Community Forum on Education in Wellington's Eastern Suburbs

A Case Study on Choice and Democratic Community Participation in New Zealand Education Policy

by

Ruth Lillian Mansell

A two-paper thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education: Policy and Research

Victoria University of Wellington

1993
Acknowledgments

I wish to thank first Dr Anne Meade for her guidance, encouragement, and patience throughout the long gestation of this thesis. Dr Cathy Wylie has also given me warm support and valued advice.

I would like to thank Eric Baker and Peter Bartley, Principal and Board Chairperson of Miramar Central School, and the parents and staff of that school, for their continuing interest and for their generosity in giving me so much of their time and facilitating my access to their school.

I especially appreciate the many opportunities I have had to talk over ideas with Neil Sutherland, at that time Principal of Strathmore Park School, and I thank him and Colleen Wineera, the Chairperson, for welcoming me into their school.

I would like to thank Mary O'Regan particularly, and all the other people I interviewed who so generously gave me their time and the benefit of their wisdom.

I am grateful to my colleagues and students at Wellington College of Education who have helped me both personally and professionally through the difficulties I have faced combining this study with a demanding job.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my husband Jim and to my mentor Jack and to many other friends whose love and encouragement have sustained me.
Abstract

Two different ideologies were entwined in the revolutionary reforms of the New Zealand education system implemented in 1989. One was represented by a belief, long held in New Zealand, in democratic participation of communities in decisions that affect them, as a way of empowering diverse groups of people and promoting equity for minority and disadvantaged groups. The second was the free market neo-liberalism of the New Right which emphasised the rights and responsibilities of individual people to choose for themselves what they wanted. This belief is seen as an epiphyte growing vigorously onto the main trunk of democratic egalitarian ideals. The notion of choice seemed, in the initial rhetoric of the reforms, to span both beliefs in a way that represented a settlement of the two different ideals.

Community Forums on Education was one of the new policies which seemed to meet both these ideals, providing a means for communities to affect decisions about education issues in their own district, and for parents through their Board of Trustees to exercise their own choice for what kind of school they wanted.

The way in which the two parts of the tree of education policy grew together is examined first through an analysis of the intentions of those who developed the policy for Community Forums on Education, and then in a case study of the implementation of the policy in the third of the Forums which took place in the Eastern Suburbs of Wellington in 1990. The perceptions of some of the participants in this Forum are reported and analysed.

Tensions and conflicts between the two ideals are revealed in both the process and the outcomes of this Forum, as the participants discover that the simple market understanding of choice is increasingly favoured by the politicians.
who still make the final decisions. The participants describe the conditions which they believe are needed for the more complex democratic community participation to succeed. Their growing frustration and disillusionment is described as they discover that political imperatives for quick decisions, tighter central control, and constrained resources ensure these conditions are not met. This Forum is perceived by many to have given the choice to the already privileged minority, who have advantages of time, access to information, confidence in the language of the market, and money.

In the light of this Forum, I consider in the concluding section the relationship and interaction between two interpretations of democracy - 'strong' democracy characterised by community participation and 'thin' democracy extolling individual freedom of choice. The question that is raised is whether it is possible, under a New Right regime committed to individual freedom of choice, for the conditions necessary for democratic participation to flourish.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgments........................................................................................................... i
Abstract............................................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. iv
Metrosideros Robusta Rata .............................................................................................. vi

Chapter One: Introduction and background................................................................... 1

1.1. Introduction - the story I want to tell......................................................................... 1
1.2. Background to the restructuring ............................................................................... 2
1.3. Two ideological strands entwined in the reforms ..................................................... 3
1.4. Strong and thin democracy ....................................................................................... 4
1.5. Democratic community participation (strong democracy) - a characteristic of the New Zealand education system before the 1988 restructuring ................................................................. 7
1.6. Individual freedom of choice (thin democracy) introduced into the New Zealand education system .......................................................... 11
1.7. How were the two concepts of democratic community participation and individual freedom of choice entwined in the policy documents, Picot and Tomorrow's Schools? ............................................. 14
   Problems identified ...................................................................................................... 14
   How were these problems to be addressed in the new structure? ............................. 16
   Provision of choice and of community participation proposed in the Picot Report ........ 17
1.8. Community Forums on Education in the Picot Report .............................................. 18
1.9. Community Forums on Education in Tomorrow's Schools ........................................ 20
1.10 The Community Education Forum Implementation Working Party ...................... 21
1.11 The Community Forums on Education in Legislation ............................................. 21
1.12 Ministry of Education publication Community Forums on Education ...................... 22

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework and Research Design and Methodology .............. 27

2.1 Theoretical framework ............................................................................................... 27
2.2 Research design and methodology ............................................................................ 29
   Nature of study and key research questions ................................................................ 29
   Research methods ........................................................................................................ 31
   Boundaries ...................................................................................................................... 31
   Timeframe ...................................................................................................................... 32
   Interviews ....................................................................................................................... 32
   Written material ............................................................................................................. 36
   Observational analysis ................................................................................................. 37
   Themes ............................................................................................................................ 38
Chapter Three: Results .................................................................................................................. 41

3.1 Picot Taskforce ......................................................................................................................... 43
3.2 Officials committee ..................................................................................................................... 47
3.3 Implementation Working party ................................................................................................. 47
3.4 Eastern suburbs school principals ............................................................................................ 50
3.5 Parents who came to meetings at Miramar Central School ...................................................... 54
3.6 Submission from Miramar Centre BoT ..................................................................................... 59
3.7 Miramar Central parents interviewed in random sample ....................................................... 60
3.8 Strathmore Park School parents and BoT ................................................................................ 62
3.9 Public meetings arranged by Forum convener ......................................................................... 64
   Strathmore ................................................................................................................................ 65
   Miramar ...................................................................................................................................... 67
   Seatoun ...................................................................................................................................... 68
3.10 The wider educational community - seminar organised by NZEAS ..................................... 72
3.11 Convenor's Report ................................................................................................................... 74
3.12 Minister of Education - Hon. Phil Goff ................................................................................... 78
3.13 Reactions to Minister's decision ............................................................................................... 80

Chapter Four: Interpretation and discussion .............................................................................. 89

4.1 Intentions of the policy makers ................................................................................................. 89
4.2 Perceptions of people involved in the implementation ............................................................. 93
4.3 Inconsistencies illuminated ...................................................................................................... 96
   Conditions needed for demo. comm. partn. to work ................................................................. 96
   Information - views of policy makers ....................................................................................... 96
   Information - views of the Forum participants ......................................................................... 97
   Time ........................................................................................................................................ 98
   Money ....................................................................................................................................... 99
   Cultural capital .......................................................................................................................... 100
4.4 Tensions revealed in the processes and outcomes .................................................................. 101
   Processes ............................................................................................................................... 101
   Outcomes ............................................................................................................................... 103
4.5 Conclusions .............................................................................................................................. 104
   Postscript ................................................................................................................................. 106

Bibliography .................................................................................................................................. 108

Appendices .................................................................................................................................... 113
Metrosideros Robusta Rata

The rata usually begins life as an epiphyte perched high on another tree. It germinates from a wind-borne seed that settles in a fork of the host or in a clump of epiphytes already perched upon the host tree. From here it sends down aerial roots and also side roots, which grow horizontally around the host's trunk to join the original aerial root or another. In this way the epiphyte gradually encloses the host trunk and finally becomes a tall, often massive tree with a hollow trunk and huge spreading branches. Some claim that the rata kills the host, but this has been questioned. It is probable that a rata can germinate only on an aging host: vigorous trees can resist its growth.

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction - the story I want to tell

The revolutionary restructuring of New Zealand's system of educational administration, begun in 1988, saw the ideology of market liberalism transplanted as an epiphyte to entwine the main trunk of an education system which had evolved with a different ideology, democratic egalitarianism. In many of the new policies introduced in the restructuring, we can see the vines of market liberalism growing through the branches of the host tree of the public education system, sometimes merely being held up by the stronger old branches, sometimes vigorously obscuring them, and sometimes killing them off.

One of the new policies, Community Forums on Education, was formulated with the potential to lend new vigour and power to the already steady growth of parent influence and participation in the everyday life of schools. Individual freedom of choice can be considered as a branch of the epiphyte newly imported from the New Right. The relationship of this concept with the established values of democratic community participation, seen as a branch of the indigenous host tree of the New Zealand education system, may be illuminated by considering the implementation of the policy in one of the early Forums. This thesis tells the story of the third Forum in the Eastern Suburbs of Wellington as an illustration of the attempted interweaving of different purposes, expectations and values. I will pay special attention to the way in which both these branches were expected to produce leaves in the form of equity, particularly for those groups of people considered relatively powerless in the previous structure.
Within the theoretical framework of crisis and settlement of competing ideas, this thesis will consider the extent to which some of the problems identified by the reformers have been addressed. In looking at one Community Forum, I hope to better understand whether the combination of the two branches of democratic participation and freedom of choice are compatible and are producing the results of equitable empowerment claimed by the policy makers. I will discuss the extent to which the solution offered by this policy might contain within itself further tensions, with indications of continuing conflict in the district in which it was held. Would the new epiphyte which was planted to grow onto the old tree become a source of strength or a source of destabilisation?

1.2. Background to the restructuring

A complete restructuring of the administration of the New Zealand education system was proposed in May 1988 by the Taskforce to Review Education Administration (Picot Report), announced as government policy in August 1988, (Tomorrow's Schools), established in legislation in December 1988, (Education Amendment Act) and implemented on 1 October 1989.

The stated aims of the restructuring, greater efficiency and effectiveness, were to be achieved by replacing the Department of Education with a smaller policy-oriented Ministry and a number of separate agencies, abolishing the middle layers of bureaucracy, and making individual schools the basic self-managing unit of a fragmented education system. Each school was to be governed by an elected board of voluntary parent trustees carrying all the responsibility for the day to day running of the school. Parents were told that the payoff for all this work would be greater power to make choices about their children's education.
The reforms were driven by several impulses. Some related to dissatisfaction with the educational outcomes for Maori, Pacific Island, and working class children, and to a perceived feeling of powerlessness of parents. Others, led by the New Zealand Treasury and State Services Commission, were related to the perceived fiscal crisis, and a belief that the education system suffered from 'provider capture' and a cumbersome and wasteful bureaucracy.

Each of these influences resulted in some devolution of decision-making. The Policy for Community Forums on Education as we shall see was one of these.

1.3 Two different ideologies entwined in the reforms

The way in which decision-making was devolved in the new structure reflects the way in which two different ideologies, the market liberalism of the New Right and the democratic egalitarianism of the Labour Party, were combined. A key concept of the New Right ideology is that of individual freedom of choice, which implies freedom from bureaucratic controls. A concept similarly important to the reforms, with its history in democratic egalitarianism, is democratic participation, in the sense of communities being involved in decisions that affect them. Both these concepts had been featured in the rhetoric of the reforms as we shall see when we look more closely at the official documents.

To set the scene for an examination of the tensions between individual freedom of choice and democratic community participation, and to understand how the reforms could nevertheless be perceived as providing both, it will be helpful to pause here in my story of the background of the reforms, to consider the contribution of democratic theory to these issues.
1.4 'Strong' and 'thin' democracy

Two major schools of democratic thought have been identified by Jonathon Boston (1988): firstly, the radical-democratic tradition of 'strong democracy' championed by Benjamin Barber (1984), Carole Pateman (1975), and Gramsci (1978) and secondly, liberal-democratic theories of scholars such as Robert Dahl (1956) and Frederick von Hayek (1979), which Barber terms 'thin democracy'. Both these political traditions favour devolution of decision-making from central government to local institutions, but for different reasons.

Strong democracy, as argued by radical democratic theorists maintains a high level of political participation essential for the establishment and maintenance of an authentic democratic polity. It is not enough for citizens to vote and choose between political elites. Rather, citizens must be deeply involved in public affairs and actively engaged in the process of policy making at all levels within the state. From this position, devolution and democracy are inseparable partners.

Strong democracy is close to the mainstream of educational aims as expressed in a number of reviews requesting more community involvement in educational decision-making, which are discussed below. It has close connections with demands for greater equity for groups seen as relatively powerless in New Zealand political life, such as Maori and women. It is claimed that the way for these people to achieve more equitable outcomes is through access to decision-making processes and forums.

As Boston points out, while democratic principles are vitally important in determining questions relating to the structure and content of government, there are many other principles or values which must also be considered. As we shall see, some of these, such as equity, cultural diversity, cost effectiveness
and the public interest concerning broad education policies, became entangled with the democratic issues during the course of the Eastern Suburbs forum.

By contrast, thin democracy, as expressed by liberal democratic theorists such as Hayek (1979) maintain that participation has no particular significance or special relationship to democracy. Thin democracy is not concerned with the realisation of particular ideals or ends, such as justice, liberty, community or self-government, but is merely a political method, a kind of institutional arrangement for achieving political decisions.

This thin democracy of liberal democratic theory is concerned with the preservation of individual rights and liberties and the limitation of the power of the state. This view is a central element of the 'public choice' approach of scholars such as Buchanan and Tulloch (1962), McLean (1968), and Mitchell (1988) and had a profound impact on the New Zealand Treasury during the 1980s, dominating their Brief to the Incoming Government of 1987.

The official documents which followed Treasury's 1987 Brief, The Picot Report and Tomorrow's Schools, however, contained both these interpretations of democracy, without making a clear distinction between them or acknowledging that there might be a contradiction or tension in trying to achieve both simultaneously.

A number of scholars in New Zealand, (Nash, 1989), (Codd, 1990), (Lauder, 1990), (Dale, 1990), have drawn attention to underlying or potential inconsistencies between the various branches of the restructuring in New Zealand. In particular, they argue that devolution, while supposedly empowering communities in a way that would bring about greater equity, actually results in throwing the most intractable problems of social equity onto local communities which lack the resources to resolve them.
As market liberal ideologies from the USA and from the UK have been very influential in New Zealand, I found the education policy literature from these areas pertinent to my study in New Zealand, especially discussion of the concept of choice. A number of analyses of choice as a key element in the rhetoric of educational reform in the 1980s in both Britain and the USA have also suggested ideological tensions and outcomes that were either unintended or unacknowledged.

British studies discuss school choice processes and raise questions about which parties have most control over the outcomes in a system supposedly giving parents greater choice of school. They conclude that it is probable that the current choice procedures in Britain will lead to greater inequalities between the educational experience offered to children from different backgrounds. (Walford, 1992), (Adler et al, 1989), (Johnson, 1990), (Stillman, 1986), (Smith and Tomlinson, 1989), (Ball, 1990). Further analysis by British scholars relating more specifically to parent participation will be referred to below.

While some American scholars (Coleman, 1990; Chubb and Moe, 1990) claim that expanding parental choice and control at the school level will lead to increasing diversity and innovation in education and will enhance community, other studies explore the conflict between the claims of the promoters of choice as giving opportunity for the best education to children of all backgrounds, and those that claim that the already privileged will remain so (Levin, 1990; Elmore, 1990). They contrast the value placed on the autonomy of parents to make choices that are best, in their view, for their child with the value placed on having a society that is not fragmented by divisions imposed by segregated or exclusive upbringing. Some question the assumption that market analogy, which is often employed to justify choice, is in fact a highly decentralised control mechanism (Witte, 1990).
Dale (1991), writing about Canadian education and drawing on scholars from Scotland and Britain as the USA, finds evidence that:

'choice' in education leads to what economists call 'rationing by the purse' ... and more stratification in the school system ... undermining the comprehensive or common school principle that underlies state provision of schooling in so many societies (p. 55)

The literature on various interpretations and effects of choice and of democratic structures is very extensive, and I cannot do justice to it in a two paper thesis. Keeping in mind the problematic nature of these concepts, I return to my story of the background in New Zealand education to the concept of community Forums on Education.

1.5 Democratic community participation ('strong' democracy) as a characteristic of the New Zealand education system before the 1988 restructuring.

Before 1988, parents and the community in general had a role in making formal decisions about primary school education as they elected their members to serve on local school committees, which in turn elected the lay members of each of the ten district education boards for primary schools. Decisions about the type of school, which was the subject of the Community Forum on Education in 1990, were until then made by the elected education boards which governed primary schools. Parents could, except in a few instances of overcrowded schools, freely choose which primary school their child would attend. In primary schools it was common for parents to work closely with staff within the school, for fundraising, maintenance and servicing of grounds, buildings and resources such as library, and also for 'parent-helping' with the children in classrooms. Parents at many schools were able, through this variety of informal involvement, to have a significant 'voice' in the formation of the culture of the school.
A number of initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s, which encouraged parents to play a more active role in schools and teachers to adapt to these changes, have been described fully by Barrington (1991). I will briefly indicate some of these which are most significant in understanding the philosophical background to Community Forums of Education.

Community participation in educational decision-making was a theme of the Educational Development Conference held in 1973 and 1974. The summary of this pioneering series of community discussions about future directions for education in New Zealand, published as Talkback (1974), reported that:

there was a strong national feeling that the community should be more deeply involved in education ... parents wished to take part in decision-making...there should be a more balanced power structure between local and national interests.

The aims of Community Forums on Education seemed to be foreshadowed with the suggestion by some groups that the conference itself was a practical example of the ideal they sought, and

limited versions of the conference were seen as a means of providing continuing dialogue between schools, parents and educationists (p. 10)

In relation to my present thesis about the Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs, which debated whether children should have to attend an intermediate school, it is interesting to note that the issue of intermediate schools aroused strong opinions during the 1970s public discussions, the general view of parents and of many teachers being strongly against them (p. 12). From my own experience I know that during this time groups of parents in a number of Wellington districts were trying to prevent the building of further intermediates in their own area, and were feeling frustrated by the
Wellington Education Board. Although this Board was elected mainly by parents it was not seen to be recognising the validity of parents' views on this issue.

The theme of community involvement was continued with the setting up in 1975 of a Committee on Secondary Education by the Minister of Education to report among other things on ways of ensuring close co-operation between school and their parents and communities. Another hint of a forum mechanism came in its report, *Towards Partnership* (1976), which suggested that:

> each secondary school establish a Community School Association ... to provide a forum at which educational matters of concern are freely discussed. (p. 35)

One significant change in the decision-making role of parents was enacted in legislation in 1985 when the introduction of the Revised Health Education Syllabus was accompanied by a requirement that sex education might be introduced for Form 1 and 2 children only with the approval of parents, (Education Amendment Act, 1985). The resources for teachers and parents which accompanied this new syllabus strongly emphasised the necessity for development of consultation skills within the school and community, if the expected equitably empowering outcomes were to be achieved, (Department of Education, 1985). The need for this kind of support to ensure that democratic participation of parents and community is effective and equitable was, as we shall see, reinforced in 1989 by the Implementation Working Party on Community Education Forums.

The theme of more active involvement of parents and communities in school decision-making and training implications was developed further in the Curriculum Review Report, (Department of Education, 1987), which recommended that:
better school and community consultation (requires) skills of management and human
relationships...opportunities for diversity exist ... more should be encouraged ...
Criticism of particular types of school (intermediates) might be avoided if stronger
school and community links were made and the community encouraged to work in
partnership with the local school (pp. 120-121)

One way to help address the problem of under-achievement of Maori children
at school was seen by the Curriculum Review to be greater involvement of the
Maori community in schools:

Maori children learn best where ... the Maori community is fully informed about and
involved with the school programmes (p. 28)

Encouragement for Maori people to take a greater role in school decision-
making was seen as possible within the existing administrative structure:

All decision-making committees should be representative of the mix of ages and racial
groups in the community, and should have a balance of the sexes. Maori people in
particular are currently under-represented and steps must be taken to redress this
situation. Elections, selection and meeting procedure must enable all people,
regardless of gender, race or age to feel confident and comfortable in participating (p.
108).

and, for all races:

Parents have said that they want more say in the schooling of their children. They say
schools should be an important part of the community. Teachers have said that they
welcome community help and ideas. The will to form a strong partnership is there (p.
109).
In summary, while there was already substantial informal parent involvement in New Zealand primary schools, and the governing Education Boards were elected by parents, there was a general desire for more decision-making power at local level, and for greater equity in the representation of Maori people and minority groups on elected bodies and for training and resource support to make this happen. Some of these issues were, as we shall see, addressed in the 1988 reforms by proposals for Community Forums on Education.

1.6 Individual freedom of choice, or 'thin' democracy introduced into the New Zealand education system

Power for parents to make decisions about schools was expressed, from 1987, in a way which seemed at face value to be consistent with democratic community participation in schools. This was through the concept of 'consumer choice' in education which was first widely publicised by the opposition National Party in its 1987 election manifesto on education, *A Nation at Risk*. The emphasis here was on the necessity of consumer choice and better management systems to improve upon the highly centralised and interventionist management style of the Department of Education.

While the National Party was unsuccessful in gaining power in 1987, the New Zealand Treasury issued its brief to the incoming Labour Government (NZ Treasury 1987) which promoted empowerment of consumers through freedom of choice rather than through democratic participation. The roots of these ideas in the ideology of market liberalism have been traced by a number of analysts (Grace, 1990; 1991), (Lauder, 1990). This was the first expression in a major New Zealand official document of a radically different interpretation of the role of parents and the community in education. If Treasury’s ideas were adopted as policy, then parents might participate in education in two ways. The first was by involvement in school boards to which some central
government functions would be devolved (p. 10). The second way was by parents being able to exercise choice as consumers. One of the questions asked in the Treasury Brief was "what is the appropriate relation between the education service and those who are its participants?" Treasury answers this with the proposition that the important relation was one of provider and customer/consumer.

The concern of Treasury was that parents should have free choice of schools and, through the implicit threat of removal of their custom, be able to influence schools to be more responsive to their wishes as consumers.

This new conception of the role of parents has been commented upon in the British context as well as in the New Zealand one, by a number of scholars (Lauder, 1990), (Deem, 1992) who point to dual underlying ideologies concerning lay participation in educational administration. One stresses the significance of 'strong' democracy, public accountability and collective concerns, and one emphasises markets, competition, consumer rights and private interests. Westoby (1989) draws on Hirschman's (1970; 1981) contrast between the opportunities for 'voice' and for 'choice' for parents, in suggesting that voice, associated with democratic participation, is weakened by choice in which their option for influence is restricted to 'exit' from a school they do not like, thus distancing themselves from active participation in the ongoing decisions of a school.

Treasury's Brief (1987), however, expressed faith in:

the self-steering ability inherent in society to reach optimal solutions through the mass of individual actions pursuing free choice without any formal consensus. (p. 41)
In this way, Treasury claims, parents as the decision-making unit would be able to exercise power over the providers of education, the teachers and bureaucrats. This is preferable, in Treasury's view, to having the school (presumably with community participation) as the decision-making unit because the school is considered susceptible to provider capture and would favour provider interests over user interests. (p. 147)

Treasury does not explore any possible limitations to the freedom of choice of individual families if many choices are aggregated. In this case, as public choice theorists suggest (McLean, 1986), the sum of these individual interests might not present the optimal benefit for all. This paradox will be considered as I examine the issues emerging in the Eastern Suburbs Forum.

In claiming that equity is its prime concern, Treasury (1987) identifies two significant equity dangers to unleashing substantial choice for consumers of secondary education. The first, labelled a patronising view, is that disadvantaged parents will choose wrongly and thus reinforce disadvantage. The second is that of inequitable distribution of resources which disadvantaged students may receive. Simple-sounding answers are given to these two objections. Firstly provision of information would allow at least the majority to make their decisions on an informed basis and the minority are liable to benefit from the environment created. Secondly,

research evidence shows that enriched school resources ... are not the key; quality of teaching and student motivation are ... Careful targeting of resources and accountability may help to overcome this problem (p. 150)

It can be seen, then, that two different ways to achieve the generally desired outcome of a greater and more equitable spread of parent power in education were being suggested in 1987. The promoters of the New Right epiphyte,
represented by the New Zealand Treasury, believed that simple individual freedom of choice would produce the leaves of equity, while the supporters of the revitalisation of the existing host tree of the education system looked for a similar outcome through a more complex empowerment of minority groups through more equitable forms for democratic participation.

1.7 How were the two concepts of democratic community participation and of individual freedom of choice entwined in the policy documents, the Picot Report and Tomorrow's Schools?

Problems identified

The Picot Report (1988) set the scene for its proposals with an analysis of the existing system. I will consider here only those which directly impinge on democratic community participation and choice.

Overcentralisation of decision-making was claimed to be one problem.

The official will tend to be more concerned to satisfy pressures and norms at head office than to meet the concerns of the local community. If she or he makes a poor decision, they are less likely to suffer the consequences if they are remote from the community affected.

... Another feature of an overcentralised system is that decision-making tends to be slow ...

A highly centralised system is particularly vulnerable to the influence of pressure group politics (p. 23)
A second problem identified was lack of information and choice. Here the notion of choice seems limited to information about options for obtaining services and products such as equipment and furniture. Although nothing is said here about lack of choice of school being a problem for families or communities, as we shall see, this issue was the only one which was specifically addressed through choice mechanisms in the Picot recommendations.

A further issue which was identified as a problem by the Picot Report and which particularly set the scene for the proposal for Community Forums, is that of feelings of powerlessness (p. 35), associated with consumer dissatisfaction and disaffection. According to the Picot Report, people felt unable to influence the system which appeared inflexible and unresponsive to consumer demand. Six groups of people who felt powerless were identified:

- those who did not understand the system;
- those from minority groups who claimed the system is specifically designed for another group of people;
- those who had been failed by the system and felt alienated by it;
- those who hold different perspectives from the majority and whose long term educational needs are not being satisfied;
- those who sought to make a contribution to the running of their local school but found themselves exposed to inflexible procedures when trying to achieve simple changes;
- and those teachers who feel the system stifles initiative.
The report goes on to say that these problems tend to be accumulated in some localities, and

this kind of clustering of failure is certain to lead to personal social and economic catastrophe. It cannot be allowed to continue (p. 36)

This argument is an example of the weaving together of the branches of traditional Labour concern with equity and community empowerment, with those of the New Right suspicion of bureaucracy and provider capture.

How were these problems to be addressed in the new structure?

An analysis of the Picot Report and of Tomorrow's Schools reveals a number of ways in which the people in the community were to be empowered. Grace (1990) suggests that:

the empowerment of parents by their dominant position on Boards of Trustees and the potential empowerment of communities through the agency of Community Forum marked a distinct shift from Labour's traditional reliance upon educational bureaucracy ...

... the new education settlement was being founded upon a relation with parents and community rather than with intermediate or central levels of bureaucracy (p. 181)

The dual ideologies growing through the reforms are, however, suggested by the alternative explanations provided by Grace for the dramatic change:

The removal of 'unnecessary layers of bureaucracy' in publicly provided services was a strategy favoured by the Treasury. The replacement of a mediated relation between the State and the school by a direct relation raised large questions about exactly who had become empowered as a result. A diffuse collection of Boards of Trustees and Community Forum throughout New Zealand were unlikely to constitute a significant
power bloc which the Treasury would have to deal with in future struggles over education policy or resources. While the new relation with parents and community might serve the purposes of the Labour Government's new education settlement it also had the potential to serve the Treasury's agenda for public policy (p. 181)

*Provision of choice and of community participation proposed in the Picot Report*

As we consider how choice was to be provided in the reforms, we find that specific references to choice in the Picot Report recommendations are surprisingly limited. The section entitled "Issues related to the exercise of choice" (pp. 76-78) are all concerned with zoning of enrolments and the rights of exemptions and withdrawal from existing arrangements for attendance. As primary schools had generally been free from zoning restrictions, the changes proposed would make very little difference to this sector of education.

Objectives relating to democratic community participation, on the other hand, were strongly emphasised in the Picot Report. For example:

> Students, parents, and community groups should be able to understand the structure of the system, to participate in decision-making and to influence the system so that it provides the best educational opportunities for them (p. 41)

Most of the actual reforms which were intended to achieve this objective, however, related only to local decision-making over-spending of the funds allocated by Government.

Two further principles of the reforms are particularly relevant to community participation and to the policy of Forums:
Co-ordinated decision-making ... decisions should be made in ways that take account of the activities and priorities of the whole education service. When priorities are being determined, the aim should be to establish where and how the maximum benefit can be achieved (p. 42)

and

Openness and responsiveness ... an open system in which there are good information flows, and in which information on which to base decisions is available to everyone - consumers and providers alike ... for consumers, good information flows provide a way of checking on the exercise of power and responsibility within the system, and provide a basis for choice (p. 43)

In seeking to implement these principles, the Report proposed the system of self-managing schools described above. The objectives of increasing choice to consumers would presumably be achieved mainly through the opportunity parents would have to make decisions as trustees on the board of their own school.

1.8 Community Forums on Education in the Picot Report

At this stage I must explain a change in terminology for this policy, and how I deal with it in this thesis. The original term used in the Picot Report was Community Education Forum. Late in 1988, the Implementation Working Party decided that this term was inappropriate, as community education had specific and different connotations. Their recommendation, which was subsequently incorporated into all official documents, was the adoption of the title, Community Forums on Education. For simplicity, this is the term I will use, except in those direct quotes where the initial title is accurate.
While the basic unit of administration and decision-making in the new system was the individual learning institution, it was recognised that there would be some issues that would need to be considered by the wider community beyond individual schools. The Picot Report thus proposed a completely new mechanism:

A wider community forum will be required so that the views of the whole community can be brought together on matters of educational importance - both within and across sectors. We propose that Community Education Forums be established to do this, and to act as the official voice of the community on educational matters. They would:

- identify and gather together the views - both professional and consumer - of all education sectors on issues of importance;
- identify and gather views within sectors;
- discuss and if possible settle local conflicts of interest;
- discuss policy initiatives proposed by the ministry an provide feedback on these to our new proposed education policy council;
- initiate policy ideas to be considered by the new education policy council.

This section of the Picot report concludes:

We cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of Community Education Forums. In many submissions to us, we read that one particular sector of education or another did not have the opportunity of finding out the views of others locally and so could not present a community viewpoint to us. Similarly, we were told of syllabus committees and such groups which have had trouble in finding people to represent a broad based community view. We believe the establishment of community forums would help overcome that kind of difficulty (p. 55)
1.9 Community Forums on Education in *Tomorrow's Schools*

The policy document *Tomorrow's Schools* maintained this identification of Community Education Forums as one of the principal features of the reforms:

> Community education forums will be set up to act as a place of debate and a voice for all those who wish to air their concerns - whether students, parents, teachers, managers or education administrators (p. 2)

It is interesting, in the light of analysis of British reforms by Westoby (1989) and Deem (1992) that the term 'voice' is used so firmly in this policy document. The participants in the Eastern Suburbs Forum, as we shall see, were to question whether the voices of the community were really heard as the policy was implemented.

The few modifications to the Forum policy made in *Tomorrow's Schools* were to give more power to the Minister. The expectation in Picot that Forums would initiate policy ideas to be considered was deleted. The Minister was now responsible for drawing up the terms of reference and was able to request a convener to call Forum meetings.

As equity was made more explicit as an aim in *Tomorrow's Schools* by requiring that "equity objectives will underpin all policy related to the reform of educational administration" (p. 25), we would expect that those involved with implementing the Community Forum policy would have to consider the way in which the process of any Forum would involve Maori and members of minority groups, and also be concerned that the outcomes of any Forum would provide more equitable outcomes for children from these groups.
1.10 The Community Education Forum Implementation Working Party

Following the publication of *Tomorrow's Schools* (1988), an implementation working party was set up which greatly expanded the detail of how the Forums would work. The working party, according to the chairperson, Mary O'Regan, spent the whole of the first meeting defining what they meant by 'community', and subsequently proposed a community development model for the Forums, with a much enhanced role for the convener. In order to do the job, this person was considered to need training, salary, security of appointment, and access to a national information base. Interviews with key participants in this working party will be discussed later in this thesis in relation to the eventual operation of the third Forum set up in the Eastern Suburbs of Wellington.

1.11 Community Forums on Education in the Legislation

The legal basis of Community Forums on Education was established and given a much narrower focus in the Education Amendment Act of December 1989, section 157. Here there was no specific mention at all of Community Forums on Education. The section specifies only that:

The Minister shall not change the designation of schools without first appointing a community education convener, giving reasonable time to convene meetings relating to the proposed action and report to and advise the Minister on the outcome of the meetings and considering any report and advice received in that time.
Community participation was emphasised as the purpose of the Forums in a Ministry of Education information booklet for communities, 'Community Forums on Education' (1990). The Foreword to this booklet which was signed by the Hon. Phil Goff, at that time the recently appointed Minister of Education, states:

Community Forums on Education are part of the democratic structures the Government is setting up as part of the Tomwozo's Schools Reforms.

At the heart of all the reforms is the Government's determination to place decision-making on educational matters as close as possible to the point of implementation by local people ... the partnership between parents, teachers, Government and community is seen in Boards of Trustees. Community Forums on Education will bring the whole community even more closely into the decision-making process ... the end result will reflect the Government's vision of education being more responsive to the needs of the community.

This statement, together with the booklet's emphasis on the role of Forums to provide communication between communities and key government agencies, appeared to confirm the Community Forum policy as a mechanism for democratic participation as distinct from individual choice.

In summary, we have seen how the rationale for Community Forums sprang from the Picot committee's emphasis on community participation as a complement to individual choice. The policy for Community Forums seems to be in a direct line from the Educational Development Conference (1974), the McCombs Report (1976) and Curriculum Review (1987) rather than from Treasury's notions of choice. The Labour Party's commitment to forging new
links with the community sees its expression in this proposal. At the same time it can be seen to be consistent in one way with Treasury's desire to reduce the power of the bureaucracy, ostensibly limiting the role of the state and moving decisions as far as possible towards those most affected by them.

This analysis of the development of the policy for Community Forums for Education shows that although the restructuring of education in 1988 planted elements of the New Right, or 'thin' democratic ideology, this was one of the new policies which clearly, until 1990, was intended to strengthen the existing growth of a reasonably egalitarian and 'strong' democratic system. By observing and analysing the implementation of this policy, we may learn something about whether this emphasis was sustained.

1.13 The policy implemented - Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs, 1990, an outline of events

The issue for this Forum was about expanding the range of school types available in the district. Parents' choice of which of the district's schools to send their children to was not at issue, as primary schools in the area had never been zoned. Up until the 1960s, the primary schools in this district took children from ages 5-12, and then the children went on to secondary school. During the 1960s a two year middle school, called Evans Bay Intermediate, was built, and the 11 and 12 year old children (Forms 1 and 2), then went to that school for two years before going on to secondary school. The primary schools now took children for only six years instead of the former eight years, and were said to be 'de-capitated'.

Many of the parents in the district at that time objected, preferring that their children stay on at the primary school for the full eight years. The parents' views were, however, not heeded by the education authorities, and this
pattern of six year primary contributing schools and a two year intermediate school prevailed for the next 30 years.

The promise of the reforms enacted in 1988 was that at last parents would have choice to change the structure of their school. In May 1989 the newly elected Board of Trustees of one of the contributing schools, Seatoun, leapt at the chance to exercise this choice. Following surveys of parents at their school and a public meeting, the Board was confident that the vast majority of parent of Seatoun School children were in favour of retaining the 11 and 12 year old children at their school, rather than sending them to Evans Bay Intermediate. This action was termed 're-capitation' of the school.

In October 1989, the Board of Trustees was advised by the Ministry of Education that it could not make any assumptions about changes for 1990. Subsequent advice to the Board was that the issue of full primary status is the prerogative of the Minister of Education and that under the Education Amendment Act 1989 (Sections 157: (1)(f), (2) (e) and (3)(c), the Minister, prior to making a decision on the matter must appoint a Community Education Forum Convener to convene meetings relating to the proposed action, and consult with the Board of Trustees of the school concerned and with the Boards of Trustees of other schools which may be affected. Accordingly, in March 1990, planning for the Forum began.

The Terms of Reference for the Forum were broadened to encompass the wider topic of the wishes of the community of all the schools in the Eastern Suburbs concerning Forms 1 and 2 education. This was done because the Minister wished to have enough information from this Forum about the aspirations and corresponding resource requirements of other contributing schools in the area, to enable him to make subsequent decisions on the future status of these schools without recourse to any further Community Forums on
Education (Ministry of Education, 1990 - Terms of Reference, Community Forum on Form 1 and 2 Education in the Eastern Suburbs of Wellington City)

It was clear that if the Seatoun parents got their choice, other schools in the district would be affected. The roll of the intermediate and its staffing would be reduced, and its viability would be threatened. If the intermediate school subsequently closed, then parents in the whole of the Eastern Suburbs district would no longer be able to send their children there but would have to either switch to one of the schools that now took Form 1 and 2 children, or take steps to recapitulate their own school. This would have resource implications for government, and for at least one of the schools would be impossible because of the limitations of its small site. Seatoun's choice, then, would potentially limit the choices of parents at all the other seven schools.

When the Seatoun School Board of Trustees was told by the Ministry of Education that they would have to go through the process of a Community Forum on Education to allow the views of parents from all the schools to be considered they were not happy, feeling that this would delay a decision and complicate what they saw as a straightforward free choice situation of the kind promised in the new system. They had already provided information to their own parents and mobilised local opinion. They did not acknowledge that their choice should be tempered in any way by considerations of the impact on the other schools and communities in the eastern suburbs.

The other schools by this stage already felt disadvantaged by lack of information and involvement with the setting up of the forum. They had been trying without success to find out whether newspaper reports of a Forum were accurate. The first official information they had was in late April 1990 when they received a letter from Mary O'Regan, the convener appointed by the Ministry from a list that had been prepared by the Seatoun parents. This letter
outlined a very tight timetable for a series of four public meetings throughout the district, beginning only three weeks later, immediately after the imminent two week school vacation. The whole process of the Forum culminating with the convener's report to the Minister in mid-July was to take less than three months.

While Seatoun School felt frustrated by the delays, parents and teachers at the other schools saw the time-frame as exceedingly rushed. They did not have time to properly inform parents about the issues and felt that this was preventing the people of cultural minorities from working through the process in their own ways. The principal of Strathmore Park School protested:

There's a contradiction between the Minister's actions in setting up this forum and the philosophy of Tomorrow's Schools. I feel bitter about this because my school is now deeply involved in consultation about bilingual education - and we're not ready to ask parents to put that aside for this issue. The process we'd need would take six months.

The communities of these schools ranged from Seatoun, which is a comparatively wealthy and generally white suburb, to Strathmore Park, which is a state housing area with most of the families either Maori or Pacific Island immigrants. The other schools have varying mixes of Maori, Pacific island, Greek, Indian, South East Asia immigrants and white New Zealanders.

A great deal of media publicity was given to this situation, as a large number of Boards of Trustees of contributing schools throughout New Zealand had indicated that they also were interested in re-capitating, and would look to the new policy of Community Forums to convince the Minister of Education to give his approval. The Eastern Suburbs Forum was therefore seen as a test case for the new policy.
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Theoretical framework

In writing this thesis, I wanted to go beyond a merely descriptive account of a Community Forum in action, and examine this new policy in the context of the politics, ideologies and interest groups of the policy making process. I wished to make visible any internal contradictions within policy formulations, and take some account of the complex effects of the wider social and economic relations within which policy making is taking place. In trying to make sense of what was happening, I believed it was useful to identify the various contending interest groups and any changes to their relative decision-making influence or power as promised by the reforms.

The theoretical framework which thus seemed most useful to me in analysing the restructuring of New Zealand educational administration as a whole was that of crisis and settlement, as developed by the Education Group of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (EGCCCS, 1981). This group points out that there are always challenges to the established consensus which may in some circumstances bring about a situation of crisis. Grace (1990) makes the point that many education crisis situations in policy terms will be a complex amalgam of both objective crisis features and of constructed crisis features.

It appeared to me that the policy of Community Education Forums was one of the components of an overall settlement intended, as I explained in Chapter One, to shift the balance of power from the educational bureaucracy to parents, particularly those parents who previously had least involvement in decision-making. I wanted to know how a Community Forum might contribute to a new settlement of interests in terms of the theory of crisis and settlement, or whether it might perhaps contribute to destabilisation.
Because this settlement was intended to benefit ordinary people in their own communities, I wanted to see what was happening through their eyes and hear it through their voices. The implication for my research design of this theoretical framework was that I must listen to the voices of the people in the various interest groups, to evaluate from their perceptions the extent to which the intended shifts of power were actually occurring.

Sue Middleton's (1992) description of the Monitoring Today's Schools Research Project matches well with my intentions for this study:

If we are to gain a wider understanding of educational restructuring, we need to augment textual analyses with studies of how the restructuring processes are lived and thought about in specific local sites, such as schools. We can learn by studying the processes of administrative reform through the eyes of, and in interaction with, key protagonists in the various restructuring "dramas" as they are lived (Ramsay, 1990). We need studies that explore relationships between the theoretical assumptions of government policies and the ideas of those who are involved in the everyday implementation of those policies within the schools ... One objective of the project is to "give voice" to those who initially have been those most directly affected by the administrative changes (pp. 302-303)

As my study proceeded, and I listened to these voices, the underlying issues that emerged suggested that my initial interpretation of the EGCCS theory of crisis and settlement was insufficient as a theoretical framework for understanding what was happening. Besides considering the power shifts among different interest groups, I found that I needed to consider in more depth the way in which Tomorrow's Schools represented an attempted settlement of differing ideologies. While the policy documents referred to participation and choice as if they were the same thing, the implementation of the policy revealed that various groups of people meant quite different things
by these terms, and so had conflicting expectations of what the process and the outcomes of a Community Forum on Education might be. I needed to refer to further theories that dealt more specifically with the meanings of the discourse and the roles that parents were playing.

I was led in this way to further study of democratic theory as explained in Chapter One. The conflict that now interested me was between the concepts of 'strong' and 'thin' democracy which belong to the different ideologies of the New Right and of Democratic Egalitarianism, and the extent to which the new vine of 'thin' democracy was being implanted onto the established trunk of the New Zealand education system with its history of attempts to grow in the direction of 'strong' democracy.

Closely related to this theories was a set of ideas introduced to me by Rosemary Deem of Lancaster University (Deem, 1992) referred to in Chapter One, which defined the two different underlying ideologies about parent's participation as collective concern and as consumer rights. These three related theories, then supported the development of my own ideas and analytical framework for this thesis. My discussion in the final chapter draws on aspects of all these theories.

2.2 Research Design and Methodology

Along with the evolution of my theoretical framework, my research design and methodology also developed along lines rather more complex than I had at first planned.

*Nature of the study and key research questions*

As I began to work on this thesis, I intended to simply prepare a case study on one school within the context of the Eastern Suburbs Forum, and of the
political events that had led to it. I wanted to find out how the people in this school perceived the Forum, how the goals expressed in the policy documents were achieved through the implementation of the policy in action, and whether the settlement of interests offered by the Community Forum policy seemed to be contributing to the larger settlement which the education reforms as a whole were intended to achieve.

As the focus of my study extended from a settlement of interests to a settlement of differing ideas about the participation and choice, the nature of democracy, and the expected roles of parents and community, it seemed useful to incorporate to a limited extent observations of a second school in the Eastern Suburbs whose culture incorporated firm beliefs about participation and empowerment.

My key research questions were:

# What were the intentions of those who established the policy of Community Forums?

# What were the perceptions of the people involved about the way that the policy of Community Forums was implemented in the Eastern Suburbs and the outcomes of that Forum?

# Can any inconsistencies in the reforms, and their impact, be illustrated by documenting this policy in action, and in so doing, can the potential for a settlement be evaluated?

There are two components of my research design. The first is an analysis of the intentions of the policy through examination of the relevant documents and interviews with people who were involved in its development. The
second, and major part, is observation and analysis of the policy in action through the process of the third Forum which took place in Wellington's Eastern Suburbs during the first part of 1990. While this analysis will focus primarily on the perceptions of the participants in the Eastern Suburbs Forum it will also draw, in a more limited way, on the views of the wider educational community who expressed an interest in what was happening.

Research methods

For both components I used a variety of methods to carry out my research, believing that method triangulation is an important consideration in contentious areas of current educational policy. These methods were:

- study of the written material associated with the policy;
- observation and recording of formal and informal meetings associated with the forum;
- interviews with a number of people who were involved in either the formulation of the policy or its implementation.

Boundaries

I knew that I would have to draw boundaries around the scope of my study, to keep it both cohesive and manageable within the limitations of a two-paper thesis. These boundaries would need to be set in terms of the time-frame of events I would study, of the people I would consult and observe, and of issues or themes I would use for my analysis. I was unsure just what these boundaries would be until I began to listen to the people involved and analyse what was happening.
Time-frame

My field work started on 23 April 1990 when I attended and observed the first meeting associated with the Forum in the Eastern Suburbs. I decided to finish my field work at the end of November 1990, after I had completed interviewing the Board members, teachers, and the sample of parents at Miramar Central School. By this time the Forum was over and the people involved had had time to formulate their opinions on aspects of the process. Some changes resulting from the Minister's decision announced on 8 September 1990, such as the zoning of Seatoun School, were still under way between that time and the end of my interviews in November. For the purposes of my thesis, however, the main action directly related to the Forum had finished, and I decided I would not comment on any actions that took place after the close-off date of 8 September, 1990.

Interviews

A schedule of interviews with details of dates is attached as Appendix One.

As I believed that a grounded theory approach would allow issues and themes to emerge freely, I decided to conduct either face to face or extended telephone interviews where I could ask clarifying or follow up questions as the interview proceeded, rather than relying on set questions or responses to a written questionnaire. This was my approach with the in-depth interviews with members of the Picot Taskforce and the Ministry of Education, with Mary O'Regan and Douglas Day, and with the principals and chairpersons of the schools. When I came to interview members of bigger groups - the parents, teachers and board of Miramar Central School, in order to gain accurate data reflecting the views of the whole group, I did use a consistent set of questions for each member of the group. These, together with samples of the letters sent in preparation for the interviews, are attached as Appendix Two.
I selected the three members of the Picot Taskforce who lived in Wellington. Their different backgrounds and sector groups - Maori, State Services Commission, and an educational institution, were likely to be associated with a variety of interests and beliefs which had contributed to the policy. My choice of subjects however, did not represent a business viewpoint, nor a male perspective. It appeared, as my interviews proceeded, that a gender bias could be present, because these three did have a special interest in and commitment to the concept of community forums.

The people I interviewed from the *Tomorrow's Schools* implementation working party were the chairperson, Mary O'Regan and her deputy, Douglas Day, who took over the chair for a period while Mary was having a baby. I chose them because of their pivotal role in this working party, and because they were in Wellington for some of the time, and could be interviewed face to face. The chairperson, Mary O'Regan was a particularly vital person to interview, as it happened that she was selected by the government to convene the forum I was observing, and so was a player with two major roles. I was aware that because of this her recollections of the intentions of the working party could be influenced by her current role as convener. I was able to triangulate this data, however, with reference to the report of the working party, written a year earlier, and also with reference to the interview with Douglas Day who was not directly involved in the Eastern Suburbs Forum.

I conducted a telephone interview with Annette Dixon, the chairperson of the officials committee which had reviewed the responses to the Picot Report and made recommendations to Cabinet in preparation for the policy document *Tomorrow's Schools*. I chose her because she seemed to be a key player in this stage of the process, and also because she was in Wellington and accessible to me.
The person from the district office of the Ministry of Education, who, because of her continued employment there has remained anonymous, was chosen because of her active involvement in the setting up of this forum and her particular knowledge of the policy process.

For the second part of my study, the policy in action, I had to consider both the forum process itself as it was constituted in a series of public meetings and the process within the schools involved. The whole group of eight schools involved was too wide to work with in any depth within my time limitations, so I decided to focus on two as described below.

The first school I selected as my focus was not one of the main protagonists, Seatoun or Evans Bay Intermediate. I chose Miramar Central for three reasons.

Firstly, it provided an example of the "other" affected neighbouring schools included in the consultation as provided by the Community Forum policy.

Secondly, I was already involved in a three year longitudinal research study in this school. I had established a relationship of trust with the board and staff, and had received their permission to attend and record their board and staff meetings and any school activities in which I was interested, and to have access to school records and documents such as the charter and family lists and addresses. Parents and teachers in the school knew me well, welcomed me into their school, and were in the habit of speaking openly and frankly with me. Gaining access to their meetings and material for the purposes of this thesis was a relatively small task. I had already attended a meeting of parents and teachers at that school in November 1989, before the Forum was planned, where the issue of re-capitation was discussed and so had an introduction to the position and views of these people.
Thirdly, this school was reasonably typical of the group involved in the forum. In common with most of the other neighbouring schools, Miramar Central School had a mixed ethnic population. In terms of the socio-economic structure, it was in about the middle range of the schools in the Forum. In the light of the claim of the Picot Report that minority groups would be advantaged by the reforms, I believed that Miramar Central School provided an interesting population for this study.

The multicultural nature of the school seemed to me to offer a good opportunity to investigate to what extent the new policy provided equitable opportunities for participation. If the Forum process was indeed empowering, it was possible that I would be able to detect some change in this school.

During and immediately after the Forum, I interviewed a number of people from Miramar Central School. I interviewed the principal and the board of trustees chairperson twice, and all eight members of the board of trustees and the sixteen teachers once. My purpose in these interviews was to ascertain the perspectives of these people who were directly involved. The board and the staff of Miramar Central were all pakeha, and generally from middle socio-economic backgrounds.

In addition, I was particularly interested to compare their views with those of the sample of parents which included the range of ethnic and socio-economic groups in proportion to their representation in the school as a whole. As members of the board and staff attended many or most of the Forum meetings, I wanted to hear also from a group of parents who did not go out to these meetings, to make some evaluation of whether the views of these two groups were congruent. To achieve this, I conducted telephone interviews with a random sample of parents of 10% of the children at Miramar Central. I found this sample by taking every tenth card from the school pupils' card index,
which yielded 22 parents to telephone. Two of these declined to be interviewed, because of our lack of a common language. I checked the ethnic background of the sample, and found it matched very closely with that of the school as a whole.

Although I had at first intended to restrict my interviews and school observations to Miramar Central, I did extend my study in a limited way to a second school, Strathmore Park, at the invitation of the principal and chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The principal shared my strong interest in the possibility of paradox or incompatibility between individual free choice and equitable democratic participation which might empower previously disadvantaged groups. I found his perceptions valuable and wanted to be able to include them in my study.

I was interested in seeing any differences between democratic participation in Strathmore Park, where the principal had been working on it for six years, and that in Miramar Central, where it had really just begun with a newly appointed principal. I believed it was too good a chance to miss to be able to make a comparison with the process in the first school.

All the interviews above, with the policy makers and with the people in schools, were either taped and transcribed or recorded with full notes, and were returned to the interviewees for checking and approval for inclusion in this thesis.

Written material

The series of official government documents has been studied to track the origins of the policy of Community Forums on Education. My commentary on them was included in Chapter One.
Other written materials were examined during the process of the Forum, as they became available. These include submissions to the Forum from the Miramar Central and Strathmore Park schools, and from the NZEI, both branch and national, and publicity and reports of various kinds from Evans Bay Intermediate School. Newspaper cuttings from the local suburban paper and from the Wellington daily papers have been kept. I had access to surveys of the views of the students of the Evans Bay Intermediate School and of students from Miramar Central.

A key document was the report of the Forum convener, Mary O'Regan, written at the end of the Forum process, in which she summed up both the oral and written submissions and representations and produced her own analysis for the Minister's consideration.

Observational Analysis

I attended 17 meetings associated with the Forum in Wellington East between November 1989 and September 1990. Three meetings were public meetings arranged by the forum convener, three were meetings of parents arranged by the boards of Miramar Central and Strathmore Park Schools, two were of principals in the district and several were meetings of either staff or boards with the then local Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister, Peter Neilsen, and with Mary O'Regan. I attended all the board of trustee meetings of Miramar Central during the time of the Forum.

Notes were taken of the number and ethnic make-up of participants and an almost verbatim record has been kept of the discussion at all these meetings. Many of these meetings were public and were being reported in the news media. The comments made were being referred to and quoted and requoted in various further meetings. In light of the public nature of this part of the
data, I did not think it necessary to provide transcripts for checking. I have not quoted speakers in a way that can identify them, except for the Forum convener, who consented to this.

As one of the characteristics of the Forum was intended to be dialogue and interaction between interested people, I have paid particular attention to the spoken exchanges and interviews which reveal a rich picture of people's responses and feelings. Another reason for giving more time to oral information is that in trying to ascertain the views of the whole range of people of varying educational and cultural backgrounds, I found that the people from lower socio-economic groups were under-represented in the volume of written material, and to hear from them I needed to listen, as well as to read.

Numerous opportunities were taken to ask for opinions and information from a great variety of people who were involved. These informal discussions were not usually recorded or checked, so are not directly quoted, but they did enable me to build a full and complex background picture of the responses of the people involved in the process of the Forum.

Themes for analysis

As the Forum proceeded, the people involved at the various meetings I was observing as well as those I was interviewing, brought up a number of important related issues. I identified a number of questions which were being asked repeatedly. These were:

Are Form 1 and 2 children better off in full primary schools, intermediates, or other kinds of school structure? Where do we get information on this?
What is the government policy on Form 1 and 2 education, if any?

Who has responsibility for policy decisions about the kind of school structure that will be available?

Should this policy formulation be devolved to communities or should there be a national policy?

How can co-ordination and liaison be maintained among the separate schools of this district to facilitate the continuing developments we are discussing, after this Forum has finished?

What is the appropriate role of the principals and teachers in this Forum - do they have a right to express their opinions?

Will the structural changes proposed cost more? What will government be prepared to fund? What can we in this community afford?

Is the government really allowing us to make our own decisions or is it pulling back control to the centre?

How do we define community - one school, or the district?

Any one of these questions could have been the subject of a major study in relation to this forum. As well, the questions obviously overlap and interact with each other.

Besides these specific questions, a number of underlying issues emerged which seemed to relate to people's views about a settlement for the identified crisis in their own locality. These issues were:
what kind of power for parents;
provision of information;
community consultation and participation;
the competence of individuals;
fairer outcomes for disadvantaged groups;
choice in terms of competition for consumers in a free market.

They were related to, but not identical with the problems identified by the Picot Taskforce, which have been referred to in Chapter One. It may be that their emergence as issues was influenced by the publicity surrounding the reforms of educational administration.

Once I had gathered the data, I used a coding system to identify the main issues emerging from both the documents and the interviews and observations. As I proceeded, I saw that many of the issues were entwined, signifying a tension between different ideals. I became more and more interested in these points of tension, or dilemmas, as the focus of my reflection about what was going on, as explained above. I decided to report on results concerned with the initial questions only when they illuminated these tensions.

Comments relating to procedural, personal and local happenings were not coded because they had no bearing on the substantive discussions and did not connect to the themes.
Chapter Three: Results

I have structured the results generally according to different groups of people who had an interest, first in the development of the policy of Community Forums on Education, and then in the implementation and the outcome of the Eastern Suburbs Forum, so that any comparison of their views about the aims of the policy or of their perceptions about the process or outcomes of this Forum may be made clear.

These groups are:

1. Members of the Picot Taskforce.

2. Tomorrow's Schools Officials Committee

3. Members of the Implementation Working Party on Community Education Forums

4. Eastern Suburbs principals who were the first group to meet after the Forum was announced

5. Parents who came to Miramar Central School's meetings

6. Miramar Central School Board of Trustees

7. Parents interviewed in random sample survey from Miramar Central School

8. Strathmore Park School parents and Board of Trustees
Parents who came to public meetings:
   a At Strathmore Park
   b At Miramar
   c At Seatoun

The wider education community which was represented at a seminar at Evans Bay Intermediate School

The report of the convener of the Eastern Suburbs Forum

Government - The Member of Parliament for Miramar, Hon. Peter Neilsen, a Ministry of Education official, and the Minister of Education, Hon. Phil Goff

Interested groups who reacted to the Minister's decision
1. School trustees in the Eastern Suburbs

2. Views of Miramar Central Trustees about whether the Forum had settled the re-capitation issue.

3. Views on the Eastern Suburbs Forum held by the chairperson and deputy chair of the Implementation Working Party


Material from miscellaneous other meetings and discussions is inserted from time to time as it contributes to the data base needed for my thesis.
3.1 The policy developers - members of the Picot Taskforce

Of the three members of the Picot Taskforce I interviewed, two were appointed members, and the third was an official of the State Services Commission who, along with a Treasury official, was appointed to assist the task force. By chance they were the three women involved with the taskforce. As one of them said:

Perhaps the women on the Picot committee seemed to have a better idea of what forums could be about. We were influenced by the way Kohanga Reo had developed at district level - not too structured - we just mosied along to the meetings and would see what came up.

Three themes relevant to this thesis emerged consistently from their interviews.

Firstly the forums were definitely intended to provide a mechanism for democratic community participation:

We wanted more decision-making and power in the community but needed a focus for that.

We saw that ordinary people in the community needed a focus. The forum could work like a town square - an exchange of ideas and information and a testing out of public opinion ... certainly it would be a voice for the community, hopefully an empowerment. Parent groups in schools would get together to get them started ... it was a minimalist approach which would address the gap where there were any defined incoherent feelings, "someone ought to ..."

We saw the forums as a lightning rod for issues in the community ... things from the
community would go up to the Minister and also the Minister could suggest things that should be discussed ... It was potentially a voice for community people who had not had a voice ...

The Maori member of the taskforce saw all groups, not only Maori, being empowered by the forums:

They could be a negotiation measure ... when there were different interests of parents, for example when there was a need for a Kura Kaupapa Maori, (Maori language school), this could be taken to a forum to discuss with other interested people, a means of co-ordinating and planning at district level. Equity issues, for example, could have been debated and fed into the Ministry so policy would come from the grassroots ... also it would provide a means of participation for Pacific Islanders ...

The problems were in having devolved the decision-making to the schools, how were they going to make policy? How to get the grassroots ideas as a basis for policy? With the Forums, groups could come together ... Aureretanga - a good Maori word for what the forums could do ... a way of dealing with grievances.

The member from the State Services Commission indicated she was aware of possible conflicts between community decision-making and parental choice, but seemed to see the Forums as a way to have both:

We were working within a framework and that was about devolution. So where do we start? Build up the structures around the child, the school. What sort of decisions should the community be making? If the school was no longer guided by strict central rules, what would parents choose? Some schools might miss out on being chosen. Schools should have freedom to have Maori, or bilingual units, for example. It might be expensive to provide what the parents want, they may need other facilities, but if the community gets together, resources could be sorted out and shared.
She also pointed out the constraints on choice that must come from funding limits:

There are always going to be some groups of people who want things differently. That will influence what happens in other schools. Absolute choice is a luxury. It's very nice if you can afford it - but the community can only choose up to a point. Government has to make a decision about whether they can afford it. There comes a time when cost has to be balanced against the choice of the community.

In some ways we would have to take a risk that some articulate groups in the community would perhaps high-jack a forum. But I believe that if people feel strongly enough about something they will speak out.

Secondly, the taskforce was anxious that their painstaking efforts to rid the education system of unnecessary bureaucracy would not be counteracted by the growth of new power bases in the form of these forums, or that the convener should not accumulate power:

They would be governed by the community to avoid it becoming the focus of a new bureaucracy.

A key point was that the convener was a person with limited power but with good public exposure.

The convener would have access to information both from the Ministry about new policy initiatives and from the community and so could be an information pivot.

Another member reinforces this point that the power should rest with the community rather than with the convener:

The forums would work upwards from the communities ... the role of the convener would be as a mediator, no more than that.
The State Services Commission official put it more strongly:

The idea ... of a community developer ... just horrifies me. They would start deciding what the issues were straight away - the whole bit about the professional preserving their position, just like teachers have been doing all this time ... we avoided having a bureaucracy set up.

These comments suggest a simple view of community, as a homogeneous and cohesive set of interest.

The third theme that is touched upon by the Picot Taskforce members was that the forums would act as a network or link between individual boards of trustees:

the 'official voice of the community' idea ... the boards of trustees might get stuck into a groove and the forum could help to get over this

The forums would be intersectional, a means of co-ordinating at district level.

Picot was very concerned about the abolition of the boards - he saw some gaps ... networking functions.

In considering the way in which policy for all the reforms was planned, an additional comment from one member is worth keeping in mind:

There were an awful lot of loose ends we didn't have time to resolve. We had so much to discuss and work out and so little time.
The uncomplicated view of community presented in the Picot Report, which assumed that the power of a community as a whole would not be contestable by different groups within that community, was reflected in the lack of public response to this part of the report.

Following the release of the Picot Report, a committee of government officials met to read summaries of the responses and prepare a report on these for Cabinet. I interviewed the chairperson of this committee. She said:

I don't remember Community Education Forums being discussed, it was not an area of contention.

The summary report of submissions Twenty Thousand (Office of the Minister of Education, 1988), contains no reference to Community Education Forums, nor explicitly to issues of choice or participation.

3.3 Implementation Working Party on Community Education Forums

Following the publication of *Tomorrows' Schools* (1988), the government's policy document, a number of groups were set up to translate the policy into a workable structure for implementation. I interviewed two key people from the Working Party on Community Education Forums, the chairperson Mary O'Regan and the deputy chair, Douglas Day, and analysed their report. The introduction of the Report (Working Party, 1989) explains:

Our brief was extremely broad with very little in the way of clear definition. In effect, we were required to translate a revolutionary concept (both in the New Zealand context and, from what we could ascertain, universally) into a structure which would
ensure that people in a given community have a say in the educational process within their community whilst taking into account the rights and responsibilities of individual schools, their Boards of Trustees, and the professional staff in their employ (p. 1)

The interview with Mary O'Regan was particularly interesting as one year after completing the task of chairing this working group and presenting the report, she was selected as the convener of the third of the forums.

In contrast with the Picot Taskforce, this working party held a more complex view of community and of what would be needed to empower diverse groups within the community.

When asked what she believed, at the time of this working party, was the purpose of the forums, Mary O'Regan identified a dilemma that was apparent to her from the start:

They had decided that the wider community needed a voice and they referred to the forums as the official voice of the communities, and there did seem to be a conflict there ... that's what the Boards of Trustees were supposed to be, and that raised questions about what are they calling the community ... we spent the whole first day on nutting out what we meant by community, because we started off with some people saying the community is the school, just the parents, and so on, and then as we talked it through it became obvious it had to be wider than that.

This working group, after consulting various groups with experience in community development, set out a number of conditions which they believed needed to be in place if the forums were to be effective as a mode of community participation. These included a longer time frame for some communities, for example multicultural ones, training programmes for the conveners, information resources such as videos to help communities
understand the process, meeting places where people felt at home, for example Pacific Island churches, conveners who could themselves identify issues and get in touch with people to help them see the wider implications and effects on other groups before the initial group established ownership of the forum, and adequate information about the issue so that discussion could be informed. There would eventually be a repository of information built up by the various forums on issues that were likely to come up in the future in other communities.

Douglas Day described the democratic functions of Community Forums in this way:

> With devolution, there was a need for community involvement in monitoring the process of education at the community level. Local concerns could find expression. It was not there with a problem solving function. It would be pro-active when necessary. The most important purpose in my view was to be a forum for discussion and consultation on a whole range of educational issues.

He also made clear links between this democratic process and the equitable involvement of all groups:

> We were concerned particularly to enable "disadvantaged" groups to have a say in the process ... meetings were to take place in non-threatening situations, with childcare facilities available, notices of meetings promulgated in church newsletters etc ... we were particularly influenced by the Wellington Ethnic council - we wanted to hear the views of ethnic groups beyond Maori.

In summary, these interviews indicated that both the Picot Taskforce and the working party saw the aim of Community Education Forums as promoting democratic community participation and not simply one-off choice. The
working party, however, whose members were experienced in community development, foresaw difficulties ahead in achieving this aim, and the need for specific supports to ensure that all groups did in fact share in the power they were intended to enjoy.

3.4 Eastern Suburbs school principals

When the Forum was announced in the Eastern Suburbs, the first group of people to meet and discuss what was happening was the local group of principals. Perceptions of potential discrepancies in power were immediately evident. The first meeting was on 23 April 1990, and was called to discuss a newspaper report of 19 April which had announced that Mary O'Regan had been appointed by the Minister of Education to convene a Community Forum. The meeting was attended by twelve local principals, with the Ministry officer who had responsibility for arranging the forum. On the morning of this meeting, some, but not all of the schools had received a letter from Mary O'Regan introducing herself and her role in the Forum, but not the terms of reference. The principals noted that there was already a great deal of interest throughout the country in what was happening with Seatoun's attempts at repapitation, and that what happens in the Eastern suburbs would be a precedent for other districts.

Even at this very early stage, before the Forum began, many of the principals present felt aggrieved that their schools were disadvantaged in a number of ways compared with Seatoun School. They had not been given the information about the Forum which Seatoun School was privy to, even though they had tried to obtain this from the Ministry of Education. They were particularly upset at not being consulted on the terms of reference. Comments from principals included:
We rang the Ministry early in October (1989) when there were rumblings round the community... There's an imbalance in the response of the Ministry to us and their response to Seatoun.

My board officially requested in writing several weeks ago to be consulted.

This is the first time we've heard anything but rumours

Do we understand that Seatoun school has already been consulted by the Ministry and we haven't?

Some people know what's going on and some don't.

They were dismayed at the short time frame for the Forum, with the school holidays coming up the following week and the first public meeting only three days in to the next term.

I'm concerned at the frantic panic that so many decisions are taken in.

I have a problem educating the parent body.

We can't do this in the time frame. We want to look at different alternatives to the... structure. If we had more time to talk more we could come up with constructive solutions.

The principal of Strathmore Park School highlighted the contradiction between the present situation and the devolution of power to parents and individual school boards which had been promised by the reforms:
There's a contradiction between the Minister's actions and the philosophy of *Tomorrow's Schools*. I feel bitter about this because my school is now deeply involved in consultation about bilingual education but we're not ready to ask parents to put that aside for this Forum. The process I'd need would take six months. It takes a long time to get to our immigrant parents. I suggest we put forward our own terms of reference and submit that to the Minister.

The principal of Evans Bay Intermediate School, who was an enthusiastic supporter of *Tomorrow's Schools*, saw a need for other opportunities for community development besides the series of public meetings planned for the Forum:

Keep the power to the people - a co-operative of the boards could meet - there's a need for all that before the lock-step of the public meetings. Maybe this collective group could take action.

Other principals also suggested the complexity of a process that would provide a better chance for power to be shared among all the groups in the community:

Perhaps the first thing is to convey to Mary that the time frame is unacceptable and invite her to a meeting of the principals and chairpeople - we'd have some control that way over the processes. I hope the emphasis is for the schools to be working collectively....Write to the Minister saying we want to proceed in accordance with the Ministry's supposed consultative process.

The sad thing is that if someone flies in the face of authority like Seatoun has, they get what they want.
The situation at Seatoun is that the Board of Trustees feel they have to represent their community - that's what they were elected for - no responsibility for other schools.

One month later the group of principals were granted their request to meet with the convener. The feeling expressed at this meeting was generally of disappointment with the process so far, that it did not seem to be fulfilling the promise of the reforms of genuine democratic involvement in educational issues.

The principal of Worser Bay School, a site too small to take the option of re-capitation, pointed out the dilemma:

We can't grow. We can't give parents choice. One person's rights are denying other people's rights. If the intermediate disappears we'll lose that choice.

The principal of Seatoun School, attending his first meeting of principals since the Forum began, explained his position:

We've had a very strong response from the community since Picot ... the parents have a right to decide.

When asked whether his board had considered the implications for other schools, the Seatoun principal said that he'd rather not comment on that. The principal of another school, Kilbirnie, said that his board had also been in favour of re-capitation but had discussed the effect on other schools and had decided not to go ahead.

In summary, the view expressed by the Seatoun School principal endorsing the simple right of the parents to decide was in contrast with the views of the rest of the principals, who saw the process of democratic participation as more
complex, requiring time, information, fair access to resources and particularly provision for people of minority ethnic groups to participate in ways they were comfortable with.

3.5 Parents who came to meetings at Miramar Central School

The Miramar Central Board of Trustees Chairperson called a special meeting of the Board on 24 April 1990, the day he received the letter notifying them about the Forum. A further meeting of the Board was held on 27 April with their local Member of Parliament.

The board echoed concerns that had already been voiced by the principals about rushing a complex process. At the first meeting, the chairperson began the discussion with:

I think it stinks, to be quite honest. The convener can meet with us only on days that suit her. Sure, there's going to be four public meetings, but that's not a good way to decide things. One or two hotheads can take over. A lot of things need to be taken into account.

Scepticism about the reality of devolution showed in another board member's comment:

I can see the bulldozing that's coming from the top. It's a 20 year question they're asking us to decide in a month.

And another:

We should write to someone - don't take it lying down. And send a copy to Lockwood Smith. If he's going to be the next Minister of Education - God help us! - he might as well know now what's going on.
Resentment was expressed by the Miramar Central principal that the short time frame had been forced upon the other schools by Seatoun:

Seatoun needs a decision for next year or they're in real strife with staffing and space. They're forcing us to take decisions we're not ready for.

The staff representative commented:

In the meantime Seatoun parents are all mad with their arguments.

The Board chairperson felt that:

Consultations should go on about a year, with ideas going backwards and forward between parents, teachers and the board.

And another parent trustee suggested:

We should consult the kids too! The kids who are here now and the ones who've gone out the other end.

At the meeting with their local Member of Parliament, the chairperson told him that their concerns were, firstly that they had not seen or been involved with framing the terms of reference, and secondly, that the six week period of consultation was far too short and that the times the convener could meet them were very limited.

We wrote to the Minister asking for consultation and are still waiting for his response. We're starting now on the back foot. It's a very big decision for the community - we can't see why it's all such a rush.
Other board members told the Member of Parliament:

A lot of people have an idea now but only from one point of view. They need to hear others before they make up their minds. Also it's concerning that Seatoun is well sorted out and could force a decision on the other little schools. We've got to look at the total community for both schools.

The principal brought up another point:

One thing we're concerned about is the close working relationships of the group of principals that meet here - it's a close knit group with informal contacts .. we want to talk together about it.

The staff representative referred to a meeting of parents held the previous year which had been generally in favour of re-capitating their school, but had decided to delay any action for a while until the reforms settled down.

We have heard only from one kind of parent. It wasn't a varied mix who wanted full primary. We have a mixed racial group so it could be only a white middle class group who forced it.

Other trustees commented:

Are we catering to white elitist schools in this area? Is this what we want in this community? Are they the only ones who'll be advantaged? I wouldn't want that to happen. If it's good for some it must be good for all.

The immigrant families couldn't go away (from this area) to get their choice.
The questionnaire we sent home - that's a middle-class pakeha thing to do - so many of our families are from Asia ... they're just getting to grips with a new country - they're not responding yet. It's not a lack of interest. Only 35 out of 160 questionnaires have been returned so far. We didn't have any ethnic groups at our meeting last night, though our school is 40% ethnic now.

At the first public meeting there was only one Maori lady. It's very difficult for them to go to a meeting like that.

I think there needs to be community education before the forum and we need much longer.

The identification of simple choice as an issue was brought up by several parent trustees at a meeting on 29 May when the Board of Miramar Central School met Mary O'Regan:

Parents want a choice - it's about 50-50 for or against the intermediate.

It's very much down to the individual child - parents want to choose what suits their child.

However, others at this meeting suggested that choice had further implications:

We'd need a million choices then!

Parents at Seatoun have three choices - to stay at Seatoun, to go to Intermediate, or to go to private schools. Our parents have only one choice.
A meeting to consult parents was called by the Board of Trustees of Miramar Central School on 28 May 1990. This was an evening meeting held in the school staffroom. It was attended by 36 people in all, five of whom were staff, the rest parents. None of the people present were from any of the minority ethnic groups that make up half the school roll. The principal was asked by the board chairperson to open the meeting, with a few questions to focus the thinking of the parents present on the benefits to the children of the various alternative school structures.

A few parents spoke of their expectation that they would have simple and unfettered choice:

Parents should be able to make decisions on schools without interference from outside.

Let's give the schools back to the government if we can't do what we want!

Government haven't really let the reins go - or Treasury.

Are they really giving us a choice? Is Seatoun's decision binding on everyone?

All parents can't have options.

There was one parent who vigorously put the case for individual choice:

It's free enterprise - this is the modern world ... My primary concern is for my own children - not for children of parents in other schools. That's their problem. I should have the choice for my own kids ... I'm philosophically opposed to two year intermediates. For me, the two years I spent at Evans Bay Intermediate was the worst time of my life. That's the start of my feelings about it ... How many of you think parents should have the right to choose?
About three quarters of the parents put up their hands. One of the teachers then commented that:

This group is not representative of the whole school.

When parents were asked whether they were in favour of Miramar Central retaining its own Form 1 and 2 children, about one third said they definitely wanted this, and the rest either that they preferred them to go to the Intermediate school, or that they were not sure.

3.6 Submission from Miramar Central Board of Trustees

Following these meetings the Board presented a written submission to the Forum convener which reported on three methods of consultation:

a. A questionnaire sent home to the 160 families of the school, which drew a response from only 22% of them. About half favoured re-capitating Miramar Central School to enable Form 1 and 2 children to remain there.

b. The parents' discussion evening described above was reported on.

c. The Board reported on a survey of their Standard 4 children who generally were in favour of going on to the Intermediate school.

The Board of Trustees said that they assumed that those who neither attended the parents' meeting nor responded to the questionnaire:

were either happy with the status quo or did not understand the implications of the Community Forum.
The Board's submission emphasised their main concern:

Our school has 13 different ethnic communities with approximately 30% being of Asian origin. A lack of time to prepare for the Community Forum exposed a serious issue of equity which the Board would have addressed if more time had been available. Some of our families have a reluctance to respond to these school issues and careful consideration has to be given to educating them on the issues involved and allowing them time to form opinions. Some of the parents do not speak English and communication has to be done through the children. The equity issue of Tomorrow's Schools has not been fully met on this occasion.

3.7 Miramar Central School Parents interviewed in a random sample

I wanted to find out the views of parents as a whole, and not only those who had participated in the meetings and school surveys, and to check the assumption of the Board of Trustees that those parents who had not responded either were happy with the status quo or did not understand the question. I arranged a telephone survey of a random sample of 10% of the parents of the school.

Of the 20 parents I interviewed, 9 were of minority cultures, in very similar proportions to those of the whole school. I compared the responses from this minority group with that of the whole group of parents I interviewed and obtained the following data:

Did you know about the Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number and percentage who responded: Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you attend meetings connected with the forum?

*Number and percentage who responded: Yes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole group</th>
<th>Minority ethnic group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you respond to the questionnaire sent by the school?

*Number and percentage who responded: Yes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole group</th>
<th>Minority ethnic group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(40%)</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What kind of school do you want?

*Number and percentage in favour of intermediate school education for Form 1 & 2 children:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole group</th>
<th>Minority group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even with a small sample there is a clear pattern that minority ethnic group parents had had far less involvement, even though they said they were aware of the Forum.

When those who did not go to meetings were asked what would have made it easier or encouraged them to have taken part, the following comments were typical:

I work at night - generally I'm too tired to get involved. Perhaps if some of the meetings were in the afternoon I could have come.

My husband works on shift and I can't get out at night. It would suit me better if it was a time I could take my child with me.

There is a language barrier for us.
I should point out here that we do not know whether, if these people had been involved in the forum process, their view might have changed, as indeed the views of many of the parents who did come to meetings changed, from wanting re-capitation to being unsure that this would actually benefit their children. It does appear that the views of a large group of parents who neither attended meetings nor returned the questionnaire were not able to be included in the process of this forum. This group included a disproportionate number of parents of minority cultures.

3.8 Strathmore Park School parents and Board of Trustees.

To provide a comparison with the meeting of parents at Miramar Central School, I also attended one for parents at Strathmore Park School. I will describe this meeting in some detail, as the way it was organised contrasted with the process of all the others I attended, and has implications, I believe for the democratic participation by all groups which was intended in the policy for Forums.

This meeting was designed to inform and consult the Samoan, Maori and Palagi and other parents from minority groups. It was a shared tea meeting, beginning at 5.30 pm, with everybody bringing their contribution. Long trestle tables set up in the school library were covered with takeaway food such as bags of fish and chips, fruit and cakes. Board members and school staff made sure everyone was greeted as they arrived and introduced around.

About 60 parents came, and a lot of children. (They were running about too fast to count!) The ethnic composition of the group present seemed to be similar to that of the school as a whole - about 80% Samoan or Maori. The school, with financial help they had requested from the Forum Convener, had employed a number of young people to take care of the children after the
meal, and provided videos to entertain them in another room. The atmosphere was very informal and family oriented. The Forum Convener had been invited, and was welcomed and asked to say a few words about what she was doing through the Forum.

The principal had prepared for the parents some large posters with simple and clear information about Form 1 and 2 education, the similarities and differences between what children would get in a full primary school and what they would get in an intermediate school. Information was requested by parents about the adequacy of funding they might expect from government if their school did re-capitate, but neither the principal nor anyone else could answer this.

The parents were then invited to join any of the three groups which had been organised, one being led by a Samoan woman facilitator in the Samoan language, one by a Maori teacher from another school, and one by the principal.

The informal discussion that I recorded included very few references to choice, most of the talk being focussed on what the parents felt was good for their children. Most of the parents in all three groups said that they favoured keeping Form 1 and 2 children at Strathmore Park, but said they needed more information about resources before they could be sure this was best for their children.

The written submission to the Forum Convener from the Board of Trustees of Strathmore Park school was short and pointed:

Strathmore Park School Board of Trustees would like to inform you of the things we think are essential for multicultural communities like ours to get an opinion from our parents. These are important if equity is a goal across the community so all schools get
an equal chance. These things should be offered as our right under the equity provisions of the Ministry. We should not have to fight for them.

1. Enough time for proper consultation with each culture.

2. Funds for translators and typists in Maori and Samoan.

3. Maori and Samoan facilitators at forums.

4. Down to earth information.

5. Time to consult with people experienced in the needs of 11, 12, and 13 year old children.

6. Seatoun school can keep their Form 1 and 2 as long as all other schools have the same rights in future.

7. The process used is intimidating to parents in our community.

8. Our parents need to be talked to not talked *above*.

9. Our board also doesn't want to decide for our school until we have consulted other schools because what we do will affect them.

3.9 Public meetings arranged by the Forum Convener

There were four public meetings arranged by the Forum Convener. I was unable to attend the first one held in Kilbirnie, and so have not included this in my data. I did receive information on it from a number of people who attended, and believe that the number and mix of people attending and the issues raised were similar to those at the meeting in Miramar.
The three subsequent public meetings were each held in a different suburb - Strathmore Park, Miramar, and Seatoun. The meetings were planned by the convener to use similar processes and to cover the same ground, with the same questions being used by her as discussion starters. These are attached as Appendix Four.

People from any of the schools were able to go to any of the meetings. Some went to more than one and some went to a meeting out of their own school locality. The view was stated by some observers that Seatoun parents were going in force to all the meetings to make sure their point of view was clearly heard. For these reasons, it is not possible to characterise the different meetings too tightly by the place they were held. However, at each meeting, it would be fair to say that most of the people attending were from the local school area, and the differences between the three meetings were likely to suggest variations between the population of those suburbs. In this way, we may look for some comparison among the views expressed by people belonging to the various interest groups I have identified - parents at Strathmore Park, at Miramar, and at Seatoun.

I recorded what was said in the plenary sessions of these meetings, and analysed the data to discover the general weighting of the different issues and points of view presented. I have included quotations which are typical of the range of viewpoints, in similar proportion to the number of people who spoke from that position at each meeting.

*Public meeting at Strathmore Park, 30 May*

This meeting was held in a community hall a few metres up the road from the school. About 50 people attended, most of whom were parents, with a few teachers. They came from the whole range of schools in the district. Of those
present, about ten people, or 20%, were Maori or Pacific Island, although the ratio of these groups to the whole school population in that suburb is over 80%. This group sat together at the back of the hall.

Several efforts were made by Mary O'Regan, the convener, to make the environment of the meeting welcoming. She greeted most people at the door. Although the chairs were arranged initially in formal rows, one of the parents present suggested they would feel more comfortable in small groups. Mary then formed the groups by numbering people off, a procedure which separated those who had come together. Several comments were heard during the meeting that it was a pity the people were not able to stay with the friends they had come with, for mutual support.

When the small groups reported back, responses from five of the seven groups indicated dissatisfaction with the process of the Forum in terms of equity of participation. Some examples of this point of view were:

We're not happy to give our opinion with not enough information.

Choice should be based on facts.

There's not enough time.

Strathmore can't look at this issue in isolation from the other schools - it should be much more interactive.

There is a racial issue - there's not enough consultation with the Samoan Community.

There are language difficulties.

Planning should have been on a whole community basis, not piecemeal like this is.

Only the motivated would be coming to this style of forum.
This shouldn't be a one-off forum - it should be reviewed.

I'd like you to give Uncle Phil (the Minister of Education) a kick in the butt - this is not the way to go about it!

Only three of the seven groups mentioned choice, and each of these indicated they had discussed the tension between free choice for one school and the rights of the collective of other schools. None of the groups spoke up for choice as an unfettered right:

There's a denial of rights - the contributing schools will have their choice taken away if the intermediate is no longer there.

Seatoun School did not go about this the right way - they've compromised other people's choices.

We want choice but not if it infringes on other people's choices.

*Miramar Public Meeting, 31 May 1990*

Another public meeting was held in a Miramar church hall the following night. It was attended by about 80 people, again a mixture of parents and teachers from a range of the local schools, with most of those speaking being parents. Ethnic minorities were still unrepresented, with apparently no Maori or Pacific Island people. Two were Indian, and one Chinese.

Five of the 10 groups reported that the process was not appropriate for all groups, giving reasons similar to those given at Strathmore the previous night:

We should have informed choice - speed does not allow for this.
Other ethnic groups are being neglected - the churches should have been given notices and the chance to hold forum meetings in their own environment.

This type of forum is not culturally appropriate for the ethnic minorities.

Nine of the ten groups here mentioned choice in their reporting back, all of them stating some reservations or qualifications, and six of them saying that choice must be limited by the consequences on others:

There should be choice, but some schools can't re-capitate and there's not enough resources.

There are no 'yes' and 'no' answers. People are interested in having options but realise this is simplistic and would have effects.

There should be choice, but this shouldn't affect schools that don't have that choice.

If the intermediate is lost, our choice is lost.

The whole notion of choice is because we've entered an era when the free market economy is to the fore. But choice also has a cost. In basic terms, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In education that will happen too.

This parent's statement was supported by a general murmur of agreement.

Public Meeting at Seatoun, 6 June 1990

This meeting presented a number of contrasts to the previous two. Firstly, in spite of it being held on a very wet and cold night, between 200 and 250 people were there. Of these, I judged there were five Indians, one Chinese,
and probably two Maori. In contrast to the other meetings where the convener set the whole tone and agenda, at Seatoun the chairperson of the board of trustees had requested and been granted permission to make a statement to open the meeting. He gave five reasons why Seatoun school wanted to retain its Form 1 and 2 children. The first two of these were not directly to do with the children, but with choice:

Picot promised us freedom of choice. The Board was elected to represent the community and be responsive to its wishes.

We're in a time of market forces at the Rogernomics level. Seatoun school produces a product the customers like - so why not be able to offer them two further years of it?

His other reasons related to advantages for Form 1 and 2 children of staying on their local site, the administrative and logistical disadvantages of a two year interruption to the continuity of children's schooling, and the claim that parental support is easier when the school is close by. Every one of the 15 groups which reported back to the plenary session used the word 'choice', most in very general terms. The following are typical:

Last year (before the first elections for the new boards of trustees) the lovely ads on TV promised choice.

We were led to believe that in Tomorrow's Schools we had the right of choice.

Basically we felt it should just be freedom of choice for everybody.

Only three groups mentioned the consequences of one school's choice limiting the choices of others:
We want freedom of choice so long as Evans Bay Intermediate doesn't go down the tubes. The government should bail it out if they look like losing, so that choice is kept.

Other schools should have choice too - the Intermediate should be available.

Eight groups responded using the discourse of the market.

We want to see Evans Bay advertising. Pedal your bike and sell yourself.

Schools need to meet the needs of the customer.

If there's no demand, it should cease to exist.

We'll canvas on the free market and get more kids.

Evans Bay will have to upmarket their image and compete.

If I'm happy with the product I'm likely to stay with it.

Six groups commented on the non-participation of ethnic minorities at the meeting, only about half of these indicating concern.

Where is equity in this discussion?

This forum is racially biased, it's rushed, and ethnic groups are left out.

They've all had the opportunity to participate.

This is a Seatoun issue - we can't comment on who is left out.
Three groups said more information was needed before decisions could be made. Typical comments were:

More time for research is needed for informed parental choice.

More time is needed for consultation.

In summary, the three public meetings I attended presented interesting contrasts. Far more parents came to the meeting in Seatoun, reflecting no doubt the urgency of the concern of these people that their school should be able to re-capitate. We must also consider whether the more affluent and generally Pakeha parents in Seatoun felt more comfortable with public meetings of this kind, and did not have to face so many of the obstacles of childcare, shift work and unreliable transport reported in my interviews with parents in Miramar or Strathmore Park.

The small group discussion as reported in the plenary sessions showed differences in the language used, with far more use of market terminology in the Seatoun meeting than in the others.

The analysis of the issues raised also revealed contrasts between these three meetings, with more people discussing free choice and individual rights at Seatoun, and more people at Miramar and Strathmore Park concerned about the process of the Forum which many said was inequitable for ethnic minorities and too rushed for informed and considered involvement of the whole community.
This seminar was held before the Convener’s report was made public and the Minister had made his response. The invited speakers were from the wider educational community, as well as particularly interested parents and teachers from the range of the Eastern Suburbs schools. Many of the speakers pointed out that the process of this Forum showed up dilemmas involved in the concepts of community participation and of choice. The following indicates the range of opinions of educationists from outside the locality:

The purpose of consultation is to allow people to interact in such a way that they learn more about what their own views are and can shift those views after hearing others ...

the Curriculum Review Research in Schools Project (1988) developed the idea of consulting ...

Schools have to work very hard to make decision-making more accessible to their community ...

One of the issues thrown up here is that we must look at the context in which choice is offered - is it one of increasing or decreasing resources? Choice is only viable when there are plenty of resources.

What we’re talking about is basically a conflict with the prevailing economic climate of the time.

It’s not only the economic climate that is the problem but it is the competition between schools that is being encouraged by this government. Unless schools in a district become collaborative, no one will win ... The consultation procedure is ideally a group-of-schools process rather than a single-school process.

One of the unresolved conflicts in Picot was that the thrust towards free market which set up schools in competition with each other is contradicted by the need for co-
operation and collaboration. Do we see schools as atomised branches of one enterprise? ... How can we reject consumer sovereignty as a very poor and sterile option that gives only a handful of people - those with the most money - real choice, but for the vast bulk of people restricts choice? ... Treasury and the New Right and market theory have no concept of time ... For children we're talking about 15 years of schooling ... Market forces look at a quick return in 12 months. Market ideology denigrates planning. We have to manage change in ways that people can stay secure and know they'll have a part in it and retain some control.

These were typical viewpoints expressed by chairpersons of the schools involved in the Forum:

I was very disappointed with the public meetings. The questions were on a 'yes' or 'no' basis. They did not allow us to negotiate together and work towards a consensus. Choice is a luxury. We have to pay for it. In a world of diminishing resources choice is very limited indeed. Through no wish of my own I am fighting with these people from other schools for resources. Consultation is not good when it is based on the premise of having to fight each other for resources.

We shouldn't have to go out and market our school to get children and push our own barrow ... When we were told about consultation, that assumes that everyone in the room is equal. But it only catered for the 'nice' majority groups. The minority groups were not catered for.

The Forum is dominated by people who are white, articulate, well educated ... This is a power issue ... The them has changed - it's not the bureaucracy we're fighting now, it's each other.

Choice is used as a buzz word to attract us, but choice involves responsibility. It wasn't just the ethnic groups that were not consulted adequately, but the poor and the
powerless. And there are many more of them out there than there are of us here today. I wanted to learn from the Forum what the other people felt, but I couldn't see them at the Forum.

The whole argument centred around the right to choose, not around the best education possible for kids ... the whole change is being driven by the agenda of one group - Seatoun. We need to do a lot of research, talking, informing, before we change the system. Change happens as people respond. Don't tear down the structures before we're ready.


Mary O'Regan's report, which she sent to the Minister of Education on 17 July 1990, drew attention to the dilemmas which had been revealed during the forum.

Firstly, she reported on the complexity of the consultation process, and her view that this was inappropriately combined with simple fact-finding for the Minister. She said:

In my view, Community Forums should be used primarily to enable communities to debate educational issues of common concern. The gathering of factual information should be done through other means and where it is relevant to the topic of a Forum, should be made available to those being consulted. (Foreword)

Secondly, she recognised that:

There were many who, for a variety of reasons, did not participate in the Forum and hence their voices were not heard nor their views recorded. For this and other reasons
many who did not participate were critical of the process... I have recorded these criticisms in the hope that they will assist in the organisation of subsequent Forums.

She wrote of the time constraints, and the uneven provision of information which many people had claimed made it unlikely that all groups could participate equitably.

Thirdly, she pointed out that while the Forum expressed support for Seatoun School's right to re-capitate, two main qualifications to choice had been voiced:

One was that if Seatoun School was granted re-capitation, other schools in the Eastern Suburbs should also have the right to alter their status. The other was that the choice of one group of parents should not limit the choices subsequently available to other groups. (p. 1)

Fourthly, she emphasised that the most significant of the dilemmas that had been expressed on a wide range of issues during the Forum were the conflicting interpretations of 'community' and 'choice':

Seatoun School's ... view of 'community' was the immediate school community. According to these interpretations they believed their actions were entirely in line with the new philosophy in education which promoted local solutions to local issues. They had a clear mandate from their own community and wished only to act on that.

The other interpretations were less straightforward. 'Community' was interpreted in a wide sense to include all those who may be affected by the action of a school and, accordingly, the right of one school to exercise 'choice' was seen to have the potential to limit the choices of others. In this context it was considered that any decisions made should be preceded by a thorough analysis of the likely impacts in terms of overall community choice (p. 1)
She reported that while many people interpreted Seatoun School's desire to re-capitate as a move to avoid sending their children to Evans Bay Intermediate and suggested that reasons for this might be based on social rather than educational considerations, Seatoun school was adamant that this was not the case.

In her report, Mary O'Regan included a section "What does equity mean, who is responsible for it, and how can it best be achieved?" Here she reported on the view of many in the Forum that there were benefits for children in attending Evans Bay Intermediate which drew its pupils from a range of suburbs and so included a diversity of cultures.

Given the increasing complexity of our society in terms of its multi-racial composition it is essential for the future well-being of the country in terms of social and community development for children to be exposed to different cultures and values at this stage of their development (p. 22)

She did not discuss the lack of participation, in terms of equity, of the minority ethnic or racial groups in the Eastern Suburbs. This omission from her report was commented on later by Neil Sutherland, the principal of Strathmore Park School and is reported later in this chapter. Mary O'Regan wrote about 'choice':

Seatoun School's interpretations were based on a free market approach to education in which schools are perceived as autonomous entities which should survive in the market-place only so long as people wish to avail themselves of the product they offer ... Changes in the provision of education should be able to occur as a consequence of consumer demand.
The other view promoted the concept of schools as branches of an enterprise in which inter-relationships between schools are acknowledged. Accordingly, changes in the structure of schools should not occur without consultation with all interested parties ... This would lead to a co-ordinated approach to change resulting in increased choice of overall education provision. The proponents of this view felt that the time-frame and process of this Forum had been inadequate in terms of enabling effective discussion on the possibilities ...

Mary O'Regan's position in her report was that:

Where there are such conflicting views on issues fundamental to the outcome of the Forum, it is not appropriate for the Convener to endorse one or the other. Accordingly, she recommended two possible courses of action which might be taken as a result of this Forum. The preferred course of action will depend on which of the two prevailing views of the Forum is officially endorsed.

The two options she presented to the Minister of Education were:

1. If the *free market* or competitive approach to education provision is endorsed, Seatoun School should be granted the right to re-capitate.

2. If the *co-ordinated, co-operative* approach to education provision is endorsed the following action should be taken:

Schools in the Eastern Suburbs should be given the opportunity to continue the process which has begun during this Forum with a view to exploring ways in which the existing educational resources of the Eastern Suburbs can be most effectively used to provide the widest possible range of options in terms of educational provision.
Further, that a suitably qualified person be employed to facilitate this process.

This process could be set in place as a pilot scheme for a limited period. It should then be evaluated with a view to providing a model for other areas.

It should be noted that this option would not preclude re-capitation of Seatoun School or other contributing schools in the future.

3.12 The Government - the Member of Parliament for Miramar, the Hon. Peter Neilsen, a Ministry of Education official, and the Minister of Education, the Hon. Phil Goff.

The pressures on the government were reported in a number of the interviews and meetings I recorded. I did not interview the Minister but recorded his public comments and reports of his views indicated by others.

The local Member of Parliament, at a meeting with the staff of the Intermediate School on 26 April at the beginning of the Forum, had said:

What we want is for parents to get what they want in their area. It would be easier for the Minister if this wasn't occurring ... I think the Minister is embarrassed by the fact it's arisen and they're floundering about trying to find a way to handle it. All we want is for parents to get what they want ... The Minister is nervous about the process as it will be a test case. One of the reasons Seatoun is so cynical is that they know the Minister could do without it.

At a meeting with the Miramar Central Board of Trustees on 27 April, this Member of Parliament, when confronted with the view of those parents that the process was being unfairly rushed, spoke of the Government's dilemma:
Seatoun thinks there's a hidden agenda to hold it up - they think Government doesn't want to make a decision ... The Minister is caught in the crossfire between people who think it's too fast and people who think it's too slow. I can't see how the timetable can possibly be met as it's already behind. If there are extensive delays that could prevent Seatoun from getting their Form 2s in next year -then there'd be problems.

Further indications of the view of the Minister were recorded in the interview on 17 July with a Ministry of Education officer. She reported the confusion that was felt when Seatoun School initially announced their intention of keeping their Form 1 and 2 children at the same time as the legislation had just been passed which required that any such decision must be preceded by the appointment of a convener to elicit the views of all the schools affected:

The legislation is quite poorly worded ... this all sounds very messy and we are in a very messy period, right? ...

She reported direct involvement of the Minister's advisers in drawing up the terms of reference and the selection of the convener.

We were under a lot of pressure too, to get it up and started ... We really felt that we're coming up to the election ... So if anything was going to be decided before next year we really need to get cracking and so our first priority was to get a decision over Seatoun.

Six weeks after receiving the Convener's Report, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Phil Goff, called a meeting of the Boards of Trustees concerned to announce his decision. In contrast to the language of the Ministry of Education's Information Booklet on Community Forums on Education (1989), which had been stated less than a year before in terms of community, partnership and process, the Minister now clearly identified the issue as one of greater parental choice:
I come from the position that under Tomorrow’s Schools, we’re trying for maximum choice for parents ... the decision needs to be made locally. The convener’s report goes into ideological or philosophical differences, between co-operation among schools or a free market. But I don’t think in those terms, so that is not very useful to me. The choice is really to allow Seatoun its choice now or to go on talking about it.

My decision is that Seatoun School should be permitted to cater for Form 1 and 2 pupils for 1991. This confirms my priority for parental choice.

The Minister, however, backed off from a full-scale free market situation, as he did want to protect the future of the Intermediate School. He said that further schools in the district could apply to the Ministry to recapitate, but that once a point was reached where the Intermediate School was no longer viable, then permission would not be granted.

3.13 Reactions to the Minister's decision from interested groups.

The Seatoun Board of Trustees, upon hearing the Minister’s decision expressed satisfaction that the promise of free parental choice had been met.

Representatives of the other seven schools were, however, not at all happy with this compromise. They interpreted it as putting pressure on them not to follow the same course as Seatoun had, and saw their future choices limited. Their comments reflected a sense of injustice. The Chairperson of the Strathmore Park School Board of Trustees said:

I’m concerned that Seatoun School has been devious and has got away with what they wanted. But we don’t have that chance. At the meetings we’ve had, Maori and Pacific Island people were not represented as the meetings were not held in a way that was acceptable to them. He has taken away our choice to do what Seatoun did.
The Principal of Strathmore Park School commented on the section about equity in the Convener's report:

She doesn't seem to see that equity means giving everyone a fair chance. The whole process of the forum was inequitable - she doesn't seem to acknowledge this. I'd have liked to see suggestions for ways it could be done better in the future. We at Strathmore Park made specific pointers in our submission that she failed to take up. You wonder what will happen to them. There's now no reason why the fourth forum will be any different ... there's no addressing how to deal with the difficulties we identified in the process.

The lack of equitable outcomes for other schools that would result from Seatoun's choice was also a concern of the Principal of Miramar Central School:

All the equity issues were not considered or adequately assessed by the Minister. Resources will be given to Seatoun, but where will these resources come from? These are affluent people. Do the people of Miramar really have this choice? What we're doing now is really cutting down our options. We should have started off with asking what are the educational needs of this whole community of schools.

Interviews with the Board members of Miramar Central confirmed the concern of each of them that the whole range of parents had not been involved in the forum, and that even those who were involved were limited by time and lack of information. The board chairperson said:

The preliminary information could have been better. Parents are not that learned about the education system ... we were cast out into the wild blue yonder ... it was a bit of a dig and hope and search to find information and evidence ... The time-span meant we didn't have as much information from our parents as we could have ... we certainly
didn't feel we were getting through to the groundswell of opinion from the parents. It was what we were set up under Tomorrow's Schools to do, but we found we couldn't do it. We really needed professional advice, about how to survey people, how to get through to minority groups, and then to make sense of any information we got, finding help from the right sources. We as Boards are learning ourselves. There were limitations on what we could achieve.

Other parent trustees said:

The Forum didn't go far enough. It should also have looked at where education could go in the future in the Eastern suburbs ... we need someone based in Wellington to have the task of getting schools together on a regular basis. I found it really interesting to develop my ideas ... Now I've got nowhere to go with it - I'm frustrated.

We need to get a lot more parents involved in the discussions, maybe by earlier and larger media publicity...When we send something home to the Chinese and Cambodian parents the children have to translate for them so its like seeds falling on barren land. Perhaps we need to translate what we send home for them.

With more information and more time we could have got opinions firmed up more one way than another, rather than the half and half we seemed to have ... The Cambodian and Vietnamese people didn't have time to form their views ... We didn't have time to get things translated for them. The whole process was a bit rushed. Seatoun was pushing for a quick decision...There wasn't time to take account of the whole school population. The outcome was that Seatoun got what they wanted.

The Board Secretary commented that some good did come from the community participation process of the forum:
I think a lot of parents found out things they didn't know previously, and the Intermediate had a chance to put their case ... Overall, parents did have the opportunity to go and put information and also for other people to correct them if their information was not right ... But parents needed to have more input. I don't think it should be one school on its own that makes the decision. That's bad. Seatoun isolated themselves from the rest of the Eastern Suburbs. The decision should be one for us all.

The staff representative on the Board commented:

The public meetings were limited, because the reports back from the groups didn't include everything that was said and there was limited satisfaction with all the meetings as they were only talking to certain groups of parents, not the full cross-section. I don't agree with a single school having its say as in the Seatoun situation, as happened this time. I feel concern that parents were making decisions for themselves based on their own memories of their schooling and not looking at what is best for the children's future.

Turning to the role of the government to make decisions in relation to that of the parents, the chairperson commented:

They also recognised limits to community decision-making, believing that the Government must in the end make decisions that have resource implications:

Another parent trustee said:

At the end of the day, the authorities had to make a decision. The election was coming up.

A different viewpoint on parent power was offered by the Chairperson of one of the other schools involved:
The assumption seems to be that parents know best. I don't agree. There's a conflict between parent choice and equity.

Looking to the future, I asked the members of the Miramar Central School Board of Trustees, "Do you think the re-capitation issue will surface again in Miramar?" All eight of the trustees said that they did believe the issue of re-capitation would come up again, though most thought this would not be for a year or two at least. Some saw that schools now had realised the options open to them in a *market* environment to gain more customers:

Evans Bay Intermediate has been accused by Rongotai (a local boys' secondary school) of setting up ready to be a Form 1-4 school without talking to them. There's bad feeling about this.

Some saw changes in the future as schools may seek to keep their Form 1 and 2 children as a way of meeting the needs of cultural minorities:

The issue might come up again as a way of keeping the ethnic influence, as at Strathmore Park.

Some board members pointed out that parents were now more likely to think about choosing another school and Miramar Central may need to compete for pupils by re-capititating:

The parents will have the choice of going to Seatoun ... These families are ones with their oldest child now in Standard 3 and they haven't had the good experience of having a child at Intermediate yet.

Yes, it will come up again, because of shrinking rolls ... a group of parents will endeavour to get it going again. We'll need to keep our roll up.
Yes, it is extremely possible. It depends how the existing schools are seen to be run. The competence of the teachers will be looked at.

Not for a year or so. We'll have to wait and see how many families enrol at Seatoun instead of Miramar Central.

It may take one year or five years, depending on how Seatoun's situation goes. Parents will look and see what happens there. It could rear up again if there's some kickback with other schools.

A number of the Miramar Central trustees commented that it was a pity the collaborative process begun by the Forum had stopped, but they saw possibilities for the Board itself to continue links with other schools:

The Forum didn't go far enough ... It should also have looked at where education could go in the future in the Eastern suburbs. We were cut off half way through the discussion. We need someone based in Wellington to have the task of getting schools together on a regular basis.

It would be nice for the Board to take the initiative and arrange for parents to visit the Intermediate, even before there is any more action taken by parents. They can then make comments based on proper information.

As a Board our priority is to establish close liaison with the Intermediate in a constructive way, building bridges, working together with it as one of its contributing schools.

The two branches of the reforms, of parents as trustees having more involvement in planning for their school, and of parents exercising their right of choice were still both present. The reference to schools competing against
each other and trying to gain students at the expense of other schools was new.

I asked Mary O'Regan, who had been the Chair of the Community Education Forum Implementation Working Party, and Douglas Day, who had been her deputy, to comment from the perspective of that working party on the process of the present Forum.

In discussing the difference between what the working group had recommended and the reality of the third Forum, which by the time of the interview, she was convening, Mary O'Regan pointed out the changed role of the Minister in relation to the community:

The Minister has got more direct control now ... he decides when to convene one ... and then the report belongs to the Minister and he decides whether to release it and decides what the outcome will be ... it is now a mechanism for the Minister to consult. It is just a process that he can use to get views via somebody else, whereas the way it was envisaged before that, the community initiated it when they felt they wanted to articulate a view or to engage in discussion ... it would be quite a force for pressuring change in some areas.

Douglas Day says:

The processes are all so rushed. I can see the middle class white Anglo Saxon Pakeha domination of the forum. This shows in the style of discussions. This forum is responding in a reactive way - it just arose when there was a problem.

Keeping in mind the emphasis given by both the Picot Taskforce members and the working group members that for true democratic community participation to occur, it was important that the community owned the Forum, I interviewed
an officer of the Ministry of Education who had been closely involved with setting up the Eastern Suburbs Forum. I asked her to what extent she felt the Ministry had directed the way the Forum would proceed. She responded:

I think it was a very large measure of Ministry's directives ... the Minister approved the terms of reference and the staff in the Minister's office told us very definitely that the Minister wanted that focus, enough information to decide the future of all the other schools ... we were under a lot of pressure to get it up and started, so the main focus of our thinking was Seatoun ...

The original view of Community Forums was that you would have someone in the community permanently involved in consultation. Now I'm very used to that model because I've worked very closely with REAPs (Rural Education Activities Programmes) and it works superbly well. What we've got is something extremely limiting, something that serves the Minister or suits his interests in some limited way, providing him with information, that's the main focus. The main focus is not on the community working co-operatively and working issues through, and I feel very sorry that idea got lost. I don't think it's just a matter of funding. I think it's a suspicion and fear of community and consultation. Whereas I've got a lot of faith that people will make good decisions if they've got good information ...

I tried to argue that for a real debate in the community, they must be able to have some idea about resources. So you'd say to them, there's going to be so much money for that sort of thing. It's no good saying the community is irresponsible when they give you a wish list, if you haven't given them real choices and fed the implications in ... there's no information available like that and there's no policy about Forms 1 and 2 education. So that makes it difficult for the community ...

The time frame was determined by how much funding we could get ... and that we're coming up to the election ... if anything was going to be decided for next year we really needed to get cracking and so our first priority was to get a decision over Seatoun.
In summary, the reactions to the Minister's decision and to the end of this Forum were characterised by disappointment with the process of the Forum with its rushed timeframe and lack of information and resources. The perceptions of most of the people I listened to were that a valuable opportunity had been lost for community participation of a democratic and equitable kind. They felt that the Forum had been reduced to a process in which the simplistic notion of choice prevailed, and that choice seemed to be available only to the most powerful group of parents.
Chapter Four: Interpretation and Discussion

The purpose of this study has been to find out what were the aims of the policy of Community Forums on Education, and to what extent these aims were achieved in the implementation of the Forum in Wellington's Eastern Suburbs. Exploration of these questions took place at two levels - descriptive and theoretical.

We have seen in Chapter One the way in which the policy for Community Forums on Education was intended to address the problem of powerlessness at the level of parents and community, particularly for groups such as Maori and Pacific Island people which had been identified as disadvantaged. This problem was to be addressed by devolving to communities some power to resolve contentious educational issues which affected more than one school.

In this final chapter I shall first refer to my key research questions relating to the perceptions of the policy developers and the participants in this Forum, briefly interpreting the evidence of their intentions and expectations and the way in which any devolution of power was actually experienced. I will then consider whether this was affected by other aspects of the reforms. The issues that emerged as I explored the key research questions relating to any inconsistencies will be dealt with at more length through an examination of the conditions needed to achieve the intentions of the policy.

4.1 Intentions of the policy makers

We have seen that the policy for Community Forums on Education was part of the Government's devolution of educational administration. In this particular policy, as well as in the re-structuring as a whole, we can see elements of both liberal democratic theory, the 'thin democracy' of Hayek (1979) and of radical
democratic theory, the 'strong democracy' of Barber (1984). The two ideals, of choice associated with the former and of empowerment of parents and community through democratic participation which is associated with the latter, were both part of the rhetoric of the reforms. However, my analysis of the discourse of the policy documents (The Picot Report and Tomorrow's Schools, 1988) indicated that the intention of the policy for Community Forums on Education was clearly for democratic community participation.

This intention was confirmed in my interviews with members of the Picot Taskforce, as well as those of the Implementation Working Party. The people interviewed, in using phrases such as "a voice for the people in the community who had not had a voice, ... an empowerment" (Rosemary) and "equity issues could have been debated and fed into the Ministry so policy could come from the grassroots" (Wereta), and "local concerns could find expression ... it would be pro-active when necessary" (Day) did indeed indicate an expectation that the devolution offered by Forums would enable people in the community to serve an instrumental role to make a distinctive contribution to decisions which affected them, with better resultant decisions and the protection of public interests. This policy was intended to revitalise and enhance the established tradition of community power in educational administration, which had been exercised in a limited way by the old Education Boards, by bringing a fresh and less bureaucratic structure to the scene. From the point of view of the Picot Taskforce the Forums would have the advantage of being ad hoc structures which would not accumulate power to themselves. Parents and community members would be free to take initiatives without constraints imposed by bureaucrats. In this way, the leaves of equity would supposedly flourish on the newly vigorous tree of New Zealand education.

While the extent to which decision-making could actually be devolved to Community Forums on Education had not been explicitly explored, two major
qualifications to the devolution of power were recognised by the policy developers.

The first qualification is the ultimate responsibility of government to allocate funding for any process or outcome related to the Forum. Some of those involved with policy development, such as the State Services Commission officer working with the Picot Taskforce and the Ministry of Education official, were aware that this would be a limitation on real power for the community. Most decisions would have resource implications and must therefore ultimately remain the responsibility of the Government.

The second qualification is the problematic role of the facilitator, or convener. As we have seen, the State Services Commission officer represented the view of the New Right that there is a danger in professional capture by such people, who would then control the flow of information both to and from the community, and become themselves the repository of considerable power. In contrast, the Implementation Working Party clearly maintained that a network of permanent and trained facilitators would be essential. The dilemma here is to what extent it is possible for the community to obtain enough information to participate properly in the Forum without the services of such a facilitator. This issue was raised again by local people involved in the Eastern Suburbs Forum as we shall see below.

As Boston suggests in his discussion of devolution of political power (1988), any reflection on this issue raises a host of complex theoretical and practical issues concerning the appropriate division of elected power in a society. The ideal of devolution of power to communities was associated in the minds of at least some of the Picot Taskforce with the acknowledgment of cultural diversity, and the presumed greater educational equity which might be achieved for disadvantaged groups of children when their families were more involved in decision-making through a Community Forum on Education.
We have seen that the policy for Community Forums for Education developed from a series of public consultations and policy reviews advocating further participation of parents and communities in school decision-making. This was clearly consistent with the strengthening and revitalisation of the main trunk of the existing education system, with its long-standing goals of egalitarian democracy.

A foreshadowing of possible tension between this ethos and some of the newly imported ideas of the New Right was seen in comments of the official on the Picot Taskforce from the State Services Commission. She suggested that when communities get together to sort and share out resources, "we have to take a risk that some articulate groups in the community would perhaps highjack a forum" (Robinson), giving some indication that her view of the purpose of Forums may be more in line with the 'thin' democracy of the liberal democratic theory (Hayek, 1979), which is merely concerned with a political method or institutional arrangement for reaching political decisions, and that the level and extent of mass participation in the political process is irrelevant. The suggestion that this view of the purpose of Forums gradually predominated in the office of the Minister of Education was made by both the Ministry official I interviewed and the Convener of the Forum. They commented that the process was now "a mechanism for the Minister to consult ... just a process that he can use to get views via somebody else" (O'Regan) and that "the Minister wanted ... enough information to decide the future of all the other schools" (Ministry Official). Ironically, the change of direction of the Forum in order to provide information for the Minister coincided with the vigorous complaints of the participating community that they were hampered by lack of information on which to base their opinions.
4.2 Perceptions of people involved in the implementation

My study of the views of the parents, teachers and community members revealed the co-existence of two different sets of beliefs about the nature of their community participation, which became more explicit as the Forum proceeded. Most of the parents who spoke at the meetings at Miramar and at Strathmore Park clearly saw their role as pursuing collective concerns, not wishing, for example, to take decisions in their school without considering the impact on other neighbouring schools. We also heard a different view, emerging most strongly at the Seatoun meeting, which emphasised the responsibility of the individual schools in the district to market themselves and compete for clients, and the role of parents simply as consumers who would exercise their choice about which of the products to buy for their children.

The emphasis in some of the debate, particularly by some of the Seatoun parents, on the promise of the government to give individual parents freedom of choice without bureaucratic interference seems consistent with one of the characteristics of Hayek's 'thin' democracy, in that it is more concerned with the preservation of individual rights and liberties and the limitation of the power of the state than with the value of citizen involvement which is the concern of 'strong' democracy. The emphasis on individual freedom of choice is a central element of the 'public choice' approach of such scholars as James Buchanan and Gordon Tulloch (1962), which is one of the economic theories underpinning the re-structuring of the New Zealand public service as a whole, (Boston 1988).

This contrast in parents' views, consistent with the two theories of strong and of thin democracy, has been explored in relation to the role of parents in the re-structured education system, by Rosemary Deem (1992) who writes of the
co-existence of two different, underlying ideologies about lay participation in educational administration in Britain. One ideology which she terms 'collective concern ideology',

stresses the significance of democracy, public accountability and collective concerns ...

This ideology ... although still current among some parent and governor pressure groups appears to be in decline. (Deem, 1992, p. 1)

The other ideology, which Deem terms 'consumer interest' emphasises markets, competition, consumer rights, and private interests appeared to Deem in 1992 to be in the ascendancy in Britain.

Another way of making the distinction between these two ideologies has been suggested by Adam Westoby (1989), who uses concepts of 'voice and choice', developed by Hirshman (1981) to analyse the role of parents under the British 1988 Education Reform Act. He suggests that the British reforms empower parents as consumers who can choose between schools, while claiming to strengthen parents' influences within school organisations. He outlines a conceptual framework developed by Hirshman and others for analysing such interrelationships, using the notions of 'voice' and 'exit', and maintains that for organisations such as schools which mainly compete on quality, more extensive 'choice', or power of 'exit' actually weakens the 'voice' that could help them modify their performance.

We have seen that the model which was envisaged by the Implementation Working Party and by the Convener's Report, of sustained parent involvement in educational decision-making within the community, was referred to by a number of the parents at Miramar who wished to continue the Forum process. They hoped that it would allow them to produce changes and enhance quality in the larger pattern of educational provision in the Eastern Suburbs. When
the Minister of Education refused to allow this continuity of involvement in the Forum process, and agreed to the Seatoun parents being given their choice to exit from the intermediate school, the possibility for continued influence on the development of that intermediate school was removed. We have seen that some of the participants suspected that, despite the rhetoric, the Government was reluctant to devolve any sustained decision-making power to Community Forums, and they perceived this as limiting the real power of parents.

It is probably significant that during the period of this Forum, the Ministry of Education was being overwhelmed with more and more schools around the country wanting to re-capitate. The Government must have been beginning to understand the scale of the resource implications of so many structural changes. The expense of allowing a proliferation of different kinds of schools in an area in order to provide the promised choice was becoming obvious. It seems likely that changes in Government interpretations of the aims of Forums were strongly influenced by these pragmatic considerations.

I began to perceive, through the eyes and ears of the participants in this Forum, that the agenda of the settlement was shifting. The language that was being used, as reported in Chapter Three, was changing. By the time this Forum was underway in mid 1990, there had been a change of Education Minister, and the voices of those putting the case for market forces to rule education were becoming clearer and stronger. The perceptions of parents and teachers from the schools other than Seatoun suggested that the ideology expressed in the Treasury Brief (1987) which had been modified in the Picot Report and Tomorrow's Schools, was being resurrected. These perceptions were reinforced by other events that year, which I am unable to report more fully in this thesis, such as the release by the Business Roundtable of the Sexton Report, and the setting up of the Lough Committee by the new National Minister of Education.
As I listened to what the people involved in this Forum were saying, and heard a great many comments about what could have been achieved if only the process had been different, I realised that the answers to this research question were best found through an examination of the conditions which were needed for the aims of the Forum to be achieved.

*Conditions needed for democratic participation and choice to work*

If the achievement of greater equity, either through democratic participation or through individual freedom of choice is related to redistribution of power, and power is dependent on access to a number of resources, then the results of my study of this Forum may throw some light on which resources were seen to be critical. People who participated in the Forum spoke of these resources:

- information
- time
- money
- cultural capital - comfort with the process and language.

A few participants identified the desirability of a trained and semi-permanent facilitator who could expand the role of the convener to ensure that the resources listed above were available for all groups in the community.

*Information - views of policy makers*

An analysis of the interviews with members of the Picot Taskforce suggests that they had an image of a community vigorously participating in debate but did not think very much about how this would come about. Only one member, (Rosemergy) spoke about the convener being an "information pivot"
who could pass information between the people and the government. More of
the discussion with the Picot members was concerned with the necessity,
perceived by each of those I interviewed, to limit the power of the convener
and to prevent a new bureaucracy or powerbase growing up around any such
professional person.

In contrast, the Implementation Working Party was very clear that unless
Forums had trained conveners who had access to information and resources to
communicate this to the community, they would not have a chance of
empowering people. As well, the Working Party emphasised that the time
needed for Forums must be flexible because some communities, particularly
multicultural ones, would need more time to inform and consult.
Furthermore, the Working Party suggested in some detail ways in which
Forums could be organised to ensure that all groups would feel comfortable
with the process, and that facilities such as childcare would be available so
that any one could take part. The funding implications of training and paying
a network of conveners, and of providing for the resources were carefully
acknowledged.

*Information - views of the Forum participants*

Several kinds of information which were vital to the people involved in this
forum were seen to be inequitably distributed.

Firstly, the people in schools other than Seatoun complained that they suffered
a disadvantage in not knowing that the Forum was to take place until well
after Seatoun had got themselves organised. By the time the Boards of
Trustees read about the Forum in the papers and eventually received their
letter from the Ministry, the Seatoun Board had already been consulted about
the selection of the convener and the terms of reference.
Secondly, during the process of the Forum, information was consistently requested by the parents of the schools other than Seatoun. They said that they needed to know about Form 1 and 2 education, about the 'pros' and 'cons' of Intermediate Schools, about practical issues such as resource implications for their own school if they re-capitated, the effect on Evans Bay Intermediate in terms of staffing and resources, about the conditions under which the Intermediate would cease to be viable and so disappear as one of the choices available to them, and about the possibility of other options such as a Form 1-4 school. The parents at Seatoun School did not ask at public meetings for this kind of information. It appeared that by the time of the Forum they had already made up their minds and just wanted to get a decision from the Minister.

Thirdly, any information that was available from the Ministry or from the Convener was in English only. Despite the high proportion of families in the Eastern Suburbs for whom English was a second language or who did not speak English at all, the only multilingual information was that provided by Strathmore Park School after they had made a case to the Convener for extra funds for translation.

*Time*

As indicated above, the prior information which Seatoun School Board of Trustees enjoyed was related to the extra time this group had to prepare themselves and their community before the Forum was announced. Because Seatoun had initiated the Forum by their request to re-capitate the school, it may be that this time advantage was inevitable. However, the Boards of both Strathmore Park and Miramar Central School requested that more time be allowed for the Forum to enable their multicultural communities to take part more effectively. The Convener supported this request in her Report to the
Minister, emphasising that time was needed for schools and their communities to work in collaborative and co-operative ways, and acknowledging that further funding would be needed if the Forum were to be extended in this way. However, the urgency for Seatoun to have the decision in time to arrange staff and other resources before the following school year, and the desire of the Minister to have the matter settled before the forthcoming election meant that additional time was not granted. This evidence of Government's desire to control the timing of the Forum was taken by a number of the participants as an indication that the Forum was 'owned' by Government rather than by the community, consistent with 'thin' democracy, where apparently democratic processes are merely a means to Government ends rather than a true devolution of power to local groups.

Money

There were several ways in which the level of financial resources determined the fairness of the process and of the outcome of this Forum.

Firstly, the degree of participation of the diverse groups depended to some extent on their financial ability to be free from work at time of the meetings, to get reliable transport to take them to the meeting halls on winter evenings, and to pay for childcare.

Secondly, it was perceived by parents speaking at a number of the meetings that the Seatoun school community, having the financial capacity among its parents to consider buying a building if the Ministry was not able to provide one in time for the start of the next school year, had more choices open to it than the other schools would have if they re-capitated.
Thirdly, people with family backgrounds of higher socio-economic status, such as those in Seatoun, are more likely to already have the education and the appropriate social skills to gain access to information and to take an active part in debates about education.

*Cultural capital*

People were able to participate in this Forum to the degree that their own philosophy, their language and their preferred ways of operating in their everyday lives were congruent with the philosophy, language and operating style evident in the process of the Forum. I include here the familiarity with and acceptance of a free market ideology, and the ability to use its language to promote one's cause, as the parents did at the Seatoun Public Meeting. The frequent use at this meeting of words and phrases such as parents' right to choose, freedom of choice, sell yourself, were reminiscent of the language of the Treasury Brief, and were reflected a few weeks later in the language of the Minister of Education when he gave his decision. I also include being comfortable with the middle class Pakeha processes used in this Forum, the familiarity with the protocol of this type of public meeting, and the confidence to enter a large cold hall full of strangers.

The limitations imposed by the particular processes of this Forum on Maori and Pacific Island people in particular, and also on other groups such as those unemployed and otherwise feeling powerless, were discussed at the Public Meeting at Strathmore Park and at the Seminar at Evans Bay Intermediate School. The interviews with the immigrant parents at Miramar Central School suggested a discomfort with coming out to meetings of this kind.
4.4 Tensions revealed in the processes and outcomes

It is clear that the aims and the policy of Community Forums on Education and the process by which it was intended to be implemented in a community were consistent with democratic community participation, in the sense of the 'strong' democracy of Barber (1984), and in the tradition of the long standing egalitarian ideals of New Zealand's education system. Individual freedom of choice, associated with 'thin' democracy of Hayek (1979), was interwoven with community participation in aspects of the educational restructuring as a whole, and at first these two concepts were spoken of by the policy developers as being fully compatible with each other. Deconstruction of the language used by the participants of the Eastern Suburbs Forum, however, highlights many contrasts between the two concepts in relation both to the process and to the outcome of the Forum.

Processes

It was evident during this Forum that the processes required by the increasingly dominant New Right commitment to individual freedom of choice were very different from those required for the successful implementation of the policy as envisaged by the Picot Report and expected by most of the parents.

* Processes which are co-operative and collaborative

When democratic community participation is dominant, the process will be co-operative and collaborative, with people in schools considering the needs and circumstances of those in other neighbouring schools before they commit themselves to decisions that affect them all. The outcome that is sought is one that is best for the collective good of the wider community, rather than of one
individual school. In contrast, when individual freedom of choice is the over-riding motivation, then the group consulted on such crucial conditions as the terms of reference of the Forum, is limited to those who take the initiative. The benefits to one school are not tempered by considerations such as loss of benefit to others.

Collaborative interactions, sought energetically by some of the schools, such as Evans Bay Intermediate, were found to be difficult to sustain in the face of a competitive approach where a school wanting to increase its market share of pupils would be wary of sharing resources and thus losing its advantage.

Processes favoured by the schools committed to democratic participation were referred to frequently in terms of listening to each other. In contrast, the school wanting to sell its message was perceived by the others as more interested in telling others what it could offer and what it wanted.

Negotiation was a process discussed by staff and parents of Evans Bay Intermediate, Miramar and Strathmore Park School. Give and take and compromise were seen as necessary options. The proponents of the recapitulation of Seatoun school, on the other hand, were clear that they knew exactly what they wanted and when they must have it put in place. It seemed to others that this was an all or nothing approach.

* Processes for sharing knowledge

The process of democratic participation requires that knowledge be shared, with information about professional opinion on educational benefits of different courses of action, about government policy, and about likely provision of resources freely available to all the participants. It is not assumed, as New Right advocates appear to assume, that everyone has equal
access to this information. It is necessary for someone, such as a facilitator, or Forum convener, to be a repository for information and to ensure that it is fairly available to all groups in the community. The information advantage to the benefit of Seatoun school perceived by people in the other schools during this Forum was taken for granted by some Seatoun speakers as the right of those who took the initiative.

Provision of information also takes time. A convener contracted for a period of a few weeks will not have time to work through the collection and equitable dissemination of information. Information considered important by many parents in Strathmore Park related to the circumstances of the other schools. It would take time to go to these people and talk with them, in order to take account of the full scope of interests.

This provision of information as well as the collaborative procedures needed to establish a genuine two-way flow of information between parents and schools or the Ministry, will cost money, for translation into community languages, and for setting up a variety of modes of communication, such as smaller meetings in greater numbers. This expenditure would be in conflict, however, with the intention of the government to cut costs. As well, this role for the convener of being a repository and disseminator of information was seen by the New Right as dangerously powerful.

Outcomes

While the processes of democratic participation are more costly than those of simple individual choice, putting in place the outcomes of those choices is likely to be much more expensive if choice is to be provided. Chubb and Moe (1992) estimate that a fully choice-driven education system, with its probable duplication of resources, will require at least 10% more funding by
government than one in which limited choices are provided. In contrast, the rationalisation of resources which was sought as an outcome by some participants favoured a longer process of community negotiation which may have reduced the costs by consolidating a number of small schools.

One of the outcomes of successful democratic community participation is likely to be a sustained involvement of those parents in the everyday life of the school. Those have had their voice listened to, and who have taken part in two way processes, have experienced real influence and will feel more confident and encouraged to continue in dialogue with the teachers, board or other parents in their school. As Westoby (1990) points out, those who exercise 'choice' rather than 'voice' are more likely to see this as the sum of their involvement and having made their choice, subsequently leave the decision-making to the teachers and board. The results or outcomes of democratic participation, in the sense of being a negotiated position within an ongoing consultative process, are likely to be expected to be reviewed and re-negotiated over time. Some key characteristics of the two ideals of democratic community participation and of choice were talked about by participants in the Eastern Suburbs Forum. A comparison of these concepts, as expressed during the Forum, is offered in Figure 1.

4.5 Conclusions

The inconsistencies between these terms which emerged during the Forum highlight the tensions between the two ideals of democratic community participation and individual freedom of choice, and illustrate the inevitable conflict between 'strong' and 'thin' theories of democracy. As both were intended at the same time to be crucial components of the Community Forum Education policy, and we have seen that the two ideals are incompatible, it is clear why the process and the outcomes of this Forum were so deeply frustrating to so many of the people involved.
The new vine of choice was seen to be growing aggressively stronger during the few months of this Forum, until, in this context, it overpowered and weakened the old tree which represented a democratic egalitarian ideal for New Zealand's education system. Further studies of the implementation of other education policies stemming from the Picot Report will eventually indicate the extent to which the 'strong' democracy of the host tree is or is not proving vigorous enough to resist the epiphyte of 'thin' democracy throughout New Zealand's education system.
Postscript

In the general election of October 1990, which took place one month after the Minister's decision was announced, both the local Labour member of Parliament and the Minister of Education lost their seats, and the Labour Government was overwhelmingly beaten. The following year, 1991, the new National Government passed legislation which abandoned Community Forums on Education. This policy was replaced with one called Educational Development Initiative, which provides some encouragement from the Ministry of Education for groups of schools to discuss restructuring, particularly where this will result in amalgamation of schools, as resource economies. In the two years since this policy was introduced, very few communities have chosen to pursue this path.
Bibliography


Dale, R. (1991) "Regulation Theory, Settlements and Education Policy", in Gordon, L. and Codd, J. (eds) *Education Policy and the Changing Role of the State, Delta Studies in Education Number 1*

Deem, R. "School Governing Bodies - public concerns or private interests?", Paper presented to the international conference on "Accountability and Control in Educational Settings", England, University of Warwick


Hayek, F. A. von (1979) "Whither Democracy?", in F. A. von Hayek, Social Justice, Socialism, and Democracy, Centre For Independent Studies


Appendix One: Schedule of Interviews

### Face to face interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.7.90</td>
<td>Mary O'Regan</td>
<td>Chair of Implementation Working Party and Convener of Eastern Suburbs Community Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.7.90</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.8.90</td>
<td>Mary O'Regan</td>
<td>Deputy Chair, Implementation Working Party and later officer in Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.8.90</td>
<td>Douglas Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.90</td>
<td>Peter Bartley</td>
<td>Chair, Miramar Central School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.90</td>
<td>Colleen Wineera</td>
<td>Chair, Strathmore Park School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.9.90</td>
<td>Neil Sutherland</td>
<td>Principal, Strathmore Park School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.9.90</td>
<td>Eric Baker</td>
<td>Principal, Miramar Central School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.9.90</td>
<td>Mary O'Regan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10.90</td>
<td>Lorraine Allison</td>
<td>Parent Trustee, Miramar Central School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10.90</td>
<td>Eric Baker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Telephone Interviews - Open format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.11.90</td>
<td>Margaret Rosemergy</td>
<td>Member, Picot Taskforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.11.90</td>
<td>Annette Dixon</td>
<td>Chair, Officials' Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.11.90</td>
<td>Marijke Robinson</td>
<td>SSC Officer, Picot Taskforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.11.90</td>
<td>Whetumarama Wereta</td>
<td>Member, Picot Taskforce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Telephone Interviews - set of questions posted beforehand (see Appendix Two)

- November, 90 16 teachers, Miramar Central School
- November, 90 8 Board members, Miramar Central School
- November, 90 20 randomly selected parents, Miramar Central School

The interviews with Mary O'Regan and Judith Manchester were taped and the transcript returned to them for checking. The other interviews were recorded with notes, which were sent to the interviewees for checking.
Appendix Two: Samples of letters sent in connection with interviews

1. Letter sent to teachers at Miramar Central School in preparation for telephone interview

Dear

I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you about the Community Forum on Education which took place in the Eastern Suburbs earlier this year. This Forum is the subject of my research for my MEd thesis.

I will contact you to see if you are willing to talk with me at a time convenient to you, to give your opinions on the following questions:

1. What class do you teach now?
2. Have you ever taught Forms 1 and 2?
3. If so, did you teach in an intermediate or in a full primary school?
4. Did you go to any of the meetings where the re-capitation of the Eastern Suburbs schools was discussed?
5. If not, what was the reason for you not being involved?
6. If you were involved, 
   a. what did you see as your role in the discussion?
   b. did you find the meeting satisfactory for this purpose?
7. What type of school do you think is likely to be best for Form 1 and 2 children? - a 2 year intermediate, full primary, other variation?
8. Has your opinion on this question changed at all during this year?
9. How do you think the decisions on the type of school provided in a district should be made?
10. Who should be involved in these decisions?
11. What do you think should be the role of teachers in these decisions?
12. Do you have any other comments to make on this topic?

If you are willing to be interviewed, I will send you a copy of my notes from our interview so you can check it and I can correct anything you ask me to. Whatever you say will be confidential and will not be identified with your name.

Please telephone me at home 691 707 if you would like to ask me any questions.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your help.
2. Letter sent to members of Miramar Central Board in preparation for telephone interviews.

Dear

Research Study - Community Forum on Education for Form 1 and 2 Education

I would very much appreciate your help with some information for my MEd thesis topic. I have interviewed a random sample of 20 Miramar Central parents, and all of the staff, and I will be happy to share the overall results of those interviews with the Board. Now I would like to ask a few particular questions of the Board members. I will phone you during the next week or so, and ask whether you are able to talk to me on the phone about the questions below. If it suits you better, please phone me, 691 707, or drop me a note at home.

1. Which of the meetings associated with the Forum did you attend?
2. Did you have any other involvement with the process of the Forum?
3. What is your impression of the views of Miramar Central parents on the best kind of school for Form 1 and 2 education?
4. How have you obtained this information about parents' views?
5. Can you comment on the effectiveness of the forum?
   a. for parents to gain information?
   b. for finding out what parents think so that an appropriate decision can be made?
6. How do you think that the final decision should be made about the type of school to be provided in a district?
   a. by the parents of an individual school?
   b. by the community as a whole including all affected schools?
   c. by the Minister of Education (following consultation)
   d. any other way?
7. What type of school do you personally prefer for Form 1 and 2 children in the Eastern Suburbs?
8. Do you think the re-capitation issue will surface again in Miramar?
9. What do you think the Board of Trustees should be doing next about this?
10. How satisfied do you now feel with the process and the outcome of the Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs?

Thank you very much for your time. I will appreciate your help.
3. **Letter sent to a random sample of Miramar Central parents (selected by picking out every tenth family card in the school's file).**

Dear

I am writing to ask for your help in a research study I am doing for my Master of Education degree.

The topic of my study is the Community Forum on Education which took place this year in the Eastern Suburbs. As you may know, this forum was set up to help decide whether Seatoun School should be allowed to keep its Form 1 and 2 children instead of having them go to Evans Bay Intermediate School, and whether other schools in the area, including Miramar Central, should be allowed to do the same.

I am interested in the opinions of parents at Miramar Central about what is the best type of school for their Form 1 and 2 children, and about how decisions on this should be made, and who should be involved.

The staff of Miramar Central have allowed me to use a list of all the families with children at the school. I have selected every tenth name to write to and ask if they would mind taking part in a telephone interview.

I will phone you sometime next week to ask whether you would be willing to talk with me on this topic. I am attaching the questions I would like to discuss with you.

Whatever you say will of course be confidential and any information you give me would not be identified with your name.

I would be most grateful if you are able to help me with my study in this way.

Please telephone me if you want to ask me any questions before you hear from me. My home phone number is 691 707.

**Questions for Parents, Miramar Central School**

1. What classes are your children in now?
2. Are they boys or girls?
3. Did you know that Seatoun School has been allowed to keep its Form 1 and 2 children instead of sending them to Intermediate School?
4. Did you know about the Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs?
5. If yes,
   a. How did you hear about this?
   b. Did you go to any meetings to discuss it?
   c. If you did go to a meeting, did you find out what you wanted to?
   d. Did you have adequate opportunity to give your opinions?

6. If you did not go to any meetings, is there anything that would have encouraged you, or made it easier for you to take part?

7. Did you give your opinion in any other way?

8. What kind of school do you think is likely to be the best for your children in Form 1 and 2? e.g. Intermediate school for Form 1 and 2? Full primary school for juniors to Form 2? Standard 4 to Form 2? Form 1 to Form 4? Form 1 to Form 7? Anything else?

9. Has your opinion on this question changed during this year?

10. How do you think that decisions on the type of school provided in a district should be made?

11. Who do you think should be involved in these decisions?

12. Do you have any other comments to make on this topic?

Thank you very much for your help.

I will send you a copy of my notes from our interview so you can check it and I can correct anything you ask me to.
4.  Letter sent to members of Picot Taskforce after interview

Dear Whetu

Thank you very much indeed for giving me your time this evening to help me with my MEd Policy thesis by talking with me about the origins of the idea of Community Education Forums.

I am enclosing my notes from our discussion. I am aware that I was unfortunately unable to get down everything that you said, but hope I have got the main ideas. Would you mind looking over the notes, and letting me know if there are any mistakes I should correct, or any parts you would prefer not to have quoted? There may be other points that have come to mind since, that you would like to add. If so, please give me a ring - 691 707 - or put the amended version in the post to me. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that it is OK as it is.

I really appreciate your interest and help and I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you. Thanks again.
Appendix Three: Schedule of Meetings Attended and Recorded

21.11.89  Miramar Central Board of Trustees and parents
23.4.90  Wellington East School Principals' Group
23.4.89  Miramar Central Board of Trustees
26.4.90  Evans Bay Intermediate School staff and Peter Neilsen, MP
27.4.90  Miramar Central School Board of Trustees and Peter Neilsen, MP
23.5.90  Forum Public Meeting, Kilbirnie (I was unable to attend - information on meeting was given to me by Helen Shaw, Dennis Thompson, and Neil Sutherland and recorded by me)
23.5.90  Miramar Central Board of Trustees
28.5.90  Miramar Central Board of Trustees and staff
29.5.90  Miramar Central Board of Trustees and Mary O'Regan
30.5.90  Forum Public Meeting, Strathmore Park
31.5.90  Forum Public Meeting, Miramar
6.6.90  Forum Public Meeting, Seatoun
19.6.90  Strathmore Park School Board of Trustees, staff and parents
14.7.90  Seminar organised by Evans Bay Intermediate School Board of Trustees and NZ Educational Administration Society, Wellington Branch
5.9.90  Minister of Education's meeting with invited Boards of Trustees at which he announced his decision
20.9.90  Miramar Central School Board of Trustees, staff and parents.
Appendix Four: Community Forum on Education in the Eastern Suburbs Public Meetings

Questions put to discussion groups by the convenor, Mary O'Regan

1. What is your general view on Forms 1 & 2 education i.e. Do you think it is better for children to be able to stay at primary school for Forms 1 and 2 or do you think they should go to an intermediate school?

2. Discuss your reasons for your answers to question 1.

3. Do you think that Seatoun School should be allowed to keep its pupils on at Seatoun School for Forms 1 and 2 as it wishes to?

4. What are your reasons for answering "yes" or "no" to Question 3?

5. Do you think other primary schools in the Eastern Suburbs should be able to keep their pupils on for Forms 1 and 2 if they decide they want to?

6. Give reasons for your answer to Questions 5 (if different from the reason(s) given in Question 4)

7. If some primary schools in the Eastern Suburbs decided (and were able to) retain their pupils on for Forms 1 and 2, what effect(s) do you think this might have on those primary schools who do not wish to do the same?

8. If several primary schools decided (and were able) to keep their pupils on for Forms 1 and 2, what effect do you think this might have on Evans Bay Intermediate School?

9. Can you think of any solutions to the 'effects' you have identified in response to Questions 7 and 8?

10. Who do you think are the main "stakeholders" (interested parties) in the outcome of this Forum?

11. Do you think all these parties have had/will have the opportunity to participate in the Forum? (bearing in mind that the Convenor is consulting with Boards of Trustees of Schools, Staff who wish to meet with her, teacher unions, and the people who attend the 4 public meetings).

12. What outcome do you think might be in the best interests of those parties who you have identified as being 'left out' of the discussions?