

built on existing institutions rather than on newly-devised school boards."⁴⁴ No community was obliged to form a board but every opportunity should be made to do so. It was hoped that those schools that did not elect to form such a board would do so at a later date after observing the success of established boards.

In Western Australia, a Departmental survey⁴⁵ indicated that there was no felt need for governing bodies in state schools. In Tasmania, the Department of Education is permitting schools that have requested so, to experiment with school councils or boards.⁴⁶

The Composition and Functions of School Boards of Governance in Australia

Below is a summary of the proposals of the respective systems of education for the composition and functions of the governing bodies.

A. Composition

1. Australian Capital Territory⁴⁷

Primary Schools: the principal, one nominee of the authority, two teachers, three from parent groups, two co-opted non-voting members if considered necessary.

Secondary Schools: As above, but two students may be members if the board so desires, and the co-opted members may number three.

The Chairman must be a lay member, and the principal is the chief executive officer. The term of office has not yet been defined, but one year is suggested.

2. South Australia⁴⁸

The principal is the chief executive officer.

Staff representatives:

in a school of > 60 - 0

61-300 - 1

301-600 - 2

< 600 - 3

One representative from each affiliated school organization, one nominee of Parliament, one nominee of local government, co-opted members, and students if desired by the council. Parents must constitute more than one half the members of the council.

The maximum number of members is to be 19.

Half the council retires each year.

3. Victoria⁴⁹

Alternative A - status quo.

Primary Schools: two from the mothers club, 8-12 from any other source elected for four years by the parents.

High Schools: five from parents, not more than 2 from the mothers club, not more than 4 from local government, the District Inspector, up to 5 nominated by the District Inspector, the principal. A maximum of 17 elected for three years.

Technical Schools: two from parents, 2 from mothers club, 2 from local government, members nominated by the Minister, the District Inspector or inspector of technical schools. A maximum of 17 elected for three years.

Alternative B: seven from parents, 5 from teachers, 2 from students, where desired from secondary schools or 2 extra parents in primary schools, up to 3 co-opted members. The principal is executive officer non voting, or with voting rights if elected by teachers.

Alternative C: five from parents, 2 local government nominees, 2 from welfare clubs, members nominated by the Minister of whom the District Inspector may be one. The principal is ex-officio secretary and chief executive officer, but not a member.

Alternative D: any combination of membership which is agreed to by the school council, principal, staff, parents and members of the community.

The survey conducted by the Director-General to determine the preferences for the four alternatives provided preliminary figures in March, 1975⁵⁰ as follows:-

| | School | | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|------|-----------|
| | Primary | Consol. | High | Technical |
| Complete unanimity | | | | |
| for: | | | | |
| Alternative A | 263 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| B | 32 | 1 | 8 | - |
| C | 21 | 1 | 1 | - |
| D | 370 | 13 | 74 | 20 |
| No unanimity | 46 | 1 | 33 | 15 |
| Total replies | 732 | 18 | 117 | 42 |
| Remaining schools | 1038 | 11 | 144 | 76 |

4. New South Wales⁵¹

The principal is the executive officer with the right to vote.

| | Parents | Teachers | Principal | Total |
|-------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-------|
| Class 4 Primary | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 11 |
| High School > 500 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| < 500 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 11 |

The Chairman is not to be a Departmental employee.

The term of office is for one year.

B. Functions

1. Australian Capital Territory

As proposed in the Hughes Report⁵²:-

Determination of broad school policies.

Budgeting and control of funds.

Employment of professional staff.

Employment of non-professional staff.

Maintenance and minor extension of school buildings.

Encouragement of experimentation with curriculum.

As implemented by the A.C.T. Interim Schools Authority in 1974⁵³:-

Determination of policies (aims and objectives) and programmes.

Consulted on staffing arrangements and appointments.

Final appointments are made within the Commonwealth Teaching Service.

Finance: Allocation of funds from government grants and Parents and Citizens' funds. The preparation of a budget.

Building: Awaiting legislation to transfer duties from the Department of Works and the National Capital Development Committee.

2. South Australia⁵⁴

General oversight. Advice on educational matters of the local community. Advice on the needs for accommodation and equipment. Distribution of grants. Formulate a general educational policy. Keep books of account. Other duties delegated by the Minister.

3. Victoria⁵⁵

Responsibility for maintenance and improvements. Control the use of school facilities outside

school hours. Employ ancilliary staff, aides and cleaners. Administer grants. Prepare a list of needs for the Regional Director. Engage teachers for part-time day and evening classes. Administer teacher housing. Determine general educational policy. Appoint a secretary to the council.

4. New South Wales.

As proposed by the Review Panel 1974⁵⁶
 Management of school property and responsible for minor maintenance and improvement of buildings. Management of school finance, budgeting and policies for expenditure of funds.

A representative on an ad hoc Regional Appointments Committee for the appointment of principal. Propose needs for regular non-teaching staff to be employed by the Regional Director. Employment of casual staff outside school hours.

Consideration of the total education programme.

As outlined in Director-General's circular 1975⁵⁷:-

Two main areas; advisory and executive.

(a) Advisory: on educational needs and programme. A forum for discussion. Suggest teaching resources. Advise the Regional Director on needs such as buildings and maintenance.

(b) Executive: co-operative relationship between school and community. Encourage community participation in extra-curricular activities. Manage out of school hours activities. Maintenance of buildings. Administer funds from grants and Parents and Citizens. Other functions authorized by the Minister.

Some Criticisms of the School Board Proposals

The most vocal critics of the proposals have so far been the respective teacher unions. The area of greatest concern has been the threat to the professional status of teachers posed by lay participation on the boards. It is argued that because of their professional training and expertise in educational matters, teachers alone are qualified to make decisions of this nature and therefore as a group should be the only people respon-

sible for the operation of schools.

The New South Wales Teachers' Federation has been very outspoken against the proposals of the Buggie Report. In a paper, The Community and Its Schools and the Education Commission (Resolution of Annual Conference 1974)⁵⁸, Federation policy is stated as follows:-

In line with the Council Resolution of 22.6.74, Conference reaffirms its absolute rejection of the school boards as described in the Buggie Report, and further declares itself opposed in concept to formal decision-making structures for the management of school-community relationships except where such structures arise out of general agreement as to how local school-community needs may best be met.⁵⁹

The Federation argued that the proposals did not deal with community involvement but with the administration of education in New South Wales, in particular changes dealing with the decentralization of administration.

The union arguments are influenced by the fact that an Education Commission, promised by Sir Robert Askin in 1965, has not eventuated. It is claimed that if community involvement is to be properly planned and implemented, it should be done through the Commission removing control from the Public Service Board and Department of Education. The Federation also felt that the proposals were too rigid and final in a situation

where school-community involvement is still in an emergent stage.

Referring to the threat to the profession by the Buggie school boards, Conference reiterated the rights of teachers⁶⁰, the main points of which are listed below:-

1. No teacher's school or work should be subject to decisions by any non-professional body.
2. All teachers are entitled to take an active part in the management and administration of the school.
3. All teachers should be free to teach in any state school in New South Wales without any infringement on professional rights.
4. Promotions or appointments should not be influenced by any non-professional.

Conference emphasized that the establishment of a Buggie school board is a denial of the professional rights of teachers.

In October, 1974 a public meeting⁶¹ was held in the northern suburbs of Sydney called by the District Councils of the local P & C's and Teachers' Associations. At this meeting total support for the concept of community involvement in education was affirmed but complete rejection of both the Willis and Buggie Reports was

carried. The reports were rejected largely on the grounds that school boards are only a minor part of community involvement and as such should not be accepted under this guise. The meeting also endorsed the move to take the control of education away from the Public Service Board and place it under a New South Wales Education Commission.

The Victorian Teachers' Union⁶² has also been vocal in its criticisms of the proposals by the Director-General of Education in Victoria. Their main objection is also related to the apparent down grading of the professional status of teachers. For example, it is absolutely opposed to the council having the power to advise the principal and staff on the general education policy for the school. The V.T.U. believes that the school council should deal only with managerial affairs.

With regard to the revised proposal of the four alternative structures the union has objected to the council being able to advise on educational matters and/or not providing for an education committee. Alternative C is the most favoured one because it provides for a council which has a managerial function only. However the union makes one proviso to this alternative and that is that the power to advise on educational

matters be removed from the council functions. One objection that relates to all proposals is that in many of the delegated powers the phrase "in conjunction with the principal" is omitted. It is union policy that the principal is ultimately responsible for what happens in the school and this omission could lead to a situation where the principal is forced to accept responsibility for activities over which he may have little or no control.

In short the V.T.U. is insisting on:-

Managerial function only for School Council,
 advisory powers only for the Education Committee (on
 which teachers serve),
 evolutionary not revolutionary community involvement.⁶³

Reaction to the initial proposal was also forthcoming from the principals' associations, other teachers' associations and parent groups.⁶⁴

The immediate reaction from all schools and organizations was opposition to the division of the administrative and educational aspects of school management and a request for an extended period of time to discuss the implications of the Departmental paper.⁶⁵

The Minister agreed to this request for extended time and proposed legislation was deferred until agreement was reached on the proposals. At a joint meeting of parent and teacher organizations in March, 1974 a number of points in the proposal were rejected as unaccept-

able. The suggestion that the council be constituted with one third teachers, students and parents was completely unacceptable to principals of high and technical schools. It was argued that this could lead "to domination of the Council by the teacher-student group and to effective control of school policy and funds"⁶⁶, particularly in schools with a majority of radical teachers.

The exclusion of non-parents as voters prohibited interested community members from taking part in council matters. "People who belonged to the town (or school zone) but who had no child at the school at that time would not have a vote in this choice",⁶⁷ i.e. whether the school had a "basic structure" or an alternative one. The possibility of excluding the principal as a voting member, or even complete exclusion, was also unacceptable. Finally, the one year term of office was considered to be too short. "This is far too short a term for a council to plan a building or a garden project, let tenders and see it completed."⁶⁸

Some observations⁶⁹ have also been made on the South Australian school councils. It is felt, now that the council is the body to which the school is responsible, the Education Department can play a more supportive

rather than directive role. However, it is predicted that the professionals will strongly resist lay interference in professional matters and that the lay personnel will grow weary of being excluded from these more meaningful areas. Perhaps a result of this situation could be the development of power groups that will prevent certain issues from being raised at meetings. As protection to his professional status the headmaster may be forced to seek support from his peer group, either formally through the Headmasters' Association or informally.

The question of equality of responsibility by council members has also been raised. "No one, I think, will dispute the inequality in membership status, and its implications for decision-making."⁷⁰ There have been examples where headmasters have acted as disinterested adjudicators failing to become involved in controversial professional matters. In the long run "centralized political control may prove to be far more effective in achieving desired action than the decentralized democratic participation."⁷¹

Staff representatives in some cases are restrained from disagreeing with their organizational superior. There has also been at least one case where

a parent has resigned from council to prevent retaliation by staff members victimizing his child. It has become the general pattern that staff members, rather than lay, will choose the grounds on which discussion on equal footing will take place.

The influence of different socio-economic levels on the operation of councils has also become evident.

In some culturally deprived areas, and in some marginal metropolitan, and rural areas, he (the headmaster) has to enact a solo energiser and stimulator role in an endeavour to overcome strongly embedded conservative tendencies, protective of the status quo of society.⁷²

However, in the more prosperous areas councils are not operating smoothly in some cases. This may be a reflection of dissatisfaction with the school and its administration or the fact that lay membership is made up of academic personnel. Some headmasters have even questioned the need to relay council matters back to staff and parents through formal communication channels.

Criticism⁷³ of the school boards in the Australian Capital Territory are also aimed largely at staffing procedures. The A.C.T. Teachers' Federation will not tolerate the procedures outlined in the Hughes Report. Some teachers see parental involvement in the

selection of staff as a threat to their professional status. The Authority has proposed a modified process whereby a panel is suggested composed of both Federation and Authority representatives, and an occasional representative from the school to which the appointment is to be made. The Federation will not give consideration to this proposal either.

Although this attitude may sound "pig-headed", or designed to disrupt the process of delegation of powers to school boards, there is a sound foundation for this approach. In 1973, before the policy of the Authority on school boards had been released, some boards took the initiative to advertise teaching positions for 1974 and put some applicants through a very rigorous interview. Strong objections to the form the interview had taken were made. These experiences gave the Federation the evidence they needed to show that boards were considered to be inappropriate bodies for staff selection. The board involvement now is only token, having some say but not able to make decisions.

A criticism associated with the staffing procedure is related to the drawing up of a duty statement for the purposes of advertising positions. The theory

behind the school being able to advertise is that the duty statement would conform to the basic philosophy of the school. This meant that in 1973 and early 1974 duty statements that were drawn up by boards necessitated major policy decisions being made before some members had the experience or expertise to do so. A better programme would have been to allow board members to gain experience in decision making in less important areas before gradually passing over the powers of staff selection.

A confrontation between the Authority and the Federation is also developing over the status of delegates on the Authority Council and the school boards. A dichotomy of interests has developed between members as representatives of the Federation on one hand and as a board or council member on the other. This situation is also apparent with the P & C representatives. As a representative of either of these organizations on the Authority Council, a report of the business of the meetings is expected to be forwarded to the union or association. At the Council meetings representatives are also expected to present the views of the organization to which they belong. However, at the school board level members are regarded not as representatives

of organizations but as elected members forming a corporate body managing the business of education at school level. Teachers and parents are not required to report back to the Federation or P & C association. This is where the dispute has arisen with regard to the union.

One important feature that has emerged has confirmed the image that the Australian community does not want to be involved in education. Australian society is content to leave the administration of public services to large state and federal bureaucracies. Experience in the A.C.T. is indicating that community involvement is a myth. In one school only 40 people voted in the board election out of a possible 300 or 400. The use of postal votes has given the best response so far. For example, in another school what is regarded as an exceptionally high number, up to 300, voted in the board election. The Authority intends to examine the election procedures used by this school to try to determine why such a high proportion of potential voters should actually return their voting slips.

The Public Service Board has also clashed with a proposed school board function. It has insisted on

employing secretarial staff and teacher aides so that this function has been denied to the board.

Some school boards are being used as political springboards by some members. On one board two members vigorously fought against the whole concept of local government for schools. Board members have considerable power if used wisely. Another board, dissatisfied with the accommodation in the school, instructed the principal to close the school until the situation was rectified. The principal was free of responsibility to the Authority for it is quite clearly stated in the regulations that the board is responsible for all activities. On another occasion the board chairman actually approached the Minister on behalf of the school. In both cases the board was used as a political lever and the moves were successful. These are examples of making the government accountable to the board and the community.

Relationships between staff and principal have not always been harmonious. Clashes have been recorded and in some cases principals have even tried to ignore the wishes of the board. However, he is officially the executive officer and is obliged to

implement board policy. Some principals of long standing still regard the Authority representatives in the same light as inspectors rather than as members of a democratic team administering school education in Canberra.

Included in the benefits of the board structures has been the invaluable services that specialists, such as accountants, have been able to provide. Staff and parents have also benefited through gaining experience in management and decision making processes. However, some of the community, through ignorance, still fear the development of boards.

The lack of direct control over finances has also been strongly criticized. Funds are still centrally controlled and are only allocated to schools on specific request. Some people had envisaged a lump sum being given to each school at the beginning of the year and the board then allocating this money as they saw fit. This however is not to be so, for the central Authority has kept control of all funds.

A number of small surveys⁷⁴ have been conducted in the A.C.T. to gather information on the operation of the new education system. One⁷⁵ of these was an

attempt to ascertain the type of person who had become involved in the interim boards, and how they perceived their role, both in the present and as the system developed.

The idea for such a survey arose out of a series of meetings in late 1973 and early 1974 at which many participants expressed the feeling that the actual pattern of the school boards that was emerging "was contrary to that which they perceived in the Hughes Report, and which they desired."⁷⁶

The survey was conducted in July with questionnaires being sent to the chairman of all 66 boards. Approximately half were returned for analysis, the results of which were as follows:-⁷⁷

1. Many community organizations find it hard to persuade their members to accept executive office.⁷⁸
2. The profile of the typical board chairman showed him to be male, between the ages of 35 and 44, either an academic or professional administrator earning between \$14,000 and \$17,000 p.a. (1974), he had at least one degree, and had an average of six years experience as a teacher. He is therefore hardly representative of the general community.
3. Principals were older, earning less, and less highly qualified.
4. Teachers were more widely spread in age and sex.
5. Other lay personnel were less widely spread in age, in their early 40's, and were more highly qualified.

It can be argued from this data that boards are hardly representative of the general community.

People in professional and administrative occupations comprise only 24 per cent of the A.C.T. workforce, yet they make up 65 per cent of school board members, whereas sales and clerical occupations with 37 per cent of the workforce contribute only 12 per cent of Board members.⁷⁹

The question is asked whether these non-representative boards can perceive the needs of the whole community any better than the original bureaucratic structure. Also, can part-time professionals be any "more or less efficient, energetic, responsive or responsible than full-time professionals."⁸⁰

The key factor to the success of the boards, it was claimed, is the "real autonomy". Most chairmen felt that little had been achieved in the areas of curriculum, establishing links between school and community, and school policy. However, they did feel that they had played a more significant part than the P. & C. and that their efforts had been worthwhile.

The best aspects of their experience were listed as increased contact between teachers and parents, a spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm, a sense of involvement in their child's future and a sense of power. The worst experiences included lack of communication with the Authority, negative reaction on the part of teachers and principals, feelings of futility and impotence and delays and incompetence by the bureaucracy.

Looking to the future, chairmen felt that boards should have complete control over recurrent expenditure, major control over curriculum, discretion over the appointment of teachers but a major role in the appointment of principals and ancilliary staff. All chairmen "believed that the board should control the use of school facilities by outside bodies, but less strongly that they should be responsible for funds for capital works."⁸¹ Most chairmen were however pessimistic about being given discretion over finance, curriculum and staffing in the future.

This discussion of the respective proposals for school boards in the state systems of education has highlighted the fact that each system has attempted to adapt the basic formula of teacher and parent participation and decentralization of administration to suit local conditions. No proposal for any one system would be completely workable in another. Therefore the first step in drafting a proposal for school boards should be an examination of local conditions, particularly the present administrative structures.

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