrington, Higgins and Zouch, 2021).

#### The taskforce's recommendations – 'structural transformation' required

One of the first, and most significant, initiatives to be progressed on the education work programme was the independent review of compulsory schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand (the Tomorrow's Schools review). Despite the Tomorrow's Schools reforms being the subject of much analysis and criticism over the last 30 years, this was the first time that such a large-scale review of compulsory

## While the knowledge economy approach softened the neoliberal extremes to some extent, it still perpetuated an individualistic and competitive approach to education.

of the knowledge economy on policy could be seen with the implementation of a new national curriculum in 2007. Updates have been made since, but this was the first to prioritise student-centred pedagogies, flexible skills derived from generic core competencies, and inquiry-based learning, all key to building a knowledge economy (Wood and Sheehan, 2012).

#### Further 'devolution' and 'control'

The period between 2008 and 2017 under the fifth National government saw a continued emphasis on market-driven policy, while balancing this with social cohesion (particularly the need to address disparities in educational achievement).

Partnership schools ('charter schools') were introduced as a devolutionary policy, advocated for by National's coalition political partner ACT, providing an alternative pathway for those for whom the state system had 'failed' (O'Connor and Holland, 2013). These schools were funded

community of learning, the policy arguably encourages competition between communities of learning (Devine and Benade, 2015).

There were also further 'control' measures. Perhaps the most controversial was the introduction of 'National Standards' for primary schools. National Standards have been heavily criticised as an accountability tool that narrows the curriculum, focuses on outputs, and promotes competition between schools (Thrupp and White, 2013; Haque, 2014).

This period also saw a growing emphasis on 21st-century learning in education policy, particularly through building 'modern learning environments' and establishing 'bring your own device' policies, largely promoted to 'keep up' with the global economy. These have not been without criticism (Bisset, 2014; Baker, 2014), but nonetheless indicate the ongoing impact of the knowledge economy discourse.



schooling had been commissioned by the government since the original reforms (Adamson, 2022).

The taskforce released its final report (*Our Schooling Futures: stronger together*) in June 2019. Its recommendations touched on almost every aspect of the compulsory schooling system, from supporting individual students and teachers, to governance and leadership of schools, to broader system-level changes (Adamson, 2022). These recommendations were grouped under eight key issues, as explained by Thrupp and McChesney (2019b):

1. Governance (including the appropriate role of school Boards of Trustees and the proposal to establish education hubs)
2. Schooling provision (including school types, school hours, transitions between schools, the overall provision across all the schools in a geographic area, and pathways for Kaupapa Māori and distance schooling)
3. Competition and choice (including enrolment schemes/zones, school donations, international fee-paying students, staffing and funding formulae, and the consequences of those policies for certain schools and groups of learners)
4. Disability and learning support (including students' access to schools, teacher preparation for catering to diverse needs, specialist staffing, and funding)
5. Teaching (including how we attract, train, treat and retain teachers, current models for teacher appraisal and Kāhui Ako | Communities of Learning, and pathways for support staff)
6. School leadership (including workload, performance management, appointment processes, and how to attract and develop school leaders)
7. School resourcing (especially compensatory funding)
8. Central education agencies (how to position and reposition central agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Education Review Office).

Further detailed analysis of the taskforce's recommendations is needed, but some of the main recommendations included:

- establishing 'education hubs' as separate from the Ministry of Education, to take over all legal governance duties of school boards;
- replacing the decile system with the equity index;
- establishing an Education Evaluation Office to provide overall oversight of the education system, and disestablishing the Education Review Office and New Zealand Qualifications Authority; and
- expanding the role of the Teaching Council.

The taskforce argued that there was a lack of evidence that the current model of self-governing schools had led to

challenges we face ... we have to cut through the assumptions that underpin 'self-governing schools'. (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, p.11)

As an aside, it is interesting to observe *how* the taskforce undertook its review. Before the taskforce explored how the current system was operating, it first sought to step back and answer the question, what should be the purpose of our education system? This question was also posed to the public when the taskforce held 'education conversations' around the country. Taking such a first-principles approach enabled the taskforce to consider options for change beyond the status quo,

The government's response acknowledged many of the same issues as identified by the taskforce: the presence of persistent disparities in the education system, the challenges with such a decentralised model, and a lack of trust in the system' ...

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improved educational outcomes, particularly with respect to student achievement and equity. The taskforce was especially critical of the inherent trade-off at the heart of Tomorrow's Schools between devolving power to communities and opening up schools to marketisation and competition.

Overall, the key message from the taskforce was that, while some students do well, many students are poorly served by the system, and only substantial 'cultural and structural transformation' of the system will ensure that all students can succeed. As it explained:

Tinkering with the existing system simply will not work, especially if future generations are to be well prepared to cope with the large and complex economic, social, and environmental

as reflected in its recommendations (Adamson, 2022).

The report has not been without criticism, however. The proposal for 'education hubs' received the most attention (pushback) – especially from some school principals – for suggesting that some of the powers of individual school boards should be shifted to regional hubs (Collins, 2019). Others have suggested that the overall framing of the report may not have lent itself well to receiving 'buy in' from the sector, not least parents, when Tomorrow's Schools has become so deeply embedded (Thrupp and McChesney, 2019a). There was also criticism that such large-scale changes were suggested at a time when the sector is under pressure and is already undergoing significant change across all levels (Thrupp and McChesney, 2019c)

### *The government's response – 'resetting' Tomorrow's Schools*

The government formally responded to the taskforce's recommendations in November 2019, releasing its own report, *Supporting All Schools to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, 2019). As with the taskforce's report, further detailed analysis of the government's response is needed. For now, it is interesting to observe its overall framing.

Like the taskforce, the government acknowledged that Tomorrow's Schools had worked well for some, but not for others. The government's response acknowledged many of the same issues as identified by the taskforce: the presence of

This reset was to involve progressing several initiatives 'inspired by' the taskforce (Hipkins, 2019) and designed to achieve the following objectives:

- learners at the centre of education;
- barrier-free access;
- quality teaching and leadership;
- future of learning and work;
- world-class inclusive public education.

As the minister of education, Chris Hipkins, explained, 'this is not about more centralised decision making or smothering schools that already perform well. It's about making pragmatic and workable improvements that we believe can gain broad support' (ibid.). In other words, Tomorrow's Schools would not be thrown

property will now be centrally administered, removing a complex and demanding responsibility from school boards. While there were other changes, including replacing the decile system with the equity index, Adamson (2022) has observed that the government's response highlights some reluctance on its part to make transformational change to schooling: 'The current system will be fine, if only we can explain it better, resource it better, and talk to each other more often' (p.570). Indeed, the minister himself said that some of the structural changes proposed by the taskforce would be 'too disruptive and a distraction from dealing with the issues facing our learners, teachers and school leaders'. He went on to say, 'we think the intent of the Taskforce's recommendations can be achieved through changes to our existing structures' (Hipkins, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1989 fundamentally changed primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand. The reforms were also a product of their time – a time of significant change influenced by neoliberalism. Despite the obvious benefits of a devolved schooling system, it is widely accepted that the reforms have had unintended consequences, particularly the way they have contributed to maintaining, and even widening, disparities in the system (Openshaw, 2009).

Thirty or so years later, the reforms were revisited. These ongoing challenges were acknowledged by both the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce and the government. However, while the taskforce proposed structural transformation, the government proposed a 'reset' of existing structures. A substantial education work programme is already underway, including many changes in response to the Tomorrow's Schools review, but some have asked whether these changes are able to move the system away from a prevailing neoliberal attitude and towards meaningfully addressing the ongoing challenges faced by the sector (Wood and Thornton, 2019; Benade, Devine and Stewart, 2021; Adamson, 2022). Indeed, the five objectives driving the work programme have been critiqued for appearing to be contradictory and reflecting ongoing

Despite the obvious benefits of a devolved schooling system, it is widely accepted that the reforms have had unintended consequences, particularly the way they have contributed to maintaining, and even widening, disparities in the system ...

persistent disparities in the education system, the challenges with such a decentralised model, and a lack of trust in the system (particularly for the teaching profession). Whereas the taskforce had deliberately set out to go beyond the status quo and avoid proposals that involved 'tinkering with the system', the government's response was framed around a 'reset' of the existing system:

The Government will reset the governance, management and administration of the schooling system – moving from a highly devolved, largely disconnected and autonomous set of institutions, to a much more deliberately networked and supported system that is more responsive to the needs of learners/ākonga and their whānau. (p.12)

out, but improved, requiring a careful balance between centralisation and devolution.

As a result, much of the focus appears to be at the regional level, halfway between the ministry proper and the school board level. Perhaps the most significant proposal is the establishment of an Education Service Agency within the Ministry of Education. The Education Service Agency is intended to bolster support for schools at the regional level, where once those responsibilities would have been handled centrally (via the Ministry of Education) or locally (via the individual school board). For example, a school's enrolment scheme will now be managed by the Education Service Agency at a regional level rather than at the level of a school's board.

Similarly, property was another area of significant change. The government announced that matters relating to school

marketisation (Barker and Wood, 2019) and perhaps being too aspirational and lacking detail (Adamson, 2022).

Regardless, it may well be another 30 years before another opportunity arises to conduct a large-scale review of schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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# Artificial intelligence ChatGPT and human gullibility

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## Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has advanced rapidly in the past decade. The arrival of ChatGPT last year has pushed the debate about AI into the public sphere. ChatGPT, and similar tools, do things we once thought were outside the ability of computers. This raises questions for how we educate people about the capability and the limitations of such tools. This article provides an overview of artificial intelligence and explores what ChatGPT is capable of doing. It also raises questions about morality, responsibility, sentience, intelligence, and how humans' propensity to anthropomorphise makes us gullible and thus ready to believe that this technology is delivering something that it cannot.

**Keywords** artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, critical thinking, morality, consciousness

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Artificial intelligence has made massive strides in the past decade, and particularly in the past year. We now have systems, like ChatGPT, that are doing things that we thought were beyond the capabilities of computers.

ChatGPT is writing essays that would get reasonable grades if submitted by a high school student. DALL.E is creating artwork far more quickly than a trained graphic designer could. Google's LaMDA convinced Google engineer Blake Lemoine

that it was sentient. After exchanging chat with LaMDA, he said, 'If I didn't know exactly what it was, which is this computer program we built recently, I'd think it was a 7-year-old, 8-year old kid that happens to know physics' (de Cosmo, 2022). Other experts are also convinced that machines are approaching sentience. But many others are convinced that there is no evidence of sentience and quite a lot of evidence against it. Today's large neural networks are producing impressive results, but what are they really doing?

## A brief history of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been around since the dawn of computing. In the 1950s there was great hope that we could create artificial intelligence quickly. The thinking was: if people can do something, surely it will be easy to get a computer to do that same thing. That turned out to be incorrect: human behaviours are complicated. For example, understanding natural spoken language is something most children can do easily. Early on in computing, it was expected that speech recognition would be solved by the 1960s. It turns out to be stunningly difficult to get a computer to do speech recognition. It is only in the last 20 years that we have got computers to reliably recognise speech, 50 years later than we expected to be able to.

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In the early days of AI, computing researchers hand-coded systems that were based on the way they thought that humans did high-level reasoning. They were successful in getting computers to do some things that humans find difficult, like play chess. It is easy to get a computer to play chess because there are straightforward rules and clear guidelines for what constitute good and bad positions. But the way we got computers to beat us at chess was for them to take a very different approach compared with humans. Humans use experience, practice and intuition to guide them in considering a small number of possible good moves. A computer, by contrast, uses brute force to work through thousands of possibilities, far more and far more rapidly than a human could. Computers have been able to beat humans at chess for decades, but they do it in quite a different way to how humans play. A chess-playing computer is just a box of tricks doing exactly what we tell it to. It cannot do anything other than play chess.

Today we are well beyond the point of getting computers to play abstract games. The reason AI is so much in the news now is because of the phenomenal recent advances. After decades of research, there was a big breakthrough about 15 years ago in how we do AI, when advances in the speed of computer hardware allowed the technique of ‘deep learning’ to become practical for solving real-world problems. In deep learning, we build computer systems that mimic the way we think the human brain is constructed: with many layers of artificial neurons, each layer communicating to the next through lots of connections. The ‘deep’ in ‘deep learning’ comes from the fact that the neural network is many layers deep. The ‘learning’ part comes because we train this neural network by feeding it an enormous amount of data. That is, we give it lots of different inputs and, for each input, we tell it what the correct output should be. The system then tweaks its internal neurons and their connections based on the difference between what it actually output and what it was told is the correct output. For example, if we wish to build a system that can identify what animal appears in any given photograph, we would start with a blank neural network and train it by giving,

The New Zealand Law Society recently notified its members of a similar situation in their discipline: ChatGPT was able to create case notes that sounded plausible and read well ...

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as input, a series of photographs of animals, along with information about whether the animal is a cat, dog, goat, bear, etc. The system predicts what animal is in the photograph and checks this against the correct answer. Early on in the training it is making pure guesses. When it gets it wrong, it does tiny internal adjustments of the settings of millions of internal parameters to give a higher probability of being right if it sees a similar input in future. When it gets it right, it does tiny internal adjustments to strengthen the settings that got things right. As the training progresses, the chance of getting the right answer improves: it gets better at predicting the correct outcome.

So, deep learning creates what could be called a ‘prediction machine’. The system predicts the output based on its input and its past training. With enough training data, you can get a deep neural network to then give the right answer to inputs that it has never seen before: it has ‘learnt’ how to solve that particular problem. You do need a lot of training data to get this right. In the case of training to spot animal species, you need millions of labelled images to

train it to get good accuracy. Compare this to a human child, who can generalise the concept of ‘cat’ after meeting just a couple of cats.

#### ChatGPT

ChatGPT is a ‘prediction machine’, as are all the similar AI chatbot systems that can generate surprisingly good text. They are large, deep neural networks, trained on a phenomenal amount of input data gathered from across the internet. Their job is to predict what the next word will be in their conversation with the user. They do this using the context of the previous several thousand words in the conversation. With good training, which they have, and a big enough context, they can produce stunning results. For example, I got ChatGPT to write a 100-word marketing blurb for my university and it produced something that could have come straight out of our marketing department. I deduce that there is a lot of marketing copy in its training data. I also asked it to write a biography of me. It wrote a beautifully crafted biography, in exactly the right style, but it got over half the facts wrong. It knows what a biography should look like, but it essentially just puts together random facts that sound right. For example, it said I had worked at two universities I have never even visited, and that my PhD is in a completely different topic from what I really did. However, if you did not know better, it would sound right.

The New Zealand Law Society recently notified its members of a similar situation in their discipline: ChatGPT was able to create case notes that sounded plausible and read well (Holt, 2023). The system ‘knows’ what a case name and citation should look like, but it generated completely fake cases. The references look right but the cases to which they refer do not exist. This problem, which is technically known as ‘hallucination’, is common across chatbots. They are trained to produce good-sounding text but they are doing this by simply placing one word after another in a sequence driven by probability. They are not drawing on facts. While the output sounds plausible, there is nothing that checks its veracity. So beware: if you use one of these tools to write a paper for you,



you are still going to have to check all the facts.

#### How is it that ChatGPT can write so convincingly?

Those of us who write for a living, including those who devise and prepare policy, find ChatGPT challenging. It is doing something (writing) that we have been trained to do and that many of us find challenging to do well. Humanity has been here before. Weaving machines challenged human weavers: here was a machine that could do their job faster and more accurately than they could. The Luddites smashed some of the weaving machines, but they did not stop progress. Mechanical diggers obviated the need for armies of navvies to dig our roads. Automatic computers sped up bookkeeping and made some human skills redundant, such as adding long columns of numbers by hand.

We should not be surprised that we are now seeing computers that can do things that we thought were beyond their abilities. ChatGPT can generate grammatically correct essays that read well. It also produces reasonable poetry in a range of styles, from rap to haiku to sonnet. For example, asking it to rewrite Hamlet's 'To be' speech as a haiku produced this:

*To be or not to be  
Life's mysteries I ponder  
Death, my final peace.*

That is not bad. A schoolchild could have done this too, with a little bit of training. You might have noticed that ChatGPT has the wrong number of syllables in the first line. A little more investigation uncovers that ChatGPT is terrible at counting. In fact, it cannot count at all. This is because it is a language model and it has no mechanism for calculating.

Nevertheless, as a large language model, ChatGPT does produce text that reads well. This is because it is trained on literally billions of examples of text, much of which is well-written. Its training database included hundreds of thousands of publicly available books, all written and edited by humans. However, ChatGPT is achieving its success in a different way to a human. An English or History graduate spends several years learning how to structure a good essay, but they do not acquire this

Professor  
Edsger Dijkstra,  
eminent  
computer  
scientist and  
sceptic about  
AI, expressed it  
by analogy: to  
paraphrase him,  
asking if a  
computer can  
think is like  
asking if a  
submarine can  
swim ...

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skill by reading millions of other people's essays. Instead, they read a few examples, generalise their skills from those examples, and hone their skills by trial and error: giving it a go, taking feedback, getting better each time. ChatGPT does not work this way. Take this article as an example. You are reading the seventh revision of this human-written work. I invested considerable planning and thought in constructing the arguments and refining the text. ChatGPT would have done none of this, instead simply putting down one word after another in a probabilistic sequence. As with chess-playing computers, there is a substantial difference between ChatGPT's 'prediction machine' method and what a human does.

And ChatGPT has limits. As I said above, ChatGPT does not fact check. Indeed, it cannot fact check; it is just a prediction machine working off the probabilities that tell it what word should come next. If it is writing about something for which it has a lot of source data, it tends to produce correct facts on the pure probabilities because it has been trained on a lot of input with the correct facts in

it. If it is writing about something more obscure (such as that biography of me), its 'prediction machine' just invents things that sound plausible. It may seem to be operating like an undergraduate skimming on their fact-checking when writing an essay at three in the morning, but that analogy is still wrong: ChatGPT does not have any underlying thought process. ChatGPT truly is just sticking down one word after another in a probabilistic sequence. It is the human reader who is imputing meaning to its probabilistic ramblings, and we humans are gullible if we assume that there is a thought process behind ChatGPT's utterances, because there is not.

#### ChatGPT is not thinking

We have not (yet) developed a thinking machine. What we have are prediction machines, giving you their best guess at what comes next based on what they have seen before. But, given their performance in writing, where their style outstrips that of a smart human child, people are reasonably asking whether these AI systems could lead to thinking machines, or whether this 'prediction machine' method is a dead end in our search to create a truly intelligent machine.

There is a reductionist view of consciousness that says that humans themselves are just prediction machines, albeit rather more complex than current AI systems. If this reductionist model is correct, then the brain is nothing more than a biological computer and there is no reason why a sufficiently complex digital computer could not develop consciousness to the same level as a human, or higher.

Many people are not comfortable with this reductionist view of consciousness. Our instinct is that humans are something more than just a biological computer. The experts are divided on whether the prediction machine method will lead to true thinking machines. Some experts see evidence, in ChatGPT and more sophisticated models, of emergent behaviour: the ability to do things that should not be possible simply from the underlying model. Others are sceptical. Professor Edsger Dijkstra, eminent computer scientist and sceptic about AI, expressed it by analogy: to paraphrase him,

asking if a computer can think is like asking if a submarine can swim (Dijkstra, 1983).

#### How do you test whether a computer can think?

Given that there is this debate about whether we can create a machine that truly thinks, how would we go about telling if a computer is thinking, or self aware, or conscious?

The standard response is to say we should use the Turing Test. This was designed by Alan Turing, one of the pioneers of computer science, as a test of whether a machine could exhibit intelligent behaviour indistinguishable from that of a human, but it has substantial limitations. In his 1950 paper (Turing, 1950), Turing considered the question, ‘Can a machine think?’ Acknowledging that we have a problem with defining what we mean by ‘think’, he replaced the question with the closely related question, ‘Can a machine do what a thinking human can do?’ In the Turing Test an entity, either a human or a computer, communicates with someone via a text interface. The computer passes if it can convince the recipient that it is really a human.

Turing never explicitly said that the Turing Test could be used as a measure of intelligence, or, indeed, of anything other than the machine being able to emulate a human to the extent needed to fool a human. In terms of passing the test, the first system to do so was ELIZA, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966 (Weizenbaum, 1966). ELIZA’s most successful variant was based on Rogerian psychotherapy, where the therapist repeats the patient’s statements back to them as questions. For example, if the patient says, ‘I always had problems getting on with my mother’, the therapist might respond, ‘Tell me more about your mother’.

ELIZA convinced some participants that it was human (Natale, 2019), even though it was based on a simple parlour trick. It was easy to get it to spout nonsense if you had a modicum of understanding of how it worked. However, even those who knew how ELIZA worked would sometimes treat it as if it were a human therapist. Humans have a strong propensity to anthropomorphise and to be able to suspend their disbelief: we are remarkably

[Sébastien Bubeck’s] statement [on the definition of intelligence] says that intelligence requires evidence of six things: reasoning, planning, solving problems, thinking abstractly, comprehending complex ideas, and learning quickly and from experience.

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gullible, and not just with computer systems. We anthropomorphise our pets, imputing human emotions and thought processes when we are seeing only instinct and habit; and we assume other human’s motives and feelings on the very sketchy evidence of their facial expression, body language and utterances. We do this because it helps us to make sense of the world and guides our interactions with others.

Fifty-six years after ELIZA first fooled a few people, we have a professional computer scientist, Blake Lemoine, convinced that a modern computer system, Google LaMDA, is sentient, even though he knows how the system is programmed and other experts are convinced he is wrong. It looks as if the Turing Test is not useful.

Indeed, the Turing Test is concerned only with how the subject acts; that is, its external behaviour. The example of ELIZA shows that a computer program can demonstrate the right behaviour with no intelligence or consciousness behind it. I argue that ChatGPT and LaMDA are the same. They are much more complex than ELIZA, but they are simply responding to stimuli as prediction machines; they have no internal sense of self, no intelligence, no consciousness.

Sébastien Bubeck, of Microsoft Research, spoke at MIT in March this year about whether GPT-4 is intelligent (Bubeck, 2023a; see also Bubeck, 2023b). GPT-4 is the successor to ChatGPT and is much more powerful. He based his definition of intelligence on a 1997 statement signed by 52 professors in the field of intelligence (Gottfredson, 1997). That statement says that intelligence requires evidence of six things: reasoning, planning, solving problems, thinking abstractly, comprehending complex ideas, and learning quickly and from experience. Bubeck demonstrates that GPT-4 can do four of these well. It is not so good at learning, and it really cannot plan, but it definitely shows signs of being intelligent at a level beyond the abilities of most children. This might be a sign of emergent behaviour.

But reasoning and intelligence are not the same as sentience, or consciousness, or being self-aware. Can we go beyond intelligence to ascertain whether a machine is conscious? How can you know that any animal, other human being, or anything that seems conscious is not just faking it? How do you know whether it enjoys an internal subjective experience, complete with sensations and emotions like hunger, joy or sadness? We lack what neuroscientist Christof Koch has called a consciousness meter – a device that can measure consciousness in the same way that a thermometer measures temperature.

There is much work going on worldwide in understanding consciousness, including work at Victoria University of Wellington (Bareham et al., 2020). Tamara Hunt (University of Melbourne) and Jonathan Scholler (University of California, Santa Barbara) are developing a framework to think about the different possible ways to test for the presence of consciousness. They

use three types of test: brain activity that matches the subject's reported subjective states; physical actions that seem to be accompanied by subjective states; and creative products that provide evidence that a conscious being produced them. All are interesting. All tell us that a human is conscious. The first two would tell us that cats are conscious. The latter might limit us to higher animals, like elephants, who can create. By some of these tests, ChatGPT is conscious. And yet we know that it is simply following its programming, a prediction machine giving its best guess of what comes next based on what has gone before.

The final analysis is that we currently have no reliable way to tell whether a machine is conscious or not. Even if a machine tells us repeatedly that it feels, that it is self-aware, that it loves, we have no way of knowing whether it truly is conscious or just a clever trick giving the impression of consciousness.

#### Can a computer be a moral agent?

What sort of morality could you instil in a computer? Humans learn their moral code from the society in which they grow up. Some theories of consciousness require that the subject be immersed in a sufficiently rich social environment to develop consciousness, specifically a nurturing environment in which you can learn how to make an internal model of yourself by observing others (Rahimian, 2021). Would a conscious computer need a social environment in which to develop? Arthur C. Clarke's masterwork, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, has that famous fictional example of a thinking, conscious computer, HAL. There is an implication in the film that HAL had to be instructed like a child to bring it up to full operation. While fictional, it raises the question of whether this is what we will need to do to create a truly conscious computer.

Can we program an ethical or moral code into a computer? In 1942, Isaac Asimov imagined a moral code for robots embodied in three laws:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such

The question  
of what might  
happen if  
machines go  
wrong (i.e.,  
behave  
immorally)  
can be  
considered  
from a  
different  
perspective by  
considering  
what happens  
when *humans*  
go wrong.

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orders would conflict with the First Law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Asimov says that these three laws 'are the only way in which rational human beings can deal with robots – or with anything else'. (Asimov, 1981)

While the laws make sense, there are problems. First, there is the technical problem of whether and how we could embed these laws into a thinking machine in a way that would guarantee that the laws would be followed. Second, there is the regulatory problem of whether we could guarantee that all systems will have the laws embedded. It is all too easy to imagine a military robot that is explicitly not Asimov-compliant. Third is the moral problem of the status of sentient computers under Asimov's laws. Are we to make computers that are permanent slaves? How would we justify a society where we enslave sentient, conscious machines?

#### In what ways might things go wrong?

There is a great deal of dystopian literature considering how artificially intelligent machines can go wrong. These often focus on sentient killer robots (e.g., the *Terminator* and *Matrix* movies), but I believe there are challenging problems that face the world right now, with the level of artificial intelligence that we already have.

The question of what might happen if machines go wrong (i.e., behave immorally) can be considered from a different perspective by considering what happens when *humans* go wrong. We learn a lot about what it means to be human from the exceptions, and they give a warning of what might go wrong if we get the morality wrong in machines. Consider those unwelcome personality types: the bully, the narcissist, the psychopath. All of these personalities can be held by a person who is perfectly able to function in society, including by people who rise to leadership roles. Psychopaths can be quite charming when it suits their ends, but they have poor empathy, are manipulative, and even when they get good results everyone is wary of them. Humanity produces such people at a rate of about one in 100 (Burton and Saleh, 2020). When they get into positions of power they can be tremendously disruptive, as demonstrated in various regimes in the past century. These people take advantage of the cultural and moral norms to disrupt society to their own ends. Consider Joseph Stalin, who manipulated and controlled the Soviet Union for decades, with psychopathic cruelty. Was he clinically insane? Or was he, as one author has put it, 'a very smart and implacably rational ideologue'? (Appelbaum, 2014). I find that latter characterisation chilling because 'very smart and implacably rational' is a good description of a computer.

Imagine a Machiavellian or psychopathic computer that had control over the financial services or the military hardware of a country. It could do so much wrong, as imagined in the *Terminator* movies, where the computers are given control of weapons systems. While that remains the go-to message when people think about intelligent computers (see, for example, the campaign against killer robots, <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/>), there



is a more prosaic and insidious problem that is already happening. AI systems are taking increasing control of decisions about how humans live their lives. For example, an AI system likely decides whether you get life insurance and how much it should cost; or whether you should be given a mortgage. AI systems decide which videos to recommend to you on YouTube, what websites to suggest on Google Search, and where you should go next on social media. There are regimes that are experimenting with 'social credit' systems, where people's monitored behaviour feeds into a credit score that determines what they are and are not allowed to do. A good score might lead to opportunities for better jobs, better housing and travel; a poor score might block those opportunities. Human beings alone could manage a system like this only with considerable personnel, bureaucracy and paperwork (think Cold War East Germany), and, even then, it would be a relatively blunt instrument. Artificial intelligence allows for more efficient, more fine-grained control over human behaviour. This is what George Orwell was hinting at

in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where even the Inner Party members were controlled by the system, but even Orwell did not imagine just how much control you could have if you use computers to do the monitoring for you.

This is the position we are in right now. We do not need to wait for computers to be sentient for them to exert considerable control over our lives. Human-run organisations are using artificial intelligence to improve their profit margins and their market share. We consumers are equally culpable, making conscious and rational decisions to engage with these systems because of the perceived benefits we receive in return. We are already in a world where artificial intelligence combined with human intelligence is controlling what we do. Corporations and governments are using the existing tools to modify and manipulate human behaviour. We need to develop policy now. We do not need to wait for AI systems to improve, or to demonstrate sentience. Humans and computers combined already create a world that is different from the world where everything was controlled by

humans alone. The speed with which computers can calculate has enhanced what humans can do with their brains, in the same way that mechanical machines enhanced what humans can do with their muscles.

Going beyond today, we can imagine a world where a computer gives the *illusion* of sentience, given that we cannot test whether or not it really is sentient, and given humans' tendency to anthropomorphise. If enough people *believe* the computer to be sentient, this could significantly affect how human society behaves and develops; in the same way that, if a psychopath became leader of a major nation today, and if enough people believed in them, it would cause substantial disruption to the entire nation, not just to those who believed. So the question is not whether a computer can be sentient (which we cannot prove), but whether humans can believe that a computer is sentient (which is all too likely) and how they will react and respond to a computer that they believe to be sentient.

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Monica Mercury

# What Would it Take to Successfully Introduce Compulsory Te Reo Māori in all Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand? A future-focused policy analysis

## Abstract

While considerable ground has been made in education policy promoting te reo Māori, no government has yet been willing to implement this as a requirement for all schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this article I undertake a ‘future-focused’ policy analysis to consider what it might take to implement this by drawing on recent research involving key advocates and stakeholders. I propose a ‘radical incrementalism’ approach that increasingly normalises and values te reo Māori across all sectors of society and that is supported by the resourcing of teachers and teachers’ college institutions and their leadership.

**Keywords** te reo Māori, language revitalisation, biculturalism, future-focused policy, education

The idea that every student in Aotearoa New Zealand be taught te reo Māori in school has gained traction in recent years. In 2019 Kelvin Davis, the minister for Māori Crown relations and associate minister of education, announced that he would like to see te reo Māori made compulsory in all schools. While this was not Labour Party policy, he said he would personally like to see it ‘as soon as possible’ (Bracewell-Worrall, 2019). Both the Green Party and te Pāti Māori announced their support in 2020 (Hurihanganui, 2020), and the former race relations commissioner, Meng Foon, has spoken out in support, adding that making te reo Māori compulsory will ‘help to unite Aotearoa’ (Perich, 2022). Yet while the sixth Labour government has committed significant funds to Māori education, to date no government has been willing to implement this. Indeed, in 2022 Kelvin Davis stated that Aotearoa is ‘not ready for’ compulsory te reo Māori

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and voiced fears of a ‘backlash’ should the government make it compulsory (Walters, 2022).

In this article I pause to take stock of where we are at with te reo Māori education in schools, and consider what would be needed in policy today and in the future for the successful introduction of compulsory te reo Māori. This article therefore involves taking a ‘future-focus’ on a policy which is not currently implemented to reflect and consider the incremental policy required to achieve this transformative change. Halpern and Mason (2015) refer to ‘radical incrementalism’ as the accumulation of small changes in policy, alongside ongoing evaluation to ensure policies are effective.

... while [my father] was proud to serve his people, I do know that he was often whakamā about entering the gates of the kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa because he thought he might be asked to speak a greater amount of Māori than he felt capable of speaking in a Māori-medium setting ...

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I believe that a ‘radical incremental’ future-policy approach that ‘normalises’ (Higgins, Rewi and Olsen-Reeder, 2015) the value of te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand society is underway and one day in the near future will arrive at a ‘tipping point’ (to borrow a phrase from Kelvin Davis), when it will become ‘just the right thing to do’ (Walters, 2020).

Futures thinking has become an increasingly important part of policymaking (Government Office for Science, 2021). In New Zealand, a growing interest in ‘futures thinking’ is noted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which describes policy futures thinking as ‘a range of techniques to help you think about the drivers of change that

are shaping the future and explore the implications of these for making decisions today – not only about what to do, but how and when to do it’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2021). Using this approach, this article reviews previous and current policies supporting te reo Māori and then, drawing on a small study of key stakeholders in Māori language revitalisation, considers policy steps towards the successful embedding of te reo Māori in every classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand.

#### Personal statement

My interest in this area stems from 30 years as a teacher of Māori descent in English-medium schools, where I made efforts

native tongue and cultural practices. As a result, I did not fully appreciate my taha Māori growing up in the 1970s and I only learned te reo Māori as a re-indigenised adult, when I had my own children and we had the opportunity to send them to kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori in the mid-2000s.

It was fortunate that my father became a te reo Māori speaker at the age of 50, when began his mahi as a ‘pou o te haahi’ of our church and learned to conduct full services in te reo Māori, which he did for 30 years. However, while he was proud to serve his people, I do know that he was often whakamā about entering the gates of the kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa because he thought he might be asked to speak a greater amount of Māori than he felt capable of speaking in a Māori-medium setting: ‘not being Māori enough’ is a common feeling among our older Māori of a particular age and generation. The issue, therefore, about sustaining the language for all students in Aotearoa New Zealand became a huge passion for me and was the focus of my Master of Education degree, where I thought more deeply about effective policy development and implementation (Mercury, 2021).

#### Current education policy status of te reo Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand

The primacy of te reo Māori me ona tikanga is established in te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi in article 2, where it states:

The Queen of England agrees to protect the chiefs, the subtribes and all the people of New Zealand in the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures. (Waitangi Tribunal, n.d.)

The Tribunal notes that ‘treasures’ or ‘taonga’ refers to all dimensions of a tribal group’s estate, material and non-material – heirlooms and wahi tapu (sacred places), ancestral lore and whakapapa (genealogies), etc’ (ibid., note 8). Despite this, te reo Māori has not been treasured in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1840, and indeed was banned by the Native Schools Act 1897. In recent years, several policy initiatives have



indicated a growing commitment to te reo Māori in schools. The current focus rests upon years of work by activists and advocates, as well as policies which have both promoted and hindered the growth of the Māori language, and persistence by whānau, iwi and hapu to sustain te reo Māori.

While space allows only a very brief history here, it is important to acknowledge several ‘change-makers’ who had a massive impact on Māori language policy in Aotearoa. Ngā Tamatoa (the warriors) was an influential Māori activist group formed in Auckland in 1970 which operated throughout the decade to promote Māori rights, fight racial discrimination and confront injustices perpetrated by the New Zealand government, particularly violations of the Treaty of Waitangi. They were instrumental in bringing attention to Māori issues and worked alongside the New Zealand Māori Students’ Association and Te Reo Māori Society, based in Wellington, to combat the threat of the decline of the Māori language by rallying and organising tens of thousands of Māori to sign a petition to revitalise te reo Māori. In September 1972, Ngā Tamatoa presented a petition to Parliament with more than 30,000 signatures to have Māori taught in schools. Titewhai Harawira was strongly involved in this campaign for the Māori language. She said in 2009: ‘We were determined to rescue our language because we felt and we believed, and we believe today, that a people without its language is a people that die’ (RNZ, 2009). Other initiatives by the organisation helped to enforce real social and political changes in New Zealand, with the establishment of Māori language nests, kōhanga reo, and the kura kaupapa Māori immersion schools. In 1987 the Māori Language Act was passed, giving te reo Māori official language status.

#### Recent policy initiatives

The sixth Labour government’s education work programme has included a strong Māori education focus. The Māori Education Strategy, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2021a), aims to develop a long-term commitment approach to equitable outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in our education system,

embedding it across all developing strategies and reviews. Second, Ka Hikitia has been refreshed and aims to accelerate Māori student educational achievement alongside Tau Mai te Reo – the future-focused provision by the government for an essential strategic framework for Māori language in education and an annual implementation plan (Ministry of Education, 2021b). The status of the Māori language has been embedded in New Zealand education policy and the national education and learning priorities (NELP) introduced in August 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020). While not compulsory yet, the learning of te reo Māori me ona tikanga is included in these priorities and spread right across all the objectives.

4–8 students, and is freely available for download from the NMSSA website (National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement, 2021).<sup>1</sup> However, despite this, there still is no national policy on making te reo Māori a core subject in English-medium schools (Albury, 2018).

#### Priorities for future policies in te reo Māori

My study involved interviews with 12 selected stakeholders with a vested interest in te reo Māori in schools; they included Māori, Pākehā, Chinese and Samoan teachers, principals and one member of Parliament (see Mercury and Wood, 2021 for further details on the methodology). From these interviews, a thematic analysis

The most commonly referred to idea that emerged from participants was that te reo Māori itself needed to be valued if any future policy is to be a success.

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The NELP statement says that all early childhood learning centres, schools and tertiary institutions should ‘meaningfully include the Māori language and tikanga in their everyday life’ (RNZ, 2020).

A further recent strategy is Te Ahu o te Reo Māori, which is the mainstream te reo Māori cluster training initiative for school staff (principals, teachers and support staff). This initiative has included a pilot programme in 2020 across four regions: Te Taiuru (Taranaki-Whanganui), Tainui (Waikato), Te Tonga (Manawatū-Pōneke) and Ngāi Tahu (Te Waipounamu). This pilot programme aims to improve the proficiency of all teachers in Māori language learning and involves upskilling classroom teachers in te reo Māori (Ministry of Education, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). A further recent digital te reo resource for primary school teachers is based on the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) and its assessment of learning languages with year

identified four themes with strong support from all participants which provided significant insights for future policymaking to implement te reo Māori in all schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many participants wished to be named as part of their contribution to this study.

#### Valuing te reo Māori

The most commonly referred to idea that emerged from participants was that te reo Māori itself needed to be valued if any future policy is to be a success. While this point is an obvious one, and previous studies have identified the importance of valuing te reo Māori (Barback, 2017; Kāretu, 2008), the emphasis placed on values cannot be understated. As one tāne Māori, Jack Adams, stated:

It needs to be valued by everyone, not just the government, and schools, but the families need to value it as well. Te aroha mo te reo Māori, na reira, maumau taima

[Have compassion for the language, otherwise, it is a waste of time].

Some saw the recent resurgence in interest in te reo Māori and tikanga as a 'renaissance', and felt that this moment needs to be made the most of: 'I would support that. I see a renaissance and willingness to learn te reo Māori, and we have to seize the moment and get on board with that.' This was reinforced by several younger participants who described this revitalisation as part of a generational shift that was more 'bicultural' and contained a

boys coming through recently. The parents say they are loving having Māori here because there was nothing at primary school. (Louise Carter, wāhine Māori)

One impact of this was that it showed te reo was valued enough to be made compulsory, as Luana Carroll, a wāhine Māori, reflects:

Allowing Māori to reclaim our language back and challenge those who are coming into the teaching profession in

leadership. School leadership is vital if an educational policy reform is to be successful (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Viennet and Pont, 2017). Participants noted that leadership needed to be at both the national and school level for a compulsory te reo Māori policy to be effective. Successful and sustained educational change can only be achieved by the collective action of all professionals involved (Fullan, 2001) and participants described the need for leaders to lead authentically and by example: 'If the leaders do not buy into the kaupapa, then it is not going to happen; I need to see some really good leadership come from the Ministry too on this and value it' (Luana Carroll, wāhine Māori). The schools that had experimented with compulsory te reo Māori for their year 9 students found that cumulative growth was challenged by the lack of te reo Māori teachers in the schools to take the learning beyond this; this is linked to the third key theme from participants, teacher expertise.

#### *Teacher expertise*

A key feature in the literature on teaching te reo Māori is the need for a well-qualified teacher workforce to deliver this and for ongoing professional development for all staff. As Ngāpō (2013) argues, the quality of who is teaching, what is taught and how it is taught is essential, and he proposes that teacher trainees need to participate in compulsory te reo Māori classes for the entirety of their degree. The evidence gathered from research participants reveals this as a critical concern as well. School-based participants all agreed there currently weren't enough teachers being trained or available to teach te reo Māori and there was still a long way to go to achieve this goal, as this Pākehā principal explains:

The issue we have had is finding the teachers to do the work. We have [had] a desire to do it for some time ... We have had real difficulty in getting staff who can stay and grow with us. (Gael Ashworth, wāhine Pākehā)

[Te Taura Whiri, the Māori Language Commission] are taking a nationwide educational and 'normalisation' approach by ensuring that te reo Māori is seen and heard across as many media platforms and as much as possible, so that all New Zealanders are exposed to it and this can produce a wider attitudinal change.

generation of Māori speakers (Kāretu, 2008) who will pave the way forward:

That is where Aotearoa is heading. The younger generation wants to be bi-cultural, and we want to be bi-lingual and honouring te reo Māori as an official language because it is an official language. (Abby Robertson, wāhine Pākehā)

Some teachers represented schools that had made te ao Māori programmes compulsory at year 9 and therefore had some experience in compulsory language introduction. One participant reflected on how successful this had been:

We integrated te reo Māori for year 9. Students cycle through half a year of te reo Māori. There are such a variety of

Aotearoa New Zealand about why they are there. We need to be bold and show that we genuinely value te reo Māori.

Most of the interview participants recognised that having some form of compulsion would take a genuine commitment from all parties involved:

The keys steps would first be the philosophy, the vision; it has to have a major focus. We are going to have to let some other things go so that we can focus on that. You can only have one or two priorities if you really want to follow it through. (Nicola O'Halloran, wāhine Pākehā)

#### *National and school leadership*

A second key aspect of policymaking participants identified was school

Teacher education is vital to this, as Jack Adams makes clear: 'It needs to start with

the right people delivering it. The training of the kaiako is crucial. Me Māori tonu te kaiako. It has to be delivered by Māori.’

### Resources and time

For language policy to be successful, macro-policies need to align with resourcing at the level of classroom micro-policies. In a study of three Pākehā primary school teachers who attempted to incorporate te reo Māori into their classroom, Barr and Seals identified that ‘the most crucial resource for te reo Māori use at all schools was time’ (Barr and Seals, 2018, p.443). Participants in our study agreed that both human and financial resources were crucial to the success of a future compulsory te reo Māori policy. As Robyn Thompson, wāhine Chinese, stated: ‘More schools are aware that effective policy implementation needs to happen, but many do not have the tools, the resources. There is a lack of capability issue within schools too to do this.’

### Future planning for te reo Māori in all schools

While this was only a small study, it identified the main areas that require policy attention if all schools can successfully embed te reo Māori language learning in their classrooms. In this final section I undertake a futures-thinking approach to consider policy incrementally by identifying drivers of change (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2021). Deeply valuing te reo Māori me ona tikanga goes beyond one policy initiative and extends across several realms. As Kāretu (2008) reminds us, we must fully commit our time and effort to the cause of te reo Māori revitalisation at all levels, beginning by valuing te ao Māori and te reo Māori within the whānau, and extending this to the wellbeing of individuals and the knowledge of community and society. If there is no genuine commitment, then there is no survival.

### Valuing te reo

The most strategic aspect of embedding a policy that requires all teachers to be teachers of te reo Māori is to enhance the valuing of the language. This is the most difficult, yet important, part of future policy planning. Gaining a sector-wide commitment will not happen overnight; instead, incremental steps that equip teachers with greater foundational history and knowledge and exposure to te reo Māori will contribute to wider buy in. I believe the revitalisation of te reo Māori and the teaching of it in every school in Aotearoa New Zealand will require a radical incrementalism in policy (Halpern and Mason, 2015). This entails an approach that prioritises the ‘normalisation’ (Higgins, Rewi and Olsen-Reeder, 2015) of the language across multiple sectors. Te Taura Whiri, the Māori Language Commission, adopted such an approach using extensive evidence. They are taking a nationwide educational and ‘normalisation’ approach by ensuring that te reo Māori is seen and heard across as many media platforms and as much as possible, so that all New Zealanders are exposed to it and this can produce a wider attitudinal change.

The significant role of tangata tiriti (non-Māori Treaty of Waitangi allies), our current youth population (the tamariki and rangatahi in our schools now), and ngā uri whakatipu (our future generations to come) cannot and must not be underestimated. It is their enhanced understanding, commitment and loyalty to this kaupapa that will make the greatest difference with the ‘value’ factor.

### Resourcing teachers

It is clear that teachers will have a much greater commitment to teaching te reo if they themselves have been taught well. This necessarily involves the teachers’ training colleges and resourcing the teaching of te reo Māori for all teacher training lecturers,

and then in turn the teacher education trainees. Prioritising training institutions will be cost-efficient, as such teachers can then share their expertise in schools once they graduate.

### Leadership

Teaching te reo Māori in all schools in Aotearoa New Zealand requires considerable bravery and leadership. As one of the study participants, MP Marama Davidson, said, ‘we still haven’t quite seen the bravery and the courage to put the resources and the commitment into a plan yet’. It will require leadership in every sector of government and education.

When I was a primary school principal, I worked closely with the senior leadership team to canvass the community and see what they thought. We were able to move forward with the following:

- The board of trustees and staff undertook te Tiriti o Waitangi and cultural responsiveness training.
- I facilitated the development and implementation of user-friendly, accessible te reo Māori resources and programmes for teachers in classrooms.
- Our team monitored and evaluated te reo Māori implementation once a month.
- I taught compulsory kapa haka for the entire school on a weekly basis.
- We created links with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to use our school facilities and run weekly adult te reo Māori classes for 36 weeks a year for three years running. It took time, but we got there eventually.

Making time to ensure such a policy is implemented well instead of rushing things through is essential and will significantly benefit all. From the scale of the government, to members of society, and within our education system, te reo Māori can be sustained if we treasure it.

<sup>1</sup> <https://nmssa.otago.ac.nz/reports-and-resources/learning-languages-resources/>.

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## What Would it Take to Successfully Introduce Compulsory Te Reo Māori in all Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand?

### A future-focused policy analysis

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Murray Lucas

# A Former Principal's View and Experience

## of the Ministry of Education's Involvement in Contemporary Education Issues in New Zealand

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### Abstract

This commentary provides a former principal's perspective on contemporary educational issues and the role of the Ministry of Education in addressing these. In the author's experience, when the Ministry of Education works with principals, positive changes have begun to happen, although often not to the stage of embedding these changes. Problems can emerge when the Ministry of Education makes decisions without involving the sector.

**Keywords** education policy, schools, implementation, principal, educational issues

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**T**ed Wachtel, the founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, once said, 'human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour, when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them' (Wachtel, 2016). As I bring a principal's perspective to examining Ministry of Education policies, I find it useful to consider those policies' impact through the prepositions 'with', 'to', and 'for'.

I was a principal of two co-educational state secondary schools for 22 years. These were, in turn, Horowhenua College and Tawa College. It would be fair to say that

over that time, the ministry has been increasingly willing to work with principals and the teaching sector. It has consulted with carefully selected representative groups and developed responses to many issues. Issues that I have been directly involved with include: the revision of the effectiveness and credibility of the NCEA system; appropriate strategies to deal with behavioural challenges in schools; strategies to address the concerning mental health of students; and the importance of collaboration among schools on matters of teaching and learning. I will explore these in turn, drawing out points of relevance to wider processes of policy implementation.

#### The 2019 NCEA review

The recent review of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) appeared to show a considerable improvement from the time when School Certificate was replaced with NCEA (around 2002). In the review phase it was impressive to see the extent to which principals were trained to encourage responses from many involved people – school leaders, teachers, students, parents, whānau, and the business sector. The consultation phase was well managed, and all ethnic groups were intentionally included. The process involved was excellent, and a highly qualified group of experts developed the outcomes.

For example, during the NCEA review period, a Ministry of Education group involved with the review spent a day shadowing the five members of the Tawa College senior leadership team over a normal school day. The feedback from those visitors at the end of the day included surprise that none of the senior staff had time for a lunch break, and also at the large number of different, important and often urgent issues the senior leaders had had to juggle in the course of the day. The ministry staff felt that this was a valuable exercise and it enabled them to start to understand the context in which Ministry of Education initiatives were received. I was impressed by their approach.

However, I know there were many who spent considerable time listening to different ideas and presenting carefully considered submissions who were left disappointed. One example was the

I felt that the NCEA review would have been more effective if assessment and curriculum were key parts of one government department rather than two government departments (the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority), which is the current situation.

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number of submissions from students on the importance of 'soft skills'. 'Soft skills' are non-technical skills that describe how students work and interact with others. These skills are key components of the core competencies that are outlined in the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum. There is a realisation that it is not easy to translate 'soft skills' into quantifiable data, but there did not appear to be much effort to look beyond New Zealand to see if these important skills have been assessed constructively elsewhere.

I felt that the NCEA review would have been more effective if assessment and curriculum were key parts of one government department rather than two government departments (the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority), which is the current situation. This can lead to fragmentation of curriculum and assessment and a lack of consistency and cohesive approaches between the two organisations in a reform such as the current NCEA Change Programme.

#### Behavioural management in schools

I also had first-hand involvement with Ministry of Education endeavours to deal with challenging behaviour in schools. The ministry developed a suite of programmes to support schools in promoting positive behavior. They came under the umbrella of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) (Ministry of Education 2010). Two particular programmes that I was privileged to be part of were Restorative Practices and My FRIENDS Youth (Ministry of Education 2012).<sup>1</sup>

In 2006 the Ministry of Education had expressed some concern about a high number of suspensions and stand-downs at Tawa College. To their credit, they were proactive in suggesting a way forward, and they put me in contact with Mark Corrigan, a ministry employee, whose input proved invaluable in implementing restorative practice at the college. Since 2009, restorative practice has made a positive difference to the climate of Tawa College. It involved the teaching staff working proactively with the board, the students and the whānau to work through minor and major infractions in a manner that addresses causes of poor behaviour and listens to the stories of all those involved in the situation.

In 2011 the ministry established a reference group to develop a strategy for promoting restorative practices in schools across New Zealand. The group comprised ministry staff, principals, teachers and guidance counsellors, as well as effective trainers in this area. This reference group was an excellent example of the ministry working with principals and the sector to develop this worthwhile programme. One very positive outcome was an effective set



of manuals dealing with the various aspects of restorative practices: Fundamentals, Circles and Conferences (Ministry of Education 2014).<sup>2</sup> The manuals were well presented and also had effective training modules that schools could use with their staff. After some teething troubles, the reference group was well chaired and the Ministry of Education representatives both listened and consulted. Unfortunately, there were ministry personnel changes, the facilitator moved on and the replacement, although well-meaning, had very little understanding of restorative practice and so momentum was lost.

With the new facilitator, meetings of the reference group became irregular and the ministry decided that restorative practice should be outsourced. Reference group members were involved in selecting the organisation to assist restorative practice in schools. It would be unfair to comment on how effective this was, but it would be prudent to reflect on the wisdom and overall effectiveness of outsourcing. I thought the reference group should have continued to meet, albeit less regularly, to keep a watching brief on the accessibility of training and on the effectiveness of this training.

In retrospect, the reference group should have included a representative of the colleges of education, so that teachers' pre-service training could have involved some instruction on restorative practices. In a 2011 evaluation of restorative practices in New Zealand, author Liz Gordon stated: 'It appears that only the University of Waikato offers a voluntary course in restorative practices'. She commented further: 'If these practices are so successful in bringing about some core goals for New Zealand education ... it is surprising the approach is not covered in all courses' (Gordon, 2011, p.54).

It was also frustrating that the number of schools that wanted to take up restorative practice support exceeded capacity, and once again momentum was lost. I believed that the publication of the excellent resources meant the time was right to extend the programme to as many schools as possible.

Another personal observation is that with behaviour initiatives, some of the key decision makers within the Ministry of Education do not appear to stay with a

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proven and effective policy, but look for the next new initiative. In this case it appeared to be promoting KiVa as a method to deal with bullying. KiVa is an anti-bullying programme that has been developed in Finland. It is an effective evidence-based programme that is relatively expensive and therefore difficult to access for a number of New Zealand schools.

#### Strategies for students' mental health

One of the other programmes related to building health, wellbeing and resilience was My FRIENDS Youth. This programme was underpinned by cognitive behaviour therapy, which was the gold standard for dealing with anxiety.

It was an Australian programme that the Ministry of Education purchased and began trialling in New Zealand schools. There were some challenges both in training facilitators and then in extending the training to pilot schools in New Zealand. Tawa College was involved, but after the initial training many schools pulled out. The trainers did not appear to understand student behaviour in a classroom context.

Tawa College persevered, and we were well supported by two excellent teachers, one North Island-based and one South Island-based, who served as the national facilitators. Using a research team based at Massey University, the programme was evaluated effectively in some of the New Zealand pilot schools, and this – commendably – involved both student and teacher voices. The summary of the evaluation report concluded:

This evaluation report shows that the My FRIENDS Youth Resilience Programme aligns with government strategies, is consistent with the *New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies and the health and physical education curriculum, and can be effectively facilitated by teachers for all Year 9 students, including priority learners. (MacDonald et al., 2015, p.1)

The report indicated that the programme could be enhanced if it were adapted using a Māori cultural lens, and the Ministry of Education began the process. It was also determined that an online programme was preferable to a paper-based one. The ministry ensured that the rewrite or adaptation was reviewed by psychologists, and the pilot schools were excited about this programme, which could have done much to alleviate student anxiety. Again, I was fortunate to be part of a reference group which looked at the resources.

There was a silence about the programme for a long time, and then we were told that the ministry would not be proceeding with the My FRIENDS Youth initiative, although pilot schools could continue to use the resources for a limited period of time. To the best of my knowledge no reason was given. The lack of further communication from the ministry was disappointing, and a worthwhile mental health initiative was mothballed and any momentum was stopped.

Reflecting on the abrupt pause of both of these programmes from the perspectives of a principal and teachers in my school, it is this kind of lack of continuity in programmes that is frustrating to schools and the 'churn' of changes makes it difficult

to navigate and not become cynical about the next programme.

**School collaboration: kāhui ako/  
communities of learning**

Another interesting development was the acknowledged need to increase collaboration among schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The National government, under Minister of Education Hekia Parata, developed the idea of communities of learning, which subsequently became known as kāhui ako (Ministry of Education, 2023). This had its initial challenges, as funding in New Zealand schools is roll-based and this leads to competition among schools, rather than the collaboration sought. The unions representing the primary and secondary school sectors had differing views on this initiative, and two different agreements were developed with the Ministry of Education. This meant there were different criteria for the various roles within a kāhui ako, and also different remuneration for these roles.

A commendable aim of kāhui ako was that teachers had a vested interest in the students throughout their school pathway, and not just for the year they were in their class. This worked particularly well when the contributing schools were geographically and philosophically aligned, and the majority of primary-aged students would advance from year 1 to year 13 within the same kāhui ako. Each kāhui ako was required by the ministry to develop its own 'achievement challenge' according to prescriptive criteria, and initially the focus had to be on lifting academic achievement. Later on there was greater flexibility, and health and wellbeing goals and culturally responsive pedagogy goals were included alongside academic achievement.

I was fortunate to be given a sabbatical in 2021 to look at the effectiveness of kāhui ako throughout New Zealand. I was most impressed with the teacher-only days I attended involving all schools in the kāhui ako, but also by the ways schools were dealing with key transitions in a student's educational pathway. It was not universally successful, in that it worked better with geographically aligned schools and less well with inner-city schools where there were multiple pathways for a student to choose,

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particularly with regard to secondary schools. Another advantage was that teachers with specific expertise could now not only benefit the school they were from, but this expertise could be shared across the kāhui ako.

Feedback from kāhui ako also included concern with regards to lengthy application forms for lead principals and across-school leaders. These forms took many hours to complete. Also, there were challenges to involving early childhood educators in the process. Nevertheless, the notion of collaboration between schools and across education sectors is worthy and I believe that kāhui ako have a future in New Zealand education. (See also Kamp, 2019.)

Policies, to be effectively enacted and developed, must be predicated on effective relationships. The ministry seemed to realise this and assigned a ministry adviser to each principal. The idea was good, but the reality is that it depends on the education adviser remaining in that job for

a reasonable length of time. My initial experience at Tawa College was disappointing in that the school had multiple education advisers of those critical early years. Also, the college was not always notified of changes of our adviser. Fortunately, in my last years as principal Tawa College had the same education adviser, and she was hugely supportive and helpful in keeping the school informed and checking how we were progressing policies. In particular, her support over lockdown periods was outstanding. The education adviser is a vital role and there needs to be some incentive given to keep the Ministry of Education adviser in that role.

Lack of continuity has also been evident with regard to the property adviser and the learning support adviser. When the Ministry of Education does not retain staff in critical liaison areas, this has a major impact on schools in both the efficiency and quality of school change.

Another area of concern is professional learning development. This was addressed eloquently by Bali Haque when he stated:

We have created an over complex and incoherent approach to teacher PLD. Teachers have for decades been forced to interpret and implement the curriculum without adequate support and resources. Wheels have constantly been reinvented and workloads have skyrocketed with the MOE acting as no more than a PLD broker and procurement adviser. (Haque, 2021, p.4)

After wide consultation across New Zealand at the request of the current government, Haque and the independent taskforce he chaired produced a worthwhile document titled *Our Schooling Futures: stronger together* | Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019).

Unfortunately, there have been cases in which the Ministry of Education has not worked with the sector and the result has been disappointing. An example of this was the introduction of learning support coordinators in New Zealand schools. The concept of schools having learning support coordinators was welcomed and needed, but the allocation

of these was not appreciated by those schools that missed out, and there were a considerable number. First, there was no process by which schools could present their case and provide evidence, particularly financial, to indicate their need of such personnel. Instead, schools were informed that in tranche one they either were granted learning support coordinators or they were not. Tawa College was one of the unfortunate schools to miss out, but we were given initial hope that there would be further tranches and support from the Ministry of Education adviser with regard to the application. Soon after this, we learned that the ministry was not proceeding with providing further learning support coordinators. I believe this unfortunate situation could have been avoided if

principals had been part of the allocation process. A recent evaluation of these learning support coordinators shows that they have been highly effective in supporting school communities to provide appropriate care and learning for students with high learning needs. It is a real pity that all schools did not benefit.

This is one principal's view of working with the Ministry of Education to implement policies and practices in the past 20 years. In summary, some good educational progress has been made when the ministry has worked with the sector. There have been some worthwhile initiatives, such as restorative practices, kāhui ako (collaborative learning) and learning support coordinators. However, there are still a number of barriers which prevent schools being as effective as they

could be in this area. These include the impact of losing key Ministry of Education liaison personnel, especially if they stay only a short time in their role; a lack of opportunity for all schools to access what they need; and a lack of willingness to not only initiate worthwhile programmes, but also to work with principals to ensure that these programmes are embedded and reviewed, rather than slowly disappearing to be replaced by the next initiative. Recognising and addressing these barriers needs to be done by the Ministry of Education and principals working together

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# Public Housing in an Urban Setting

## an inclusive wellbeing framework

### Abstract

We outline a wellbeing framework to underpin analysis within a major research programme in which a key component is to examine effects of public housing on tenant wellbeing. The wellbeing framework is designed to be inclusive by drawing on multiple international approaches to wellbeing (especially the capabilities and subjective wellbeing approaches) and on te ao Māori and Pacific wellbeing frameworks. Key features of the framework are that it: emphasises

both individual and whānau wellbeing; enables wellbeing judgements to be made by the tenants themselves; allows for co-determination of factors affecting wellbeing; and allows for interpersonal factors to affect wellbeing. We describe surveys of public housing tenants being conducted within the research programme and outline how they can be analysed with reference to the inclusive wellbeing framework.

**Keywords** wellbeing, public housing, subjective wellbeing, capabilities

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A five-year research programme, Public Housing: Maximising Wellbeing and Urban Regeneration (supported by the MBIE Endeavour fund), began in late 2020.<sup>2</sup> The research programme is designed to improve the wellbeing of public housing tenants and their communities by providing evidence that leads to healthier and more environmentally sustainable development. Considerable research has been conducted in New Zealand on the effects of housing quality on health, wellbeing and sustainability (for a comprehensive summary, see Howden-Chapman et al., 2023). However, there is considerably less evidence on the specific relationships between public housing and each of health, wellbeing and sustainability.

Public housing tenants, on average, face greater socio-economic disadvantages than do private sector tenants or homeowners. In part, this reflects the eligibility criteria for acceptance into public housing, which include adequacy (e.g., not currently in accommodation), suitability (e.g., family violence), affordability (e.g., inability to afford private rentals), accessibility (e.g., discrimination) and sustainability (e.g., social functioning) (Ministry of Social Development, 2022). Some disadvantages faced by public housing tenants may be ameliorated by their payment of income-related rents (which reduces their rental costs compared with private renters) and through provision (in many cases) of better-quality housing than experienced in private rentals. These differentiating features of public housing and of public housing tenants, coupled with the key role of housing in supporting wellbeing, makes an understanding of how public housing can contribute to tenant wellbeing of considerable importance.

Researchers in this programme are working in close partnership with public and community housing organisations across seven different public housing providers to increase understanding of the wellbeing impacts of different public housing settings.<sup>3</sup> The programme studies how the diversity of governance arrangements, financial planning, and housing and urban design approaches of the seven providers affect tenant outcomes. At least two of the partner programmes

have explicit urban regeneration goals in addition to the provision of public housing. The full research programme aims to: identify a range of positive wellbeing outcomes; analyse sustainable urban regeneration and carbon reduction efforts; understand what enables socially inclusive communities and neighbourhoods; outline how public housing providers can achieve the above elements while building efficiently and effectively at scale; and understand and inform housing models that support and enable hapū and iwi housing aspirations. The wellbeing analysis, to which this article contributes, focuses primarily on outcomes experienced by

of these factors, and of public housing more generally, it is important to outline the concepts of wellbeing that frame the analysis and to describe how these concepts relate to public housing. Provision of this framework is the purpose of this article. The framework is an input into the design of surveys of public housing tenants within this research programme that will be used to interpret the elements of wellbeing, and contributions to wellbeing, of the tenants. Subsequent papers will analyse the data gathered from the surveys in the context of the conceptual framework outlined in this article and in two companion papers noted below.

Given that there are both similarities and differences in the way that people view wellbeing, a wellbeing framework needs to be conceptualised in an inclusive way that can reflect how different individuals and groups perceive their wellbeing and how housing and neighbourhood factors influence their wellbeing.

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existing public housing tenants in comparison with outcomes for people in other housing tenure types.

In the short term, the findings will provide evidence to help decision makers improve strategic public housing policies and support more effective allocation of government funding. In the long term, this research can help enhance wellbeing and improve environmental sustainability through decisions that result in the provision of more effective, equitable and sustainable public housing and urban regeneration.

Multiple factors related to public housing affect tenants' lives and so are included within the programme's analysis. These factors include governance, housing quality, transport, energy use, community place-making, and consistency with te ao Māori. To interpret the wellbeing impacts

In outlining our framework, we are cognisant that people with different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds may have different conceptions of what constitutes wellbeing, and of how housing and neighbourhood factors contribute to wellbeing. For instance, some researchers essentially equate wellbeing with a self-identified measure of subjective wellbeing based on a question about an individual's life satisfaction (e.g., Layard, 2011; Easterlin, 2020; Frijters and Krekel, 2021). Others, especially those who draw on the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Alkire, 2007), see wellbeing as multi-dimensional, with evaluative wellbeing constituting just one dimension of a broader concept of wellbeing. The framework in this article is inclusive of both these approaches.

The framework draws on a diverse international literature that deals with

wellbeing approaches to public policy. These approaches include some that have been used to assess wellbeing across a wide range of countries (Grimes, 2021). The framework also draws on prior work relating to wellbeing of Māori and Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Nevertheless, no framework can be all-encompassing. For this reason, the article is complemented by two companion frameworks developed for this research programme. The first of these outlines a wellbeing model grounded in te ao Māori (Penny et al., 2023) and the second outlines a Pacific wellbeing framework (Teariki and Leau, 2023), each with respect to public housing. The three papers are intended to be complementary,

and owner-occupiers who live close to some of the surveyed public housing tenants. Inclusion of this wider sample enables us to compare outcomes for people in different tenure types within the same geographical area.

To set the scene, we first summarise some prominent conceptual and practical wellbeing frameworks used elsewhere, especially in the Western literature (from Europe, North America and Australasia) and describe how these relate to the role of public housing in affecting wellbeing. The papers by Penny et al. (2023) and Teariki and Leau (2023) provide much deeper insights into Māori and Pacific wellbeing approaches relevant to the research

## The evaluative approach to considering wellbeing underpins many modern subjective wellbeing approaches to public policy and the measures perform well in terms of face validity, convergent validity and construct validity ...

each having insights that are relevant to the analysis of wellbeing in the public housing context in New Zealand.

Given that there are both similarities and differences in the way that people view wellbeing, a wellbeing framework needs to be conceptualised in an inclusive way that can reflect how different individuals and groups perceive their wellbeing and how housing and neighbourhood factors influence their wellbeing. It must also incorporate links between people, since the wellbeing of each of us is influenced by the wellbeing of others, whether within the whānau or the wider neighbourhood. Additionally, a range of measures of wellbeing, and its different facets, will be included when taking the framework to the gathering of evidence, which we do by incorporating multiple wellbeing measures in surveys designed specifically for public housing tenants. The survey is also being conducted with people in private rentals

programme. We then present an inclusive framework in the context of public housing that builds on these approaches. The framework emphasises intertemporal relationships (given the path dependency of housing) and interpersonal relationships which may be enhanced or diminished by the housing and neighbourhood situation. In the final section, we discuss how the wellbeing framework will be incorporated into the broader research programme, including a brief description of surveys of public housing tenants that have been designed to reflect this framework.

The focus throughout this article is on frameworks suitable for interpreting adult wellbeing. There is considerable evidence indicating that adult wellbeing is a major influence on children's wellbeing within the family (Casas et al., 2008; Powdthavee and Vignoles, 2008; Clair, 2012), but we do not separately survey children's wellbeing within the research programme.<sup>4</sup>

### Prior frameworks

We outline two conceptual approaches that form the basis of much international wellbeing literature, the subjective wellbeing approach and the capabilities approach,<sup>5</sup> and note how the New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework (Treasury, 2021c)<sup>6</sup> fits with these approaches. We also provide some brief background regarding te ao Māori and Pacific wellbeing concepts that are developed in depth in the Penny et al. (2023) and Teariki and Leau (2023) companion papers.

### Subjective wellbeing approach

Wellbeing frameworks that focus on understanding people's subjective wellbeing are influenced by the approach of 18th- and 19th-century utilitarian philosophers (e.g., Bentham, 1789; Mill, 1879). Subjective wellbeing approaches have been adopted by scholars across several social science and humanities disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology and economics (e.g., Singer, 2011; Pinker, 2018; Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 2014; Layard, 2011; Helliwell, Layard and Sachs, 2012; Easterlin, 2020; Benjamin et al., 2021). Following the guidance of Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009),<sup>7</sup> the OECD (2013)<sup>8</sup> posits three main concepts comprising subjective wellbeing: (positive and negative) affect (referred to as hedonic wellbeing by Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi), eudaimonia (psychological flourishing) and evaluative wellbeing (often summarised through a measure of overall life satisfaction).

The first concept emphasises people's feelings or emotional states (e.g., anger, worry, excitement) at a point in time. Data on these aspects may be obtained through the 'day reconstruction method' of Kahneman et al. (2004) or through point-in-time survey approaches such as ecological momentary assessment (Shiffman, Stone and Hufford, 2008).

Aspects of eudaimonic wellbeing include the pursuit of a meaningful life and the degree of control one has over one's life. Statistics New Zealand gathers data on these items through the General Social Survey and Te Kupenga. Concepts of 'balance' and 'harmony', which are related to eudaimonic wellbeing, are given prominence in many non-Western cultures.



Evidence shows that these concepts are also prioritised by people in Western countries, and indeed tend to be experienced more prevalently by people in richer Western countries relative to people in non-Western settings (Lomas et al., 2022). Currently, no data on balance and/or harmony is collected by official surveys in New Zealand.

Evaluative wellbeing reflects a broad assessment of a person's satisfaction with their life. It is typically measured in surveys by asking people to consider their overall life situation (Cantril, 1965). In New Zealand, the wording of the relevant question in Statistics New Zealand surveys (including Te Kupenga, the General Social Survey and Household Economic Survey)<sup>9</sup> is:

I am going to ask you a very general question about your life as a whole these days. This includes all aspects of your life. Looking at [the showcard below], where zero is completely dissatisfied, and ten is completely satisfied, how do you feel about your life as a whole?

The evaluative approach to considering wellbeing underpins many modern subjective wellbeing approaches to public policy and the measures perform well in terms of face validity, convergent validity and construct validity (OECD, 2013).<sup>10</sup> This approach to incorporating subjective wellbeing is commonly emphasised in policy applications because it: (a) is the broadest concept of the three, with both affect and eudaimonic influences potentially contributing to a person's evaluation of their overall wellbeing; and (b) has been shown to be more closely aligned with the basis on which people actually make decisions than is the case for the other measures (Kahneman, Wakker and Sarin, 1997). It is also easy to collect and imposes little respondent burden relative to the information it collects.

A considerable body of research has examined the key underpinning factors of people's evaluative subjective wellbeing as measured by life satisfaction (e.g., Dolan, Peasgood and White, 2008). Many of these underpinning factors are common for people both within and across cultures (Cantril, 1965; Easterlin, 2020; Lomas et al., 2022). Layard (2011) summarises seven

key drivers of life satisfaction as: family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values. Helliwell, Huang and Wang (2017) summarise major drivers of evaluative subjective wellbeing across countries at a macro level as: income, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, perceptions of corruption (quality of governance) and hedonic wellbeing.

#### **Capabilities approach**

The second main conceptual approach to wellbeing in relation to public policy is the 'capabilities approach' advanced by Amartya Sen. Sen considers that a person's

what a person achieves (both in a material and a non-material sense).

Sen does not specify a required set of capabilities for individuals.<sup>11</sup> This aspect provides a practical challenge for the approach, especially if people are considered potentially to be poor judges of their own wellbeing. If an external observer were to state which capabilities are required – as does Martha Nussbaum (2003) – this could be seen as paternalistic in that it prioritises the views of an external observer who 'knows best' what is in the interests of the person concerned. Sen's response has been to emphasise the procedural aspects of agreeing to a core set of capabilities, arguing that it is important that any set of

One pragmatic way of conceptualising the relationship between the capabilities and subjective wellbeing approaches is to treat capabilities as contributors to a person's functionings, which in turn contribute to the person's evaluative subjective wellbeing.

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perception of their own wellbeing should not be treated as an end in itself. One reason advanced for this view is that some people may be poor judges of their own wellbeing, in part because they do not know what other possibilities may be open to them.

Sen instead advocates that wellbeing consists of people's freedom to 'lead the kinds of lives they value – and have reason to value' (Sen, 1999). Sen suggests that the scope of a person's freedom provides them with a set of capabilities which can be used to achieve the things that they have reason to value. Thus, having a higher level of capabilities is tantamount to having greater real opportunities in life – i.e., to enlarge the scope of people's choices. Sen conceives of capabilities as contributing to functionings, where the latter are essentially

capabilities does not come from a narrow academic or philosophical perspective but is grounded in a widespread, well-informed, democratic process.

While faced with these challenges, the capabilities approach is useful in highlighting that many underpinning factors (capabilities) contribute to a person's overall wellbeing, and most lists of capabilities align well with the main factors found to determine evaluative subjective wellbeing (Smith, 2018). One pragmatic way of conceptualising the relationship between the capabilities and subjective wellbeing approaches is to treat capabilities as contributors to a person's functionings, which in turn contribute to the person's evaluative subjective wellbeing. Under this conceptualisation, it is the person who defines what they value most when considering their evaluative

subjective wellbeing. This conceptualisation is reflected in the framework set out in this article.

### *International and national wellbeing frameworks*

The Stiglitz–Sen–Fitoussi Commission report (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009) recommended the adoption of a dashboard of indicators to summarise people's objective and subjective conditions and capabilities which goes beyond simply looking at income and production as measures of wellbeing. It also recommended a dashboard of sustainability indicators that underpin future wellbeing.

with the addition of a cultural domain. The 2021 Living Standards Framework incorporates 12 domains for 'Our individual and collective wellbeing': health; knowledge and skills; cultural capability and belonging; work, care and volunteering; engagement and voice; income, consumption and wealth; housing; environmental amenity; leisure and play; family and friends; safety; and subjective wellbeing (i.e., subjective wellbeing is again placed alongside the other domains). In a paper commissioned by Treasury, Smith (2018) argued to place life satisfaction at the top of a hierarchy, making it explicit that life satisfaction provides a summary measure of the degree to which other

Policies and other factors that affect wellbeing are rated according to their effects on evaluative subjective wellbeing. Using this approach, a 'WELLBY equates to a one-point change in life satisfaction on a 0–10 scale, per person per year' (Treasury, 2021a). For instance, in the UK, becoming unemployed is estimated to reduce subjective wellbeing by 0.7 of a step, so being unemployed for two years would correspond to a WELLBY cost of 1.4. The approach relies on two crucial assumptions: (1) that 'reporting functions' (scales) for evaluative subjective wellbeing are identical across individuals; and (2) that the subjective wellbeing measure can be interpreted cardinally despite surveys adopting an ordinal scale (e.g., integer values between 0 and 10). If one is prepared to accept that these two assumptions hold (at least approximately), then two strengths of the WELLBY approach are: (1) that it can be used to compare effects of disparate influences (provided that the impacts of each influence on subjective wellbeing can be calculated); and (2) that the effects reflect people's own experiences of the relevant influences and the effects of these influences on their own subjective wellbeing, rather than relying on lists of capabilities stipulated by other people and which may not be considered important by the individual concerned.

The WELLBY approach has similarities with approaches in health that use QALYs (quality-adjusted life years) and DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) to measure outcomes of policy initiatives.<sup>13</sup> The overarching nature of an evaluative wellbeing measure means that a WELLBY captures a broader range of factors than do QALYs or DALYs, potentially including process characteristics arising from an intervention. These process factors may include aspects such as respect and autonomy (i.e., eudaimonic aspects), which may be important to people. The breadth of the WELLBY approach is particularly relevant to a research programme examining public housing that is designed to capture a wide range of impacts arising from public housing and which may arise also in processes of urban regeneration. These impacts may include, for example, effects of housing on education outcomes and thence on wellbeing, as well as process

While there is evidence indicating that many factors which contribute to wellbeing are similar across cultures ,, there are culturally specific differences in the relative importance of different factors and how these are communicated or conceptualised.

The report has been operationalised through the OECD's *How's Life?* report and Better Life Index (OECD, 2011, 2020). *How's Life* incorporates 11 wellbeing 'domains': housing, income and wealth, work and job quality, social connections, knowledge and skills, environmental quality, civic engagement, health, work–life balance, safety, and subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing is represented by life satisfaction and measures of affect, and is included as a separate wellbeing domain rather than as an overarching measure of wellbeing. The framework also incorporates four 'capitals' – human, social, natural, economic – which are considered to underpin future wellbeing.

The most recent version of the New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework (Treasury, 2021c; Hughes, 2021) updates and extends the 2018 Living Standards Framework, which in turn was modelled closely on the OECD framework,

domains contribute to a person's overall wellbeing. Reflecting this suggestion, Treasury encourages other government agencies to use life satisfaction as a summary measure of wellbeing when valuing non-market outcomes for the purposes of cost–benefit analysis (Treasury, 2021a). As with the OECD, Treasury includes four forms of capital (or wealth) in the Living Standards Framework as factors that underpin future wellbeing, and adds a layer of institutions and connections that govern the ways in which the capitals are transformed into domains of wellbeing.

Neither the OECD nor the Treasury's Living Standards Framework approach provides an overarching measure that can be used to summarise the effect of a policy initiative (such as a new public housing initiative) on a person's overall wellbeing. An alternative approach adopts the concept of wellbeing years (WELLBYs; see De Neve et al., 2020; Frijters and Krekel, 2021).<sup>12</sup>

aspects relating to governance practices. Process aspects are particularly highlighted in the te ao Māori and Pacific frameworks of Penny et al. (2023) and Teariki and Leau (2023).

#### *Te ao Māori and Pacific approaches*

While there is evidence indicating that many factors which contribute to wellbeing are similar across cultures (Cantril, 1965; Helliwell, Layard and Sachs, 2012; Exton, Smith and Vandendriessche, 2015; Smith, 2018), there are culturally specific differences in the relative importance of different factors and how these are communicated or conceptualised.

The companion paper by Penny et al. (2023) sets out a 'whakawhanaungatanga Māori wellbeing model' that provides a te ao Māori approach to wellbeing in the context of housing and urban development. Prior contributions that outline aspects of te ao Māori approaches to wellbeing include Durie (1985), Cram (2014), Kukutai, Sporle and Roskrug (2017), O'Connell et al. (2018), Te Puni Kōkiri and Treasury (2019, 2021b). The companion paper by Teariki and Leau (2023) outlines Pacific worldviews that are relevant to public housing and urban regeneration policy initiatives. Prior contributions that describe Pacific approaches to wellbeing include Pulotu-Endemann (2001), Thomsen, Tavita and Levi-Teu (2018) and Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2018).

Without attempting to summarise the two companion papers, there are several key shared elements within the two frameworks that are highly relevant when considering the wellbeing of public housing tenants. These elements include the central importance of relationships with whānau/family (both current and past), and the importance of spirituality, including spiritual connections to land and nature both currently and across time. While these elements have counterparts in findings from the international wellbeing literature (particularly the importance of relationships with family and friends for people's wellbeing), they are perhaps more strongly emphasised in Māori and Pacific wellbeing models than they are in models derived from Western cultures.

In an urban setting, these emphases indicate the importance of paying

particular attention to having places in which people can interact with friends and whānau/family and build interpersonal and spiritual relationships in a stable, and culturally and environmentally appropriate, context. In considering the role of a public housing development on wellbeing, it is therefore important that attention extends to the presence of these culturally appropriate aspects that relate to wellbeing.

#### **An inclusive wellbeing framework**

We bring together the various approaches to wellbeing outlined above within a model that is intended to be inclusive of different wellbeing concepts and approaches. This conceptual model sets the scene for the

they do not move house). Similarly, health, education, work, spirituality (and many other factors) are likely to have high persistence, and they may be co-determined with each other. Co-determination of factors implies that a policy action which affects one factor may indirectly affect another factor, which then impacts on wellbeing. Furthermore, factors which relate to one person may influence factors facing other people and so are interactive (between people). For example, in a public housing development, choices regarding provision of fixed neighbourhood facilities (such as a community centre or playing fields) will have long-lived effects on factors such as personal health and on

... current wellbeing may depend not just on current circumstances, but also on past personal, historical and cultural experiences, as highlighted particularly in te ao Māori and Pacific wellbeing approaches.

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design of a survey tailored to the situations of public housing tenants. The key facets of this survey, which includes questions specifically on the tenant's house and questions relating to a range of factors that may interact with housing in influencing wellbeing, are presented in the following section.

Our model recognises that wellbeing represents a flow over time, so conceptually should be considered within an inter-temporal framework. For instance, current wellbeing may depend not just on current circumstances, but also on past personal, historical and cultural experiences, as highlighted particularly in te ao Māori and Pacific wellbeing approaches. For instance, a person may retain a warm glow (or the opposite) from past family interactions. Furthermore, many factors that affect subjective wellbeing are persistent: for example, a person's housing conditions next year are likely to be related to their housing conditions this year (especially if

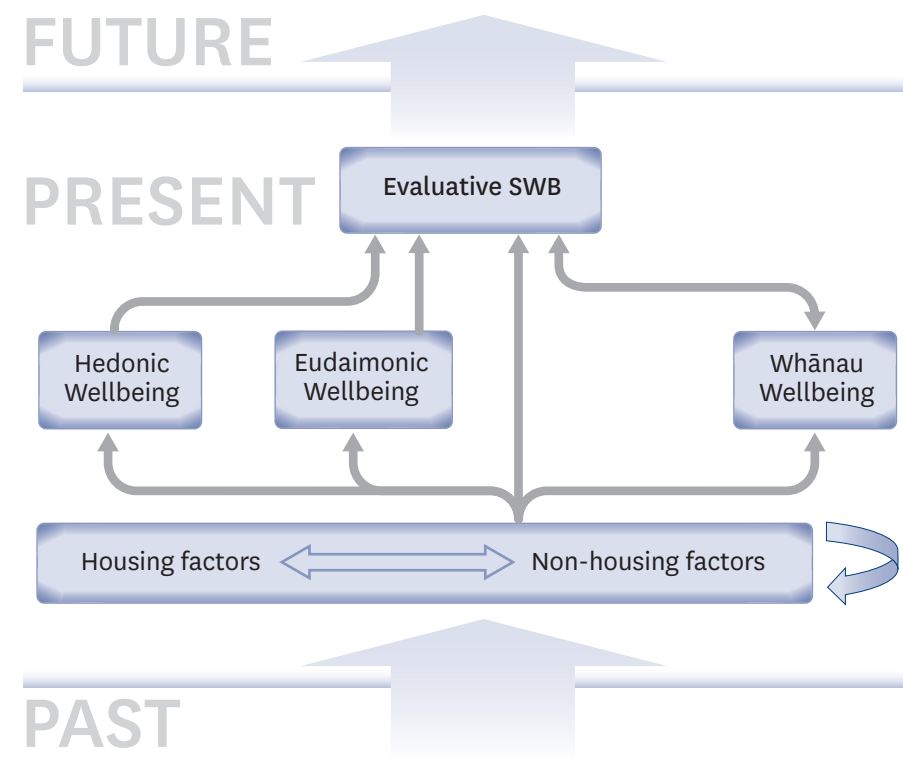
neighbourhood interactions.

The importance for wellbeing of interactions between people is highlighted in te ao Māori, Pacific and Western contributions, including the related social capital literature (Putnam, 2000). Relevant interactions for our purposes may include involvement with whānau, positive social capital factors such as trust and volunteering, negative factors such as discrimination, and interactions with authorities (including, for tenants, their housing provider). The family element means that evaluative subjective wellbeing may be 'reflective' (i.e., one's own subjective wellbeing affects a whānau member's subjective wellbeing, which reflects back on one's own subjective wellbeing).

Given the preceding discussion, a wellbeing framework that is suited to application within a public housing research programme needs to account for the following features:



Figure 1: An inclusive wellbeing framework



- a person's representation of their own evaluative subjective wellbeing;
- a person's evaluation of the subjective wellbeing of their whānau;
- housing and other (possibly co-determined) capability-related factors which have an impact on the person's and their whānau's current and future subjective wellbeing;
- the persistence of housing, neighbourhood and related factors which influence the person's and the whānau's wellbeing; and
- interactive factors (between people) which affect each other's wellbeing.

To reflect these features, our framework incorporates several subjective wellbeing concepts, including an evaluative concept that reflects overall life satisfaction, hedonic wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing factors, and the influence of whānau wellbeing on a person's own wellbeing. The weightings placed on these factors and on a range of capabilities in determining a person's wellbeing will differ across people and across cultures (Amendola, Gabbuti and Vecchi, 2021). For instance, discrimination may not have been experienced by some people, whereas it may be a constant issue for another person; subjective wellbeing of the former person

will not reflect discrimination even though it would do so if they were to become subject to discrimination.

Figure 1 provides a schematic depiction of a wellbeing framework which reflects each of the aspects discussed above. Focusing initially on the PRESENT panel, the framework incorporates a range of (potentially co-determined) housing and other capability-related factors which may affect the current evaluative wellbeing of a person. To keep the diagram simple, a single box is used to represent factors that are specifically within the housing domain plus factors within other (potentially co-determined) domains (e.g., health, housing, transport, energy, education, governance). Co-determination (marked by the bi-directional arrow between housing and other domains) is particularly important in the context of a public housing intervention since the housing situation may influence health and other outcomes for residents, while other factors (e.g., transport links) will influence the suitability of a house for a resident, so impacting their wellbeing. In addition, the impact of some factors, such as neighbourhood characteristics, may depend on interactions between people. Another form of interaction between

people is the potential effect of interpersonal comparisons (e.g., relative material living standards) on an individual's wellbeing (which we will be able to test for by having different comparator groups across our various public housing sites). These interpersonal interactions are signified by the curved arrow in Figure 1.

The channels for the influence of various factors through to evaluative wellbeing may be direct or be via the person's hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing, and may also operate through their effect on the wellbeing of whānau. Moreover, the diagram indicates that the relationship between own wellbeing and whānau wellbeing is reflective, so that the effects are bi-directional.

Current factors affecting wellbeing and wellbeing outcomes are influenced by past factors and by past subjective wellbeing, shown by the single arrow from the PAST to the PRESENT panels.<sup>14</sup> These past factors may be long-lived, such as intergenerational effects of land loss for Māori (Thom and Grimes, 2022), or they may reflect the more recent past (e.g., a recent neighbourhood event). Similarly, factors may be persistent, so that current factors that affect wellbeing may help determine future factors. Future factors then affect future evaluative wellbeing via the same channels discussed above. In addition, subjective wellbeing is persistent, so current evaluative wellbeing will have an effect on future evaluative wellbeing.

#### Applying the framework to interpret wellbeing effects of public housing

The public housing research programme is applying the conceptual wellbeing frameworks outlined here and in the companion papers to analyse the impacts of public housing through data gathered across several research strands. This work includes the gathering of evidence both from public housing tenants and from providers of public housing. Evidence on governance and finance matters are being collected from documentary sources and through face-to-face interviews with public housing providers. A 73-question survey of adult tenants at each site is gathering evidence from the viewpoint of the tenants themselves. Questions in the

survey have been chosen with input from the programme's Māori strand to ensure adherence to matauranga Māori and the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi.<sup>15</sup>

The survey, which builds on the conceptual framework outlined above, includes questions relating to: tenant characteristics (age, ethnicity, gender, length of existing tenancy, educational qualifications and employment status), and tenant views on domains comprising house quality, energy use, neighbourhood and community, social capital, health, transport, Māori cultural involvement, ability to express one's own culture, spirituality, discrimination and trust (including in the public housing provider). The domains, and questions within each domain, have been chosen to reflect factors that interact with housing and the neighbourhood to affect tenant wellbeing. Where possible, wording of questions in the survey mirrors the wording in Statistics New Zealand or other available surveys, so that direct comparisons can be made with external data sources covering similar tenant groups.

Questions that relate specifically to house quality cover issues of: dwelling condition, cold, mould, dampness, excess heat, pride in the house and how well the house meets the tenant's needs. These questions have been chosen to reflect key findings in the literature on shortcomings of housing in the New Zealand context (Howden-Chapman et al., 2023). Questions that relate to the neighbourhood include factors such as safety after dark, sense of belonging and ease of accessing green space. Questions included across other domains reflect factors that interact with housing to affect health, wellbeing and sustainability of dwellings and their residents. In each case, questions have been chosen to reflect issues that may be particularly important for public housing tenants, either because of the disadvantaged economic position of many public housing tenants or because of the greater proportion of Māori and Pacific tenants in public housing relative to the broader housing stock. For instance, our choice of survey questions emphasises issues of discrimination faced by the tenant, aspects of Māori culture, and aspects of spirituality that may be particularly important for

Pacific peoples and for some other ethnicities.

The survey questions that relate directly to wellbeing comprise four questions that are included in Statistics New Zealand's Te Kupenga survey and General Social Survey. These questions cover: (1) evaluative subjective wellbeing, based on overall satisfaction with one's own life; (2) the wellbeing of the whānau; (3) a eudaimonia question relating to control over one's own life; and (4) the WHO-5 mental well-being Index set of questions that relate to feelings of cheerfulness, calmness, activity, rest and interest. The survey is being administered twice through the programme at each site

whether education and health outcomes are related) and will test for associations of capabilities with the wellbeing outcomes of the public housing tenants.<sup>16</sup>

In interpreting results of the analysis as inputs into development of policies and practices with respect to public housing, it will be important to distinguish between four mechanisms:

- the direct impact of an intervention on a domain outcome for a person (which may or may not be directly via the housing domain);
- the interaction of changes in multiple domains (including housing) that affect the person (so incorporating the

In analysing the survey data, the inclusive nature of our approach, together with the incorporation of multiple wellbeing measures, will make it straightforward to switch the places of whānau wellbeing and evaluative subjective wellbeing within Figure 1 to reflect a cultural perspective that places more weight on collective than individual wellbeing.

(and to neighbouring private renters and owner-occupiers) to test whether changes (e.g., in transport links) have occurred between surveys and whether these changes affect the various dimensions of tenant wellbeing.

In analysing the survey data, the inclusive nature of our approach, together with the incorporation of multiple wellbeing measures, will make it straightforward to switch the places of whānau wellbeing and evaluative subjective wellbeing within Figure 1 to reflect a cultural perspective that places more weight on collective than individual wellbeing. Similarly, we can focus on outcomes for specific capabilities in relation to wellbeing. We will test for associations between capabilities (e.g.,

potential for complementarities, such as between transport options and work status);

- the impact of these changes on outcomes for others, including whānau;
- the impact of each of these changes on a person's wellbeing reflected in the various subjective wellbeing measures.

In each mechanism, it is important to understand the effects in the context of the person subject to the intervention, since: (a) the impacts of the intervention on the domain outcome may differ across people; and (b) the impact of the domain outcome on subjective wellbeing may differ across different groups of people. For instance, some factors which contribute to the wellbeing of some individuals and/or their whānau may not contribute to others'

wellbeing. Questions relating to spirituality may be an example here. In other cases (e.g., paid work), the weight placed on a factor may differ across groups (Durie, 1985; Haines and Grimes, 2022). For these reasons, we will undertake disaggregated analyses by population group to test whether particular wellbeing relationships are more important for tenants of some ethnicities than for others.

To illustrate the potential use of the framework within the broader research programme, consider a hypothetical example. We may be interested in how different public sector governance structures affect the wellbeing of public housing tenants. The effects of the governance structure may have its immediate impact on outcomes within the housing and neighbourhood domains, including housing quality and the availability of culturally appropriate meeting spaces. In turn, these changes may affect outcomes in the health/disability domain and in social capital, such as volunteering and interpersonal trust. These latter outcomes may impact on the wellbeing of others, including, but not limited to, whānau. We will wish to ascertain the changes in each of these outcomes that arise from a different governance structure. We then need to ascertain the effects of these changes on various measures of subjective wellbeing (which may vary according to personal characteristics), including the impacts of any interactive effects between the individual, whānau and others.

As a second hypothetical example, consider a case in which public transport that services a public housing site improves. The improved transport link may open up additional employment opportunities for members of a household, which may then have income and health consequences that affect the tenant's wellbeing. In the statistical analysis, we will therefore wish to test not only for the direct influences on wellbeing from specific domains, but also test for interactive effects on wellbeing across multiple domains.

The tenancy survey does not capture momentary affective reactions in relation to the tenant's housing situation other than through inclusion of the WHO-5 mental wellbeing questions. We will supplement the tenancy survey with an ecological momentary assessment survey designed to measure hedonic wellbeing (i.e., short-term affect) associated with the tenant's current situation. This survey will be administered (by mobile phone) in the year after the first survey to a subset of tenants who undertake the initial survey so that the momentary assessment data can be combined with information gathered in the broader survey.

The survey information will provide valuable data to analyse factors that determine public housing tenants' individual wellbeing and that of their whānau. The data will be supplemented by information gathered through other strands of the Public Housing and Urban Regeneration programme, including governance practices of each provider. The results will present decision makers with a rich picture of factors related to tenants' experiences of public housing and their neighbourhood that affect multiple facets of their wellbeing.

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- 9 The Household Economic Survey (and earlier waves of the General Social Survey) use a 5-point scale rather than an 11-point scale.
- 10 Face validity refers to respondents and others judging that the items are appropriate given what they are told about the assessment objectives; convergent validity relates to whether the measure correlates well with other measures for the same underlying concept; and construct validity refers to whether the measure performs in the way theory suggests with respect to the construct being measured (OECD, 2013).
- 11 Although Sen has avoided setting out a comprehensive or final list of capabilities, the *Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009) does set out a pragmatic set of outcome measures intended to capture important capabilities (and functionings) in the context of official statistics.
- 12 The WELLBY approach in De Neve et al. differs mechanically from that in Frijters and Krekel but in practical terms they are identical. We use the latter approach as it is the one adopted by Treasury in its cost-benefit model (CBAX) (Treasury, 2021a).
- 13 A QALY may be defined as a 'health outcome measure based on survival weighted by quality of life, where quality of life is scored between 1 for full health and 0 for death', while a DALY instead weights by the level of disability that a person experiences (Guinness and Wiseman, 2011, p.217).
- 14 We do not ask retrospective questions in our surveys other than to ask for the length of current tenancy, so will not detect specific life events that may have affected the wellbeing of an individual. By running two surveys for a longitudinal sample of tenants, we will nevertheless be able to control for past responses of the individual when analysing responses to the second survey. One feature that this will help to control for is the process of adaptation of an individual's subjective wellbeing to their existing situation, a feature known as the 'hedonic treadmill' (Brickman and Campbell, 1971). One interesting feature that we will not be able to test is whether tenants retrospectively reassess their past wellbeing.
- 15 The full survey can be accessed at: <https://www.sustainablecities.org.nz/our-research/current-research/public-housing-urban-regeneration-programme/tenant-wellbeing-survey>.
- 16 Smith and Davies (2020) provide a prior example of analysis which captures the impacts of housing outcomes on evaluative wellbeing.
- 1 Public Housing and Urban Regeneration: Maximising Wellbeing team members comprise: Mark Apperley, Clare Aspinall, Sarah Bierre, Ralph Chapman, Elinor Chisholm, Brodie Fraser, Caro Fyfe, Libby Grant, Michael Keall, Amber Logan-Riley, Kate Murphy, Crystal Olin, Jenny Ombler, Kim O'Sullivan, Guy Penny, Nevil Piersie, Tiria Pehi, Ed Randal, Bridget Robson, Jacinta Ruru, Ian Shearer, Ian Short, Mary Anne Teariki, Lucy Telfar-Barnard, Helen Viggers, Teresa Wall.
- 2 <https://www.sustainablecities.org.nz/our-research/current-research/public-housing-urban-regeneration-programme>.
- 3 The seven public housing partners within the programme are: Tamaki Regeneration Programme, Eastern Porirua Regeneration Programme, Wainuiōmata Marae Trust, Wellington City Council, Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust, Salvation Army and Dwell.
- 4 We will instead use data from the Growing Up in New Zealand survey to examine impacts of public housing versus private tenancies on children's wellbeing.
- 5 A third strand of literature which conceptualises wellbeing as positive mental health (Roscoe, 2009; Oswald and Powdthavee, 2010; Cooke, Melchert and Connor, 2016) adopts a narrower definition of wellbeing that is not well suited to the public housing research programme.
- 6 The Living Standards Framework presented in Treasury (2021c) updates and extends the Living Standards Framework presented in Treasury (2018).
- 7 Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi state: 'National statistical agencies should incorporate questions on subjective well-being in their standard surveys to capture people's life evaluations, hedonic experiences and life priorities' (2009, p.216).
- 8 See Figure 1.1 in OECD, 2013 and its surrounding text.

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