

Clarence Beeby, the 'Brains behind the Blackboard'¹



'C E Beeby in an Indonesian classroom examining a student's work', 1973
Alexander Turnbull Library, Reference Number: PA1-0-877-13

¹ Brown, Karen (1992) The brains behind the blackboard, in *Evening Post*, 13 Jun 1992, p.13

Beeby – The Brains behind the Blackboard: A Philosophical Biography

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Abstract

This thesis is a philosophical study of Clarence Beeby, New Zealand's Director of Education from 1940 to 1960, with particular regard to the New Zealand education system. Of particular interest is his vague idea of equality. Many historians consider Beeby to have infused the education system with a strong egalitarian spirit. I argue that Beeby's true contribution was his egalitarian myth which concealed the fundamentally utilitarian system that he bequeathed New Zealand in 1960.

As a young man Beeby was strongly influenced by competitive education, psychology and religion. Meanwhile, the history of the Department of Education reflects a battle between liberal and conservative ideologies. Beeby's Directorship was strongly influenced by both his history and that of the Department. During his first six years in the Department Beeby focused on consolidating his authority and exerting his influence through a series of publications in the name of the Minister. Between 1945 and 1950 Beeby's administration became more authoritarian and paternalistic as he implemented wide sweeping reforms. During the 1950s his philosophy shifted towards egalitarian utilitarianism under more conservative leadership. At this time efficiency strongly influenced his thinking. Beeby's theory of Educational Myths helps to explain how egalitarian reforms did not happen during the rest of the twentieth century. A series of graphs based on ministry data will support the hypothesis that Beeby left the education system in a state of inequality. It is shown that the disparity that minority groups face in the education system today can be traced back at least as far as Beeby's Directorship, showing he failed to fundamentally reorient the education system during his twenty-year Directorship. Overall it is made evident that the traditional assertion that Beeby established New Zealand's egalitarian education system is flawed.

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| AJHR | Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives |
| NEF | New Education Fellowship |
| NZCER | New Zealand Council for Educational Research |
| NZEI | New Zealand Educational Institute |
| NZG | New Zealand Gazette |
| NZJES | New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies |
| PD | Parliamentary Debates |
| PPTA | Post-Primary Teacher Association |
| WEA | Workers Educational Society |

SECTION I
STARTING UP: ‘A *HAPPY KNACK OF BEING IN THE RIGHT PLACE*
AT THE RIGHT TIME’

CHAPTER 1

I have a few ideas on education, but I am no scholar. I have always suspected that my success in life has been in large part due to a happy knack of being in the right place at the right time

(Beeby, letter to Lionel Elvin, 7 June 1981)²

1.1 Thesis Overview

This thesis examines the philosophical ideas underlying New Zealand’s education system via an analysis of the writings on educational philosophy by Clarence Beeby. I will argue that the philosophical underpinnings of the New Zealand educational system in the 19th and 20th centuries persistently consisted primarily of liberal and utilitarian ideas. I will consider Beeby’s influence on the New Zealand education system, through a study of his contemporary and later writings. I will also challenge the view that the New Zealand education system is historically profoundly egalitarian. In doing so, I will explain why the broad egalitarian reforms of the early 20th century were fragile and able to be extensively dismantled by the late 1980s. I argue that while Beeby’s reforms significantly changed the policies determining what can be called the ‘superstructure’ of the education system, he nevertheless maintained and reinforced the underlying philosophical foundation. I also apply the lessons of this historical and philosophical analysis to current debate about educational policy to show that not only was Beeby’s contribution to education not fundamentally egalitarian but that his influence is still present. I overall argue that an obsession with the ‘instruments’ of education (e.g. curriculum, assessment systems and qualifications) has drawn the education system towards a utilitarian outcome-oriented approach and away from one that can address the inequality in education in terms outside of those instruments. That is, not all education problems can be addressed within the walls of the classroom.

Throughout the thesis I drew upon the four disciplines of education, history, philosophy and sociology. The use of historical and biographical methods in this philosophical enquiry is based on the idea that the former can inform and assist the latter. The historical enquiry will provide a framework of events, arguments, and policy decisions before and during, and after Beeby’s time as Director of Education. The

² All quotations in this thesis retain their original formatting unless otherwise noted.

biographical study situates Beeby as author of the pseudo-egalitarian reforms of the mid-20th century, and examines his philosophical development and his philosophical strengths and weaknesses. This paves the way for a philosophical assessment of his ideas, assumptions, reforms and style of leadership.

Beeby has been the intense study of few other authors. Besides his biography³, the last recorded thesis written on Beeby was Tom Prebble in 1970.⁴ Prebble focused on Beeby's approach to educational planning and strategy during the 1940s. Unlike Prebble I will be focusing more broadly on the way that the educational environment shaped and was shaped by Beeby throughout the twentieth century.

In presenting an alternative analysis of Beeby's influence on the New Zealand education system, it is necessary to situate him in his social and educational context. This context includes the reforms throughout the 20th century of the curriculum, qualifications, and methods of assessment. A considerable amount of research already exists on these reforms;⁵ I will be adding to this body of work by focusing on the assumptions underlying reforms throughout this period and the ways he reshaped the Directorship and Department of Education.

I instead present an interpretation of history to help explain his successes and failures in educational reform. I apply this analysis to Beeby and his Department, and will reflect on the historical periods either side of the Beeby era. I show that Beeby's directorship was significantly influenced by both his background and the background of the Department.

In order to put Beeby's administration and his educational thinking into perspective, I consider his style of leadership over his twenty years and a range of significant reform that he undertook. I assess the impact that Beeby's overtly psychological perspective had on his approach to education—such as his faith in the standard distribution curves. While Beeby was pragmatic and eminently practical, as well as an intelligent and competent administrator, his restrained engagement with the justification for, and implications of, what he later called the 'myth' of 'equality of opportunity' nevertheless frustrated his egalitarian 'reorientation' of the system.

³ Alcorn, Noeline (1999) *To the Fullest Extent of His Powers. C.E. Beeby's Life in Education*. Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press.

⁴ Prebble, 1970, *Strategies of Change: A Study on Some Aspects of New Zealand Education during the first half of Directorship of Dr C.E. Beeby, 1940-1950*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Auckland.

⁵ See, for example, Beeby, 1986; Alcorn, 1999.

In the thirty years after Beeby's directorship his reforms were gradually challenged, and undermined, by successive governments and ministers of education. However, contrary to Beeby's intentions, the underlying liberal utilitarian educational philosophy that was woven closely into New Zealand's educational system remained influential. Key weaknesses in Beeby's philosophical repertoire were his relatively limited understanding of egalitarianism, and his philosophically impoverished method—as evidenced by his own later philosophical attempts to reinterpret his educational reforms in terms of what he called educational 'myths'.

Beeby's limited philosophical background ensured that his (and other) egalitarian reforms of the education system remained poorly rooted and lacking in explicit and cogent justification. Attacks on his reforms during the 1960s up until the 1980s, which resembled earlier pre-Beeby criticisms of the education system, gradually undermined the justification for his reforms. Once the justification was weakened, the way was open for his reforms to be dismantled wholesale in the neo-liberal-inspired legislation of 1987–1993. These reforms were introduced by both Labour (a historically centre-left party) and National (a historically centre-right party) governments.

Throughout this thesis I will primarily use 'education' and 'educational system' to refer to the process of formal education in New Zealand and to educative artefacts, such as the curriculum and assessment system which accompany schooling. This stands in contrast to what D.F. Swift calls 'the very broadest sense' of education, which is 'the way that individual acquires the many physical, moral, and social capacities demanded of him by the group in which he is born and within which he must function'.⁶

Chapter Review

This thesis consists of eight more chapters. Chapter 2 is a biography of Beeby that focuses on how key events in his life shaped his career as Director. I argue that Beeby's upbringing and educational background fundamentally shaped how he viewed education and equality, and in particular how his beliefs and experiences would go on to shape the type of Director he would become. I argue that after developing a competitive spirit early on in life, his view on education was distinctly shaped by his religious and psychological experiences in the period before he became Director.

⁶ Swift, D.F. (1968), p. 8.

Chapter 3 provides the historical context of the Department of Education prior to Beeby's arrival. It is an examination of the politically influential ideas in the philosophy of education in New Zealand from 1877 up to the period just before Beeby's Directorship. It does so through a study of the previous Directors of Education. I will demonstrate that many of Beeby's reforms are modified perpetuations of policies of previous Directors rather than a fundamental reorientation of the education system.

Chapter 4 considers Beeby's first six years at the Department of Education. I argue that during this period he established himself as an influential Director willing to work hard to achieve his desired goals. I discuss his willingness to use publications to ensure his beliefs were influential on the shape of the education system. I consider at length the famous 1939 Statement, usually attributed to Peter Fraser, to demonstrate Beeby's underlying belief about the nature of equality of opportunity. By considering the major ideas and policy changes during his tenure, I argue that Beeby functioned as more of a highly competent administrative architect than a pioneer of educational policy.

Chapter 5 examines the period of 1945-1950. During this time Beeby oversaw a significant expansion of the education system. I argue that his authoritarian paternalism reshaped the Department into a larger, more centralised organisation. I discuss how he viewed education through the lens of the needs of the state and how that affected a range of reforms. I consider his firm self-confidence, and his strong interest in moulding students' character.

Chapter 6 analyses the period of 1951-1960. I argue that Beeby's flexible ideology enabled him to keep successfully working under a new government. I show that during this period his psychological background and belief in an efficient education system led to an increased emphasis on vocationalism, technical education and qualifications. I also reflect on his contentious relationship with both teachers and the University of New Zealand.

Chapter 7 is a concise consideration of Beeby's Theory of Educational Myths. I discuss the nature and history of his Theory, and reflect on how Beeby's criterion for a Myth has subtly altered over time. I conclude with a discourse on how Beeby's theory can be applied to explain why the second half of the twentieth century did not experience fundamental egalitarian reform.

Chapter 8 reflects on the half century of reforms that have followed Beeby's Directorship. I argue that the majority of these reforms can be understood through the lens of a reaction to either actual or perceived Beebyism. I show that Beebyism has continued to shape New Zealand's education system even though many of his reforms have been replaced. I consider both liberal and conservative attacks on Beebyism that helped create the 'educational crises' which led to the 1987 utilitarian resurgence.

Chapter 9 analyses achievement data from the Ministry of Education. I use a large number of graphs to show how educational inequality typically associated with the 1980s and 1990s is better located in the 1960s. The graphs will show that inequality, according to both sex and ethnic group, was one of the Beeby's legacies, rather than an egalitarian education system.

Philosophical Tensions

I chose Beeby as a subject of biographical study because of his importance to, and influence over, the philosophy of education in New Zealand. However, this thesis is not a work of (philosophy of) education in a conventional sense. Rather, it was a philosophical reflection on the influences on and of Beeby given his strong emphasis on 'equality of education'. I was also interested in how the philosophical debates between liberty, efficiency and equality are represented in New Zealand's educational history.

I propose that changes and tensions in educational philosophy can be viewed through the lens of three broad philosophical theories. Utilitarianism, Liberalism, and Egalitarianism dominate discussions on a wide range of social and economic topics due to the respective issues of efficiency, freedom, and equality even if not couched in those exact terms. Wilkinson called these tensions a *trilemma*, explaining:

[T]hese debates produce ... a trilemma, where one cannot simultaneously have all three values.⁷

Beeby himself was also concerned, particularly in later life, about the tensions between efficiency/excellence, equality/equity and choice/liberty. He reflected in 1982:

We postponed the moment of irrevocable choice between courses for as long as possible in the interests of equity. ... It is almost too obvious to add that the tensions between equity and excellence, and between private and public good, have their roots in a competitive and acquisitive society. ... Would there be a danger of sacrificing equity in our attempts to give every individual the chance to be excellent in his own chosen way? ... I can't be of much use ... [as] I don't know the answers in my own country ... I don't think any of us will make much progress with the reluctant learners at the bottom end of the scholastic scale until we have a

⁷ Wilkinson, 2000, p. 69. See Wilkinson's Chapter 6 for a detailed attempt to address this conflict.

better intellectual grasp of the conditions that led us into this equity-excellence impasse, and of the principles that might lead us out of it.⁸

Beeby's 'equity-excellence impasse' is just one aspect of the tensions between these three influential philosophical theories. (Obviously these are not the only philosophical theories but I propose that these can be considered the three major ones given their recurring presence within the discourse on education.)

In this thesis I will be analysing the major changes of educational policy by the Department of Education in terms of liberty, utility and equality. In the current debate over education, educationalists arguing that education should promote equality are regularly in conflict with those saying education should be more efficient or should promote individual choice. Moving towards one type of goal is to essentially move away from one or both other goals.

There are of course, not one but many types of Liberalism, Utilitarianism, and Egalitarianism—each greatly varying in kind and degree (e.g. John Rawls' 'democratic equality' and 'difference principle'⁹). A comparison between the different types is well beyond the scope for this thesis. However, as they do each have a very wide range of meanings some broad, basic definitions are necessary. By an egalitarian policy I mean one that promotes an increase in equality of some kind. The same for utilitarian policy and efficiency, and liberal policy and freedom. (There is of course a considerable range of possibilities as to what is being promoted, how it should be promoted, and how success can be identified.) In the following chapters I will discuss a range of policy changes using these and related terms such as authoritarianism versus freedom, paternalism versus choice, and centralisation vs efficiency.

Finally, it should be noted that conflict between these theories is not always guaranteed. For example, utilitarian theorists could adopt egalitarian models of distribution in order to maximise utility, or liberal theorists can use utilitarian strategies if the utility aimed for is liberty. Governments or administrators can thus combine aspects of two theories in developing or implementing policy. (For example, modern Neo-liberalism usually combined aspects of liberalism and utilitarianism—a call for freedom mixed with a demand for economic efficiency.) However, I propose that this observation can confuse coincidence with coherence—they are a conceptual marriage of convenience up until the two theories begin to conflict. Conjoint theories usually take

⁸ Letter, Beeby to Theodore Sizer, 10 March 1982.

⁹ See, for example, Rawls 1999a, 1999b, 2001 and 2005.

the form of a stable means-to-ends relationship or as an unstable multi-headed hydra with multiple goals in conflict with itself. I discuss conjoint theories and Beeby further at the beginning of Chapter 6.

1.3 Thesis Methodology: Philosophical Biography

A biography is customarily considered an account of someone's life and as a literary genre in its own right. As Robert Miller describes, biographical research is that which collects and analyses a person's life, or part thereof, through interviews or personal documents.¹⁰ A *philosophical* biography might well just be a subgenre of biography, focusing on the philosophical aspects of a person's life.

However, the exact scope and nature of a *philosophical biography* is in fact contested. As Irina Polyakova explains, '[t]he genre scopes of philosophical biography have remained an object of debates to this day'.¹¹ One core issue is whether a *philosophical biography* is in fact rightly a subgenre of biography, a subgenre of philosophy, or something more transdisciplinary—incorporating philosophical insights into biographical research. Another major issue is whether other assumptions arise using this methodology, such as whether this method attributes extra importance to philosophy itself. For instance, Ray Monk wrote:

to regard someone [as a subject of philosophical biography is] to see them as someone whose thought – whether expressed in poetry, music, painting, fiction or works on philosophy – is important and interesting to understand.¹²

Monk is incorrect to necessarily assume that selecting someone as a subject automatically imparts importance or interestingness. Instead I would argue that it is important and interesting people who tend to be the subject of biographies, such as in the case of this thesis with Beeby. Nevertheless, given the extensive biography of Beeby by Alcorn I will not be engaging in primarily historical biography.

For the purposes of this thesis I am adopting the concept of philosophical biography as a nuanced version of biography where the account is focused on the (philosophical) ideas held by the person over their lifetime. In this regard I am focusing on a series of key ideas, in word or action, somewhat in isolation from other events occurring in his life unless directly relevant. Just as Beeby himself wrote his *Biography of an Idea*, I am writing a (philosophical) biography of the interwoven spectrum of

¹⁰ Miller, 2003, pp. 15-17.

¹¹ Polyakova, 2012, 15.

¹² Monk, 2001, p. 3.

Beeby's ideas and how they influenced the policies he implemented. This will include looking at the influences on pre-Director Beeby, on the pre-Beeby Directorship, and the result when these came together between 1940 and 1960.

Research Methods and Methodology

I began this thesis by researching the influence of Beeby on the modern education system. Overall I have engaged in basic research rather than applied research to avoid having to identify and justify problems in education. I originally intended to have a much stronger focus on contemporary reflections so I spent several years visiting a range of schools across New Zealand, surveying a range of students, and engaging in a series of structured and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Thus my initial intent was to collect a range of qualitative and quantitative data to provide a coherent base for the analysis of historical documents by focusing on the views of the stakeholders of education.¹³ However, I concluded that a present-centred bias was insufficient for an analysis of Beeby. The results of the prior ethnographic research was abandoned except for the observations about philosophical tensions that both students and teachers were raising. I reoriented my thesis towards historical research of primary sources and Beeby himself directly. I thus adopted the *Philosophical Biography* approach, using both a chronological and thematic approach to explore the period before, during and afterwards. I used secondary sources to establish key tensions at the middle of the twentieth century, during Beeby's Directorship, and in modern educational philosophy to provide an overall framework.

It became apparent to me that many modern philosophical issues can be traced back over the past century. However, it was not clear exactly how or when they arose or who or what shifted the debate. Rather than engaging in a problem-oriented research that may have anchored my analysis to the present, I decided to ground my research in reflective analysis. That is, I would do a broad survey of primary sources, reflect on modern interpretations and develop my own analysis that challenges prevailing assumptions. To avoid causal contamination between social and individual influences on his Directorship, I decided it was important to separate Beeby's history from that of the Department of Education. Thus I researched the rise of both the Department and Beeby to understand their respective backgrounds up to the point they coalesced.

¹³ See Pring, R. (2014) for a discussion on the false dualism between qualitative and quantitative research and of the philosophical issues involved in conducting educational research.

I then developed the three core chapters focused on Beeby's Directorship. I aimed to discuss both overall themes against the chronological development of his Directorship but I needed some way to meaningfully divide it up. Given the importance of contemporary events, I decided to divide his Directorship into three periods as defined against the prevailing socio-political context: the economic travail up to the end of the war (up to 1945), the social investment during the rest of the Labour government (1946 to 1950), and the following conservative reaction across the political spectrum (1951-1960). I used primary sources to structure thematic development between and within each broad period. I identified a core theme of authoritarianism and paternalism against the wider theme of equality versus efficiency. I designed other subsections on that broad framework. In each case I sorted my sources both thematically and chronologically, and alternated between the two sorting methods to ensure an analytical balance. I only briefly consider peripheral social, economic, and political events so as to focus on Beeby, and because these have been covered in great detail in the literature.

At the conclusion of these chapters I felt it important to explain some of Beeby's direct theoretical contributions to the field of education. I focused on his theory of 'educational myths' and used a critique of it to further identify general themes in his Directorship. I also then adapted it to apply to Beeby's reshaping of education as a way to understand both the longevity of his influence and its apparent departure.

Finally, I wanted to broadly link the Beeby analysis to the modern debate. However, I was concerned that it is near impossible to make causal links over a fifty-year period. Instead, I decided to investigate post-Beebian trends, while acknowledging his influence was diluted over time. To cover changes in the post-Beebian period without losing the focus on Beeby, I reinterpreted the post-1960 period through the lens of changes or modifications to his Directorship.

I also investigated, catalogued and graphed the available achievement results of students, as throughout my research I discovered sources having only done partial summaries and analyses. I then sorted, separated and analysed the results according to year, qualification, sex and ethnicity to facilitate a series of graphs to show the general trends using basic quantitative methods. I combined this with modern sources to provide a reflection on the contemporary state of education, such as ongoing issues with NCEA.

Throughout this thesis I used reflection and comparative document analysis as the main method alongside the chronological and thematic analysis. Bryman explained both that document analysis is important in triangulation processes to draw out

meaning.¹⁴ I used a breadth of document sources, specifically: Public record, media sources (primarily newspaper articles), biographies, and Beeby's own private papers.

However, I have generally not sought to do a longitudinal analysis of the sources themselves. I am using Beeby's writings at the time and reflections afterwards as the primary sources to guide my analysis. I have not sought to homogenize Beeby's reflections at the time and decades afterwards; my focus is on his writings and actions at the time in part due to the problem of bias in autobiographical reflection. Similarly, I have not sought to address common concerns in the broader philosophy of education.

This thesis is primarily informed by Beeby's thoughts as expressed in his published and unpublished writings, and only secondarily by the facts of his life. I use other primary sources to moderate his biases, and I am relying on thematic cohesion to aid in my analysis. I thus adopt a vagueness tolerant methodology to identify key issues and themes within an overall analytical framework of the three competing philosophical theories described above. Nevertheless, to ensure the analysis is defensible, I have grounded most of it in Beeby's own writings.

The Primary Source

A habitual typist, Beeby kept a copy of almost everything he wrote. Some of his most telling remarks about education were made after he left the Directorship and was no longer in public view. From that time, Beeby generally refrained from commenting publicly on changes in educational policy, but he nevertheless commented copiously in his personal correspondence. In addition, there is a wealth of other archival material, including seminar notes, speech notes, and government reports.

An extensive collection of Beeby's correspondence and personal records are held by the Alexander Turnbull Library Collection in the New Zealand National Archives.¹⁵ This material offers invaluable insight into his thinking at the time. During my research I flew to the Archives four times and spent nearly three months reading over a thousand separate documents. I did so to immerse myself into Beeby's frame of mind and to identify key quotes that both summarised and represented his views.

I quote extensively from Beeby's published and unpublished writings, in particular when he was the Director of Education. For example, the annual reports in the AJHR are a concise summary of the activities of each of the government's departments

¹⁴ Bryman, 2001.

¹⁵ See <https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/a-z/alexander-turnbull-library-collections>

to every Member of Parliament. The Director of Education is responsible for the Education report, containing details of all aspects of education occurring in the country, which the Minister of Education then approves, signs, and presents to parliament. The AJHR thus provides an annually published record of the developing views of the Minister, Director, and the Inspectors of Education. Beeby explained:

The first section of the report, (E.1.), was an extensive report by the Inspector General of Education covering the administration in the year to date. This section was written by officers of the Department and signed by the minister and represented the ‘official voice’ of the Department. The second section of the report, E.2, contained the reports of the individual Chief Inspectors... [T]he E.2. did not speak for the Department and represented divergent views, which in many instances came close to running counter to government policies.¹⁶

So although signed by the Minister, the ‘E1’ was ultimately supplied by the Director and functions as a statement of his¹⁷ views. In later E1s, Beeby even wrote extensive addendums explaining what he considered to be an important issue in education that needed to be better addressed by the government. Another key source for his later reflections on his period in the Department is his intellectual autobiography *A Biography of an Idea*, in which he reflects on the development of his thinking concerning educational equality.

The use of this data is not without its limitations. Researchers are always at risk of importing their own biases when interpreting material. To this end I have chosen to directly quote Beeby wherever possible. Furthermore, there is also the risk of presenting such quotes ‘in a vacuum’¹⁸; that is, outside the wider social and political environment. To address this risk, I have used a wide range of sources and will quote extensively from education reports in the AJHR and other contemporaneous reports, in order to set Beeby’s material in context.

My thesis thus reflects on the pre-, mid- and post-Beebian era in these terms, albeit only in a wide sense given the interwoven history of the above philosophical theories. Few, if any, educational systems are based on a single philosophy theory. Hybrid systems of education arise from regular political compromises within governments, and between governments and external organizations. These compromises often reflect global trends, and directly influence educational priorities, funding, and the process of policy formation. Similar sentiments regarding a lifetime of influences can be made for educational administrators as well, as I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁶ Beeby, letter to David McKenzie, 19 October 1985.

¹⁷ All of New Zealand’s Directors of Education were men.

¹⁸ Cohen and Manion (1994), p. 55.

CHAPTER 2

BEEBY: THE MAKING OF A DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2.1 Overview

Clarence Edward Beeby was New Zealand's Director of Education from 1940 to 1960. The educational reforms during Beeby's administration made him a renowned, and occasionally infamous, figure during and shortly after his lifetime.¹⁹

Beeby died 10th March 1998, but his influence on the New Zealand education system died a decade earlier, during the reforms of the Fourth Labour Government. Although he is regularly referenced in educational analyses during the 1980s and 1990s, twenty-five years after Labour's reforms Beeby has now largely faded from memory. Although a bronze bust of his head rests on the front desk of the Ministry of Education, and he is mentioned from time to time by educationalists—usually in reference to his and Peter Fraser's famous 'government's objective' statement of 1939—he has become broadly unknown.

In several ways Beeby's life reflects New Zealand's own history. Like many early New Zealanders he emigrated from England with his family, to make a new beginning away from poverty and the class barriers in England. From his mother he learnt he had to compete with others in school and life.²⁰ Throughout his early life it can be seen that coherent themes of competition, meritocracy, and committing oneself to a greater purpose emerge. Practical and pragmatic in his early years, he became taken with ideas from overseas in early adulthood. Contact with progressive educational thinking would then shape his career both in New Zealand and subsequently overseas.

2.2 Early Life: Competing for the Tin Train

Born on 16 June 1902 in Leeds, Beeby was young when his working-class family migrated to New Zealand in 1906.²¹ He later recalled:

Christchurch, as I remember it early in the century, has something of the character of a market town, of a Fielding or a Waimate, with cathedral and university added. Wednesday was Sale Day, when the country came to town. Farmers and their sturdy wives invaded the streets, and it was not until late afternoon when they departed by train or gig, Model-T or capricious Sunbeam, that we emerged to re-take our city. Or so it seemed to a child. There were many Christchurch families

¹⁹ See Alcorn, 1999, for an extensive biography of Beeby's life and administration.

²⁰ McKenzie, 1982, p. 129.

²¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 3.

who straddled town and country, one foot in the city office, court, or classroom and the other in the family home on a farmlet on the outskirts.²²

Beeby was a member of one of those ‘straddling’ families; his father worked in town as a ‘manufacturing chemist’ (or pharmacist²³) and the family lived in New Brighton, a mile from the Christchurch boundary, on ‘the edge of a wilderness’.²⁴ His mother had worked as a pupil-teacher before taking up upholstery, giving her the time to provide practical assistance and guidance to her family.²⁵

Beeby started school in 1906, at Christchurch East School, before transferring to New Brighton School.²⁶ The young Beeby already had some idea of what he wanted his education to provide:

I knew exactly what I wanted from it. I wanted to learn to read so that I could consume Grimm’s Fairy Tales in great gulps instead of having them doled out to me, one story each bedtime, by my mother, Alice, or my older brother, Bernard. There was nothing else I asked of school.²⁷

However, Beeby soon found himself in, what he called, a rat-race:

[T]he educational rat race began in the primers, and intensified throughout the school till it came to its climax in the Proficiency examination. ... Helping another child, except under specific instruction, was regarded as a form of cheating, the most heinous of sins.²⁸

His simple, outcomes-orientated view of school was made even more complicated when he received a blue tin train with red wheels²⁹ as a prize for good conduct:

I discovered that education was also about beating other people and ‘coming top’. I had discovered the joy of competition, I was in the rat-race, and did not completely escape from it until thirty-one years later when I became director of education; there was no further to run and the only possible ambition was to make a decent job of what I was doing.³⁰

For Beeby, escaping from the ‘rat race’ did not mean escaping from the ‘joy of competition’. It was an educational focus that he retained throughout his life:

My idea of education took even longer to recover from the tin train and the school prizes that followed it. Even yet, it contains an awkward element of competitiveness that refuses to be left out of any concept of schooling, authoritarian or liberal. ... Anyone knowing my brief history and the nature of schools in 1909 could have foretold what the tin train would do to my idea of

²² Beeby, introduction to Somerset, 1974, p. xi.

²³ McKenzie, 1982, p. 129.

²⁴ Beeby, 1992, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ Alcorn, 1999, p. 17.

²⁶ Alcorn, p. 18.

²⁷ Beeby, 1992, pp. 3-4.

²⁸ Beeby, 1974, p. 17.

²⁹ Alcorn, 1999, p. 19.

³⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 2.

education. From then on, it embraced two purposes: learning to read and coming top, or as near to it as hard work would bring me.³¹

Thus from his initial experience of beating everyone else at passively ‘sitting still and never speaking’³², he developed a bookishness³³ alongside a competitiveness that remained in his future ‘authoritarian or liberal’ concept of schooling. Alcorn explains that Beeby

realised the importance of success, of beating other people. It was a lesson in competitiveness that he learned well.³⁴

This emphasis on competitive success motivated Beeby through the rest of his education. He finished as dux of his school in 1914, and, in 1915, he was enrolled in the highly selective Christchurch Boys’ High School, whose selectivity helped reinforce Christchurch’s prevailing class structures.³⁵ Here, after an examination in English and arithmetic, he was placed in 3A, the highest-ability stream.³⁶ The presence of academic streaming further shaped the teenage Beeby:

Everything in the school programme intensified my idea that education was a highly competitive business. ... I found myself in form 3A,³⁷ and it had to be explained to me ... that we were an academic elite who would have the best of the teachers, and that the rest tailed off progressively to form 3D. I had never heard of ability streaming but it fitted neatly into my idea of education.³⁸

Beeby was taught the ‘traditional academic course of English, Latin, French, Mathematics and Science’.³⁹ His lack of interest and size discouraged him from taking up sport, and so instead he got involved in debating while also developing a love of English literature. His exposure to careful analysis and demarcation in Biology instilled a fierce editorial spirit, which he retained throughout the rest of his life.⁴⁰

During his first high school years, Beeby’s early ideas about competitiveness in education were reinforced yet he also realised that learning can have intrinsic value:

Our form-master in forms 3A and 4A was R M (‘Puppy’) Laing ... [who] gave me a new idea of education. ... I began to value learning for itself and not as a means for coming top and gaining approval. ...

³¹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 2, 4

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1; Alcorn, 1999, p. 19.

³³ McKenzie, 1982, p. 129.

³⁴ Alcorn, 1999, p. 19.

³⁵ McKenzie, 1982, p. 129.

³⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 20.

³⁷ For most of the 20th century, the fifth and sixth years of schooling in New Zealand were interchangeably known either as standard 5 and 6, or as form 1 and 2, depending on the school attended. This meant that the ‘first year’ in many high schools was form 3.

³⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 2.

³⁹ Alcorn, 1999, p.21.

⁴⁰ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 21-23.

With all my new-found love of knowledge for its own sake, I still made sure I won the prize in physics at the end of the year. ...

Laing taught English as well as science to forms 3A and 4A ... and he had a method of motivating [students] that now seems to me strange in so humane a man. The class was seated in strict pecking order. A question in grammar could be thrown at anyone. If he failed to answer it, the boy after him took up the challenge, then the next boy, and the next. The first boy to answer correctly took up his books and moved into the seat of the first to have failed; everyone in between them moved down a place ...

I was always near the top, and the procedure ... only strengthened my belief that education was a competitive business, where the prizes went to the deserving; I won the English prize in Laing's form 4A. It was the epitome of the education system as a whole, the very model of meritocracy.⁴¹

This 'model of meritocracy' dominated from the beginning of his primary schooling to the end of his secondary schooling. Alcorn notes that at 'school, as later in his tertiary study, Beeby was an achiever.⁴² All students competed for educational opportunity through a series of direct assessments:

When I entered school, some children were dropping out at standard 4, after failing repeatedly in lower classes. Selection at the end of primary school was done by the old Proficiency examination⁴³, though many of those who passed it couldn't afford to go to secondary. The dread 'Matric'⁴⁴ did the hatchet job at the end of the secondary school. Both examinations were, in effect, competitive for the limited number of places in the next higher institution. So selection for some meant inevitable failure for others. Failure was built into the system, which couldn't have worked without it. ... The system was interested only in the successes; and failures just faded off the educational screen.⁴⁵

Beeby said later that the dominant 'myth' at this time was 'survival of the fittest'. Beeby's theory of educational myths is discussed in Chapter 7.

During his final year of school, Beeby continued to wholeheartedly endorse this 'model of meritocracy'. Meanwhile, Methodism 'ceased to be an overt influence ... as science and rationalism apparently triumphed'⁴⁶ Beeby states that he came to care little about the meritocratic model's potential negative impact on the less successful students:

The year in the middle sixth [form], with its freedom to read what I liked without ulterior purpose, gave me a first glimpse—and my last for five years—of what an intellectual life could mean if it were not constantly tuned to external examinations set by a person or persons unknown. Yet I had no wish to see external examinations abolished. Why should I? They had served me well in the past and, by then, I had reason to believe they would do the same in the future. It was my kind of world, and I knew how to live in it ... I chose my friends from boys of like mind, and we knew little, and cared less, about the unfortunates in other forms

⁴¹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 19-22.

⁴² Alcorn, 1999, p. 24.

⁴³ Abolished in 1936 by Peter Fraser while Minister of Education.

⁴⁴ Short for Matriculation (later renamed 'University Entrance').

⁴⁵ Beeby, Shelley Forum Talk notes, 1986, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 24.

whose lives might be distorted by the examinations that we enjoyed, at least in retrospect.⁴⁷

The use of examinations to sort students persisted in the education system throughout the period of Beeby's directorship.

The 'model of meritocracy' not unnaturally produced students trained in competition rather than cooperation, and Beeby emerged from school a 'confirmed individualist':

I was successful at the things I thought a school was for, and did not attempt the things in which I had no interest. ...

From the school's point of view I was a success academically but a failure as an all-rounder ...

Team spirit was taught on the playing field and frowned on in the classroom, where co-operation was regarded as either chatter or cheating, one a venial and the other a moral sin. ... I finished school as a confirmed individualist, better trained in beating others than in working with them.⁴⁸

In later life Beeby complained about the narrowness of his secondary school curriculum:

I feel that half of me was pretty well educated, and the other half completely neglected. I have a theory that the only reason educated teachers could have so badly neglected the arts was because our boys secondary schools were based on the English public schools where the staffs assumed that books, pictures, music and intelligent conversation on current affairs were a natural part of every boys' background, so that the school merely had to teach the Latin grammar and mathematic that the homes were unlikely to teach.⁴⁹

Under Beeby, a wide core curriculum, compulsory for all schools until the fourth form, was introduced in 1945, in response to the Beeby-influenced 1944 'Thomas Report' on the post-primary curriculum.

Beeby left school at the end of 1919 and enrolled at Canterbury University College⁵⁰ in 1920 to study Law:

For doing Law you had to take certain subjects, including either English or Philosophy, so I chose Philosphy [sic]. ...

I found the Law extraordinarily badly taught. There was no faculty of Law. ... I became interested for the first time in the Philosophy and the whole world of abstract ideas and [sic] through Jurisprudence.⁵¹

While a student at the Canterbury College, Beeby enrolled in the following undergraduate subjects and gained the following results:⁵²

⁴⁷ Beeby, 1992, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Letter, Beeby to Walter Harris, 9 July 1985.

⁵⁰ At this time, all universities in New Zealand were parts of (colleges of) the University of New Zealand.

⁵¹ Beeby, 1991, p. 1.

⁵² Personal Correspondence from Ministry of Education.

| | | |
|------------------|--|----------------|
| Bachelor of Arts | | |
| 1920 | Latin | 64/70 |
| | Mental and Moral Philosophy | 60/70 |
| | Constitutional History and Jurisprudence | 62/64 |
| 1921 | Economics | 66/76 |
| | Education | 60/60 |
| 1922 | Mental and Moral Philosophy | 72/80/78 |
| Master of Arts | | |
| 1923 | Mental and Moral Philosophy | 68/75/68/65/75 |

Although he worked as a law clerk at a Christchurch legal office while studying part-time towards a Bachelor of Laws⁵³, he still managed to win, to his own surprise, the ‘Philosophy 1’ prize at the end of his first year.⁵⁴ However, he became ‘disappointed’ that the curriculum in the years following would not involve ‘theoretical stuff’,⁵⁵ and so he abandoned Law:

I was very thrilled with [Jurisprudence] and said to people who were a year or two ahead of me – ‘Well, I’m looking forward to more of that next year.’ They said ‘you can forget all about that nonsense – next year we get down to tin-tacks.’ I just couldn’t face it, so I switched to Training College.⁵⁶

His academic credit in 1920, initially credited towards a Bachelor of Laws, was instead credited towards a Bachelor of Arts, and he replaced his study of Law with the study of Education.

Beeby enrolled at Christchurch Teachers’ Training College in 1921 to train to become a primary teacher, while continuing to study philosophy at Canterbury University College on a part-time basis.⁵⁷

While training to become a teacher, Beeby became acquainted with ideas imported by James Shelley, Canterbury University College’s first professor of education. Shelley, a lively intellectual who had ‘recently arrived from England bubbling with ideas’⁵⁸, was influenced by J.J. Findlay, who taught at the Victoria University of Manchester and was a major proponent of child-centred continental educational theory. Thus, in turn, Shelley became an ‘inspiring advocate of ... child centred education.’⁵⁹ Shelley’s biographer, Ian Carter, wrote:

His best memorial is the difference that his words made to many people who heard him speak and determined that they would try to live their lives in another way. That is the mark of a great teacher. And whatever else he was – drama producer, art

⁵³ Alcorn, 1999, p. 25.

⁵⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Beeby, 1991, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Alcorn, 1999, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Beeby, 1979, p. 2.

⁵⁹ McKenzie, 1982, p. 130.

critic, actor, artisan in wood and metal, designer, illustrator, broadcaster, reluctant administrator – there can be no doubt that James Shelley was a great teacher. Just like Socrates, that other gadfly.⁶⁰

Beeby also admired Shelley's breadth of knowledge, writing that:

Shelley, as a teacher, was not a man but a multitude – actor, craftsman, artist, art historian, psychologist, sociologist, and a lecturer who brought to the study of education in New Zealand a breadth and a dramatic quality that it had never known. He gave his academic critics ample grounds to accuse him of superficiality, but ... [t]here is a place in any university for the occasional teacher, especially in the faculty of education, who can help students to see unity and pattern in the scattered fragments of their learning.⁶¹

However, Beeby was also disdainful of Shelley's unwillingness to maintain his breadth of knowledge with new readings, especially in the field of education:

[Shelley] had obviously read widely before he came to New Zealand, but here he read little and lived for years on his intellectual fat. He did read some books on art, but little or nothing on his own subject, education. He came here with his mind packed with ideas, some his own and others garnered from a new crop of writers who had come to public notice in Europe after the war but were still unknown here in a country isolated by distance and war from the centres where the ferment was: Freud, Jung, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Cyril Burt, Spearman, and the rest. Moreover he had his own dramatic ways of making the ideas his own and expounding them from any platform. He could twist them, juggle them, and present them in a score of forms that seemed new and exciting. But not forever. Even his cellar ran dry. He did all his thinking on his feet in front of an audience, and never wrote a thing ... So the number of permutations of his original stock of ideas eventually ran out, and he could only repeat himself.⁶²

Shelley may have been a Socratic 'gadfly' but nevertheless he significantly influenced Beeby.

Beeby's initial contact with Shelley was through the only one of Shelley's courses – Education I – that Beeby enrolled in:

[It] had quite a lot of psychology in it, and the beginnings of some sociology, but he never dictated a note, he never had a lecture written, and sometimes he didn't know what he was going to say when he came in. ... [H]e was really extremely stimulating. He was quite a remarkable man.⁶³

That single course left a 'long and fruitful'⁶⁴ impression on Beeby:

[T]he plea of Shelley ... for a fuller recognition of the individual's needs and aspirations came as a revelation. It has stayed with me ever since.

Although I took Shelley's lectures for only one year, he affected my idea of education more than any one person I have ever known.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Carter, 1993, p. 262.

⁶¹ Beeby, introduction to Somerset, 1974, p. xiv.

⁶² Letter, Beeby to Paddy Smart, 2 December 1984.

⁶³ Beeby, 1991, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Alcorn, 1999, p. 31.

⁶⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 52.

However, Beeby does not credit Shelley with contributing to his later thinking on equality of educational opportunity, saying that unlike many of his ‘liberal ideas on education’, it did not

come from my close association with James Shelley. He made me see the individual child as the centre of educational thinking but I do not remember him ever mentioning equality of opportunity.⁶⁶

Shelley’s method of teaching was very different to that of C.F. Salmond, the professor of philosophy at Canterbury University College. Beeby thought more of Shelley’s educational expectations than he did of Salmond’s.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he explains that he learnt to adapt his writing style to ensure that he could out-compete all the other students:

In the final examinations, in 1921, I gave Salmond exactly what he wanted; for Shelley I wrote what I wanted to say myself which, I guessed, was what he wanted. My dualism paid off; I won the college’s prizes for philosophy 2 and education 1.⁶⁸

The feeling that he was expected to think for himself was not the only feature of his education at the Training College that he praised. Beeby’s intellectual ‘dualism’ was a direct reflection of the differences between his experiences at the University and the Teachers’ College:

[A]t the training college I was having my first experience of education without competitiveness, and was feeling an extraordinary sense of liberation. ...

I found myself free not only of competitiveness in the lecture room but also of the kind of professional ambition that depends on competition with one’s fellows.⁶⁹

The sense of intellectual liberation that Beeby experienced, as well as the educational ideas imported by Shelley, led him to question his beliefs about both education and religion.

2.3 From the rock of religion to the rock of education

In the young Beeby’s world, religion and education were closely connected. Success in work and education were highly valued in the Methodist Beeby household.⁷⁰ Writing about the attitude that prevailed in his parent’s household, Beeby recalled that working hard was just ‘taken for granted’ and ‘approbation, if not indeed salvation, comes through work’.⁷¹

Not everyone in the Beeby family was religious, however:

⁶⁶ Beeby, 1992, pp. 289-290.

⁶⁷ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 54.

⁶⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 55-56.

⁷⁰ Alcorn, 1999, p. 17.

⁷¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 3.

My maternal grandfather who was a stoker in the Leeds gasworks was a professed atheist, which, even in my most religious days, I much admired in a working man in the North of England in the middle of the XIX century. I should never have the self-confidence to be more than an agnostic. Perhaps Calvin was right and some of us are born to be damned.⁷²

The young Beeby's religious convictions were firm enough to lead him to want to opt out of religious instruction at his high school, which was given by the Anglican-influenced headmaster, C.E. Bevan-Browne:

His views on religion were at odds with my Methodist revivalism and to me had a tang of popery. After a year, I got an exemption from scripture on the grounds that it took me an hour to get from my home in South Brighton to school at 8.30 a.m. It was the truth, but not the whole truth, which was better not revealed, though it was certainly not for lack of religious faith.⁷³

Beeby's religious faith was also strong enough for him to become a Methodist local preacher in his later teenage years. Ultimately, the same winds of change blowing though his ideas on education also affected his thinking about religion:

In my first year of university I was still preaching in little churches short of pastors, but the conflict between faith and my new intellectual discoveries steadily increased. ... Before the end of the year I gave up my membership of the church and my belief—but not my interest—in doctrinal religion.⁷⁴

Following his loss of belief, he transferred his religious zeal to education:

A faith can be killed by reasoning, but not the need for faith nor the habits of mind that go with it. Torn from the rock of religion by a storm of my own making, I suppose that I could have been, like some sea creature, groping for another solid surface. What better than the neighboring rock of education, with its tradition of service and its high ideals proclaimed from platforms at each year's end? There is some truth in the analogy, but it is too neat to tell the whole story. ...

I had achieved unity of a kind, but only by allowing some of the feelings and values of my religious life to become attached to education. Later in life I was to experience occasions when my idea of education would take on the character of a secular religion—even if that be a contradiction in terms.⁷⁵

Beeby's analogy may not 'tell the whole story', but it does indicate how he himself regarded his later views about education: they were akin to religious conviction. It was with what Beeby described at 'missionary zeal' that he entered Christchurch Training College in 1921.⁷⁶ It was a zeal that also extended to psychology.

2.4 Becoming a Psychologist

Beeby completed his undergraduate studies in philosophy and education at the end of 1922. In November of that year he successfully sought employment over the summer as

⁷² Beeby, letter to Colin Bailey, 7 November 1983.

⁷³ Beeby, 1992, pp. 55-56.

⁷⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 38.

⁷⁵ Beeby, 1992, pp. 38-39.

⁷⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 39. Alcorn, 1999, p. 25.

senior assistant librarian at Canterbury University College,⁷⁷ in order to ‘get a bit of extra money to help ... take my honours degree’.⁷⁸ However, in January 1923, shortly before his Bachelor of Arts result was released,⁷⁹ he was appointed assistant lecturer in philosophy and education:⁸⁰

[I]n the beginning of 1923 I read my newspaper and found I’d been appointed assistant lecturer – I didn’t apply for it ... I’d never been inside a psychological laboratory – neither had Shelley ...⁸¹

This position required him to work directly under both Salmond and Shelley:

The duties Salmond demanded of me were straightforward: I was to take over the teaching of logic at the pass level, and to mark all the papers set for his psychology class at the same level. In a department where everything was formalized and nothing ever changed, it was an easy task. ...

Under the terms of my appointment, I was charged with establishing a laboratory for the teaching of experimental psychology. ... The only stated obligation I had as assistant to Shelley was to develop the laboratory in such a way that it could be used for teaching and research in educational psychology, and to collaborate with him, where required, in the teaching of that subject in the diploma of education course.⁸²

So although he was employed to assist in the departments of philosophy and education, much of Beeby’s work was in fact psychological.⁸³

Psychology was still in its infancy in New Zealand:

It’s difficult to appreciate the state of psychology in the 1920s without understanding the isolation of N.Z. at that time. ... Apart from 4 or 5 scholarships and 4 free passages for the country as a whole,⁸⁴ there was no regular assistance to graduates in arts or sciences to study abroad, although a few of us did so on our meagre savings. ...

Scholarly libraries were miniscule; at Canterbury there were two or three shelves of books on psychology, mostly dreary in retrospect, and the only periodical on the subject was the BJP [British Journal of Psychology], seldom opened. ... Even within N.Z. there was little contact between the teachers in the four university colleges⁸⁵ ⁸⁶

On his appointment Beeby had to overcome the challenge of creating a psychological laboratory from scratch, and moreover before the start of the new academic year:

⁷⁷ Alcorn, 1999, p. 35.

⁷⁸ Beeby, 1991, p. 21.

⁷⁹ As Beeby explains, ‘all papers were marked in England and some barely arrived in time for the academic year’ (Beeby, 1979, p.1).

⁸⁰ Alcorn, 1999, p. 34.

⁸¹ Beeby, 1992, pp 61, 62.

⁸² Beeby, 1992, p. 62

⁸³ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 35-36.

⁸⁴ One per University College.

⁸⁵ Auckland University College and Otago University College.

⁸⁶ Beeby, 1979, p.1.

I had never seen a psychological laboratory, but I read the few books I could lay my hands on, and T.A. Hunter was good enough to give up part of a long vacation to introduce me to the equipment and the practical work in his laboratory at Victoria College. I based my course on his, which had been strongly influenced by Wundt and Titchener. ... I read up what I could and learnt the rest on the job.⁸⁷

During this period Beeby taught 'experimental psychology' classes at the local Workers Education Association (WEA).⁸⁸ He also did basic fieldwork on criminal psychology, after getting permission to serve a sentence of seven days hard labour in Paparua Prison for supposedly stealing a portmanteau at Rakaia Railway Station.⁸⁹ As well as setting up the new psychological laboratory, Beeby worked with Shelley to develop the nascent psychological clinic at Canterbury, which had been set up a few years earlier:

[B]etween us, we built up a kind of clinic in which I did most of the intelligence testing and intellectual intelligence testing and testing of achievement and so on, and Shelley did the emotional and social side of it.⁹⁰

Although Beeby completed a Master of Arts in Philosophy in 1923, by that time he considered himself a psychologist rather than a philosopher. His master's thesis was titled 'The psychology of laughter and the comic',⁹¹ although in fact it was largely a mixture of philosophy and history. Beeby himself said:

It is recognized in the Union List of Theses of the University of Canterbury of New Zealand, 1910-1954 (Wellington, N.Z Library Association, 1956) as the first master's thesis on psychology in N.Z., but I doubt that.⁹²

Whether Beeby doubted it was the *first* master's thesis on psychology or the first master's thesis on *psychology* is not made clear, but given his intimate acquaintance with its contents, quite possibly he meant the latter. In any case, the thesis was also listed under philosophy, and the 1963 Union List, which included corrections and additions to the 1910-1954 list, did not modify this double classification. The distinction between philosophy and psychology was somewhat vague at this time, and at Canterbury University College psychology remained officially part of philosophy until the early 1950s.

Salmond taught a mix of psychology and philosophy. Beeby remarked:

Regarding psychology as simply a branch of philosophy, [Salmon] saw no reason why it should be studied or taught differently from any of the other branches. For

⁸⁷ Beeby, 1979, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁸ Alcorn, 1999, p. 36.

⁸⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 65-66.

⁹⁰ Beeby, 1991, p. 8.

⁹¹ Beeby, C.E. (1923) *The psychology of laughter and the comic*, unpublished thesis. University of Canterbury: Christchurch, New Zealand.

⁹² Beeby, 1979, p. 2.

him the proper approach to the subject was through introspection, the psychologist's study of what was going on in his own mind.⁹³

Salmond's coverage of psychology was apparently far from complete. 'In four years of lectures on psychology I do not remember hearing the names of Freud, Jung or Spearman', Beeby said.⁹⁴ Like Freud and Jung, experimental psychology was also absent from Salmond's courses. Beeby recollected:

Salmond never had the faintest interest in the laboratory. He never went into it. He never mentioned it to me. He just treated it as if it didn't exist. I was a lecturer in Logic and I marked papers in Psychology. But we just never, never mentioned the laboratory at all.⁹⁵

However, Salmond by no means opposed the creation of the psychological laboratory, and in fact assisted it. He wrote to the College Registry:

I would again make the suggestion already offered to the Board that provision should be made for the teaching of Experimental Psychology at Canterbury College, as has already been done in Wellington and Auckland, and that an Experimental laboratory be equipped for that purpose.⁹⁶

Furthermore, Salmond argued that the time had come to separate psychology from philosophy formally at Canterbury. He wrote:

The time is rapidly coming when the subject of Philosophy must be divided in the University, and two chairs established in it in our College. Psychology now ranks as one of the special sciences, and any adequate treatment of it in all its departments demands a separate chair, as indeed the University of Sydney has lately recognised. Psychology is now seen to be the foundation on which all the social sciences rest, and these social sciences, as a recent writer has said, are to occupy in the twentieth-century the place that the physical sciences occupied in the nineteenth.⁹⁷

At the beginning of 1925, Beeby was awarded a 'Free Passage' based on his Master of Arts results.⁹⁸ The details of the award are given in the 1924 Academic Calendar:

The Orient Company and the Peninsular and Oriental Company each offer yearly one free first-class return passage between Australia and England in favour of graduates of the University who desire to proceed to Europe for the purpose of continuing their studies.⁹⁹

Beeby was granted leave without pay in order to work on his PhD in England. His fiancée followed him in the following year and soon the news of their marriage was reported back in Wellington, New Zealand:

⁹³ Beeby, 1992, p. 61.

⁹⁴ Beeby, 1979, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Beeby, 1991, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁶ Salmond, Letter to Mr Adams, Registry, 4/5/21; quoted by Youngmeyer, p. 64.

⁹⁷ Salmond, Letter to Mr Adams, Registry, 1/5/21; quoted by Youngmeyer, p. 83.

⁹⁸ Alcorn, 1999, p. 36.

⁹⁹ University of New Zealand, Calendar, 1924, p. 59.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Beeby, of Redcliffs (late of Christchurch) have received a cable announcing the marriage at Manchester, England, of their son, Clarence, to Beatrice Newnham, of Christchurch, New Zealand.¹⁰⁰

Beeby had enrolled in his PhD at the University of Manchester in July 1925. He decided to specialise in psychology, even though he described the laboratory there as ‘even less impressive than the one I had left in Christchurch’.¹⁰¹ He later explained:

I was beginning to feel ... that ideas on education were altogether too vague for my practical mind, and I was sure I wanted to take the degree in psychology where my advanced academic qualifications lay. ... I had no contact with the radical educators I had hoped to meet, and so came to think of myself purely as a psychologist.¹⁰²

He completed his PhD in psychology in 1927, focusing on ‘the relation between the simultaneous constituents in an act of skill’.¹⁰³ His thesis was an analysis of how best to train people to do a complex task with more than one component. He went on to publish an article on this research in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1930.¹⁰⁴

During his PhD studies Beeby spent a period at University College, London. There he worked under Charles Spearman, a pioneer of factor analysis and intelligence testing, and the ‘guru of mental measurement’.¹⁰⁵ Spearman was ‘known for his methodological rigour and a belief in his ability to measure general intelligence’.¹⁰⁶ Beeby considered that Manchester was where ‘the real research was done’.¹⁰⁷

Spearman was elected to the Royal Society¹⁰⁸ in 1924 and their obituary notice summarises his lasting influence:

[F]rom 1906 until his retirement (and after) Spearman was founding ... a new school of psychology, with a new outlook, the experimental and statistical, but also with strong affinities with philosophy. ... Spearman’s work is a whole, but it can be looked at from two sides, represented by his two chief books, *The abilities of man* and *The nature of intelligence and the principles of cognition*. ... [His method] has inspired and directed most of the quantitative psychological research of the past quarter-century. ... [W]ith rather inadequate equipment he nevertheless opened up a new field of research both to the experimental psychologist and to the mathematician.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ The Evening Post, Issue CXI, 7 June 1926, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ Beeby, 1979, p. 3.

¹⁰² Beeby, 1992, pp. 66, 67.

¹⁰³ Beeby, 1927.

¹⁰⁴ Beeby, C.E. (1930) *An experimental investigation into the simultaneous constituents in an act of skill*. *British Journal of Psychology* (General Section), 20 (4).

¹⁰⁵ McKenzie, 1982, p. 130.

¹⁰⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 38.

¹⁰⁷ Beeby, 1991, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge.

¹⁰⁹ Thomson, 1947, pp 373, 392.

‘Spearman had a very great influence on me’, Beeby said.¹¹⁰ He explained in a 1987 lecture that

In the 1920s and early 30s, through scientific research of the purest kind of its day, we knew more about the nature and distribution of intelligence than anyone had ever known before – or has ever known since, because your generation has challenged what we took as eternal truth. We were inclined to think that the Gaussian curve of human abilities was as much a product of evolution as the human hand. Spearman’s researches into the nature of ‘g’ and ‘s’¹¹¹ were to have great influence on me as an administrator, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse.¹¹²

Beeby’s belief in ‘the Gaussian curve of human abilities’ is manifested in later his advocacy for scaling marks to fit a normal distribution (as discussed in Chapter 5).

2.5 Lecturing at Canterbury University College

Beeby returned to Canterbury in August 1927, as a full time lecturer in experimental education and philosophy:¹¹³

There was no great sympathy between the Professors of Philosophy and Education, and, by some maneuvering on Shelley’s part, I was given a semi-independent job suspended vaguely between them, with the grandiose title of ‘Director of the Psychological and Educational Laboratories’. As far as I remember, I still taught logic, but I thought of myself as a psychologist.¹¹⁴

The laboratories ran experiments in both industrial psychology and vocational guidance:

Shelley concentrated mostly on behaviour problems and emotional disturbances in both children and adults, and, while he did sometimes give Binet-Simon tests¹¹⁵ and the occasional written intelligence test to individuals, he left most of the testing to me and never interested himself actively in vocational guidance, which became my dominant interest outside university teaching. It was only after my return from England in 1927 that the work on industrial psychology really began.¹¹⁶

Industrial psychology was the scientific study of human behaviour in the workplace and Beeby’s new focus involved him with local businesses:

[W]hen I returned, Shelley and I took up industrial psychology with more enthusiasm than expertise. At the request of the DSIR [Department of Industrial and Scientific Research] we started a bit of research in Aulsebrook’s chocolate factory on the relation between production rates and temperature and humidity. ... We did a time and motion study in Bunting’s brush factory, and planned a complete new layout to improve the flow of work through the ‘making’ shop in Duckworth, Turner’s shoe factory, which resulted in an increase in output. It really

¹¹⁰ Beeby, 1991, p. 12.

¹¹¹ In Spearman’s psychometric system, ‘g’ stands for the general factor in human intelligence and ‘s’ stands for any special test-specific variance.

¹¹² Beeby, Radford Memorial Lecture, 5 Dec 1987.

¹¹³ Alcorn, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁴ Beeby, 1979, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ The predecessor to the Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scales.

¹¹⁶ Beeby, letter to A.R. Hornblow, 15 January 1980.

took little more than common sense, a few simple rules, and [sic] outsider's eye, and more free time than a factory manager normally has.¹¹⁷

The work of the laboratories also included designing aptitude tests to help employers assess new staff, as well as lecturing employers on time and motion studies, and delivering courses on industrial psychology to business executives.¹¹⁸ These activities even led to a request to prepare a course on industrial psychology for a Wellington college:

[A]t the request of a leading private business college in Wellington, I wrote for them a long study course on industrial psychology, but was saved from its publication as a premature book by the college going bankrupt.¹¹⁹

Beeby also took interest in a number of students under his supervision, developing associations and relationship with some that he retain for much of his life.¹²⁰

In October 1930, Beeby travelled to the USA to study psychological laboratories and to visit psychology departments. He was particularly interested in having

first-hand contact with the application of psychology to education and industry, especially through vocational guidance and selection, which I saw as the link between the two.¹²¹

While in America he observed the psychological research done at the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric on worker motivation.¹²² He later hybridised this research in connection with the problem of truancy in New Zealand.¹²³ He later used his experiences in a public lecture on 'What can America teach the World?'.¹²⁴

Beeby returned home in February 1931, shortly after the start of the Depression. At this time he shifted his interest from industrial psychology to vocational guidance, focusing on as he put it 'the problems of individuals'.¹²⁵ He joined the Christchurch Employment Committee, which was 'the beginning of a lifelong interest in vocational and technical education.'¹²⁶ Two years later, for example, he was suggesting schemes where boys under 16 could only be employed in pairs and if those boys also attended educational and vocational training.¹²⁷

¹¹⁷ Beeby, 1979, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 44-46.

¹¹⁹ Beeby, 1979, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Alcorn, 1999, 48-9.

¹²¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 74.

¹²² Alcorn, 1999, p. 46.

¹²³ Beeby, 1991, pp. 13-14.

¹²⁴ Alcorn, 1999, p. 44.

¹²⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 77. Alcorn, 1999, 48-49.

¹²⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 50.

¹²⁷ Evening Post, 1933, p. 8.

Beeby also had a strong interest in developmental psychology at this time. For example, he carried out diagnostic work with children who were attending the Christchurch Normal School,¹²⁸ and in 1932 he and his wife set up a Montessori-inspired project to study the behaviour of young children.¹²⁹ Beeby's work on practical psychology created considerable popular interest:

The college [Canterbury University College] began to charge fees for this advice, and we had more cases than we could afford time to handle. I lectured endlessly on the subject to W.E.A. classes and various organizations, often dragging a suitcase of equipment with me.¹³⁰

His ideas at this time on making the education system more efficient were widely reported.¹³¹ For example, a 1931 newspaper article reporting on one of Beeby's WEA classes said:

One of the first purposes of applied psychology, said Dr. Beeby, was to eliminate waste. ... The greatest wastage which existed was that arising from the placing of square pegs in round holes—in other words, having a man or woman in a job for which he or she was not fitted. ... [T]ests were made at the College to determine the type of work for which any individual was most suited. A boy might have certain fancies as to the occupation he desired to follow, but he had little idea of his capabilities, and his parents had still less. ... People never had been equal and never would be. Much of human happiness depended on judging the differences between individuals and putting them into occupations for which their differences fitted them.¹³²

The article's subheadings summarise Beeby's work at the time: 'Use of Psychology', 'Eliminating Waste', 'Testing Abilities', 'Intelligence Assessment', and 'Fitting Pegs in Holes'.¹³³

Beeby's new views on guiding and incentivising students to focus on the good of the community were an opportunity to bring his older views about streaming to bear. In 1933 Beeby argued:

One hundred years ago ... it was all very well for a boy to be ambitious, for industrial expansion was providing new careers every day. But in our time we have seen most avenues of employment slowly closing up and most of the old beliefs crumbling away. Here in Canterbury College are many students who know that there is little opportunity for them outside and who lack positive ends in life. ...

And I am not sure that there is room in the world of to-day for that old individualistic type of ambition. It has proved itself definitely anti-social time after time; and in the future we must substitute other ends than purely individualistic ones for the guidance of our youth. The only incentive to modern youth is self-advancement, but even that is a pretty hopeless incentive to-day, and something

¹²⁸ Beeby, 1979, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Alcorn, 1999, p. 47.

¹³⁰ Beeby, 1979, p. 4.

¹³¹ For example, see 'Men and Machines' in the Evening Post, Issue 44, 20 August 1935, p. 4

¹³² Ellesmere Guardian, 1931, p. 7

¹³³ Ellesmere Guardian, 1931, p. 7.

more is definitely needed. That something must be a social incentive, and we must provide it quickly, or else our community life will suffer. It can be done. Look at Russia, Germany, Italy, Japan. They are harnessing ambition to social ends in those countries.¹³⁴

Beeby's authoritarian ideas on streaming and the 'social incentive' found famous expression in the 1939 statement he wrote for Fraser, which emphasised that the student's free education should be 'of the kind for which he is best fitted'. (Beeby's authoritarianism and the 1939 statement are both discussed in Chapter 4.) Beeby's coupling of streaming and vocational guidance in the 1930s laid a foundation for his education reforms. The intention in the 1939 statement was, he later said, to

broaden the curriculum to cater for a wider variety of abilities, provide teachers and facilities for the non-academic children and establish guidance services to make sure that each found the right educational track.¹³⁵

Beeby wrote that by the beginning of 1934 he wanted to become a career academic:

[M]y only ambition was to be professor of psychology at Canterbury University College.¹³⁶

During this time, he was already an acting professor at Canterbury University College due to Salmond becoming unwell¹³⁷:

[D]uring an extended overseas visit of one professor and the long final illness of the other,¹³⁸ I was successively Acting-Professor of Education and Acting-Professor of Philosophy - though I have never taken Education beyond Stage I and was not much of a philosopher. It all smacked of impudence rather than versatility, but it does illustrate the sketchy boundaries between the subjects in those days.¹³⁹

Beeby thought that he had a good chance of being appointed to the rank of professor on Salmond's retirement. In 1934 the dying Salmond

told me that they would offer me the Chair when he died, and I of course would have accepted.¹⁴⁰

According to Beeby, Salmond was not the only person to intimate to him that the job would be his for the asking:

¹³⁴ New Zealand Herald, Volume LXX, Issue 21658, 25 November 1933, p. 14.

¹³⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 137.

¹³⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 85.

¹³⁷ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 53-54.

¹³⁸ Shelley and Salmond, respectively.

¹³⁹ Beeby, 1979, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Beeby, 1991, p. 15.

I was given to understand that my chances for his chair were good. ... Christopher Aschman, my old patron who had become the powerful chairman of the Canterbury College Board of Governors, told me personally that I should be offered the chair of philosophy.¹⁴¹

During 1934 Beeby also became aware of the availability of position of executive officer—later changed to ‘director’—of the newly created New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER).¹⁴² Beeby recalled:

Early in the year, Shelley returned from a meeting of the council in Wellington ... Shelley said I should apply for the position. ... Shelley told me that my chances for the research post were good if I persisted with my application.¹⁴³

Beeby later said that choosing between (as he seems to have seen it at the time) a professorship and the directorship was ‘the most difficult decision of my life’.¹⁴⁴ He opted to apply to the NZCER and became its first director in June 1934. Whether Beeby would have been as successful in replacing Salmond is impossible to determine. Even though he had left for the NZCER Beeby could have still applied for the professorship given that it took several years to appoint a successor, and, despite his confidence, he would have faced fierce competition.

In 1937 Psychologist Ivan Sutherland became Salmond’s replacement. Sutherland was certainly an outstanding applicant: the first international student to obtain a PhD from the University of Glasgow¹⁴⁵, he had been lecturing at Victoria University College since his return to New Zealand in 1924, and there he had pioneered social psychology and anthropology, and he was a leading advocate of the importance of recognizing the Māori worldview.¹⁴⁶ A measure of the strength of Sutherland’s application is that he was selected over the philosopher Karl Popper who also applied for the position.¹⁴⁷

In later life Beeby often commented on how glad he was that he had decided to take the role at the NZCER rather than a professorial position at Canterbury University College. He wrote:

This is the wisest—or luckiest—professional decision I ever made in my life but ... [i]t ran contrary to my social background, my upbringing and my intellectual preparation.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 86.

¹⁴² McKenzie, 1982, p. 131. Alcorn, 1999, pp. 55-56.

¹⁴³ Beeby, 1992, p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 86.

¹⁴⁵ Sutherland won the same post-graduate travel scholarship in 1920 that Beeby later won in 1925.

¹⁴⁶ Sutherland, 2103; Miller, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Miller, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 89.

Although Beeby says it ‘ran contrary’ to his prior experiences, his pseudo-religious educational convictions provides some illumination on his eventual decision:

If my own experience in leaving the church and entering the profession of education in 1921 has any significance, it may well be that the weakening of doctrinal religious faith had left an emotional gap that education filled for others, as it had for me. The need for faith doesn’t die with the rejection of a specific doctrine. However that may be, I took up the directorship of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research with a deep unspoken assumption—it would have sounded too naïve if it had been expressed as a belief—that education, properly understood, could change the world, and that research could change our concept of education. It was an assumption that underlay the liberal idealist in the 1930s. Remnants of it linger with me still, and my idea of education is, rationally or not, forever tinged with it.¹⁴⁹

Beeby also used religious analogies to justify the confidence he had in his educational reforms:

Inequality had been so starkly obvious during the Depression that its opposite now seemed equally clear. For those of us who were charged with initiating the reforms to put the principle into practice, the first steps seem inevitable, ordained. We accepted the idea with almost messianic fervor; it was not a time for doubts. ... For a few short years we could enjoy the advantages of an age of faith. Some of us were very, very sure we were right, always a help in the early days of a reform, however maddening it might be to those who do not share the faith.¹⁵⁰

Beeby later described the professorial position at Canterbury University College as ‘a fate equivalent to intellectual death’.¹⁵¹ Later on, he reflected that his appointment at the NZCER had

rescued me from accepting the Chair of Philosophy in Christchurch, which I should have been quite incompetent to handle and would have been in it over the next 35 years ...¹⁵²

In a 1991 interview he expanded:

I would have made an awful mess of it of it, because, you know, when it came to philosophy, I knew no more, really than [Salmond’s] notes. We had no kind of breadth of reading of any kind at all ...¹⁵³

There was also the fact of his ‘neglect of philosophy proper as a result of my absorption in its errant offspring, psychology’.¹⁵⁴

In his reflections Beeby expressed his pleasure that he had opted for the NZCER:

Within a couple of years, the teaching of experimental psychology became an agreeable routine, enlivened only by the fresh enquiring minds each new year’s students brought in. ... Whatever I might have thought at the time, I now realize

¹⁴⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. xvii.

¹⁵¹ Beeby, Letter to Mr. Theodore Smith, 9 May, 1984.

¹⁵² Beeby, Letter to Mr. Theodore Smith, 9 May, 1984.

¹⁵³ Beeby, 1991, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 86.

that I never had the kind of scholarly mind that was prepared to dig at great depth on a narrow front. My Yorkshire upbringing and working-class background inclined me to seek the practical applications of what I had learnt from books.¹⁵⁵

Beeby preferred the practical over the theoretical. In a moment of candour he reflected that he did not consider universities to be particularly ‘practical’ institutions but places with inactive theoreticians:

In one of the less solemn moments of the N.Z. University Senate, I once suggested that it was the business of the professor to think without acting and of the administrator to act without thinking – with Vice Chancellors in some uncomfortable limbo between them. That was a gross libel on them both, but there’s enough truth in it to make my point.¹⁵⁶

Beeby later wrote that universities should instead be more practically orientated by being more responsive to the demands of the community (see p. 172). As Director of Education he was a member of the Senate of the University of New Zealand, where he saw himself

as one of the agents charged with keeping the demands of the community before the attention of the university.¹⁵⁷

He likewise stated that post-primary schools should reflect the needs of the local community and that the whole education system should be oriented to the needs of society and the economy (see Chapter 4).

As Director of Education, Beeby used his position to influence university entrance policies, the university curriculum, and how the University of New Zealand was funded. Notwithstanding his belief that the universities should become more practically focused, he advocated moving both technical and technological training from the universities to specialised technical schools. He also advocated the disintegration of the University into four separate and competing universities (for a more detailed analysis of each of these topics, see Chapter 5).

2.6 The NZCER: Beeby’s Route to the Ministry

Beeby was the first Director of the NZCER, from 1934 to 1938.¹⁵⁸ When he took on the role of directing educational research, he was a psychologist with only a nominal training as an educator: ‘It wasn’t going to be easy for a psychologist who had been neither administrator nor classroom teacher’, he said. When he applied for the position,

¹⁵⁵ Beeby, 1992, pp. 71-73.

¹⁵⁶ Beeby, 1969, p. 64.

¹⁵⁷ Beeby, 1992, p. 224.

¹⁵⁸ McKenzie, 1982, p. 131.

he sensibly pointed out in his cover letter that if the organisation appointed him, it should ‘not demand of me immediate practical results’.¹⁵⁹

The NZCER was established through a donation of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the work of many educators over half a decade to help stimulate research and innovation in education.¹⁶⁰ When the NZCER initially canvassed names for the new position, ‘Beeby’s was not among them’ explains Alcorn.¹⁶¹ When the NZCER opened the position up for application, Beeby was one of four shortlisted applicants. Fortuitously for Beeby, the two Australian applicants had withdrawn and the other New Zealander was unavailable, and so, after a successful interview in May 1934, Beeby was offered the position.¹⁶² The small organisation the Beeby entered originally consisted of just the director, two research officers and a secretary, and had the goal of being

an independent and impartial organisation whose job it was to collect facts scientifically and then make value judgements on some of them.¹⁶³

Beeby, with his training in philosophy and his PhD in psychology, had little experience relevant to directing educational research. He later stated:

When I entered the NZCER I had never even heard of the annual report to Parliament of the minister of education or read a word on the history of education of this country. My ignorance of sociology was even more complete.¹⁶⁴

In an organisation of only four people, Beeby was himself closely involved in research. Here he relied on his training in psychology. He said that in the early years of the NZCER, he felt ‘more at home’ when working on vocational and industrial research into ‘students’ passage through the school system and out into employment’.¹⁶⁵ During this period the NZCER ‘demonstrated that education policy could be informed by good research instead of relying upon ideological ad hocery’.¹⁶⁶

Beeby initially regretted leaving academic life for his role in the new organisation and made a characteristic comment portraying his attitude to universities and their role:

For weeks I had been cursing myself that ever I took this job. Every school I saw seemed drabber than the last, and every teacher less inspired. I was beginning to

¹⁵⁹ Beeby, 1992, p. 89.

¹⁶⁰ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 55-58.

¹⁶¹ Alcorn, 1999, p. 59.

¹⁶² Alcorn, 1999, p. 59.

¹⁶³ Beeby, 1992, p. 91.

¹⁶⁴ Beeby, 1992, pp. 92-93.

¹⁶⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 94.

¹⁶⁶ McKenzie, 1982, p. 131.

regret the lost seclusion of the university post where facts and factors can be, if not ignored, at least brightened up a little.¹⁶⁷

He dwelt on what he saw as a lack of inspiration in the teachers he encountered during his school visits in his five-year research plan for the NZCER:

Little else matters if the Council can serve as a rallying point for the curiosity in his craft which alone can keep the teacher alive, and which tends to fade so rapidly in the trying atmosphere of the classroom. That curiosity can die, or can grow, but cannot stand still; it is not the business for the Council to satisfy it but to feed it. If the Council did nothing but ask intelligent questions it would have done a job worth doing. A few may even be answered. But intelligent questions, like most living things, breed; and there should be more unanswered questions in five years' time than there are now.¹⁶⁸

In July 1936 the then Minister of Education, Peter Fraser, commissioned the NZCER to undertake research into the history and role of New Zealand's intermediate schools. This research led to one of the NZCER's first published books, written by Beeby.¹⁶⁹ Beeby's experience in both leading the NZCER and performing research helped shift Beeby's focus towards more recent visions of education, and the need to bring such ideas to New Zealand's shores.

Early in 1937, Beeby secured Fraser's support for a nationwide conference on education.¹⁷⁰ The conference's organisers were able to arrange for many of the speakers at an adjoining NEF (New Education Fellowship) conference in Australia to visit New Zealand. Organised on the general topic of 'The Bases of Educational Reorganisation'¹⁷¹, the delegation of 14 educationalists spent a week traveling to the main cities to speak about new methods and ideas in education. The dates of school holidays were even adjusted to enable teachers to attend New Zealand's own NEF conference.¹⁷² As a joint honorary secretary for the conference's national planning committee, Beeby may have met Fraser.¹⁷³ (Fraser himself did not attend the meetings and was instead was briefed by Hunter, the chair.)

The NEF offered Beeby the opportunity to soak in new, progressive and liberal ideas of education. It expanded his knowledge and infused him with an eagerness to make change. Beeby was more than satisfied with the outcome of the NEF:

¹⁶⁷ Beeby, Letter to Tate, 27 August 1934.

¹⁶⁸ NZCER, 1935b.

¹⁶⁹ Beeby, C.E. (1938) *The Intermediate Schools of New Zealand*. Wellington: NZCER.

¹⁷⁰ McKenzie, 1982, p. 131.

¹⁷¹ Cunningham, 1938, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁷² *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR)*, 1938, E2, p. 2. (The AJHR includes annual Education reports to Parliament)

¹⁷³ Abbiss, 1998; Campbell, 1938, p. 494.

The NEF Conference was an astonishing success and attracted the general public as much as the profession. ... Never before or since have teachers, parents and public studied education together with such passion. Some of the sessions had the flavour of the old-fashioned Methodist revival meetings I had known as an adolescent ... The NEF Conference offered an almost unbelievable opportunity to catch up with the thinking of the outside world.¹⁷⁴

Fraser also sounded pleased:

The visit of so many eminent educationalists to New Zealand ... was not merely the event of the year as far as education in the Dominion¹⁷⁵ was concerned; it was the event of many years. It was an educational and intellectual enterprise which deserved, and obtained, the greatest measure of knowledge about life in its manifold expressions which is the work of education.¹⁷⁶

After the conference, new branches of the NEF were set up in New Zealand's main centres to see 'how far the ideas gained can be incorporated into our education system'.¹⁷⁷ Beeby said that, for him however, it was more like a re-introduction to those ideas:

In spite of its importance, I don't think that the NEF conference had much effect on my ideas on education; rather it confirmed the ideas I had already gained from James Shelley and from my reading.¹⁷⁸

This is surprising, however, given the range of expertise at the conference, and the fact that Shelley had arrived from England eighteen years previously.

Even if the conference did not have an immediate effect on Beeby, it nevertheless did introduce him to a range of educationalists who influenced his later ideas on education. Isaac Kandel, one of the NEF visitors, published a report on the Australian and New Zealand education systems a few months subsequent to the Conferences.¹⁷⁹ Beeby later wrote that readings of, and discussion with, Kandel made him 'see education, for the first time, from the view of an administrator rather than the scholar. ... I owe a great deal to Kandel'.¹⁸⁰

Beeby's involvement in planning the NEF conference also turned out to be a pivotal event in his educational career, since it led to him working directly with Fraser. Early in 1938, Fraser invited Beeby to meet with him to discuss personnel changes in the Department of Education. According to Beeby:

[H]e sent for me and said ... 'Look, I want to reorganise the whole of the Education System. ... You've seen a lot of the people recently in New Zealand education but

¹⁷⁴ Beeby, 1992, pp. 105-106.

¹⁷⁵ New Zealand was a Dominion of the United Kingdom from 1907 to 1947.

¹⁷⁶ Fraser, introduction to Campbell, 1938, p. ix.

¹⁷⁷ AJHR, 1939, E2, p.2.

¹⁷⁸ Beeby, 1992, pp. 106-107.

¹⁷⁹ I.L. Kandel (1938) *Types of Administration with particular reference to the educational Systems of New Zealand and Australia*, Wellington, NZCER.

¹⁸⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 291.

the Director of Education retires at the end of 1939 and we want to revive the position of Assistant Director' which had been created for Rennie [sic] Marsden, you know, years before – who went from that to the Head of D.S.I.R. [in 1926].¹⁸¹

Furthermore, Fraser first sought his opinion on suitable candidates for the temporary post of Assistant-Director of Education and then inquired whether Beeby himself would be interested:

He called me back, and told me that I must apply for the position and go through the usual procedure of vetting and appeal. Not being a complete simpleton, I must have guessed by the time I stood up that the curious interview was not quite what it purported to be, though I don't recall having any notion of its true purpose until his question. Certainly, when I entered the room I had not the slightest intention of ever joining the department, and I should not have dreamt of applying for the assistant-directorship if Fraser had not suggested it to me. I applied for the position and I got it.¹⁸²

2.7 Beeby's Apprenticeship: Assistant-Director

Beeby became New Zealand's Assistant-Director of Education on 1 September 1938. He served under Nelson Lambourne, the Director of Education from 1933 and who was due to retire at the end of 1939.

Unlike Fraser, Lambourne was generally satisfied with the state of the education system, perhaps even complacent. He wrote in the 1935 annual education report:

The New Zealand system of education, primary and post-primary, is fundamentally sound, modern, and well suited to our requirements; it does not need any drastic amendment ... I believe that our secondary schools are in a large measure well suited to our requirements, and that they give the majority of their pupils a sound and liberal education.¹⁸³

That same year Peter Fraser became Minister of Education, after campaigning for broad educational reform. Fraser's appointment of Beeby to the Directorship had broken with the tradition of selecting men¹⁸⁴ with extensive administrative backgrounds:

For fifteen years the path to the position of Director of Education had laid through the primary school inspectorate which, in turn, had been from men near the top of the primary school graded list.¹⁸⁵

However, Lambourne's complacent attitude may explain why Fraser brought in the more liberal, if less experienced, Beeby to assist in the reform of the education system. 'His appointment ensured Fraser of continuity of policy', Massey explains.¹⁸⁶

Shortly after Lambourne's retirement at the end of 1939, Beeby praised his devotion to education:

¹⁸¹ Beeby, in King, 1978, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸² Beeby, 1992, pp. 109-110.

¹⁸³ AJHR, 1935, E5, pp. 2, 8.

¹⁸⁴ All past Directors of Education were men.

¹⁸⁵ Campbell, pp. 68-69.

¹⁸⁶ Massey, 1968, p. 122.

Of Mr Lambourne's abilities, wisdom, and devotion to the cause of education I cannot speak too highly. Not the least of his contributions was the spirit of friendliness and mutual trust he did so much to establish between the Department and all those concerned with education.¹⁸⁷

Beeby later expanded on their relationship:

[Lambourne] ... actually did things for me that I know I can't imagine myself ever doing for anybody. He said 'Well if you perhaps would like to know a bit about the running of the Department, then I suggest you have a desk in my room for the first three months.' So I sat in his at a desk with a pile of papers dutifully signing things in triplicate to go over to the Public Service Commission or doodling or whatever it was, and I sat there for 3 months. All the trivial jobs – I took something off his plate and heard every conversation no matter how confidential, how personal. This was an astonishing thing to do. This was the kind of reception I got.¹⁸⁸

Beeby later explained how working with Lambourne helped shape him as an administrator:

I got an overview of the department's work and, more subtly, an insight into the way an excellent administrator handled people, from his secretary to his minister, from a timid young teacher to a belligerent delegation; he was equally courteous to them all. ... For my first year or two as director I was to live on the trust Lambourne had left behind.¹⁸⁹

According to Alcorn, Beeby learned that he would need to be the kind of leader who could both inspire teachers and work closely with politicians to ensure policy changes met the expectations of the community.¹⁹⁰

However, Beeby was a new man in a new job, and as with his previous new job he had very little relevant experience. As Beeby candidly said:

Apart from my time in the family atmosphere of the NZCER, I knew nothing about administration, and everyone in the department was aware of it.¹⁹¹

Just as he had taken up the Directorship of the NZCER with little experience in educational research, here he was in the Department of Education. His close friend Bill Renwick said that Beeby 'is one of those rare persons with the luck to have genius and the genius to have luck'.¹⁹² It was a cliché but there was an element of truth in it.

During this initial period Beeby maintained a good working relationship with Fraser:

¹⁸⁷ AJHR, 1940, E1, p. 5.

¹⁸⁸ Beeby, in King, 1978, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 118-119.

¹⁹⁰ Alcorn, 1999, p. 140.

¹⁹¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 119.

¹⁹² Renwick, introduction to Beeby, 1992, p. vii.

During my sixteen months of initiation, Peter Fraser had taken me with him on his visits to schools ... ostensibly as his advisor but, in the beginning, as his apprentice, for he knew more about the school system than I did.¹⁹³

Alcorn argues that this contact with Fraser provided Beeby with the opportunity to familiarise himself with Fraser's philosophical commitment to equality of opportunity:

[T]hese visits were vitally important. They reinforced his own belief in the importance of these direct contacts with grass roots education; as Director he spent time in the field whenever possible. They also helped him to understand the background to Fraser's ideals, and to appreciate more fully his vision of an education system designed for all citizens, not merely the elite.¹⁹⁴

However, according to Beeby himself, what Fraser focused on in their discussions during these sixteen months was a range of specific problems in schools and school districts, rather than ideas of educational equality:

I don't recall that [Fraser] and I had any profound discussions on the philosophy and objectives of education; most of our talk was about the particular problems of each school or district we visited.¹⁹⁵

Fraser was an educationalist idealist with a firm and wide grasp of educational issues. McKenzie explains that he was

an experienced and brilliant tactician who was thoroughly used to grasping the politics and educational issues from the point of view of both professional practitioners and the public.¹⁹⁶

In making Beeby his Director, Fraser placed a lot of trust on Beeby's young shoulders.

Beeby's opportunity to repay Fraser's trust in him came a few months after his appointment, early in 1939. Fraser had rejected Lambourne's draft annual report on education, with (according to Beeby) a note to the effect of 'This report has nothing to say, and I won't sign it. Send me a report that says something'.¹⁹⁷ Lambourne gave Beeby the opportunity to rewrite the draft. He produced a historic report about the state of education in New Zealand that included a list of egalitarian educational goals soon viewed as the core of the government's policy on education. (For a detailed analysis of the statement, see p. 92.)

Beeby became Director of Education in January 1940. Reference to this 1939 list of sweeping educational goals was a constant feature of his rhetoric and reports during the coming years of educational reform. In the next chapter I establish the administrative background of Beeby's reforms by describing New Zealand's

¹⁹³ Beeby, 1992, p. 122.

¹⁹⁴ Alcorn, 1999, p. 97.

¹⁹⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

¹⁹⁶ McKenzie, D., 1982, p. 132; Clark, M. 1998, p. 216.

¹⁹⁷ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

educational leadership and legislation from 1877 to 1940. Chapters 4 to 9 then analyse Beeby's reforms and the extent of his influence on education in New Zealand during his twenty years as Director.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAKING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

3.1 Overview

When Beeby became Director of Education in 1940 he stepped into an education department based on British precedents that had been shaped by a century of domestic reform since the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.¹⁹⁸ Utilitarian and Egalitarian influences present in nineteenth century New Zealand migrated over from Britain along with her colonists. Sinclair explained:

Scholarly radicals knew the works of John Stuart Mill, and perhaps also those of A.R. Wallace. ... Fabians. Populists, and antipodean Labour and Liberal parties alike received inspiration from their pages.¹⁹⁹

Mill had modified Jeremy Bentham's more egalitarian Utilitarian theory by replacing an idea of general happiness with a more efficient system of measurement. Similarly, Beeby would modify Fraser's more egalitarian philosophy by adding distinct utilitarian undertones.

In order to contextualise Beeby's reforms as Director of Education, this chapter gives a history of the Department of Education from its founding in 1877, up to the beginning of the Beeby era. The history is focused around Beeby's six predecessors, five of them Directors of Education and the other, William Habens—who was appointed to the Department in 1878—not quite a Director, since the position of Director was not established until 1915. It is against the context provided by Beeby's predecessors that his reforms of the education system can best be understood.

The position of Director of Education was that of administrator and not legislator: legislators make policies and administrators implement them. In reality, though, things were not so simple. Beeby described the two-way relationship between policy and implementation:

In theory, the government determines the policy and adopts the plan, and the administrator's job is to carry it out. ... Governments have frequently only an emergent purpose that becomes altered in the very process of moving towards the goal, and policy not only determines ways and means but is, in some measure, itself determined by the ways and means chosen to put it into operation.²⁰⁰

The present chapter outlines the emergence of issues that were especially important during Beeby's Directorship. These include: the centralization of power in the

¹⁹⁸For a summary of prior events in the nineteenth century see Appendix 1.

¹⁹⁹ Sinclair, K., 1961, p. 156.

²⁰⁰ Beeby, 1967, pp. 18-19.

Department; the rise of psychology in educational philosophy; an increasing focus on qualifications ('qualificationism'); the emergence of a focus on educational equality, with policy swings between equality of access and equality of opportunity; the importance of efficiency in the school system; the idea that education should be directed towards character building and citizenship; and the development of a compulsory national curriculum, with repeated swings between the academic and the vocational ideals.

3.2 William Habens, proto Director of Education, 1878-1899

During his 21 years in the Department Habens established a series of precedents for Beeby. The Department of Education did not originally include a Director of Education but was managed by two officers; a Secretary of Education and an Inspector-General of Schools. Habens was appointed to the latter position in 1878; in 1886 he took over the role of Secretary of Education and held both positions until his death in 1899.²⁰¹ During his tenure of these positions, Habens' reforms established the foundations of the New Zealand education system.

The 1877 Education Act²⁰² set up Education Boards throughout New Zealand. As Inspector-General, Habens was responsible for overseeing and inspecting these education boards:

[T]he chief function of the Inspector-General was to travel about the country, investigating the affairs of the boards personally and endeavouring to discover to what extent the returns furnished by the boards were accurate.²⁰³

It was from these Boards that power was gradually taken by the Department of Education during the twentieth century. The Boards were viewed by Beeby as unsuccessful in the role for which they were created. Beeby explained:

During this time the Boards had the supremacy, and enjoyed a largely unfettered freedom – a freedom of which they took such advantage that they failed to bring about the very things for which the 1877 Act was passed – that is, the equalizing of the opportunities between various parts of New Zealand and the establishment of a truly national system. ... [T]he children of New Zealand were not getting an equal opportunity, even though all the money was raised by central taxation.²⁰⁴

The 'failed' goal of equalizing opportunity was a Beebian invention. The Act did not in fact seek to promote the equalising of 'opportunities', but rather empowered the Boards to administer the provisions of the Act in accordance with the desires of their

²⁰¹ Davey, p. 24; also see Appendix 1.

²⁰² See Appendix 1.

²⁰³ Webb, p. 38.

²⁰⁴ Beeby, Speech notes to NZEBA, 1956, pp. 5-6.

members. This was a compromise between differing political views—there was at the time little agreement regarding any overarching educational philosophy.²⁰⁵

Habens' pragmatic approach to his position throughout a series of governments, with different legislative goals, spanning a period of 24 years, was a model of public service neutrality that Beeby would later imitate. Habens first worked under the 1877 to 1879 Ministry²⁰⁶ of Sir George Grey, a previous Governor of New Zealand²⁰⁷ and a supporter of a decentralised education system:

Grey, an uncritical opponent of centralist tendencies, deliberately set himself to strengthen local control generally and board control particularly.²⁰⁸

Next, between 1876 and 1891, Habens served under a series of seven different ministries, some very short-lived. During this long period of political instability, a group of politicians later dubbed the 'Continuous Ministry'²⁰⁹ tended to dominate. The Continuous Ministry favoured centralised power, and the Department of Education became

usually antagonistic to the boards and made occasional feeble efforts to limit their powers. ... [T]he political atmosphere was not conducive to sweeping changes ... [and the Continuous Ministry] preferred to play for safety, never vexing great issues if it could avoid doing so.²¹⁰

During Habens' last eight years at the Department, he served under the new Liberal-Labour government, which came into power in 1891. Its first leader, John Balance, opposed centralisation, saying 'The Education Boards are far more efficient and economical than any central department'.²¹¹ The government's second leader, Richard Seddon, favoured centralisation, however. This was to be achieved by abolishing the education boards and investing their power of inspection in the Department.²¹² Despite the very different orientations of the governments under which he served, Habens took a neutral and pragmatic approach, focusing mainly on practical reforms acceptable to all sides.

As with Habens, Beeby's twenty years at the Department saw swings of power from left to right and back again. Following the precedent Habens set, Beeby spoke

²⁰⁵ See Appendix 1, for a discussion of the situation leading up to the Act

²⁰⁶ An earlier term for Cabinet or Government

²⁰⁷ See Appendix 1.

²⁰⁸ Webb, p. 38.

²⁰⁹ See Wilson, 1985, and Wood, 1996, for an analysis of this period.

²¹⁰ Webb, p. 38.

²¹¹ New Zealand Government, Hansard, 1890, Vol. 69, p. 101.

²¹² Hansard, 1883, Vol. 45, pp. 154-5; Hansard, 1887, Vol. 59, pp. 889-890

strongly in favour of the neutrality both of the Department and its Director. That neutrality is represented by loyalty to whatever government was in power:

It may be taken for granted that the public servant's first duty is to carry out loyally the policy laid down by his Minister. If he cannot bring himself to do that, his only alternative is to resign.²¹³

When Beeby later believed that the loyalty of the public service was under attack, he wrote:

I regret that I must take this opportunity to tell you ... how distressed I was by Mr Longe's [sic] recent statement on the loyalty of permanent heads. Having been a permanent head, who gave loyal service, as a matter of course, to successive governments over a period of twenty years, I find his remarks, as reported, quite offensive.²¹⁴

Beeby later wrote that his own service was impartial:

For twenty years as a permanent head, I served both parties impartially and ... I found no difficulty in putting whatever professional knowledge and skills I had at the disposal of every minister with whom I worked.²¹⁵

'Native Schools' under Habens

One of the first, and most enduring, aspects of Habens' tenure was the continued separation of schools for Maori and non-Maori. It was a separation that continued up to and throughout Beeby's tenure as Director of Education. In the decade before the 1877 Education Act, a series of separate 'native schools' were established by the government for the purpose of educating and socialising Maori.²¹⁶ In 1879, responsibility for the Native School system was transferred from the Department of Native Affairs to the Department of Education. So while non-Maori primary schools became the responsibility of the local Education Boards, Maori education remained under the direct management of the Department. Chapter 6 discusses this and other aspects of the structural racism that continued under Beeby.

The Primary School System under Habens

Habens devised a national curriculum for the primary schools and developed the standards for a new qualification system. His curriculum²¹⁷ initiated the still ongoing dispute regarding the appropriate level of prescription in the school curriculum.

²¹³ Beeby, NZJPA, Vol.18, No. 2, 1965, p. 7.

²¹⁴ Beeby, letter to Fran Wilde M.P., 6 January 1984.

²¹⁵ Beeby, letter to Clive Matthewson, M.P., 15 March 1988

²¹⁶ See Appendix 1.

²¹⁷ As published in the Regulations defining Standards of Education and for Inspection of Schools: New Zealand Gazette, 26 September 1878, pp. 1309-12.

Habens' curriculum consisted of six successive standards of primary school work, one for each year of compulsory schooling (for ages 7 to 13).²¹⁸ However, Habens' standards were merely aspirational, since the Department lacked a way to enforce them. This was because the 1877 Education Act invested control of the Inspectorate in the Education Boards. Furthermore, a lack of funding meant that the Department was unable to

ensure that the funds it allocated to the boards were spent as stipulated by the department.²¹⁹

Habens' push to establish a new national curriculum was not the only theme of his period in office that would later be taken up by Beeby. Beeby's focus on qualifications, a strong theme of his Directorship, also had its counterpart in Habens' time. Habens' externally-assessed, outcomes-orientated system, involving six separate qualifications, led to a form of education that was dominated by examinations. Several inspectors reported that teachers were focusing merely on preparing for the annual standards test, 'on a kind on examination-probability basis'.²²⁰

Despite these difficulties, in 1899 Habens went on to introduce two more qualifications. These were leaving qualifications and were forerunners of every leaving qualification since. The new qualifications were: 'Proficiency' for students in Standard 6, the final year of schooling, and 'Competency', a similar award for children who passed Standard 5.

Habens' style 'qualificationism' was a persistent feature of the educational structure that Beeby inherited from his predecessors. Concern over levels of prescription in the curriculum and the distorting influence of externally-examined qualifications were to haunt the Department of Education (and its successor the Ministry of Education). These concerns have accompanied the introduction of every new qualification, from the creation of Habens' original six standards up to the current four levels of NCEA. However, a half-century of concern did not prevent Beeby from supporting end-of-year leaving qualifications for secondary school students.

Secondary Schools under Habens

Although the 1877 Education Act gave the Department regulatory power over only primary schools, Habens attempted to influence the qualifications offered by secondary

²¹⁸Subjects were reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar and composition, geography, history, elementary science, drawing, object lessons, vocal music, and sewing and needlework for girls.

²¹⁹Dakin, 1973, p. 22.

²²⁰AJHR, 1884, E1B, p. 8.

schools, which at that time were offered by each school individually. There is an analogy with Beeby's efforts to extend the influence of the Department into the self-governing tertiary sector. In 1887 Habens tried to persuade secondary schools to adopt a scheme of common examinations. These would replace the individually-crafted exams offered by each school.

Receiving little support for his proposal, he concluded in his annual report that 'it would not be wise to attempt a general examination [in secondary schools]'.²²¹ Nevertheless, in January 1888, at the first New Zealand Secondary Schools Conference, secondary school headmasters decided that the University Matriculation exam would be a suitable leaving qualification for secondary education across New Zealand. This unifying decision resulted in a single examination serving two purposes, a secondary school leaving qualification and the university entrance qualification. However, this decision resulted in parallel problems to the earlier decision to use national leaving qualifications in primary schools to grant access to secondary education. The effect in each case was the domination of education by examinations. Beeby complained:

Preparatory courses were to dominate the schools for decades, despite the growing number of students who had no intention of going on to university.²²²

Habens' interference with secondary schools was an example of how a Director can influence educational matters outside his jurisdiction; Beeby would also do this in the 1950s in his attempts to influence the University of New Zealand. I discuss Beeby's relationship with the University in Chapter 6.

It was however Haben's successor, Hogben, who had the more extensive influence on Beeby's philosophy of education.

3.3 The Department under George Hogben, 1899-1915²²³

Hogben was the Secretary for Education and Inspector-General of Schools until 1915, when the two positions were combined into a single Directorship. Hogben became Secretary and Inspector-General of Education in 1899; he was greatly influential both on the education system between 1899 and 1915, and on Beeby several decades later. Understanding Hogben's reforms sheds some light on Beeby's own later reforms.

Hogben took office during a time of economic recovery, social reform, and growing dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the education system under Habens.²²⁴

²²¹ AJHR, 1887, E-1, p. xxi and E-9, p. 8.

²²² Beeby, in McDonald and Campbell, 1984, p. 91.

²²³ See Roth (1952) for a detailed biography of Hogben.

During the twenty-one years (1891-1912) that the Liberal Party was in power, the government passed a series of Acts that reformed New Zealand on many fronts, including extensive educational reforms under Hogben. Hogben was especially effective in increasing access to secondary education. In addition he attempted to orientate primary education towards technical and practical skills, a focus that Beeby inherited and maintained.

An important influence on Hogben was the idea of ‘social efficiency’. A report of remarks that he made at the 10 February General Education Conference said:

the several parts of the educational system of the Dominion must essentially lie connected ... There had been many theories as to the basis of co-ordination in education ... The ideal that appealed most to him was that of social efficiency—that was, “the development of the natural powers of the individual and the acquisition of knowledge, so that he may become adjusted to the ideals towards which society is moving.” ... Social efficiency is the best brief expression of our goal, emphasizing the capacity to do as well as to know ...²²⁵

As I explain in chapter 6, Beeby was motivated by similar ideas.

Hogben has been described as

a deeply religious man. He was a firm believer in progress ... he thought that change had to come from above, and saw the educated classes, able and wise men, as the ideal rulers of society.²²⁶

Under Hogben change would indeed come from above, from a strong Department of Education and a centralised education system. During his time at the Department, Hogben ‘reshaped the primary school system, bringing it under firm control of the Department of Education’.²²⁷ Beeby would continue as Hogben had begun: the education system became yet more centralised under Beeby and the Department yet more powerful.

Drivers of Centralisation

The centralisation of the Department in the twentieth century can be explained as a reaction to the influence of the Education Boards on the Minister of Education in the nineteenth century. The inability of the early Department to ensure both that schools taught the curriculum, and that the Inspectorate enforced the Department’s regulations, provided a motivation for the Department to take greater control of the system. However, members of the Education Boards were an impediment to reform:

²²⁴ For a detailed discussion of this time period, see Butchers (1930), pp. 7-143; Ewing (1970), pp. 1-86; Murdoch (1944), pp. 161-168; Openshaw, Lee and Lee (1993), pp. 81-119; Webb (1937), pp. 1-60.

²²⁵ AJHR, 1910, E-10, pp. 6-7.

²²⁶ Roth, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p. 225.

²²⁷ Roth, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p. 225.

In 1878 there was not a board in the country which did not have amongst its members at least one man who sat in Parliament; ... Among themselves the boards may quarrel vigorously; in Parliament their representatives formed a compact body which doggedly opposed any alteration of the essential provisions of the act of 1877. It was their advice, and not the advice of the department, which influenced the Minister.²²⁸

The Department thus could only increase its own advisory and administrative role by reducing the power held by the Education Boards. A related concern, equally a driver for centralisation, was that non-governmental groups should not hold too much influence. Beeby took this concern further, objecting also to excessive influence on the part of teachers (see Chapter 6).

Centralisation under Hogben

Although Hogben's Department took power from the Education Boards, he regularly proclaimed himself an opponent of centralisation. Hogben stated that he supported 'strong and efficient local control',²²⁹ that he was in favour of decentralisation,²³⁰ and that he was 'very strongly against central administration'.²³¹ However, Hogben's reforms consistently eroded the power of the Boards, usually in favour of the Department. Hogben's strategy of professing support for the Boards while simultaneously undermining them was later replicated by Beeby. The following four early reforms by Hogben demonstrate his systematic erosion of the power of the Boards.

Hogben's 1899 *Regulations for Inspection and Examination of Schools* modified the function of the Board Inspectorate. The regulations weakened the Boards by shifting the right to examine students in Standards 1 to 5 from the Boards to the schools themselves, while maintaining the Department's right to overrule any examination decisions.

Hogben also increased centralisation by changing how teachers were employed and paid. In 1901 the Department, using its power of financial oversight (granted by the 1877 Education Act) established a national scale of teachers' salaries. The 1901 *Public Schools Teachers' Salaries Act* overrode local salary scales by establishing regulations over staffing in primary schools, and also how much the government would pay for

²²⁸ Webb, pp. 38-39.

²²⁹ AJHR, 1901, E14, p. 1.

²³⁰ AJHR, 1907, E1c, p. 3.

²³¹ AJHR, 1912, E12, p. 35.

each grade of teacher. By doing so, it took financial freedom away from the Boards and invested it in the Department.

Thirdly, in 1905 Hogben established a national system of teacher training for New Zealand's four Teachers' Colleges. Ostensibly this was to improve the quality of teaching, but it was also to increase control over teacher education:

Hogben ... [was] instrumental in the overhaul of teacher training. Control of teacher training became integral to his educational aspirations. Before becoming Inspector-General, Hogben had consistently expressed a deep concern with the existing curriculum and with the quality of the nation's teachers, hence centralized control of teacher training was vital to his future plans. ... The education boards retained administrative control while the Department of Education became responsible for all matters of policy.²³²

Hogben's new national teacher education curriculum eliminated the ability of Boards to decide for themselves what new local teachers would be taught. Hogben's focus on improving the quality of teachers later became the core of Beeby's theory of how to use teachers to ensure the quality of education.

Fourthly, Hogben not only extended the Department's influence over teachers but also sought to influence pupils directly. He extended the Department's influence into schools via the introduction of free government-printed publications. The first such publication, the *School Journal*, was founded in 1907:

The *School Journal* ... gave us an even more direct influence on what went on in the classroom. In many schools it was the children's main or sole reading matter, and its contents ... could affect methods of teaching and the pupil's enjoyment of reading, in some cases for a lifetime.²³³

By distributing the *Journal* directly to schools, the Department removed the Boards' ability to control the distribution of information. This technique of using publications to communicate directly with teachers and students was adopted by Beeby soon after he became Director:

I had little direct contact with the teachers ... I quickly decided to use the School Publications branch, started in 1939 under Lambourne, as the channel for the department's direct communication with teachers.²³⁴

Beeby was also influenced by Hogben's philosophy of making the curriculum more practical and prescriptive, in order to provide an education system better suited to students' needs.

²³² Openshaw and Ball, in O'Donaghue and Whitehead, pp. 158-159.

²³³ Beeby, 1992, p. 146.

²³⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 146.

Hogben and a Vocational Curriculum: Beeby's Precursor

Under Habens, the overall goal of schools was to prepare students for further education. Hogben, on the other hand, argued that the principal goal of all schools should be to address the vocational needs of students. His curriculum reforms attempted to fit school education to the future needs of pupils:

If the schools do not in the best sense fit their pupils for the needs of their future lives ... the schools will have failed, because to the great majority of their pupils the lessons of the class-room have had no relation to the facts of the universe, moral or otherwise.²³⁵

Hogben considered a vocational course to be one suited to every student no matter what their 'probable calling' in life:

A vocational course ... is not a technical or professional course, nor is it merely externally and immediately utilitarian ... It is essentially a course of general education ... in which a certain part of the work is brought into close contact with the facts of the life in which the boy or girl finds himself or herself and with the aims and objects of the most probable calling that he or she will follow in the future.²³⁶

Like Hogben, Beeby also emphasised a vocational curriculum; but unlike Hogben, Beeby's Department of Education focused on *guiding* the vocational choices of students. Nevertheless, the effect was the same in each case: Hogben and Beeby both supported the expansion of technical education.

Hogben's strong support for technical education was a significant part of his vocational reforms and had a lasting impact. Under Hogben the curriculum expanded to include an increased number of practical subjects. The 1900 and 1902 *Manual and Technical Instruction* Acts offered capitation, building, and equipment grants to schools and universities in order to establish technical instruction. The Acts were themselves an expansion of the 1895 *Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act*,²³⁷ which had contained no provision for grants. The technical grants to schools established by the 1900 and 1902 Acts were 'for manual work, science, and agriculture'.²³⁸ Hogben's grants helped to reorient the school system away from Habens' academically focused curriculum.

Hogben's 1904 curriculum introduced this extended range of technical subjects as part of an overall increase in prescription. His curriculum specified in great detail the content that teachers would be expected to cover in every subject. This additional depth

²³⁵ AJHR, 1913, E-12, pp. 2-3.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

²³⁷ This in turn had developed from Governor Grey's 1847 Ordinance that had identified industrial training as an appropriate focus for education (see Appendix 1, page X).

²³⁸ Campbell, 1941, p. 119.

of detail was accompanied by claims about the social, intellectual and cultural needs of students. He stated that education should explore:

the careful development and direction of the child's natural activities and powers ... the child will learn best, not so much by reading about things in books as by doing.²³⁹

His curriculum also specified in great detail the content of mandatory moral instruction. Hogben's curriculum was underpinned by his views on the place of morality in addressing students' needs. His curriculum stated:

the moral purpose [of education] should dominate the spirit of the whole school life.²⁴⁰

Beeby was strongly influenced by Hogben's emphasis on building the moral character of students. Beeby later argued that character building is 'the most important task of education'.

Hogben's new curriculum was not well received. Within a few days of its release, several publications expressed concern about the level of prescriptive detail in the curriculum. One newspaper wrote that

[Hogben] has presented by far too ambitious a scheme ... Instead of simplifying the whole programme of public school education, the Inspector-general has produced a curriculum still more complicated than that which it is intended to replace. ... On the whole it appears to be contemplated that the average New Zealander of the future will be stuffed as full of undigested facts as a universal cyclopaedia.²⁴¹

In response to this criticism, Hogben argued that critics misunderstood the purpose of his curriculum. He stated that schools were supposed to select portions of the curriculum, making sure that a suitable range of subjects was taught so as to suit the specific developmental needs of its students. He said that:

The important point ... is not the amount or number of things that are taught, but the spirit, character, and method of the teaching in relation to its purpose of developing the child's powers.²⁴²

Hogben explained that schools should offer different selections of courses so that students not intending to attend university would follow a practical curriculum, while academically-minded students would follow an academic curriculum.²⁴³ In short, each subject was prescribed in detail in his curriculum but it was up to schools, he said, to pick the subjects that they would teach their students.

²³⁹AJHR, 1904, E1c, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ AJHR, 1904, E1c, p. 2

²⁴¹ Otago Daily Times, Issue 12841, 9 December 1903, p. 4.

²⁴² AJHR, 1904, E1c, p. 2.

²⁴³ AJHR, 1905, E12, p. 5.

In fact, however, the high level of prescription actually reduced the freedom of teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of students. Despite Hogben's reply to the contrary, his curriculum reinforced the reality that what was taught in classrooms was decided by the Department rather than by teachers.

Nor was Hogben's plan to encourage schools to adapt to the needs of non-academic students widely successful. Although several Boards adopted the new curriculum, and received technical education grants, the schools were more stubborn:

[T]he secondary schools proved obdurate. They complied with the minimum requirements of the relevant regulations by incorporating the teaching of physics and chemistry into their programmes, but few would undertake to teach technical and commercial subjects.²⁴⁴

In reaction to the 'obdurate' response of secondary schools, Hogben simply introduced two new types of school. He extended the direct influence of the Department into secondary education, so mitigating the need to persuade the existing privately-run secondary schools of the merits of his curriculum. The new types of school were District High Schools, introduced in 1905, and technical day-schools, introduced in 1906. District High Schools were simply rural primary schools with an attached secondary section. Since all primary schools were already under the control of the Department, this move extended the Department's direct control into secondary education. Although the technical day-schools were not controlled by the Department, they were expressly set up to teach technical subjects:

[s]ubjects such as woodwork, metalwork, typing, book-keeping and homecraft were taught as well as some of the usual secondary school subjects ...²⁴⁵

Hogben's new District High Schools were, Beeby said, 'genuine rural or agricultural high schools, with a realistic curriculum adapted to the needs of the country'.²⁴⁶ Hogben himself would not have described matters in this way, since his focus was on the future needs of students and not on the needs of rural communities. For Beeby, the purpose of education was much wider and a much more pragmatic affair than Hogben's single-minded 'developing the child's powers'.

As Director, Beeby sought to reorient the education system so as to better address the needs of the whole country, not simply the needs of students. Nevertheless, Beeby's technical and vocational reforms of both the secondary and the tertiary sectors

²⁴⁴ Dakin, 1973, p. 27.

²⁴⁵ Fraser, 1986, p. 334.

²⁴⁶ Beeby, 1937, p. 9.

echo Hogben's. Moreover, Beeby's reforms aimed at increasing access to tertiary education also echo Hogben's reforms to increase access to secondary education.

Hogben and Increasing Access to Secondary Schools

Hogben increased access to secondary education by simplifying the system of primary school qualifications, and using the Competency and Proficiency leaving qualifications as entrance qualifications for secondary education. In 1901, Hogben increased access to the Competency and Proficiency leaving qualifications themselves, by abolishing Habens' complex system of examinations for every standard.

Then, in 1902, he began offering monetary incentives to secondary schools that would agree to admit every pupil who had passed Proficiency. Hogben's incentives were intended to increase the number of students attending each secondary school:

education boards were offered a capitation grant in respect of these schools large enough to enable them to dispense with fees and grant 'free places' to all pupils who passed standard 6 ... In 1902 a system of free places for the endowed secondary schools was instituted. The governing bodies of these institutions were offered a capitation of £6 for every pupil admitted without payment of fees, provided additional free places were given at a rate of one for every £50 of revenue from endowments.²⁴⁷

Hogben's initial attempts were only partially successful, with only 15 out of New Zealand's 25 Secondary Schools actually accepting Hogben's offer.²⁴⁸ Hogben turned to the Government for legislative assistance and the 1903 *Secondary Schools Act* effectively made his scheme compulsory:

Secondary schools were required either to accept the offer of capitation allowances for free place pupils or to institute free places to the value of one-fifth of their endowment revenues.²⁴⁹

In 1905, Hogben extended his free place scheme with a view to increasing enrolment at his new technical day schools. He made Competency, the standard 5 qualification, the entry requirement for the technical day-schools. However, this introduced a two-tier system, with the Technical Schools having a lower entry requirement than the Secondary Schools. His move to increase access to technical education had the effect of devaluing the Technical Schools:

From the outset technical schools had inferior status ...²⁵⁰

Hogben further extended his free place scheme, in both secondary and technical schools, by using the Civil Service Junior Examination to provide additional access to

²⁴⁷ Webb, p. 77.

²⁴⁸ AJHR, 1903, E-1, p. xxxiii.

²⁴⁹ Webb, p. 77.

²⁵⁰ Olssen, in Rice, 1992, p. 276

education. His original free place scheme provided students with free access only to the first two years of high school—later called a ‘junior’ free place. However, from 1905, students who passed the junior civil service examination became entitled to a ‘senior’ free place for their remaining years of secondary education.²⁵¹

Each of the qualification-based requirements in Hogben’s scheme reinforced the prevailing idea that access to education is dependent on achieving a specific qualification. This idea, originally was established by the Matriculation (later University Entrance) exam in 1872, was perpetuated under Beeby, and is still prevalent in the current education system.

Nevertheless, Hogben’s free-place scheme was successful in significantly increasing the number of pupils receiving post-primary education. By 1925, 52% of all students attaining Proficiency went on to post-primary education, with 93% of these students attending by means of the Free Place Scheme.²⁵² Hogben’s qualification-based reforms to increase access to secondary education foreshadowed Beeby’s own qualification-based reforms aimed at increasing access to tertiary education.

The Education Act 1914

One of the reasons for the success of Hogben’s scheme was that the scheme was supported not only by the Liberal Party government but also by the following (more socially conservative) Reform Party government, under which he served between 1912 and 1915. The 1914 Education Act consolidated all the education reforms since the 1877 Education Act and so moved Hogben’s various reforms into law.

The 1914 Act, based on a Royal Commission on Education that was set up in 1912, was a *coup de grâce* to Hogben’s detractors. The Act created free places for all students in publicly funded secondary schools; raised the leaving age to 14; transferred control of the School Inspectorate to the Department of Education; removed the power of school committees to recommend the appointment or dismissal of teachers; and made provision for a national grading scheme for teachers. The Act was thus a significant step towards the thorough-going centralisation of the educational system, and was the last major expansion of the powers of the Department until it was administered by Beeby.

²⁵¹ AJHR, 1907, E1, p. xix.

²⁵² AJHR, 1925, E1, p. 23.

Hogben's enduring influence on Beeby

Hogben's educational ideals had a life-long impact on Beeby. A few years before Beeby became Director, he wrote that Hogben was 'a strong and progressive administrator', whose reforms of the curriculum were 'foiled' only by the 'conservatism' of schools.²⁵³ The later Beeby said that Hogben was 'the greatest of all our Directors of Education'.²⁵⁴ Beeby retained his admiration for Hogben in his final years:

[A]fter a lapse of fifty years ... [I] find my respect for Hogben undiminished. I begin to suspect that my thinking on education owes more to Hogben than I ever imagined.²⁵⁵

As discussed in later chapters, Beeby considered himself, as in his characterisation of Hogben, to be a progressive administrator whose various educational reforms were undermined by conservative teachers and an ill-informed public.

Beeby and Hogben had much in common. Both took office during a time of economic recovery and under similar political circumstances. Both began their reforms a few years after the election of a socially liberal government that had campaigned on rejecting the conservative educational policies of previous governments. Both remained in office for a long period of time, and both saw governments voted out, yet both came to be seen as embodying the educational views of a particular government. In Beeby's case, his reforms came to be seen as representative of the 1935-1950 Labour Party government's rejection of the educational policies of the series of governments that had held power for the twenty-year period after Hogben's retirement.

3.4 The Department under William J. Anderson 1915-1921

The Reform Party government appointed Anderson Director of Education on 1 May 1915. Anderson had been the Assistant-Director of Education from 1906 and then the Acting Director during the first four months of 1915. He retired from the position in March 1921;²⁵⁶ his almost six-year term was the first of a series of Directorships of similar duration preceding Beeby's twenty-year term. Anderson's term was shaped by a series of events outside of his control, including World War One and then the 1918 Influenza Epidemic. Webb said of Anderson's directorship: 'Over sixty years of age, and with retirement in sight, Anderson desired nothing more than to maintain peace and

²⁵³ Beeby, 1937, p. 9.

²⁵⁴ Beeby, Speech notes to NZEBA, 1956, p. 6.

²⁵⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 108.

²⁵⁶ See Davey, pp. 34-35, and Webb, p. 94, for a brief biography of Anderson.

the *status quo*.²⁵⁷ This criticism is not entirely just: Anderson sought to maintain the stability of the education system at a time when the status quo was also threatened by a conservative backlash against the sweeping reforms of the Hogben era. Beeby described Anderson's directorship of lacking inventiveness. Yet in fact Anderson achieved a radical reorientation of Hogben's reforms.

It was, Beeby said, a time when 'new theories were scarce and educational experiments were suspect'.²⁵⁸ Echoing Webb, Beeby wrote:

[T]he concern was to maintain standards rather than to introduce new ideas and practices. ... Anderson was within six years of retirement and preferred routine and the quiet life to adventure in education.²⁵⁹

However, Anderson also spent much of his Directorship completing Hogben's reforms and to a large extent reorienting these in accordance with the Reform Party government's policies. Anderson sought to implement the 1914 Education Act in such a way as to meet the demands of the growing population:

Although its administration of education was based on the reforms of the previous Liberal era and was generally not innovative, the [Reform] government was highly sensitive to the growing demands that their children be equipped with the qualifications enabling them to enter skilled trades and white collar jobs. ... Enrolments grew most rapidly at technical high schools, and most of their pupils came from the lower socio-economic strata.²⁶⁰

In Anderson's hands, Hogben's vocational reforms became the means to produce a loyal, efficient, and well-trained workforce:

Training children for roles in the work-force emerged as an important function of the educational system ... the system was designed to produce not only economically useful skills, however, but also sound morals and loyalty to the British Empire. Education was seen as method of socialising the young in order to produce good, productive, and efficient citizens.²⁶¹

While Hogben himself had focused on the needs of the students, Anderson focused on the need for a suitably trained workforce. Here he foreshadowed Beeby's drive to create a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the nation.

Under Anderson, the Department extended its control over the staffing of schools, and the inspection of teachers in both primary and secondary schools. In 1920, more or less complete control of the (primary) School Inspectorate was achieved by the introduction of a national system for grading teachers:

²⁵⁷ Webb, p. 66.

²⁵⁸ Beeby, in the introduction of *Littledene*, by Somerset, p. xiv.

²⁵⁹ Beeby, 1992, p. 45.

²⁶⁰ Fairburn, in Sinclair, 1996, p. 205.

²⁶¹ Olssen, in Rice, 1992, p. 277.

The effects ... were immediate and profound. Over the great majority of appointments the boards lost all effective control; except for specialist positions, the staffing of schools was, after 1920, determined automatically.²⁶²

Furthermore, the 1920 *Education Amendment Act* gave the Department the authority to issue regulations on the classification and salaries of all secondary and technical school teachers.

Anderson worked to reorient the education system towards training an efficient and compliant workforce. His successor, on the other contrary, sought to develop students' independence.

3.5 The Department under John Caughley, 1922-26

Caughley was appointed Assistant Director of Education in January 1916 and so served under Anderson until the latter's retirement.²⁶³ Caughley became Director of Education in 1922. Little has been written about him or his Directorship.

Caughley appeared to consider himself a Hogbenite. Two years after leaving the Directorship, he claimed that he had maintained the spirit of Hogben's reforms to the syllabus:

the main principles of and objectives of [Hogben's 1904] syllabus have not since been greatly altered.²⁶⁴

In fact, however, Caughley disagreed extensively with some of the main objectives and principles of Hogben's reforms. He opposed Hogben's separation of academic and vocational education, and his prescriptive, efficiency-orientated curriculum (both core features of Hogben's reforms). Caughley advocated the amalgamation of the several different types of post-primary education introduced by Hogben. In contrast with Hogben's vision of a vocational education, Caughley sought a system that was based on developing students' autonomy.

Caughley regarded Hogben's distinction between academic and vocational education as artificial, and strongly supported breaking this distinction down. He argued:

²⁶² Webb, p. 101.

²⁶³ Cumming and Cumming, 1978, p. 216.

²⁶⁴ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 38.

the study of every so-called utilitarian or technical subject can and should bring culture to the student. Likewise every cultural subject must, to realise its own proper value, have a reactive relationship with the realities of life.²⁶⁵

Further, Caughley argued that in the absence of a real distinction between academic and vocational subjects, Hogben's differentiation of secondary schools was unnecessary and unhelpful. The obliteration of this distinction would, he said, bring about a secondary education system that was better aligned with the (already undifferentiated) primary school system, and also better able to address the different needs of students:

The time is therefore most opportune for the adoption of a better articulation of all post-primary education with primary education itself. Such provision should embody in the same schools for full time pupils ... all the courses of education suited to the various aptitudes and needs of the pupils with their differing requirements for the future.²⁶⁶

Caughley supported the introduction of American-style Junior High School courses, to provide a transition between primary and secondary school. His goal was to help prepare primary school students for further education:

What I personally favour is the adoption of the Junior Secondary Course in all our schools and centres of post-primary education. This would mean that a more gradual and natural transition from primary to secondary education would be provided for, at a stage some two years earlier than that at which the present unsatisfactory junction is made.²⁶⁷

Caughley's vision was implemented, although not exactly as he intended. Rather than Junior High School courses being introduced in primary schools, the Department introduced from 1922 separate Junior High Schools (some were later called Intermediate Schools). These Junior High Schools combined features of primary and secondary schools, with the aim of providing better educational continuity.

Caughley was nevertheless extremely supportive of the new Junior High Schools. He argued that such a system of schools was 'one of the most far-reaching reforms' in New Zealand education, and that it should be the first step in a system-wide reformation of the compulsory education system:

It involves a recognition of the world-wide opinion of educationalists that, consequent on the extension of facilities for secondary and advanced education, the old boundary limit of the primary school is placed too far on in the pupil's course, and that in his interest a rearrangement should be made in the relationship of primary, secondary, and technical education.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 37.

²⁶⁶ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 42.

²⁶⁷ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 43.

²⁶⁸ AJHR, 1924, E1, p. 1.

Caughley argued that the Junior High Schools were well worth the costs in establishing them. In general, he was critical of those whom he considered too focused on the transitional costs of educational reform:

It cannot be too strongly urged, however, that, in view of the indisputable advantages of the new system—advantages so great and so numerous as to outweigh by far any small difficulties that may occur during the state of transition—it would be foolish for anybody to focus his attention on the minor difficulties that are incidental to every period of adjustment. Such an attitude would be of the “pennywise and pound-foolish” order, and if it were effective could have no other result than that of robbing the children of New Zealand of the advantages of one of the greatest reforms in education ...²⁶⁹

Beeby later wrote that Caughley was a ‘director with insight’ who foresaw the ‘ultimate amalgamation of the secondary and technical schools’.²⁷⁰

Unlike Beeby, with his emphasis on a compulsory core curriculum, Caughley was in favour of student autonomy:

The teacher ... best plays his part when he enables the pupil more and more to take up the responsibility of his own thinking, feeling, and acting. ...²⁷¹

Caughley did not believe that education would best prepare students for the future just by instilling government-specified knowledge into them. He said that a curriculum should avoid being a ‘list of necessary items of knowledge or training’.²⁷² Adequate preparation for the future, he said, did not mean simply preparing students for their place in the future workforce:

[W]e must ever remember that he is more than a pupil or a future worker. He is a human personality with a destiny of his own. ... We should no longer think in terms of subjects and courses and schools ... [W]e should desire to train our young people from their early years to value and use rightly the freedom they enjoy and the liberty that every freeman desires ... After all, Freedom and Liberty constitute the greatest human obligation that can be desired, assumed, or conferred.²⁷³

Beeby later made a similar argument that schools should train students to value western liberal traditions such as democracy (see p. 140).

Despite Caughley’s various departures from Hogben’s principles, he did support centralisation. As part of consolidating the entire school system he expanded the reach of his Department’s powers into non-public education. At this time, some primary schools and most secondary schools were private. The 1921-1922 *Education Amendment Act* extended the inspection powers of the Department to include all private

²⁶⁹ AJHR, 1924, E1, p. 4.

²⁷⁰ Beeby, 1992, pp. 241, 128.

²⁷¹ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 41.

²⁷² Caughley, in Davey, 1928, p. 37.

²⁷³ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, pp. 42, 45.

primary schools. The Act also required that all schools be registered with the Department, and that all teachers take an oath of allegiance. Government financial support for a secondary school would be forthcoming only if the schools' teachers were inspected and approved by the Department.²⁷⁴

3.6 The Department under Theophilus B. Strong, 1927-1932

Strong had been appointed Chief Inspector of Schools in January 1922. He became Assistant Director of Education a few months before Caughley's retirement and was appointed Director in 1927. Beeby described the late 1920s as:

a time of steady if unexciting educational expansion, except for a burst of economy in 1927 ... Many minor reforms were begun ... but educational policy, even in those prosperous days, was not unduly adventurous.²⁷⁵

A blunt man, even described as 'tactless',²⁷⁶ Strong desired a powerful and authoritarian Department. He thought the Department should have the power to require schools to address the needs of their students and the economic needs of the nation. The objectives of many of his reforms were similar to Anderson's. Strong thought: that schools should train all types of workers, from professionals to labourers; that schools should sort students according to their intellectual ability, in order to provide an appropriate education; and that there should be a greater emphasis on technical education.²⁷⁷

Strong's sympathy for Anderson's objectives was not the only way in which he turned his back on Caughley. He was sceptical of the system of Junior High Schools that Caughley had brought in. He said:

The proposed reorganisation which has for its object the establishment of what is known as the 'junior high school system' has been received with a certain amount of caution, if not reserve, mainly because of its effects upon both primary and secondary schools, and the lack of sufficiently definite information regarding the cost. ... The general opinion throughout the Dominion is that it would be unwise to abandon the present undoubtedly efficient primary-school system before being assured of the suitability and worth of its rival.²⁷⁸

By the time of Strong's departure from the Department, the Junior High School system had become only a mere shadow of what Caughley had intended:

²⁷⁴ Fraser, 1986, p. 336.

²⁷⁵ Beeby, 1936, p. 395.

²⁷⁶ Cumming and Cumming, p. 249.

²⁷⁷ Strong, in Davies, 1928, pp. 152-155.

²⁷⁸ AJHR, 1927, E1, p. 3.

The course was now reduced from three years to two, the name ‘junior high school’ was changed to ‘intermediate school or department’, and less liberal staffing and salary scales were brought into operation.²⁷⁹

Unlike Caughley, Strong supported Hogben’s differentiation of secondary schools into technical and non-technical. Strong argued that the technical schools, rather than the academically-focused secondary schools, should be responsible for educating the majority of students, since most students were ‘practically minded’.²⁸⁰ His emphasis on technical education was due in part to his Hogbenite desire that students receive a ‘suitable’ education. He emphasised the undesirability of students receiving an academic education that was inappropriate for them, saying:

The trend of modern education is undoubtedly to ascertain what type of education will be of most benefit to the individual child, to measure as accurately as possible his mental calibre and discover the nature of his talents. At this stage in our educational development we dare not risk such a mistake as giving undue emphasis to academic studies.²⁸¹

Strong’s idea of suitable education reflected the prejudices of the times. He supported sex-based educational differentiation along the lines of ‘the old-established “male” and “female” subjects’.²⁸² He also supported a non-academic, agricultural education for Maori students:

Even as late as 1931, T.B. Strong contended that Maori schools should turn out boys to be good farmers and girls to be good farmers wives. Strong even went so far as to say that he did not want white teachers to encourage [Maori] pupils to take arithmetic beyond their present or even possible future needs.²⁸³

Furthermore, Strong believed that a suitable education included shaping students’ political ideas in accordance with the nationalistic thinking of the times. He argued that it was the duty of teachers to foster in students a love of country and a willingness to sacrifice oneself in defence of the homeland.²⁸⁴

From 1927 the Department appointed vocational counsellors to the larger technical high schools to help ensure that students received a suitable education. Strong argued that psychologists—rarely mentioned by Caughley—had an important role in helping schools to determine the appropriate education for each student, saying:

[M]ore should be done in the schools themselves by expert psychologists and psychiatrists to aid teachers ... to find some way of more completely understanding the child and satisfying his peculiar needs. The future is full of hope, for every year finds the State more clearly realising its responsibilities towards its children. There

²⁷⁹Campbell, p. 141.

²⁸⁰Strong, quoted in Openshaw, Lee and Lee, p. 160.

²⁸¹Strong, in Davies, 1928, pp. 153-154.

²⁸²Cumming and Cumming, p. 234.

²⁸³Walker, in Rice, 1992, p. 499.

²⁸⁴ Strong, 1921, 1 November.

are already State dental clinics and State medical clinics; to-morrow there will be mental clinics.²⁸⁵

The job of the counsellors was to help students decide which educational path they should pursue. Strong argued that vocational guidance was important in order to

avoid the possibility of a pupil remaining in a post-primary school that cannot satisfy his real aspirations nor provide him with courses of instruction that will lead to the highest development of his powers.²⁸⁶

Beeby later built on Strong's reforms in the area of vocational counselling, appointing the first educational psychologist to the Department in 1943. Beeby created a 'small but flourishing psychological service' in 1948.²⁸⁷ I discuss the influence of psychological theory over the education system during Beeby's Directorship in Chapter 4.

In order to provide further guidance on what constituted suitable education, Strong introduced his 1929 *Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools* (also known as the 'Red Book'). His syllabus was the first significant revision of the curriculum since Hogben's 1904 syllabus. The 1929 syllabus was based on the report of a committee, set up in 1927, to revise the curriculum and examine current teaching methods in primary schools.²⁸⁸ The result was a detailed curriculum strongly influenced by 'the new education' movement. Middleton said:

Written by a committee, this 223-page book, hardbound in red covers, included 63 pages of 'syllabus', a 12-page bibliography, and 148 pages of appendixes written by inspectors. ... The Red Book ... [was] influenced by the core assumptions of the progressive movement of the 1920s-1930s (often referred to as 'the new education'). The new education wove together psychoanalytic and psychological notions about the 'normal' developmental stages of children with the more 'sociological' theories about the school's role in fostering democracy.²⁸⁹

Beeby later said that Strong was 'not without imagination'. The Red Book 'covered all the subjects needed to provide a rounded education for the whole child'.²⁹⁰ Beeby's own 1944 curriculum was also intended to provide a rounded education and so possibly the Red Book was in some sense a model for Beeby's curriculum.

Although Strong's Red Book provided a detailed curriculum, the Red Book noted that that teachers were being given a 'new freedom ... to organise their teaching

²⁸⁵ Strong, in Davies, 1928, p. 149.

²⁸⁶ Strong, in Davies, 1928, pp. 154.

²⁸⁷ Beeby, 1992, p. 150.

²⁸⁸ Department of Education, 1928, *Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools*. Wellington [N.Z.]: Government Printer.

²⁸⁹ Middleton, in Robertson and McConaghy, 2006, pp. 43-44.

²⁹⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 138.

in any way that appeals to them'.²⁹¹ Teachers were encouraged to adapt the content of the curriculum to suit the needs of their own particular students:

The Department particularly desires that the present syllabus shall be regarded both by Inspectors and teachers as mainly suggestive. Teachers are to consider themselves free to make any alteration or rearrangement of work they think desirable ...²⁹²

Nevertheless, the authoritarian Department required that its approval be given for any innovations in the curriculum. Any use of new teaching methods demanded the approval of the Department's inspectors. The Red Book said:

[T]he Inspector will approve any reasonable scheme that appears to meet the needs of children of a particular type or of a particular locality.²⁹³

However, the Red Book did not make clear what counted as a 'reasonable' scheme. It stated that inspectors would only allow 'full measure of freedom to teachers who are competent enough to use it wisely', and even then the teachers were warned not to ignore or discard the Inspector's recommendations unless they could substitute something better.²⁹⁴

Strong attempts to reform the education system were badly hampered by the 1930s Depression. Alcorn explains:

[Strong's] term in office as Director coincided with the Depression and he was, perhaps unfairly, blamed for educational cuts. Although his Red Book, the syllabus revision of 1929, indicated a liberality of views, his manner was authoritarian.²⁹⁵

The effects of the 1929 United States stock market crash hit New Zealand during the second half of Strong's Directorship:

By 1933 unemployment reached approximately ... 12 per cent of the workforce [and] the national income had plummeted by 40 per cent from its 1929 level ... The conventional wisdom of the period was that the only way out of such a financial crisis was ever greater efforts at thrift.²⁹⁶

Strong insisted that teachers enhance their teaching methods against this background of deteriorating economic conditions and swingeing educational cuts—the 1932 *National Expenditure Adjustment Act* cut the salaries of teachers up to 12.5 per cent.²⁹⁷

Strong's reforms were also hampered by his bitter relationship with the Education Boards. In his first year as Director, the Government established a committee to consider ways of reducing education costs. During a private discussion with the

²⁹¹Department of Education, 1928, p. 5.

²⁹²Ibid., p. 5.

²⁹³Ibid., 1928, p. 5.

²⁹⁴Ibid., 1928, p. 5.

²⁹⁵Alcorn, 1988, p. 97.

²⁹⁶Moon, 2013, pp. 143-144.

²⁹⁷Cumming and Cumming, p. 249.

committee Strong proposed abolishing the Education Boards, together with all local education authorities, apart from school committees.²⁹⁸ Unfortunately Strong's proposal was made public, and the Department's relationship with the Education Boards—increasingly fragile since the 1914 Education Act—sank to an all-time low:

The record of the next five years is a record of intrigues and counter-intrigues and of bitter and sterile controversy. The boards ... fought every proposal [and] the department ... became increasingly intolerant of criticism and increasingly unfair in its methods of attack.²⁹⁹

In the end this terrible cost achieved nothing. Strong's proposal to abolish the education boards was at first diluted and then eventually rejected outright by the government.

Beeby later observed that Strong

had handled many problems clumsily and was at odds with both the teachers' organisations and the various controlling authorities of schools.³⁰⁰

Beeby's early attitude to the boards was also critical. Three years before becoming Director he wrote:

The local boards, both primary and secondary, still exist, and if they have lost most of their power to do anything positive they have by no means lost their power to prevent anyone else from doing it. The loss of the bulk of their authority has made them all the more jealous of what remains. Amongst them they represent a potentially solid body of political power. In consequence, most Ministers of Education have preferred to lead rather than drive them, even though the requisite financial goad lies ready to hand. But leading can be a tedious business when the beast suspects that it is to the slaughter.³⁰¹

As Director Beeby incentivised the Boards to comply with his reforms by offering them some limited decentralisation. Nor did he shrink from bringing the full force of his personality to bear upon board members in private if they publically challenged his authority to implement reform. I discuss Beeby and the Boards in Chapter 4.

3.7 The Department under N.T. Lambourne, 1933-1940

Lambourne, Director of Education from 1933, adopted a conciliatorily style of leadership, as part of trying to mend the relationships with other educational bodies that were damaged under Strong:

²⁹⁸Webb, p. 106; Mitchell, p. 31.

²⁹⁹ Webb, p. 105. See Webb, Chapter 6, for a discussion of the deteriorating relationship between the Department and the School Boards during the twentieth century.

³⁰⁰Beeby, 1992, pp.118-119.

³⁰¹Beeby, 1937, p. 8.

[Strong's] manner was authoritarian. Lambourne's unobtrusive courtesy and pleasantness of manner were important in restoring trust.³⁰²

Beeby thought that Lambourne's contribution to rebuilding trust in the Department had not been appropriately recognised by historians:

Lambourne was an admirable public servant, who has never received his just desserts from historians. He had come into the directorship ... when the department's public relations were at their lowest. The Depression had meant savage cuts ... [and] Lambourne had to bring the system back to normal and, at the same time, re-establish the department's good relations with every part of it. He was a man of compassion, of absolute integrity, and ... [he] won the trust of everyone in the education service, and the trust in the man spread to his department.³⁰³

Beeby himself adopted a Hogbenite style of leadership with aspects of both Strong's assertiveness and Lambourne's courtesy and pleasantness.³⁰⁴

During Lambourne's first few years, when New Zealand was still recovering from the Depression, he revisited Hogben's emphasis on vocational education. In 1933 he encouraged the (rural) District High Schools to provide a greater range of practical courses to their students. Beeby explained:

Despite the fact that a very small percentage indeed of their pupils ever go on to higher studies, [the District High Schools] have, until recently, been remarkably academic in tone. In 1933 a new attempt was made to return to Hogben's ideal of thirty years earlier and a Departmental memorandum was issued encouraging the district high schools to provide a farm course and a home crafts course in addition to the ordinary academic course.³⁰⁵

The Memorandum that Beeby mentions was also in accordance with Hogben's belief in socially efficient education. Lee comments:

The overarching social efficiency strategy – where the curriculum provided to individual pupils would be determined in accordance with their intellectual abilities, the type of post-primary school they attended, their intended length of stay, and future employment options – continued to be promoted unquestionably by Directors and Ministers of Education throughout the 1930s.³⁰⁶

³⁰²Alcorn, 1999, p. 97.

³⁰³Beeby, 1992, p. 118.

³⁰⁴For further discussion on Lambourne's influence over Beeby, see Chapter 2.

³⁰⁵Beeby, 1937, p. 15.

³⁰⁶Lee, H., 2005, p. 32

Beeby too would adopt this ‘social efficiency strategy’ during the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, one of his earliest influences on the education system was a renewed emphasis on students’ abilities. His famous 1939 statement on educational goals, written for Fraser, emphasised that all students should receive education ‘to the best of their ability’. I discuss Beeby’s 1939 statement in Chapter 4 (p. 91).

Lambourne continued to follow in Hogben’s footsteps by introducing a new secondary school qualification in 1934. According to Lambourne, the new ‘School Certificate’ was designed as a leaving qualification for non-academically inclined students. Lambourne said in a report:

For some of the pupils, however, their curricula have been too academic. The introduction of the school certificate in 1934 should be the means of freeing those schools from the dominance of the University Entrance Examination and of giving them the opportunity of developing other courses of study than the academic one for those pupils who are not aiming at, or are not fitted for, University education.³⁰⁷

However, much like Hogben’s vocational reforms thirty years earlier, the new non-academic courses and qualification struggled to find acceptance by parents or employers.³⁰⁸ In 1945 Beeby ‘solved’ this problem by introducing a compulsory curriculum, with both academic and vocational content, and also a more conventional School Certificate that preceded University Entrance.

In June 1935 Lambourne departed on a six-month tour of educational systems in other countries.³⁰⁹ In November, during his absence, a new Labour Party government was elected. In 1936 Beeby noted:

The last two or three Governments, whatever their other virtues or vices, made no pretense of regarding education as a major issue. Although there were some Ministers of Education with a genuine interest in education, there were usually under the dominion of the Treasury. The new Government has always made education a main plank of its platform, and has now given the Ministry of Education to one of its strongest members, the deputy-leader of the party. There is a general impression abroad that the stage is set for a “boom” in education.³¹⁰

Following his return, Lambourne reported on his findings to the new government. Nevertheless, while he provided an extensive list of areas needing consideration and improvement, once finances permitted, he also stated his broad satisfaction with the overall condition of the New Zealand education system:

The New Zealand system of education, primary and post-primary, is fundamentally sound, modern, and well suited to our requirements; it does not need any drastic amendment ... The free-place system ... is a good one ... The intermediate school or

³⁰⁷AJHR, 1935, E5, p. 8

³⁰⁸Fraser, 1989, p. 336.

³⁰⁹AJHR, 1935, E5, p.1.

³¹⁰Beeby, 1936, p. 395.

department ... is educationally sound ... The school certificate ... removes to some extent the dominance of the University Entrance Examination ... The grading of primary-school teachers ... rarely fails in practice to secure that the most efficient applicant for any position shall be selected for appointment, and prevents patronage and localism ... The training of teachers is on the right lines ...³¹¹

According to Cumming and Cumming:

Lambourne's report was regarded by his critics as being more defensive and complacent than critical and urgent in its constructiveness.³¹²

Lambourne's broad satisfaction with the education system contrasted with Peter Fraser's desire to make sweeping changes to it (as mentioned in Chapter 2). Lambourne's supposed complacency may help to explain why a few years later Fraser sought out a more activist Director of Education.

Lambourne's report also contained several suggestions that were more in agreement with Hogben and Strong than with Fraser. Lambourne believed that the intermediate schools should play an instrumental role in education by guiding students towards a suitable type of secondary education. He wrote:

Unlike other systems, it aims at discovering at a reasonably early age (13 to 14), and before a pupil enters his course, the kind of post-primary education, secondary or technical, for which he show natural aptitude. ... Our provision of exploratory intermediate schools ... allows a two-year period for trying out the capacities of a pupil and ascertaining whether between 13 and 14 he should enter a secondary or technical school to proceed with his post-primary education.³¹³

Furthermore, Lambourne's conservatism is reflected by his Strong-like support for sex-based educational differentiation:

A hall should be provided for assembly purposes and for physical exercises, especially for girls. Wherever possible each school should have the Woodwork Instructors and Domestic Science Instructresses full-time on its own staff to secure full recognition of the subjects they take as integral parts of the course given, and to promote proper co-ordination in the teaching—e.g., among the teachers of woodwork, arithmetic, drawing, and handicrafts for boys, and the teachers of domestic subjects, science, needlework, art, and handicrafts for the girls.³¹⁴

Nevertheless, Labour's 1935 Education policy effectively laid out Lambourne's work for the remainder of his Directorship. In 1937 he reaffirmed his agenda, as determined by the government's policy.³¹⁵

In 1936 Lambourne implemented one of Fraser's most impactful policies—the abolition of the Proficiency examination as from 1937. This reform removed the barrier preventing advancement from primary to secondary education, and led to a major

³¹¹AJHR, 1935, E5, pp. 1-2.

³¹²Cumming and Cumming, 1978, p. 256

³¹³ AJHR, 1936, E5, pp. 5-6.

³¹⁴ AJHR, 1936, E5, p. 5.

³¹⁵See AJHR, 1937, E1, p. 2.

increase in the number of children attending secondary schools. Between 1935 and 1939, the number of students receiving a secondary education increased from 58% to 64% of the school age population. According to Beeby, the new secondary school enrolment was ‘more ... than during any other year in the Dominion’s history’.³¹⁶ The percentage of children at secondary schools increased further during the 1940s; by 1949 it was 92%.³¹⁷

In 1939, his final year as Director, Lambourne established the School Publications Division. The goal of the new Division was to expand the *School Journal* (established by Hogben) and to replace ‘irrelevant’ textbooks from overseas with New Zealand-oriented equivalents. Beeby explained:

Some of us, from the 1920s onwards, were objecting that [overseas] textbooks were not relevant to the needs of many of the pupils and students who were using them.³¹⁸

In this manner, the Department greatly extended its influence over the reading matter that students could study and the opinions that could be presented.

Beeby later argued that the desires of the state are ‘equally valid’ as those of students, and therefore the Department has a right to control the curriculum in this way:

It would obviously be wrong to let the consumers of education have all their own way in fixing the purposes of reading. The producers have purposes of their own, which are equally valid, if not always equally effective. The State has its reasons for wanting its citizens literate, and the teaching profession their views on why children should learn to read and how they should be guided once the basic skill is gained.³¹⁹

Beeby thus argued that the state should regulate the education that students receive. This belief underlay a large number of his reforms, especially of the curriculum, the assessment system, and the qualification system.

So by 1939 the system moved from a philosophy of decentralised administration with a high level of local control, to a centralised administration with a lower level of local control. The 1877 Education act had originally granted the Boards broad-ranging powers: to administer its own finances; to employ and pay teachers according to their own regulations; to provide secondary education; and to control the inspectorate, which was responsible for assessing students and granting qualifications. From 1901 to 1939 the Department had: changed to the direct funding of buildings and salaries, imposed its own national grading system and pay scale, which granted *de facto* control over

³¹⁶ AJHR, 1940, E1, p. 2.

³¹⁷ Bassett and King, p. 145; AJHR, 1950, E1, p. 2.

³¹⁸ Beeby, ‘Why Reading’ Talk, 1973.

³¹⁹ Beeby, ‘Why Reading’ Talk, 1973

employment, established a national and compulsory scheme of free secondary education, and introduced a national system of inspection.

In 1940 Lambourne retired and Beeby became Director. The Depression was over, the Second World War had begun, and Labour had been in power for over four years. Beeby wrote:

By the time I became director of education at the beginning of 1940, the ... government, with Fraser as prime minister, was committed, in peace or war, to the reform of education, employment was plentiful and schools at all levels were assured of work falling within their capacities. Political differences were relatively low-key during the war, and many of us in the profession ... saw education as one arm of a sweeping state policy to produce a society where the sufferings of the Depression would be forever a thing of the past.³²⁰

³²⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 292.

CHAPTER 4

THE EARLY YEARS, 1938-1944

I am making a list of all my publications and main mimeographed reports and papers. To do even that seems to me an act of gross egotism, though I expect some poor devil will some day make a Ph.D. out of me, and will be grateful to have something to quote to fill up the pages.

(Beeby, letter to David McKenzie, 7 February 1983)

4.1 Overview

This chapter gives an account of Beeby's influence on the education system during his first six years at the Department. This period might be called Beeby's progressive phase—he has recently been inspired by the NEF conference, and then soon after been hired into the Department of Education by Peter Fraser. Unencumbered by future struggles, Beeby began to implement Labour's wide-ranging liberal and egalitarian reforms. He thus may rightfully be called an 'Education great', as the Southland Times described him in its obituary,³²¹ but it is also true that his background would prejudice his thinking in significant ways.

Charting the extent and limits of Beeby's influence is not straightforward. Beeby initially oversaw educational change during a turbulent decade which included both the World-War Two shortages in education, the post-war reinvestment in education, and the protectionist restructuring of the economy. During the first five years of his Directorship Beeby was greatly financially restrained, and so this period is dominated more by ideals, desires and intentions than practical success. Nevertheless, in the context of limited financial resources, it is possible to more clearly see the educational concepts that Beeby embraced and the leadership style that he adopted.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the nature of Beeby leadership, and in particular the amount of power he had over determining policy. I explore this topic with the question of how influential Peter Fraser was on Beeby. I consider the impact during this period (and beyond) of Beeby's book *Intermediate Schools of New Zealand*, and then I describe and analyse the statement of educational objectives that Beeby wrote for Fraser's 1939 Education Report. Finally I discuss his influence on the important Thomas Report of 1944—a key point of reference for many educational reforms of the following decades. The background and formation of these interwoven documents provide insight into Beeby's overall style of leadership as Director of Education.

³²¹ Southland Times (1998) Education great dies, 12 March 1998, p.8.

4.2 Administrator vs. Architect

There are two common assessments of Beeby's method of administration. The first views Beeby as nothing more than a highly skilled administrator who just fleshed out and implemented the reforms handed down to him by successive Ministers of Education. I challenge this *Administrator* view (as I call it) by arguing that the decisions Beeby made while bringing about his reforms did significantly alter the education system.

The second assessment views Beeby as a historically significant progressive/liberal reformer who was successful in reorienting the education system towards equality of opportunity. I challenge this *Architect* view (again, my term) by arguing that, although Beeby's egalitarian reforms were broad, they sometimes lacked depth and did not change the fundamental philosophical presuppositions underlying the system that he inherited from his predecessors.

A view held by some educational historians is that Beeby had a deep understanding of the issues even before his Directorship. An example of this comes from Alcorn, Beeby's biographer, who argues that the 1939 statement that Beeby wrote for Fraser (see p. 91):

... provided a foundation not a superstructure.³²²

However, although many of the changes made during Beeby's directorship were significant, many of those changes in fact did focus only on the 'superstructure' of the education system rather than the 'foundation'—the educational philosophy that underlies and drives educational reform. Marx employed this foundation/superstructure analogy in an economic context:

The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.³²³

In an educational context, the foundation/superstructure analogy bears on the evident fragility of many of Beeby's reforms.

To pursue the analogy, a house that is built upon a weak foundation remains fundamentally weak regardless of changes made to the structure supported by that foundation. Over many years, the house may receive several coats of paint, a second storey, and new wallpaper. Changes to a house do not necessarily strengthen the foundation, but strengthening the foundation can make the house more resilient to

³²² Alcorn, 1999, p. 371.

³²³ Marx, 1977, p. 21. For a fuller analysis of Marx and Education, including an attempt to extrapolate a philosophy of education from his works, see Small (2005) and Anyon (2011).

external events; and similarly changes to the features of an education system (e.g. the curriculum and assessment system) do not necessarily change the underlying educational philosophy. These changes may give the appearance of fundamentally improving the house; however, the house will remain just as vulnerable to a foundation-cracking, super-structure-breaking earthquake.

Later in his life, Beeby became particularly aware of the difficulty of making fundamental reform to an education system. He began arguing that in order to significantly reorient the education system in any given society, reformers needed to address the deeper underlying educational philosophy in society—what he called the ‘attitudes’ held by all stakeholders in the system:

[R]eal change in education is slow, often maddeningly slow. Society is constantly changing and, in theory, the schools that serve it should be changing just as rapidly. At first glance this looks simple. It seems as if all you have to do is to agree on a new curriculum and new syllabuses, and pass regulations. Put up better buildings, buy new equipment, produce new textbooks and train teachers to use them. If all you are trying to do is to find new ways of achieving old objectives, you might reach something like your goal in five or ten years.

But if you want to go deeper than that and change the very objectives of education, change the kind of students who emerge from the school system, then you have at least a generation of work ahead of you. That calls for changes of attitude, not just in the teaching profession but also in the parents of the students, the employers and the country as a whole. Changing attitudes is a vastly slower business than changing skills and the tricks of the teacher’s trade.³²⁴

What Beeby refers to as ‘attitude’ seems to refer to general beliefs about education, including educational philosophy. As Beeby notes, merely finding ‘new ways of achieving old objectives’ does not change the underlying philosophy, but those new changes may nevertheless reinforce those old objectives by redressing them in the clothing of contemporary theory.

4.3 Beeby and Fraser

A primary advocate of the *Administrator* view is William Renwick, an educational historian and himself Director of Education from 1975 to 1988. Renwick believed that Fraser’s contributions to educational reform have been misattributed to Beeby. He wrote:

One reason for a lack of interest in Fraser’s contributions after 1940 is to be found in the dominant place that Dr. Beeby came to hold in the collective memory of the teaching profession during the years 1940-60 when he was Director of Education. Beeby’s own memoir,³²⁵ furthermore, has recently provided an account of the

³²⁴ NZ Listener, November 8, 1986, p. 53.

³²⁵ Beeby, 1992, *A Biography of an Idea*.

period that many readers will find sufficient for their purposes. But without a similar account of Fraser's role in those reforms the historical record remains unbalanced and one unintended effect of Beeby's memoir has been to distance [Fraser] from the education reforms he himself authored.³²⁶

In 1935 Fraser became the Minister of Education in the first Labour Government, and then Prime Minister in 1940. Fraser only left the education portfolio because of the illness and death of the Prime Minister—from whence his focus had turned from education to the looming threat and then declaration of war in Europe.

Fraser had appointed Beeby as Assistant Director of Education in 1938 and as Director in 1939 (see Chapter 2). Several authors have argued that most of Beeby's achievements were actually Fraser's achievements. According to this view, Beeby was merely an effective administrator, while Fraser, as Minister of Education, was responsible for writing the key 1935 education manifesto that Lambourne and then Beeby implemented; and, moreover, Fraser guided educational reform for the 10 years that he was Prime Minister (1940 to 1950).³²⁷

Renwick continues:

For, without detracting from Beeby's singular achievement, public servants do not determine the policies they administer, even though they may often claim a hand in their authorship. It was Fraser who created the political context and the policy framework that enabled Beeby to be a great educational administrator.

However, even though the Minister creates policy, Renwick greatly downplays ('claim a hand') the influence that an administrator can have on policy, via the process of implementation. I will argue that, as implementer, Beeby in fact had considerable input into educational policy under Fraser.

Renwick concludes:

Without Fraser as Minister of Education in the first Labour government there would have been no need for a Beeby as Director of Education.³²⁸

This counterfactual rhetoric is hardly persuasive, however. One might as well say that without Fraser as Minister of Education in the first Labour government, there would have been an even greater need for a Beeby as Director of Education. The fact of the matter is that both Fraser and Beeby contributed vigorously to the educational reforms of the first Labour government.

Renwick portrays Fraser as the master and Beeby as the servant in matters of

³²⁶ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p.68.

³²⁷ Peter Fraser ceased being the Minister of Education upon becoming Prime Minister in March 1940 but reportedly retained a strong interest in education policy.

³²⁸ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p.68.

educational reform. Yet he provides no evidence from Fraser that this was their relationship. In fact, Fraser seems to have had little influence on Beeby's educational thinking, either during the period 1939-1950 or previously. Beeby's recollections consistently highlight the absence of any deep discussion with Fraser on educational matters. For example, speaking of the period 1938 to 1939 Beeby said:

I don't recall that [Fraser] and I had any profound discussions on the philosophy and objectives of education; ... I found myself in agreement with most of the decisions he made, but I soon began to realise that his reasons for making a particular decision might be very different to mine. ... I was well aware of Fraser's continuing distrust of psychology; he reminded me more than once that I had been appointed assistant-director of education not *because* I was a psychologist, but in spite of it. It may be that we were both aware of the difference between our underlying beliefs and that this was the reason why we didn't discuss the philosophy of education.³²⁹

Things remained much the same once Fraser became Prime Minister. Beeby said:

[W]hen [Fraser] was Prime Minister, he would on occasion ... come to my office and we'd go off and have the usual cup of tea and just discuss education in general. I was always very scrupulous about it. I never talked of any specific thing, so that there was nothing that ... could come between my Minister and me that would have been frightful, but he did say 'If you ever have any problems at all, come and see me', so I said Thanks, but of course never did it. [He said] 'You know, if you have any problems of any kind, that Mason³³⁰ can't solve or anything of the kind well you just come and see me' but of course I didn't do it.³³¹

Nor was there any great sharing of views before a Fraser-guided committee appointed Beeby as Assistant Director in 1938. Even during the planning for the NEF conference in 1937, he and Fraser did not speak much, Beeby recollected: 'before he sent for me [in 1938], I had seldom spoken to him, and never alone'.³³² In fact, according to Beeby, he only had a single—unpleasant—interaction with Fraser before briefly working alongside him in connection with the NEF Conference. Beeby explained that their only contact had been in 1930, during the Atmore Commission's tour:

I'd only met him once before ... I know there was a general idea that he and I were great cronies beforehand but we weren't. I'd never met him before that except when he was a member of the Atmore Commission ... and he was a member of that Committee that travelled up and down New Zealand. I was then ... lecturing in Education and Philosophy, and Peter Fraser came with the group there and was highly unimpressed with everything I had to say. Highly unimpressed, obviously. Very sniffy about it – he didn't like psychology, didn't like any kind of testing ... So my first contacts with Peter Fraser were by no means cordial, certainly not

³²⁹ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

³³⁰ Henry G.R. Mason, also commonly known as Rex Mason

³³¹ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 11.

³³² Beeby, 1992, p. 109.

warm. He obviously disapproved very much of the whole of this idea of testing human beings and he did right to the end because I was doing a lot of work down on vocational testing and vocational guidance and working with selection tests for employers.³³³

Beeby later described how Fraser's dislike for psychology had brought this meeting to an abrupt end:

Fraser, who was deeply suspicious of psychological testing, made no effort to conceal his distaste for our use of mental tests in guidance and selection, and stalked out in the middle of the meeting.³³⁴

While Renwick downplays Beeby's role, he lauds Fraser's. He described Fraser as:

an educational thinker in his own right and the architect of the first Labour government's educational policies; and in my opinion he was our greatest Minister of Education, his legacy being the bipartisan educational orthodoxy that lasted until the late 1980s.³³⁵

Just as Renwick singles out Fraser as 'our greatest Minister of Education', Beeby singled out Hogben as 'our greatest Director of Education' (see chapter 3). Beeby downplayed the achievements of Hogben's successors, and similarly Renwick, by attributing the long-lived 'bipartisan educational orthodoxy' to Fraser, downplays the achievements of Beeby, and also of the Ministers that succeeded Fraser.

While Renwick states that the reforms ushering in this long-lasting orthodoxy were Fraser's, he does not explain how these reforms were able to survive until the late 1980s. He even comes perilously close to contradicting himself, for instance when he says, 'After his high hopes of the years 1936-38, [Fraser's administrative] proposals for education were allowed to die quietly in the mid-1940s'. It was Beeby's educational theories, and his reforms, implementing Fraser's vision, that were substantially responsible for the longevity of Fraser's legacy. Renwick is in fact also wrong about the nature of what lasted: in Chapter 7 I argue that what actually lasted was a 'bipartisan illusion' of equality of opportunity.

From time to time views similar to Renwick's appear in the literature and general academic discourse. For example, Sarah Weiss argued that Fraser

created the blueprints for the next half century of educational reform. Beeby just implemented them to the best of his ability.³³⁶

Noeline Alcorn, Beeby's biographer, has helped to perpetuate the *Administrator* view.

She wrote:

³³³ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 3.

³³⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 109.

³³⁵ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 68.

³³⁶ Weiss, 2000, p. 3.

His genius was as an administrator. ... An unauthenticated comment attributed to Fraser is that he appointed Beeby to be an architect and found him to be a builder.³³⁷

However, it may be more true to say that Fraser appointed Beeby to be a builder and found him to be a foreman.

The Architect view

Contrasting with the *Administrator* view is the more commonly expressed *Architect* view. The *Architect* view, like the *Administrator* view, assumes that there were extensive egalitarian reforms, but attributes primary responsibility for these reforms not to Fraser but to Beeby. For example, May describes Beeby as ‘the key architect of postwar education policy’³³⁸ and Mein-Smith says:

In 1939 Dr C. E. Beeby, a psychologist, laid down the post-war blueprint when he summarised his own idea of education.³³⁹

While Renwick leans too far towards Fraser, May and Mein-Smith lean too far towards Beeby, seeming to omit Fraser’s contribution altogether.

Cumming and Cumming even go as far as to argue that Beeby helped develop Labour’s 1935 educational policy:

During the 1930s the Labour Party’s educational policy, in conjunction with its economic theories, was built by Fraser, Walter Nash, Henry E Holland, ... C E Beeby, ...³⁴⁰

Cumming and Cumming base this claim on the fact that Beeby was the Director of the NZCER at this time, but they fail to explain how that made him a builder of Labour’s policy. Renwick also indirectly contributes to this interpretation, writing:

Beeby ... made conspicuous contributions to the educational and cultural policies of the first Labour Government.³⁴¹

However, as mentioned above, Beeby had no influence on Fraser or his policies until well after 1935. The *Architect* view, at least in its more extreme versions, is hype rather than history. Some of the obituaries following Beeby’s death in 1998 reiterated this hype, describing him as an ‘Eloquent architect of educational reforms’,³⁴² the ‘father of modern education’,³⁴³ and the ‘father of NZ’s education system’.³⁴⁴

³³⁷ Alcorn, 1999, pp. 370-371.

³³⁸ May, 2000, pp. 124-125.

³³⁹ Mein-Smith, 2012, p. 177.

³⁴⁰ Cumming and Cumming, 1978, p. 254

³⁴¹ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 70.

³⁴² Reid, Graham (1998) *Eloquent architect of educational reforms*, in New Zealand Herald, 13 March 1998, p. A11.

³⁴³ Potter, Tony (1998) *Outsider became father of modern education*, in Sunday Star Times, 15 March 1998, p. News9.

The *Architect* view has become the dominant, even the default, view of Beeby. Modern descriptions of him often use the ‘architect’ metaphor. Reviews of his *Biography of an Idea* in 1992 described him as the ‘Architect of an education’³⁴⁵ and the ‘brains behind the blackboard’.³⁴⁶ Education commentators in the 21st century often refer to Fraser only briefly, before differing over whether to give the credit for the educational reforms either mostly or fully to Beeby. For example, Chris Trotter, a political columnist, attributes credit for the educational reforms to both Fraser and Beeby. He wrote:

One of the greatest tragedies flowing out of the neo-liberal experiment of the past two decades has been the state’s quite deliberate disengagement from Beeby’s educational ‘mission statement’. ... Most clearly evident in the tertiary sector of New Zealand’s education system, the introduction of “user pays” has undermined the egalitarian assumptions at the heart of Beeby’s and Fraser’s vision.³⁴⁷

Many commentators credit Beeby both with designing the reforms and also infusing an extensive egalitarian vision into the education system. For example, in 2003 Steve Maharey, Labour’s Minister for Education, said:

Beeby was a visionary thinker. His famous [1939] quote established a public good and right-of-citizenship basis for the education system. ... Beeby’s vision formally commits the state to enabling every child, each citizen, to reach their potential. ... The Beeby vision was, therefore, partly an articulation of what Fraser had already been doing. But it also became a guide for future policy initiatives. ...

All in all, we have a wide range of strategies. In each case they are characterised by a commitment to the kind of education system that Clarence Beeby set in place, but against the backdrop of a society that has very different needs. ... Beeby is still at the heart of the New Zealand education system.³⁴⁸

Similarly, Jacqui Duncan, Principal of Cashmere Primary, in 2012 attributed the vision that drove the reorientation of the education system to Beeby:

Clarence Beeby’s vision of a public educational system is still relevant today and Christchurch teachers are asking the public to think about what a reorientation of schooling will look like in the 21st century and to be included in the discussion on what is possible.³⁴⁹

All of these views exemplify the *Architect* view, entrenched since the closing decades of last century.

³⁴⁴ Press (1998) *Father of NZ’s education system*, 12 March 1998, p.5.

³⁴⁵ Swain, Pauline (1992) *Architect of an education*, in *Dominion*, 16 Jun 1992, p.9.

³⁴⁶ Brown, Karen (1992) *The brains behind the blackboard*, in *Evening Post*, 13 Jun 1992, p.13.

³⁴⁷ Trotter, Sunday Star Times, 2007, p. A11.

³⁴⁸ Maharey, Steve (2003). *Tertiary Education & Public Good*. Presentation to the Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. Hunter Council Chamber, Kelburn campus, Wellington. New Zealand Government: <http://beehive.govt.nz/speech/beeby-vision-today> (accessed 10/6/2015).

³⁴⁹ The Christchurch Press, 10 December 2012, p. A13.

How did the *Architect* view become entrenched? During the second half of Beeby's term, a number of critics of the direction of educational policy began to identify Beeby as the prime mover behind the reforms. Critics started to use the term 'Beebyism' to describe any changes that they opposed.³⁵⁰ According to Dunstall:

In the 1950s there was mounting criticism of the aims and methods of primary education. Traditionalists accused 'Beebyism'—with its 'social' promotion,³⁵¹ liberal curriculum, and flexible teaching methods (dubbed the play-way)—of lowering standards in the basic skills known as the three Rs, reading, writing, and arithmetic.³⁵²

According to Renwick, Fraser, unlike Beeby, escaped scapegoating due to only being associated with the early period of reform. He wrote:

[Fraser] was fortunate to be Minister during the honeymoon of Labour's educational reforms. It was his successors H.G.R Mason and T.H McCombs and, even more, the Director of Education, Dr C.E. Beeby, who had the task during the 1940s of defending them against their critics.³⁵³

Beeby, however, primarily credited Mason, the Minister of Education from 1940 to 1947, for the false belief that he was responsible for Labour's reforms. Beeby wrote:

I suffered a lot through Mason – through his generosity in some ways. You know – he would go to a meeting or have a speech to follow the platform and he would talk for about 3 or 4 minutes and then say 'Well the Director knows far more about this than I do,' and turn around and I would have to give a speech and the result is that I was always being shoved into the front and people thought that Beeby was running the show. You see we got this term 'Beebyism'.³⁵⁴ You never got Masonism ... even in that period you got that because it was thought that I was the dominant member of the party.³⁵⁵

Architectural Administrator—the Navigator

Considering both arguments above, each has an element of truth and falsity. Beeby was in a position to have significant influence over education policy yet he was never directly in control of education policy. Beeby's skill was as a micromanaging administrator, determining the way that policy would be implemented and making sure that the right research was done, reports written, and books published. This might be said for any administrator, but in Beeby's case he went further. He was willing to personally make sure that the right statements and books were created by writing them himself (as discussed in the remainder of this chapter). The degree to which Beeby

³⁵⁰ McKenzie, 2000, p. 133.

³⁵¹ The automatic progression from primary to secondary schools which occurred due to the abolition of Competency and Proficiency.

³⁵² Dunstall, Graeme. *The Social Pattern*, in Rice (1992) p. 467.

³⁵³ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 79.

³⁵⁴ A derogatory term used by critics to describe the reforms.

³⁵⁵ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 14.

influenced policy is uncertain, he had a strong personality but only a limited amount of educational background.

To a great extent the policy framework that Beeby worked within was not his own. Fraser had a broad educational vision throughout the 1920s and 1930s that culminated in a series of policy decisions once Labour was elected in 1935. This was enhanced by the type of education promoted by the 1937 NEF conference. By the time Beeby entered the Department he would have had to continue implementing five years of policy already passed, and had to prepare for policy that was already planned to pass in coming years. For example, the abolition of the Proficiency examination in 1937 not only immediately affected the primary schools, but would have long lasting ramifications for both the secondary and tertiary education systems. To the extent that Beeby was an architect, he was one that arrived to the job to find a large pile of blueprints already drawn up alongside a list of unavoidable design requirements.

However, Beeby was no ordinary administrator. Although he was given a firm framework to work within he also worked to make it his own. Beeby not only worked hard in his office but also regularly ventured out to present and argue for his policy—speaking at public gatherings and writing prolifically.³⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Rex Mason was reportedly a quiet and unassuming man, committed to Peter Fraser’s vision. Beeby operated under the trust of Fraser, bonded by a commitment to progressive education. Alcorn notes:

[Mason] and Beeby were both confident of the Prime Minister’s continuing support for the portfolio that was his own first love. But Beeby was never forced to examine the differences which could have arisen between himself and Fraser resulting from their underlying assumptions about education.³⁵⁷

Beeby was thus able to fill the vacuum of visibility left by Mason while also having the opportunity to slowly deviate from the course that Fraser had plotted.

However, given Beeby’s position, it is unlikely that either Fraser or Mason would have interfered in the day-to-day administration. Furthermore, while Ministers came and went,³⁵⁸ Beeby remained the constant in the Department, overseeing policy implementation over twenty years. It is relevant to note that while Beeby operated under a strong tailwind when he entered the Department, in 1950 he had to change direction due to the incoming National government. Beeby’s ability to operate under the trust yet higher scrutiny of a new series of Ministers is a testament to his professionalism.

³⁵⁶ See Alcorn, 1999, Chapters 6-12 for a detailed discussion of his activities as Director.

³⁵⁷ Alcorn, 1999, p. 101.

³⁵⁸ For example, T.H. McCombs was Minister of Education from November 1947 to November 1949.

Whether *Architect* or *Administrator*, Beeby would also have been subject to external pressures well outside his control. The forces of political urgency, social demands and economic reality would have guided certain policy decisions regardless of his desires or intentions. He would have been expected to implement policy and deal with new problems independently while also consulting on any more sensitive or politically difficult matters relating to policy outside his jurisdiction. Each of his decisions could be up for review as education policy was revised, yet he would also be expected to implement any new policy, such as changes to curriculum or assessment.

However, *Architect* and *Administrator* both fail to reflect the above complexity. He may have had constraints as to what policies he could implement, but, as I discuss in coming chapters, he was able to shape their implementation to his own assumptions. Beeby is thus better described as a *Navigator*. After being given a destination, he checked the route, filled in the policy gaps, determined the problems that needed to be addressed, and charted a course of action with a firm hand on the tiller. His background and personality influenced the multitude of minutiae that he had to address, and he did so with a firm conviction of the purpose and role of each sector of education.

4.4 The Intermediate Schools of New Zealand

One of Beeby's earliest yet long-lasting influences over the education system was on the development of the Intermediate School system (also known as Middle Schools or Junior High Schools).³⁵⁹ His journey from a researcher with a narrow educational background, via being an administrator guiding school policy, to reshaping the educational system long after his departure is an exemplar for his entire Directorship. In considering his influence over several decades it is possible to identify trends in his style of leadership that will re-emerge in the following chapters.

Beeby's support for the Intermediate School system before and during his Directorship provided an impetus to the development of over a hundred Intermediate Schools by 1980, and his influence is still felt in discussions about the appropriate role of Intermediate Schools. (Intermediate schools currently provide a bridge between Primary Schools and Secondary Schools.) His key work in this area was his book *The Intermediate Schools of New Zealand*, published in 1938. Its 316 pages were based on

³⁵⁹ These terms are not used consistently in the literature – however, in general, Middle Schools refer to all schools that lie between primary and secondary schools, while Intermediate Schools and Junior High Schools refer to a particular type of Middle School.

two years of research on the sixteen Intermediate Schools in existence in 1936,³⁶⁰ and it provided a series of recommendations for future reforms—recommendations that capped a half century of discussion about Intermediate Schools.

The idea of the state providing extended educational opportunities for primary school students had been discussed regularly throughout the lifetime of the pre-Beebian Department of Education. While the 1877 Education Act established a national system of Primary Schools, just three years later the O’Rourke Commission³⁶¹ recommended making available an additional period of education for students who had completed Primary School but had no access to a Secondary School. The Commission’s report proposed:

That a primary school, not being in the neighbourhood of a secondary school, when it contains, say fifty pupils above the fourth standard, be constituted a ‘Middle School’.³⁶²

This proposal was not widely implemented; instead, two additional years—later called ‘Standard 5’ and ‘Standard 6’—became part of the Primary School system. Nevertheless, the concept of separate Middle Schools or Intermediate Schools was regularly written about by politicians and educationalists in the decades that followed.

One of difficulties facing attempts to establish Intermediate Schools as part of a nationwide education system was that the Primary Schools and Secondary Schools had evolved in different directions.³⁶³ The administrative differences between Primary Schools and Secondary Schools were magnified by differences in educational philosophy. Whereas several provincial primary school systems had been inspired by a philosophy of egalitarian opportunity, most of the earliest secondary schools concentrated on the narrow needs of the few academically-focused students staying beyond Standard IV.³⁶⁴ With the O’Rourke commission recommending that students receive, first and foremost, a *primary education* of 4 to 6 years length,³⁶⁵ there was no clear role nor need for a separate type of school, and few were established before the 1920s.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁰ This included both separate Intermediate Schools and intermediate departments attached to pre-existing school. Beeby reports that he visited all sixteen of them during his research. See Beeby, p. 1, 37.

³⁶¹ *The report of the Royal Commission Inquiry into and report upon the operations of the University of New Zealand and its relations to secondary schools of the colony* (presented in H-1, in the 1880 AJHR).

³⁶² AJHR, 1880, H-1, p. 46.

³⁶³ For an extensive analysis see, for example, Butchers, 1932 and Campbell, 1941.

³⁶⁴ See Appendix 1 for a discussion on the early Primary School system.

³⁶⁵ AJHR, 1880, H-1.

³⁶⁶ One exception were two schools established in Nelson that functioned as Middle Schools, and thus provided the nation with some precedents (see Watson, pp. 7-8).

The 1920s saw a shift in view. What were primarily called ‘Middle Schools’ were no longer just seen as a mere extension of primary schooling, but also as vocationally oriented pre-secondary institutions. One major proponent of this new view was Frank Milner who, in 1921, presented a report recommending the establishment of a series of explicitly vocational Junior High (Intermediate) Schools to meet the occupational needs of New Zealand.

However, in proposing that Junior High Schools be vocational in nature, Milner further fragmented the education system. Since the vocational focus of his Junior High Schools lay simply on occupational outcomes, the schools, in general, lacked a guiding educational philosophy. Beeby later explained:

New Zealand has never had a bold and consistent policy of intermediate education, owing largely to its attempt to introduce the new type of school with the least possible disturbance of the existing system.³⁶⁷

Moreover, the vocational focus was in tension with both the broad preparatory focus of Primary Schools and the more academically focused Secondary Schools.³⁶⁸ Throughout the 1930s there was debate over which of these three viewpoints should be followed by Intermediate Schools, and indeed the whole education system.³⁶⁹

Development of a cohesive philosophy for Intermediate Schools was also retarded by lack of assistance from central government. For example, in 1932 a new education policy addressed growing public concern about the cost of the Junior High Schools,³⁷⁰ but did not address concerns about the lack of a guiding policy. David Campbell argued that these actions reflected the Department of Education’s inability to learn from overseas experiences. He wrote:

Behind these hesitations and shifts is ... the lack of a clear-cut and self-contained intermediate school policy, and that in turn was once again largely due to a failure to adapt and synthesize ideas borrowed from abroad.³⁷¹

By the mid-1930s, the events of the previous decade had left Intermediate Schools in a precarious position. With few new schools established, no guiding philosophy, and cuts in financial support, the Intermediate School sector was struggling. In 1936, Beeby summarised the development of Intermediate Schools. He wrote:

The movement has been slow partly because it involved financial outlay and partly because of local resistance to the decapitation of existing primary schools. ... The

³⁶⁷ Beeby, 1938, p. 193.

³⁶⁸ Campbell, 1941; Lee and Lee, 1996.

³⁶⁹ See Hinchco, 2004, for an extensive analysis on the development of Intermediate Schools in New Zealand.

³⁷⁰ AJHR, E1, 1932, pp. 2-3.

³⁷¹ Campbell, 1941, pp. 140-141.

original policy was to try out at least six different types of intermediate school in order to fit the system to varying local conditions. They are scarcely yet past this experimental stage.³⁷²

He then reflected further on *why* he believed progress had been slow:

One feels that, with few exceptions, though the externals are there, the country has little understanding of the spirit of the intermediate school system. Many of the schools are badly handicapped by lack of equipment to provide exploratory courses, and even the best, though well equipped, are still struggling to find an adequate basis for the classification of pupils. None of them is quite free of the aims, methods, and curricula of the old primary school. ... There is a deep cleavage in theory and in practice between an intermediate school planned as an end in itself for a proportion of its children and one designed to prepare for the secondary school.³⁷³

These concerns later made up a considerable and significant part of his 1938 recommendations on how to reform the Intermediate School system.

The 1936-1937 Beeby Survey

In 1936 the Labour Government commissioned the NZCER to carry out a survey of Intermediate schooling in New Zealand. In its 1937 Annual Report, the NZCER (then under the Directorship of Beeby) stated that it had been specially asked to:

undertake a survey of the Intermediate School System with a view to evaluating the system as presently established in New Zealand.³⁷⁴

According to Watson, the NZCER was more specifically tasked with broadly evaluating the overall success of the schools, with analysing how relevant those schools were to the economic needs of New Zealand, and with developing a clear educational philosophy to provide the schools direction and objectives for the future.³⁷⁵

Beeby later explained that this survey, in part, also arose out of the surprise that the small number of established Intermediate schools were successfully operating without the guidance of an overarching educational philosophy. He wrote:

The cause for surprise is not that the schools should have lagged along the road but that they should have gone so far, since no-one has ever quite known where they were going.³⁷⁶

Beeby himself was offered the research project while he was still the Director of the NZCER. He took both the opportunity and full responsibility for the project:

[The NZCER] asked me to undertake the work personally. This report of the survey is entirely my own, and members of the Council are in no way responsible

³⁷² Beeby, 1936, p. 404.

³⁷³ Beeby, 1936, pp. 404-405.

³⁷⁴ NZCER, 1937, Second Annual Report, p. 16.

³⁷⁵ Watson, 1964, p. 67.

³⁷⁶ Beeby, 1938, p. 37.

for its conclusions, and ... they have given me complete freedom.³⁷⁷

He established for himself a broad set of questions to guide the research project:

In broad terms, the questions I have set myself to answer are four. What functions do New Zealand administrators and teachers wish the Intermediate Schools to perform? ... How far, as at present organized, are they capable of performing these functions? ... How far are they actually performing them? ... What are the most desirable objects of intermediate education and what are the best methods of attaining them?³⁷⁸

Beeby later reflected on his difficulty in undertaking the research project. In 1992 he admitted that it was a significant challenge due to his own limited educational experience and, in particular, the political complexities in the education system. He explained:

For the first time in my life I had to see an educational problem whole, from the point of view of every participant in what had, by then, become a bitter dispute, running deep both professionally and politically.³⁷⁹

Beeby's Report

Beeby released his report, *The Intermediate Schools of New Zealand*, in 1938. His report is broken into two sections: background, and recommendations. In the first four-fifths of his report, Beeby thoroughly reviews the historical development of Intermediate Schools, their internal organisation, and their external relationships.

The first section provided the first detailed (child-centred) philosophy for middle schooling in New Zealand. Echoing proposals of educational philosophers such as John Dewey, Percy Nunn, and Isaac Kandel, Beeby argued in favour of a tripartite education system. He argued that Intermediate schools should provide students with the opportunity to explore different subjects of the curriculum whether completing their education or segueing from the exam-free Primary School system into the exam-driven Secondary School system.³⁸⁰ That is, the Intermediate schools were to have both a terminal and preparatory/transitional function. For example, the system would involve, what Beeby called, a 'multi-track "try-out" curriculum', where all students would be taught core subjects (e.g. mathematics and English) by one teacher, and then choose between other different subject options (e.g. woodworking or domestic science) to be taught by other, specialist teachers.³⁸¹ This model is still followed by many Intermediate schools.

³⁷⁷ Beeby, 1938, p. 1.

³⁷⁸ Beeby, 1938, p. 5.

³⁷⁹ Beeby, 1992, p. 95.

³⁸⁰ Beeby, 1938, p. 50.

³⁸¹ Beeby, 1938, p. 50.

Beeby also proposed that students from all types of primary education should be able to experience a critical period of, what he called, ‘socially integrative education’. He declared:

The chief function of the intermediate (or middle) school (is) to provide ... a period of expansive, realistic, and socially integrative education that will give all future citizens a common basis of experience and knowledge. No other function should be allowed to interfere with this.³⁸²

His overarching demand for a ‘common basis of experience and knowledge’ in Intermediate Schools is also exemplified by his introduction later on of an extensive compulsory core curriculum for Secondary schools (see Chapter 6).

Beeby argued that his exploratory curriculum was justified both practically and psychologically. Alcorn argued that, as a progressive, Beeby sought to secure the general education of all young New Zealanders, especially those without academic aspirations.³⁸³ However, Beeby explained that his standardised schooling structure was primarily designed to reflect the relatively homogenous developmental needs of students:

the four-year intermediate is advocated on both psychological and administrative grounds ... the group from (age 11-15) is relatively homogenous emotionally and socially.³⁸⁴

In the second section of his Report, Beeby proposed and discussed twenty-nine recommendations for the Intermediate School system. Beeby’s first, and most straightforward, recommendation was that ‘the Intermediate School system in New Zealand be continued and extended’.³⁸⁵ He justified their strengthening and continuation on the basis that the schools were ‘better adapted to the needs of the adolescent’ than the current system.³⁸⁶ He also justified the schools on a range of economic grounds, writing that they were ‘more economical of time and effort’, that they could ‘offer all the advantages of consolidation’ such as ‘more generous equipment’ and ‘efficient exploration of aptitudes’, and that they can ‘reduce the gap between ... school and work’. He stated that these advantages just in themselves were sufficient to justify the extension of the intermediate school system.³⁸⁷

³⁸² Beeby, 1938, p. 210.

³⁸³ Alcorn, 1999.

³⁸⁴ Beeby, 1938, pp. 179-180.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1938, p. 209.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1938, pp. 209-210.

Implementing the Beeby Report

Upon becoming Director of Education in 1940 Beeby acquired the power to implement his own recommendations for Intermediate education. So although he had inherited an Intermediate school system lacking a clear philosophy, he also acquired the opportunity to fundamentally reform the whole education system. Beeby had ironically foreshadowed this possibility in his 1938 report, writing:

[The recommendations] represent only what I should do if I had control of an intermediate school.³⁸⁸

Just two years later Beeby had control over administering the whole education system.

Beeby's report became a blueprint for many of his Intermediate School reforms. Beeby's position would also have enabled him to exert influence over other types of schools. Although most Secondary schools were still privately administered, the Department still oversaw Primary schools, Native (Maori) Schools, District High Schools, Maori District High Schools, the Correspondence School, and the various schools for students with special learning needs (e.g. schools for blind students).

His report remained the primary document on Intermediate Schools for several following decades. Its student-centred sentiments were echoed by many government reports during the remainder of the 1940s. For example, the highly influential 1944 Thomas Report stated that it was 'strongly in favour' of classroom approaches that would take 'full account ... of the interests, experiences and relative immaturity' of young adolescents³⁸⁹ (see below for Beeby's influence on the Thomas Report).

The first time that Intermediate schooling was substantially re-examined was after the election of the National Government in 1949. Ronald Algie, the new Minister of Education, convened a conference on Intermediate education in October 1951. At the conclusion of the conference, Algie stated that he was 'satisfied that the Intermediate School was fully justified on educational, social, and economic grounds'.³⁹⁰

With the stamp of approval from both major political parties, Beeby was able to spend the 1950s solidifying his reforms and the Intermediate sector quickly grew in number. Although only five Intermediate Schools were established during the 1940s, 26 new Intermediate Schools were established during the 1950s. A further 40 were established during the 1960s, and another 29 during the 1970s.³⁹¹ Throughout this rapid

³⁸⁸ Beeby, 1938, p. 231.

³⁸⁹ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 38.

³⁹⁰ Algie, R, quoted in O'Neill, B., 1984, p. 3.

³⁹¹ Lucic, D.M., 2013, p. 22.

growth the Intermediate schools remained closely aligned with the primary school sector, not least of all because the new teaching positions were mostly staffed by primary-education trained teachers and principals.³⁹²

In 1954, the PPTA commissioned the NZCER to review the Intermediate Schools again. The *Watson Report*³⁹³ was published in 1964, and although it identified four issues of particular concern to Intermediate Schools, it was nevertheless generally a reiteration and endorsement of Beeby's Report from over twenty-five years prior. The report directly echoed Beeby in its detailed recommendations section by stating:

The Intermediate School system in New Zealand should be continued, extended, and strengthened.³⁹⁴

Furthermore, in 1962 the comprehensive Currie Report on Education³⁹⁵ was published. (The Currie Commission was established after the Watson Commission but reported before it, and actually had early access to an unpublished version of the Watson Report.³⁹⁶) The Currie report echoed the findings of the Watson Report, supporting the continuance of the prevailing Intermediate school system within the broader education system.³⁹⁷ These two reports represented the last major reviews of Intermediate Schools before the sweeping changes across the education system that occurred in the 1980s under the Fourth Labour government.

Finally, it is noteworthy that, as outlined above, Beeby's significant influence over the Intermediate School system was both direct and indirect. Although it was his report that was used, it was his position as Director that enabled him to implement many of its recommendations. His position of national leadership enabled him to introduce his ideas into other public school types then extant—Primary schools, Native (Maori) Schools, District High Schools, and Maori District High Schools.

In the years that followed, Beeby used a similarly effective yet more subtle strategy, where he would influence official documents—nominally written by other people—while staying in the background implementing their recommendations. It is of course not uncommon for administrators to do work for their Ministers to be published in their name. However, given Beeby's firm shaping when implementing educational policy, in doing so he somewhat took over both roles of policy outliner and policy

³⁹² Watson, 1964.

³⁹³ More formally known as *Intermediate Schooling in New Zealand*.

³⁹⁴ Watson, 1964, pp. 418-434.

³⁹⁵ More formally known as the *Report of the Commission On Education in New Zealand*.

³⁹⁶ *Report of the Commission On Education in New Zealand*, 1962, p. 161.

³⁹⁷ *Report of the Commission On Education in New Zealand*, pp. 165, 223-225.

implementer. Returning back to the beginning of his Directorship, a key example of his *Architectural Administration* was his subtle strategy was his 1939 statement on education (written while he was still Assistant-Director of Education).

4.5 The famous 1939 Education Report³⁹⁸

Few modern discussions of Beeby's influence fail to reference the 1939 statement on education that he wrote for Fraser. Its first sentence became emblematic of the Labour Government's education policy as its desire to address the needs of all students regardless of sex, race or class. It also became emblematic of the principal social and moral goals of the post-war education system for the following 50 years. Beeby's statement is still regularly quoted in New Zealand educational literature, and is still used in making the case for a (more) egalitarian education system. According to sociologists John Freeman-Moir and Alan Scott, Beeby's statement was the 'educational version of the [American] Declaration of Independence', part of 'a utopian vision of a socially just world where the application of fairness and opportunity would be an unquestioned fact of life', and one of the 'ideals of a progressive educational liberalism.'³⁹⁹

The progressivism in Beeby's statement emerged in part out of an American social movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Generally rejecting social Darwinism, American progressive argued that social problems could be addressing by the development of strong social institutions in health and education, alongside an efficient workplace. In supporting a socially-benevolent interventionism, they argued that government's role was to ensure society 'progressed' in specific, benevolent direction.⁴⁰⁰

Beeby's statement is thus a principal example of his progressive and liberal influence over the education system. Rarely quoted in full, the statement is often seen as capturing the egalitarian vision articulating New Zealand's education system. The first sentence reads:

The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers.

The statement goes on:

³⁹⁸ More specifically, the E1 in the 1939 AJHR, reporting on the Education Department in 1938.

³⁹⁹ Freeman-Moir and Scott, 2003, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Jaycox, 2005, pp. 80-89; Nugent, 2010, p. 54.

So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. The structure of the New Zealand education system as originally laid down (and indeed, of practically all the school systems of the world) was based on the principle of selection. An elementary education of the 3 R's was given to all the population, but, beyond that, schooling had to be either bought by the well-to-do, or won, through scholarships, by the especially brilliant. Under such a system post-primary education was a thing apart from primary education and tended to be verbal and academic in nature. A definite penalty was placed on the children of the poor, especially those who lived outside the main centres of population.

The present Government was the first to recognize explicitly that continued education is no longer a special privilege for the well-to-do or the academically able, but a right to be claimed by all who want it to the fullest extent that the State can provide. Important consequences follow from the acceptance of this principle. It is not enough to provide more places in schools of the older academic type that were devised originally for the education of the gifted few. Schools that are to cater for the whole population must offer courses that are as rich and varied as the needs and abilities of the children who enter them and that means generous equipment, more and better trained teachers, and some system of guidance to help pupils select the schools and courses that will best cater for their abilities. It means also if there is to be true equality of opportunity, that by one method or another, the country child must be given access to the facilities from which he has always tended to be barred by the mere accident of location. Most important of all, perhaps, it means that the system of administrative control must be such that the whole school system is a unit within which there is free movement.

It is only against this historical background that the Government's policy in education can be fully understood. It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on the basis of selection and privilege to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable. I would wish the achievements of the past year, as outlined in this report, to be seen against this background and to be judged according to their furtherance of the aims here discussed.⁴⁰¹

However, these paragraphs of Beeby's were not the result of extensive deliberation or research. He explained that he composed them quickly and off the cuff:

The brief [opening] statement and the page of explanation that followed it were shot off the cuff in an hour or two, with no previous preparation or discussion.⁴⁰²

He later expanded:

I had no time to study papers or seek advice, and so I sat down and began to write. After a brief paragraph surveying the government's most interesting innovations in 1938, I wrote, out of my head, a page on its objectives for education as I imagine Fraser saw it.⁴⁰³

In fact Beeby's statement was intended to be a quick rewrite of an earlier, unsatisfactory, statement:

The minister's annual reports in those days were written by a senior clerk in the Department of Education, a man with no professional background who saw his

⁴⁰¹ AJHR, 1939, E1, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰² Beeby, letter to Gary Hawke, 18 November 1991.

⁴⁰³ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

function as setting out accurately the figures and bare events of the previous year. In February 1939 ... Lambourne ... came to my office with the typed report which had been submitted to Peter Fraser. Fraser had scribbled in red ink across the first page, 'This report says nothing. I will not sign it until it has something to say'. Lambourne was obviously worried about it, and asked if I thought I could do anything to satisfy the minister. I had never seen the script but rashly said I thought I could, only to find that the minister wanted the revision back the next day!⁴⁰⁴

Beeby appeared confident that he was paraphrasing Fraser. Beeby wrote 'I was sure I was expressing his views; the words were mine, the policy was his'.⁴⁰⁵ He had good reason for such confidence, the statement closely echoes that one made by Fraser the year before, in October 1938. Fraser wrote

The second major principle that had guided the Government educational policy is that every child, whatever his and economic position and whatever his level of academic ability, had the right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind and length to which his powers best fit him. In fact, none of us know how far-reaching are the implications of this principle.⁴⁰⁶

Beeby argued that he had the opportunity to become familiar with Fraser's opinions while he was Assistant-Director. He explained:

Lamborne [sic] took me with him on every occasion that he went to see Fraser.⁴⁰⁷

However, there are no published comments by Fraser on this matter. Several decades later, Beeby himself even suggested that his influence was not Fraser but Isaac Kandel:

I owe a great deal to Kandel. It was probably due to his influence that I dashed off ... in the spur of the moment, the opening sentence of Peter Fraser's much-quoted statement.⁴⁰⁸

Alternatively, Middleton and May also give some credit to Percy Nunn. They wrote:

With the 'electrifying' writings of Percy Nunn still having effect, Beeby ... crafted the words and policies that made Fraser famous.⁴⁰⁹

It is more accurate to say the statement was the result of several sequential writers, each adding their own conception of education. Regardless of source, it is not unreasonable to assume that, since Fraser did indeed accept and sign the statement, it did at least chime with his views.

Beeby habitually referred to the statement as 'Fraser's statement', camouflaging the fact that it was his own writing. He used the same technique in connection with the 1944 Thomas Report (see below), and his 1944 book *Education Today and Tomorrow*,

⁴⁰⁴ Beeby, letter to Gary Hawke, 18 November 1991.

⁴⁰⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. xvi.

⁴⁰⁶ Fraser, 1938, p. 353.

⁴⁰⁷ Beeby, in King, 1978, pp. 8-9

⁴⁰⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 291.

⁴⁰⁹ Beeby, C.E., in Middleton and May, 1997, p. 27.

in which he quoted and attributed the statement to Fraser.⁴¹⁰ Beeby also took the opportunity to restate his position on intermediate schools, based on his 1938 research report, as part of discussing their history and future direction.

Although his 1944 book was written for the 1944 Education Conference, Beeby also wrote that he hoped it would be purchased by:

parents, teachers, taxpayers, board and committee members – upon whose sympathetic understanding all advances in education finally depend. If this publication can increase their understanding ... I shall be content.⁴¹¹

Five years after the 1939 statement, the Education Conference addressed concerns raised during the War about educational reforms. Middleton and May note that Beeby had personal reasons to ensure the book supported his vision. They wrote:

Beeby saw the conference as an evaluation of his regime as Director.⁴¹²

They also argue that Beeby's 1944 book was a way to ensure support for his post-war reforms. Guided by his document, the education conference supported his educational regime thus far. Middleton and May continued:

The conference reaffirmed the direction of educational reform but also countered criticism of the impact of reform on the educational standards of school-leavers.⁴¹³

Beeby's impact on school-leavers is discussed in Chapter 9.

Beeby later admitted that this book was attributed to the Education Minister so that he, as Director, could subsequently refer to it when justifying his own reforms:

I wrote it for a national conference called by the minister, H.G.R. Mason, and got him to sign it because I wanted to be able to quote it as government policy over the next few years, and his signature was necessary for that.⁴¹⁴

He later expanded:

I decided that ... I would not speak publicly at the conference, or take any part in the running of it. What I did was to write, as a background document for the conference, a 100-page illustrated book, *Education Today and Tomorrow*, which set out the government's educational policy (based on Fraser's statement on 1939), and then, sector by sector, described its achievements over the past decade ... and forecast the 'Questions yet to be Answered' before a longer-range policy could be decided on some moot questions. ... The minister saw nothing of it until he was given the galley proofs, but he accepted it as it stood, and I had no difficulty in persuading him to sign the book himself. It was ... a firm platform on which to build future reforms. I was to quote from it for years.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Mason, 1944, p. 8.

⁴¹¹ Mason, 1944, p. 5.

⁴¹² Middleton and May, 1997, p. 105.

⁴¹³ Middleton and May, 1997, p. 105.

⁴¹⁴ Beeby, letter to Mrs Lynley Hood, 3 May 1984.

⁴¹⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 155.

Vagueness in Beeby's Opening Sentence

Beeby's statement is hardly a detailed prescription for achieving an egalitarian state of affairs. Much like Haben's curricula, Beeby's statement was more aspirational than specific and appears to be symptomatic of Beeby's overall philosophical approach to education. The first part of Beeby's opening sentence is admirably precise: *everyone*, without restriction, is entitled to a *free* education. It is relevant to note that Beeby made no mention of inequalities in either ethnicity or sex in his list of specific inclusions. Chapter 8 discusses how these two inequalities persisted until well after the Beeby era.

However, vagueness sets in with the phrase 'of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers' (passing over, for the moment, Beeby's phrase 'a right as a citizen'). This vagueness would make Beeby's subsequent use of the 1939 statement to justify his reforms much easier (see p. 91).

Strikingly, the statement contained no arguments in support of its bold assertions. Moreover, it gave no definite examples of what these assertions would entail. However, the statement's vagueness is often disregarded by historians, who attribute great significance to Beeby's words. According to Alcorn, for example, Beeby's opening sentence gave clear direction for reform:

Its key sentence is a succinct summary of Fraser's belief in and commitment to liberal education for all citizens, broad enough to ensure widespread acceptance and specific enough to provide a goal and focus for education for the next thirty years.⁴¹⁶

Alcorn's praise is possibly overly generous: Beeby's 'key sentence' gave little enough clue as to the form of education that ought to be provided.

The opening sentence was just specific enough to engender an illusion of farsightedness, and also amply broad enough for diverse liberal and conservative reformers to appeal to it as a justification for their proposals throughout the next four decades. Although one of the fountainheads of Beeby's enduring egalitarian image, this sentence in fact served to inhibit analysis and criticism of New Zealand's inegalitarian education system, during the Beeby era and beyond (as I argue in Chapter 8).

With hindsight, one prominent feature of Beeby's statement is the lack of any explicit distinction between different *kinds* of equality. Philosophically, 'equality of opportunity' has acted as an umbrella term for a series of related concepts of equality: access, provision or treatment. Equality is itself notoriously difficult to define, from equalising resources to equalising people's preferences to sense of well-being. Defining

⁴¹⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 99.

the extent, limits, and nature of equality of education remains an ongoing task in educational literature.

Furthermore, defining equality in terms of an outcome, ‘opportunity’, glides over these complex issues yet also sets up the education system to be outcome-oriented. Defining equality in terms of outcome severely risks ignoring the origin and prior educational status of students—a form of equalisation based on end-point qualifications rather than beginning-point capabilities. Such a system can even be argued to be prejudiced against individual responsibility and choice, as discussed further below.

In the middle part of his statement, Beeby uses the phrase ‘equality of opportunity’, and his opening sentence strongly implies his belief in equality of access, but he does not tackle the fact that these are *different*. Throughout his writings Beeby leaves unclear what he meant by ‘equality of opportunity’. This is a phrase whose meaning was debated by contemporaries and is indeed still debated in the modern literature.

One political consequence of there being no definite meaning to the phrase ‘equality of opportunity’ was that previous inegalitarian views could be simply perpetuated under the new label ‘equality of opportunity’. As David McKenzie notes:

In some respects, this statement did little more than endorse the tradition of equality of access to public schooling which had grown up post 1877.⁴¹⁷

According to Dunstall:

Whatever the intention of the new [1944] syllabus, equality of educational opportunity continued to mean ‘the opportunity to differentiate oneself from one’s fellows, to win certificates of attainment that opened the way to more highly regarded vocational careers’. For some, school was a social equaliser, for most it was an arbiter of social position.⁴¹⁸

Beeby criticised the notion of vagueness when discussing the question of different types of equality in 1992:

[T]he statement I wrote for Peter Fraser in 1939 did not use the word ‘equality’, though it came to be regarded as the classic statement on equality of opportunity. I should like to say that this was because I foresaw the conflicts on the meaning of ‘equality’ fifty years later, but it was only because I suspected all vague abstractions in education.

However, not only did Beeby’s statement use the word ‘equality’ but he also abstractly spoke of achieving ‘true equality of opportunity’. In any case, the ‘conflicts’ over the meaning of equality that occurred ‘fifty years later’ were nothing more than a modern

⁴¹⁷ McKenzie, J.D.S. (1975), p.103.

⁴¹⁸ Dunstall, Graeme. *The Social Pattern*, in Rice (1992) p. 467.

reworking of disagreements that run through the philosophical literature for thousands of years.⁴¹⁹

Furthermore, there is vagueness in the second part of Beeby's opening sentence. Both 'of the kind for which he is best fitted' and 'to the fullest extent of his powers' are vague. Fraser's 1935 manifesto contained the unrestricted promise of 'free, secular, and compulsory primary and secondary education, and free university education',⁴²⁰ and he later pledged that 'opportunity be given to every child to be educated to the fullest extent, state assistance to be given where necessary'.⁴²¹ These both echo the 1877 Education Act, which contained an unrestricted promise of free, secular, and compulsory primary education for all. Beeby added something new: a student is not just to have access to free education, but to free education *of the kind for which he is best fitted*, and moreover *to the fullest extent of his powers*. The first restriction seems to concern the type of education offered and the second the *depth* of that *type* of education.

The phrase 'of the kind for which he is best fitted' means different things to different educational theorists, and indeed to different governments: Probably this did not escape Beeby's attention—a statement that means different things to different people can be a valuable tool, and appropriate vagueness can help ensure that a proposal has wide appeal. No doubt Beeby's thought was that his Department, which controlled the curriculum, would be able to determine what kind of education fits students best given that few students had access just a decade before. In fact, the Department introduced a comprehensive curriculum in 1944 (discussed in Chapter 5).

Beeby's 'best fitted' restriction is in fact a perpetuation of the view, explicitly advocated by most previous Directors, that students should receive a *suitable* education—although there was by no means universal agreement among the Directors as to what counted as suitable (see Chapter 2). The view dates back at least to Charles Bowen, the Member of Parliament who had introduced the 1877 Education Bill, who was reported as saying:

⁴¹⁹ For example, both Plato and Aristotle discuss equality with regards to both education and women.

⁴²⁰ New Zealand Labour Party (1934) Objective and Platform, 18th Annual Conference, 1934. Wellington: N.Z. Worker.

⁴²¹ National Education, 1 November 1935, p. 85.

It is not intended to encourage children whose vocation is that of honest labour to waste in the higher schools time which might be better devoted to learning a trade, when they have not got the special talent by which that higher education might be made immediately useful.⁴²²

Habens, who did not clearly distinguish between type and depth, argued in his 1891 syllabus that students should be taught only to the limits of their intellectual ability, since

any teaching that does not keep within the limits thus prescribed by nature is worse than useless.⁴²³

The view was advocated powerfully by the Wellington Chamber of Commerce in 1933:

Speaking generally the children of unenlightened parents would not gain benefit from a longer period at school and it was a matter for serious consideration whether after passing the fourth standard, children of but moderate mental development should not be definitely prepared for the type of work to which their mental capacity and natural ability made them best suited. It might be that further education along general lines would not fit them for the modest role nature intended them to play in life.⁴²⁴

Rather than providing a new educational direction, Beeby's talk of 'best fitted' helped to perpetuate the relatively entrenched idea that a student's natural ability should determine what education would suit them best. Beeby later wrote that he believed he was one of the few people to openly criticise the 1933 statement by the Chamber of Commerce. He said:

That deathless statement could have been made in Britain during the Industrial Revolution or in South Africa yesterday. ... On the day it appeared ... I condemned the statement ... as 'not only nonsense but nonsense on stilts'.⁴²⁵

However, his 1939 statement was essentially a reiteration of the same central point. Beeby seems also to be accidentally making the point, although in different words, that further education along general lines might not be the best fit for some students.⁴²⁶

As well as leaving open the whole question of how to *determine* what type of education would best fit a student, the statement is also silent on the question of what to do with students who wish for a type or depth of education going beyond what best fits the student (according to whatever determining procedure was in use). In comparison, Beeby's predecessor John Caughley had argued, in effect, that students should be trained to choose their own education:

⁴²² Bowen, quoted in Davey, 1928, p. 26.

⁴²³ New Zealand Gazette 14 October 1891, p. 1121.

⁴²⁴ Christchurch Times, Christchurch, 8 December 1933.

⁴²⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 126.

⁴²⁶ As 'best fit' could justify limiting education to students with only 'moderate mental development' to the fourth standard.

[W]e must ever remember that he is more than a pupil or a future worker. He is a human personality with a destiny of his own. ... [W]e should desire to train our young people from their early years to value and use rightly the freedom they enjoy and the liberty that every freeman desires⁴²⁷

Beeby's words are consistent with students who want more having a right to more, but are also consistent with these students having no right to a wholly *free* education. For all that his words indicate, his message might be that students have a right to a free education that fits them, but that schools have an obligation to provide more to students who want more and who pay. In short, Beeby's statement is far from clear although it is also unclear whether this was intentional.

There is also the question of whether and to what extent the needs of the community impact on the rights of individual students. Do all citizens have a right to a free education of the type to which they are best fitted, even if the needs of the community would be better served by providing a proportion of citizens with a type of education to which they are not entirely best fitted? To put the point crudely, suppose that as a matter of contingent fact all citizens happen to be best suited to training as farmers or factory workers. Does everyone have a right to such training, contrary to society's needs for less practical proficiencies?

Beeby himself discusses this issue elsewhere and it is fairly clear that his considered view tends to contradict the view he expressed in his 1939 statement. He believed that the needs of the community, as much as the needs of individuals, should determine the education that schools provide. He wrote in 1932:

Children should be under the control of the educational system until well established in industry. ... Bridging the gap between primary schools and industry will meet the needs of both the individual and society.⁴²⁸

He repeated this view in 1939. He wrote:

When changing the curriculum due concern needs to be paid to the needs of both the individual and wider society.⁴²⁹

It was an issue that he returned to throughout his working life. He wrote:

The tension between the rights of the individuals and the rights of the community in education is not only between groups and between individuals within the group but also within the mind of every thinking person who has anything to do with the formulation of educational policy and the planning of courses.⁴³⁰

Beeby returned to this view when discussing the role that universities should play in meeting the needs of society (see Chapter 6).

⁴²⁷ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, pp. 42, 45.

⁴²⁸ Beeby, 1932, p.2.

⁴²⁹ Beeby, letter to Ann Oakes, 3 April 1939.

⁴³⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 286.

In her biography of Beeby, *To the Fullest Extent of his Powers*, Alcorn claimed that Beeby's 1939 statement was 'clear'.⁴³¹ She went on to praise his 'clarity':

Its key sentence is a succinct summary of Fraser's belief in and commitment to liberal education for all citizens ... The statement exemplified one of Beeby's most valuable gifts: the ability to express key ideas succinctly, with clarity and elegance.⁴³²

Alcorn makes similar claims about Beeby's clarity throughout her book and her other writings. For example, in describing Beeby's 1938 *Intermediate Schools of New Zealand*, she says that his report:

was characterized by its clarity, its examination of principles and assumptions, and its scrupulous explanations of evidence.⁴³³

She repeats much the same claim in her 1992 *NZCER: The First Four Years*.⁴³⁴

However, as argued above, I argue that what Alcorn calls the 'key sentence' in Beeby's 1939 statement is anything but clear. Beeby's words might have been uplifting and well-meaning as well as succinct and elegant, but they are vague in several different ways. Moreover, the opening sentence is certainly not simply 'a succinct summary of Fraser's belief'. As just discussed, Beeby added elements of his own, modifying any Fraserian core that the sentence may have. Given its vagueness, its long-term success may even not be attributed to its idealism, but due to its uniqueness. Mitchell explains that this statement was one of the very few general principles described by anyone in charge of deciding education policy.⁴³⁵ Regardless, the statement's influence extended decades after its pronouncement.

Beeby's later reflections on the 1939 statement

In 1992, Beeby praised the 1939 statement as offering what he called 'a sense of direction'. He said:

In anything but a completely static system, educational objectives are not fixed but emergent. ... To acute observers the aims of education are – or should be – in a state of flux, partly because of the new vision that experience eventually brings. ... Under such a concept, a broad official statement of the Fraser type becomes essential because it gives a continuing *sense of direction* against which every new plan in education must be checked. The direction may be periodically modified in the light of experience, but it can be reversed only by a government that is willing to contest the principle.⁴³⁶

Beeby also acknowledged:

⁴³¹ Alcorn, 1999, p. 99.

⁴³² Alcorn, 1999, p. 100.

⁴³³ Alcorn, 1999, p. 76.

⁴³⁴ Alcorn, 1992, p. 18.

⁴³⁵ Mitchell, 1968, p. 48.

⁴³⁶ Beeby, 1992, pp. 301-302.

Thank God I was unable to see the difficulties we were to meet in putting it into practice, and was unhampered by the intellectual complexities that the years were to reveal. If I had been cursed with the gift of foresight, I might never have moved at all.⁴³⁷

At the time Beeby adopted the statement as a foundation for his own reforms. He said:

In 1939 my own belief in Fraser's statement as a basis for educational policy was complete, and it lay behind practically every new project that I was to propose over the next twenty years.⁴³⁸

Thus his vague specific statement not only became the foundation of his own reforms, it also set the standard for reform throughout the remainder of the century. With this 'elegant' statement Beeby began to take firm control over the Education System.

4.6 The 1944 Thomas Report⁴³⁹: Taking Control of the Curriculum

Between 1936 and 1943 the secondary school system underwent several significant reforms. For example, the Proficiency Certificate was abolished in 1936, removing one of the few remaining barriers standing between student completing primary school and secondary school. Then in 1941, the University of New Zealand agreed to accept accrediting for University Entrance. The process of accrediting can exist in parallel with the use of a University Entrance exam for some students, although in 1943 Beeby's intention was simply to replace the University Entrance exam with accrediting. He said:

After 1943 the University Entrance Examination as we know it will cease to exist ... and the Department's School Certificate will replace 'Matriculation' as the accepted mark of a completed post-primary course. ... I set up during the year the Consultative Committee on the Post-Primary Curriculum, under the chairmanship of Mr. W. Thomas, M.A., LL.B., to study the implications of the introducing of accrediting and to advise me on the changes necessary to enable the schools to make the fullest use of the new freedom so generously offered by the University Senate.⁴⁴⁰

These changes put pressure on the schools to address the needs of the cohorts of new students. McKenzie wrote in 1982:

A major review of secondary school curricula was clearly required ... What was now sought was a curricular emphasis that on the one hand would satisfy the demand for equality of treatment which competition for national school qualifications implies, and on the other, guidelines that would encourage the schools to promote learning experiences which would be rewarding for all children irrespective of their particular academic activities.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

⁴³⁸ Beeby, 1992, p. 123.

⁴³⁹ The colloquial name for *The Post Primary School Curriculum: report of the committee appointed by the Minister of Education in November, 1942*, under the chairpersonship of William Thomas.

⁴⁴⁰ AJHR, 1943, E1, p. 2.

⁴⁴¹ McKenzie, 1982, p. 15.

In November 1942, Beeby set up the 14-person Thomas committee.⁴⁴² Its terms of reference were:

To consider and report upon the implications for the post-primary school curriculum of the proposed introduction of accrediting for entrance to the University and in particular to make recommendations regarding –

- (1) The choice of subjects for the School Certificate Examination
- (2) The content of these subjects
- (3) Any consequent modifications of the Public Service Entrance Examination and the Free Place Regulations.⁴⁴³

Beeby indicated that the committee was expected to take the abolition of the University Entrance examination as a fact and merely to recommend the subjects to be offered for the School Certificate examination:

The political decisions had been made; all that remained was to consider the ways and means of putting the policy into operation.⁴⁴⁴

In February 1944 the Thomas committee published its report. Its recommendations, with some minor amendments, were legislated as the 1945 *Education (Post-Primary Instruction) Regulations*. However, rather than keeping to its narrow prescription, the committee went much further, both by summarising the successes and failures of previous education policies, and by making a broad range of recommendations for future educational reform. In doing so, it set out a prescription detailing the studies and activities that succeeding generations of students should follow.

Due to its breadth, the Thomas Report is often regarded as a key historical document that laid the foundation for reforms in the decades that followed. It was widely praised by educationalists. In 1961, Phoebe Meikle described it as an ‘admirable’ report and as ‘liberal, idealistic (and, for the most part, realistic)’.⁴⁴⁵ In 1968, John Wallace described it as ‘one of the most important documents in the history of secondary education in New Zealand.’⁴⁴⁶ This positive view was also held by educational historians. Ian McLaren described it as ‘progressive and realistic’,⁴⁴⁷ and in 1989 George Marshall described it as ‘an exceptional document’.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴² The colloquial name for the *Consultative Committee on the Post-primary School Curriculum*, under the chairpersonship of William Thomas.

⁴⁴³ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. v.

⁴⁴⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 166.

⁴⁴⁵ Meikle, 1961, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Wallace, 1968, p. 94.

⁴⁴⁷ McLaren, 1974, p. 128.

⁴⁴⁸ Marshall, 1989, p. 5.

Beeby had a significant influence over the Thomas Report. Firstly, he had personally appointed a number of liberally-minded people to key positions on the committee, including the chair and joint secretaries. Secondly, much as he moulded the 1939 ‘Fraser statement’ to reflect his own beliefs, he also directly influenced the content of the Thomas Report, by providing the committee with an extensive memorandum that would shape their discussion. Beeby explained:

I made a point, as a matter of courtesy, of attending the first meeting ... to outline the questions we were asking. ... I did nominate William Thomas as its chairman and, having co-operated with him on the writing of a book on the subject,⁴⁴⁹ I could scarcely pretend to be ignorant of the direction in which his mind was moving. I also nominated the joint secretaries, Campbell and Somerset, both of whom I knew to be liberals in their educational thinking ...

I gave the committee a long memorandum in which I stated the government’s overall policy, to be accepted as the basis of the committee’s deliberations, and I asked questions on the means it might adopt to carry out that policy.⁴⁵⁰

The Beeby Memorandum

Beeby’s *Memorandum for Consultative Committee on Post-Primary Curriculum* was an eight and a half page document. It consisted of approximately one and a half pages of historical overview of post-primary qualifications, and seven pages explaining the key questions to be addressed. Confidential at the time, the document is now in the National Archives. Beeby’s whole memorandum has a utilitarian flavour—it refers to the (more efficient) focus on the needs of the many over the needs of the few. For example, he asked:

Might the general education for the many be made also the best basis for the higher education of the scholar and the professional man?⁴⁵¹

He also said:

[T]he general interest of the majority of pupils must not be sacrificed to the special interests of the few. The Department is anxious to maintain standards for the scholarly but even this end must not be allowed to interfere with the schools’ main function of giving a full and realistic education to fit the bulk of the population.⁴⁵²

Much of the Memorandum consists of Beeby’s leading questions to the Committee. He said that he did not want to ‘impose my own pattern on [the Committee’s] deliberation’. Nevertheless, he asks questions that seem to solicit a particular outcome or range of outcomes. To give just one set of examples:

⁴⁴⁹ Thomas, W., Beeby, C., and Oram, Matthew O. (1939) *Entrance to the University*, Wellington, N.Z.: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

⁴⁵⁰ Beeby, 1992, pp. 166-167.

⁴⁵¹ Beeby, 1943, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁵² Beeby, 1943, p. 2.

[S]hall the new School Certificate Examination follow the pattern of the old and admit the widest possible range of subjects, or shall it insist on a specified group of subjects beyond form II which every post-primary pupil must study as part of his social apprenticeship? (Once calls to mind the “cultural core” of English, social studies, general science, health, handiwork, art, and arithmetic postulated by the Secondary School’s Association Conference in 1936.) ... Can an adolescent be safely let loose on the world with no geography beyond form II and no history beyond form IV? With no knowledge of science beyond a few principles and techniques in chemistry? With no knowledge of art of music and no experience of a handicraft that will give him at once a hobby and an insight into the lives of other men? ...

Is British history from 1783 to the present day all that we shall insist upon the educated man knowing? ... Is the chemistry of foodstuffs sufficient Home Science to prepare a girl to run a home?⁴⁵³

Sometimes Beeby simply asserts his opinion as educational fact. For example:

If these [subjects] are to be included as compulsory subjects what shall be thrown out? The curriculum is so crowded that ... the decision to pronounce some subjects essential and other non-essential would have been forced on us sooner or later.⁴⁵⁴

Again, this time on the necessity of technical subjects:

[I]f the full value is to be got from the whole scheme, if there is to be one recognized Certificate as the mark of a completed post-primary education, be it verbal or practical in bias, it is essential that the syllabuses and regulations be framed to include those pupils in technical schools who wish to complete a full four-year course in either day school or in night school. It must be remembered, moreover, that one result of the deliberations of the Committee might be to encourage in secondary schools themselves more courses of a practical nature.⁴⁵⁵

In 1992 Beeby reflected innocently on his degree of influence over the Thomas Report. He wrote:

I have no idea how far, if at all, my memorandum affected the deliberations of the Thomas Committee, but the committee’s report covered most of the points I raised.⁴⁵⁶

In fact, the Report can be considered an important landmark in a succession of Beeby-guided documents inspired by his 1939 statement. According to McKenzie, using a memorandum to directly shape the committee’s report was ‘[p]erhaps Beeby’s finest achievement’.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Beeby, 1943, pp. 4, 6.

⁴⁵⁴ Beeby, 1943, p. 5

⁴⁵⁵ Beeby, 1943, p. 7

⁴⁵⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 167.

⁴⁵⁷ McKenzie, 2000, p. 132.

Beeby's Thomas Report

The final draft of the Report was distributed to the Inspectorate on October 28th, 1943,⁴⁵⁸ before being released to the public, via the press, on February 16, 1944.⁴⁵⁹ The New Zealand Herald noted the Report's complexity:

An examination of the report ... shows that there is a real need for parents of children affected to obtain at least a clear general idea of the committee's aims and of the rather complicated machinery which it recommends for putting them into effect.⁴⁶⁰

The committee had made little effort to consult teachers.⁴⁶¹ This, coupled with the long delay in releasing the report, led to the proceedings being branded 'secret' and to the report being described as consultative in name only.⁴⁶² In 1944, the New Zealand Herald wrote:

Almost a year has passed since the Minister of Education announced that a consultative committee had been set up and ... wide awake citizens have been questioning what is to come out of the deliberations of the committee. ... An impenetrable veil of secrecy still covers the proceedings. The public fear is lest the report—product of a small coterie sitting in secret—will occupy the whole field when it appears, having the effect of a *fait accompli*.⁴⁶³

Once the final draft was released, the Department allowed nearly a year for comment and submissions. As a result of this process, there were some amendments, although the final Report describes these as 'of a minor nature'.⁴⁶⁴ The final report was released in 1944, and by the end of 1945 the curriculum recommendations of the Thomas Report were largely incorporated into the secondary school regulations.

The final report echoed Beeby's opinions on a broad range of educational topics, and also echoed the views of the key liberal members of the committee selected by Beeby. As Roger Openshaw, Howard Lee and Gregory Lee wrote:

The Report echoes Beeby's sentiments strongly, in declaring support for a common core curriculum and the idea of having schools cater for the non-academically minded majority as well as providing for '... the special interests of the few'.⁴⁶⁵

Beeby did eventually acknowledge, in his 1988 memoir, that he had influenced the Thomas Committee (see above) but even as late as 1971 he was suggesting that in fact it was his friend and mentor James Shelley (see Chapter 2) who had influenced the members of the committee:

⁴⁵⁸ E 34/1/23 memorandum to Inspectors, 28 October 1943. Cited in Prebble, 1970, p. 119.

⁴⁵⁹ New Zealand Herald, Volume 81, Issue 24819, 16 February 1944, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁰ New Zealand Herald, Vol. 80, Issue 24715, 15 October 1943, p.2.

⁴⁶¹ Ross, in Codd and Hermansson, 1977, p. 84.

⁴⁶² See Moss, 1991.

⁴⁶³ New Zealand Herald, Vol. 80, Issue 24715, 15 October 1943, p.2.

⁴⁶⁴ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 79.

⁴⁶⁵ Openshaw, Lee, and Lee, 1993, p. 170.

Shelley's best friend in the schools was Chairman of the [Thomas] Committee. ... Half the members of the committee had been influenced in some way by Shelley's thinking.⁴⁶⁶

It is impossible to know exactly the extent of Beeby's, or anyone else's, influence on the committee. However, Beeby's stamp is plainly visible throughout the report. I give seven examples below.

First, vague language characteristic of the 1939 Statement is well to the fore, and the educational opinions expressed in the Report are closely related to those in the Statement. For example, the Report said that the education system should

ensure as far as possible, that all post-primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying occupational ambitions, receive a generous and well balanced education.⁴⁶⁷

Second, just as in the 1939 Statement, the Report argued that the curriculum should be adapted to the abilities of the student: that is, to what 'fits' them, in the language of the 1939 Statement. The Report said:

A general education can be secured in practical ways, and differentiation should often be considered not so much as a problem of curricular content as one of method—i.e. of adapting the approach to the abilities of the pupil.⁴⁶⁸

Third, just as Beeby had argued in the Statement, the Report was critical of the fact that, due to economic pressure, the education system was not fully responsive to social needs or the personal needs of students.⁴⁶⁹

Fourth, Beeby's sentiments in his Memorandum, concerning girls and Home Science and boys and the Physical Sciences,⁴⁷⁰ reappear in the Report. The Report states that adolescent women would benefit from Home Crafts instruction, and that boys would benefit from study of the physical sciences and technology.⁴⁷¹

Fifth, the Report called for an extensive compulsory common core of subjects, as Beeby did in his Memorandum. The Report proposed a core of social studies⁴⁷², English language and literature, general science, elementary mathematics, music, a craft or one of the fine arts, and physical education. This was virtually identical to the compulsory core referred to in Beeby's Memorandum. In the Memorandum, Beeby not only mentioned essentially the same core subjects, but also fretted repeatedly over the risk of excluding any of these subjects.

⁴⁶⁶ NZBC Interview with Beeby, Sir James Shelley, Sep 1, 1971 (transcript).

⁴⁶⁷ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁸ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁹ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 4; Shuker, 1987, p. 161.

⁴⁷⁰ Beeby, 1943, p. 6.

⁴⁷¹ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, pp. 17, 46, 60, 71-78.

⁴⁷² A recently new general subject based on introductory history and geography.

Sixth, the structure recommended by the report for a revised School Certificate was very similar to the one discussed by Beeby in his Memorandum. Beeby spent several pages discussing the failing School Certificate and how this could be restructured into a four-year course, which he wished to be available to all students studying any of the approved subjects, and at any of the types of post-primary school.⁴⁷³ The Report recommended a very similar four-year course ‘within the reach of pupils pursuing any of the recognised courses in post-primary schools’.⁴⁷⁴

Seventh, the Report explicitly called for schools to use the new curriculum to prepare students for democratic citizenship. The Report spent several pages explaining the ‘overriding duty’ that schools have to provide civic training and to teach the importance of democracy. It stated:

[T]he human values we sum up in the word ‘democracy’ have too much been taken for granted. They are still threatened from without and only active effort and unceasing vigilance can make them more secure within. The schools thus have the overriding duty of helping pupils to understand them and live in accordance with them ... [and Social Studies shall] assist in the development of individuals who are able to take their parts as effective citizens in a democracy.⁴⁷⁵

Beeby had proposed in his Memorandum that the cultural aspects of the compulsory curriculum be considered part of a ‘social apprenticeship’,⁴⁷⁶ and had referred to the importance of ensuring that students were prepared both for citizenship and for ‘intelligent participation’ in the wider community. (The Thomas Report, much like Beeby’s AJHR Reports and his Memorandum, obliquely referred to so-called ‘recent events’ (World War 2) to justify the need for training in democracy.)⁴⁷⁷ Beeby argued:

[T]he community cannot afford to have citizens who are lacking a certain common core of knowledge and barren of certain experiences that seem essential to intelligent participation in communal activities. ... They need to be prepared for involvement in a modern democracy.⁴⁷⁸

These many examples amply demonstrate Beeby’s influence on the Thomas Committee.

The Legacy of the Thomas Report

The Thomas Report had been preceded by centuries of tension between liberal, egalitarian and utilitarian principles and the Report proposed a wide range of reforms

⁴⁷³ Beeby, 1943, pp. 1-2, 6-8.

⁴⁷⁴ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁵ The Post Primary School Curriculum, 1944, pp. 5, 27.

⁴⁷⁶ Beeby, 1943, p. 4. Beeby had also argued similarly in his AJHR Education Reports in 1940 and 1941 (see Chapter 6).

⁴⁷⁷ Beeby, 1943, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

synthesising aspects of all three traditions. Nevertheless, it is not too inaccurate to describe the Thomas Report as a mere list of proposals for change mixed in with a heavy dose of hopeful rhetoric about the future of schooling. Beeby's implementation of these proposals, and his own further influence on the shape they took, is the subject of the chapters that follow. In 1961 Phoebe Meikle wrote:

[Notwithstanding] its liberal humanism, idealism, and genuine democratic feeling ... the [Thomas] Report could be no more than a book of suggested recipes presented to the nation for experimental use by many cooks of varying abilities and purposes.⁴⁷⁹

Fifteen years later John Codd made much the same point:

Despite the idealism and consistency of the Thomas Report as a whole, it was a document with very little theoretical foundation. ... The philosophical assumptions were only implicitly expressed through its advocacy of democratic and humane methods ... as opposed to the traditional methods ... As a document then, the Thomas Report was little more than a set of well-conceived suggestions for teachers concerning the aims, organisation and syllabus of each basic school subject. The success of its implementation ... was limited.⁴⁸⁰

The Thomas Report was vague, thin on underlying philosophical principles, long in expression but short in specific detail, and open-ended on how to apply its proposals. Although Beeby went on to use it to justify his many reforms of the secondary school system, the reality of his reforms never reflected the Report's soaring ambitions. Instead, the 1940s and 1950s were preoccupied with practical reforms and reforms further centralising power in the Department.

Some theorists attribute the lack of successful liberal reform to the educational limitations of teachers. Codd continued:

Most teachers failed to meet the full challenge of the Thomas Report, not because they were unsympathetic towards its aims but because they did not have a firm foundation of educational theory from which to derive their own practical judgments. ... It is not surprising that many responded only to the formal structural recommendations and the more prescriptive elements of the Thomas Report ... without taking possession of the underlying principles and far-reaching aims.⁴⁸¹

Other theorists placed the blame more widely on the schools. Thomas Prebble wrote:

[T]he silence of the secondary school authorities [in 1944] suggests that many conservative secondary school boards and headmasters had no intention of implementing the more liberal recommendations of the Thomas Report ... [and] to adhere as closely as possible to their traditional pattern of schooling.⁴⁸²

Beeby himself tended to adopt both these views, placing some responsibility on both the teachers and the schools. However, as I argue in the next chapter, this opinion

⁴⁷⁹ Meikle, 1961, p.36.

⁴⁸⁰ Codd, in Codd and Hermansson, 1976, pp. 350-351.

⁴⁸¹ Codd, in Codd and Hermansson, 1976, p. 351.

⁴⁸² Prebble, 1970, p. 121.

disregards the influence of Beeby's own Department of Education. I will argue that the same confidence displayed by Beeby in moulding the documents discussed in this chapter engendered what I call a well-meaning 'blindness of certainty'. This led to, among other things, Beeby's disregarding some of the liberal leanings in the Report in favour of a more authoritarian education system.

CHAPTER 5

AUTHORITARIAN PATERNALISM 1945-1950

I acted with conviction, because that is the only way than an administrator, who thinks he has a mission, can act.

(Beeby, letter to Prof. Richard M. Wolf, 3 December 1989.)

5.1 Overview

Beeby's reforms of the education system were shaped by an authoritarian and paternalistic style of leadership. Beeby and his reforms are often described as progressive or liberal, but a further analysis of the facts somewhat undermine this description. He maintained a strong, centralised Department while also introducing educational reform for the benefit of students. Under his leadership, the Department began shifting its priority towards the needs of the state, with the education that students received being determined according to their ability rather than by their desires. However, contrary to the popular image of Beeby as an effective reformer, by no means all of his reforms had the long term effects that he wished for and planned.

By 1945 Beeby has spent nearly six years having to operate under financially difficult circumstances. World War Two had not only led to a significant increase in the military budget but New Zealand's internal production and export industry were both depressed. However, having had those six years to develop a plan for reforms, at the end of the war there was a new opportunity to shift government expenditure from the military to social needs. Beeby had to not only address pent-up demand from society, but also an ambitious program that had been delayed due to the war. All of Beeby's reforms during this period can thus be understood against a context of a Department trying to quickly implement a series of reforms that had been stifled for years. But a key question remains, what kind of Director was Beeby during this relative time of plenty?

A key part of the recurring Beebian mythos is that he was a progressive, liberal reformer who reoriented New Zealand's education system. For example, Freeman-Moir and Scott described Beeby's 1939 statement as one of the 'ideals of a progressive educational liberalism'⁴⁸³. Similarly, Paul Smythers wrote:

⁴⁸³ Freeman-Moir and Scott, 2003, p. 7.

From ... incredible leadership given by Dr Clarence Beeby (a Dewey scholar) as Director General of Education, there emerged a very good system of liberal education.⁴⁸⁴

Furthermore, Beeby's liberalism is usually played against the reforms of the late 1980s.

Smythers continued:

But this was to be dramatically changed in 1988/1989. Public education was deemed to be in crisis and ... under threat from business, industry, economists and, as always, politicians.⁴⁸⁵

A principal, almost contradictory, feature of Beeby's authoritarianism was his willingness to use it to introduce and enforce liberal reforms. He required teachers to follow a particular liberal curriculum, and was at the forefront of a more differentiated education with the introduction of more technical subjects. Throughout his Directorship he advocated a wide range of liberal and egalitarian ideas. However, in these cases while the subject matter was liberal, the method used was authoritarian—he had a clear view of how education should be, and who it would serve, and he sought to implement it. It is a matter of means and ends.

While Beeby advocated Fraser's liberal ideals, he was not intensely committed to the same kind of philosophical liberalism. Indeed, Beeby's beliefs and actions had more in common with Fraser's democratic socialism than the modern Labour Party's social democracy.⁴⁸⁶ Beeby was neither an economic liberal nor a social liberal. He did not advocate significant decentralisation of state regulation of the education system, and in fact acted to strengthen it. Similarly, he also did not advocate for increasing freedom in schools, and in fact he implemented a range of reforms aimed at providing specific guidance to, or even making decisions for, students.

Liberalism vs Progressivism

Beeby's professing of his progressivism provides a key insight into his view of the role of government. Modern progressives are usually considered closely aligned to their liberal kin in left-wing parties and many progressives also call themselves liberals. So how can Beeby continue to profess progressivism yet also embrace authoritarianism? The answer is that progressives are not necessarily liberals. Whereas liberals generally promote freedoms to enable individuals to do as they like, progressives believe that people (and thus government) should develop in particular ways: that they should

⁴⁸⁴ Smeyers, Paul, 2009, p. 161.

⁴⁸⁵ Smeyers, Paul, 2009, pp. 161-162.

⁴⁸⁶ For a comparative analysis of the beliefs of Fraser and the First Labour Government against those of the modern Labour Party, see, for example, Bassett and King (2000), and Clark (1998, 2005).

progress towards particular goals. Even though those goals often align with liberals, they need not do so; there is no necessary contradiction in a progressive conservative.⁴⁸⁷ In fact, for a government to be able to guide citizens towards a particular end requires that government to wield sufficient power to either encourage or require citizens to do so. Simply put, the more control the government has over someone's life, the less control, and thus the less liberty, that person has over it. Beeby's well-meaning paternalism combined with certainty of progressive objectives led naturally to an increase in centralisation so as to better organise education to enhance equality.

Beeby stated that his reforms were driven by beliefs both in equality and in the power of education to improve society. In 1989 he reflected:

I assumed—and so, I think, did others—that good education in itself could gradually produce a population with enough belief in humane values and sufficient understanding of how society works to be unwilling to tolerate gross inequality. It was an assumption that could never be proved correct, though all too easily thrown into doubt, but I still have a lingering hope that some day it may be shown to have at least a small enduring element of truth. Without that, educational reform could seem pointless. ...

I could only hope that the changes we were introducing into the school would eventually produce a generation with more people determined to right existing wrongs. Too vague a hope, perhaps, to carry much conviction in 1990, but it would be a sad generation of educators that didn't harbour it.⁴⁸⁸

In order to pursue a more equal society, Beeby argued that he needed to act with authoritative confidence. He did not argue that he was always necessarily right, just that he was always justified in acting with conviction. He wrote:

[S]ince I have been an administrator rather than an academic, I have frequently had to act with complete conviction in situations where all I was intellectually justified in saying was 'I think that...'. Looking back from the age of 87, I am now all too well aware that, on occasion, my ideas were less than conclusive, but I am still glad I acted with conviction, because that is the only way that an administrator, who thinks he has a mission, can act.⁴⁸⁹

Beeby's authoritarian paternalism is thus an extension of his confidence, or what I call his blind certainty—he believed that his 'mission' was to make the education system (and society) a better place. Beeby regularly wrote with firm conviction and a sense of purpose. For example, Alcorn reports that Beeby said:

You never know whether you are right. I always know that I am.⁴⁹⁰

Beeby's certainty of his 'mission' closely echoed his earlier, more innocent and less guarded, admiration for the authoritarian nationalistic governments in Europe. He

⁴⁸⁷ For example, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada was a major party for over fifty years.

⁴⁸⁸ Beeby, 1992, pp. 292, 297.

⁴⁸⁹ Beeby, letter to Prof. Richard M. Wolf, 3 December 1989.

⁴⁹⁰ Beeby, quoted in Alcorn, p. 370.

praised their emphasis on making education more community-oriented and cultivating a sense of ambition in individuals for the benefit of society.

Beeby later, during World War Two, distanced himself from his earlier admiration. He said that the 'Axis' countries were misguided, and had developed 'a brutal philosophy' that instilled hatred, prejudice and a 'half-crazy pride' (see below). Nevertheless, he retained his firm belief in the need for authoritarian leadership of the Department of Education to instil different beliefs in students as part of developing a more appropriate democracy-loving citizenship.

Fortunately for Beeby, New Zealand's cultural background may explain why his Department, and the Labour Government, was able to retain its authoritarianism without the spectre of totalitarianism. Renwick argued that New Zealanders had a great degree of ambivalence towards authority. He wrote:

Ambivalence towards authority is probably one of the underlying themes of our social history. ... Wellington and the Department of Education are ... to most people in education the places where 'they' make decisions that affect 'us'.⁴⁹¹

According to Renwick, this ambivalence was also caused by the realisation that a strong central Department was also a necessary consequence of a centralised education system.

He continued:

In a country where ... the Government of the day is finally accountable to the public for the wellbeing of the education system, there must inevitably be a concentration of authority in the hands of a small number of decision-makers. That is simply a consequence of a centrally financed, national system of education.⁴⁹²

Beeby's view of his impact sometimes included a prideful nationalism. In 1958, while reflecting on the impact of his reforms, he wrote:

The whole teaching profession have had to face, as never before during this century, the real purpose and meaning of their craft. Philosophies and practices in education, that have never been fundamentally challenged by classroom teachers since the pattern was laid down in England towards the end of the last century, have had to be reviewed afresh, and our post-primary school, with all its imperfections, is now a thoroughly New Zealand institution.⁴⁹³

In 1983 Beeby privately reflected on his previous blind confidence in the direct reforming power of education while still maintaining his strong convictions about education. He wrote:

⁴⁹¹ Renwick, W.L., 1976, pp. 310, 312.

⁴⁹² Renwick, W.L., 1976, pp. 310-311.

⁴⁹³ AJHR, 1958, E1, p. 10.

It is true that the progressives – including me – took a naïve view on the influence education could have on social and economic change, regarding it as a cause and not merely a condition of social reform.⁴⁹⁴

That same year Beeby also publically reflected on his moderated belief that education was still the only force capable of ‘saving’ the world. He wrote:

I used to think, even 40 years ago, that the World... could be saved by Education. I still believe it can only be saved with Education, but it is subject to a vast number of influences.⁴⁹⁵

5.2 Historical Precedents for Beeby’s Authoritarianism

Beeby’s authoritarianism cannot simply be attributed to personal characteristics. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is also a reflection of the history of authoritarian leadership in the Department. Beeby did not step into a small liberal bureaucracy and impose a new structure. Rather, he stepped into a large tightly-ran organisation with a history of centralised power. It is difficult with any certainty to pinpoint specific influences by other individuals on Beeby’s style of leadership. However, Beeby’s actions regularly echo the behaviours and reforms of three specific men: Hogben, Hanan, and Fraser.

In proposing the ‘reorientation’ of the education system in his 1939 statement, Beeby followed directly in Hogben’s footsteps. Just as Hogben rewrote the primary school syllabus and introduced a range of reforms to reorient the education system, Beeby sought to introduce a new curriculum and encourage more practical, efficient teaching methods. Just as Hogben blended the practical and vocational orientation of Habens with the expectations of the Liberal party, Beeby combined the technical and employment-related goals of Strong and Lambourne with the egalitarian expectation of the Labour party. In both cases, each man was Director long enough to have a large impact on the education system.

Beeby’s relationship with Fraser also echoes Hogben’s earlier relationship with Joseph Hanan, the authoritative 1915-1919 Minister of Education. Several of Hanan’s uncompleted goals were later completed under Beeby and Fraser; including publishing NZ-oriented schoolbooks from 1940, increasing the school leaving age in 1944, and establishing a wide compulsory curriculum in 1945.

Hanan was an activist Minister who pushed for educational reform. Beeby later described Hanan as an ‘energetic’ Minister who tried to ‘lighten the scene’ during

⁴⁹⁴ Beeby, letter to David McKenzie, 28 June 1983.

⁴⁹⁵ Beeby, 1983, p. 5.

Anderson's conservative Directorship.⁴⁹⁶ One of the main reforms that Hanan supported was 'equal opportunities for all', so that all students could 'enter more fully and widely into the life of the community'.⁴⁹⁷ Beeby later continued these reforms when he argued that an extensive compulsory curriculum would increase equality of opportunity and help prepare students for their lives as future citizens.

Just as Beeby would argue twenty-five years later, Hanan's 'equality of opportunity' was based on students' ability. Firstly, Hanan argued that the 'equal opportunities' offered to post-primary students would be dependent on their mental and physical abilities.⁴⁹⁸ Secondly, he wanted to require all students to study, and be examined on, an extended range of subjects:

Hanan was particularly eager to utilise the political power of his office to expand the compulsory subject provisions in curriculum and examinations regulations.⁴⁹⁹

By 1919, when replaced as Minister for Education, Hanan had been unable to implement many of his proposals. Much like Hogben, Hanan had not fully accounted for resistance from teachers to sweeping reforms, and widespread opposition to reforms which would make the system less academically-oriented. According to Openshaw, Lee and Lee:

Hanan had learnt very little from the experiences of either Hogben or previous Ministers of Education, and he had difficulty in appreciating the extent of the stranglehold that public examinations held over post-primary school curricula.⁵⁰⁰

Beeby learned from their mistakes and developed a view on the importance of teachers to educational reform (see Chapter 6).

Fraser found in Beeby a Director willing to implement wide-sweeping changes to the education system. Beeby's constant contact with Fraser likely also influenced Beeby's style of leadership. Fraser's democratic socialist background helps to explain his support for strong, progressive state regulation in education. He argued that education should be used to assist boys and girls to develop mentally, physically and morally into the best types of men and women.⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, although the 1935 Labour party itself had shifted from its socialist roots towards a more humanist

⁴⁹⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 45.

⁴⁹⁷ AJHR, 1916, E-1a, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁸ NZPD, 1910, vol. 150, pp. 884-885.

⁴⁹⁹ Lee, 1996, p. 179.

⁵⁰⁰ Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993, p. 113.

⁵⁰¹ Fraser, National Education, 1936a, p. 8.

orientation, it retained a strong emphasis on education as a means of empowerment.⁵⁰² Into this environment Beeby was employed.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint specific ways that Fraser directly influenced Beeby, the two worked together for several years and shared an assertive leadership style. Webb described Fraser as someone who

liked power, fought hard to win it, and towards the finish clung desperately to it.⁵⁰³

Furthermore, Beaglehole describes how Fraser's 'authoritarian streak' was 'always there', and how Fraser

could be devious in action, intolerant of opposition, and ruthless in maintaining his authority. He had a long memory for enemies as well as for friends.⁵⁰⁴

Beeby's later penchant for an authoritarian Department complemented the Labour government's wider belief about the necessary power of the state. Gibbons explains:

The Labour party believed in using to the full the power of the state for change. This was a time-honoured tradition in New Zealand, but the Labour Party, partly because of its socialist roots, and partly because of its massive electoral support, used state power more enthusiastically and extensively than any previous governing party.⁵⁰⁵

As Fraser's 'apprentice' (see Chapter 2), Beeby would have had the opportunity to learn from Fraser and apply those lessons to reform *his* Department of Education. In fact, several decades later Beeby even reflected that Fraser himself would have made a better candidate due to his much greater knowledge. Beeby wrote:

I had no experience about administration except running a little university department ... and when I came in Peter Fraser quite literally was more fitted to be Director of Education than I was. He knew vastly more about the ... general school system.⁵⁰⁶

Right up to his death in 1950, Fraser used Beeby to protect New Zealand's overall educational reputation. After World War Two, Fraser sent Beeby around New Zealand's trusteeship territories to check their educational status. Based on his competent work and reports, Beeby was requested to serve as UNESCO's Assistant Director-General; he went in 1948 and worked there for 18 months.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰² For the early development of the Labour Party, see Brown (1962).

⁵⁰³ Leicester Webb (1953) *Leadership in the Labour party*, in *Political Science* 5(2), p 46.

⁵⁰⁴ Beaglehole, Tim (2013) *Fraser, Peter*, in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 25-Sep-2013. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4f22/fraser-peter>

⁵⁰⁵ Gibbons, P.J. (1992), p. 329.

⁵⁰⁶ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 6

⁵⁰⁷ McKenzie, 2000, p. 134.

His experiences in UNESCO sharpened his administrative assertiveness already in place throughout the early 1940s. He may not have caused the Department to become authoritarian, but he certainly embraced, extended, and justified the authoritarianism already present.

5.3 The Authoritarian Beebian Department of Education

Beeby's confidence in progressive goals helped lead him to develop an authoritarian style of leadership. However, he rarely portrayed himself as an authoritarian leader and may even not have envisioned himself as one. He instead reported that he tried to use a consultative, consensus model of decision-making. Beeby wrote:

It was for me to balance the powers of the professional and administrative arms of the department, and to find a way of getting them to work together for a common purpose. I set up the director's meeting, which met at 10 a.m. every Monday morning. ... All recommendations to the minister on policy, and most important decisions on the carrying out of policy and on finance, came before the meeting. We seldom voted on an issue and tried to come to agreed decisions whenever possible; when that failed, we adopted the usual tactic of setting up sub-committees to find more facts and report back. ...

There was an unspoken understanding that, in case of deadlock, the final decision was mine. ... I seldom made a decision on either action or politics without consulting my colleagues ... The decision, in almost all cases, was a joint one, but the reasons, the set of ideas behind the judgement, were my own.⁵⁰⁸

However, Beeby later admitted to initially having difficulty with a consultative style of decision-making. He reported that he initially found the idea of having to consult with other people 'foreign' and he appeared to blame this on his university background. He said:

You see it was foreign in some ways ... You didn't think of administration being like that, and coming from a University, ... you wanted to be consulted but you didn't consult other people very much.⁵⁰⁹

Beeby also had some difficulty in delegating authority. Shortly after retiring as Director he reflected on his preferred management style—clear lines of responsibility that were all routed through him. He said:

⁵⁰⁸ Beeby, 1992, pp. 121-122.

⁵⁰⁹ Beeby, in King, 1978, p. 10.

I have always had a particular fear of tangled lines of responsibility in administration ... I should find it extremely difficult to run a post where one of the men under me was liable to receive instructions that, in theory, did not go through me. ... If the theoretical lines of authority are clear, I have found that in practice they rarely have to be thought of; they only become important when nobody knows what they are.⁵¹⁰

In each case he was driven by good but not liberal intentions. His preference for a strong, central Department thus echoes his preference for a strong, central Director. He refined this preference throughout his Directorship. McKenzie explains:

By the time his long tenure of office as Director of Education came to an end ... Beeby had learned ... to become a consummate tough-minded politician and one who would go to any lengths to protect what he regarded as being worthwhile in the educational process.⁵¹¹

Beeby vs. the Local Education Boards

Beeby's relationship with the provinces also provides insight into his authoritarianism. In 1936 Beeby argued that the perpetuation of the 'local bodies' (the Education Boards) was the 'chief administrative problem'. He wrote:

The position of the local education authorities constitutes the chief administrative problem of the new Minister [Peter Fraser]. The system at present is costly and cumbersome, and combines the disadvantages of both extreme centralisation and extreme decentralisation, since it makes positive action by the local bodies extremely difficult while leaving them considerable power to block the positive advances of the Department if they so desire.⁵¹²

He used the development of the Intermediate School system as an example of how local bodies negatively influence educational development. He wrote:

The [Intermediate School] movement has been slow partly ... because of local resistance to the decapitation of existing primary schools. It provides an excellent example of the power of passive resistance to the local bodies.⁵¹³

However, Beeby appears to have neglected the fact that the division of power also makes it more difficult for 'positive advances of the Department' which local bodies may see as negative. While this neglect could just have been an oversight, it can also be explained by an assumption that all advances of the Department will in fact be positive.

For Beeby, greater centralisation was the 'obvious' solution. He wrote:

The advantages of centralisation in a country with a scattered rural school population are obvious. New Zealand has the most efficient rural school system.⁵¹⁴

And while Beeby did consider a potential disadvantage he also immediately discounts it:

⁵¹⁰ Letter, Beeby to 'Mac' (David McKenzie), 25 December 1961.

⁵¹¹ McKenzie, 1982, p. 133.

⁵¹² Beeby, 1936, p. 399.

⁵¹³ Beeby, 1936, p. 403.

⁵¹⁴ Beeby, 1936, p. 399.

The disadvantages are not quite so obvious; the greatest is probably that New Zealand elementary schools show relatively little variation. Standardization may not necessarily be the corollary of centralisation but in this case ... a premium was placed upon quiet acceptance of the existing order.⁵¹⁵

Beeby turned this lack of variation in schools from a vice to a virtue with his introduction of standardised plans for schools for the sake of efficiency.

For Beeby, the ‘local bodies’ problem was just part of an overall problem faced by the new Minister—to *improve* centralisation of education. Given the small population of New Zealand, centralisation was seen as the most logical, efficient form of organisation. Beeby argued that centralisation was not only important for efficiency but was also inherently fair. He wrote:

The ultimate problem is to find a system of organisation which will add to the efficiency, economy, and essential fairness of centralisation, the local enthusiasm and experimentation which spring usually from other sources.⁵¹⁶

The notion that centralisation was essentially fair re-emerged a few years later as a core component for ensuring, what Beeby called in his 1939 statement, equality of opportunity. However, in practice the failure to fully plan and prepare for significant increases in school populations undermined attempts to provide an equal education.

According to Dunstall:

A sharp growth in numbers and a continuing relocation of the school population challenged the very notion of equality. ... ‘Prefabs’ proliferated in the suburban schools. And there was a shortage of well-qualified teachers, especially in the new suburban primary schools of the 1950s and the rural secondary schools of the 1960s. To some critics, maintaining equality of access had meant some inequality of treatment; quality was being threatened by quantity.⁵¹⁷

Beeby, of course, could not have predicted the large population increases, as both changes in social norms and Labour’s policy encouraged larger families.

Nevertheless, this overall Beebian view remained the dominant position well after his Directorship. According to Renwick:

Beeby’s cautionary observations became the accepted view of educationalists in the post-war years. Schemes of educational reorganisation proposed by the Currie Commission in 1962 and the Educational Development Conference in 1975 met the same fate. The system was incapable of reforming itself from within.⁵¹⁸

Why might it be incapable of reforming itself from within? Systems based on efficiency and progressiveness would find it difficult to support apparent inefficiency and regressivism. The Department was effectively trapped by its own ideology. Renwick

⁵¹⁵ Beeby, 1936, p. 399.

⁵¹⁶ Beeby, 1936, p. 399.

⁵¹⁷ Dunstall, Graeme. *The Social Pattern*, in Rice (1992) p. 467.

⁵¹⁸ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 82.

argues that Beeby's conservatism was ultimately responsible for Labour's failure to fundamentally reshape education. Renwick wrote:

[Beeby's] failure to bring about administrative reorganisation undermined Labour's reforming agenda.⁵¹⁹

This lack of significant reform was also commented on in the comprehensive 1983 OECD Report of Education in New Zealand. It noted that the heavily centralised Department-led education system

is saved from many time-consuming and frequently unproductive arguments that beset societies elsewhere. At the same time, it may be deprived of the stimulus to examine fundamentals and to redefine priorities that such debate can sometimes produce.⁵²⁰

Beeby's style of leadership in both the NZCER and the Department combined consultation with dominant decision-making. This style of leadership remained present into the Department in the 1980s. The Report continues:

Within a context of much consultation and the *management* of schools, *policy-making* and *administration* are highly centralised in the Department. The result is a combination of local initiative within guidelines firmly laid down by the centre. ... Half the teaching force are women. Yet it was pointed out to us that women are under-represented in the consultative process, and that few women hold influential positions linked to this process. ...

Educational administration is centralised. ... Frequent review and the making of many small adjustments have perhaps been responsible for the lack of major structural change in New Zealand's education system.⁵²¹

Beeby's emphasis on consultation is perhaps in part also responsible for the reactionary elimination of nearly all consultative processes during the reforms in the late 1980s. The 1983 OECD Report of Education in New Zealand explains:

It has been argued that the numbers involved conceal the triviality of some of the issues on which consultation most frequently takes place and that the costs of such consultative processes in terms of time, energy and money are becoming difficult to justify.⁵²²

Finally, Beeby's scepticism of the organisational ability of the Education Boards had a long lasting effect on their existence. He expressed doubts that reorganising the education system or empowering local education boards would lead to an improvement in the quality of teaching. His concerns were later echoed and magnified by the highly influential 1988 *Picot Report*, which recommended the dissolution of the education boards rather than reorganisation or empowerment (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of education reforms in the late 1980s).

⁵¹⁹ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 82.

⁵²⁰ OECD, 1983, p. 10.

⁵²¹ OECD, 1983, p. 13.

⁵²² OECD, 1983, p. 13, 18

5.4 The Expansion of Centralisation

Beeby's authoritarianism is evident in his administrative reforms to expand the scope of the education department and to reshape it into a more efficient organisation. In 1936, several years before he became Director, Beeby wrote a review of the state of the New Zealand education system, showing his early approval of centralisation. He wrote:

The Education Act of 1877 ... was intended to set up a decentralised system something like the English one ... The history of educational administration in New Zealand is the story of a growing Central Office and shrinking local bodies ... Increasing centralisation of control, whether desirable or not, was inevitable. The local bodies were spending money for the collection of which they were not responsible; the Department was responsible for money none of which it could spend. The position was impossible.⁵²³

While Beeby may have been correct regarding the Department's position as untenable, he completely excludes the possibility of decentralising responsibility to the local bodies rather than centralising financial decision making to the Department.

It could be argued that Beeby was just perpetuating the popular centralisation tendencies of the past but this ignores recent events. Throughout the 1930s there had been calls for decentralisation. In 1938 the Educational Amendment Bill was introduced and discussed, and amongst other large reforms it called for significant educational reforms including the appointment of an officer of the Education Department to the previously independent education boards. In response a stronger, broad range of calls for decentralisation began. Parkyn notes that '[a]fter their earlier defeats it was not to be wondered at that the defects of centralisation were emphasised and calls were being made for a return to decentralisation'⁵²⁴ Given the differences of opinion, upon becoming Director Beeby had to consciously choose as to how much centralisation he would engage in to implement the policies of the government.

In the years immediately after becoming Director, Beeby began to increase the size and scope of the Department. In 1941 Beeby expanded his Department's influence over the curriculum one subject at a time with the creation of new syllabi. Each syllabus was followed up by both textbooks and teacher handbooks, also written and produced by the Department. Beeby personally remained heavily involved in guiding curriculum reform. Between 1941 and 1947 he published nineteen different articles in the

⁵²³ Beeby, 1936, pp. 397-398.

⁵²⁴ Parkyn, 1954, p. 105.

Education Gazette alone, outlining his view on what shape he thought the new syllabi should take.⁵²⁵

From this point standing committees, consultation with teachers on new content, and testing draft syllabi in pilot schools all become core features of curriculum development and revision.⁵²⁶ Beeby's reforms echo his earlier method of combining consultation with overarching control. By keeping the process close to the Department, Beeby could guide the process without actually intervening. This process was extended in the early 1960s with the development of such services as the Curriculum Development Unit. Beeby's consultative rolling revision remained through to the mid-1980s.

In his 1943 Education Report Beeby argued that the Department should be fully responsible for vocational guidance of students as well as the school curriculum. He wrote:

It is proposed that in April, 1943, the Education Department should take over full responsibility of the Youth Centres, which hitherto have been jointly run by the Education and National Service Departments.⁵²⁷

For Beeby, education was obligatorily directly connected to the workplace. He continues:

The assumption of full responsibility ... follows from the recognition of the principle that educational and vocational guidance is a function of the education system hardly less important than its more commonly recognized function of instilling knowledge. The school cannot regard its obligations to the child as completely fulfilled until he is established in an occupation for which he is best fitted.⁵²⁸

His proposal not only shows his desire to expand the Department, but also that his 'best-fitted' philosophy also extended beyond the walls of the school and into the workplace. By efficiently managing the vocational guidance offered to students, the bridge between school and work, he could ensure his goal of guiding students into appropriate careers for which they are 'best fitted'.

Under Beeby, the Department of Education's administration physically increased in size as well. In 1942 both the School Library Service and National Film Library were established. The Service oversaw the distribution of books from a national library, while the Library consisted of 'documentaries, travelogues, and other

⁵²⁵ Prebble, 1970, p. 79.

⁵²⁶ Ewing, pp. 208-258.

⁵²⁷ AJHR, 1943, E1, p. 2.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

educational material'.⁵²⁹ He then established the post of Assistant-Director (Administrative) in 1947 to help the main office manage administrative minutiae, and opened a regional office in Auckland in 1948 (followed later by others in other locations) to help the department administer at a regional level.⁵³⁰

Beeby continued his centralisation throughout the 1950s. For instance, in 1953 the Department set up a Building Committee to efficiently control and regulate school building programmes across the country. He wrote:

When I took office, I felt that there was room for a major reform in our method of preparing plans and specifications for each new school that had to be constructed. ... If a four-room school was needed in a given district, why could not the design used for an earlier four-room school be used over again? ... [W]hy wouldn't one plan do for all? ... We now have a basic or standard plan easily adaptable for any primary school and for any locality. This change in procedure saves time and, therefore, money, and it does not mean any loss of quality in the work or of attractiveness or utility in design.⁵³¹

In continuing the open-ended expansion of the central office into the semi-autonomous regions, Beeby was following the precedent established by Hogben.

Finally, during Beeby's Directorship, the Department greatly expanded in size to include a broad range of advisory services. Renwick attributes these changes to Labour's policies:

Labour's educational reforms greatly increased the Department's dominance. Almost all the new educational advisory services became Departmental duties: vocational guidance officers, physical education and art services, educational psychologists and an increasing array of special education services, educational publications for use in schools and, somewhat later, curriculum development officers.⁵³²

Renwick correctly observes the expansion of the Department, but fails to consider Beeby's influence over the particular services that were expanded. I argue below that some of these expansions directly reflect Beeby's own educational biases.

Beeby and Early Childhood Education

One of Beeby's earliest and most significant post-war goals was the downward expansion of the Department into Early Childhood Education. Beeby's interest had been ignited several decades earlier, and his passionate support re-emerged in both his 1939 statement and his book written for the 1944 Education Conference. He emphasised a

⁵²⁹ Fraser, 1986, p. 337.

⁵³⁰ Mitchell, 1968, p. 16; Beeby, 1992.

⁵³¹ AJHR, 1953, E1, p. 4.

⁵³² Renwick, in Clark, 1998, p. 83.

technical and moral aspect to education—including an emphasis on learning to work, and developing good habits and attitudes. He wrote:

However we may differ in our views on education in the later stages, we must all agree that ... [the child] should learn to work and play ... and that he should lay down the basis of good habits and attitudes from which all healthy growth in later life must spring. In the broadest sense the first take of the infant room is not an intellectual one but a moral one.⁵³³

In 1947, just three years after the conference, the Bailey Report⁵³⁴ recommended that the state be responsible for early childhood education. Under Beeby the Department did not just provide financial support but greatly extended its reach into pre-primary education.⁵³⁵ By the end of the 1950s Beeby had introduced a range of childcare licencing regulations that set minimum standards for all childcare centres. These Beebian regulations treated some early childhood providers inequitably. Middleton and May explained:

[A]ll institutions not a free kindergarten or playcentre were registered as childcare centres and placed under the umbrella of child welfare, not education. The inequities of this were to simmer for some years.⁵³⁶

Eleven years after Beeby's departure, in 1971 the Hill Report⁵³⁷ reviewed the development of the Early Childhood Sector. The Report supported the Bailey Reports conclusions, endorsed the changes that had occurred since 1947, and advocated improving greater access to Early Childhood Education. Beeby's influence over how Early Childhood Education should be managed thus extended well beyond his Directorship.

Extending the leaving age

In 1944 the paternalistic reach of the Education system was also extended upwards into secondary education by the official raising of the leaving age from 14 to 15. The legislation that permitted the raising of the leaving age had actually been passed in 1935 but it was under Beeby that it was actually applied by the Department. Was the increase necessary to increase attendance? Not according to the AJHR statistics—during the 1930s the number of students staying on at secondary school was actually continuing to increase.⁵³⁸ While the increase can in part be explained by increased access to education

⁵³³ Mason, 1944, pp. 15-16.

⁵³⁴ More formally the 1947 *Report of the Consultative Committee on Pre-School Education*

⁵³⁵ Cook, 1985.

⁵³⁶ Middleton and May, 1997, p. 110

⁵³⁷ More formally the 1971 *Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education*

⁵³⁸ AJHR, 1935-1940, E1.

due to the abolishment of Proficiency, Beeby also believed it should be done for the students' own good. He wrote:

The rise in the secondary school entrance and retention rates during the depression cannot, in itself, be taken as a sign of 'rising aspirations'. I was closely concerned with this in Canterbury and know that a good number of students stayed on at school just because there was no work available for them, and the official policy was to encourage this to 'keep them off the streets'.⁵³⁹

Assuming Beeby's analysis of why students stayed in school is accurate, it does not explain why raising the leaving age was necessary. By raising the leaving age, students' ability to leave and get work would have been inhibited. However, raising the leaving age made it compulsory to stay in school, extending the Department's paternalistic influence over students by enabling schools to spend an extra year shaping students' vocational goals and character.

Beeby's argument that the leaving age needed to be raised to give schools more time to prepare students for work and school set a precedent. Under the Fourth Labour Government, the leaving age was again raised. According to Swarbrick:

In 1989 the school-leaving age was raised to 16, reflecting the view that children needed a solid secondary education before going on to further training or work.⁵⁴⁰

One of the difficulties Beeby faced during the rapid expansion of the Department's influence was the inefficiencies that can arise from such high-level reform. While top-down reform can lead to widespread change, those changes can only be a surface level—the physical rather than the philosophical. In 1958 Searle explains how even after a decade of reform, the actual methods of teaching in the classroom had little changed. He argued that although the syllabi and laboratories had been upgraded, the underlying philosophy of education had not. He reported the

same dull routine of taking notes and drawing diagrams, of swotting facts and snippets of knowledge, of playing in the laboratory, occasionally in a purposeful way but more often aimlessly.⁵⁴¹

Searle blamed the external examination system, workload on teachers due to the new syllabi, the discouragement of experimentation, and the lack of innovations initiated and accepted by teachers.⁵⁴² Similarly, Kivell reported in 1970 that few secondary schools had successfully implemented the Thomas Reports recommendations for social studies. He argued this was in part due to a lack of specific direction from above and not enough freedom given to schools and teachers.⁵⁴³ Given that both of these criticisms echo

⁵³⁹ Beeby, letter to David McKenzie, 20 September 1986.

⁵⁴⁰ Swarbrick, 2015.

⁵⁴¹ Searle, 1958, p. 251. See Chapter one for a summary of his critique. This author recalls a very similar sentiment about the science classroom during his own education in the early 1990s.

Beeby's criticisms from decades earlier, why might little have changed? One explanation is that the whole education system remained suspended above teachers and students, and subservient to the state.

5.5 State Paternalism as the 'needs of the state'

Beeby's belief that control over education should remain centralised is founded on the progressive ideal that the education system should be designed for the benefit of students. However, his vague egalitarian goal was to ensure that the primary system identified the ability of students and directed them towards an appropriate post-primary destination. In some regards this reflects the liberal individualism held by many progressives at the time, that a student's abilities and not their background should be the determining factor. However, it also reflects his utilitarian opinion that the role of the state is to make decisions on behalf of all the new students for the benefit of wider society. Beeby reflected:

[T]here was a background of what I might unkindly call state paternalism ... I knew the real problem at that time was not at the top end of the schools but at the bottom, where they were unprepared to handle the flood of new clients coming into the schools.⁵⁴⁴

Beeby's paternalism extended to the point where he believed that only government and educational professionals should determine the nature of education. He was concerned about letting others have a formative influence on policy, writing:

[E]ven as a sympathetic outsider trying to understand the new conditions, I am still puzzled about the professional implications of bringing in the lay public at the earliest stages of planning. I have always believed that parents and the general public should be given every opportunity to criticize plans before they became fixed and effective, but I believed that it was for the profession to make the first moves and to prepare something that has shape and form and unity to present to lay bodies and individuals for their consideration. ... But the whole movement towards the greater participation of the public in planning what goes on in the school must eventually run up against the question of the place of the profession of education. I am, of course, far from advocating the professional mystiques of medicine and law, but I still think there are professional skills and insights that justify a professional point of view that should demand respect in the proper place and at the proper time.⁵⁴⁵

Beeby's pseudo-consultative approach to education outlined above is the argument that those who specialise in education (e.g. teachers) should be the ones to determine when and where changes are to be made. By relying on 'profession to make

⁵⁴² Searle, 1958, pp. 246-256.

⁵⁴³ Kivell, 1970. See Chapter three for his five-part analysis on why the reforms had not succeeded.

⁵⁴⁴ Beeby, letter to Renwick 20 July 1986.

⁵⁴⁵ Beeby, Letter to Renwick, 20 July 1986.

the first moves', Beeby incorporated conservative attitudes to change and to where ideas for change can come from. Although he embraces this variation of consultative democracy, it is also evident that he was sceptical of the public to lead the discussion. Beeby is instead embracing a consultative Aristotelian 'rule by experts', where it is only the education professionals who establish what is best for the education system.

It seems that Beeby believed that the consultation could only extend so far, to just the discussion between options rather than the formation of options themselves. Nevertheless, Beeby was not ignorant to the calls of sector groups, he acknowledges that:

It still remains to get general agreement on what are the proper places and times, and what are the limits that must be set on professional functions in the planning of education in a country where the demands of sectional interests and cultures are as strong as you say.⁵⁴⁶

His acknowledgement is not that these 'sectional interests and cultures' should have any determining say over education but just that professionals do need some limitations over the extent of their planning. That is to say, teachers are not experts in non-educational fields and should consult with, for example, local businesses and Maori groups, in a properly structured way (the proper place and time). Nevertheless, he is arguing that this consultation should be taken and not that these groups should determine the planning.

This approach reflects his general Aristotelian conservatism. Just as Aristotle was sceptical of democracy, as a type of government in which the impoverished masses can use government to serve themselves, Beeby was sceptical of the public's ability to understand the nuances of education. So while he valued people's opinion by involving them in the decision-making process, he did not let them establish it. This is particularly so later in his career due to personal experience:

My mind goes back to the 1940s and 50s when the Department was being attacked for the alleged drop in standards in the secondary schools. *As a professional* I knew that the real problem at that time was not at the top end of the schools but at the bottom, where they were unprepared to handle the flood of new clients coming into the schools as a result of raising the leaving age. The public, or at least the clamant public was wrong, as later events have shown, and a few professionals were right, but I didn't have the power or the opportunity – or the guts – to tell them so.⁵⁴⁷

In this case, although he was not a secondary school teacher, he considered himself to be part of the professional teaching body due to being the Director of Education. The inherent conservatism in this scepticism arises from his unwillingness to be directed by the desires of either pupils or their parents, leading to a teacher-centric system.

⁵⁴⁶ Beeby, letter to Renwick, 20 July 1986.

⁵⁴⁷ Beeby, letter to Renwick, 20 July 1986; my emphasis.

Therefore, teachers could choose to not advance particular policies for personal reasons or simply if they ignore or are unaware of the problems. As Beeby notes:

As far as I recall there was *no strong professional move* to press the government and the Department to do more for the poor non-academic youngsters who were being forced into schools not prepared to cater for them. The public could not be expected to see this because most of them did not have the training to do so.⁵⁴⁸

As outlined earlier, this suggests that if there is no move by the professionals then there is no move in government. Although this represents a high-trust model for professionals, it is also a low-trust model for parents and students. Furthermore, by shifting some of the responsibility from the government to teachers, Beeby is also shifting the praise or blame for the success or failure of the system.

Beeby on Shifting Sands

Beeby's belief in a centralised, autocratic Department of Education is also exemplified by his reaction to reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s to make education more student-oriented. During the 1980s the Department began a series of reforms that reflected the goals of greater student self-determination and of giving schools greater autonomy to craft courses that better suited students' needs. Beeby's discomfort to these changes is particularly evident in a letter he wrote to, the then Director, William Renwick. Beeby wrote:

After 1975 I find myself, in some respects, in a strange world. As you know, I feel quite at home with your ideas on equity; it is the whole move towards what you call 'self-determination' that makes me feel I am on unfamiliar and shifting sands. Much as I tried in my day ... to involve the professional and administrative bodies and the practicing teacher in our planning, I suppose that, behind it all, there was a background of what I might unkindly call state paternalism, that you are managing, or struggling, to get rid of. I'm glad it's not my job; at my age I doubt if I could manage the change in attitudes and assumptions.⁵⁴⁹

Beeby's 'shifting sand' of self-determination may originate in the conflict with national planning. National education planning involves a layer of planning for the kinds of education that are suitable and appropriate for students, and such planning requires some valuation methodology (which can include supporting equity) for determining that plan. On the other hand, 'self-determination' involves the student instead making (some of) the valuation decisions for themselves regardless of any plan.

Beeby's difficulty in reconciling his authoritarianism and student autonomy may be explained in his doubt that student freedom is essential to education. John Caughley,

⁵⁴⁸ Beeby, letter to Renwick, 20 July 1986; my emphasis.

⁵⁴⁹ Beeby, letter to Renwick, 20 July 1986.

one of Beeby's predecessors, argued that the school system should be used to train students to value freedom.⁵⁵⁰ However, as discussed earlier, Beeby was sceptical about leaving decisions in the hands of students. He instead followed Hogben and Strong, and emphasised the importance of shaping students' choices and character through a strong, paternal state for the benefit of all.

5.6 Beeby's Educational Zeal

Beeby's faith in his ability to determine what educational reforms were necessary reflects his overarching self-confidence. So where did the confidence to implement all the above reforms originate? As discussed, his focus during the 1940s was on implementing sweeping reforms across the primary education sector based on his own vague notion of equality of opportunity. However Beeby later admitted that, due to World War Two, he was more concerned with reforming the system than ensuring the reforms were actually in a 'correct' direction. He wrote:

By the time I became director of education at the beginning of 1940, the country was at war, and I had enough new problems on my hands without worrying whether the general direction we were taking was correct.⁵⁵¹

Furthermore, his blind confidence in the notion of equality of opportunity was reflected in the lack of re-assessment during this period. He wrote:

I cannot pretend that, over this period, the department devoted much time to re-assessing the policy of equality of opportunity; it would have been pointless to do so until we saw the results of the action we had taken.⁵⁵²

Much like the theory itself, Beeby's argument that it was 'pointless' to evaluate a theory except by its results is distinctly similar to Utilitarian arguments that evaluate actions on the basis of outcomes. Utilitarian J.J.C. Smart summarised:

Utilitarianism is the doctrine that the rightness of actions is to be judged by their consequences.

However, Beeby's confidence in the absolute ability of, and need for, education to reform society for the better appears in part to be a redirection of his earlier religious convictions. The nature and extent of Beeby's religious convictions at this time is impossible to know. Beeby reported giving up his church membership and his belief in doctrinal religion at the end of 1920.⁵⁵³ However, he may have retained his belief in having faith and in doctrine more generally applied to education.

⁵⁵⁰ Caughley, in Davey, 1928, pp. 42, 45.

⁵⁵¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 292.

⁵⁵² Beeby, 1992, p. 292.

⁵⁵³ Beeby, 1992, p. 38.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Beeby viewed education as less than something to be done and more as something to have faith and believe in. Beeby is reported to have said:

We believed in education in those days. We were simpletons, of course, in many ways – we grossly over-simplified things. We believed that the world could be altered by education. They came from everywhere. There was real faith.⁵⁵⁴

Beeby's oversimplification and veneration of education has since extended to others in their assessment of his Directorship. For example, Taylor described Beeby as the 'leading local apostle of the new spirit'.⁵⁵⁵

Beeby's Christian agnosticism blending of religion and education would have also aligned with the Christian background of many leaders of the Labour Party. Michael Joseph Savage, Prime Minister from 1935 to 1940, himself argued that many of their social reforms had a religious influence. For example, Savage himself described the 1938 Social Security Act as 'applied Christianity'.⁵⁵⁶

The redirection of Beeby's zeal helps to explain the moral objectivist dimension of his reforms; that is, that there are *right* and *good* reforms that should be implemented. Beeby argued that there is clearly a way that people and the world should be. He wrote:

For the moment let me just say that, in education if not the social sciences, I agree strongly with your initial assertion that 'we should be more explicitly concerned with how the world should be, rather than how it is.' ... I find it impossible to consider any really important topic in education without basing my argument on purpose. And, since social purpose are without lasting significance unless they are based on what you call ethical criteria, it seems to me that your ideas on educational research and concept of myths are on converging courses.⁵⁵⁷

To argue that 'we should be more explicitly concerned with how the world should be' is to implicitly assert that there is a way that the world should be. This is to view education as not only a transformative process, but as a means to trying to transform the world, and thus students, in a particular way. Thus the 'purpose' that Beeby bases important topics on is likely a moral purpose, to try to achieve some kind of moral outcome.

Beeby was also confident that if people understood his reforms that they would agree. For instance, in 1942 he wrote:

I have enough faith in the modern movements developing in the schools of New Zealand to believe that parents who know exactly what is being done cannot fail to approve.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Beeby, C.E., in Middleton and May, 1997, p. 25

⁵⁵⁵ Taylor, 1986, p. 1116.

⁵⁵⁶ Fraser, quoted in Moon, 2012, p. 147.

⁵⁵⁷ Beeby, letter to Mr John Longbottom, 27 June 1986.

⁵⁵⁸ AJHR, 1942, E1, p.2.

His confidence suggests he believed that parents should be led by the Department, rather than be led by them.

Beeby's later aggressive stance towards those who disagree with him, such as the Educational Boards, can also be explained by his pseudo-religious faith in the reforming power of Education. According to Ravitch, many 'radical' educators lose their humility once in a position of professional power. On the topic of educational leaders throughout history she wrote:

they turned and built a narrow world of their own; shielded by their self-righteous, salvationist, reformist rhetoric, they lost the capacity either to accept criticism or to criticise themselves.⁵⁵⁹

Although Ravitch was writing about the various anti-schooling movements in the United States, a similar criticism appears to be applicable to Beeby.

The Certainty of Psychology

Beeby's faith in education only partly explains his confidence in his education reforms. The other crucial part of his convictions appears to be grounded in the objectivity found in his psychological background.

In 1908 Professor T.A. Hunter of Victoria University College had established New Zealand's first laboratory of experimental psychology. It was this laboratory that had been visited by Beeby in 1923, and it was the basis for both the psychological clinic and the psychological laboratory that he later set up with Shelley. Psychological testing had been taking place for several decades before Beeby became Director. In February 1924, the first nationwide testing of students' intellectual abilities occurred when the Department

applied the Terman Group Test of Mental Ability to every high school and technical school entrant.⁵⁶⁰

The method and results of the earliest Intelligence Tests had a direct influence on Beeby's ideas on methods of assessment in education. He wrote:

At first sight, their findings seemed to fit perfectly into a survival-of-the-fittest structure. ... Cyril Burt's tests, and those from a multitude of American psychologists, from Terman and the inventors of the Army Alpha test onwards, provided a more efficient – and its seemed to us at the time more equitable – method of selecting than the school examinations on which other psychologists

⁵⁵⁹ Ravitch, 1978, p. 118.

⁵⁶⁰ Fraser, 1996, p. 336.

were throwing suspicion. The normal curve of distribution of intelligence seemed, like the human hand, to be the unquestioned product of evolution.⁵⁶¹

Beeby's response helps to explain why he connected psychology with education. That he thought that the mental testing of student were both more efficient and equitable explains in part why psychology-influenced statistical analysis became a significant feature in the marking of students' examinations from the 1940s.

Beeby's faith in psychology rivalled his faith in education—he always was more of an educational psychologist than an educationalist. Beeby continued to be an enthusiastic supporter of the analytical methods of psychology as they applied to intelligence testing, and to the natural, measurable distribution of ability across the whole study population. Beeby's interest in the application of psychology to education is evident before he became Director of Education. In 1936 he oversaw the NZCER's standardization of the Otis Intermediate Intelligence Test for use in NZ schools. At that time, he argued:

The Intelligence test, after a quarter of a century of suspicion, has at last achieved a measure of intellectual respectability in the educational world. ... The theory behind intelligence testing is daily becoming more technical and complex and the average class-room teacher must accept it as he accepts the theory behind his electric light meter.⁵⁶²

Fifty years later Beeby reflected on how his importation of Spearman's⁵⁶³ ideas helped to shape New Zealand's measures of assessment. In 1982 Beeby wrote:

Thanks for sending me a copy of your Measuring Intelligence in New Zealand. ... It took me back to the problems we had with the NZCER standardising of the Otis ... In the late 1930s when we started the Otis operation, I was still deeply embedded in Spearman's ideas on intelligence, and saw little reason to go beyond them, and our statistical tools were pretty elementary.⁵⁶⁴

During the first decade of Beeby's Directorship the Department of Education introduced a wide range of psychology-based reforms. For instance, in 1946 the Department established a psychological service for children in schools. One of the consequences of this more intense monitoring and testing of students was a creation of new categories of failure. In 1958 it was reported that a 'conservative estimate' of 12,000 primary school children were 'emotionally unstable'.⁵⁶⁵ Furthermore, the psychological service laid the foundation for the society-driven, vocational guidance

⁵⁶¹ Beeby, introduction to Renwick, 1986.

⁵⁶² Beeby, *National Education*, 1936.

⁵⁶³ His PhD. Supervisor.

⁵⁶⁴ Beeby, letter to Prof. Cyril Rogers, 27 September 1982.

⁵⁶⁵ Parent and Child, 1958, p. 17.

system that grew in the decades that followed and remains present in many secondary schools.

By the 1950s psychological theories had begun to influence educational reform world-wide. This change of viewpoint marked a conceptual shift from, what May describes as, a ‘Physical gaze’ to a ‘Psychological gaze’.⁵⁶⁶ She explained:

By the 1950s a broad psychological paradigm deemed the mental health of children as important. “Understanding” parents and teachers, and the playful participation of children were now the crux of successful learning. By mid-century, developmental psychology advocated fulltime mothering. ... Perceived “disorders” such as illegitimacy, delinquency, and working mothers were “understood” in psychological terms.⁵⁶⁷

While the rise of psychology throughout the 19th century was a world-wide phenomenon, in Beeby the New Zealand education system had a psychologist trained by Spearman, one of the pioneers in psychological testing. I discuss further the effect of Beeby’s psychologism on educational assessment and qualifications in Chapter 6.

In his later years Beeby acknowledged the powerful, perhaps distorting, effect that his psychological background had on his educational reforms. For instance, he reflects on the impact of psychology while critiquing a book chapter written by Bill Renwick. Beeby wrote:

I also appreciated the criticisms of the over-dependence of my generation on the normal curve of distribution. It links with my statement, somewhere or other in the book, that the history of educational theory and practice might have been very different if the systematic study of the sociology of education had preceded the Spearman concept of the psychology of education instead of lagging thirty years behind it.⁵⁶⁸

However, Beeby does not make clear whether he appreciated his specific influence on the New Zealand education system because of his own specific psychology background. Nor does he discuss the extent to which it helped to reinforce the utilitarian educational ideas already in place upon his arrival to the Directorship.

5.7 Beebian Inequality and Meritocracy

A notable consequence of Beeby’s blindness of certainty in his educational reforms was a blindness to his own biases. Beeby himself later tried to provide insight into what may have caused his blindness. For instance, he suggested that his own psychological and religious background influenced his views on the abilities and dispositions of girls. In 1992 he reflected on prior beliefs:

⁵⁶⁶ May, 2000, pp. 124-125.

⁵⁶⁷ May, 2000, p. 125.

⁵⁶⁸ Beeby, letter to Bill Renwick, 20 February 1992.

With my background in mental testing, I certainly could not believe that women's intelligence was inferior to men's ... I did, nevertheless, share the illusion of my generation that there were sex differences in special abilities. Men were naturally superior in physics and chemistry, and women in the biological sciences; men were interested in things, and women in people. By divine providence, this distribution of skills fitted them for the roles they were to play in life; men in the practical world of affairs and women in the home. If proof were needed that natural abilities were distributed in this way, girls and women themselves provided it by the optional subjects they chose at secondary school and university. There was no one to tell us whether their preference for biology was due more to their own considered choice, or to the programmes offered by the schools, to advice from their elders, to the simple acceptance of the current assumption, or to the pattern laid down in the primary schools.⁵⁶⁹

It would be unfair to simply criticise Beeby for any prejudice from a modern perspective—as he notes, he simply shared ‘the illusion’ of his contemporaries.

However, Beeby's argument that ‘there was no one to tell us’ is incongruous—the girls and women themselves could have addressed questions regarding their own motivation. Furthermore, both early sociologists and Marxist feminists, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin, were addressing these issues. Even if modern sociologists would have been better trained to perform this research, the very issue of student motivation is a theme that both philosophers (and psychologists⁵⁷⁰) have been addressing for several centuries.

Furthermore, the lack of sociological theory does not preclude awareness of differences in the academic results of students. By 1940, the Department had been making annual reports to parliament on education for over 60 years and Beeby himself oversaw twenty such reports. The AJHRs show a record of constant inequality amongst both the employment of teachers and the academic results of students.

Beeby's beliefs included ideas of the expected roles for men and women. Beeby later claimed that although he had sought sexual equality, he was blinded by a lack of clarity. He wrote:

I, for one, was determined that women who wanted to go on to a professional career should not be disadvantaged by their sex, but it was a long time before I could see with any clarity that special provisions must be made to help them surmount the obstacles they would encounter just because they were female.⁵⁷¹

However, his blindness to sexual inequality extended to well beyond such ‘obstacles’. In his 1941 Education Report he discussed pre-primary education, revealing his

⁵⁶⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 188-189.

⁵⁷⁰ While psychology as an independent academic discipline may be only a few centuries old, many philosophers from the ancient Greeks onwards have been interested in the *psyche* and have contributed terms and topics both in modern psychology and the philosophy of mind.

⁵⁷¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 189.

assumption that only ‘the right kind of girl’ would make a suitable kindergarten teacher.

He wrote:

There is a dearth of kindergarten trainees, ... some practical encouragement may be necessary to make kindergarten teaching attractive for the right kind of girl.⁵⁷²

In the same report he discussed post-primary education for Maori girls. He continues:

During the year the Government took the first step towards entering the field of Native post-primary education. ... It will differ from all existing technical schools in that the curriculum will be more predominantly practical and will centre around the idea of the home ... The boys will be taught practical building, painting, paperhanging, some plumbing, and cabinetmaking, with the definite purpose of preparing them to enter some or other of the building trades. ... The girls will learn cooking and simple dietetics, sewing, laundry-work, and general housewifery.⁵⁷³

As noted earlier, the modern Beebian may argue that these views were just typical of the time and to argue otherwise risks anachronism. Even if true, this platitude only explains and does not excuse his later attitudes and actions, and thus it is still relevant to note that at the beginning of his Directorship Beeby did not necessarily attribute equality between the sexes.

However, Beeby’s overlooking of educational inequality can instead be more appropriately attributed to an ideal of democratic meritocracy. This is the idea that in an environment where any can succeed, the best will inevitably do so. The young Beeby did not challenge the qualification-dominated system due in part to his own academic success:

The system had served [me] well, and [I] saw no reason to find fault with it.⁵⁷⁴

By 1939 Beeby still did not consider that a person’s background significantly affected their academic success. In later life he conceded:

In nothing that I wrote before 1939 did the concept of equality of opportunity arise. ... In an article I wrote for overseas readers in 1936 I said ... little more than a restatement of the old theme ... that ability plus effort equals success.⁵⁷⁵

Beeby credited others with enlightening him to egalitarian principles, contending that by 1940 he had learnt that education ‘must change to cater for a wider range of abilities.’⁵⁷⁶ Even if so, this is just an extension of his previous idea—the prejudice against a *narrow* range of abilities may have been reduced but the underlying ‘old theme’ appears to have remained intact.

⁵⁷² AJHR, 1941, E1, p. 5

⁵⁷³ AJHR, 1941, E1, pp. 4-5

⁵⁷⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 31.

⁵⁷⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 290.

⁵⁷⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 291.

One aspect of Beeby's meritocratic ideal was his utilitarian emphasis on distributing education according to ability/best-fittedness. This vague, subjective criterion led, in the middle of the century, to the institutionalisation of predispositions which still lingers in the modern education system. Dunstall noted:

Pakeha notions of educational equality for Maori in the 1940s were still circumscribed: an education for which Maori were 'best fitted' meant an emphasis on training for manual labour.⁵⁷⁷

Beeby's assertion that the achievement would emerge when those with ability exerted effort reveals a particular bias. Besides disregarding unequal non-ability related circumstances, Beeby was maintaining aspects of the Darwinian liberalism that influenced the Habens and Hogben Directorships. As Kliebard explains, the laws of natural selection are neither egalitarian nor democratic, but in the view of late 19th century liberals the unequal distribution of wealth and ability was evidence of natural selection at work.⁵⁷⁸

Twenty years later Beeby's paternalistic blindness was beginning to be recognised by new Directors of Education. In 1976, Director William Renwick wrote:

New Zealand has an enviable reputation for the quality of its race relations. ... Until quite recent years, however, when we spoke of the New Zealand way of life, we were really speaking to the Pakeha way of life. ...

And then there is the woman question. Our current concern with the socialisation of girls and the status of women is essentially about how the two sexual sub-cultures in New Zealand society should refashion their roles. If the social ambivalence has until recent years been subconsciously pakeha, it has also been subconsciously male. Indeed, one of the main obstacles to a new concept of equality between the sexes is the continuing predominance of male norms as defining norms for both sexes.⁵⁷⁹

While Beeby is not responsible for any Eurocentric male norms that he inherited, he bears responsibility for any of the ones he helped to maintain and perpetuate.

5.8 Beeby, Dewey, and Training Students for Democracy

One of the major consequences of Beeby's belief in democracy and paternalistic reforms was his support for the compulsory democratization of students. Under Beeby, according to Renwick, the education system was tasked to instil democracy 'in the heart and minds of the citizens'. Renwick explained:

Discussion about the tasks of education in the years immediately after World War II frequently took as their point of departure the contribution of education to

⁵⁷⁷ Dunstall, 1992, p. 469.

⁵⁷⁸ Kliebard, 1995.

⁵⁷⁹ Renwick, W.L., 1976, p. 307

democracy. The war had once again underlined that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Democratic institutions would survive only if democratic values were kept alive in the heart and minds of the citizens.⁵⁸⁰

Beeby correlated education and democracy together before he became Director. For example, in February 1939, at a four-day refresher course, Beeby addressed native-school teachers on the subject of 'Education for Democracy'.⁵⁸¹ Beeby also argued in his 1939 statement that Labour's educational reforms were also essentially democratic goals. He wrote:

It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on the basis of selection and privilege to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable.⁵⁸²

Beeby's reasoning appears simple: if educational goals are essentially democratic goals then compulsory education should include compulsory teaching for democracy. However, Beeby does not clearly explain why we should believe that educational goals are essentially democratic goals. By arguing that the education system should train students to understand and support Democracy for both the good of the student and the state, Beeby was following a tradition set by John Dewey.⁵⁸³

Dewey insisted that, to be part of a democratic state, children should be taught to think for themselves to be a fully engaged member of society.⁵⁸⁴ However, he also argued that education should inculcate appropriate dispositions towards democracy, and children should learn to embrace liberal democratic values.⁵⁸⁵ Dewey wrote:

[I]t is the main business of the family and the school to influence directly the formation and growth of attitudes and dispositions, emotional, intellectual and moral. Whether this educative process is carried on in a predominantly democratic or non-democratic way becomes, therefore, a question of transcendent importance not only for education itself but for its final effect upon all the interests and activities of a society that is committed to the democratic way of life.⁵⁸⁶

Beeby considered Dewey to have been a major influence on his educational philosophy. Beeby wrote:

The NEF, and Deweyism, were first introduced into N.Z. in 1920, by our first professor of Education, James Shelley ... I am sorry to say I never had the pleasure

⁵⁸⁰ Renwick, 1986, pp. 103-104.

⁵⁸¹ Cumming and Cumming, p. 260.

⁵⁸² AJHR, 1939, E1, p. 3.

⁵⁸³ Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan. See Hook, 1995, and for a detailed analysis of Dewey's belief and influence on educational thought.

⁵⁸⁴ Ornstein and Hunkins, 2004, p. 44.

⁵⁸⁵ Dewey, 1916.

⁵⁸⁶ Dewey, 1937, pp. 462, 467.

of meeting John Dewey, but I suppose no one had more influence on my thinking on education.⁵⁸⁷

However, throughout his life Beeby struggled to integrate Dewey's educational philosophy with his own. Beeby continues:

He also influenced deeply other men and women of my generation who came to hold positions of influence in our school system. I am still struggling to reconcile some of his ideas with the realities of the schools of a score of countries I have worked in or visited over the past fifty years.⁵⁸⁸

Beeby's struggle with Dewey can in part be explained by underlying contradictions in their thinking. Beeby was initially acquainted with Dewey's work at University. Alcorn writes that there he was

introduced to the work of John Dewey, who believed that education and growth should be seen as ends in themselves. Beeby's personal and instrumental views of education were challenged, though not at this stage superseded.⁵⁸⁹

Dewey's non-instrumentalism is pervasive throughout his work. He argued for reason-inducing education and for changing the world through experience.⁵⁹⁰ He argued against utilitarianism, education for the sake of social or economic goals, and vocationalism. Beeby may have followed Dewey, but he was not a follower of Dewey's philosophy.

Training for Democratic Citizenship

Beeby's interest in shaping the minds of students emerged in his assertion that the education system should shape student's character, a much broader idea than just shaping their beliefs. It was a sentiment also held by Peter Fraser, who said:

Education is not enough if it teaches us merely to make a living. Education must teach us how to live.⁵⁹¹

Beeby demonstrated his paternalistic view of the role of education just after the outbreak of World War 2. In 1939 he wrote an article for the Director of Education on handling the issue of war in the classroom. The article emphasised the importance of trying to protect children from harm even if not possible. It said:

⁵⁸⁷ Beeby, letter to Prof. Ronald Goodenow, 14 October 1982.

⁵⁸⁸ Beeby, letter to Prof. Ronald Goodenow, 14 October 1982.

⁵⁸⁹ Alcorn, p. 31.

⁵⁹⁰ Dewey, 1960, p.3.

⁵⁹¹ Fraser, quoted in Massey, 1968, p. 44.

If it were possible, I would, I think, protect every child from all madness of an adult world at war, and let a generation grow up that was free from the hatred and bitterness that war engenders. It is not possible; but the alternative is not to use the children to win the war. ... If the price of winning the war were to fill our children's mind with lies and hatred, it would be better that we should lose.⁵⁹²

However, is conceptualising children as innocents needing shielding from the war, Beeby also justified passing on only that knowledge deemed suitable to children. He did not encourage freedom of thought as much as support the state's need to guide the minds of students. The article continued:

The teacher's duty, as I see it, is to act as a buffer between the world of the child and the warring world of the adult, to pass on to the child only such of the jarrings and the jostlings of the adult world as he feels the childish mind can cope with at each stage. It is for the skilled teacher to say what burden of knowledge the child at each age can and should bear.

In 1940, the following year, Beeby clearly indicated what he thought students should instead be taught. It is apparent that before this time he had wrestled with the apparent contradiction of encouraging students to think for themselves while simultaneously telling them that they should think specific things about democracy. However, in his first official Education Report for Parliament, he argued for training students to support democracy. He wrote:

There is amongst all concerned with education a growing realization that it is in the schools that future citizens must not only learn how democracy works, but must develop a passionate belief in the fundamental human values for which democracy stands. How to achieve this more fully without resorting to the methods used in the totalitarian states is one of the major problems that faces the schools in every democratic country. I believe that it can be solved.⁵⁹³

Beeby's confidence that the contradiction could be overcome in the pursuit of indoctrinating students to support Democracy was repeated the following year. Then, he expressed the need to make students love Democracy even more emphatically:

The Axis Powers have a clear and definite and utterly brutal philosophy, and for years they have moulded their education systems into almost perfect instruments for instilling that philosophy into the minds of the young. The democracies have a harder task. It is simpler to teach hatred and prejudice and half-crazy pride of race than it is to create a love of freedom and tolerance and the quiet, decent virtues of the democratic way of life. But if the present sacrifices are not to be in vain we must press on more quickly than ever before with the kind of education that will make the children of New Zealand understand and love the ways of life for which their elders are fighting.⁵⁹⁴

It is also in his 1941 report that Beeby states where he believes education generally acquires its meaning to society. He wrote:

⁵⁹² Dewey, 1960, p.3

⁵⁹³ AJHR, 1940, E1, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁴ AJHR, 1941, E1, p. 2.

The nation is at war: money, materials, and human energy must be thrown without stint into the task of saving for the world those simple moral and political principles which give our education its meaning. ... Above all, this is a war of ideas.⁵⁹⁵

The idea that the state should inculcate certain dispositions in students, possibly including moral or religious attitudes, as well as economic and social beliefs, was not new. It was present in New Zealand education since at least the 1880s under Habens. However, Beeby's emphasis on forming appropriate beliefs and how the mind is shaped reflected both his philosophical and psychological training.

The Beebian 1944 Thomas Report also reinforced the importance of citizenship training. The Report states that the new curriculum aimed

firstly, at the full development of the adolescent as a person; and, secondly, at preparing [them] for an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, homemaker, and citizen.⁵⁹⁶

By making character-building a key part of social studies in the new compulsory curriculum, Beeby set a precedent which persisted throughout the rest of his Directorship. In later life Beeby incorporated his emphasis on the essential link between Education and Democracy in his theory of Educational Myths (see Chapter 7).

The Currie Commission's 1962 Report, appointed by the second Labour Government (1957-1960), also maintained this view. It says:

[P]articular institutions, such as schools, are provided for particular purposes and there cannot be much doubt that the intellectual development of each pupil to his full capacity is still the primary ... purpose of New Zealand schools. ...

By intellectual development [the Commission] means vastly more than the acquisition of bookish learning ... [it] also must mean the cultivation, to the appropriate degree, of aptitudes and attitudes of mind, the ability to think, communicate, judge, and discriminate. It is important to realise that a democratic society requires these things of *all* its citizens ... [and it is] the school's contribution to the character formation in which this development is mainly expressed ... On [the school] lies the major responsibility for the 'intellectual advancement of the nation', a task confided to it by the State, which it may not neglect.⁵⁹⁷

Beeby's association of education with Democracy and Citizenship set a precedent in New Zealand academic literature. Since Beeby, many other centrist and left-wing New Zealand authors have also attempted to reconcile morality, freedom of choice, and educating students for democratic citizenship. One such modern writer is John Codd, who wrote:

⁵⁹⁵ AJHR, 1941, E1, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁶ *The Post Primary School Curriculum*, 1944, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁷ *Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand*, (1962) AJHR, E2, pp. 21-22.

While practices which extend discussion and consultation are necessary to the democratic process, they are not sufficient for the achievement of democratic outcomes unless they arise out of an over-riding concern for truth and are accompanied by a prior commitment to basic moral principles such as fairness, freedom, and a respect for persons. ... Thus education for democratic citizenship is education that places high values on the qualities of open-mindedness, tolerance of diversity, fairness, rational understanding, respect for truth, and critical judgement.⁵⁹⁸

Codd's requirement that democratic citizenship must arise from a higher commitment to (objective) truth and basic moral principles is similar to Beeby's support for education based on 'simple moral and political principles'. While Codd is cautious in justifying his more sophisticated support of democratic citizenship, he nevertheless endorses it in a variety of ways throughout his writings. However, like Beeby, Codd does not fully justify why we should be committed to those 'basic moral principles', or value the associated list of 'qualities'.

Beeby maintained his belief in education for democratic citizenship for the rest of his life. He argued in 1992 that one of the primary focuses of schools should be to shape students into appropriately-minded citizens. Like some modern egalitarians, he was motivated by an idea of social justice,⁵⁹⁹ claiming:

If schools could turn out the right kind of individuals, they could surely help to produce a more just society.⁶⁰⁰

However Beeby still appears to take for granted that there is a 'right kind' of student to turn out, that it is the schools' responsibility to do so, and that a 'more just' society is a desirable thing.

5.9 Consequences of Beeby's Authoritarian Paternalism

By seeking both equality and efficiency, egalitarian and utilitarian goals respectively, Beeby significantly increased the authoritarian nature of the Department. By doing so, Beeby gradually reduced some of the structural traces of liberalism in the education system. But was this a necessary outcome? Yes, according to the schema I laid out in Chapter 1. If the tensions in an education system between liberal, egalitarian or utilitarian philosophies are understood as a three-way 'tug-of-war', as one theory become more dominant it reduces the effect of the other theories. The more an education system adopts one philosophy, the less it adopts another or both other philosophies. In Beeby's case, by using authoritarian and paternal approaches (that is,

⁵⁹⁸ Codd, J. (2004) pp 11-12.

⁵⁹⁹ See, for example, the extensive work of John Rawls.

⁶⁰⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 51.

less liberal), the education system was pushed further away from liberalism. Given the utilitarianism in the education system before his arrival, one of the core issues for reformers in the 1950s was to what degree the education system of the 1950s should be built on equality or efficiency, if not liberty.

CHAPTER 6

EGALITARIAN UTILITARIANISM 1950-1960

What I expected from equality of access to education was much the same old normal curve of distribution but with different people in many of the slots.
(Beeby, in King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 13)

6.1 Overview

For twenty years Beeby sought, and was generally successful in his attempt, to refocus the aims and goals of education and the structures that underlay those aims and goals. However, Beeby was less successful in challenging or changing the underlying educational philosophy he inherited. Instead, one of the consequences of Beeby's blind certainty and authoritarian paternalism was the further embedding of a strong, state-directed style of educational planning and an emphasis on practical, technical education.

One of the driving features behind many of the decisions made was a financial retrenchment under the new National Government. Expenditures on education were trimmed and a new spirit of cost-cutting efficiency entered the Ministry. Beeby was required to focus on a new set of priorities, even as he still tried to implement an egalitarian-flavoured one. This chapter will first discuss Beeby's view of equality in more detail before explaining why it gave him the flexibility to work under an entirely different political party. I then go on to argue that many of the 'efficiency' or Utilitarian-based reforms nicely meshed in with his prior beliefs. I argue that in this regard, that while Beeby had truly believed in Fraser's egalitarianism, he also harboured Utilitarian tendencies as well, making the implementation of policies in the 1950s much easier. I discuss the impact of psychology on Beeby's idea of education, his prevailing views on waste and efficiency, the role of teachers, the importance of qualifications, the expansion of technical education, and the long term impact of Beeby's Egalitarian Utilitarianism.

Overall, this chapter argues that during the 1950s, the philosophy underlying many of Beeby's reforms changed from a form of liberal Utilitarian Egalitarianism to Egalitarian Utilitarianism. For the sake of argument and discussion this thesis uses these terms only in a broad sense.

By *Utilitarian Egalitarianism* I mean a form of Egalitarianism where the Egalitarian goals are achieved via Utilitarian means. As such, the form and distribution of utility is subordinate to the demands of equality. This may, for example, include employing a utilitarian distribution scheme as a means of achieving equality.

By *Egalitarian Utilitarianism*, I mean a form of Utilitarianism where the Utilitarian goals are achieved via Egalitarian means. As such, the form and distribution of equality is subordinate to the demands of utility. This may, for example, include employing an egalitarian distribution scheme as a means of achieving greater efficiency.

The above distinction is made further complex by the fact that Beeby was not so much a *Utilitarian* as an *Educational Utilitarian*, by which I mean a form of Utilitarianism that takes education as the utility to be maximised. That is, a view that the form and distribution of increasing equality in education is subordinate to the demands of utilitarianism. During his administration, Beeby both emphasised increasing equality of opportunity while also increasing his emphasis on system-wide efficiency. A large number of his major reforms focused on the external, measurable aspects of education, such as teachers and the qualification system.

6.2 Beeby's Unsophisticated Equality

Beeby had a fervent belief in equality. As discussed in Chapter 5, his belief underlay his paternalism and justified his authoritarianism. He regularly opined on equality and on the problems facing the education system to meet its demands. His reputation as an egalitarian is well founded on his avowed dedication to equality in the hundreds of documents that he wrote. His belief was a key part of his commitment to what he considered liberal progressivism.

However, Beeby's fervent commitment also lacked some depth. His sense of certainty provided him with the confidence to commit to a vague notion of equality of opportunity. Although Beeby had an academic background that included philosophy, his own understanding of this complex idea was incomplete. While at university, Beeby studied both Education and Philosophy and achieved high marks in each. However, Beeby was frank about his philosophical background in later years:

My four years of copying dictated notes as preparation for a thoroughly unmerited First in philosophy.⁶⁰¹

According to his biographer, Beeby had some significant gaps in his scholarship. She writes:

⁶⁰¹ Letter to Lionel Elwin, 20 January 1988.

[Beeby] admitted that he did not fully understand the inherent conflicts between the work of Thorndike and Dewey, between the beliefs of Shelley and Fraser.⁶⁰²

According to his own admissions, he did not possess a deep understanding of the underlying philosophical issues concerning equality. In later life Beeby humbly acknowledged his inadequacy. He wrote:

I am no real scholar but only an experienced administrator with an abiding interest in ideas that might make sense of my actions. What is more, I am a pathetically slow reader. So, by scholarly standards, my reading on education has been patchy and totally inadequate, even though I have had the temerity to write a fair bit on the subject in setting where experience carried some weight.⁶⁰³

Beeby's lack of a driving ideology also reflected the Labour Party's own lack of philosophical underpinning. In 1961 Martyn Finlay, president of the Labour Party, explained:

Most of [Labour's] radical legislation was passed in its first term... From then on both experimentation and majority declined... The Party, as a whole, never did have an ideology, any formulated and accepted body of philosophy or doctrine.⁶⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Beeby retained an idealistic commitment to his beliefs regardless of practical experience. For instance, in a letter to a friend he explained:

I ... was trying to recall that the 1930s was deeply involved in the 'progressive' movement in education. (You must be aware that, at heart, I am, and shall always be, something of a 'progressive' in spite of a lifetime's experiences of its failings.)⁶⁰⁵

So while Beeby did not have had a simple understanding of equality, he did have, what I call, a naïve understanding of equality. His naïve equality led to him being the gatekeeper for the range of egalitarian reforms for which he is known, but also provided a 'backdoor' for reforms that were egalitarian in name alone. However, to critique him for the latter is not to undermine his successes in the former.

Beeby's reforms both shaped and were shaped by his conception of equality. Middleton and May explained:

The version of equality which dominated educational, and wider social, policy-making from the 1940s to the 1980s was that 'equal means the same'. Equal opportunities could best be provided through the uniformity of educational provision – if all children (with some allowances for differences in intelligence and gender) went to the same schools, experienced the same curriculum, and sat the same examinations.⁶⁰⁶

Only in his later years did Beeby become less certain of his guiding egalitarian philosophy. He wrote:

⁶⁰² Alcorn, 1999, p. 10.

⁶⁰³ Beeby, letter to Prof. Lawrence Cremin, 3 Feb 1987.

⁶⁰⁴ Finlay, p. 45.

⁶⁰⁵ Beeby, letter to Prof. Lawrence A, Cremin, 15 July 1988.

⁶⁰⁶ Middleton and May, 1997, p. 185.

I have been working recently on a reconsideration of the ‘equality of opportunity’ in education that was my pole-star from 1940-60 when I was Director-General of Education here. Not only is it dimmer – though still shining, I assure you – because of all that has happened in rich countries in the years between, but decades spent in and out of poor countries all over the world have enabled me to see our educational problems in their distorting mirror.⁶⁰⁷

Pole-star Equality

Overall, Beeby’s version of equality may be best summed up in the above quote, that ‘equal means the same’. This absolute equality is both clear and vague—proponents can agree to the sentiment of equal treatment yet disagree over what that treatment should be. While Fraser had called for greater equality and equity in education, Beeby had a more flexible conception—Beeby’s ‘pole-star’ can be approached from a range of different directions under quite different captains and crews. Nevertheless, the conceptual weakness inherent in such a distant goal was also as ideological strength, as it permitted flexibility in implementation under both Labour and National governments.

6.3 Beeby’s Ideological Flexibility

Beeby’s view of equality afforded him liveness when it came to implementing policies under successive governments. Although Beeby was seen by some during the 1940s as a standard bearer for the Labour Party’s education reforms, he remained a competent administrator when the National Party was the government between 1949 and 1957. His ideological flexibility is somewhat evident in that although National was critical of the Labour party’s reforms, Beeby retained his job and ultimately gained the support of the new Minister of Education, albeit after an initial period of doubt.

Nevertheless, Beeby’s influence can best be seen in the perpetuation of his reforms. Middleton and May wrote:

Despite changes of government, the two decades after the war were characterised by a remarkable consensus among key decision makers about education. When the Labour government was defeated by National in 1949, a change in direction was widely expected.⁶⁰⁸

However, Beeby himself later noted:

With the defeat of Labour ... the climate altered, but after some initial hesitation, there was no marked change in the general direction of education.⁶⁰⁹

Beeby’s focus on the implementation of policy rather than the ideology itself may have contributed to his ability to work smoothly under different Ministers⁶¹⁰ and with

⁶⁰⁷ Beeby, letter to Dr Theodore Sizer, 10 March 1982.

⁶⁰⁸ Middleton and May, 1997, p. 156.

⁶⁰⁹ Beeby, 1986, p. xxvii.

different political parties. However, it would have also contributed to a weaker egalitarian vanguard when National's liberal utilitarianism returned to power.

In 1950, a more socially conservative National Government replaced the Labour Government. They had campaigned on well-tread utilitarian grounds—against excessive government expenditures, inefficient use of resources, impractical policies, and ineffective ministers.⁶¹¹

One of the factors in the campaign was concerns about the failure of education to address the needs of students. Beeby had overseen the failure of central government to sufficiently plan for education; the raising of the leaving age exacerbated the shortage of teachers and educational resources. Whitehead explains that the system 'struggled through one of the worst staffing emergencies imaginable'.⁶¹² In 1951 Ronald Algie, the new Minister of Education, in an article about the 'crisis in education', wrote:

Everything about education is getting so big that threatens to outstrip our ability to keep up with its demands ... a layman might wonder whether we might not be returning to a period of over-crowded classrooms, shelter-shed teaching and the uncertified teacher.⁶¹³

Nevertheless Beeby retained his job. Although Beeby was a symbol of the previous government's education reforms, he was able to maintain his reforms while working in conjunction with Algie. Beeby later recalled:

When we came to know each other better, I found him an excellent minister, a shrewd tactician who managed to get through Cabinet financial approvals that seemed hopeless. ... All the administrative mechanisms for curriculum change in the primary and post-primary schools were firmly in place, and he made no attempt to alter them. ... I had the sense not to flaunt the term 'equality of opportunity' but, after the first year or so, he never gave any indication that he disagreed with the policy it represented.⁶¹⁴

Due to the continuation of Beeby's central-planning under a more financially conservative government, many educational facilities continued to struggle. Middleton and May report that:

The conditions in many kindergartens, playcentres, and many secondary, intermediate and primary schools of the 1950s and 1960s made it difficult for their teachers and/or supervisors to do more than survive – maintain some semblance of order – on a day-to-day basis.⁶¹⁵

Sutch agrees, noting the lack of a guiding philosophy of education. He wrote:

⁶¹⁰ Peter Fraser, Henry Mason, Terry McCombs, Ronald Algie and Philip Skoglund.

⁶¹¹ See, for example, Robinson, 1957, for a analysis on the successful campaign of the National Party.

⁶¹² Whitehead, 1974, p. 122. Also see McLaren, 1974, pp. 99, 126.

⁶¹³ Algie, 1951, p. 7.

⁶¹⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 292.

⁶¹⁵ Middleton and May, 1997, p. 119.

[I]n the 'fifties the country was apparently satisfied with catering for the rapidly expanding numbers of secondary schoolchildren ... But the education system was still characterised by inadequately trained teachers, particularly in secondary schools; classes too large; and by the lack of a philosophy of education—again, particularly in secondary schools.⁶¹⁶

Beeby's Pragmatic Impartiality

Although associated with Fraser's socialist Labour Party, Beeby was also proud of his political impartiality. He wrote:

I did not join or in any way support any political party until, at the age of 73, I did join a political party in 1975. For twenty years as a permanent head, I served both parties impartially and ... I found no difficulty in putting whatever professional knowledge and skills I had at the disposal of every minister with whom I worked.⁶¹⁷

Beeby's willingness to reorient his knowledge and skills to develop Departmental policy according to a completely different political ideology reflects his overall pragmatism. Ben Levin explains that for politicians:

[P]olitical decisions are shaped by many considerations including the requirements of staying in office and the vicissitudes of the moment as well as the beliefs and commitments of policymakers and their advisors.⁶¹⁸

Beeby demonstrated that the same analysis might apply to Administrators as well.

Beeby's principle of impartiality also explains why, during his Directorship, he wrote rarely about his educational and political views. To remain 'loyal' to the current government, he kept his political opinions to himself. After his Directorship, Beeby refrained from publicly commenting on the New Zealand education system until his withdrawal from public life.

In private correspondence later in his life, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, his political views became quite evident. Beeby rarely attacked political parties or individuals. Educational ideas and policies were his targets. To give one example of such criticism, Beeby wrote negatively of the move in the 1980s to decentralise the administration of education; the replacing of the extensive Department of Education with a smaller, more narrowly focused, Ministry of Education, with much of the decision-making process being transferred to boards of trustees in each school.

Although Beeby was ideologically pragmatic, he maintained a strong belief in linking economic rationalism to educational outcomes under either government. He

⁶¹⁶ Sutch, p. 323.

⁶¹⁷ Beeby, letter to Ken McKinnon, 4 March 1990.

⁶¹⁸ Levin, B., 2001, p. 22.

constantly maintained a fiscal conservatism to educational financing - a view he held several years before even becoming Director. In 1936 he wrote:

Even with a strong Minister, however, education cannot be independent of the financial position, and educational progress will largely depend upon the success or failure of certain unorthodox economic theories. ... One may learn something of a country's scale of values from the additions it makes to its education system in times of prosperity; one learns more from watching the direction of its economies when revenue falls.⁶¹⁹

Several decades later Beeby later admitted that his initial financial credentials were weak. He wrote:

When I took the office in 1940, it was a role for which I was ill-prepared. Peter Fraser knew much more about ... finances than I did.⁶²⁰

However, Beeby's utilitarian belief in deference to the state-regulated economy is a precursor to the neo-liberal deference to the free market. The 1970s saw a rise again in neo-liberal economic analysis of education in New Zealand.⁶²¹ He later wrote:

We educators were grateful to the economists for their definition of education as a form of capital investment, which gave us an intellectually respectable argument for more funds for education, but we were not so happy about their application of the idea to manpower planning.⁶²²

Beeby himself contributed via his analysis of the role of manpower planning and aligning of education to economic goals in his *Which are the Frills in Education?*⁶²³

6.4 Beeby's emphasis on an Efficient Education system

Beeby's pragmatism provided the opportunity for him to renew his focus on efficiency. Efficiency is, of course, not simply a utilitarian concern. However, arguing for a more efficient system is different to arguing for greater efficiency itself—in the second case in can represent a shift of priority away from equality towards utility. As I will argue, while it is impossible to know Beeby's year-by-year priorities, his overall behaviour suggest a firm dedication to efficiency even at the cost of other goals.

Beeby began expressing his concerns about inefficiency in the education system several years before he became Director. In 1936 he argued that 'rigidity of the grading system' led to an 'inefficient' use of teachers' abilities. At the same time, he noted that this applied to Directors of Education as well as to school teachers. He wrote:

Since progress in the profession depends on annual grading marks, a man can seldom reach the top until he is well past the prime of life, and a series of directors

⁶¹⁹ Beeby, 1936, pp. 395-396.

⁶²⁰ Beeby, 1992, p. 230.

⁶²¹ See, for example, Braitewaite and Ogilvy (1970) and Ogilvy (1970)

⁶²² Beeby, letter to Prof. Lawrence A, Cremin, 15 July 1988.

⁶²³ Beeby, 1974.

of education take control when they are too near to the retiring age to give the country the full benefit of their abilities and experience through long-range schemes. If there is a problem of problems, this is it.⁶²⁴

It is perhaps ironic that Beeby would go on to become both the youngest Director of Education and the first to lack actual classroom experience (see Chapter 3).

Beeby maintained this attitude towards educational reform leading up to his Directorship. For instance, while arguing for the development of intermediate schools, Beeby sought greater efficiency through the effective consolidation of educational resources. He argued:

The strongest single argument for the intermediate school is that it can offer all the advantages of consolidation: ability grouping, specialist teaching ... [and] more efficient exploration of all aptitudes.⁶²⁵

Beeby's consultative leadership style too was in part based on efficiency. Tom Prebble explains:

Traditionally there had always been something of a gulf between the professional officers and the clerical staff ... Beeby believed that this separateness was not in the best interests of departmental harmony and efficiency.⁶²⁶

Prebble goes on to explain how Beeby constantly acted to maximise opportunities when employing new staff, use persuasion 'to the point of propaganda', utilise political expediency in forming committees, create more effective publications, and to utilise every means to achieve his goals. While not nefarious, the missing feature throughout Prebble's analysis is any emphasis on equality. Beeby himself said in 1970:

Sensitivity to the angle of reform was the most important thing in my life – to realize just how far you could push your angle of reform up without creating tensions – how closely you could go to the wind without the darn thing coming round and knocking you overboard.⁶²⁷

I concur with Prebble that during the 1940s 'Beeby's great concern was to gain the maximum amount of development possible'.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, Beeby's attempt to maintain an organised, efficient education system bears a striking resemblance to the social efficiency movement.

Beeby and the Social Efficiency Movement

Modern Commentators have traditionally located the arrival of the neo-liberal focus on social efficiency to New Zealand at the end of the twentieth century. For instance, Lee

⁶²⁴ Beeby, 1936.

⁶²⁵ Beeby, 1938, p. 50.

⁶²⁶ Prebble, 1970, p. 66.

⁶²⁷ Beeby, quoted in Prebble, 1970, p. 56.

⁶²⁸ Prebble, 1970, pp. 77-93.

states that it was ‘reborn ... in New Zealand in the early 1990s’.⁶²⁹ This assumption, however, appears to be incorrect. The utilitarianism inherent in the social efficiency movement was a constant feature of Beeby’s Directorship. While no Director would argue for an inefficient education system, Beeby consistently argued for a range of educational reforms on the grounds of eliminating waste and improving educational efficiency.

Beeby had the opportunity to be exposed early on to the social efficiency movement during his research travel to America. The wider *efficiency movement* was a core part of the progressive movement in the United States from 1890 to 1932.⁶³⁰ Adherents argued that strong, centralised authorities were needed in government to eliminate waste in both the economy and society, even if it meant curtailing other social goals and policies. One of the most famous adherent with regards to education was Franklin Bobbitt, who argued for a well-structured curriculum, development of citizenship, mental testing, and vocational guidance.⁶³¹ Not only did Beeby spend time visiting schools and factories in America, he also considered himself a progressive who admired other progressives such as John Dewey.

However, Peter Fraser had been much more sceptical of the movement and its close connection to the economy, dating back to its influence under Hogben. Massey wrote:

Technical education had an important part to play in economic development but they (Labour) were justified in watching the present campaign of ‘efficiency’ with suspicion. ... [T]he gulf between the blue-collared and white collared blinded Labour’s eyes to the fact that egalitarianism was not synonymous with individual educational opportunity nor with the economic interests as a whole.⁶³²

Nevertheless, Beeby’s Department came to bear nearly all the hallmarks of, according to Lee, the efficiency movement. To begin, Lee noted that a key feature of the utilitarian movement is ‘the (re)introduction of an outcomes-based approach to school curriculum and assessment reform. Beeby’s re-introduction of exam-tested qualifications fits well. Second, the movement originated in time-and-motion studies. Beeby did these in the 1930s. Third, the movement claims that young people only need enough to prepare them for their future occupational roles in society. Beeby’s vocationalism and equality of opportunity echo this. Fourth, the movement encourages

⁶²⁹ Lee, H., 2003, p. 64.

⁶³⁰ See Haber, 1964, for a full analysis of the role of the (social) efficiency movement in progressivism.

⁶³¹ See, for example, Bobbitt, 1918, 1924.

⁶³² Massey, 1968, pp 2-3, 10.

schools to only teach what is relevant to the needs of industry, clearly define a curriculum and then teach it to all children. As do some of Beeby's curriculum reforms. In fact Beeby had argued in 1932 that what was needed was closer cooperation between the educationalist and industry.⁶³³

The key difference is that while American theory was 'displaced by *social reconstructionism*', in New Zealand Beeby added psychological justification over top. Lee's analysis refers to the Cult of Educational Efficiency.⁶³⁴ In this context, given his early exposure and later influential position, Beeby might even be described unceremoniously as New Zealand's *cult master*.

Many of the changes outlined in the remainder of this chapter occurred against the context of the rise of human capital theory. During the 1950s human capital theorists had begun developing complex, utilitarian quantitative techniques to measure the benefits of investment in education. They used statistical models to evaluate the best outcomes of different types of investment, and argued that education needed to clearly be quantified, so that it could be measured and processed.⁶³⁵ In this environment Beeby would have been motivated, and likely expected, to adopt similar theories as part of National's desire to restrain spending while also maximising their return. To this end, rather than simply accepting these theories, Beeby needed another firm underpinning to justify his egalitarian instincts.

6.5 Psychology and Efficiency

Beeby's philosophical and ideological flexibility ensured that he needed a foundation to base his ideas of equality upon. It is thus understandable why his psychological training came to strongly influence how he viewed educational equality. According to Beeby himself, when he returned to New Zealand the normal curve distribution of ability dominated his thinking on equality. In 1978 he reflected on its influence:

I'd been trained under Spearman and ... Cyril Burt, and I was soaked in the thoughts of the psychologists who knew as never before or since the exact nature of inherited intelligence. What I expected from equality of access to education was much the same old normal curve of distribution but with different people in many of the slots. It was almost inevitable that I should see selection on the basis of ability as one of the inherent functions of the educational system.⁶³⁶

⁶³³ Evening Post, 1932, p.6.

⁶³⁴ Lee, H., 2003, pp. 60-67. Each of these claims about Beeby are made throughout this thesis.

⁶³⁵ See Becker, 1993, and Elkin, 1994, for a discussion on human capital theory and New Zealand.

⁶³⁶ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 13.

Beeby's focus on student ability is one of the defining features of his overall educational philosophy. True to the Labour Party's manifesto, Beeby sought to address the secondary schooling educational needs of all children rather than just the wealthy. However, by conceptualising all students according to a normal curve of distribution Beeby also encouraged educators to focus on the mean, or 'average' student, as efficiency would dictate spending money to achieve the best overall outcome. The fact that argument continued throughout the twentieth century into the modern day is testament to Beeby's influence on the education system.

However, by narrowing focusing on ability Beeby was blinded to the complexity inherent in relying on a meritocratic-style education system. Beeby goes on:

I now see more clearly than I did at that time that while the social distribution of the population on the basis of merit rather than on wealth is fairer to some individuals in a competitive society, it doesn't necessarily lead to a form of society that is fairer to all people.⁶³⁷

Beeby's support for testing student ability would have also covered his unbeknownst prejudices under the guise of equality. Shuker explained:

[T]he idea of measurable intelligence proved a useful tool for enabling schools to reconcile demands for social equality on the one hand and for social selectivity on the other. ... What is also clear, is the association of I.Q. testing with the rise of the meritocracy ... with the ideology of meritocracy represented by the formula $I.Q. + Motivation = Achievement$.⁶³⁸

As late as 1992 Beeby still held a very similar view. He wrote:

[A]bility plus effort equals success.⁶³⁹

Beeby's psychology-based, social-efficiency driven, view on equality, combined with his professional focus on administration, resembles classic Utilitarianism. As ethicist Bernard Williams explained:

Utilitarianism ... is alarmingly good at combining technical complexity with simple-mindedness.⁶⁴⁰

A primary effect of his narrow view was to somewhat undermine the egalitarianism that he had inherited from Peter Fraser. While Fraser had been a strong advocate for a revolution based on social equality, Beeby instead generally maintained the underlying system that Fraser had opposed while still promising equality of opportunity. Ricard Bates explains:

⁶³⁷ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 14.

⁶³⁸ Shuker, 1987, pp. 173-174. Also see Codd, 1988, pp. 252-270.

⁶³⁹ Beeby, *Biography of an Idea*, 1992, p. 290.

⁶⁴⁰ Smart and Williams, 1973, pp. 149-150.

Fraser's program for cultural and social revolution was co-opted by those who had an ideal not of the elimination of educational, intellectual, and therefore social inequalities, but rather of a system which aided greater social mobility within a system of social inequalities. ... [T]he relative positions of social class groups remained almost untouched by educational and economic policies.⁶⁴¹

Bates, however, is vague as to exactly who or what 'co-opted' Fraser, and instead argues that 'few sophisticated examinations on New Zealand education have been undertaken'.⁶⁴² Nevertheless, Beeby's narrowly-focused emphasis on education according to ability regardless of background may have helped ensure that few students could truly break out of sex, race or class restrictions. In 1968 Vellekoop completed a study on 3773 male high school students, analysing their social background and educational choices. She observed that subject streaming appeared to be directly related to their fathers' occupations. She concludes that 'the New Zealand school system is unable to erase the effect of social class background on the students'.⁶⁴³

According to 2005 research done by and reported by the *Listener*, most people still believe that education contributes to race and class structure. Black explained:

Market research ... has revealed that 70 percent of New Zealanders think a social class system exists here. ... Of those who believe it exists here, 75 percent say ... that education ... and family background also play important roles. ... [T]he "bicultural functioning society" turned out to be myth when ... [looking] at the position of Maori and Pacific Islanders.⁶⁴⁴

Beeby and Maori/Native Schools

The perpetuation of a separate system of schools for Maori students is another pertinent outcome of Beeby's focus on educational efficiency. Separate schools for Maori were established in the 19th century and reflected European attitudes towards language and culture. Under Beeby the Department expanded the number of District High Schools that catered to Maori.

However, under Beeby, Maori students, a distinct minority group, were well respected but did not fare well culturally. As early as 1936 Beeby made clear that he believed Maori should receive their own separate, more practical kind of education even as they were being 'absorbed' by the wider European/Pakeha culture. In 1936 he wrote:

A vigorous attempt is being made by the Department to alter the whole bias of native education. Until a few years ago the native school frankly worked for the Europeanization of the Maori. The new scheme aims at relating Maori education to Maori institutions and Maori patterns of thought. Special emphasis is

⁶⁴¹ Bates, R., 1980, pp. 258-259.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁶⁴³ Vellekoop, 1968, p. 18.

⁶⁴⁴ Black, Joanne, *Listener*, 2005, pp. 16-20.

being laid on the active and creative sides of the curriculum in an attempt to reach the emotional life of the Maori. It is recognised that, ultimately, the Maori will be absorbed by the European, but that the process will be very much slower than was previously thought.⁶⁴⁵

Beeby also explained that the education system should seek an efficient, maximal outcome from the absorption. He continues:

One object of native education is to ensure that each culture will gain the maximum benefit from the process of coalescing.⁶⁴⁶

Furthermore, while most other District High Schools fell under the control of local education boards, Beeby's Department retained in control of the new schools, potentially disregarding the concerns of local Maori. Beeby later wrote:

[W]hen the NEF was quite strong in New Zealand, there were few problems of race relations here. Or, to be more correct, they were quiescent, and we ignored them.⁶⁴⁷

Throughout Beeby's Directorship Maori were treated paternalistically as a less capable groups of students. Simon explains how this restricted both equality and opportunity. She wrote:

State control of [educational] decision is evident especially in the type of secondary schooling that was eventually provided for Maori. ... [Their curriculum] was a continuation of earlier policies to limit Maori education to mainly manual and domestic training ... No School Certificate courses were included in these schools until Maori parents themselves demanded them. ... [T]he provision of equality of *access* ... did not provide them with equality of *opportunity* with all other children. ... Rather the policies and provisions could only serve to widen the gulf between Pakeha and Maori in terms of economic and political power.⁶⁴⁸

The extensive 1960 Hunn Report⁶⁴⁹ and 1962 Currie Commission Report both criticised the failures towards Maori students. The Hunn report argued that the separate system depressed Maori educational achievement, and that the assimilation policy needed to be replaced with a more equal policy of integration.⁶⁵⁰ The Currie Commission Report noted the extensive inequality between Maori and non-Maori achievement in retention, qualifications, and employment. The Currie Report was also critical of the failure of the Department to consider the desires of the local tribes.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁵ Beeby, 1936, p. 411.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

⁶⁴⁷ Beeby, letter to Prof. Ronald Goodenow, 14 October 1982.

⁶⁴⁸ Simon, 2000, p. 56.

⁶⁴⁹ More formally the *Report on the Department of Maori Affairs*.

⁶⁵⁰ Department of Education, 1960a, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁵¹ Department of Education, 1960a, pp. 419-427.

Monocultural Meritocracy

The above prejudices are obviously not solely Beeby's fault. However, he still bears some specific responsibility for overseeing an education system which led to what some historians have described as a 'mediocracy'. Dunstall wrote:

[D]espite the apparent tendency towards a meritocracy, New Zealand could still be seen in 1960 as: 'a mediocracy — a society and economy conducted without a governing elite selected for high education and/or intelligence'.⁶⁵²

Rather than delivering evenly to the masses, Beeby's utilitarian-like prejudice towards the educational majority ensured that the benefits of education remained primarily distributed amongst the dominant social group with political power—middle/upper-class European males. Dunstan continues:

[T]here is little evidence that the educational under-achievement of children from blue-collar [lower class] families diminished. ... As with class, so with sex: girls did not reap the full benefits of educational opportunity. ... Education had not served to remove social inequality for Maori, any more than it had for some groups of Pakeha.⁶⁵³

The bias inherent in Beeby's 'best fitted' ideology affected employment opportunities as well as education for Maori and women. Dunstall continues:

The long-established single-sex state schools ... maintained their pre-eminence in the pursuit of university scholarships. Equality of access ... did not mean equality of opportunity. ... A study of school leavers and university entrants in 1961 concluded that 'there is still a considerable proportion of able children in the manual workers' group who are not going on to the University'. ...

Even in co-educational schools, the sexes tended to be put in different streams and confined in the differences of role already implanted. Despite educational attainment, women continued to be found mainly in short-term, semi-skilled jobs and in professions of low status.⁶⁵⁴

Furthermore, the partiality inherent in the Beebian reforms carried over into tertiary education. Miles Fairburn wrote:

Many intellectually able teenagers ... found the universities a readily accessible doorway ... There were still, however, relatively few women students outside the Arts faculties of the universities and even fewer Maori students of either sex anywhere in the tertiary sector.⁶⁵⁵

Dunstall agreed:

Although this was challenged late in the 1950s, Maori had still to make their way through a school system that was almost entirely monocultural. ... Comparatively few Maori students entered the sixth form, and they were greatly under-represented at university. These disparities persisted into the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵² Dunstall, 1992, p. 468.

⁶⁵³ Dunstall, 1992, pp. 468-9.

⁶⁵⁴ Dunstall, 1992, pp. 468-9.

⁶⁵⁵ Fairburn, in Sinclair, 1996, p. 288

⁶⁵⁶ Dunstall, 1992, pp. 468-9.

In fact, to update Dunstall, Beeby's 'monocultural' disparities have persisted well into the twenty-first century. In 1986, in a letter to Renwick, Beeby himself admitted:

I ... agree with your statement ... that educational development 'until quite recent years has been implicitly ... male and mono-cultural in its essential variations', much as I should like not to. We made efforts to be otherwise, but they were feeble by present-day standards.⁶⁵⁷

Beeby tried to excuse the extent of the inequalities that had emerged during his Directorship. He argued that there had been a lack of sociological scholarship on the topic. In 1986 he said:

It was not until the 1960s that social research showed how profoundly students, whatever their abilities, can be handicapped throughout their whole school life by the social and racial background from which they come. Some obstacles to school progress that are glaringly obvious to us now were hidden from us in the 1940s.⁶⁵⁸

However, according to Beeby, Fraser had understood that educational inequality was an expression of social and economic inequality. Beeby wrote:

I believed the principles as profoundly as did Peter Fraser and yet we believed it in subtly different ways which we had the good sense not to discuss. Don't misunderstand me. We both believed in the right corresponding to the needs of the individuals but his thinking was deeply embedded in the belief as workers movements all over the world that differences of ability had for the most part been artificially created by the economic and social conditions.⁶⁵⁹

On the other hand, unlike Fraser, Beeby viewed educational inequality as an expression of a natural distribution of intellectual ability, in accordance to psychological theory. Given the influence that the sociologically-informed post-1970s criticisms have had in recent decades, Beeby's decision to be guided by the new science of psychology rather than the emerging science of sociology may be one of the most influential decisions that he made in this regard.

Had Beeby thoroughly consulted, and agreed, with Fraser on how to address educational inequality, a different set of reforms may have been implemented to meet the goals of the successive governments. However, even in old age, as during his Directorship, he remained sceptical about whether the vast majority of students could achieve academic success even under ideal educational circumstances. He wrote:

I think Bloom's idea of statistical 'proof' is weak, and never, till the end of time, will I accept his statement – and I quote from memory years after reading his book – that 94 percent of the population, under mastery learning, can achieve as well as all but a handful of the best. My training under Spearman, admittedly, led me to

⁶⁵⁷ Beeby, letter to Mr R.L Renwick, 20 July 1986.

⁶⁵⁸ Beeby, 1986, p. 53.

⁶⁵⁹ King, Interview with Dr Beeby, 1978, p. 13.

overestimate the influence of inborn characteristics on achievement, but I think Bloom goes too far in the opposite direction.⁶⁶⁰

Beeby's ability-driven bias towards more able students is also evident in some of his Reports to Samoa and the Cook Islands. In 1954 he argued that Samoa needed universal education because:

without a foundation of universal schooling, it is impossible to find out who are the really bright children to be selected for further education.⁶⁶¹

Beeby recycled this idea in his 1954 *Education in the Cook Islands*. He wrote:

At this stage of the Territory's development, it is neither possible, not even perhaps desirable, to give post-primary education to the whole population. It must be conferred to a well-selected group of able children who show promise of being capable of taking positions of responsibility.⁶⁶²

6.6 Beeby and Teachers

Beeby's relationship with the teaching profession, alongside his relationship with school boards, exemplifies his Department's complex relationship with the rest of the education system. His relationship with, and attitude towards, teachers reflected both his utilitarianism and his authoritarianism. Beeby saw teachers as an efficient and essential part of student socialisation. By socialisation I mean the social and psychological process by which children inducted into the customs and traditions of their society (e.g. their sexual, racial and class roles, as well as their roles as students, citizens, and members of families and the community). Teachers were an essential part of this process—a means to an end.

Beeby was particularly critical of the effect of school boards on teacher quality. For example, when writing about teachers in secondary schools, he noted there was:

[H]eavy congestion at the upper end of the secondary teaching profession. Advancement is very slow, and matters have not been helped by the fact that nearly every school board has adopted the principle of internal promotion. Such inbreeding must in the long run be harmful.⁶⁶³

Teachers as Instruments of Change

Early in his career Beeby sometimes struggled to understand the difficulty of legislating educational change from above. In 1936 he expressed a lack of understanding as to why primary school teachers had failed to embrace the freedom given to them by Strong's *Red Book*. Beeby wrote:

⁶⁶⁰ Beeby, letter to B.W. Imrie, 13 March 1990.

⁶⁶¹ Beeby, 1954a, p. 21.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁶³ Beeby, 1936, p. 405

The most important event of the decade ... was the introduction of a new *Syllabus of Instruction* ... Above all, it offered the teacher a new freedom in the choice of courses and methods. Why so little advantage has been taken of this offer is still sufficiently a mystery to preclude reasons being fully discussed here.⁶⁶⁴

Beeby's lack of understanding suggests an instrumental view of education; that teachers were the part of a system to be guided, instructed, and regulated, and in response teachers would follow such instruction and regulation to implement education policy.

Under Beeby the education system moved towards being a tool for paternalistic social policy. Renwick explained that during this period:

The education system was to be an instrument of social policy in a way it had not been before ... [and] came into its own both as an instrument of personal betterment and of economic and social progress.⁶⁶⁵

Beeby's educational instrumentalism was an extension of his overall instrumentalism. For example, he has been quite willing to use conditions under World War two as a means to an end. McKenzie explains, 'a centralised economy placed on war footing was not disadvantageous to an architect Beeby of public education reform'.⁶⁶⁶ In an interview with Helen May, Beeby explained:

Far from waiting until after the war, we used the war as a means of getting things done [in education].⁶⁶⁷

Beeby's educational planning was based on the ability of teachers to implement his reforms. He attributed much of the responsibility for the speed of educational progress to teachers. He explained that the vital component of an educational foundation is the educational practitioners—the teachers who can choose to either accept or subvert any governmental reform. He wrote:

Teaching is different from most other professional activities in that, unless the individual classroom teacher both understands and personally accepts the qualitative changes that are being planned, no significant change will occur in his practice.⁶⁶⁸

This attribution means that it is not the responsibility for the government to simply present clear information but for teachers to actually understand it. While this may seem reasonable, Beeby was concerned that teachers may willingly 'not understand' any planned changes that they do not want to implement. Beeby goes on:

The saddest lesson every official educational reformer has to learn is that teachers, under the pressure of instructions they have not understood or accepted,

⁶⁶⁴ Beeby, 1936, p. 400.

⁶⁶⁵ Renwick, 1986, pp. 104, 106

⁶⁶⁶ McKenzie, 1982, p. 132.

⁶⁶⁷ Beeby, C.E., in Middleton and May, 1997, p. 72

⁶⁶⁸ Beeby, quoted in Renwick and Ingham, 1974, p. 25.

have an infinite capacity for doing the same things under another name, so that only the shadow of progress can be achieved by regulations and exhortation.⁶⁶⁹

Considering earlier discussions of Beeby's reliance on national planning and his willingness to get involved in the decisions of local education boards, it is evident that he saw regulations and exhortation necessary for progress. Therefore, teachers were responsible for the flow of change, such that if they choose to not implement change then it will not happen. Alternatively, teachers may just choose to insincerely implement change, providing only a 'shadow of progress' of the government's plans.

Beeby often blamed his lack of success on the education system and teachers. He argued that 'education systems are, by nature, conservative', and that conservatism in the teaching profession was thus the primary obstacle to educational change.⁶⁷⁰ As an example of this he identifies recent changes in the curriculum, noting that greater resistance occurs in changes of educational goals rather than curriculum. He continues:

The difficulty shows itself as its most acute when the reform that is being introduced is more than a mere change in the methods of achieving old and accepted ends, and involves the introduction of new goals for teaching.⁶⁷¹

McKenzie argues that Beeby's reforms were often misunderstood. He writes:

Teachers and schools, Beeby and others came to argue, should be properly judged in terms of the quality of teaching and learning which actually took place in the classrooms. The trouble was however, that the criterion of quality was too often taken to be the percentage of passes each school and class gained in national examinations.⁶⁷²

Furthermore, Beeby was sceptical of non-teachers to even understand educational reform. He wrote:

I think only people of our generation ... can understand the problems involved in getting a whole profession to accept as their own changes that are not in methods only but in the very purposes of teaching. ... An even harder job is to get the politicians and laymen generally to see what the problem is; it seems to them so easy to alter the curriculum and then sit back and await the miracle.⁶⁷³

In later years Beeby also blamed the teachers' colleges for the slow implementation of his reforms. He said that he wished he had gone even further in influencing early childhood and primary school education to implement his ideals. He also said he regretted not more actively regulating the teacher training colleges themselves. He said:

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁷⁰ See Beeby, 1966, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

⁶⁷¹ Beeby, in Renwick and Ingham, 1974, p. 25.

⁶⁷² McKenzie, 1982, p. 131.

⁶⁷³ Beeby, letter to Julia Wallace, 25 May 1972.

I've criticized many things that I did, and that would be one of them. We didn't control the training colleges. ... We regarded them as largely autonomous. Inspectors had a right of entry, but if I were doing it again I would get them in more actively.⁶⁷⁴

For Beeby the problem, again, was trusting the teachers at the teachers' colleges too much. He continued:

We relied on them doing it themselves. I think I trusted them too much ... I couldn't trust them to come alive.⁶⁷⁵

Beeby's instrumentalism had a lasting effect over the education system, either by introducing more instrumentalism or making firmer the instrumentalism already present. In 1976, Director William Renwick wrote:

[S]chools have traditionally been seen as institutions of ... socialisation. ... [T]hrough their codes of conduct, forms of discipline, and the example of their teachers, they would uphold the community's best opinion of its own mores, the schools were expected to concern themselves with instrumental learning.⁶⁷⁶

Beeby's influence was such that by 1976, instrumental socialisation was just an assumed feature of education. The debate was instead focused on what exactly should be instilled in students. Renwick continued:

Schools ... are, of course, still concerned with instrumental knowledge. Over the years, however, they have been required, in the name of society, to broaden their mission. They have at times been called on to cultivate in their pupils attitudes and forms of behaviour conducive to good citizenship, a sense of nationhood, democracy, loyalty to the British Empire ... and many other socially approved causes from temperance to the protection of the environment.⁶⁷⁷

Beeby's focus on an instrumental conception of education may have also contributed to the inequality between the races and sexes. Renwick continued:

[T]he social ambivalence has until recent years been subconsciously pakeha [and] has also been subconsciously male. ... The problem was conceived as ... a problem of schooling. ... It was tackled in instrumental terms, as if the problem was simply one of marketable knowledge.⁶⁷⁸

Long term influence of Beeby's Scepticism

Beeby's scepticism of both parental input and teacher impartiality had a long-reaching impact on educational reform. Beeby's scepticism about the ability for teachers to guide reforms according to their own schedule provided a foundation for the criticism often known as the 'teacher capture' of education. One of the most famous proponents of this

⁶⁷⁴ Beeby, C.E., in Middleton and May, 1997, p. 127

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 127

⁶⁷⁶ Renwick, 1976, pp. 304-305.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 304-305.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 307.

was the New Zealand Treasury, who in 1987 prepared a whole volume of criticisms and alternative education policy proposals.

6.7 Retaining certification and perpetuating qualificationism

Under Beeby, the education system in both the 1940s and 1950s, re-emphasised the importance of achieving qualifications. Although Beeby was not responsible for legislation that abolished or established qualifications, he himself was a firm believer in their value. For Beeby, the role of qualifications to assess and sort students was an essential part of determining students' abilities to be able to shape their education and guide them to an appropriate vocation. However, by doing so Beeby replaced this aspect of Fraser's ideology of eliminating qualifications with his own.

In 1934 the new Labour Government introduced a new School Certificate. Nearly 50 years later Beeby's reflection demonstrates his belief that qualifications had to meet the need of business, and that society needed to be persuaded of that fact. He wrote:

It is too early to estimate what effect this new certificate will have, but its success or failure will depend almost entirely upon the willingness of the business and semi-professional world to accept it as evidence of a satisfactory post-primary education when making appointments. Intensive propaganda may be necessary.⁶⁷⁹

By the end of the twentieth century Beeby's wish has somewhat come true, as politicians regularly argue that student qualifications need to address the needs of business as part of an overall economic strategy.

In 1936 Fraser fundamentally altered the admission system for secondary schools by abolishing primary and intermediate school examinations (Proficiency). In response, schools expanded the range of subjects they offered as the whole system also became driven by the needs of low and middle income students. In 1940 Beeby wrote:

In throwing open higher education to the children of the factory and the shop, however, New Zealand raised to a higher level of importance than she intended the scheme of values of the marketplace, which is present in some degree in all educational systems.⁶⁸⁰

Fraser's decision can be explained in part by his dislike for any kind of testing, and in particular psychological testing. Beeby recalled:

Fraser, who was deeply suspicious of psychological testing, made no effort to conceal his distaste for our use of mental tests in guidance and selection, and stalked out in the middle of the meeting.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ Beeby, 1936, p. 405

⁶⁸⁰ Beeby, 1937, p. 220

⁶⁸¹ Beeby, 1992, p. 109.

The abolishment of Proficiency disrupted the status quo in the Primary schools. As the final remnant of standardized testing in primary schools, and in combination with the free-place system, this ushered in the universalizing of secondary schooling. Taylor writes:

The dreary pressure of the Proficiency examination, long the target of primary school effort, had been abolished in 1936, leaving some teachers confused, but with scope for livelier, more varied work.⁶⁸²

At the time, Beeby reflected that the lack of acceptance of a more liberal syllabus in primary schools might be explained by tradition and the belief in external examinations. He wrote:

[T]he proficiency examination at the end of the primary school course has done much to make for rigidity and formalism, despite the fact that it is now the only external examination in the eight years of the primary course. The unexaminable has tended to be untaught, and the emotional and aesthetic sides of the curriculum have suffered accordingly.

Beeby also ascribed the demand for qualifications to the lower socio-economic students. In 1937 he wrote:

In throwing open higher education to the children of factory and the shop, New Zealand has necessarily introduced into her schools the scheme of values of the market-place. The passion for examinations, the rigid following of syllabuses, the over-intellectualization of the schools, and the whole undignified scamper for "results" follow directly from the giving of educational opportunity to social groups without any tradition of intellectual culture.⁶⁸³

However, the abolishing of Proficiency prompted widespread concerns over the lowering of academic standards caused by mass secondary schooling. Beeby addressed these concerns shortly after becoming Director:

[F]ears have been expressed ... that the abolition of the Proficiency Examination ... might lead to a serious drop in the standards of work. I am pleased to be able to state that there is every indication ... not only that the standard of work in the formal subjects has been adequately maintained, but also that significant new developments are taking place in other fields ... Music, drama, and the arts generally ... and [students] are, I believe, leaving the school a little readier than ever before ...

After all, the best guarantee of standards of efficiency in the schools is not an annual inspection, an external examination, or a rigid syllabus of work, but a body of well-trained, well-led, and enthusiastic teachers.⁶⁸⁴

Furthermore, in 1944 and 1946 Beeby published several articles strongly in support of rigorous education and high academic standards.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸² Taylor, 1986, p. 1116.

⁶⁸³ Beeby, 1937, p. 6.

⁶⁸⁴ AJHR, 1940, E.-1, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁵ See, for example, Education Gazette. *Standards in Education*. Vol. XXV, 1946, No. 10, October.

Beeby's concern for maintaining 'standards of efficiency' in the light of criticisms about Fraser's reforms also helps to explain his own renewed emphasis on other, higher qualifications. Although the Proficiency examination had been abolished, multiple external examinations would remain in the secondary school system.

In 1944 the Beeby influenced Thomas Report called for a form of qualification-based equality of opportunity. That is, the range of subjects that could be examined was greatly expanded from the core subjects to the range of optional subjects that schools could offer students. So rather than liberalising education, the reforms took greater control over the curriculum while retaining the previous philosophy of using schools to sort and select particular types of students.

Beeby's own experiences of the secondary school curriculum likely shaped his idea that all students should receive a wide-ranging curriculum regardless of background. His own experiences are just one illustration of the education system at the end of Hogban's Directorship. In 1985 Beeby recalled that:

I feel that half of me was pretty well educated, and the other half completely neglected. ... [T]he men who taught us in secondary school were educated and often cultured people, who, if they had ever stopped to think like human beings, could never have imagined that the curriculum they gave us was a complete education. They were caught in a monastic tradition, and they must have justified themselves by imagining that we should all pick up a feeling for art, music, drama, intelligent conversations in our homes and in the community at large.⁶⁸⁶

However, perhaps due of his psychological background, Beeby considered young teenage students to be 'relatively homogeneous'. He wrote 'the group from (age 11-15) is relatively homogeneous emotionally and socially.'⁶⁸⁷ He argued that was particularly the case for intermediate students, writing:

The 'chief function of the intermediate schools [is] to provide ... a period of expansive, realistic, and socially integrative education that will give all future citizens a common basis of experience and knowledge.'⁶⁸⁸

It is thus appropriate that he considered a homogeneous compulsory curriculum as suitable for all students.

One consequence of Beeby's commitment to test- and ability- driven education was the perpetuation of a specifically exam-driven qualification system. In 1940, Mason, the new Minister of Education expressed concern that the market for credentials greatly influenced students' subject choices.⁶⁸⁹ However, under Beeby, qualifications

⁶⁸⁶ Beeby, letter to Walter Harris, 10 August 1985.

⁶⁸⁷ Beeby, 1938, p.180.

⁶⁸⁸ Beeby, 1938, p. 210.

⁶⁸⁹ Lee, G., 1992, p. 109.

decreased in value but increased in importance. This is a process called credential inflation, where

high school [qualifications] ... were badges of substantial middle-class respectability, and ... conferred access even to managerial level jobs. ... [O]ccupations require increasingly higher and more specialized academic credentials. ... As educational attainment has expanded, the social distinctiveness of that degree and its value on the occupational marketplace has declined; this in turn has expanded demand for still higher levels of education.⁶⁹⁰

Beeby's failure to address credential inflation during his Directorship has helped ensure that a qualification-dominated secondary system remained intact.

Ironically, Beeby even foresaw this credential inflation, comparing it in 1937 to unbacked currency. In 1937 Beeby reportedly said:

Its face value remains the same, but its real value tends steadily to fall, unless it is in some way pegged.⁶⁹¹

How did it happen? He later admitted that his commitment to ability-driven equality of opportunity contributed to the instability of the credential system:

We adopted automatic promotion in the primary school, and so lowered the age of which the slow learners were able to enter the secondary school. ... Educational inflation inevitably followed; we raised the educational qualifications for all but the most humble jobs.⁶⁹²

Although Beeby opposed the idea of just using examination to sort students, he was in favour of using them to discover students' aptitudes. In 1937 he reportedly said:

The success of an educational system can or should no longer be measured by the numbers who pass or fail in examinations, but by the degree to which it has been able to discover the abilities and needs of pupils and students and has provided for them the type of education from which they are capable of profiting. Such a philosophy lay behind the abolition of the proficiency examination in New Zealand.⁶⁹³

However, Beeby's decision to emphasise the importance of Fourth and then Fifth Form qualifications, in lieu of Proficiency, led to them becoming the minimum standard required by employers.⁶⁹⁴ (This then set a precedent such that the Fourth and Fifth Form qualifications would later be superseded by employer demands for Sixth and then Seventh Form Certificates.)

⁶⁹⁰ Brint, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁹¹ Beeby, quoted in Evening Post, 1938, p. 9.

⁶⁹² Beeby, letter to Theodore Sizer, 10 March, 1982.

⁶⁹³ Beeby, quoted in Evening Post, 1938, p. 9.

⁶⁹⁴ Lee, 1992, p. 130

School Certificate

Under Beeby, the range of subjects that could be taken for School Certificate greatly expanded. Although discussed in 1943 and 1944, the new Secondary School regulations were only finally gazetted in 1945.⁶⁹⁵ Schools thus had two years to prepare for the official introduction of the regulations in 1946. Although accrediting had been introduced in 1944, many schools were still operating under the old regulations, as evidenced by the comparatively few students (543) applying for the new University Entrance Examination.⁶⁹⁶ Lee notes that this followed the recent historical trend, where between 1934 and 1945, ‘entries for the Matriculation Examination outnumbered those for School Certificate by a ratio of 18 to one’.⁶⁹⁷

However, although the surface-level structure of the compulsory core was expanded, the much deeper social differentiation was not fully addressed. Sutch explains:

As a result the social class differentiation that had separated the technical colleges from the other secondary schools was continued through the multicourse schools. The children of parents with low incomes tended to take the courses that looked like providing a trade, or training for a housewife, and also tended to leave school early, while the children of better-off parents tended to keep away from these courses and stay at school longer. The result was the continued deprivation of the children of low income groups of the rounded education the children of the richer parents tended to get, and also of an educational qualification which would enable a vocational specialisation to be tackled later.⁶⁹⁸

Beeby also explains the effect from his Department’s focus on the ‘middle’ ability student:

In N.Z. these changes produced for say, the middle 50% of the school population, ranked in order of academic ability or interests, something approaching the results we sought. ... But insufficient provision was made for the bottom 25% ... So the comprehensive school imposed on the bottom 25% the same kind of irrelevant objectives which it had saved the middle 50%.⁶⁹⁹

Beeby later humbly acknowledged his failings. He wrote:

I have become very conscious that, when we set up the School Certificate forty years ago, we failed to give enough attention to the needs of the adolescents, often of low academic ability, who flooded into the secondary schools as a result of the raising of the school leaving age.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁵ Education Gazette, Vol. XXIV, 1945, No. 11, December.

⁶⁹⁶ AJHR, 1939, E2, p.2. See also Chapter 9 and Appendix 4a-d for details on University Entrance trends.

⁶⁹⁷ Lee and Lee, 2001b, p.27; Lee, 1991, p. 220, Table 27.

⁶⁹⁸ Sutch, p. 323.

⁶⁹⁹ Beeby, letter to Theodore Sizer, 10 March 1982.

⁷⁰⁰ Beeby, letter to Ms R. Heinz, 3 April 1986

The Commodification of Education

One effect of Beeby's failure to address demands for qualifications was the constantly increasing focus on qualifications as commodities. Just as Utilitarians need some specific utility that can be distributed efficiently, the Education Department needed something tangible to measure. During the last half-century there has been a perpetual focus on increasing the success rate of students achieving qualifications. As recently as 2013, the New Zealand Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, blatantly expressed this view. She said:

Kids are at school to get qualifications. That's the expectation. That's why you as a taxpayer, and everybody else, has put \$9.6 billion into education this year. It's to get kids learning, raise achievement, secure a qualification. ... That is the expectation. That's why the whole system exists.⁷⁰¹

The process of refocusing achievement to achieving qualifications can also be called Qualificationism. Qualificationism is itself an extension of the more common term commodification. Commodification is the economic transformation of a good or service into a commodity. Once transformed, that commodity can then be included in commodity-based market-orientated decision-making. Qualificationism is the transformation of the imprecise intrinsic benefits of education into quantifiable extrinsic benefits in the form of qualifications.

In New Zealand's case, the statistical conformity to a distribution curve that Beeby introduced via scaling helped enable control over a limited resource. Furthermore, his support for a series of outcomes-based examination-driven qualifications from School Certificate to University Scholarship ensured that educational achievement would be considered a measurable commodity. The result of which has been an education system focused on measurable outcomes in the form of qualifications, and which can then lead to the analysis of that education system in the context of qualifications. That is, a system that leads to more qualifications will be valued more than one with fewer qualifications. The most recent qualification system, NCEA, continues this trend.

6.8 Beeby's expansion of Technical and Vocational Education

The expansion of qualifications under Beeby also directly prioritized technical and vocational education. Beeby's 1935 Five-Year Plan for Education emphasized practical education and recommended that resources be assigned to develop the role of technical

⁷⁰¹ Listener, May 2, 2013.

schools. By doing so he expanded the emphasis on technical education that he inherited from his predecessors. A key part of his expansion was his belief that the education system should prepare students for future vocations, and thus providing each student with guidance that would be to their own benefit. As discussed in Chapter 2, the desire by many for a distinction between academic and vocational education dates back through the New Zealand education system. However, Beeby built on this tradition during his tenure by increasing the emphasis on technical and vocational education as part of expanding secondary education.

Beeby made several statements on the role and importance of vocational education before he became Director. In 1936 Beeby stated that New Zealand's growing education system needed to take into better account students' 'vocational prospects'. He wrote:

New Zealand's difficulties in postprimary education have sprung largely from an only partial realization that the quantity of postprimary education cannot be materially increased without at the same time correspondingly altering its nature. An education suited to 10 per cent of the population, selected on the basis of either wealth or intelligence, cannot be applied without modification to 55 per cent with different intelligence, different home backgrounds, and totally different vocational prospects.⁷⁰²

Beeby's emphasis is not on the needs or desires of the student or their family but is instead on their potential occupation—a utilitarian consideration. He goes on to praise the development of the more practically oriented technical school system to address the difficulty create by the 'totally different vocational prospects' of the new students. He wrote:

The New Zealand technical school system represents a genuine attempt to face this difficulty.⁷⁰³

As explained in Chapter 3, the desire to efficiently address 'vocational prospects' via the ability of students to meet the needs and desires of the community was a central part of Beeby's 1939 statement on education. He regularly reiterated this idea, for instance in 1953 when he argued:

[P]ost-primary schools are a product of their environment, and ... they should reflect the needs and, if possible, aspirations of their local community. Of the pupils entering post-primary school... [t]he waste of effort was colossal, and thousands of children were being given, in an incomplete and broken form, a type of academic and verbal education for which they were quite unsuited and which was largely irrelevant to their purpose in life and to the needs of the community.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² Beeby, 1936, p. 404.

⁷⁰³ Beeby, 1936, p. 404.

⁷⁰⁴ AJHR, 1953, E1, p. 16.

During the 1940s Beeby worked to raise the standard and public esteem of technical courses. Beeby explained:

By 1947 the distinctions between secondary and technical colleges had become so blurred and unreal that the two inspectorates were combined, and in 1948 the two types of school were brought under the same staffing and salary regulations. ... But the time would seem to be imminent when we should split the group again on another facet, so that the handful of larger schools that are developing towards senior technical status may do so under conditions suited to their needs.⁷⁰⁵

In 1944 the Beeby influenced Thomas Committee Report strongly recommended an increase in practical, vocational subjects. Sutch wrote:

Some of these subjects ... such as shorthand, typing, heat engines, field husbandry, embroidery, clothing, homecraft, bookkeeping, had little educational content, and [yet] each of them was deemed equal to a language, mathematics, or history as a subject for school certificate.

The technical vocational people had clearly won the day—and they won the years ahead. For the Thomas Committee had recommended—and the Minister had generally accepted—that from two-fifths to three-fifths of school time could be devoted to these so-called vocational subjects.⁷⁰⁶

Sutch's description of these subjects as having 'little educational content' is itself contentious, but his point otherwise stands—under Beeby, the Thomas Committee recommended shifting the emphasis in schools on academic-based education towards technical and vocation-based education. The Beeby-influenced Currie Report 17 years later would endorse and support these reforms as well.

In 1946 the Technical Correspondence School was established. The school extended full technical training to rural New Zealand and diverted money to apprentices to encourage technical education. By working in conjunction with apprenticeship programs already in place, extended the Department's influence in the apprenticeship system. Beeby explained:

Under the [Apprentices Amendment Act], dominion apprenticeship committees would be set up for each trade ... Then, in 1946, the Army Education and Welfare Service was disestablished, and ... [we] took advantage of this to establish the department's Technical Correspondence School ... The Technical Correspondence School, combined with block courses, brought technical training to rural apprentices. The department also offered technical bursaries to apprentices who had completed two years of post-primary schooling ... The place of education in the apprenticeship system was firmly established.⁷⁰⁷

Beeby's centrally organised apprenticeship stayed in place for 45 years before being disestablished under the 1991 *Employment Contracts Act*.

⁷⁰⁵ AJHR 1956, E1.

⁷⁰⁶ Sutch, p. 323.

⁷⁰⁷ Beeby, 1992, pp. 186-187.

In the 1950s Beeby's pivot towards technical education accelerated. In 1956 he re-established the position of Superintendent of Technical education to:

focus the demands of industry upon the [technical] schools and help the schools to meet them.⁷⁰⁸

Furthermore, in the 1956 Education Report he laid out a plan for a nation-wide structure of technical schools completely separate to universities to develop courses overseen by a central authority. Beeby's goal was to bypass the educational institution that resisted his reforms to orient education to the economy. He explained:

[T]he time has come to make major changes in the technical school system if it is to fulfil its part in our expanding economy. ... The orthodox secondary schools of fifty years ago were unwilling or unable to develop practical courses to suit the nonacademic child, and so technical schools were developed to give a general secondary education with a technical bias.⁷⁰⁹

The first tertiary technical institute—the Central Institute of Technology—was established in 1960. This Institute was the ancestor of the many modern polytechnics.

Beeby's focus on practical, vocational education left limited space for the creative arts. In 1973 Beeby noted that he was surprised by the amount of arts and crafts that had flourished in the decade after his departure. In a 1974 discussion of the 'Frills in Education', Beeby wrote:

Some thirty years ago ... [i]deas on school art had barely altered since my own days at school ... (In an unkind moment I once defined school arts as the art of making rubbish out of rubbish). ... When I returned to New Zealand in 1968 after an absence of nine years, one of the things that struck me was the new vigour of the arts and crafts in this country.⁷¹⁰

Beeby's surprise and reflection suggest that these things did not occur under his Directorship. Furthermore, he later acknowledged that his Department insufficiently addressed students' artistic needs. He wrote:

I never felt that we were as successful as we should have been on preparing youngsters for an appreciation of the arts.⁷¹¹

Reforming the University of New Zealand

Beeby's mentality is particularly evident in his passive aggressive handling of the University of New Zealand. In earlier writings Beeby echoes the opinions of Fraser and other educational liberals on the negative impact of the University Entrance Examination. In 1936 he wrote:

⁷⁰⁸ AJHR 1956, E1, p. 18.

⁷⁰⁹ AJHR 1956, E1, p. 6.

⁷¹⁰ Beeby, 1974, pp. 5-6.

⁷¹¹ Beeby, letter to Professor Philip Smithells, 6 February, 1970

The ... curriculum is still very academic, and is dominated by the university entrance examination. This examination is the villain of the piece. ...The problems of the University of New Zealand could have been foretold by anyone knowing its structure and the composition of its student body. ... The system is most unsatisfactory.⁷¹²

Nevertheless, early on in his Directorship he insisted that he would respect the autonomy of the Universities. He wrote

[T]he University should have the greatest autonomy.⁷¹³

However, by 1960 Beeby had enacted a series of large reforms. Beeby outlines his influence in his *Biography of an Idea*. In his book he explains what he considered the 'six major problems' with the tertiary system that he needed to address during his Directorship.⁷¹⁴

The most pertinent feature is his justification for forcing a wide range of changes upon the University. In 1951 Beeby made clear his view that the autonomy of the University actually depended on obliging the needs of society. He said:

The University must itself make the final decision as to what its standards should be, but before it does so it is under an obligation to consider the full effects of its actions on the community of which it is a part, an obligation I am sure it will be willing to meet with a full sense of its responsibilities. If its decisions are such as to leave major demands unsatisfied, it must, of course, be prepared to see the community develop other kinds of institutions to meet its needs.⁷¹⁵

He retained this view throughout the next decade, adding some scepticism about the monopoly that the University held. In 1959 he wrote:

The University of New Zealand ... has no rivals; it has a complete monopoly of higher education for a whole country. ... The responsibilities of the University to its community are wider just because it has no rivals. ... [T]here are very real advantages in the University holding a monopoly on higher education, provided it never forgets the responsibilities that that monopoly brings with it.⁷¹⁶

One of Beeby's last actions was initiating a 1960 inquiry into the future of the University. The resulting *Hughes Parry Report*⁷¹⁷ on the structure of universities was published also in 1960—a 130 page report that emphasised the vocational role of universities, the need for more practical and competitive leadership, and the need to focus on more practical subjects.⁷¹⁸ The inquiry led to the *1961 Universities Act* which dissolved the University into its constituent colleges (which Beeby conditionally

⁷¹² Beeby, 1936, p. 405.

⁷¹³ AJHR, E1, 1946, p. 13.

⁷¹⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 224.

⁷¹⁵ Beeby, 1951, *The Future of the University*, p. 5.

⁷¹⁶ AJHR, E11, 1959, pp. 6- 10.

⁷¹⁷ More formally, the *Report of the Committee on New Zealand Universities*, 1960.

⁷¹⁸ Department of Education, 1960b.

supported⁷¹⁹), thus encouraging them to start competing with each other for students and funding. The modern system of universities is still based on this reform. Brian Easton argues that only in the 1990s did more utilitarian sentiments occur:

There has always been a tendency for New Zealand Universities to be utilitarian reflecting the practicality of New Zealand life ... However, at no time since the Parry report has there been so much pressure to make [them] New Zealand's sole utilitarian vocational trainers.⁷²⁰

6.9 Educational Philosophy as Psychology: Distributions and Scaling

Finally, one of Beeby's most utilitarian and long-lasting effects on both secondary and tertiary education was his continued endorsement for the scaling of student marks. Scaling is the process of adjusting a group of students' marks according to a presupposed theory of distribution. Beeby's psychology background significantly influenced his own perspectives on learning ability as well as educational practice. Beeby's support for scaling in education emerged out of his commitment to the normal curve of distribution acquired in the 1920s while studying under Spearman. Beeby wrote:

I was trained under Charles Spearman in the 1920s, and influence (if it may still be admitted) by Cyril Burt. So I all too readily fell into the trap of thinking that the normal curve of distribution of abilities and achievements was as much the natural product of evolution of the human hand.⁷²¹

Beeby's support for scaling to improved academic standards can be found in his introduction to *Entrance to the University* a book co-written by Beeby when he was the Director of the NZCER. In the book he expressed scepticism about the efficacy of the University Entrance Examination. He listed five possible methods of raising the standard of the University Entrance Examination; making the prescriptions for each subject more difficult, raising the pass mark, decreasing the percentage of students who could pass, decreasing the percentage of the total population permitted to pass, and adding an extra qualification necessary to achieve University Entrance. Nowhere did Beeby discuss increasing overall equality in the education system. Instead, each of the five possible methods was utilitarian: they each treated the educational populace (or national populace) as a whole without any particular regard to the actual ability (or desires) of students.

Beeby also discussed scaling directly. He noted that in using scaling to raise the standard of the University Entrance Examination:

⁷¹⁹ Beeby, 1992, pp. 236-237.

⁷²⁰ Easton, 1999.

⁷²¹ Beeby, letter to Prof. Benjamin Bloom, 25 February 1982.

If the number of candidates is considerable the fixing of standards in terms of the percentage passing is preferable to [making the prescriptions for each subject more difficult or raising the pass mark]..., since the average level of ability of the candidates in a well-organised school system is more likely to be constant from year to year than are different examiners interpretations of a set of prescriptions or of a fixed pass mark.⁷²²

During Beeby's Directorship, the 'fixing of standards in terms of the percentage passing' became the means of scaling and it would remain a feature of the education system for the rest of his term.

Scaling in Secondary Schools

Due in part to Beeby's support, scaling also became a significant long-term feature of the secondary education system. Following Beeby's departure, the annual (internal) Scaling Reports, written for the Ministry of Education on University Entrance Examination results, contains unequivocal statements regarding the necessity of scaling.

For example, the 1966 Scaling Report states:

Scaling is an accepted and necessary procedure for large examinations. ... It is designed to minimise variability in the marks of subjects from year to year. It is also designed to bring into uniformity the marks from different subjects in the same year and the marking standard of different markers with the same subject. ... Because of improved techniques it is now possible, after raw marks are known, to produce results that conform to any predetermined pass rate.⁷²³

As with many of Beeby's other policies discussed earlier, the scaling procedures were distinctly utilitarian. The stated goal was to modify (improve) the average score by making it conform to the 'predetermined pass rate'. For example, the 1971 Scaling Report states the goal that:

Number of passes as a percentage of total entries [for University Entrance] to be 58.2%. This would comply with the Board minute at the May 1970 meeting, that a slight reduction of pass rate be made, to be a reduction over two years down to 58.2%. (Percentage 1970 was 58.4% so the objective is a 0.2% decrease [sic] of this)

The scaling statistics have been so determined so that at the lower end of the range of marks for scholarship winners, there will be a differential of about 15 marks obtained in the Scholarship and the Bursaries paper in any subject.⁷²⁴

The process of modifying students' raw marks to a pre-determined standard (e.g. a pass rate of 58.2%) involved flexible, arbitrary goals. The 1973 Scaling Report explained:

Standardization consists of alteration of the raw marks so that required values are given to one or more of the numerical quantities listed below. The required values

⁷²² Thomas, Beeby, and Oram (1939), p.5.

⁷²³ Ministry of Education (1966) Scaling Report 1966 (unpublished document), p. 1.

⁷²⁴ Ministry of Education (1971) Scaling Report 1971, p. 1.

may be either pre-determined constants or values determined for a specific purpose in the course of the scaling process.

The net effect of the whole process is that with unchanged pass marks, the statistics of adjusted marks of each subject in a particular examination vary between years by only small amounts and the variations of these statistics between subjects in any one year are controlled, in order to standardize subject relativities.⁷²⁵

Beeby's fix helped to ensure a *non-egalitarian* education system. If student achievement, as a measure of academic ability, is assumed to be normally distributed then that forces a distortion of actual results to fit a theoretical framework. This requires that there must be a group of high achievers and must be a group of low achievers either side of a large group of 'average' achieving students. Thus attempts to aid students treated unequally will be countered by scaling, so to ensure that grades overall still reflect a norm distribution curve.

So while reforms may raise the overall objective achievement of students, scaling ensures a set amount of successes and failures. Thus Beeby led a Department that preached an inclusive equality of opportunity for all individuals but also maintained a system that guaranteed some would be labelled academic failures for the sake of a normal distribution.

Scaling remains present even in NCEA, the system supposedly designed to eliminate all the problems with scaling. As analysed by Roy Nash, in 2005 NZQA adopted expected 'profiles' of each subject and engage in remarking to ensure student marks reflected the profile. Nash writes:

[R]e-marking to maintain expected 'profiles' introduces a form of norm-referencing. [NZQA Acting Chief Executive] Karen Sewell denies that re-marking to a profile is 'scaling', and if scaling is defined as adjusting given marks to fit the normal curve, that is correct, but re-marking papers achieves the same result by allocating what amounts to a proportional quota for each grade.⁷²⁶

Equality of Subjects

Beeby's vague conception of equality may have even influenced the development of valuing subjects in an 'equal' way to valuing students. According to the 1974 Scaling report:

Underlying Assumptions: These are that (i) all subjects are of equal weight, in contributing to candidate's aggregate marks; that is, there is no a priori differential weighting of marks in the respective subjects. This equal weighting which applies in the initial stages of scaling, is, however, modified in that part of the operation called the "other subjects adjustment" which has been described in earlier reports. This

⁷²⁵ Ministry of Education (1973) Scaling Report 1973, p. 1.

⁷²⁶ Nash, Roy (2005), p. 104.

finally weights each subjects marks by equalising its frequency distribution to that of marks in all other subjects sat by the same candidates.

(ii) the candidature is homogeneous; in other words, in any one examination it may be treated as a single random sample of that total statistical population of candidates in that examination over at least a decade.⁷²⁷

The 1974 Report goes on to directly reference *Entrance to the University*, a work that Beeby co-authored. The Report continued:

(iii) A third assumption ... cannot be put into better words than those in the work of Thomas, Beeby, and Oram, “Entrance to the University”.

Finally, the 1974 Report also summarises the effect of scaling. It states:

The standardization of results has the effect of eliminating any disparity which may occur between the academic standard of an examination and the level of ability of the candidates.⁷²⁸

However, rather than eliminating disparity in education, all scaling does it eliminate disparity in grading – a shallow solution to a much deeper problem.

The recurring fixation on a vague, numerical notion of equality is particularly evident in the 1976 Scaling Report synopsis of the scaling procedure. It states:

[Every] marker’s set of marks is first scaled to a common set of scaling values ... Individual subject marks frequency distributions are then transformed to equality with the marks frequency distributions of associated subjects – that is, of the average marks in all other subjects taken by the candidates in the subject under adjustment.

By perpetuating the notion that all students and subjects were numerically equal, the Department was implicitly suggesting the philosophy that all attainment was equal—that is, that a ‘58%’ in mathematics was in a sense equal to a ‘58%’ in another subject.

Equality of Results

For Beeby, scaling was an important part of ensuring the ‘equality of results’ aspect of equality of opportunity. However, Beeby’s confidence in the objectivity of psychology means he may have overlooked the subjectivity inherent in modifying (scaling) a specific set of semi-random academic results according to physical laws supposedly derived from nature. That is, by modifying students’ marks according to a specific theory of distribution, his utilitarian scaling system just focused on the concept of ‘the average student’ rather than the achievements of specific individual students.⁷²⁹

Beeby retained his support for using testing and scaling late into his life. Nevertheless, he struggled to reconcile the arbitrariness of modifying mark distributions

⁷²⁷ Ministry of Education (1974) Scaling Report 1974, p. 1.

⁷²⁸ Ministry of Education (1974) Scaling Report 1974, pp. 1-2.

⁷²⁹ The benefits, limitations and general effects of scaling has been extensively discussed in the literature.

with his own theory of education. This struggle is evident in a 1990 letter, where Beeby reflected on what he even meant by equality of opportunity. He wrote:

[A]t the end of our conversation you gave me an idea that, for some reason, had never occurred to me and that solved a problem with which I had been struggling in my writing. ... You maintained that the distribution of results within each group (socio-economic, racial or sex) should be the same as for every group. I agree with your interpretation ... it gives a far better sense of direction for educational programmes than did the Fraser 'equality of opportunity' myth that I wrote and then followed for twenty years as director.⁷³⁰

The primary difference in this reimagining of scaling is the shift from distribution across the whole group to equalizing distribution across several subgroups. This 'far better sense' only remains, however, a surface-level modification, and it is not clear that Beeby, even though he expressed scepticism, ever appreciated the limited effect that this 'far better sense' would cause.

6.10 Overall Impact of Beeby's Egalitarian Utilitarianism

According to one academic who visited New Zealand in 1960, the whole education system had adopted a close-minded mentality. He wrote:

Despite some improvements in recent years ... the secondary school system still impresses the overseas observer as the most anachronistic segment of New Zealand life. ...

One of the most surprising aspects ... is the vast amount of wishful thinking Education Department officials exhibit in referring to "significant changes for the better that have taken place in recent years". Unfortunately, however, the changes they would have like to see take place have not for the most part actually occurred. When one brings to their attention typical instances of harsh and badgering discipline, of segregation of the sexes in ostensibly coeducational schools, and of the absence of genuine pupil self-government ... their standard reply is that such conditions used to exist in the past but no longer do so now, except in rare isolated cases. Since there is no reason to question the sincerity of their assertions, one can only assume that they have lost touch with the situation in the secondary schools.⁷³¹

Beeby also later reflected on the above philosophical tensions, and how decisions at the time influenced the education system. His comments illuminate many of the assumptions that he and others made at the time, and how those decisions have impacted different quartiles of students. He wrote:

We postponed the moment of irrevocable choice between courses for as long as possible in the interests of equity. ... We have, in effect, deprived these students of the choice between preparatory courses and courses designed to meet the wishes – if not always the needs – of those who wanted to get out, as soon as possible, into what they saw as the 'real world'

⁷³⁰ Beeby, letter to Mrs Rosslyn Noonan, 27 August 1990.

⁷³¹ Ausubel, 1977, pp. 91, 101.

In N.Z. these changes produced for say, the middle 50% of the school population, ranked in order of academic ability or interests, something approaching the results we sought. ... But insufficient provision was made for the bottom 25% ... So the comprehensive school imposed on the bottom 25% the same kind of irrelevant objectives from which it had saved the middle 50%. ... It is almost too obvious to add that the tensions between equity and excellence, and between private and public good, have their roots in a competitive and acquisitive society, and cannot be resolved by the schools alone. ...

[I]s it possible that there are people, unspecified and uncounted, who don't want preparatory education of any kind, and ... will always refuse to struggle for that kind of distant goal? ... Would there be a danger of sacrificing equity in our attempts to give every individual the chance to be excellent in his own chosen way? On the other hand, what are the limits of society's rights to demand of every citizen an education in our common purposes whatever his personal purpose?

I don't know the answers in my own country ... Those of us who were struggling, forty years ago, to establish comprehensive schools, as a means of getting something like equality of education for all students, were fighting battles at the top end of the scale. ... The battle on this front ... absorbed our attention and energies, and nobody bothered us about what the comprehensive schools might do to the bottom 25%, where the major problems were eventually to develop.

We sensed that the schools were not yet doing all they should for these students, but we assumed that advantages the middle 50% were getting from the comprehensive schools would somehow trickle down to the bottom of the heap. ... But ... the 'trickle down' theory worked little better in education than it has done with economic aid to developing countries... I don't think any of us will make much progress with the reluctant learners at the bottom end of the scholastic scale until we have a better intellectual grasp of the conditions that led us into this equity-excellence impasse, and of the principles that might lead us out of it.⁷³²

⁷³² Beeby, letter to Theodore Sizer, 10 March 1982.

CHAPTER 7

THE MYTHOLOGICAL LEGACY

For me an educational myth is a statement of a dominant sense of direction whose influence can extend over several decades, while apparently firm targets for education will inevitably change over the years.

(Beeby, letter to Harvey McQueen, 21 February 1992)

7.1 Overview

This chapter gives an account of Beeby's long-term mythological legacy to New Zealand education. As Director, Beeby shaped the overarching discussion about the aims and goals of education. He oversaw twenty years of educational reform where the goal of education was regularly stated to be equality of opportunity. In his later years, Beeby developed a framework that educational myths as a way to help explain his theory of equality's development. However, a much more pertinent myth also present in New Zealand is the 'Beebian myth'—that he was an effective reformer that oversaw a successful egalitarian reorientation of the New Zealand education system. The former will be used to help explain the latter.

It is impossible to know whether an alternative series of reforms aimed at changing people's attitudes would have lasted any longer than Beeby's actual reforms. However, despite Beeby's intention to usher in a liberal-egalitarian education system, it is certainly true that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, New Zealand's education system, particularly at the secondary level, remains robustly non-egalitarian. In later life Beeby rued his lack of success at challenging the established underlying philosophy, writing:

We strove to make changes to every aspect of education ... but in the end it took us twenty years to realise that without changing the thoughts and opinions of teachers, parents and politicians, that no permanent change can be effected.⁷³³

Beeby's growing awareness of the shaping influence that contemporary ideas have on educational structures led to the development in his later life of an educational theory based on what he called 'Educational Myths'.

7.2 Beeby's Scholastic Background

Beeby made several significant contributions not only to New Zealand's education system but to education systems worldwide. Besides his experience as an administrator, he also constructed several influential theories to explain how educational systems

⁷³³ Beeby, letter to Henry Boyle. 3 March 1991.

develop. Was he sufficiently qualified to do so? The answer is yes, according to many proponents of the Myth of Beeby. For example, McKenzie wrote:

Beeby was a particularly fine educationalist who was a master of the literature of in his field.⁷³⁴

However, according to Beeby's own admissions, not necessarily—he regularly refers to himself as only an administrator and not an educationalist or scholar. He writes:

My approach to [improving education] was that of an administrator, because I am not a genuine scholar and based my generalizations on years of administrative experience, not on anything that could be called research.⁷³⁵

And

I write as an administrator, not as a scholar, and the gap between them can be greater than either of them realizes.⁷³⁶

And

[T]hough I have written a fair amount over the years about curriculum development, I have done very little systematic reading on it. I am an administrator rather than a serious scholar.⁷³⁷

Beeby's lack of systematic reading might be reasonably attributed to the demands of the Directorship. His responsibilities would have required a breadth of knowledge and his background suggests he would be able to handle periods of intense research. Nevertheless, as Beeby noted, he only read in an unfocused manner. In a letter discussing educational philosophy, he wrote:

If I ever did read [Bernstein] on the subject ([sic] in the past, it cannot have been more than superficially ... Over the past thirty years my reading on education has been scrappy and unorganized, and I have had to develop my theories based on my experienced of practice as an administrator.⁷³⁸

Another example noted by Beeby in early 1982 that he had not read Paulo Freire, writing:

Scheffler I knew well; Freire I didn't, and I was interested to find how much more mythic his ideas are than our liberalism in the 1940s and 1950s. Apart from background reading of a relatively desultory kind, I shall not pursue the idea of myths until after Bill's book comes out – if it ever does.⁷³⁹

Renwick's book came out in 1986. So although Beeby had several years to work on his theory of educational myths, if Beeby did not in fact 'pursue his idea' then that is a gap of approximately four years before he started to refine it.

⁷³⁴ McKenzie, 2000, p. 131.

⁷³⁵ Beeby, letter to Professor Angela Little, 5/2/1989.

⁷³⁶ Beeby, letter to Sue Middleton, 5 July 1992.

⁷³⁷ Beeby, letter to Prof. A. Harry Passow, 23 November, 1984.

⁷³⁸ Beeby, letter to Mrs Barbara Leigh, 4 November 1989.

⁷³⁹ Beeby, letter to Lawrence A. Cremin, 18 February 1982.

7.3 Origin of the Theory

Beeby developed the concept of educational myths as a way to explain the the merging of new ideas and beliefs about education with contemporary ideas and beliefs. He explained:

For me an educational myth is a statement of a dominant sense of direction whose influence can extend over several decades, while apparently firm targets for education will inevitably change over the years.⁷⁴⁰

His usage is an implicit critique of the usage of extant histories or policy documents to define what a given society believes about education, as it uses the idea that the mere expression of ideals in such documents does not automatically reflect the general overall attitude to education at that time. Instead it is better understood as a broad description about the desired role and structure of education that does not include specific policy details.

However, I will argue that an examination of his concept reveals some significant limitations that, indirectly, help to explain why the myth of ‘equality of opportunity’ was able to become pervasive yet superficial throughout the half century after his directorship.

Beeby only began to talk and write about educational myths at the beginning of the 1980s. Beeby uses the word ‘myth’ in a specific yet abstract sense, rather than as a pejorative, by embracing the idea that a myth can have a useful explanatory value even if not true, or not able to be tested for truth. Beeby’s usage of ‘myth’ is thus indirectly a discussion of the impact of philosophy on society and thus education

In Renwick’s *Moving Targets*, Beeby broadly describes what he considers as the four distinct myths which influenced four periods of New Zealand’s development:

- Pre-1920 as ‘survival of the fittest’
- 1920 to 1935 as moving towards ‘progressive education’
- 1935 to 1965 as moving towards ‘equality of opportunity’, and
- 1965 to 1984 as moving towards ‘equality of outcomes’⁷⁴¹

The trigger for his initial reflection was an invitation to write an introduction for an upcoming book.⁷⁴² Beeby explained:

[T]he idea of writing about educational myths arose when I was writing an introduction to a book of essays by Bill Renwick, the present Director-General of Education in N.Z. ... but I found some difficulty in reconciling the ideas behind

⁷⁴⁰ Beeby, letter to Harvey McQueen, 21 February 1992

⁷⁴¹ Renwick, William (1986). *Moving Targets, Six Essays on Educational Policy*. Wellington: NZCER.

⁷⁴² Renwick, William (1986). *Moving Targets, Six Essays on Educational Policy*. Wellington: NZCER.

my educational policies in 1940-1960 with his (and in some respects my own) in 1980. So I was driven to the concept of great over-arching myths that dominate the tone of thinking about education in each period, and rise and fall over quite long periods, but still linger on in the periods that succeed. My main purpose in the introduction to Renwick's essays was not to deal with theories about myths or anything else, but to show what a period of history with which he was dealing ... looked like at the time to the people who were living through it. I had to have recourse to a thesis of myths to explain what I meant; it was not intended to defend what we had thought or done in my generation, but only to make the policies of the period understandable.⁷⁴³

Although Beeby originally planned a brief introduction, the result was a nearly a chapter in itself. Shortly after completing the introduction, he wrote:

I started the introduction as a couple of pages ... and then found myself so interested that I went on for another 40 or so to look at the same set of events from the other side of a gap of nearly half a century. To my surprise I had to do some more thinking and came up with a view of the history of educational policy that I had never thought of before. I have never taken so long with a bit of writing in my life, but I am glad I did it, and it will play a major part in the later chapters of my book *The Biography of an Idea of Education*.⁷⁴⁴

Six years later, Beeby expanded on his original sentiments in his *Biography*, writing:

It was not until 1981 that I was forced to face up to the full implications of my discovery of a common sense of direction in education systems of widely different types. ...

This led to a device that I called the educational myth. (The term carried no hint of disparagement; it is journalists and their like who have given a fine term the connotation of 'mere myth'. Some of the noblest of human achievements are myths created to give a sense of permanence in this world or the next. Every utopia is a myth.) Each generation creates, or simply assumes, its own educational myths and its own unattainable but approachable goals, with at least an appearance of permanence, on which to build its plans for education. No myth can express all the purposes of education, but it provides a criterion by which all other purposes can be judged. ...

The myth of equality of opportunity, as we began to understand it better, provided the criterion for judging out success or failure.⁷⁴⁵

At around the same time, Beeby reflected in private that:

For me, an educational myth is a statement of a dominant sense of direction whose influence can extend over decades, while apparently firm targets for education will inevitably change over the years. Peter Fraser's much quoted statement in 1939 about equality of opportunity in education was a myth that influenced education in New Zealand for half a century.⁷⁴⁶

So according to Beeby, an educational myth describes a society's popularly held attitudes about education, rather than just the aims and expectations found in government policy documents. That is, his 'dominant sense of direction' is another way

⁷⁴³ Beeby, letter to B.L.B Kaye, 9 November 1981.

⁷⁴⁴ Beeby, letter to Ann Orlov, 15 June 1986.

⁷⁴⁵ Beeby, 1992, pp. 298, 302-303.

⁷⁴⁶ Beeby, letter to Harvey McQueen, 21 February 1992.

of describing a general philosophical position from which a range of specific applied policies can emerge (which need not cohere with each other). His use of ‘sense of direction’ may also be an allusion to the necessary ‘reorientation’ he outlined in his 1939 statement. If so, then for Beeby, a fundamental reorientation may primarily involve changing the destination of an educational journey without necessarily providing any landmarks along the way.

Several decades later, Beeby referred to the limited way that an educational myth can direct change. He wrote:

I find that even in my own specialty of education in N.Z. or any other country, rich or poor, all I can give is a sense of direction, not a straight line, even at that, but a quadrant within which I think change can be progress but outside which I believe [sic] changes are regression. This comes back to my concept of ‘myths’ of educational progress ... I don’t think educational progress can proceed without myths that one follows till they break down and have to be remodelled or replaced.⁷⁴⁷

7.4 Genealogy of the Criteria of an effective Educational Myth

The gradual process of refining his concept of educational myths gave Beeby the opportunity to reflect on concerns he’d held since training to be a teacher. Shortly after writing the above 1981 letter to Kaye, Beeby sought out advice regarding his new idea from an academic friend, a professor at a Teachers College in New York, writing:

The problem on which I am now begging your advice is rather different. In reading Bill’s account of the period (1934-60) during which I was close to the forming of educational policy in New Zealand, I found myself in general agreement with most of what he said. My main difficulty was in explaining certain blind spots that I had in the years that I controlled – or imagined I controlled – that policy. How could I have failed to see what is now so obvious? ...

I have no desire to defend what I thought or did forty years ago, but I had to understand it. So I took refuge in a device that I called an ‘educational myth’, (pp. 5-7), which dominated the thinking of a whole generation. As the idea developed, it gave me a new slant on another problem I had felt uncomfortable about ever since my student days (1921-1922) at a teachers college. I have always been uncomfortable about pontifical statements on the ‘aims of education’, which generally read to me like highflown grocery lists that can be totted up to an unconvincing total. But seen as myths, they begin to make more sense to me, and become essential to the politician’s and the administrators planning, if not to the theorist’s thinking. On pp. 38-40, I suggest that myths play, in the study of education and its objective, the part that Kuhn’s paradigms do for the physical sciences. Complete nonsense? ...

The two questions on which I should value your opinion are:

1. Is there anything really new in my thesis of the place of myths in educational thinking or planning or am I merely expressing a relatively commonplace idea in different words? Is the idea worth pursuing further, or am I chasing an already caged bird?

⁷⁴⁷ Beeby, letter to ‘Walter’, 22 April 1985.

2. Even if the idea is relevant to N.Z., and even to some developing countries I know, (also with centralised school systems) which have taken the wrong turning by importing foreign myths, has it any significance at all for countries like the U.S where the control of education is decentralised? ...

It is scandalous that a newly elected Foreign Associate of the N.A.Ed.⁷⁴⁸ (and Emeritus at that) should have to ask such questions, to which, as an accredited scholar, he should know the answers. But, as I explained in my letter of 31 May, I am a bogus scholar in the library sense, and I now have so little time for writing that I can't afford to waste it on a completely mythological myth. ... If you can exorcise my Myth, you will free me to get on with writing on subjects I know something about.)⁷⁴⁹

Beeby did in fact go on to use the idea of myths in many future publications. However, the above letter reveals the lack of theoretical background that Beeby possessed when he began to consider his theory, in that he discounts himself as an historian, a 'scholar in the library sense' and an educational philosopher. Beeby never does describe himself as a historian or a philosopher, specifically saying so several times, which is why his idea about educational myths is not a topic that he knew 'something about'.

The Myth's Evolution

While writing an introduction for Renwick, Beeby took the opportunity to explain the necessary conditions for the successful establishment of educational myths. His 1986 criterion is both based on the ideas derived from seminar he gave in 1982, at the University of Papua New Guinea, and is the base for a reiteration of his idea in his own 1992 book. The gradual changes in his criteria provide some insight into the development of his theory. His 1982 seminar included notes for the audience, which state:

Characteristics of a Myth

To be both acceptable and effective, a myth on the aims of education must meet certain conditions:

- a) It must be in general accord with some strong – though not necessarily clearly defined – public aspiration.
- b) It must be expressed in language flexible enough to permit a reasonably wide range of interpretation, and yet specific enough to provide practical guidance to administrators, planners and teachers.
- c) It must leave some place for the irrational in human nature.
- d) It must be unattainable, at least for a generation, if it is to sustain 25 years of change without being constantly and confusingly modified.
- e) It must be unattainable in another and more subtle sense – by the time it is close enough to be seen clearly, its weaknesses will have become apparent, and a rival myth will be edging its way into the centre of vision.

⁷⁴⁸ The National Academy of Education (located in the United States).

⁷⁴⁹ Beeby, letter to Lawrence A. Cremin, 4 December 1981.

- f) The final paradox is that the key people working under the myth must believe in it so completely that they will fight for it in its youth – and perhaps in theirs – must hold to it, though more critically in its middle age, and yet eventually be prepared to see another myth set up in its place when it has served its purpose. A myth may remain dominant for a quarter of a century or more, and, unless there is some political upheaval that goes beyond the routine of changing of democratic government, it rarely dies a sudden death. Even when the two are in partial conflict, the old myth, like many ancient faiths, is quietly absorbed into the new with a fresh interpretation of terms.⁷⁵⁰

In 1986, Beeby refined his criteria:

To be both acceptable and effective, a myth has to meet certain conditions: it must be in general accord with some strong—though not always clearly defined—public aspiration; it must be expressed in language flexible enough to permit a reasonably wide range of interpretations, and yet specific enough to provide practical guidance to administrators, planners and teachers; and it must be unattainable, at least for that generation, if it is to sustain twenty-five years of change without being constantly and confusingly modified. With the wisdom of hindsight, we now know it is unattainable in a more subtle sense, that, by the time it is close enough to be seen clearly, its weaknesses will have become apparent, and a rival myth will be edging its way into the centre of vision. The final paradox is that the key people working under the myth must believe in it so completely that they will fight for it in its youth (and perhaps in their youth); must hold to it, though more critically in its middle age, and yet eventually be prepared to see another myth set up in its place when it has served its purpose. A myth may remain dominant for a quarter of a century or more, and, unless there is some political upheaval that goes beyond the routine of changing of democratic government, it rarely dies a sudden death. Even when the two are in partial conflict, the old myth, like many ancient faiths, is quietly absorbed into the new with a fresh interpretation of terms.⁷⁵¹

Although a significant majority of the two versions is identical, the 1986 version makes some significant changes. Firstly, the 1982 version refers to myths on the aims of education, while the 1986 version only refers to myths. This change shows a shift from a narrow application of his idea from just the aims of education to a more general application to education.

The 1986 version also completely drops the ‘human nature’ clause which stated ‘It must leave some place for the irrational in human nature’. Beeby may have dropped this clause simply because he did not want to, or was not willing to, incorporate a specific theory of human nature. However, he may have come to believe that myths should not have to accommodate rationality. This second interpretation is supported by his 1938 argument that:

The ultimate aims in education are not given by reason, but by a feeling in the pit of one’s stomach. Sooner or later in life, one must say, for no very obvious reason, “I believe in X,” and never challenge it again. But when it comes to deciding on the means towards X, give me a reason. I suspect individuals who go on having

⁷⁵⁰ Beeby, *Myths on the Aims of Education*, 1982, p. 1.

⁷⁵¹ Beeby, forward to Renwick, *Moving Targets*, pp. xiv-xvi.

feelings in the pits of their stomach, sort of ad hoc intestinal inspirations that tell them what to do in every situation. Thatways [sic] lies all the sloppy, modern, sentimental religious faiths—and that way too, Hitler.⁷⁵²

Finally, his 1986 version modifies the ‘unattainability clause’ from ‘a generation’ to ‘that generation’. While this may just be a minor syntactical change, it may also show Beeby intentionally changing the implicit ownership of each myth. While the 1982 version is merely indicating the passage of time, the 1986 version ascribes the myth to the generation that created it, a point then reinforced in the final ‘paradox’ clause.

Beeby also addressed the necessary conditions for educational myths again in his 1992 *Biography*. There were two pertinent changes. The unattainability clause changes from:

and it must be unattainable, at least for that generation, if it is to sustain twenty-five years of change without being constantly and confusingly modified.⁷⁵³

to:

and it must be unattainable in the near future if it is to sustain many years of consistent change without being constantly and confusingly modified.⁷⁵⁴

This change adds more vagueness to his set of criteria by removing any specific chronological references. By doing so, Beeby abandoned any limitation on his passage-of-time criteria so that the limitation on unattainability could be much shorter or longer in length.

The 1992 version also removes the ‘dominancy clause’ which had read:

A myth may remain dominant for a quarter of a century or more, and, unless there is some political upheaval that goes beyond the routine of changing of democratic government, it rarely dies a sudden death.⁷⁵⁵

The removal is consistent with removing the above clause as twenty-five years is a quarter of a century. However, if that was the only motivation then only the first clause in the paragraph needed to be removed (or replaced). The removal of the rest of the sentence removes from his criteria the possibility of rapid change, which could contradict his idea of gradual change in accordance with the ‘public aspiration’.

All three versions of Myth criteria maintain a similar sense of vague progress. According to Beeby, each myth is founded in the desires of the general public but as that society’s education system gets close to achieving that myth they find its weakness,

⁷⁵² Beeby, letter to John A Lee, 16 July 1938.

⁷⁵³ Beeby, in Renwick, *Moving Targets*, p. XV

⁷⁵⁴ Beeby, 1992, p. 302

⁷⁵⁵ Beeby, forward to Renwick, *Moving Targets*, pp. xv.

presenting an opportunity for a new myth to arise, which absorbs the old myth and starts the process anew.

Beeby's explanation of how the dominant educational myth change is curiously reminiscent of the explanations for changes in scientific theory by both Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn. Beeby's himself notes:

How could I have failed to see what is now so obvious? (I realize this is no new problem to the historian, but it's novel to the poor devil of an administrator who looks back over his shoulder at his own thinking ... half a lifetime earlier.) ... I took refuge in a device I called an 'educational myth'. ... I suggest that myths play, in the study of education and its objectives, the part that Kuhn's paradigms do for the physical sciences. ... I am a bogus scholar in the library sense.⁷⁵⁶

Given that Beeby's theory of myths seems to adapt and incorporate Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts, Beeby may not be as of a bogus scholar as he professed.

7.5 Limitations of Beeby's Mythology

Beeby's criteria for educational myths has three significant limitations: its linearity, its unity principle, and its explanatory gap. Firstly, the criteria assumed a form of linear progress, where one myth gradually morphs into another. As Beeby wrote:

There is a continuity in myth, however different they may appear. Seen against the background of a changing society, [William] Renwick's 'equality-of-results' myth is a linear descendant of the 'survival-of-the-fittest' myth under which I went to school [1908-1919].⁷⁵⁷

The linearity assumed here is that Myth A becomes Myth B, which then becomes Myth C. However, Beeby did not show why this linear descent must necessarily be the case. There does not appear to be any concept of cause and effect to explain the development of myths nor what he could mean by a myth dying 'a sudden death'.

Beeby's criterion does not accommodate the contemporary educational myth not being a continuation of the previous myth. For example, the emergence of a new myth may just represent the ascendancy of one competing educational discourse over another. The Beebian can argue that even in these cases each discourse can still track its mythic heritage back in time, just like a family tree to a common ancestor. Even if so, an educational myth could still break linearity by proceeding from an 'uncle myth' to a 'nephew myth'. Furthermore, the Beebian has not shown that there is a single ancestor. Just as 'parallel evolution' can posit multiple human ancestors, 'parallel mythology' could explain the presence of multiple educational discourses in New Zealand's

⁷⁵⁶ Beeby, letter to Professor Lawrence A. Cremin, 4 December 1991.

⁷⁵⁷ Beeby, 1992, pp. 302-303.

mythological ancestry. As much as myths might only be linear in geographical or conceptual terms, these do not explain the paradigm shift aspect of the mythology.

Next, Beeby's criterion also cannot easily accommodate the observation that there may be multiple ongoing and competing educational discourses. An example of this might be that one discourse may be dominated by another during a particular period but retain the ability to resurge at a later date. Thus the appearance of an educational myth being transformed into another myth may actually be a shift in the power struggle between competing discourses, and even that all transformations are just shifts in power between different discourses. Several competing theories might be considered as being under a wider umbrella theory. The problem with doing so is that this undermines the unity principle chronologically if these theories and their descendants are also to be analysed as different paradigms yet all the same unified theory.

Finally, the use of an essentially descriptive, rather than prescriptive, criterion leaves the Beebian vulnerable to insularity. Perversely, by relying on 'public aspiration' for the conception and 'flexible' language for support, the Myth may end up expressing a broad range of sentiments without any specific detail. By permitting a wide range of interpretations of the myth, the threshold for finding supporting evidence is lowered and the myth may become unable to explain the mechanism behind myths changing. Furthermore, the easier is it to find reinforcing evidence that the myth is effective, the easier it is to keep justifying the myth. For example, if many people have the aspiration of X then X can become the educational myth, leading to people believing that X is the case. So while the aspirational myth may provide a descriptive criterion for practical guidance, it may also prevent progress towards that goal due to a lack of specific prescriptive stages.

Beeby's criterion also permits the possibility than a definition of a myth can be so broad that it becomes essentially meaningless. However, it appears that Beeby's approach of using specific generalisation was part of a deliberate calculation. In 1984, to the new Minister of Education, Beeby wrote:

I have followed for nearly 40 years a remark, at a Unesco Conference, of that wise old Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain. ... After half-an-hour of bedlam, Maritain rose and said, 'In a long lifetime I have found that men and women of good will can often agree on a line of action, but rarely on their reasons for it. I suggest Mr. Chairman, that you put the original motion'. It was done, and 30 seconds later the meeting ended amicably. ... For me, it was a revelation, and so I am all for your idea of concentrating on priorities, which constitutes a programme of action. You will, of course, need what you call a 'philosophical statement', but I think it should be brief, general enough to be

interpreted in rather different ways by different groups, but tight enough to exclude lines of action that would deviate too far from the [Labour] Party's central faiths.⁷⁵⁸

Given that 'for nearly 40 years' covers much of his Directorship, Beeby succinctly describes both the strength and weakness of his mythology. If the definition enables different political parties with contradictory policies to both claim that they are acting in line with the myth then the myth may become a purely descriptive tool. An example of this would be if one political party increased the amount of competition in public schools in order to increase educational equality, and then the following political party decreased the amount of competition in public schools also to increase educational equality.

A Beebian could claim that the apparent contradiction above would be impossible as one action would 'deviate too far'. However, this objection seems to require the assumption of some kind of *impartial spectator* or *ideal observer*—a neutral, universal judge who could determine whether a policy meets a given criteria.⁷⁵⁹ It is not clear what the descriptive limits of an actual observer would be because, like general Utilitarian theory, it is using a subjective assessment method against an objective statement of value. Thus, the outcome of excessive broadness is that it enables supporters of the myth to claim that the myth is supported by both parties in a more meaningful way than initially outlined above.

Furthermore, Beeby appears to disregard the power that myths can have in framing educational debate. More than just aspirational statements for the future, once a myth is integrated into the wider social conscience they can then, in turn, become an assumption in future discussion. Ian Middleton gives an example of such a modern myth. He argues that the ability for private schools to select academically able students combined with the earlier myth that academic results represent school quality had led to the myth that 'private schools ... give superior education'.⁷⁶⁰ He wrote:

[T]hese schools are creaming off some of the highest performing pupils from state schools and ... they are consequently depressing the performance of the state schools that these pupils may have otherwise attended. ... [But] there is little

⁷⁵⁸ Beeby, letter to Mr. Russell Marshall, 4 April 1984.

⁷⁵⁹ Adam Smith and David Hume espoused early versions of these theories and both influenced the early British Utilitarian thought. See Noonan, 1999.

⁷⁶⁰ Middleton, Iain (2008) *Secular Education in New Zealand*. Humanist Society of New Zealand. <http://www.humanist.org.nz/letters/educ.html> (accessed 13/5/2015).

evidence of performance differences between state and private schools ... [and] the argument that state funding of private schools and state integrated schools is justified because they give superior education must fail.⁷⁶¹

In Beeby's case, the myth that the New Zealand education system is based on equality of opportunity just became a baseline assumption.

One of the critics of aligning educational goals to an abstract objective concept is Beeby—although only in hindsight. By 1973 Beeby was more critical about the use of abstract, subjective language to objectively guide education. He wrote:

One trouble is that the issues become blurred by the use of semi-magical words and phrase that give an illusory sense of certainty. We are told, for example, that education, like other publicly provided services, must be 'accountable'. ... The fashionable dictum that 'education should be relevant' is equally unhelpful. Relevant to what? As used by the politicians and planners in developing countries, the underlying assumption is usually that it should be relevant to economic development, and I suspect that it has something the same flavour for many planners in rich countries. ... [A]n education admirably relevant to economic growth may, in some respects, run counter to ... national unity, equality of opportunity, and the maintenance of the country's social and cultural heritage.⁷⁶²

In 1992 Beeby had somewhat formulated a counter argument to the charge of linguistic looseness in his mythological definitions. He wrote:

The myth of equality of opportunity has been criticised in the grounds that, in the 1940s and '50s, it was too loose to give principals and teachers the guidance they needed, and allowed some schools to adopt practices that did nothing to further the cause of equality or even ran counter to it. ... [However, t]he myth of equality of opportunity, as we began to understand it better, provided the criterion for judging our success or failure.⁷⁶³

Beeby's counter argument attempts to shift the focus of the myth from guide to evaluator – from foresight to hindsight. The problem is that while this solves the problem of having a vague criteria to follow, it replaced it have having a vague criteria with which to judge the implementation of policy. Just as any left or right wing government could say that their policy *will* improve equality, under the new conception they can just as easily say they *have* improved equality. The other objections still apply, Beeby's argument has merely shifted the problem from the past to the future; further, a lack of knowledge about who will be doing the judging actually could even make the myth even less of a reliable criteria.

⁷⁶¹ Middleton, Iain (2008) *Secular Education in New Zealand*. Humanist Society of New Zealand. <http://www.humanist.org.nz/letters/educ.html> (accessed 13/5/2015).

⁷⁶² Beeby, 1974, p. 12

⁷⁶³ Beeby, 1992, p. 303.

Nevertheless, keeping with Beebian tradition some modern educationalists have continued to offer new education myths. For instance, in 2004 John Clark proposed a new myth based on fairness and freedom. He wrote:

It is the right of every citizen to become an educated person and to fully participate in and contribute to a free, fair, and democratic society; it is the duty of the state to be organised so as to freely provide the resources and direct their use to equitably meet the social needs and economic interests of all its citizens.⁷⁶⁴

7.6 Applied Mythology

One of Beeby's greatest contribution to the field of education has a strong resemblance to his theory of myths. In 1966 Beeby published his *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*. The book was based on his experiences in both developed and undeveloped countries during his Directorship and reflected his desire to address the logical problem of prescribing for one country what he was opposing in another.⁷⁶⁵ In his book Beeby echoed Marxist historicism and socialism in arguing that all education systems had to develop through a specific series of stages, each requiring an authoritative administration to oversee development. Beeby argued that only in the final 'meaning' stage did school and teachers not need 'interventionist external control'.⁷⁶⁶ Consistent with his time as Director, Beeby use of developmental stages reflected his psychological background and his focus on practical, teacher and state driven education reflected his desire for authoritarian structure.

The mythological aspect of his book was how he explained the diametrically opposed stages—from rote-learning to flexible course development. Firstly, Beeby simply asserted that all systems *had* to progress through these stages as a matter of fact. Second, he justified this via fairly simplified terminology to describe each stage with broadly specific descriptions of what each stage must entail.⁷⁶⁷ His book went on to have a similarly influential role internationally as 1939 statement had in New Zealand.

In 1980 Beeby published a paper reflecting on changes he would have made to his book if re-writing it. His reflection somewhat coincides with the above analysis. He wrote:

[I]t was to be expected that the thesis I propounded to cover a wide-range of school systems would be over-simplified ... and over-dramatic.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁴ Clark, J. (2004), p. 18.

⁷⁶⁵ Beeby, 1966; Alcorn, 1999, p. 272-279; McKenzie, 2000, p. 135.

⁷⁶⁶ McKenzie, 2000, pp. 135-6.

⁷⁶⁷ McKenzie, 2000, p. 136.

⁷⁶⁸ Beeby, 1980,

The very title of Beeby's book somewhat indicates his view on how to improve the education in schools—focusing on quality. While written after his experiences as Director, it reinforces observations made in previous chapters. Beeby wrote of education having three levels: classroom quality, quality education serving the economic goals of the community, and quality should be judged by broad social criteria.⁷⁶⁹ Beeby focused however on just the first stage, defining quality of education as quality of teachers, teaching materials, and teaching environment. As discussed in Chapter 6, he was writing during a period when human capital theorists were developing quantitative measurement techniques that any administrator could use. It is therefore unsurprising that he focused on measurable inputs and outcomes in education as a way to measure the quality of education—each stage is described in terms of systemic and well as classroom characteristics. In doing so, he foreshadowed the place given in modern education to context and demonstrable skill as a determinant of quality.⁷⁷⁰ Given Beeby's fondness of Dewey and his immersion in Progressivism, his values at this time were still likely influenced by the humanist progressive tradition that included such writers as Froebel, Pestalozzi, and Dewey.

In later life Beeby's focus on quality emerged again in his heartfelt appreciation of Professor Benjamin Bloom's theory of *Mastery Learning*. Beeby wrote to Bloom, saying:

My great interest in your work springs in part from the fact that, for 40 years, I have been either Director-General of Education in New Zealand or a consultant on educational administration and planning in developing countries, and I am all too aware of our grievous failure, with great masses of students to live up to the standards of teaching and learning that you have set. It is heartbreaking to know how much more we could have achieved if we had only the money, the skilled teachers – and the wisdom – to apply what you have learnt.

7.7 Consequences of Beeby's Mythology

The return in 2009 of objective educational standards in the form of National Standards reflects the latest development against the subjectivism inherent in the Beebian education system. Yet, National Standards, like many post-Beebian reforms are justified in some part on the grounds of increasing both fairness and educational equality. So how can an anti-Beebian reform be justified on Beebian grounds? The apparent contradiction reflects the still ongoing interplay between Beeby's educational

⁷⁶⁹ Beeby, 1966, p. 11.

⁷⁷⁰ See Hawes and Stephens, 1990, for an extensive discussion on the history of the idea of quality in education.

egalitarianism myth and non-egalitarian reforms under the guise of egalitarianism, and how the former permitted (and perhaps even encouraged) the latter.

Although Beeby only came up with his theory of educational myth in the 1980s I posit that Beeby's vague myth of equality of opportunity can, retrospectively, partially explain why there has not been more egalitarian reform throughout the twentieth century. The apparent contradiction arises from the observation that a vague myth like Beeby perpetually put forward was able to be used as a catch-all phrase for any reform in the decades following his Directorship. That is, by embracing the myth of equality of opportunity subsequent governments could evade having to make specific, measurable reforms because of the inherent vagueness in the myth. Part of one of Beeby's criteria for myths is that they be 'expressed in language flexible enough to permit a reasonably wide range of interpretation'. One such interpretation is, of course, that whatever the given government is planning to do is going to contribute to the egalitarian goal. The myth of educational equality thus became part of the wider myth of social and economic equality. Dunstall writes:

While inequalities in the distribution of income continued in post-war New Zealand, the badges of social position became more subtle. ... Those nearer the bottom of the social gradient sought to emulate not those at the top, but rather their neighbours. Inequalities were perceived as removable, and the egalitarian myth maintained.⁷⁷¹

The outcome of Beeby's mythmaking has been to provide a way for governments to make a range of promises without necessarily having to demonstrate deep-seated commitment to educational equality. It has also enabled non-egalitarian reform to be enacted in the name of equality. I propose that this is exactly what happened not just after Beeby's Directorship but during it as well. Throughout the later twentieth century, although an egalitarian reorientation was constantly in the political rhetoric, the reality never matched the rhetoric. O'Neill explains:

[T]he reality of New Zealand society contradicted the theoretical ideal or ideology of egalitarianism; ... the inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity ... were shrouded by the ideology of egalitarianism and 'equal access for all'.⁷⁷²

Therefore Beeby's intellectual legacy is that while bequeathed a myth of equality of opportunity in 1960, he did not bequeath an egalitarian education system along with it. In Chapter 8 I consider how the rest of the century can be considered as a series of reactions to both Beeby's mythology and the actual education system that he left behind in 1960.

⁷⁷¹ Dunstall, Graeme. *The Social Pattern*, in Rice (1992) p. 476.

⁷⁷² O'Neill, 2004, pp. 30-31.

CHAPTER 8

THE PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY

[E]ducation is inevitably political. And so it should be. The general public, through its elected representatives should have a proprietary interest in it.

(Beeby, letter to Professor Phillip Hughes, 19 July 1985)

8.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter gives an account of the gradual deconstruction of Beeby's egalitarian-flavored reforms during the decades after his Directorship. I begin with a summary of Beeby's own activities after 1960. I describe how, although Beeby remained involved in education, his refusal to comment on education in New Zealand may have accelerated the dismantling of his reforms.

I then spend the remainder of this section considering the educational reforms from 1960 onwards. Although the history of New Zealand education during this period has been examined by a wide range of educationalists and historians, I will interpret it through the lens of the deconstruction and reconstruction of Beebyism. I argue that the various changes in government wore down the Beebian veneer on the education system to reveal the Utilitarianism underneath, which was then refinished at the end of the 1980s. Furthermore, I argue that although Beebyism itself did not survive in any substantive form, the second half of the twentieth century was nevertheless shaped by the gradual rejection of Beebyism. To maintain a Beebian perspective of the later changes, I will supplement my analysis with Beeby's own reflections.

I will end on a reflection of how although Beeby greatly shaped the New Zealand education system, Beeby himself has not only faded from popular view but is absent in the majority of modern books on general history and educational history.

8.2 Beeby post-Directorship: Reforming the World

After the conclusion of his Directorship, Beeby focused some of his attention on helping to improve educational systems in other countries. During this period, he continued in the role of consultant, representative, editor and advisor until his self-declared retirement in 1987. Renwick summarised Beeby's internationalist activities during this long period:

He was still more than two years from retirement age at the end of 1959 when the government ... decided that he should be appointed New Zealand's ambassador to France. ...

He was appointed to the executive board of UNESCO in 1960, and his residence in Paris enabled him to become closely involved in its work. At the end of 1962 he was elected chairman of its executive board.

On the completion of his term as ambassador in October 1963, Beeby became a research associate at the Center for Studies in Education and Development at Harvard University, and in 1967–68 he was Commonwealth visiting professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. ...

He returned to Wellington at the end of 1968 and took up office again at the NZCER as director emeritus. He was regularly called upon to advise governments and international agencies, speak at conferences and seminars, write papers for symposia, edit manuscripts for publication, and advise people from many parts of the world. From 1970 to 1975 he was a high-level policy adviser on Indonesian educational development, and this resulted in *Assessment of Indonesian education*. He undertook his last international consultancy in 1987.⁷⁷³

Beeby did most of his work in developing countries as an international consultant—using his experiences in New Zealand to guide other nations. The countries he worked with include Barbados, Libya, Iran, India, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Tanzania. He was also, briefly, a consultant for the World Bank on education-related matters.⁷⁷⁴ Beeby explained:

I worked on tasks in many developing countries, ranging from the internal problems of single institutions to the broad educational planning of whole states.⁷⁷⁵

On 6 February 1987, Beeby was officially honoured for his contributions to New Zealand's education system when he was made one of the five initial members of the Order of New Zealand.

Beeby's final major public address was delivered later that year when he gave the Radford Memorial lecture at the University of Canterbury in December 1987.⁷⁷⁶ His lecture, 'Educational Research and the Making of Policy', covered his life's experiences and concluded on a personal reflection about the necessary relationship between research and policy, between theory and political action:

Educational research workers and administrators walk the same ground but each within our own professional carapace that limits our vision.⁷⁷⁷

By saying so, Beeby was highlighting his own experiences as both a researcher and an administrator.

⁷⁷³ Renwick, 2013.

⁷⁷⁴ Beeby, 1992, pp. 308-309.

⁷⁷⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 296.

⁷⁷⁶ Alcorn, 1999, p. 346.

⁷⁷⁷ Beeby, in Alcorn, 1999, p. 347.

A Reticent Commentator

Beeby's constant overseas engagements were not the only cause of Beeby not having a direct influence over New Zealand's education policy after 1960. He reports instead that he decided early on to make very few public comments on the New Zealand education system and maintain intellectual solitude whenever he returned to New Zealand. He wrote:

I decided when I returned from a long absence overseas that it would be most unfair to my successors in the Department if I should begin to take any part in public discussions on education in New Zealand. I have always had a horror of old men coming back from the past, like professional zombies, to advise their younger successors how to solve problems that they themselves had failed to solve while they were in power. ... It is not, I assure you, that I am not interested, but rather that I might become too interested. And then I should be a nuisance.⁷⁷⁸

He maintained the same position two decades later. In 1992 he wrote:

I am still bound by the oath I took on leaving the Department of Education in January 1960, never again to make public pronouncements on the current changes in the policy and practice of my successors and their ministers.⁷⁷⁹

Beeby's unwillingness to comment publicly has helped to push him into relative obscurity while also depriving contemporary researchers of his experience and analyses. Only after the depositing of a lifetime of his correspondence into the National Archive, a publicly accessible repository, has a more thorough analysis of his contributions become possible.

Beeby's Educational Bequest

When Beeby left the Directorship, his contribution to the education system was widely praised. For example, Philip O.S. Skogland, the outgoing Minister of Education, offered several plaudits:

All of us who worked with Dr Beeby will long remember his administrative ability, his remarkable intellectual powers, and his complete integrity in carrying out Government policy.⁷⁸⁰

One of Beeby's educational bequests is his influential, oft-repeated enduring narrative of liberal egalitarianism. This is sometimes represented in the suggestion that the 1980s neoliberal-driven reforms comprehensively abolished the (Beebian) education system that had been in place, essentially unbroken, since the 1940s. For example, as part of emphasising the legacy of Peter Fraser, Renwick wrote:

⁷⁷⁸ Beeby, letter to Mr. R.J. Lamond, 11 June 1971.

⁷⁷⁹ Beeby, 1992, p. 304.

⁷⁸⁰ AJHR, 1960, E1, p.3.

Perhaps the greatest achievement for politicians is the endorsement of their policies by their political opponents. ... All parties remained agreed on the essentials of education policy until the late 1980s, when a later Labour administration did to Fraser's legacy what he had done to the policies he had himself inherited.⁷⁸¹

One difficulty with this narrative is that it appears to conflate the Beebian myth of equality of opportunity with the underlying egalitarian sentiment that accompanied the educational reforms—that is, seeing the persistence of the former as evidence of the latter.

But how much did Beeby's twenty year-long Directorship actually influence educational policy in the decades that followed? As discussed earlier, this is an empirically difficult, if not impossible, question to answer. Nevertheless, it is possible to interpret the key documents and changes in educational philosophy as a reaction to Beeby's significant contribution. The remainder of this chapter is a summary of events from 1960 onwards, and it uses some of Beeby's written reactions to the later changes to provide insight into his overall philosophical influence.

8.3 The 1962 Currie Report⁷⁸²

The 1962 Currie Commission is an example of how Beeby left a lasting influence over the education system. In 1960 the Currie Commission was established by the second Labour Government to investigate and report on the status of the education system. It complemented the 1960 *Parry Report* in so far that it focused on schooling rather than the tertiary system, but ended up being a much more detailed analysis. As noted in the introduction of the Commission's report:

The Commission on Education in New Zealand was constituted by the Minister of Education in February 1960 to consider the publicly-controlled system of primary, post-primary, and technical education in relation to the present and future needs of the country. In addition, the Commission was asked to consider the question of aid by the State to private schools.

The commission was given nine different broad areas to inquire into, and to 'report on these matters, and make recommendations'.⁷⁸³

Beeby's initial influence was negative—the Commission was set up in part due to mounting criticism of his reforms. Dunstall wrote:

In the 1950s there was mounting criticism of the aims and methods of primary education. Traditionalists accused 'Beebyism' – with its 'social' promotion, liberal curriculum, and flexible learning methods (dubbed the play-way) – of lowering

⁷⁸¹ Renwick, in Clark, 1998, pp. 85-86.

⁷⁸² The colloquial name for the Report of *the Commission of Education in New Zealand* (1962, Wellington: Government Printer), the Commission was named after its chairman, Sir George Currie.

⁷⁸³ *Commission on Education in New Zealand*, 1962, p. 1.

standards in the basic skills known as the three Rs, reading, writing, and arithmetic.⁷⁸⁴

Beeby himself later noted that there was concern. For Beeby:

Although the Commission expressed its approval of the general direction in which the school system has moved over the previous quarter of a century, it found many places where practice had fallen short of the high ideal of equality of opportunity.

...

Throughout my tenure with the department, there were periodic outbursts of public criticism of the changes we had made in the school system.⁷⁸⁵

However, he mainly attributed this to statistical outliers. He goes on:

By 1960 most of the changes in teaching methods in the primary school had come to be accepted by the average parent, but some parents, many employers, and a few newspapers were highly critical of the extensive structural changes we had made.⁷⁸⁶

The Commission specifically reflected on the criticism as part of its overall wide-ranging analysis.⁷⁸⁷ The final, comprehensive 850-page report (the compiled summary of recommendations was itself 40 pages long) was generally dismissive of the criticisms and supportive of the direction of Beeby's reforms. The report instead assertively defended the reforms and mildly dismissed the criticsers themselves. It states:

To some extent the Commission believes that certain critics are seeking from the schools something quite different from what the schools would wish to give them.

...

For [other] critics the Commission believes the way lies in a better understanding of what the primary schools are attempting and it sees this as a problem of communication which should be capable of solution.⁷⁸⁸

The Currie report was generally uncritical of the prevailing education system and instead endorsed the Beebian mythology—setting a precedent for supporters and critics alike. Rata and Sullivan wrote:

This largely uncritical Report was published in 1962. It reinforced three key ideas that lay behind the existing system. Firstly, that equality of opportunity was the main goal of the education system, and that this was an appropriate goal. Secondly, that the education system was progressing towards that goal, and that the changes made had been wholly beneficial. Finally, the Report maintained that it was appropriate that the state should continue to provide and control education in New Zealand.⁷⁸⁹

The report argued that the demands of equality of opportunity necessitated two core principles. First, that it is imperative for every country to educate their citizens to

⁷⁸⁴ Dunstall, in Rice, 1992, p. 467

⁷⁸⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. xxxv, 192.

⁷⁸⁶ Beeby, 1992, p. 192.

⁷⁸⁷ *Commission on Education in New Zealand*, 1962; see chapter 1.

⁷⁸⁸ *Commission on Education in New Zealand*, 1962, pp. 27,

⁷⁸⁹ Rata and Sullivan, 2009, p. 19.

their maximum capacity in the most efficient manner possible. Second, that educational expenditure must be considered from a practical, economic point of view as to how money is spent and how education impacts on the economy. Thus, education is not an issue of personal satisfaction to the individual but a matter concerning wider society and the state. Thus, the report notes, ‘Equality and expediency appear therefore to point in the same direction’.⁷⁹⁰ The report specifically advocates for:

maximum educational opportunity for all, since they regard the people as a whole as an important part of the natural wealth of the country; not to educate them to their maximum capacity is to leave part of the country’s resources undeveloped.⁷⁹¹

Furthermore, the Currie report regularly expresses concern as to whether the New Zealand education system is properly structured to meet the country’s future economic needs. It advocated for an investment-focused conception of human capital where the goal was to prepare ‘sufficient young New Zealanders’ to meet the needs of business and industry. This echoes Beeby’s belief that the education system should prepare students for a job that reflects their ability.

Beeby had only a limited direct influence on the Commission. He sought to make sure it was independent of his Department. He wrote:

It was set up to survey the results of the great changes in the education system in the preceding 20 years, in effect to evaluate the changes during my directorship. ... So, from my point of view, it is essential to make clear that I had nothing to do with the formation of the Commission or with its work.⁷⁹²

However, Beeby did have an indirect influence on the agenda. Rory Sweetman wrote:

Uncertainty over the legality of [the Nelson system]⁷⁹³, an issue which had long troubled Dr C.E. Beeby (Director of Education), led to the issue being added to the brief on the Commission on Education set up by the second Labour government in 1960.⁷⁹⁴

In addition, the Commission was indirectly influenced by Beeby’s previous administrative reforms to the Department of Education itself. Sutch explains:

The Labour Government also set up [the Currie] Commission on education which reported in 1962, two years after the government had changed. The commission was heavily influenced by the Department of Education and its problems of administration and faced both ways on the urgent needs for a change in educational philosophy.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹⁰ *Report of the Commission of Education in New Zealand* (1962), p. 12.

⁷⁹¹ *Report of the Commission of Education in New Zealand* (1962), p. 12.

⁷⁹² Beeby, letter to Muriel McBride, 25 September 1990.

⁷⁹³ A loophole, pioneered in the Nelson province, to enable Christian education in primary schools.

⁷⁹⁴ Sweetman, Rory (2002), p. 27.

⁷⁹⁵ Sutch, p. 324.

Furthermore, the Commission even states that the 1939 statement written by Beeby would be used as ‘a reasonable working premise’.⁷⁹⁶ Thus while the commission had its own terms of references, it was influenced by the shape and history of the Department. By being focused on the Departments problems, its analysis was far more blinkered than it would have been with open-ended suggestions based just on prevailing research.

Thus, even though Beeby did not have a direct influence on the Currie Commission, it nevertheless consolidated, explained and defended his reforms and, while doing so, framed its analysis around earlier documents that Beeby had more directly influenced.

While the Currie Report made some specific suggestions for improvement, it also endorsed the previous twenty years of Beebian reforms. It states:

[O]n such professional matters as the content and balance of the curriculum, methods of teaching, and promotion practices, the Commission positively endorsed, with at most only minor reservations, the policies the Department has been following in recent years.⁷⁹⁷

Thus Beeby’s view of equality of educational opportunity was instilling once more into the education system. However, it was also a view that immediately set the agenda for counter-reforms after his departure. As Dunstall explains:

[T]o the Commission in 1962 ‘the intellectual development of each pupil to his full capacity’ was now the primary purpose of schools, an emphasis to be questioned by ‘concerned parents’ in the early 1970s.⁷⁹⁸

Beeby and Educational Standards

The beginning of the rejection of Beeby’s norm-referenced system lies in the mid-1960s. Norm-referenced systems use a system of assessment to provide information on how an individual’s performance on the test compares to others in the reference group. The current NCEA system is just the latest in a series of curriculum reforms away from the rigid Beebian assessment system.

Dissatisfaction with the qualification system fermented in the years immediately following Beeby’s departure. Sociologists around the world and in New Zealand began to critique the inadequacy of schools to address environmental factors outside the school. The 737-page, 1966 Coleman Report argued that educational outcomes ignore the complexity of factors the influence both instruction and education, including home

⁷⁹⁶ *Report of the Commission of Education in New Zealand* (1962), p. 11.

⁷⁹⁷ AJHR, 1963, E1, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁸ Dunstall, in Rice, 1992, p. 467

life and economic status.⁷⁹⁹ In New Zealand, the report demonstrated a potentially great weakness in Beeby's outcomes-oriented 'equality of opportunity'—its inability to address the realities of student background and life in the pursuit of qualifications.

Another pertinent example is the series of annual conferences by the PPTA between 1965 and 1969 that passed motions calling for reform. Judie Alison explains:

Dissatisfaction with the norm-referenced School Certificate exam was noted by the union's Annual Conference as far back as 1965, where there were concerns expressed about the inability of School Certificate to meet the needs of the increasingly wide range of students staying on at secondary school for three years.⁸⁰⁰

One of the very first attempts to significantly modify the Beebian assessment system was the introduction of single-subject passes for School Certificate in 1968. This was followed up by single-subject passes for University Entrance in 1974. Besides increasing the number of qualifications achieved each year (as students might only sit for an English exam), this modification permitted multi-level study; that is, studying several subjects at different qualification levels at once, which was contrary to the rigid qualification system.

8.4 Criticism and Reform in the early 1970s

Confidence in the education system continued to decline during the 1970s. Growing criticism began to strip away the egalitarian veneer of Beeby's reforms. In response to persistent criticisms of the education system, Phil Amos, the Minister for Education in the 1972 to 1975 Labour government, convened an Education Development Conference to consider a range of concerns about the education system. Three key reports emerged from the Education Development Conference: *Educational Aims and Objectives* (1974), *Improving Teaching and Learning* (1974) and *Organisation and Administration of Education* (1974).

All three reports provided a thorough critique of the education system. They each considered strengths and shortcomings of the education system, with the *Educational Aims and Objectives* Report containing the broadest range of criticisms. It states that the shortcomings of the prevailing education system include:

- The failure to provide, for every individual, an equal chance to profit to the limit of his ability from his educational opportunities.
- The failure to appreciate and overcome many of the problems which are causing people to become alienated from the existing education system.

⁷⁹⁹ Coleman, J.S, (1966).

⁸⁰⁰ Alison, 2008, p. 120. (See Alison for a detailed analysis on the PPTA's influence on Qualification reform.)

- The emphasis at present placed on narrow academic achievement.
- The limited success of many of the present educational institutions and teachers in providing an effective learning environment.
- The inability of formal educational institutions to respond by themselves to the problems of society and provide solutions to many of the reasonable expectations of the community.
- The lack of continuity and sufficient co-ordination in the present education system.
- The limited success of community participation and involvement in education
- The lack of promotions by the education system of awareness of, and opportunities for, lifelong learning.⁸⁰¹

Although this list was also accompanied by a list of strengths, some of these criticisms of the Beebian education system are devastating all by themselves.

The criticisms indicate that the fundamentals of the education system had still not changed over several decades of reform since the Thomas Report. As with fifty years earlier, academic achievement was still a dominant emphasis, and students were not achieving equality of opportunity. There was thus a limited emphasis on the needs of individuals, regardless of what the ministry had been saying, and only the educational super-structures, such as curriculum and assessment had been modified. These criticisms laid the foundation for the sharp decline in support for the education system that followed.

Although the criticisms were comprehensive, they did not advocate a complete overhaul of the education system. They merely expressed concerns both for the lack of progress and also a growing influence of particular schools of thought which prevented such progress. In particular, they noted that there was still too much of a focus on achievement and developing common academic standards, and in particular:

There has been a tendency for schools to over-emphasize organizational values such as order, routine, output, authority and efficiency, rather than to foster self-development, personal relationships and social maturity. ... No one will ever 'complete' his education.⁸⁰²

While the report clearly sought a more liberal approach, it is clear that it is a direct, although implicit, attack on Beebian values as authority and efficiency.

The report also contains an odd contradiction regarding egalitarianism. The criticisms suggest that after nearly 40 years of reforms since Peter Fraser's famous phrase that education continued to fail to be inclusive, effective or egalitarian. In particular, it suggests that the system has been failing to provide a genuine equal chance

⁸⁰¹ *Education Development Conference*, 1974a, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, 1974a, p. 10

for all students (and actually ‘alienated’ some students), and still retained the same short-term focus on achievement. The report clearly states:

[E]qual opportunity to benefit from access to equality of learning resources is still *distressingly far from realization*. ... We have yet to ensure that every child has a reasonably equal chance of achieving to the limit of his ability.⁸⁰³

Nevertheless, one of the strengths of New Zealand education is:

- The *high standard of performance and equality* of outcome achieved within education in New Zealand measured on an international scale.⁸⁰⁴

If there was limited success in equality in New Zealand, then this speaks poorly of the international scale. The possible contradiction between saying one is egalitarian and then not actually being egalitarian is an issue throughout the entire post-Beeby history of education and may reflect the powerful influence of Beeby’s myth-making.

Furthermore, given that egalitarianism is supposedly a fundamental part of the past and present New Zealand identity, it is unsurprising that the report states:

As a society we are essentially egalitarian; we believe that all men are equal in dignity and rights and no one is expendable.⁸⁰⁵

Although the apparent shift from ‘equality of opportunity’ to either ‘equality of resources’ or ‘equality of outcome’ suggests a change in the perceived role of equality in education. However, the high standard of being ‘essentially egalitarian’ is delusory, given the criticisms and the conflicting statements immediately above—the report claims that ‘no one is expendable’, yet half of all fifth students were made to fail School Certificate for the sake of a distribution norm.

Problematically, the report did not attempt to explain the complexities of these different conceptions of equality. Much like earlier Beebian documents, although there is half a page dedicated to equality of opportunity, most of it is assertion without justification or argument. It is reasonable to expect that if such philosophical ideas are proposed, then there would be a clarification on their particular relationship to education. However, they did not consider clarifying the philosophical complexity primarily as:

We were not asked to consider a philosophy of education. *We could not, as a committee, have done so had we been asked*. ... We have conceived it as our task ... to see to what extent we could identify aims and objectives that in our judgment should be offered as a basis for further discussion by New Zealanders.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 1974a, p. 14; my italics.

⁸⁰⁴ *Education Development Conference*, 1974a, p. 17; my italics.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 8; my italics.

Avoiding an analysis on any underlying philosophy risks not considering it at all, which ensures it remains a narrow, although detailed, critique.

Nevertheless, while not considering a philosophy of education, the report still focused on the moral character of students. For instance, it states that:

Every individual has a right to develop his abilities and a need to be accepted as a person.

And that:

Every person has a right to enjoy being in community and so develop his capacity for living.⁸⁰⁷

The same objection also applies to the document's distinctly liberal assertions regarding values and morality, asserting that:

Today, there should be no topic which cannot, or should not, be discussed rationally and tolerantly in our classrooms ... All aspects of rules, values, conduct, and morality should be discussed freely and frankly. [T]o this end, it is necessary to ensure that ... we have teachers ... of superior character.⁸⁰⁸

This strong position on morality only tenuously relates to the long-list of criticisms as discussed, but by attacking the previous 'climate of opinion', the writers implicitly added yet another criticism of the illiberal education system alongside challenging whether the system was meeting egalitarian goals. Furthermore, the emphasis on the character of teachers may demonstrate another long-term influence from Beeby's interest in sculpting the character of students.

Qualification reforms during the 1970s

The Beebian idea that changing qualifications and curriculum can address educational problems was firmly set in place by the 1970s. In 1974 Sixth Form Certificate was introduced to meet the concerns that there was no qualification for students intending to complete higher High School education but not continue on to University Entrance. This was a feature that Beeby's system had lacked. As an internally moderated qualification, all students' marks were subjectively determined by the school, contrary to Beeby's single national system of assessment for the other qualifications.

By directly linking educational achievement and qualifications together Beeby had laid the foundation for an outcomes-oriented education system. Although that took several decades to develop, recent researchers argue that students studying towards the current NCEA system directly link educational achievement with qualification

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁸⁰⁸ *Education Development Conference*, 1974a, pp. 15-16.

achievement. Furthermore, student motivation continues to be guided towards achieving NCEA rather than acquiring a broad education.⁸⁰⁹

In 1974 the third secondary school curriculum conference met in 1974, and criticized the inflexible curriculum. The 1974 AJHR later summarized the conclusions, noting that:

In general, the conference, while advocating greater freedom for each school in close association with its community, pointed to the need for it to develop its own curriculum within clearly defined national curriculum guidelines.

The conference suggested that schools should make greater provision for the social and cultural education of their pupils by increasing vocational emphasis and by teaching about values.⁸¹⁰

Concerns about the curriculum's inflexibility and irrelevancy were also the focus of the 1976 Coombe's report. The Coombe's Report criticised the disjointedness of the different curriculum areas and their lack of relevance to the whole post-school social environment. The report recommended the development of more flexible national curriculum guidelines, and in particular to enable schools to link subjects together and develop appropriate programmes for their students.⁸¹¹

Each of the reports above contains large criticisms of the Beebyian education system. Together, they cast doubt on the 'fact' that education had been significantly improved. As many of the concerns they raise echo those raised during the 1920s to 1940s, this suggests that although many things in schools had changed, such as increased participation, the underlying philosophy had not substantially changed regardless of Fraser's original proposal to adapt the education system to fit each student's needs. It is not unreasonable to assume that if the education system was meeting Fraser's goals then such criticisms would not be so expressed, but as they were expressed so thoroughly then Fraser's desires seem to have been accidentally thwarted by Beeby.

1975 Select Committee on Womens' Rights

Sexual discrimination in the Education system was also extensively analysed by a special Select Committee on Women's Rights. Established on 13 September 1973, the Committee met for two years to review submissions and evidence before publishing their findings in June 1975. The committee concluded that there was still significant inequality in education and proposed a range of recommendations to address the

⁸⁰⁹ See, for example, Meyer, et al, 2009, Motivation and Achievement at Secondary School.

⁸¹⁰ AJHR, 1974, E.-1, pp. 19-20

⁸¹¹ Department of Education, 1976

multiple layers of inequality, including: removing the sex differentiating stereotypes from infant readers, strengthening vocational training in secondary schools, giving all students the same manual training curriculum, encouraging all girls to stay longer at school, encouraging more girls to study mathematics, physics and chemistry at school, and encouraging more young women to attend university and study non-Arts degrees. The report also advocated shifting responsibility for pre-school childcare to the Department of Education.⁸¹²

Each of these suggestions is an implicit criticism of education under Beeby's Department. Nevertheless, the Select Committee's reforms proposal only addressed the expression of Beeby's reforms rather than the reforms themselves. Over a decade later girls continued to have lower success rates. The 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy concluded:

The major findings of the research are limitations on the aspirations and life chances of most young women at the completion of secondary school and their limited participation in tertiary education. ... The research shows clearly that the New Zealand education system does not offer the majority of girls a fair chance to develop their abilities.⁸¹³

However, the focus on girls' achievement may have had the unintended consequence of male disadvantage. In 1995 the Minister of Education reported that females tend to have higher rates of participation, retention, and achievement than males.⁸¹⁴ It is important to note that even though the group facing inequality changed, the fact that the education system appears to be privileging one group over another demonstrates a persistent underlying inegalitarian structure.

The 1978 Johnson Report: 'Values' education

The 1978 Johnson Report⁸¹⁵ even further added to previous concerns by strongly criticising the Beebian curriculum failure to fully address sexual and moral education. Understandably, the report provoked great concern primarily from conservative and religious groups who questioned whether schools should teach moral education, rather than homes and churches. During consultation, many called for schools to just 'focus on

⁸¹² *Select Committee on Women's Rights*, 1975.

⁸¹³ NZCER, 1988, p. 181.

⁸¹⁴ Minister of Education, 1995.

⁸¹⁵ The colloquial term for the *Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education: Growing, sharing, learning*.

the fundamentals' and thus return to a 'back to basics' approach to education concentrating on improving the falling academic standards in education.⁸¹⁶

8.5 1975-1984: The Ascendency of Educational Conservatism

The election of the Third National Government (1975-1984) heralded in a new period of conservative attacks on traditionally egalitarian policies. While liberal concerns had helped to undermine the contemporary education system, conservative concerns now undermined the liberal solutions. From 1975 to 1984, the socially conservative National party government both reflected and accentuated the full range of concerns about education. The intensification of direct and indirect attacks on Beebyism from both the political left and right reflected a new conservative period under a new Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon. According to Gustafson, Robert Muldoon, as finance minister:

revived a 'back to basics' debate ... and stated that, 'I ... cannot ignore growing public criticism arising from the failure of many students—primary and secondary to teach satisfactory levels of attainment in *basic subjects*'. His emphasis on basics and on applied, vocational learning also made Muldoon somewhat suspicious of the more radical proposals in the [Johnson] report of the committee set up by the previous Labour Government to examine social education.⁸¹⁷

The economic depression of the 1970s and the following stagflation⁸¹⁸ during Muldoon's conservative leadership of the National Government primed the country for a future neo-liberal reorientation by reigniting the idea that efficiency was required across all sectors, and that, in education, students should primarily consider the ends of their education. Gustafson explains:

[Muldoon] was determined to get value for money and accountability by using a cost-benefit analysis approach. ... He argued ... students would be better employed studying applied education of vocational value to themselves ... rather than wasting their time on a 'fun subject'... which was of little use to New Zealand. ... These views became known by the term 'Muldoonism', which was applied not only to education but also to Muldoon's general *utilitarian* and *interventionist* approach.⁸¹⁹

Muldoon's authoritarianism is somewhat reminiscent of Beeby's own leadership style, including an emphasis on efficiency and vocational education.

Muldoon also encouraged his Ministers of Education to pursue similar policies as his own. Merv Wellington, the Minister from 1978 to 1984, was Muldoon's most influential choice. Hugh Templeton, ex-National MP, wrote:

⁸¹⁶ Department of Education, 1978.

⁸¹⁷ Gustafson, p. 108; my italics.

⁸¹⁸ A colloquial term for the coincidence of stagnant economic growth and ongoing inflation.

⁸¹⁹ Gustafson, p. 240; my italics.

Muldoon played the Orthodox card with Merv Wellington (38), a teacher with experience as a borough councillor. ... The critics, whom [his predecessor] Gandar had won over, were to become more vocal under Wellington's administration. Teachers complained of his dogmatism.⁸²⁰

In 1983 Wellington established a committee to review the post-Beebian core curriculum. His committee explored the recurring concern between falling standards and a bad curriculum, before releasing a damning report in 1984 on the excessive liberalism of the education system. Wellington later explained his conservative report:

[T]here are ominous signs that the educational foundations are in danger of being eroded by a *new cult of mediocrity*. ... [T]here is a growing unease about the standards achieved by many young New Zealanders. This had led, in recent years, to a strong questioning of what is taught in schools and of the methods used by the modern teacher. ...

On 23 March 1984, I released the report for public discussion and comment, saying that 'a review of the core curriculum for schools proposes a wider range of *compulsory* subjects and more time to be given to schooling in basic subjects such as English and mathematics.'⁸²¹

Wellington's report sought to expand the Beeby-style compulsory curriculum. Wellington recommended that students in Forms 3 and 4 would spend a minimum of 70% of the school year on the core curriculum. Furthermore, 75% of the 70% must be spent on English, Social studies, mathematics and science.⁸²² In directing what schools should be teaching and how much time should be spend on each subject, he was arguing for a strong authoritarian Department.

Like both Beeby and Muldoon, Wellington was particularly concerned that recent reports did not relate education to 'economic development or the individual's place in the workplace'. Nevertheless, he also dismissed the liberal egalitarian attitude in the Thomas Report as mere 'social engineering' that had sought to replace 'proper schooling'.⁸²³ One of the legacies of Wellington's tenure was arguing that Beeby's liberal and egalitarian ideals could be portrayed not as the saviour of education but as the source of its failure.

Beeby had little positive to say of Merv Wellington. Beeby described the years that Wellington was minister as 'dreary'.⁸²⁴ Shortly before National lost power, Beeby described Wellington as

a man who, if not the worst minister of education the country has ever had, is certainly the worst I have known – and I have known them all personally for fifty

⁸²⁰ Templeton, 1995, p. 112.

⁸²¹ Wellington, pp. 58-62; my italics.

⁸²² Wellington, p. 63.

⁸²³ Wellington, pp. 71-72.

⁸²⁴ Beeby, letter to Russell Marshall, MP, 17 February 1990.

years. This minister, who is still firmly in power, was a secondary school teacher, and is a relatively young man whose feet are firmly in the 1920s, and to whom all truth has been revealed. He is ... taking advantage of the economic recession to dismantle many of the best things that have been done in N.Z. education over the past forty years.⁸²⁵

Wellington's tenure coincided with the growth of neo-liberal criticisms, with several major economists, such as Martin Friedman, arguing that, as an extension of human freedom, more choice and use of market forces would improve inefficient, state-dominated systems.⁸²⁶

8.6 The 1980s: A Vacuum and the Role of the Treasury Department

The 1980's saw a major neo-classical, monetarist shift in social and economic policy around the world. In many cases it was driven by a neo-liberal ideology that criticised government-driven policy as expensive and inefficient in comparison to the essentially free, efficient systems of the market. In New Zealand, the neo-liberal shift in education is best exemplified by the reforms that systematically abolished many of the remains of Beebian centralisation. Even while referring to equality of opportunity, Labour pursued a programme grounded in a view of human beings as rational, self-interested, choosers and consumers.

The Fourth Labour Government

The Fourth Labour government was elected in 1984. Beeby was particularly pleased, writing:

I feel a new pride in being a New Zealander, a feeling that had weakened sorely over the past few years.⁸²⁷

The recently revitalised Labour Party was an amalgam of activists united in their own opposition of Muldoon. The Party contained both traditional Labour members—social liberals who opposed Muldoon's social conservatism—and economic liberals, who were opposed to Muldoon's economic conservatism. The economic liberals were a new generation of ex-Keynesian, neo-liberal politicians led by Roger Douglas.⁸²⁸ Upon election, the new Labour party divided the portfolios broadly along social and economic lines to the two halves of the party—a decision that would later contribute to the party's internal struggles and eventual disintegration.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁵ Beeby, Letter to Professor Lawrence Cremin, 4 November 1983.

⁸²⁶ Friedman, 1980.

⁸²⁷ Beeby, letter to Ms. Fran Wilde, M.P., 20 July 1984

⁸²⁸ For a reflection of Douglas's shift from Keynesian economics to New-liberal politics, and the rise of the neo-liberal wing in the Labour Party, see Douglas (1993) *Unfinished Business*.

⁸²⁹ For a detailed analysis of the Fourth Labour Government see Clark (2005), and Sheppard (1999).

The new Minister for Education was Russell Marshall, who already had a reputation for social liberalism. Beeby expressed his delight in a letter to Marshall, comparing the new government to the election of the First Labour Government:

I was, of course, delighted with the election, and with the chance it gives you to carry out plans for education on which you have been brooding for years with an increasing sense of frustration. On election night I felt very much as I did in 1935 as I stood in an excited crowd outside the 'Evening Post' building, watching the results go up. In the cold light of a wintry morning in 1984, I am lucky enough to have again the same hope for the future of education – this time under you instead of Peter Fraser.⁸³⁰

Marshall started off his reforms slowly. He established the *Committee to Review the Curriculum for Schools* to engage in public consultation over what kind of curriculum should be taught in schools. He tried to infuse a more democratic spirit into the process of educational reform by so as to properly represent popular sentiment.⁸³¹

In April 1987, the Committee published its report, *The Curriculum Review*.⁸³² The review had a progressive spirit that repeated many of the liberal ideas that had been in circulation since at least Beeby's Directorship. The stage was set for a form of Beebyism to be perpetuated once more. However, like many reports released during the previous decades, the report was generally just a repetition of the ideas under Beeby rather than a substantive policy document. By repeating the pattern established under Beeby, the report did not address the large philosophical vacuum underlying the education system—a vacuum that the Treasury had sought to fill since 1984.

The rise of Neo-Liberalism

During the early 1980s there was a dual philosophical crisis. Egalitarians on the left were dissatisfied with the conservatism under Muldoon. Meanwhile political conservatives remained sceptical of egalitarian solutions at the expense of efficiency. The disquiet across the spectrum towards the education system is what Codd calls a 'legitimation crisis', a crisis founded on the collapse of the myth of liberal egalitarianism.⁸³³ With the utilitarian foundation of Beeby's education system exposed, the mid 1980s was ripe for a new educational philosophy to arise to build a utilitarian, neo-liberal educational superstructure.

⁸³⁰ Beeby, letter to Mr. Russell Marshall, M.P., 22 July 1984

⁸³¹ O'Neill, 1992, p. 31,

⁸³² Committee to review the Curriculum for Schools (1987) *The Curriculum Review*. Wellington: Government Printer.

⁸³³ Codd, 1990.

The New Zealand Treasury's briefing to the incoming 1984 government argued that the traditional government-led model was inappropriate for organizing the state's activities. Treasury proposed:

Fundamental changes to the way the government machinery is organized may be appropriate if the goal of greater efficiency in the use of resources is to be met.⁸³⁴

Building on its earlier suggestions, the 1987 Treasury briefing paper spanned two volumes, with education taking up one whole volume. The briefing based its criticisms on 'apparent public concern about the public education system' and on the belief that

substantial elements of current government expenditure are, at best, ineffective when viewed in terms of the equity and efficiency concerns that justify such expenditure. Hence, there is danger that further public expenditure in some areas of education will serve only to increase inequity and inefficiency.⁸³⁵

Treasury's single-mindedness should not alone have been enough to force a radical change in education on the government. Treasury had rarely ever been a source of comprehensive advice on education, but this briefing significantly influenced the direction of education policy in New Zealand. But why was this so? According to the Treasury briefing, the Department of Education had historically lacked any clear focus for its four main (Beebian) interventionist policies. It states:

On equity, there is evidence that institutionalized education makes little, if any, difference to relative position or life chances of most groups. ... On agency issues, state intervention may reduce parental responsibility and hence increase dependence on subsidized institutional provision, thus furthering the agency problem. On interdependence, state intervention runs the risk that the benefits will in fact be captured by particular groups of individuals/providers, that is, the cost becomes public but the benefits remain private. On efficiency, the inefficiencies of central bureaucracy may be substituted for individual freedom of choice, reducing the ability of individuals to hold anybody to account. In sum, state 'intervention for each of the four reasons listed has significant potential to achieve the opposite effect.'⁸³⁶

The Treasury's criticisms were a direct attack on Beebyism itself. The proposed lack of focus might be explained in a range of ways, but may have been best exemplified by the Departmental response to the Treasury Report.

However, according to David Lange, Prime Minister and incoming Minister of Education, he was not provided with any briefing containing justifications or analyses of current policies to contribute to his overall policy assessment. He recalls:

As the new minister, I looked forward to reading the education department's response, but there was none. This significant department, with its budget of

⁸³⁴ Treasury, 1984, p. 292.

⁸³⁵ New Zealand Treasury 1987, Vol II, p. vii.

⁸³⁶ New Zealand Treasury 1987, Vol I, pp. 134-135.

many millions, was the only one which did not manage to produce a briefing for its minister.⁸³⁷

The lack of response seems to indicate a continuing lack of clarity or philosophical depth at the Department, a philosophical vacuum that the Treasury was able to fill. For nearly fifty years the Department had been operating under Beeby's vague concept of equality of opportunity. In perpetuating his vagueness, the post-Beeby Directors had not only constantly left themselves vulnerable to attacks from liberals and conservatives, but also to being undermined by an aggressive strand of neo-liberalism. Sheppard goes further, arguing that the philosophical vacuum in the Department was matched politically by

a vacuum on the left within Cabinet during the 1984-87 term.⁸³⁸

In 1987 the re-elected Labour government initiated a full review of the education system. In April 1988 the report of the taskforce headed by Brian Picot, *Administering for Excellence*,⁸³⁹ identified 'serious weaknesses' and proposed comprehensive change to the entire education system.⁸⁴⁰ The Picot report was a response to persistent concerns dating back over several decades—it's 'serious weaknesses' echoes both reports before and after Beeby's Directorship. The government largely accepted the recommendations and in August 1988 released a new education policy called *Tomorrow's Schools*. While the reforms reduced the power of the Department, to that of a small Ministry, it nevertheless retained the strong centralisation.

By 1988 Beeby had lost his new-found confidence in both Labour and the New Zealand political system. He wrote:

This country is going through a difficult political crisis. The Labour Government – particularly Roger Douglas, the Minister of Finance – has fallen for the doctrine of trusting the market and innate human selfishness to our serious economic difficulties ... The conflict has even spread into education because the Government [sic] set up a taskforce, chaired and dominated by businessmen, to report on economising on education, which has brought down a set of recommendations which, if implemented, would I believe throw our whole education system into chaos. It would certainly threaten much of what, over 20 years as Director of Education, I tried to achieve.⁸⁴¹

and

Things go in N.Z. much as ever, though we are politically in a mess at the moment. The Labour Government has split asunder as a result of following that economic lead of the 'marketeers' adopting the economic philosophy of that wretched fellow, Milton Friedman if Chicago University and, incidentally, very

⁸³⁷ Lange, 2005, pp. 255-256

⁸³⁸ Sheppard, p. 18

⁸³⁹ Colloquially known as the Picot Report.

⁸⁴⁰ Picot Report, pp. 82-83.

⁸⁴¹ Beeby, letter to 'Reuben', 30 June 1988.

much the same policy as that of Maggie Thatcher in England. This, understandably, has shocked the traditional Labour supporters, and Peter Fraser and Walter Nash will be whirling in their graves.⁸⁴²

Given that Beeby was one of the few people who served in a senior administrative position with both Fraser and Nash, he was in a rare position to write this with some authority.

In the following months comprehensive changes were initiated to the entire education system that had broadly been in place since at least Beeby was Director. To decentralize educational decision-making, the Education Boards (in existence since 1877) were abolished. Instead, the government expected schools to be autonomous institutions managed by local boards of trustees. Each school was to work within a charter that reflected both the needs of the local community and a framework of national standards. Finally, the Department of Education was replaced with a much slimmer Ministry of Education and other inter-governmental agencies. These changes assigned budgetary, employment and curriculum decision-making to each school, a significant step in decentralisation.⁸⁴³ However, by regulating the central prescriptions for the curriculum, achievement, and qualifications, central government ensured that they still controlled the overarching form and goals of education.

The effect of Labour's reforms may actually just have been to remove the veneer of equality of opportunity that had been in place since the 1940s. According to Codd, Gordon and Harker, New Zealand had shifted towards capitalistic inequality. They argue:

The central role of the state at present is clearly directly towards improving conditions for the accumulation of capital... [T]he effect of this ... require the state to legitimate ... the effects of its own policies on the production and maintenance of social inequality.⁸⁴⁴

Beeby continued to be very dismissive of Labour's educational reforms. He was particularly critical of Brian Picot, the ex-supermarket chain owner and chair of the Picot Report. Beeby wrote:

Education here is ... dominated by this new school of management specialists, who see no difference between managing a group of supermarkets and administering an education system, and boast of their ignorance of education.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴² Beeby, letter to Ian F.G. Milner, 28 May 1989.

⁸⁴³ Picot Report, pp. 82-83.

⁸⁴⁴ Codd, Gordon and Harker, 1990, p. 15.

⁸⁴⁵ Beeby, letter to Clive Whitehead, 1 March 1989.

National's adoption of Beeby-esque Equity

One of the best examples of Beeby's vague egalitarian myth was how the egalitarian banner dropped by Labour was quickly adapted by the National Party. In 1987, National initiated a Beebian-style criticism of Labour's neo-liberal Treasury-influenced policies by arguing in favour of a more egalitarian education system. National argued for greater equity and fairness in education, which would be measured by both 'opportunities and outcomes'.⁸⁴⁶ Furthermore, even while National also placed heavy emphasis on notions of excellence, accountability, and parental choice, they also argued that the current Labour government was not properly looking after particular groups of students, such as 'gifted' students, and thus equity should and must be a social goal.⁸⁴⁷ These are very Beebian sentiments and their use demonstrates how National continued Beeby's egalitarian utilitarianism legacy even as Labour was continuing with an updated version of his liberal legacy.

Although National also did not win the 1987 election, they did launch a comprehensive platform of ideas to replace the previous prevailing philosophy. A key part of National's vision was to remove the state and teachers from education decisions. Echoing Beeby's earlier skepticism of teachers, National argued that educational professionals had captured the system for their own personal (or nefarious) use.⁸⁴⁸

8.7 Beebyism in the 1990s

The 1990-1999 National-led governments maintained the majority of Labour's educational reforms. Lockwood Smith, the new Minister of Education, worked to further harness the education system for economic purposes. In 1991 Smith laid out his expectations for the new national curriculum. He wrote:

In today's world, issues of curriculum are no longer just the concern of educators, but a matter of national and governmental interest. In the past, the curriculum has been essentially shaped by teachers, education administrators, and academic and curriculum specialists. Now, and for the first time in countries such as the USA, UK and Australia, we find governments being increasingly prepared to legislate for the curriculum. ... The change is a result of the government's recognition of education as a significant aspect of national development, its central position in the development of a sound economic strategy.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁶ New Zealand National Party, 1987, p. 7.

⁸⁴⁷ New Zealand National Party, 1987, p. 8.

⁸⁴⁸ New Zealand National Party, 1987, pp. 1-14.

⁸⁴⁹ Smith, L. (1991, 14 May), pp. 2-3

Smith's vision of a centrally controlled, economy-orientated, instrumentally driven education system echoes arguments from such Directors as Anderson, Strong, and Beeby.

In 1990 Beeby was clearly becoming concerned at the global changes to education as he was to changes in global economics. He wrote:

Thatcherism... [is] a much greater threat to humanity than the hole in the ozone layer. ... I'm damned glad to be out of the education system.⁸⁵⁰

In 1991, Beeby viewed the new National government with concern, and constantly wrote as such to several people. He wrote:

We have just finished with an ineffectual and divided Labour government, and now have a National one, with an enormous majority and a passionate desire to get rid of the welfare state. Not a happy prospect for the arts, education and medical services.⁸⁵¹

and

The dominance of the market in all present thinking has made life in N.Z. less attractive and more mean-spirited than anything we knew in the past.⁸⁵²

and

We here are burdened with a government that sees the profit-motive as basic in all activities, personal or public, and the Labour opposition began the rot in government before they were defeated.⁸⁵³

and

Economically New Zealand is slowly slipping into something resembling third world status and our education system could benefit from some of your knowledge and wisdom.⁸⁵⁴

None of these short comments reflect a significant awareness in the philosophical shift in New Zealand besides his reference to new-liberal ideas of the market and 'profit-motive'. A lack of comments need not indicate a lack of knowledge and thus it would be unreasonable to state this as objective fact, but it is reasonable to observe that he rarely showed significant philosophical reflection in even his personal letters.

However, even though Beeby's egalitarian sentiment were being replaced, other aspects of Beebyism remained in place. Although the reforms devolved the management of education down to schools, the Ministry retained firm control over the educational governance. Just as Beeby's Department maintained firm control over the curriculum and qualification system, the new Ministry retains control over the curriculum,

⁸⁵⁰ Beeby, letter to Ken McKinnon, 4 March 1990.

⁸⁵¹ Beeby, letter to Dr Cyril Rogers, 25 February 1991.

⁸⁵² Beeby, letter to Professor Ralph Winterbourn, 4 November 1991.

⁸⁵³ Beeby, letter to Anne and Adam, 25 January 1992.

⁸⁵⁴ Beeby, letter to Philip Coombs, 29 April 1992.

assessment and accountability. In fact, according to Peddie, control over these ‘key elements of the system’ has sharply increased,⁸⁵⁵ as some of the governance under the abolished Department has shifted to the Ministry itself.

The ideological shift towards neo-liberalism was particularly effective because both major parties embraced the idea of linking education to economic planning. They both argued that the Ministry needed to guide educational policy for the good of the state. While Labour may not have believed that the market alone could achieve the government’s aims, they too went into the 1993 election arguing:

Education is the engine room of our economy, the trigger for jobs and growth. ...
Education and skills training is the key to boosting our economic performance ...
The future shape of education in New Zealand—and our economic progress next century—will be decided at this year’s election. ...⁸⁵⁶

Education in the new Millennium

In 1999 the Labour party was elected to lead a new government. Having re-established itself under the leadership of Helen Clark, the Labour Party became a moderate centre-left party that was re-elected twice more to government. During their nine years there was no significant attempt to reorient the education system away from its post-Beebian foundations. According to Thrupp:

[U]nder Helen Clark Labour did not so much undo the neoliberal project in New Zealand education as take some of the rough edges off it: producing neo-liberalism with a social conscience.⁸⁵⁷

Even the moderate education reforms under Clark brought out fierce detractors. Some writers argue that New Zealand needs to actually continue the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, Harrison argued that the education system is inefficient and that a market system should be introduced into schools. He wrote:

Efficiency requires the right type of output to be produced, in the right amount, at minimum social cost. ... [T]here are few incentives for schools to produce increased quality, to minimize costs, to improve productivity or to innovate.

The market provides what consumers want in an efficient manner, promotes freedom and checks the power of the state, allows for diversity and encourages suppliers to develop and adopt innovations that are valued by consumers.⁸⁵⁸

This strong emphasis on efficiency is consistently a major part of market-orientated reform, and it is no coincidence that Beebian utilitarianism shared this characteristic.

⁸⁵⁵ Peddie, 1995, p. 140.

⁸⁵⁶ New Zealand Labour Party, 1993, p. 26, 35.

⁸⁵⁷ Thrupp, M., 2010, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁵⁸ Harrison, 2004, pp. 7, 19.

For education to be measured on economic grounds, then only its quantifiable aspects can be analysed:

[E]ducators should measure both the costs and benefits of various approaches to education – and choose the approach that *maximizes* the excess of benefits over costs ...⁸⁵⁹

However, as in the 1980s, this fundamental Utilitarianism conflicts with Beeby's educational myth. As Harrison notes, 'efficiency may conflict with equity' and 'Equality of outcome must conflict with liberty'.⁸⁶⁰ Harrison is a perfect representative of the perpetuation of the underlying liberal utilitarian philosophy that continues to drive educational reform.

In 2002 NCEA was introduced as the new achievement system, and almost immediately it was criticised as failing to meet the needs of students. Even though NCEA was meant to represent a break from previous qualification, in 2003 the Education Minister, Trevor Mallard, explained this was not fully the case. In response to criticisms of the supposed new direction of NCEA, Mallard wrote an article in the NZ Education Review. He argued that the distribution of various achievement standards within a subject were not a result of the new system, but inherent even in the old system. He pointed out the similarities between achievement standards and old School Certificate grades, and how NCEA would bring similar benefits to all three qualification levels as it had to NCEA level one.⁸⁶¹ Even in the new NCEA era the spectre of Beeby has remained covertly influential.

Beeby did not live to see Labour's re-election but his influence lives on into the 21st century. His support for a state-regulated education system focused on student achievement remains a key focus of the Ministry of Education. For instance, in 2003, under a new Labour-led Government, the Ministry boldly stated:

Improving achievement outcomes for all students lies at the heart of what schools do.⁸⁶²

In 2008 the New Zealand National Party won the parliamentary election and formed a minority government on 19 November 2008. It advocated a practical, 'back-to-basics' approach to education, with its major reform being National Standards for the assessment of students' literacy and numeracy. Anne Tolley, the 2009 Minister for Education, argued that the issue was:

⁸⁵⁹ Hanushek, quoted in Harrison, p. 31, my italics.

⁸⁶⁰ Harrison, 2004, pp. 32-33.

⁸⁶¹ Mallard, 2003, p. 6.

⁸⁶² NZ Ministry of Education 2003, p. 12.

[M]eeting *parents'* desire to bring in National Standards that will help lift student achievement. ... Parents demand clear and direct information about their child's progress in fundamental skills. ... Schools will assess students against the standards and convey that information to parents in plain English.⁸⁶³

The return to objective, measureable achievement standards is another echo of Beeby's intense focus on objective, measureable education according to state-set standards.

Both major political parties in the 2014 election cycle did not campaign on any substantial reforms to the Beebian-influenced education system. In brief, both still support the use of education to shape students' character⁸⁶⁴ and subject choices, to align the education system with the needs of the economy, and to maintain educational reforms that focus on increasing the average achievement of externally-focused qualifications according to a particular set of curriculum guidelines. It may even be reasonable to say that utilitarian theory is as influential in the education system of contemporary New Zealand as it was a century beforehand. In the following chapter I consider the long-term impact of the structurally inequalitarian system that Beeby bequeathed New Zealand.

⁸⁶³ Tolley, 29 June 2009; my italics.

⁸⁶⁴ Such as to be good citizens or economically rational individuals.

CHAPTER 9

THE STRUCTURAL LEGACY

Improving achievement outcomes for all students lies at the heart of what schools do.

Minister of Education, 2003, p. 12

9.1 Overview

Throughout this thesis I have argued that some of the types of inequality present in the modern education system during the second half of the twentieth century were perpetuated during and after Beeby's Directorship. As discussed in Chapter 3, Beeby clearly inherited many if not all of the inequalities from the 19th and early 20th centuries, but he also struggled to ameliorate them under the principle of 'equality of opportunity. It might even be argued that given that students and teachers are unequal, then education is always going to be unequal regardless of any reform—that is, built into the very fabric of schooling. However, this observation does not consider the fact that different types of inequality can be increased, decreased, or simply maintained between generations of students.

In this section I argue that the distinct pattern in current achievement differences between males and females, and between Pakeha and non-Pakeha, demonstrates an inherent bias that was, at least in part, perpetuated during Beeby's Directorship. I present data that suggests that the preservation of the systemic inequality in academic achievement was one of Beeby's longest-lasting, even if accidental, legacies. In Section 9.2 I argue that Beeby's own view of academic success contributed to this inequality. I will argue that not only has his long-term influence helped to sustain the myth of equality in New Zealand, but has also contributed to maintaining some of the very inegalitarian structures that it obscured.

In sections 9.3 to 9.9 I argue that the post-Beebian era contained significant inequality, and to support this I will provide graphs derived from the Education Reports in the AJHR produced during and after Beeby's Directorship. All the data used in these sections can be found in the Appendices.

Given the complexity of causes behind the data, and the fact that most of the data occurs after Beeby's Directorship, I do not claim that this proves that he is responsible for the inequality. As data before and during Beeby's Directorship is scarce, no definitive claim about his effect on inequality present in 1939 can be made

definitively. Thus no firm claims can or will be made beyond the trends shown in the graphs or data themselves.

However, importantly, the presented inequality does contradict one of the major facets of Beeby's own egalitarian myth—that he introduced fundamental egalitarian reforms. As argued previously, this evidence of inequality was evident well before the sociological analyses of the 1970s and 1980s but was ignored in favour of perpetuating the Beebian myth of equality of opportunity in education.

I then conclude this thesis with a reflection on the current state of education and how Beeby's legacy lives on even as he has faded from view.

9.2 The Degradation of Equality

In 1960 Beeby left the Directorship after presiding over 20 years of educational reforms. Beeby bequeathed three significant educational features to his successors: the myth of a liberal egalitarian education system, the fact of structural inequality in student achievement and, perhaps more importantly, the tradition of not analysing student achievement in terms of basic sociological categories such as sex and race rather than the overall groups of individuals. As discussed in Chapter 8, the recent inverse of the third feature by sociologists has helped shape the modern inequality debate, such that the discussion is often about which *group* is being disadvantaged by the education system. As Nash explains, although some sociologists focus too much on 'categorizing people and putting them into boxes labelled social class, gender, and race', 'it is impossible to have any precise information ... without exactly this form of analysis.'⁸⁶⁵

Beeby later reflected on the lack of application of even the above basic sociological categories. He wrote:

[A]t the end of our conversation you gave me an idea that, for some reason, has never occurred to me and that solved a problem with which I had been struggling in my writing. ... You maintained that the distribution of results within each group (socio-economic, racial or sex) should be the same as for every other group. I agree with your interpretation, although I still see some difficulties in accepting this as the final criterion, for all time, of educational policy, because we cannot yet foresee the social, economic and political problems that would follow from it. But it gives a far better sense of direction for educational programmes than did the Fraser 'equality of opportunity' myth that I wrote and then followed for twenty years as director.⁸⁶⁶

Unfortunately for New Zealand, this candid reflection was fifty years too late for an education system that struggled to distribute equality across all students.

⁸⁶⁵ Nash, Roy. In Freeman-Moir and Scott (eds.)(2003), pp. 62-63.

⁸⁶⁶ Beeby, letter to Rosslyn Noonan, National Secretary, NZEI, 27 August 1990.

Beeby's legacy continued to both underlie and undermine both left and right-wing educational reforms—including the sweeping neo-liberal reforms during the late 1980s and early 1990s. As discussed in Chapter 8, some of the justifications for the neo-liberal reforms were derived from the heavy criticisms of Beebian equality of opportunity. During the early 1980s, several qualitative and quantitative sociological analyses of student achievement began to argue extensively that, to a considerable extent, the educational reality did not reflect Beeby's egalitarian mythology. Some educationalists continue to assert that increased inequality is an 'inescapable consequence' of replacing (Beebian) social democracy with neo-liberalism.⁸⁶⁷ David Small wrote:

The social democratic model of education had no place in the brave new world of neoliberalism. ... Absent from ... the neoliberal economic, social and educational project is the central aim of social democracy, to promote equality or at least minimize inequality. ... The need for neoliberals to downplay equality arises from the fact that increased inequality is one inescapable consequence of introducing neoliberal reforms.⁸⁶⁸

However, the neo-liberal reforms of the late 1980s actually helped to perpetuate the underlying inequality in student achievement prevalent since the Beebian reforms.

New Zealand's Tail of Underachievement

New Zealand is consistently reported as having one of the greatest ranges of variability in educational achievement. Students from low income or Maori or Pacific households are over-represented in educational 'underachievement', and disparity between the achievement of males and females remains a recurring educational issue. In their specific detail, the concerns are often a function of the different ways in which diverse social, ethnic and political groups view the nature and purpose of education.

Whether students are 'achieving' is a concern that regularly underlies discussion of the education system in New Zealand. This concern, among others, has led to regular public scrutiny of, and criticism of, both national educational policy and educational reform. Achievement has been a national educational issue ever since New Zealand created its national education system in 1877. Concerns about achievement existed when Beeby started as director in 1940, existed when he left in 1960, and have continued to the modern day.

⁸⁶⁷ An extensive literature exists on these topics; see, for example, Freeman-Moir and Scott (eds.), 2003, and O'Neill, Clark and Openshaw (eds.), 2004.

⁸⁶⁸ Small, D. (2009), pp. 1, 3.

The concept of achievement is widely discussed in the literature. A main focus of these discussions is to determine what precisely should be meant by the term ‘achievement’, and what this implies for related educational concepts. In the following analysis, I will be using qualifications as the indicator of achievement, given the prominent role that qualifications have held in New Zealand educational history. Analyses of student achievement and how it has changed over time can be complex. While individual test scores have limited meaning in themselves, the criteria for the different forms of assessment have changed over time. Nevertheless, a comparison of how groups of students have been assessed can be useful for indicating patterns or systemic biases. In this subsection I argue that the distinct pattern in achievement differences between males and females, and between Pakeha and non-Pakeha, demonstrate an inherent prejudice that in part originates during Beeby’s Directorship. I discuss contemporary aspects of student underachievement in section 9.9.

9.3 Recorded Changes in Student Achievement

Every year a substantial number of students leave the compulsory education system with a broad range of state-recognised qualifications. The following subsections contain an analysis of the changes in the rates of achievement from 1961 to 2005. The starting date is necessarily limited by the available data and the reason to start as early as possible is to reveal long-term trends. 1960 is also the year that Beeby ceased being the Director of Education and so it is an analysis of achievement in the decades after the implementation of his reforms.

Student achievement is part of the complex system of schooling, which is part of a complex education system, which has been affected by a range of social, economic, political, cultural and other environmental changes. Although this analysis will be focused on the changes in rates of achievement, it is not an attempt to comprehensively explain the annual changes. In this analysis I will be assuming that the attainment of qualifications can be reasonably considered as the degree with which the education system reflects the educational achievement of the students. Furthermore, for the purposes of using the available data, I will be assuming a relative consistency of unavailable data, e.g. the social and economic background of each year of students.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁹ An extensive literature exists on the importance on, for example, recognising students’ social and cultural background. See, for example, Smyth and McInerney, 2007.

Two conventional methods of measuring achievement are by rates of success and by school-leaver qualifications. Analysis by rates of success focuses on the number of qualifications gained by students each year, either in absolute terms or as a percentage of enrolled students. This method of analysis has the benefit of having access to over a century of data that represents the success rates of students who are attempting to achieve qualifications. However, this method also has the disadvantage of only showing success in each given year rather than students' overall success in formal schooling and is unsuitable for analysing those students who have left formal education.

The second method of measuring achievement focuses on the highest qualification that students have achieved when they leave school. This second method has a longitudinal limitation in that school-leaver data has only been reported since 1960, but has the benefit of focusing on the students who are leaving the formal education system. Given that the formal education system is typically the only place to acquire formal school qualifications (and few school-leavers return to the education system once leaving), it is reasonable to assume that this method reveals what may be called the final amount of student achievement each year.

The following subsections present a range of graphs showing the overall trends of school leavers at the following academic levels: without qualification (1961-2005), and with School Certificate (1961-2002).⁸⁷⁰ Each qualification category will be analysed according to the sex and ethnicity of students. These statistics show the persistence of inequality present in the post-Beebian education system behind the glamour of greater rates of achievement and the myth of equality of opportunity.

To do this analysis, I have extracted the levels of educational achievement from Ministry of Education data. The principal sources of data are the annual reports to the New Zealand parliament by the Minister of Education and, in particular, the *Educational Statistics* annual series supplement to the annual reports. The compiled raw annual data is in Appendices 3a to 5.

During the last fifty years of data collection, there have been regular changes made to the categories used to sort qualifications. This causes a continuity problem with attempts to graph trends within a single category over a long period of time and would exist regardless of the method used to measure achievement.

⁸⁷⁰ Or, in each case, with an equivalent qualification. The various listed end dates reflect the final year that each of these qualifications ceased to be offered. See each subsection for more specific detail.

There have been three main types of changes in assessment methodology between 1960 and 2006, what I call: *Enclosure Change*, *Category Change*, and *Scaling Change*. *Enclosure Change* occurs when there is a modification to the range of qualification categories used to sort student achievement. This quantitative change leads to either more or fewer students being included. For example, in 1962 the lowest level of achievement was School Certificate (which required success in several subjects). However, for 1963 the new *Certificate of Education*, which recorded passes in single subjects, was introduced. The introduction of this category led to a group of students being categorised as having achieved a qualification when previously they would have been defined as not having achieved a qualification.

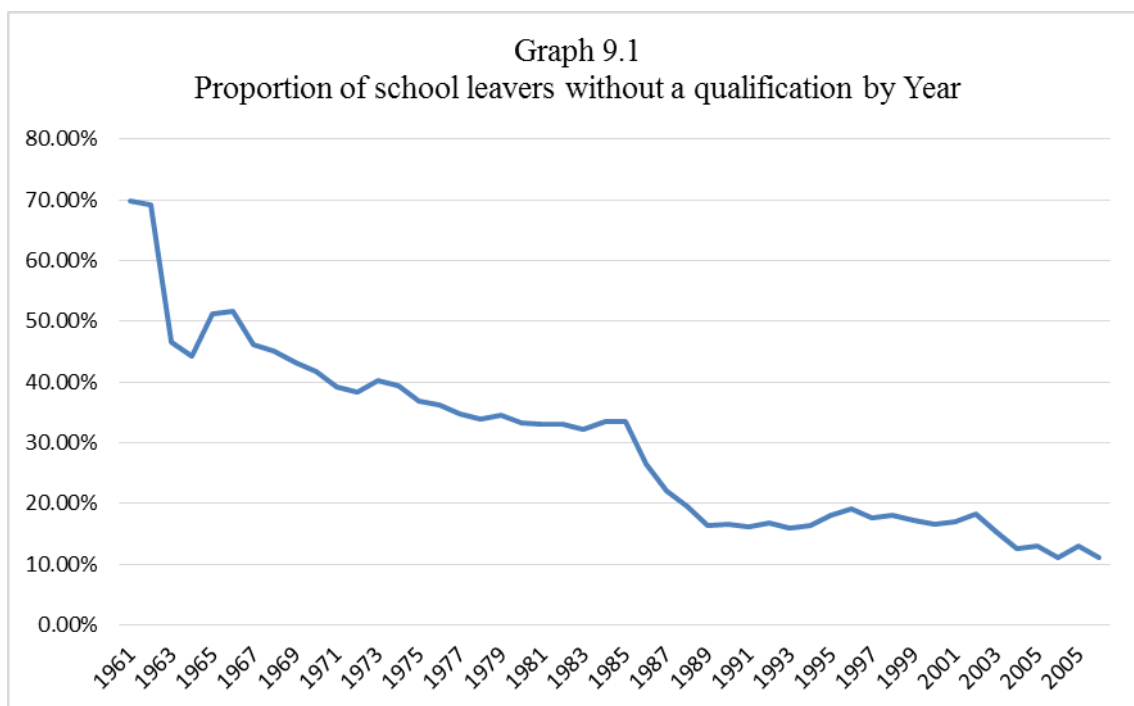
Category Change occurs when there is a modification to the categories used to sort student achievement. This qualitative change usually sorts the qualifications into either finer or coarser detail. For example, for the 1985 data, students who achieved School Certificate were sorted into one of three categories: School Certificate (3 or more subjects), School Certificate (2 subjects) or School Certificate (1 subject). However, for the 1986 data, students who achieved School Certificate were just sorted into one category: School Certificate (1 or more subjects).

Scaling Change occurs when there is a revision to student achievement by the assessors. This modification converts passes to fails or fails to passes and thus leads to an increase or decrease in student achievement. For example, in 1984, methodological changes to how School Certificate subjects were scaled were intended to ensure a pass rate of at least 50% in each subject. These changes then led to an increase in the number of passes achieved at the School Certificate level.

A full list of major changes to New Zealand's qualification system between 1960 and 2005 is part of Appendix 3a. All these changes may be considered to render any year by year comparison moot. However, this would only be true if I was trying to objectively compare actual results from year to year. I am instead using this data to look at the overall trends under the assumption that constant small tweaks will not fundamentally affect disparity between the sexes and ethnic groups.

9.4 School-leavers without formal qualifications 1961 to 2006⁸⁷¹

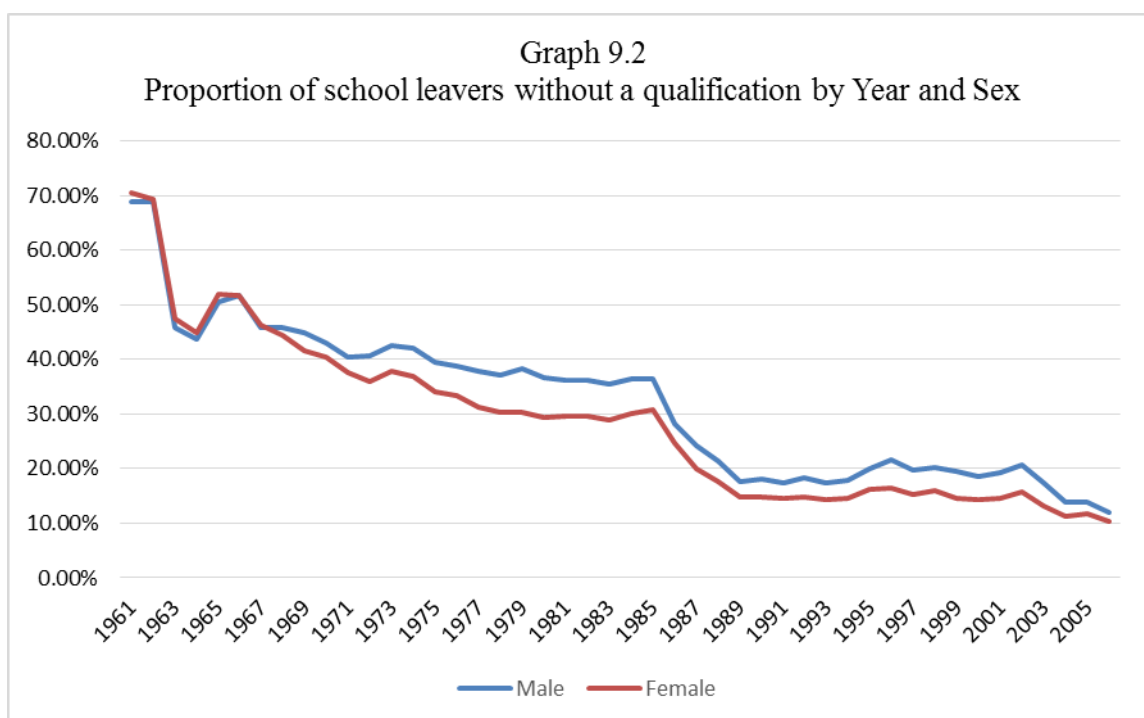
Every year a significant number of students leave the compulsory education system without any formal qualification at all. The title of this category in the data has changed several times over the forty-five year period but every title has indicated that it was either for no formal attainment (1961 to 1995) or for little⁸⁷² or no formal attainment (1996 to 2006).



Graph 9.1 shows that the overall number and percentage of students leaving the compulsory education system without a qualification has greatly dropped. However, the distribution across the student demographic is unequal depending on the qualification, if any, with which the student leaves.

⁸⁷¹ See Appendices 3c and 3d for the base data.

⁸⁷² That is, fewer than 12 credits (1996 to 2001) or 14 credits (2002-2006), which was insufficient to attain a qualification.

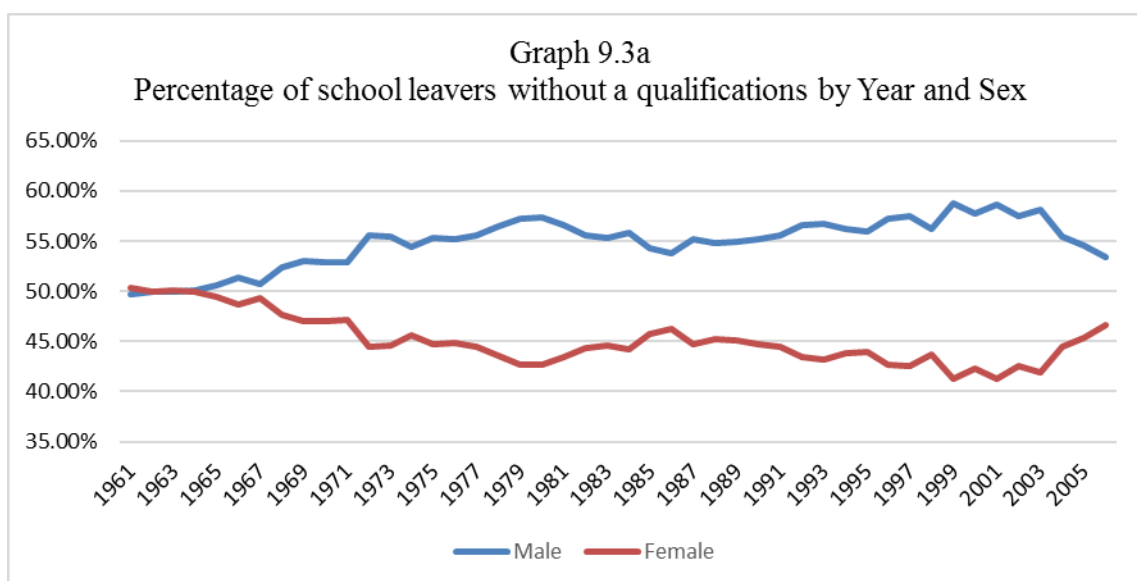


Graph 9.2 shows the emergence of a persistent trend of a larger proportion of males failing to achieve any qualification. During the early 1960's the percentages for males and females was similar but by 1970 the trend emerged of males consistently underachieving up to 8 percentage points (in 1979) more than females.

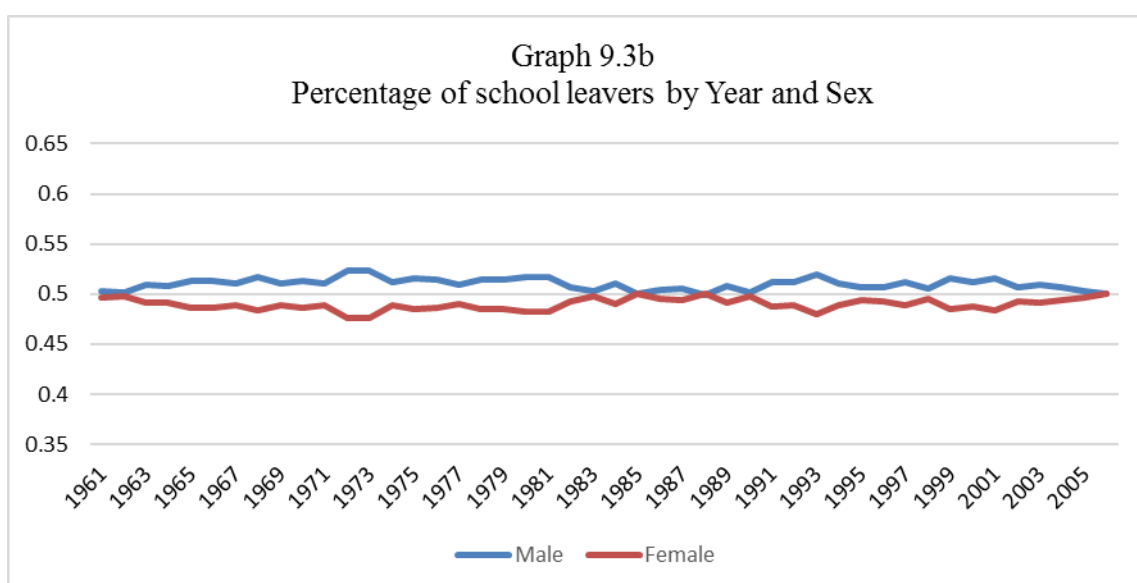
The large decrease in overall non-achievement is the other prominent feature of this graph. This decrease was in part caused by the restructuring of the qualification system and is not relevant to this particular analysis. However, what is relevant is the fact that the inequality between males and females has grown and persisted throughout the half-century following Beeby's Directorship. These changes may be better attributed to changes in society and the economy during the 1960s and 1970s than to Beeby, however I will argue that these trends are a reflection of the qualification data.

School-leavers without formal qualifications as a percentage of overall achievement broken down by sex

If the decrease in non-achievement is factored out and the overall percentages compared to each other, then the difference in achievement becomes even starker.



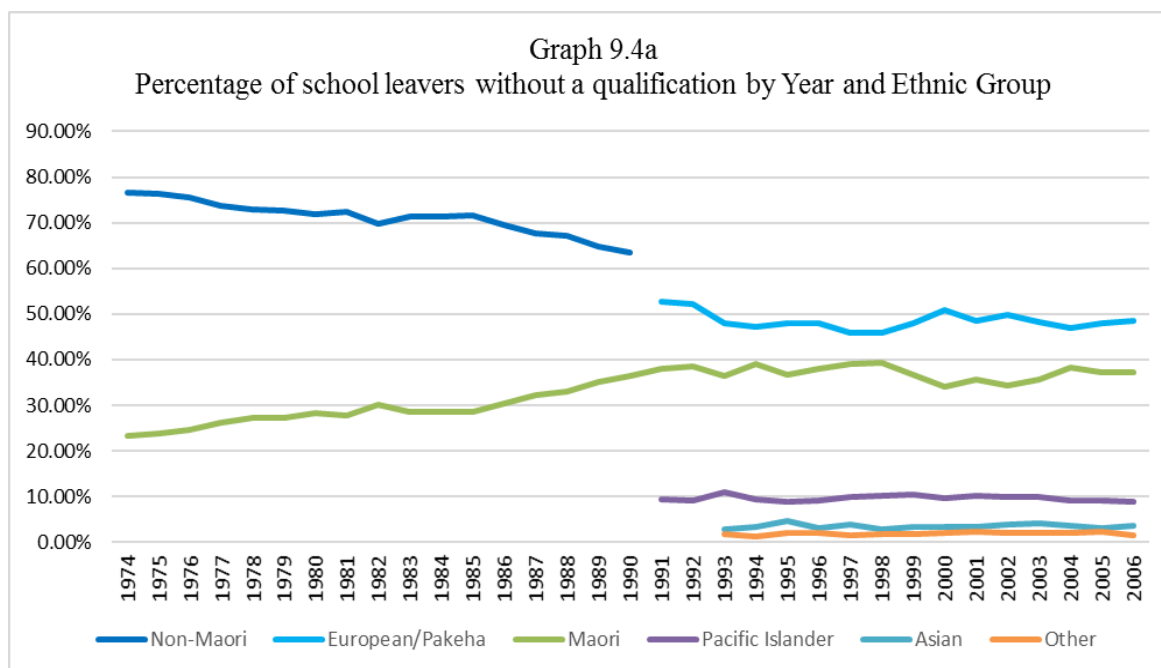
Graph 9.3a shows the growth and then variability of inequality between males and females between 1961 and 2006. Although the numbers of males and females had been fairly equal in the early 1960s, by 2000 the gap was nearly 20 percentage points.



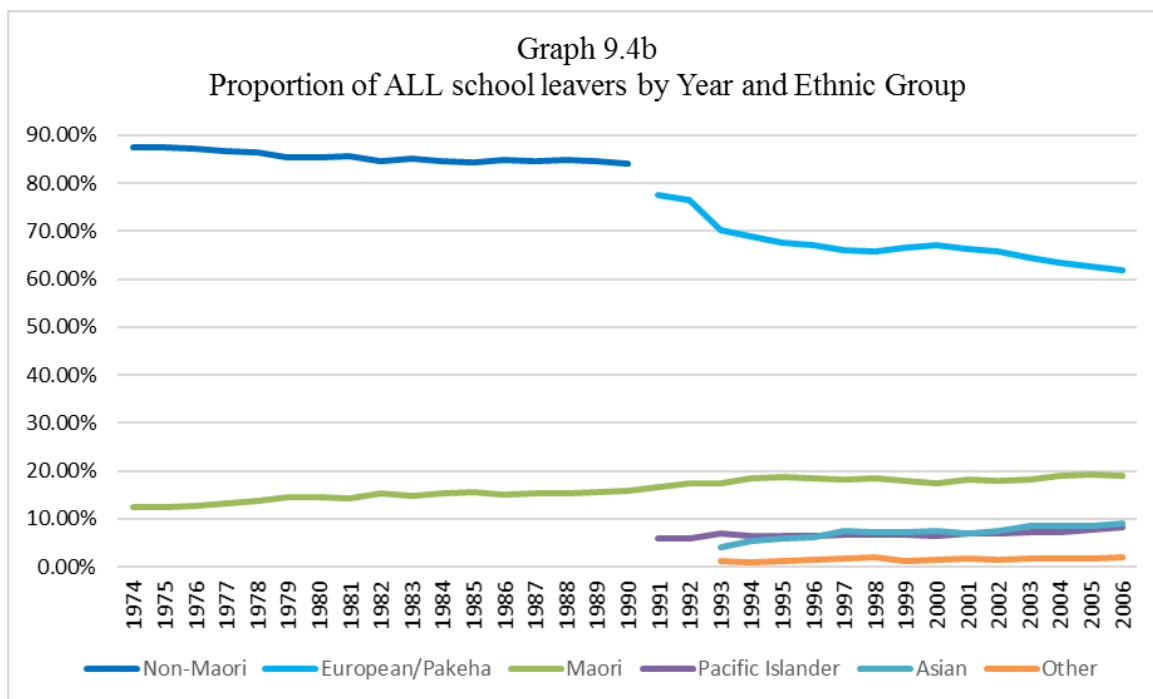
The numerical differences between male and female non-achievement difference might have been explained by a greater number of males leaving school. However, as Graph 9.3b shows, variability between school leavers without qualifications is much greater than the variability of total school leavers. Together, these graphs could suggest a systemic inequality against male achievement. Some modern educationalists argue that this bias has become particularly prevalent after the introduction of NCEA.

School-leavers without formal qualifications as a percentage of overall achievement broken down by ethnicity

Further, when graphs 9.1 and 9.2 are further broken down by ethnicity, another systemic bias becomes visible.



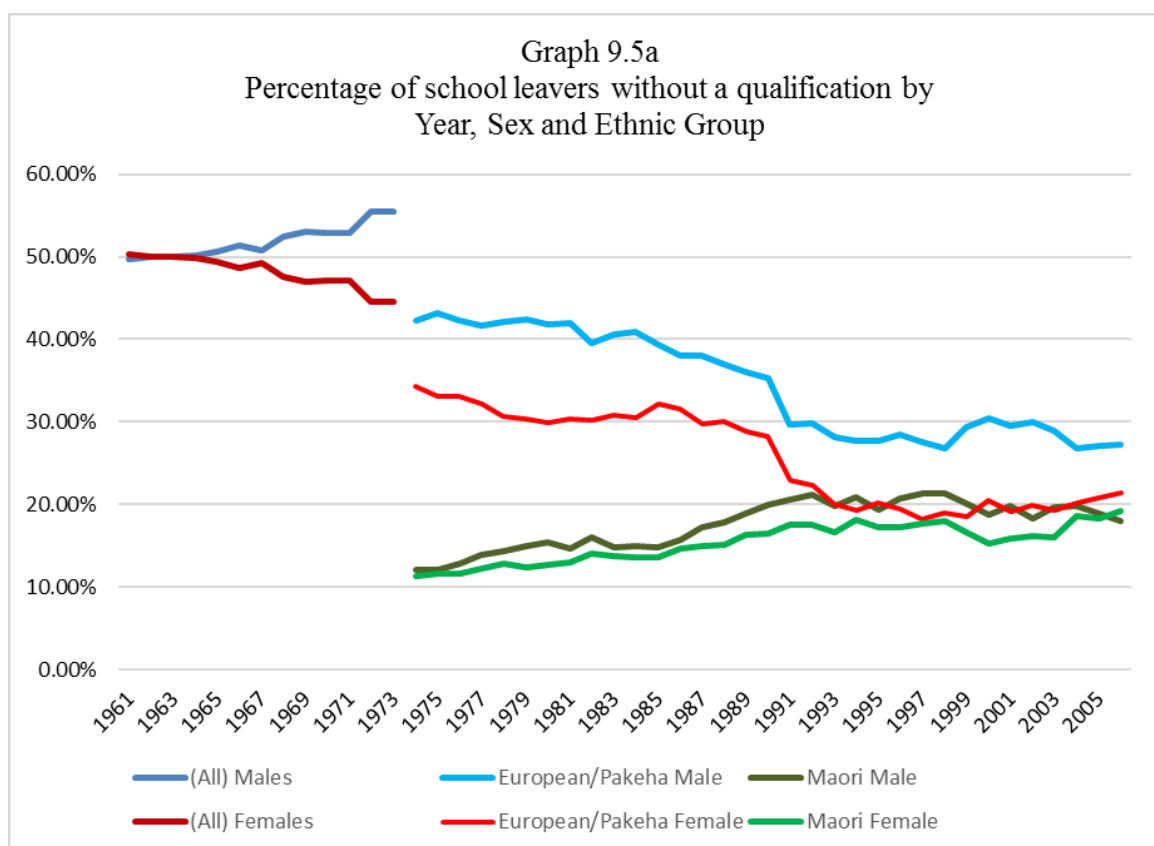
Graph 9.4b shows the inequality in results between Maori and non-Maori. The Maori percentage is much larger than the Maori demographic. Unlike the data for Graphs 9.3a and 9.3b, data about ethnic group was only collected from 1974. Between 1974 and 1991 the only Ethnic Group categories used were Maori and non-Maori. In 1991 the 'Pacific Islander' Ethnic Group was added, following soon after by 'Asian' and 'Other' in 1993. Graph 9.4a shows that although there has been some narrowing between the Ethnic Groups, it is evident that there are historically persistent differences in achievement that cannot simply be attributed to reforms in the 1980s.



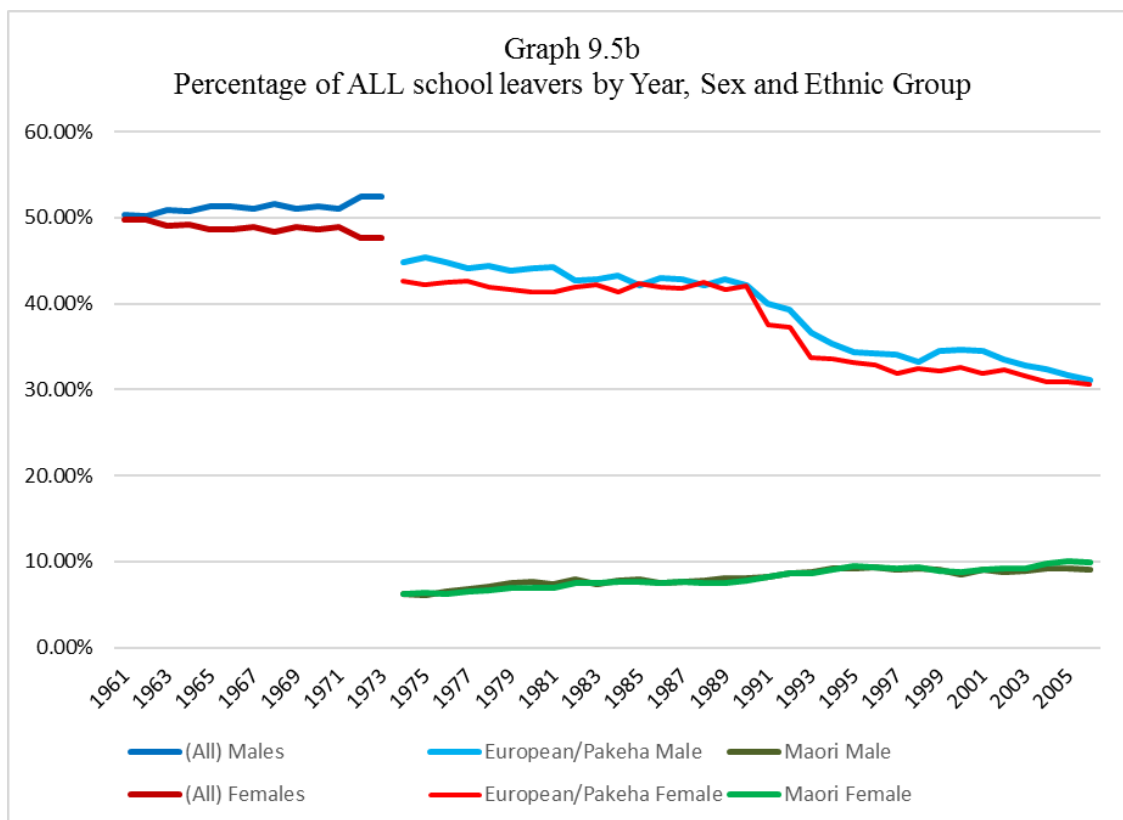
As above, Graph 9.4b might be explained by differences in the Ethnic Group membership of school leavers. However, as Graph 9.4b shows, variability between Maori and non-Maori school leavers without qualifications is much greater than the variability of total school leavers. In addition, Graph 9.4b shows that, after taking into account the added Ethnic Group categories, that the Ethnic Group membership of school leavers has remained fairly constant over the forty-year period. However, one of the most discernible differences between the graphs is that while Maori are 12-20 percent of school leavers, they are 23-40 percent of school leavers without qualifications.

School-leavers without formal qualifications as a percentage of overall achievement broken down by sex and ethnicity

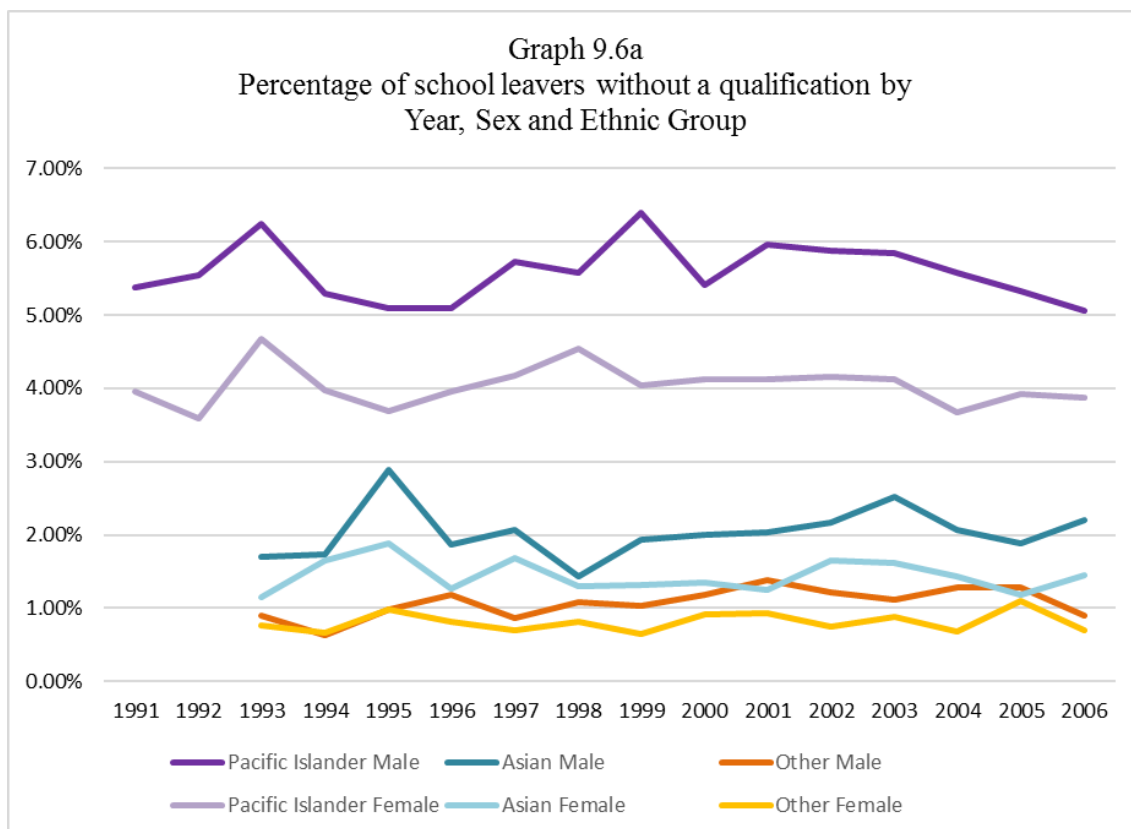
By taking into account both sex and ethnic group, the magnified effect of the disparity identified above becomes visible. For greater clarity the 'school leavers without a qualification' and the 'all school leavers' data has been split into two graphs that use different axes: European/Pakeha and Maori, and other Ethnic Groups.



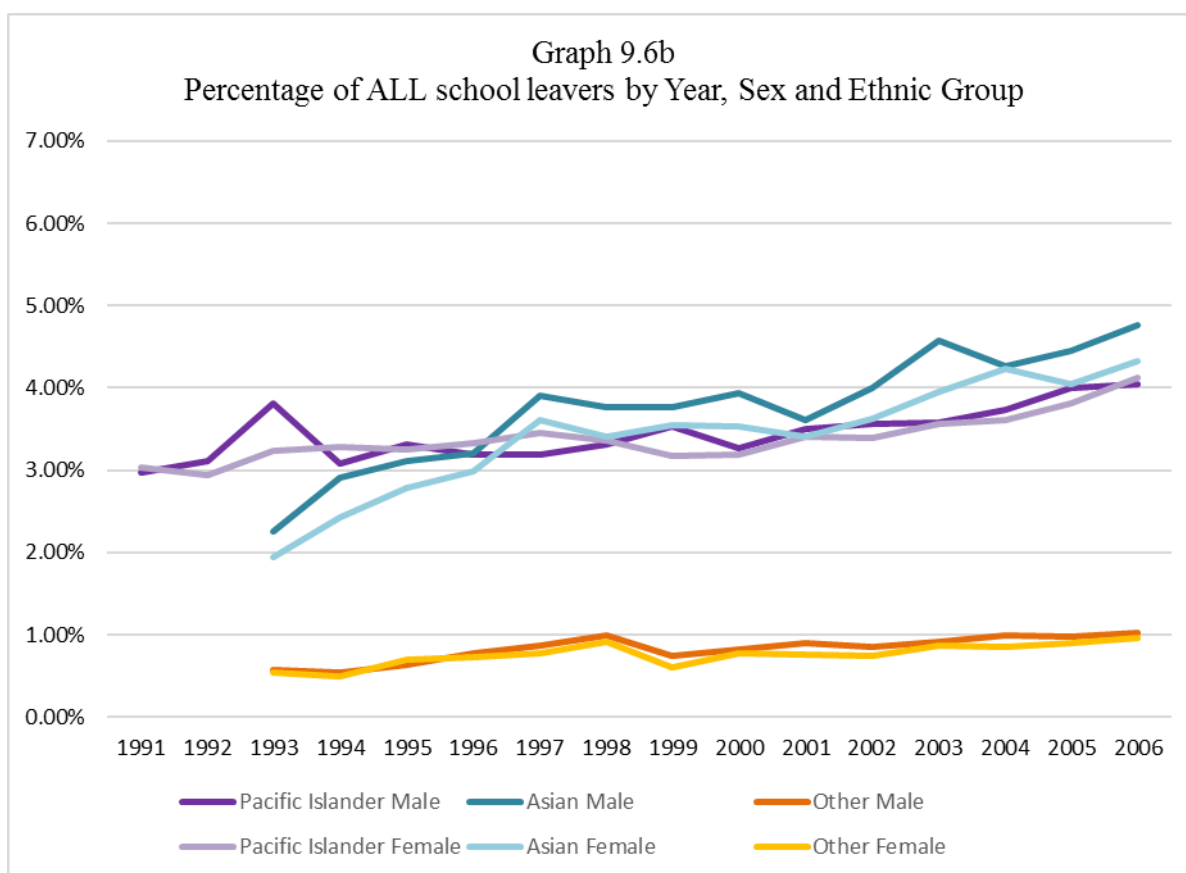
Graph 9.5a shows the inequality between male and female Maori and non-Maori students. As noted earlier, data on Ethnicity was only collected from 1974 onwards, and so the first third of this graph only refers to the sex of students. After 1974 the graphs incorporates both sex and ethnicity. The Graph also shows that while there was less difference between male and female Maori students, European males remained significantly over-represented throughout this period. It is also pertinent to note that while disparity between Maori and European females grew more similar, significant disparity between Maori and European males remained, even to the extent of Maori males sometimes being more highly represented than European females after 1992.



Graph 9.5a might be explained by disparity in school leavers. However, as shown in Graph 9.5b above, the variability between male and female Maori and European school leavers without qualifications is much greater than the variability of total school leavers.



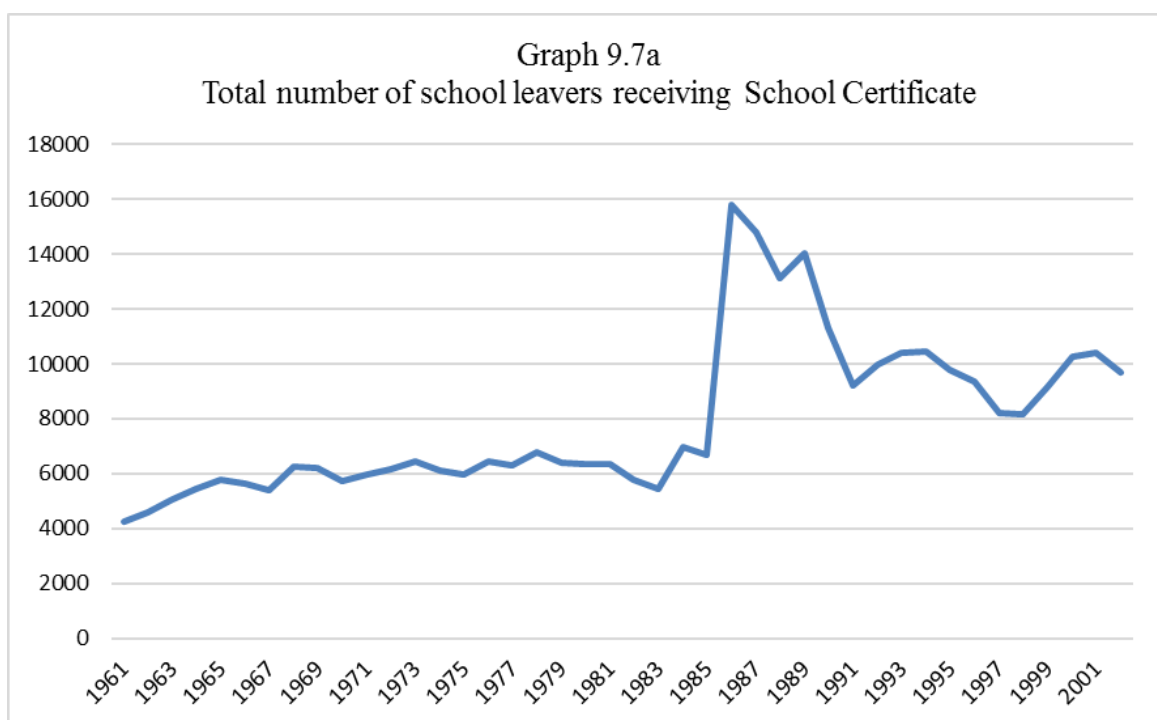
Graph 9.6a shows the persistent disparity between male and female students who identified as Pacific Islander, Asian, or Other Ethnicity. Up until 1991 the only Ethnic groups used were Maori and non-Maori, meaning that the non-Maori/Pakeha Ethnic Group also contained the above three Ethnic Groups. The data for the Pacific Islander Ethnic group was collected from 1991, and the other two categories were used from 1993. The overall number of students represented in the graph is much smaller than Graph 9.5a. However, in each case it is evident that males are over-represented, particularly amongst Pacific Island students.



Graph 9.6b shows that the variability between male and female Pacific Islander, Asian, or Other Ethnicity school leavers without qualifications is much greater than the variability of total school leavers. One of the largest differences highlighted by the graphs is the much higher percentage of Asian students who are school leavers in comparison to those who are school leavers without a qualification. Nevertheless, even amongst Asian students there is a persistent difference between male and female students on both graphs.

9.5 School-leavers with School Certificate 1961 to 2002⁸⁷³

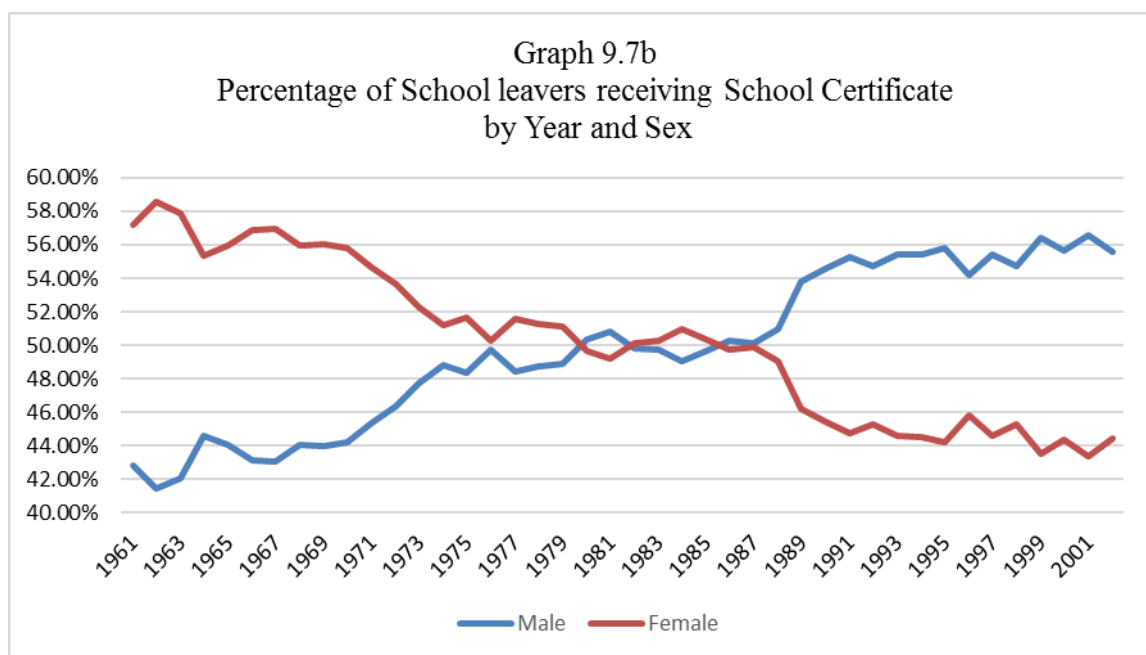
Every year students leave school after achieving the minimum formal qualification. From 1961 this was an updated version of the new School Certificate that Beeby introduced for 1945. From 1961 to 1968 students were required to achieve passes in 4 subjects (including English) or they would fail to achieve a qualification. Between 1968 and 1985 three sub-categories of school certificate results were introduced—1 subject pass, 2 subject pass, and 3 or more subject pass. In 1985 these sub-categories were collapsed back into School Certificate. Before 1968 and after 1985 School certificate required a subject pass in at least 3 subjects. Therefore, for the sake of consistency, the analysis from 1961 to 2002 will only refer to the full 3-subject Certificate (the full 1968-1985 data is in Appendix 3d). Unlike subsection 9.4, the analysis of this subsection only extends to 2002 due to the phased in replacement by NCEA level 1 between 2002 and 2003.



Graph 9.7a shows the total number of school leavers receiving School Certificate (3 subjects or more) between 1961 and 2002. Besides the gradual growth of achievement that reflects population growth, the more pertinent feature is the distortions due to changes to the qualification system, as previously discussed. The very large 1985-1986 increase was in part caused by the reintegration of the School Certificate subcategories into a single School Certificate category.

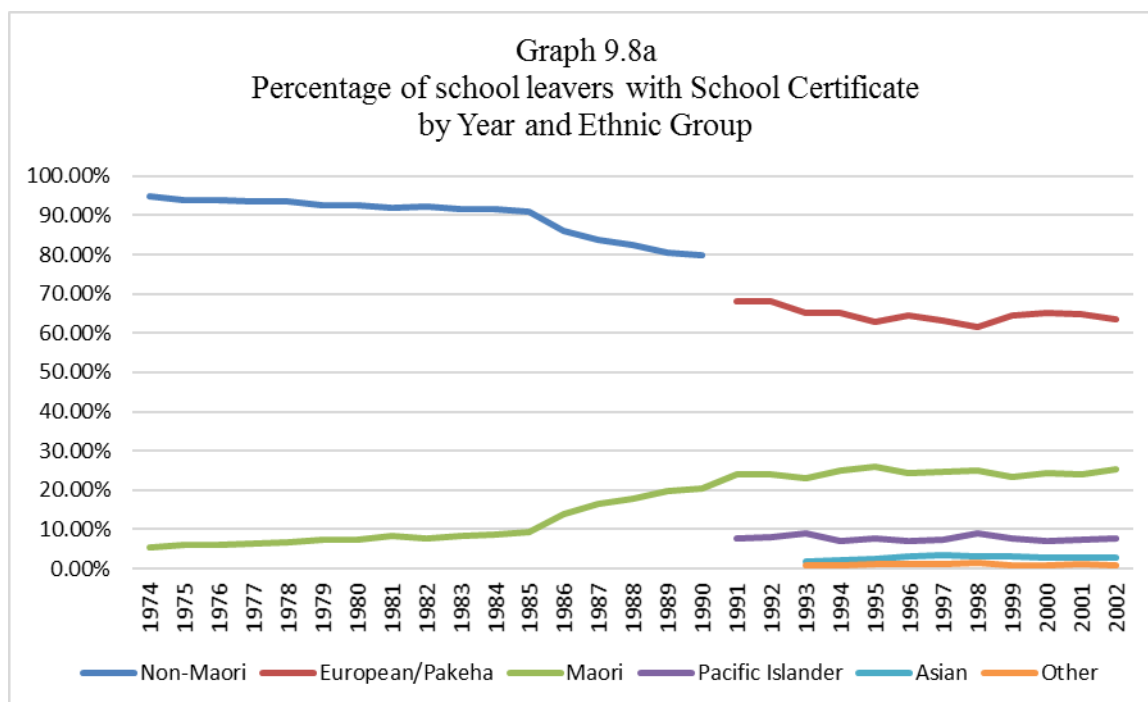
⁸⁷³ See Appendix 3d for the base data.

School-leavers receiving School Certificate as percentage of overall achievement broken down by sex.

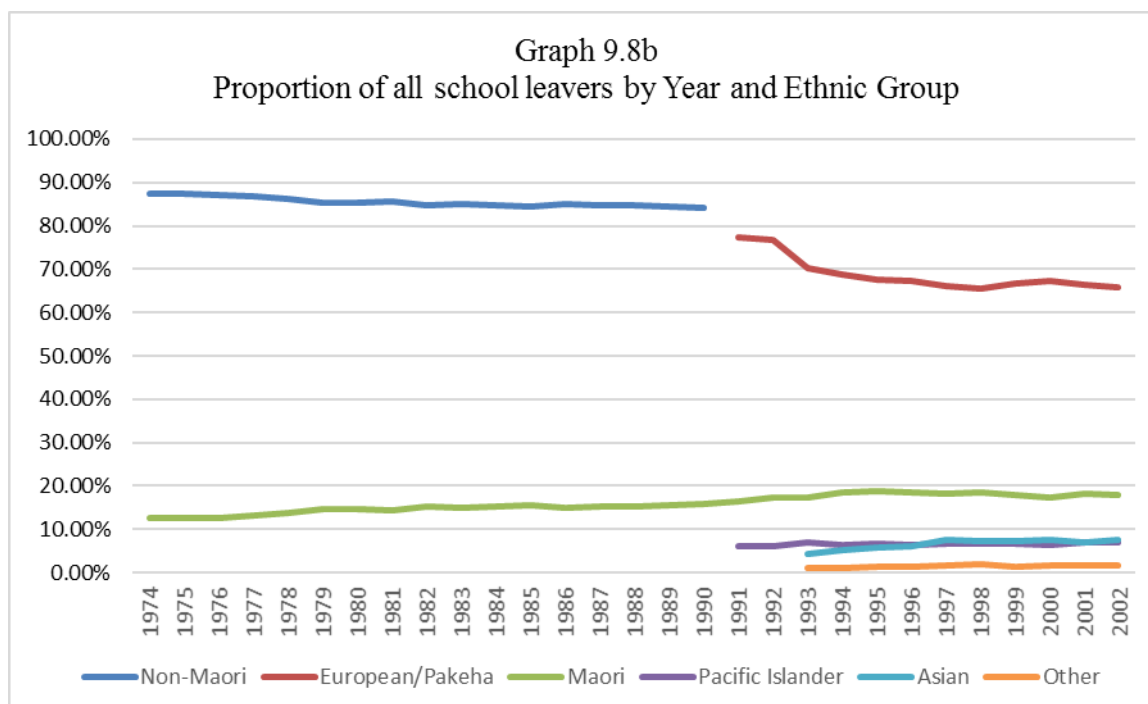


Graph 9.7b shows that the percentage distribution between males and females of school certificate reflects a distinct crossover-trend. The crossover trend may suggest an underlying pendulum style pattern, where one subgroup can only thrive at the expense of the other. In this case, the education system slowly moved from favouring one sex to favouring the other. This graph also suggests that the stark difference in student achievement between 1961 and 2001 reflects the culmination of a trend that had persisted for the previous forty years, regardless of changes to the qualification. However, as mentioned previously, the specific causes for student achievement are many and complex. For instance, the 1970s saw the rise of feminist critique and the movement to give greater educational support to girls. Thus this graph needs to be considered alongside the achievement of higher qualifications.

School-leavers receiving School Certificate as a percentage of overall achievement broken down by ethnic group

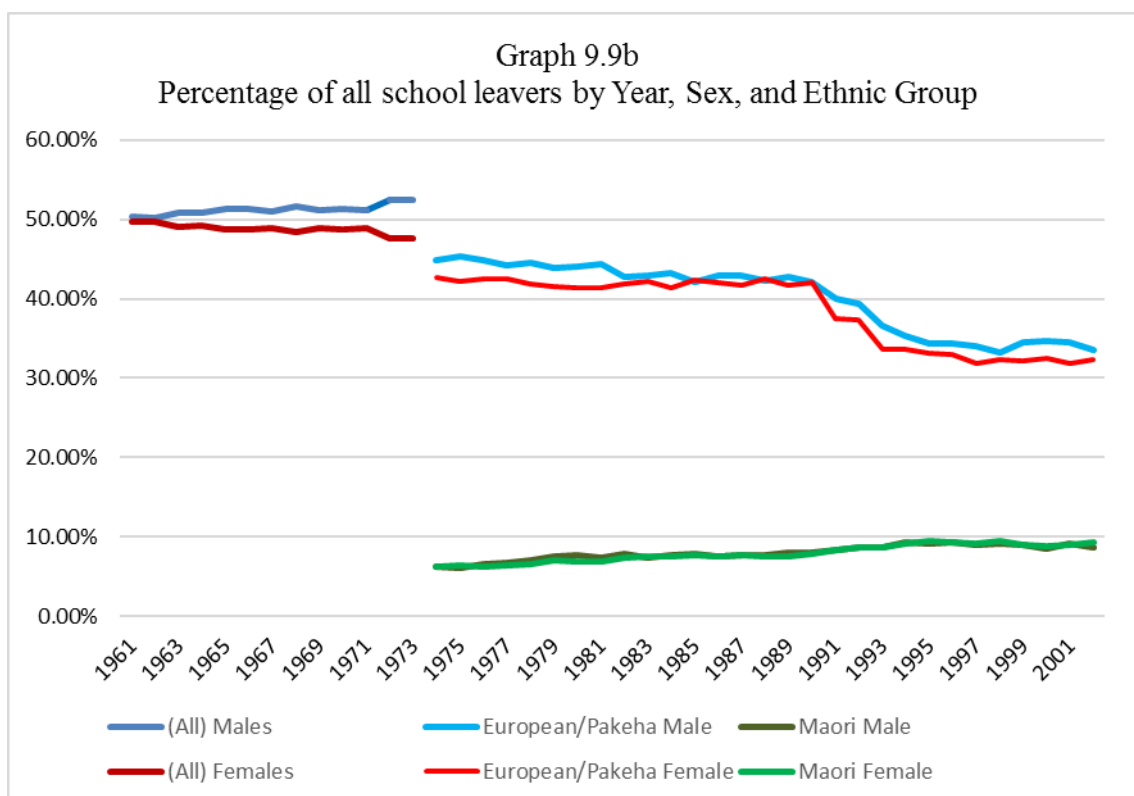
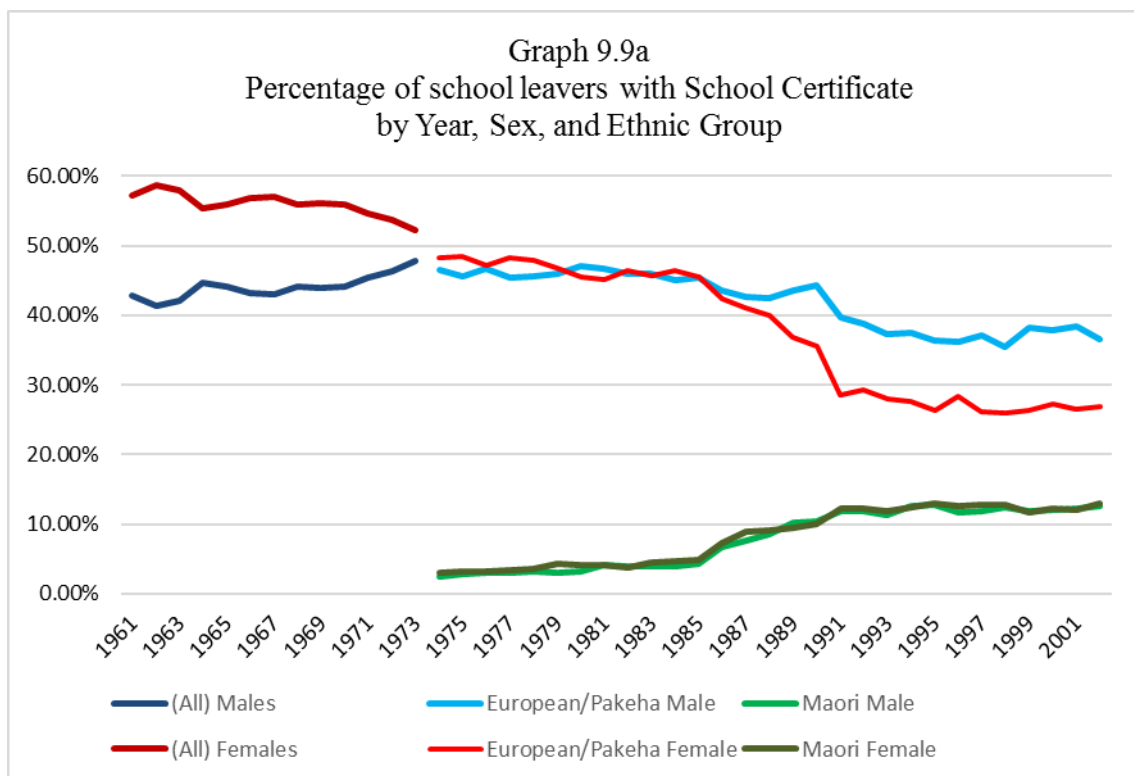


Graph 9.8a shows the inequality in results between Maori and non-Maori. As noted earlier, data on Ethnicity was only collected from 1974 onwards. Unlike Graph 9.4a, these results are closer to national demographic data. However, just like Graph 9.4a, it is evident that there are historically persistent differences in achievement at this achievement level as well as shown below in Graph 9.8b. For example, Maori regularly represent a much higher percentage of students leaving with only School Certificate.

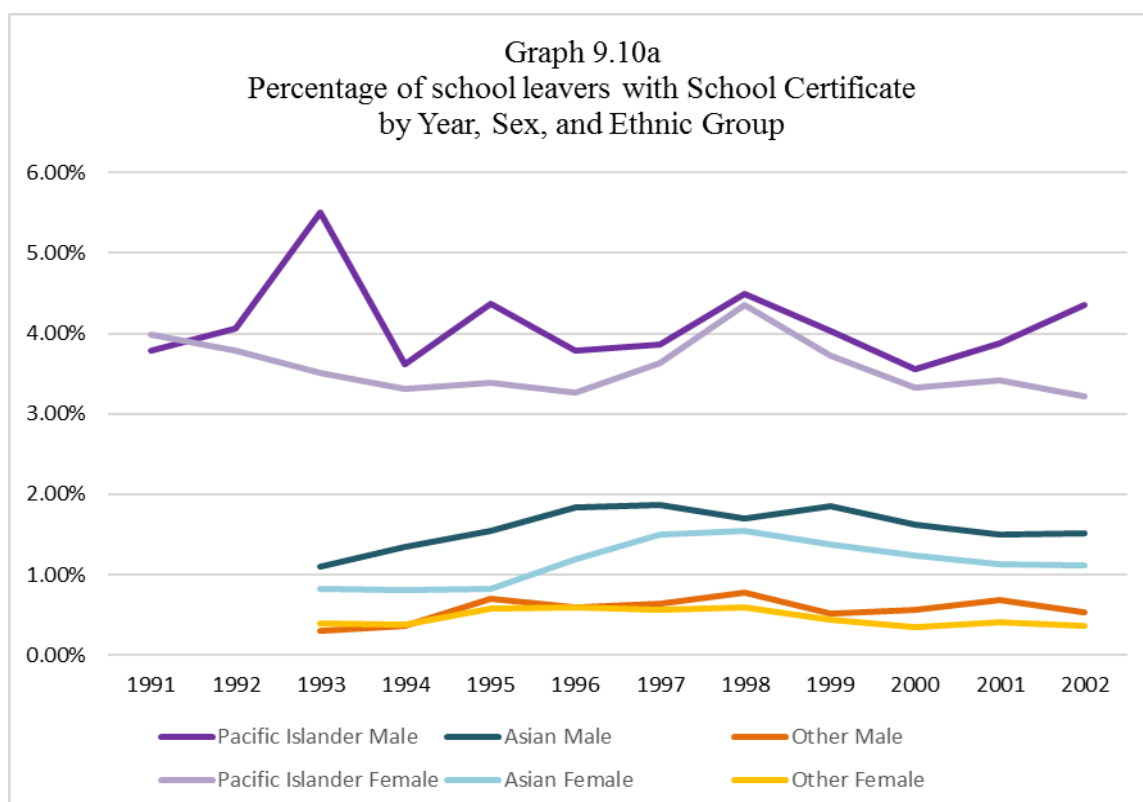


School-leavers receiving School Certificate as a percentage of overall achievement broken down by sex and ethnic group

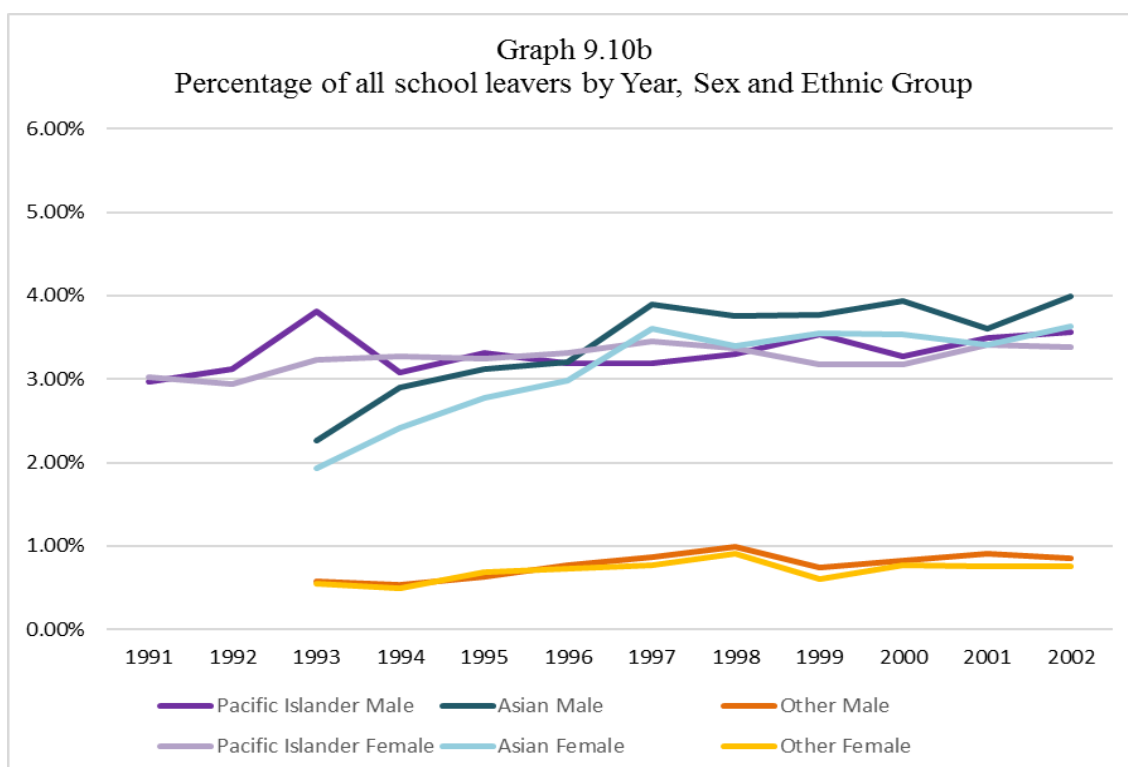
As with the 'school leaver without a qualification' data above, for greater clarity the 'School Certificate' and the 'all school leaver' data has been split into two graphs that use different axes: European/Pakeha and Maori, and other Ethnic Groups.



Graph 9.9a combines the trends shown above to show the differences between Maori and European/Pakeha students. The graph shows that while all Maori were over-represented in the percentage of school leavers only achieving School Certificate, the sexual inequality in the system was primarily confined to European/Pakeha students. Specifically, the huge shift in the majority of school leavers with only School Certificate shifted from female to male. In comparison to the overall demographic data, seen above in Graph 9.9b, changes to the education system have significantly affected the distribution of achievement between the sexes of European/Pakeha students, while only increasing the overall achievement of Maori students.



Graph 9.10a shows the distribution of achievement between male and female students who identified as Pacific Islander, Asian, or Other Ethnicity. As noted above, up until 1991 the only ethnic groups used were Maori and non-Maori, meaning that the non-Maori/Pakeha Ethnic Group also contained the above three ethnic subgroups. Graph 10a reflects both Graph 8a and Graph 9a in that disparity between the two sexes of each of the non-Pakeha ethnic groups is reasonably close to the demographic data, shown below in Graph 9.10b. In addition, in each group males remain slightly over-represented, particularly among Pacific Islander students.



Graph 9.10b shows the overall distribution of all school leavers by sex and ethnicity during the same time period at 9.10a. The main difference is the much lower percentage of Asian students leaving with only School Certificate in comparison with overall school leaver demographics.

9.6 School-leavers with Higher School Certificate 1961 to 2002.⁸⁷⁴

The inequality inherent in the education system is further evident when considering the data of some of the higher leaving qualifications: Higher School Certificate, Bursary, and Scholarship.

Higher School Certificate has maintained a fairly consistent name and separate category of qualification. Between 1961 and 1965 Higher School Certificate and University Bursary were assessed together. In 1966 they were separated and Higher School Certificate remained a distinct qualification until 2003 when it was merged with other 'equivalent' qualifications as part of a series of restructurings of the education system. This analysis will therefore only consider 1961 to 2002.

Besides the gradual growth of achievement that reflects population growth, the data also shows the distortions due to changes to the qualification system and to more students staying longer at school to achieve a higher qualification. Although by the

⁸⁷⁴ See Appendix 3e for the base data.

1980s both sexes had similar rates of achievement, it took over twenty years to eliminate the huge sexual disparity inherent in the system in 1960.

Although the degree of disparity between Maori and non-Maori has narrowed over time, in 1974, the year data by ethnic group began, there was still an approximately ten percentage point disparity in favour of non-Maori. In the 1970s, Maori students made up approximately 6-7 percent of all school leavers while only receiving around 1-2 percent of Sixth Form Certificates. Furthermore, Pacific Island female school leavers consistently received more Sixth Form Certificates than their male counterparts.

However, the gradual alignment of Sixth Form Certificate results of every ethnic group except Pacific Island students suggests that by the 1990s, the disparity in the Sixth Form Certificate system was according more to ethnicity rather than sex.

9.7 School-leavers with Bursary and/or Scholarship 1961 to 1989.⁸⁷⁵

The inequality discussed is even more evident in the highest level of school-leaver qualifications. The two main forms were University Scholarship, a separate qualification from 1961 to 1989, and University Bursary, a separate qualification from 1966 to 1989. In 1990 the results for the two qualifications were combined up until 2002, when they were gradually replaced with NCEA level 3. Given their conjoint history I will consider the data from each qualification at the same time.

Similar to Higher School Certificate, by the end of the 1980s both sexes had similar rates of achievement in each qualification. However, it took nearly twenty-five years to eliminate the large sexual disparity inherent in the system in 1966. Much of the uneven growth might be attributed to population growth as well as Ministry regulation over how many Scholarships were available. While the overall number of scholarships quadrupled over the thirty-year period, males were granted an average of 80% of available scholarships.

It is relevant to note that in every case considered above, the higher the qualification, the more distorted the achievement has been in favour of males. This suggests that not only was the education system distinctly pro-male, but that the highest qualifications were so heavily weighted that they were able to better resist the pro-female egalitarian pressures during the rise of feminist criticism.

⁸⁷⁵ See Appendix 3f and 3g for the base data.

The data also shows a large disparity of over 10 percentage points between Maori school leavers and Maori who leave with either Bursary or Scholarship. In several years the number of Maori receiving a scholarship was zero. Furthermore, Maori achieved an average of approximately 2% of Bursaries and 1% of Scholarships during the period that they represented an average of approximately 14.5% of school leavers.

In summary, all the graphs and data in this section indicate that an inequalitarian education system has persisted at least throughout the twentieth century, either by establishing a precedent that would either take several decades to overcome or would not at all be overcome even by the time of Beeby's death.

9.8 Inequality amongst Teachers

Beeby's failure to bequeath an egalitarian education system for students after his Directorship is also reflected in his failure to reduce inequality during his Directorship. From the 1940s to 1970s, the Beeby-influenced education system also maintained that men and women had equality of opportunity in employment. In the mid-70s, for example, the report of the Committee on Secondary Education claimed that:

Women teachers have equality of opportunity in their profession.⁸⁷⁶

However, by the early 1980s researchers were also dismantling this egalitarian myth. A broad range of explanations for sexual inequality continue to be given, with some observing it can both cause and be caused by the social structures underlying the education system itself.⁸⁷⁷ Regardless of the cause, the pattern of inequality of opportunity in fact stretches back at least half a century before, to the 1930s. The following graphs will not only again confirm this inequality, but show that the inequality did not notably decrease during the Beebian era.

An analysis of employment and salary data before and during the Beeby era suggests distinct structural inequality between men and women in both employment and salaries. Just before and during his Directorship the Department of Education occasionally published employment and salary data of teachers. Unfortunately, some of the data is limited but even in its fragmented state still shows the effects, or lack thereof, of Beeby's reforms during his first decade.

⁸⁷⁶ Department of Education (1976), p. 76.

⁸⁷⁷ See, for example, Aitken and Noonan (1981), Whitcombe (1981),

The following tables are derived from published data in the E1s from 1933 to 1940 and 1947 to 1962. No data was published for the years 1941 to 1946.⁸⁷⁸ The lack of data could be explained by the Department reducing the amount of paper used in its parliamentary reports during World War Two—the (pre-war) 1935 E1 was 40 pages long while the 1942 and 1943 E1s were 14 and 16 pages long. However, given the post-war unavailability of any mid-war statistics, and the fact that the 1948 AJHR report lists 1947 and 1940 as the last two data-sets,⁸⁷⁹ it is also not unreasonable to assume that this data was simply not collected.

*Teacher Employment Inequality in Public Schools*⁸⁸⁰

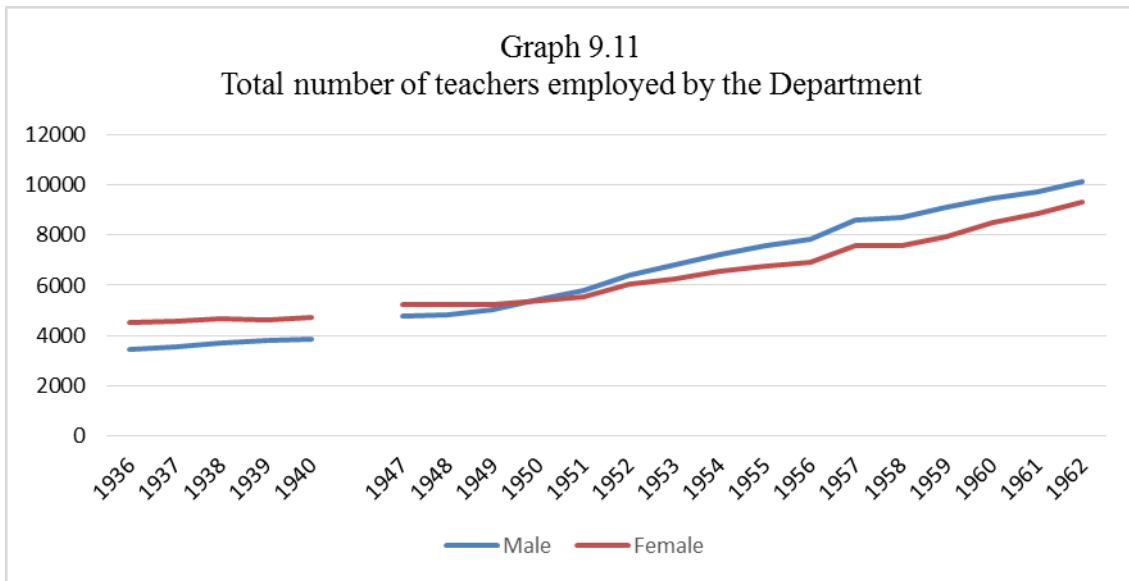
Another Beebian legacy appears to be an inequality in teacher employment between the sexes. Unlike student achievement above, only a limited amount of data on teacher salaries broken down by position was published: 1933-1938 and 1947-1962. As this data covers both the pre-Beebian era as well as most of the Beebian era (mainly just excluding World War 2) is make for a rare comparison.

As noted earlier, Beeby cannot be held accountable for the social expectations or policies implemented during this time—for example, women were expected to step aside from employment when men returned from the war. Nevertheless, the data below further suggests that the myth that Beeby bequeathed an egalitarian education system is also not held up when looking at the status of teachers in schools, much like as it does not with the achievement of students. All the data below is shown in absolute terms rather than as percentages so as to also show the overall growth of teacher employment during this period.

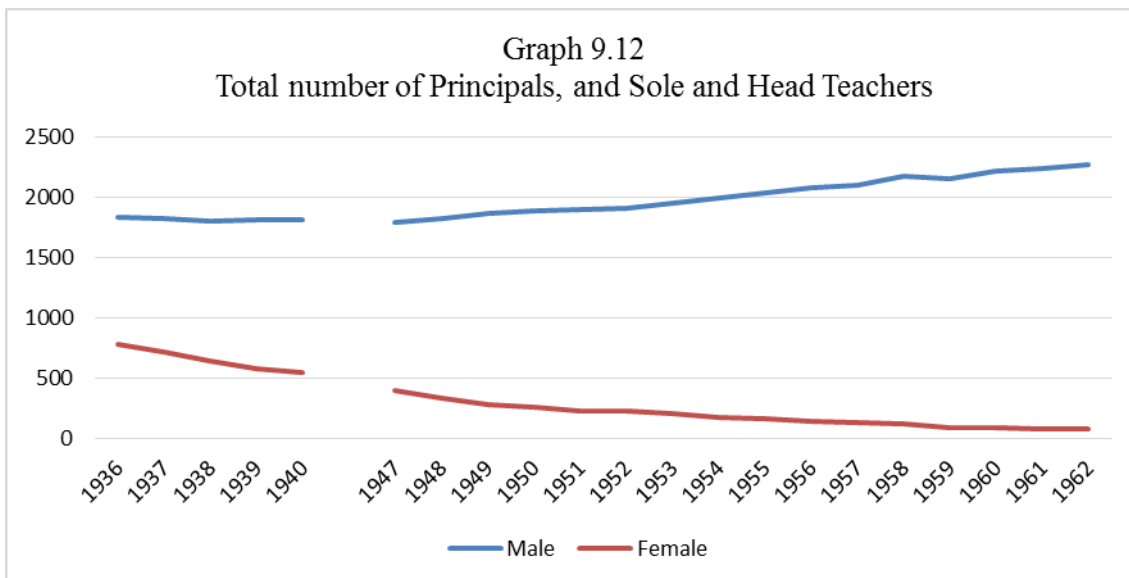
⁸⁷⁸ According to an official from the Ministry of Education they do not currently have any data for this period although it may have been collected at the time (Personal Correspondence).

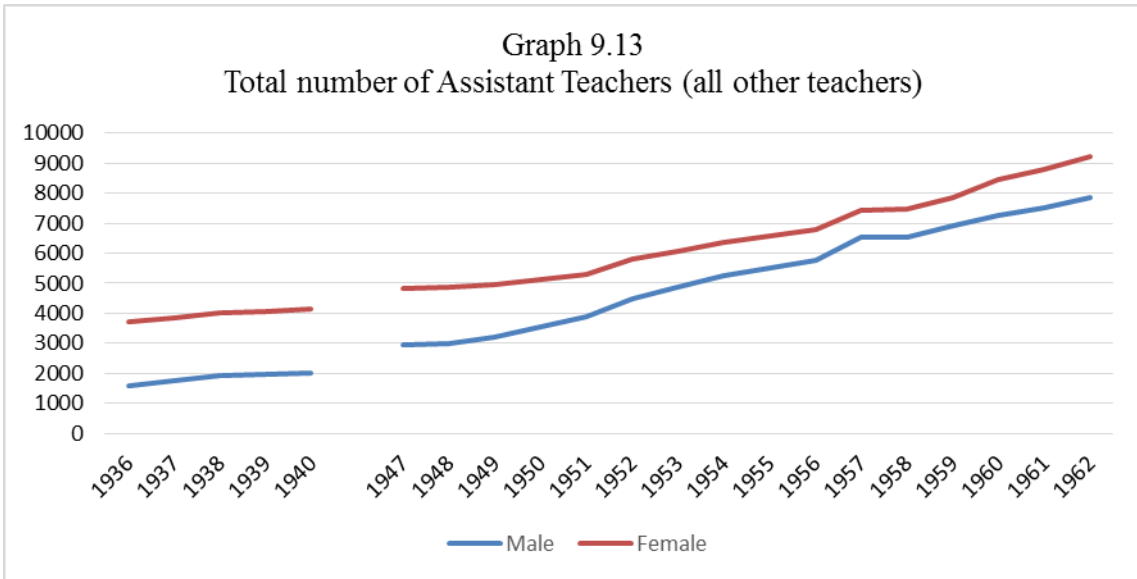
⁸⁷⁹ AJHR, 1948, E1, p. 18.

⁸⁸⁰ See Appendices 4a and 4b for the base data.

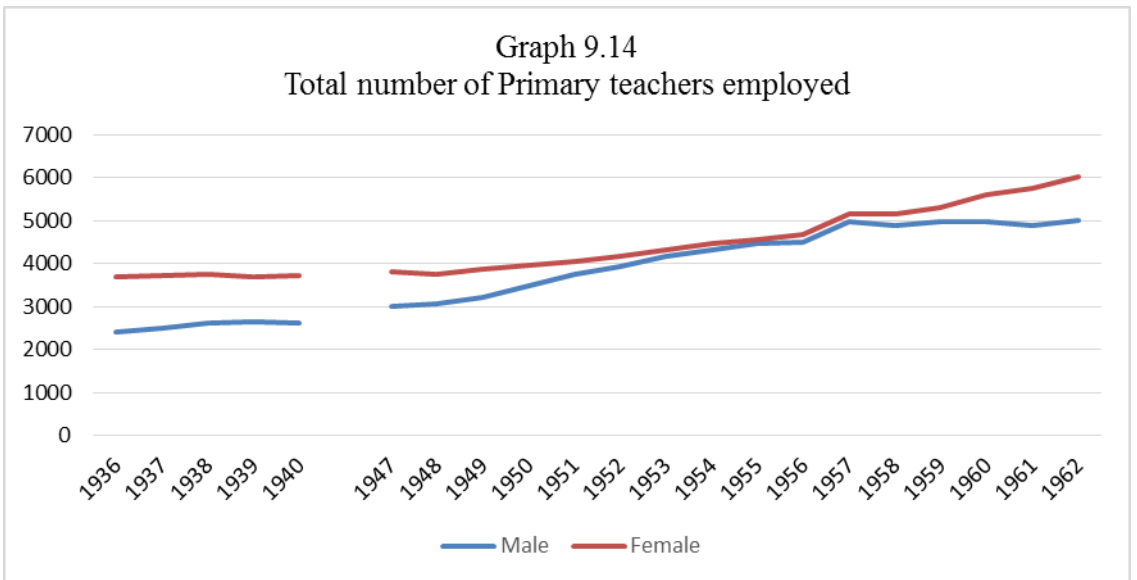


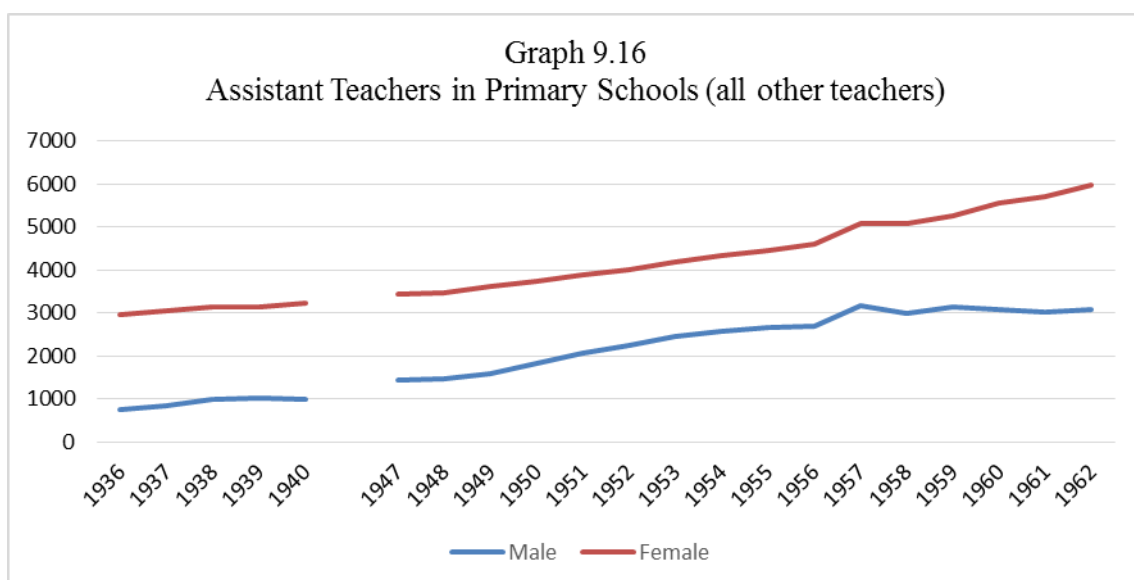
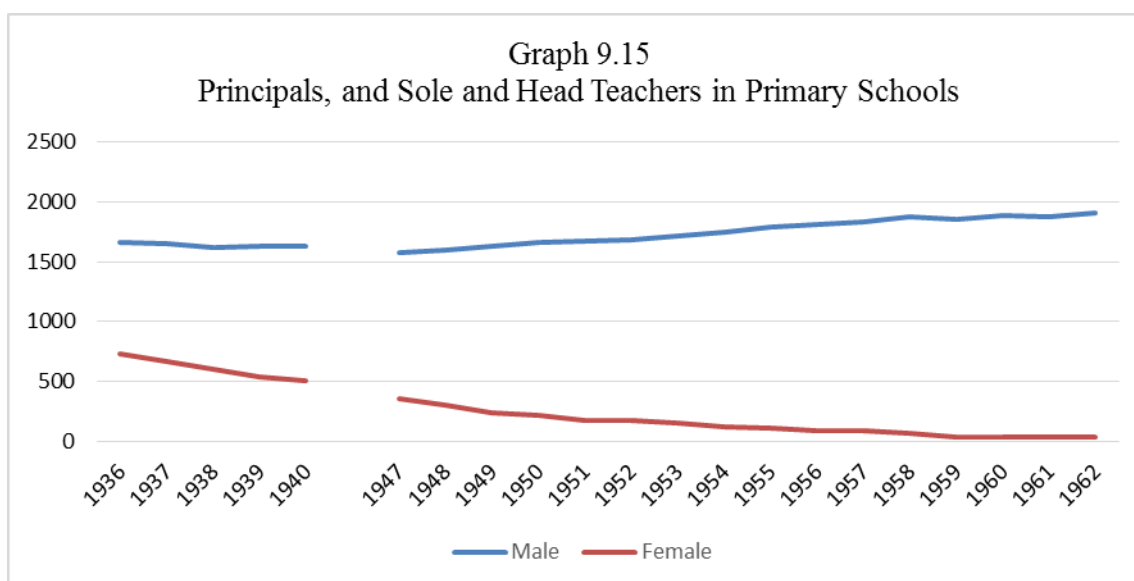
Graph 9:11 shows that the overall number of teachers employed by the Department is somewhat balanced between the sexes. However, the trend of more females than males was turned around during Beeby's Directorship as the Department expanded or opened dozens of new High Schools. This would have provided the opportunity for the development of new, more egalitarian hiring standards and protocols. The 1963 Pay Equality act is an example of the sort of policy that potentially could have, but did not, happen under Beeby. The biases against female teachers in the system are even more apparent when the data is broken down by type of teacher.





Graphs 9:12 and 9:13 shows the extreme disparity between the employment of male and female teachers in senior teaching or leadership positions. While Beeby may not have been directly responsible for teacher hiring, as that was handled by local Education Boards, it is not unreasonable to assume that his Department could have done something to rectify the inequality. This trend which became firmly established during Beeby’s Directorship continues to shape differences in teacher employment in modern primary and secondary schools.





Graphs 9:14, 9.15 and 9:16 show the employment data for just state primary schools. The overall trends are similar – a reasonably balanced workforce at first glance but one biased in favour of men upon closer inspection. The main difference is the higher amount of female teachers overall due in part to pre-war and post-war hiring trends. However, as with Graphs 9:16 to 9:18, even in the female teacher dominated primary schools, there was hiring prejudice in favour of males.

Although there are small nuances, the data is very similar for every other type of school controlled by the Department: Intermediate, Secondary Departments in rural high schools, Secondary, Technical, Combined, Post-Primary, and Secondary Schools (see Appendices 4a and 4b for the full data-set).

So while it is true that Beeby cannot reasonably be held responsible for the 1930s trends or the impact of World War Two, it is also clear that his Department did

not change the over trend that he inherited. Instead, under his Department the chance that a student would see a male in a dominant educational position increased both over time and the older the student got. Could Beeby have done anything this? If he was just a compliant administrator then possibly not. However, previous chapters have demonstrated that he had the means and the will to bring other changes to bear. If he have not simply been a man of his time, he might have inserted the specific goal of greater teacher equality into the 1939 statement or his 1944 book. As discussed previously, this is an explanation and not an excuse for the inequality perpetuated (although not initiated) under his watch.

All the data and graphs above thus demonstrate the inegalitarian education system bequeathed by Beeby. Nearly all of the graphs show evidence of pervasive differences in the achievement rates of students on the basis on sex or ethnic group at the beginning of the post-Beeby era and in the decades that followed. The consistency of this disparity indicates a structural prejudice. It has taken several decades to eradicate only some of the inequality bequeathed by Beeby.

Is it important to note that Beeby alone cannot be simply held accountable for these trends. A plethora of influences would have affected achievement statistics throughout the 1950s alongside Beeby's reforms and in the decades that followed. What is pertinent is that for both students and teachers, any claim that Beeby had architecturally designed and created an egalitarian system is tenuous at best. Even more so any claims that an egalitarian system was present since Beeby up until the 1990s.

9.9 Ongoing problems with Student Achievement

In the decades following Beeby's death the new Ministry of Education has struggled with very much the same problems as the Department of Education during the previous half-century. Reforms remain focused at the level of curriculum, assessment, and qualifications. 'Schools are failing badly with the lowest 20 per cent of their school leavers', Beeby observed in 1992.

Achievement inequality has continued to be a primary focus for policy-makers, and is often seen as a solution that can only be achieved by 'fixing' the schooling system. Thus the curriculum, assessment system or qualification system is in a state of constant flux. From the abolishment of Proficiency in 1936 to reforms of the 1990s, this thesis has argued that these attempts to intervene into achievement deficiencies fail because they stay at an instrumental, or utilitarian level. Even the wide-ranging reforms

of the 1990s have only had limited effect, with the issues identified in the years the followed being very similar to those from half a century before.

Several *Annual Reports* by the Education Review Office (ERO) highlight the difficulties in addressing the ongoing variability in achievement in New Zealand. The 1992 *Annual Report* observes the persistence of barriers to equality and a lack of focus on student needs. It notes:

Reports this year have highlighted a number of barriers to achievement. Low teacher expectations are a major concern to the Office. There are often entrenched attitudes of expected failure, so that the educational needs of populations targeted for equity reasons are not satisfactorily met. ...

Lack of depth in the knowledge teachers have about student achievement means that planning is often deficient. Planning does not arise from identified needs and so there is frequently a focus on content rather than on student needs and achievement.⁸⁸¹

Five years later, many of the same problems continued to exist; and moreover, there remained a lack of detailed direction from the National Government or any consideration of educational philosophy. The 1997 *ERO Annual Report* observes:

Addressing barriers to learning is a specific responsibility of boards of trustees ... However, there is no agreed definition as to what constitutes a barrier to learning and there are no guidelines about the extent of school's [sic] obligations with respect to addressing barriers to learning. ...

Some schools appear to have low expectations of students from disadvantaged family backgrounds.⁸⁸²

The lack of agreed definitions helped ensure that barriers to learning, such as inappropriate teacher expectations, could remain in place. This was because a lack of definitions prevents accurate identification and also inhibits conceptualisation of potential solutions, even if problems are identified. (As philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein observed, '*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*'.⁸⁸³) It was therefore difficult to challenge the 'entrenched attitudes of expected failure' which undermined the Ministry of Education's goal of 'equity'. The lack of clear definitions appears to directly descend from Beeby's culture of vagueness.

Owing to the lack of clear definitions of 'achievement' and other terms, the Education Review Office continued to struggle to assess schools. Ten years after the establishment of ERO, the 1999 *ERO Annual Report* remained optimistic but noted significant persisting, fundamental weaknesses. It explained:

⁸⁸¹ Education Review Office, 1992, p. 9

⁸⁸² Education Review Office, 1997, p.11.

⁸⁸³ Wittgenstein, L., 1922, p. 149.

The national curriculum is mandated by the Government and must by law be delivered by every school to each of its students. However, although some very promising initiatives are likely to be taken shortly in relation to testing students' learning outcomes, there is for example:

- no fully-established complementary curriculum requirement on every board to assess how each student is progressing in comparison with other children in the same year, school, or at a national level
- no explicit definition of what constitutes the role of the school
- no explicit definition of what counts as “instruction”
- no explicit definition of what constitutes a “balanced curriculum”
- no explicit definition as to what constitutes “achievement”; and
- weak definition of what is meant in the National Curriculum by “attitudes and values”.⁸⁸⁴

The 1999 report also went on to note weaknesses in ‘quality control and feedback arrangement’ and the ‘failure to dismantle barriers to learning’ as amongst eight other problems arising from the 1989 Education Act.⁸⁸⁵

Little change occurred in achievement variability after the election of the new Labour-led government in 1999. The 2003 ERO *Annual Report* explained:

Some of the areas for improvement in New Zealand’s education system are identified in this Annual Report. One that crosses the boundaries of all of them is the performance of that group sometimes identified as “the tail”. New Zealand’s best students perform with the best in other countries but there is a group at the bottom, perhaps as large as 25 percent, who are currently unsuccessful in our education system. While work is being done to meet the needs of these students there is little evidence yet of its effectiveness nationally.⁸⁸⁶

A subsequent report discerned no effective improvement. The 2005 *Annual Report* states:

New Zealand’s best students perform with the best in other countries but there is a group at the bottom, perhaps as large as 20 percent, who are currently not succeeding in our education system.⁸⁸⁷

Due to internal restructuring in the ministry, the 2005 report was the last ERO report to discuss this tail of underachievement. Instead the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was given the responsibility to report on student achievement to the Minister of Education and the New Zealand Parliament.

⁸⁸⁴ Education Review Office, 1999, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁸⁵ Education Review Office, 1999, pp. 9-18.

⁸⁸⁶ Education Review Office, 2003, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸⁷ Education Review Office, 2005, p. 6.

The NCEA Era

The curves of achievement have risen across nearly all qualification categories since the introduction of NCEA. School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance/Bursary were separate qualifications to be undertaken during each respective school year. NCEA is designed to be a ‘seamlessly’ integrated qualification which enables students to study towards different levels of qualification in different subjects during each school year.⁸⁸⁸ Discussion of the concept of achievement has become particularly relevant again because of the shift from norm-referencing based assessment to criterion-referencing assessment.⁸⁸⁹ However, the emphasis throughout this period remains not on the underlying post-Beebian philosophy but on the manipulation of assessment data submitted to the Ministry.

Between 2003 and 2013 an apparent sharp increase in achievement occurred, with the tail shortening to 30% by 2008. However, this is an artefact, produced by a methodological change within the Ministry of Education. The methodological change concerned which results schools were required to report, it has been argued that this in effect allowed schools to manipulate the system, by selecting the data that they sent to the Ministry. In this way, schools could report a higher rate of success than in previous years. In 2013 former school principal Graham Stoop summarised the situation:

In the early years of NCEA [2002-2004], schools were told not to send in their “not achieved” results at all. Some did and some didn’t. Data were “flawed”, NZQA admitted, and pass rates were through the roof.⁸⁹⁰

Stoop, head of the Education Review Office since 2007, went on to report that the underlying approach to achievement has remained relatively untouched. He continues:

The system ostensibly changed in 2008. But in practice it’s much the same. In exams, students have figured out that if they don’t write anything in an answer box, that is counted as a “void” – not a mistake, not a mark taken off. And NZQA’s “withdrawal” system lets schools pull students out of courses they enter but don’t do any work in. This lifts the student’s pass rate, and the school’s.⁸⁹¹

Post-Beebian concerns regarding variability in achievement between sexes, races, and classes have thus continued to haunt the current Ministry of Education. While the focus of the concerns has changed in some instances, such as from whether girls are

⁸⁸⁸ The education reforms also replaced each of the previous terms of ‘primer’, ‘standard’ and ‘form’ with Year 1 (age cohort 5-6 year olds) to Year 13 (age cohort 17-18 year olds).

⁸⁸⁹ Fundamentally a shift from assessing (and ranking) students against each other to assessing students against a specific standard

⁸⁹⁰ Stoop, Graham. Listener, May 2, 2013.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., May 2, 2013.

underachieving to whether boys are underachieving, the overall structure of the concerns remains very similar.

Although the qualification and qualification structure changed, the distinct variability in achievement between different sociological groups did not. The 2011 *Briefing to the Incoming Minister* (of Education) echoed the above analyses:

[T]hose groups least well served by New Zealand's education system achieve outcomes comparable with the lowest performing OECD countries. ...

There has been little change in early literacy/numeracy, school retention, truancy rates, and rates of completion for young people entering tertiary study ...

[T]he gap between our high performing and low performing students remains one of the widest in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These low performing students are likely to be Māori or Pasifika and/or from low socio-economic communities. Disparities in education appear early and persist throughout learning.⁸⁹²

The 2011 *Briefing to the Incoming Associate Minister of Education* similarly states:

New Zealand has a wide range of achievement and pockets of very low performance, and the education system under-serves particular groups of learners. Both participation and achievement outcomes are poorer for Māori, Pasifika, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and learners with special education needs. ...

[O]ur progress in addressing disparities in achievement has stagnated. The spread of achievement has failed to narrow over time.⁸⁹³

In 2011 the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) released its 2009 (most recent) report providing a comparative measure of the performance of New Zealand's 15-year-olds in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. It shows that New Zealand also had the highest ethnic and gender difference across all OECD countries.⁸⁹⁴ It shows that when New Zealand's results are broken down by ethnic group that Pakeha/European and Asian students achieve much better results than Maori and Pasifika students. The report explains:

There were Asian, Māori, Pākehā/European and Pasifika students who performed at the highest levels of digital reading literacy. Māori and Pasifika students were, however, over-represented at the lowest levels.⁸⁹⁵

In the years following the PISA assessment the National government made changes to NCEA to improve rates of achievement. It did so not by trying to change the underlying educational constant but, like other National and Labour governments before it, by making another series of surface-level reforms. In 2009 the National government

⁸⁹² Ministry of Education, 2011a, pp. 3, 8

⁸⁹³ Ministry of Education, 2011b, p. 5.

⁸⁹⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD), 2011, p. 7.

⁸⁹⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD), 2011, p. 8.

started the introduction of new national literacy and numeracy standards, echoing both NCEA and the inflexible, concrete academic standards set by Habens over a century ago. Much like Beeby's refocus on achievement and new standardised qualifications half a century previously, National's changes just shifted the focus of educational achievement to a different tranche of students. Brian Hincho summarises:

When the National Standards policy was first released much was made of the intention that this policy would raise student achievement and address the long tail of underachievement in New Zealand schooling. Early press releases, in late 2009, commented on the long tail identified in PISA assessments of approximately 20% underachievement; one of the longest tails in the OECD. However, when the 2009 PISA results released in 2010 identified that New Zealand's tail had been reduced to 14%, smaller than that of Australia by comparison, the public political debate appeared ... to shift ground. ... By mid-2010 the debate appeared to shift to the statistic that 20% of students were leaving secondary schooling not achieving NCEA level 2.⁸⁹⁶

Overall, the success of New Zealand's education system has continued to be measured by how successful each cohort is in completing formal school qualifications. The utilitarian Beebian passion for qualifications has continued. As recently as 2013, the New Zealand Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, blatantly expressed this view. She said:

Kids are at school to get qualifications. That's the expectation. That's why you as a taxpayer, and everybody else, has put \$9.6 billion into education this year. It's to get kids learning, raise achievement, secure a qualification. ... That is the expectation. That's why the whole system exists.⁸⁹⁷

In equating learning to achieving qualifications, Parata epitomises the default and ongoing tightening of the concept and purpose of schooling to primarily just achieving qualifications. Although this approach has led to an increased proportion of students achieving qualifications, it has narrowed the type of education that students receive.

Since 2008 the Government has been releasing the breakdown of school leaver results by sex and/or ethnicity online. The latest results still resemble those from fifty years ago; there is a persistent achievement gaps between the sexes and ethnic groups. Although progress had been made to address the extent of the disparity and to raise overall achievement, structural differences in achievement remain apparent, particularly at NCEA level 3.⁸⁹⁸ The graphs and data show a significant disparity between the different ethnic groups of students, and moreover their disproportionality is relatively

⁸⁹⁶ Hinchco, 2011, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁷ Listener, May 11-17, 2013, p. 19.

⁸⁹⁸ See *Education and Learning Outcomes*, 2016,

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/11235/School-Leavers-with-NCEA-Level-3-or-Above-2015-Indicator.pdf

consistent from year to year. While some variability between the groups is not unexpected, the consistency of the disproportionality indicates a systemic bias; the tail of underachievement remains disproportionately male, Maori, and Pasifika.

The Tail of Underachievement

Articles and press releases in New Zealand about the PISA results have helped to popularize the phrase that New Zealand has one of the longest ‘tails of underachievement’ in the OECD. For example, Perry Rush, principal of Island Bay School, wrote in a 4th June 2009 article that:

National has championed its education standards policy as being the saviour of the long tail of underachievement and muddy reporting to parents. This rationale seems convincing - both issues need improvement. ...

[Education Minister] Tolley’s “disinfectant” is not an aspirational idea and it has no place in our shared effort to eliminate the tail of underachievement and improve reporting for parents.

Glaringly absent in the advocacy of national standards has been the failure to explain how exactly they will improve student achievement.⁸⁹⁹

Similar thoughts have continued to be voiced. For example, columnist Tapu Misa wrote in a 6th July 2009 column that:

It’s easy to forget that the biggest challenge in New Zealand education is the long (and disproportionately brown and poor) tail of underachievement, where some 20 per cent of our students languish. Educationists blame the economic and social inequalities entrenched by the government policies of the last 25 years for the size of the gap and the length of the tail (and incidentally our fall in world literacy rankings from number 1 to 24), while many politicians blame failing schools. ...

Lifting the achievement of those at the tail end seems to be a primary motive for the introduction of national standards in literacy and numeracy. Tolley has said she expects it to help raise Maori achievement.⁹⁰⁰

Despite the rising curve of overall achievement under NCEA, the tail of underachievement continues to express three educational constants; a ceiling to student achievement, a disparity in achievement between different ethnic groups, and a disparity between males and females. However, recent changes to the assessment system have not significantly challenged these underlying causes of overall underachievement during the last century. Furthermore, they have not addressed the uneven distribution of results across groups represented within the results leading to underachievement within the underachievement.

⁸⁹⁹ Rush, *The New Zealand Herald*, June 4, 2009

⁹⁰⁰ Rush, *The New Zealand Herald*, June 4, 2009.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that the myth that Beeby bequeathed New Zealand an egalitarian education system should be rightfully challenged. Rather than addressing the causes of inequality, generation of Minister and administrators have obsessed over improving rates of achievement. Yet while achievement rates have been, sometimes artificially, raised, the inequality has remained in the education system. Or perhaps, more accurately, has remained outside the education system, given the persistence of inequality.

However, the debate over underachievement has still not diminished. So how might we address these concerns? According to Catherine Isaac, we have an historical precedent to follow. She continued:

Labour Education Minister Peter Fraser once said: “Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has right as a citizen to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers.” Clearly the spirit of his declaration is not being honoured.⁹⁰¹

It may in fact be far more accurate to say that while the spirit of *Fraser’s* egalitarianism is not being honoured, *Beeby’s* utilitarian declaration remains as influential as ever, whether we know it or not.

Ongoing educational reforms in New Zealand continue the tradition of a composite theory of education. Education remains a major issue each election, with proposals often followed by flurries of approval or condemnation, depending on whether it is about reinstating reforms, such as bulk funding of schools, or retaining policy, such as school zoning. The analysis and criticism in media and contemporary literature which follows each curriculum and assessment change strongly suggests that the social consensus over education remains as fractured as New Zealand politics. Although the system continues to evolve with every alteration, as long as education remains politicized its aims and structures will remain deeply contested

As argued in previous Chapters, multiple echoes of Beeby’s educational ideals remain present in the modern education system. While over fifty years have passed, one of the long-term impacts of the Beebian Era has been to shape current educational policy. For example, the Ministry of Education’s current focus on ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘essential skills’ are just reformulations of the older idea that the Department of Education should try to produce particular types of students with specified knowledge.

⁹⁰¹ *Education Review*, Dec 2012.

Beeby's near invisibility

Beeby spent a large part of the last decade of his life on refining his own idea of education, writing his *The Biography of an Idea: Beeby on Education* and regularly contributing to the work of other researchers. However, since his death in 1998, Beeby's visibility in academic literature has faded. In the 21st century, students can complete a degree in secondary teaching without any substantial reference to Beeby as Director of Education.⁹⁰²

Beeby's near-invisibility in 21st century New Zealand can be exemplified through a brief survey of books written or edited by some of New Zealand's leading historians. Each of the following books was published after Beeby's death and none of them directly refer to Beeby:

- *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, James Belich, published in 2001;
- *Going Public: The Changing face of New Zealand History*, a collection of essays edited by Bronwyn Dalley and Jock Phillips, published in 2001;
- *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Michael King, published in 2003 and 2004;
- *A Short History of New Zealand*, Gordon McLauchlan, published in 2004 and 2005 (revised in 2009);
- *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Pasts*, a collection of essays edited by Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney, published in 2006;
- *The Penguin History of New Zealand Illustrated*, Michael King, published in 2007;
- *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, edited by Giselle Byrnes, published in 2009;
- *New Zealand in the Twentieth Century – The Nation, The People*, Paul Moon, published in 2011;
- *Turning Points: Events that changed the course of New Zealand History*, Paul Moon, published in 2013; and
- *Encounters: The Creation of New Zealand, A History*, Paul Moon, published in 2013.

Although Beeby is not absent in every general contemporary book on the history of New Zealand, when he does feature his appearances are usually brief. For example, in *The History of New Zealand*, published 2004, Brooking only writes:

[T]he dynamic new director-general of education, Dr Clarence Beeby, overhauled the curriculum. ...

⁹⁰² Reflected by this author's personal experience in both 2001 and 2002

Lange ..., instead of appointing a prominent educator to overhaul the [education] system as Peter Fraser had with Clarence Beeby, he handed the investigation over to Brian Picot, operator of a chain of supermarkets.⁹⁰³

Phillippa Mein-Smith is a rare exception in the pattern of Beeby's near-invisibility. However, even she, in her *A Concise History of New Zealand*, published 2012, only gives a brief description of Beeby's historical relevance. She wrote:

In 1939 Dr C. E. Beeby, a psychologist, laid down the post-war blueprint when he summarised his own idea of education, in language that he rightly judged expressed Fraser's objectives. The following statement in its calls for equality of opportunity formed the 'lodestone' of education policy for a generation ...⁹⁰⁴

Beeby is also absent in several contemporary New Zealand cultural and sociological works. A pertinent example of his absence is *Culture and Identity*—published in 1989 when Beeby was still alive—a collection of essays written by primarily New Zealand academics. The book does not refer to Beeby even though there are essays on 'The Education System' and 'Inequality and the Egalitarian Myth'.⁹⁰⁵

Beeby's near invisibility can be attributed to his gradual fading from view due to unwillingness to comment on public events and educational reform. Without a presence in the media he has ceased to be a public figure. However, the very fact that Beeby has faded while his influence continues on is symbolic to the effect that educational Administrators can have. Had Beeby died decades earlier (when he was mainly working overseas) his philosophical legacy may still have lived on just as strongly. Similarly, his isolation from social commentary did not prevent the Myth of Beeby the Egalitarian Architect from emerging—indirectly demonstrating the ability for broad, coherent explanatory myths to independently sustain themselves. But perhaps, sadly, the greatest lesson is how easily a person's legacy can be distorted even while they live. Given that Beeby was well aware of the limitations of an Administrator it is doubtful that he believed in the Myth of Beeby as fervently as a generation of educators after him.

Finally, Beeby's near-invisibility may be best exemplified by *Introduction to the History of New Zealand Education*, a 2009 textbook on New Zealand's history of education. It consists of ten extended essays as chapters, each written by a different author, most of whom are senior lecturers at one or another of New Zealand's universities. The forward mentions George Santayana, famous for his assertion that:

⁹⁰³ Brooking, pp. 122, 156.

⁹⁰⁴ Mein-Smith, 2012, p. 177.

⁹⁰⁵ Novitz and Willmott, 1989.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.⁹⁰⁶

This is a sentiment that Rata and Sullivan agree with in their introduction, stating:

The oft-expressed warning that those who choose to ignore history do so at their peril appears extremely difficult to disagree with.⁹⁰⁷

Ironically, Beeby and his historic educational reforms are only mentioned once in the entire book. Furthermore, even that single mention is made only in the context of a discussion of Peter Fraser and the 1939 Statement.⁹⁰⁸ The lack of reference to Beeby may have been appropriate if the book focused on only 19th or 21st century education. However, many of the topics covered in the book directly relate to the decades when Beeby was Director of Education and, according to his UNESCO obituary, was ‘the very epitome of a thinking educational administrator’.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁶ Santayana, 1954, p. 82.

⁹⁰⁷ Rata and Sullivan, 2009, p. v.

⁹⁰⁸ Rata and Sullivan, 2009, p. 106.

⁹⁰⁹ Renwick, 1999, p. 347.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Real change in education is so slow that I sometimes think that only the very young and the very old can be optimists in the profession, the very young who believe that miracles can happen and the aged who have lived long enough to see some minor ones come about.⁹¹⁰

(Beeby, letter to Mr James Marshall, 17 December 1986.)

Beeby was a highly competent administrator who oversaw twenty years of extensive change in the education system. His strength was in extending his administrative powers to implement his vision for education. He rarely doubted that vision, and would act slowly or swiftly in order to achieve it. But to what extent, if at all, did his reforms fundamentally reorient education in New Zealand? I have argued that, while Beeby's influence on the education system was thoroughgoing, his pragmatic paternalistic progressivism also restricted his ability to undertake fundamental, long-lasting reform. McKenzie explained:

Perhaps more than he was sometimes willing to admit, Beeby's reforms enhanced trends which were already evident in official policies before his time.⁹¹¹

I have also argued that the common concept of Beeby as highly influential administrator is a lot more complex than generally attributed. My review of the historical development of both Beeby and the Department of Education has shown the haphazard background leading up to their union in 1939. In 1877 the education system had its history in denominational church schools and a system of segregated provincial systems. The 1877 Education Act established a centralised system, and over the following decades it became more and more prescriptive depending on what political party and what Minister of Education was in charge.

However, the history of the education system can be better understood as a battle between three fundamental philosophical concepts, each embodied in particular educational policies. The commonly made mistake is too much focus on the policies themselves, on the particular groups they focus on and how they are to be implemented. Very little debate ever occurs on whether the education system should focus on equality, efficiency or liberty—and if so, what should be sacrificed in order to meet those goals. It is trite to simply say that a country should embrace all three, as few would ever explicitly argued in favour of inequality, inefficiency, or a lack of freedom.

⁹¹⁰ Beeby, letter to Mr James Marshall , 17 December 1986.

⁹¹¹ McKenzie, 1982, p. 132.

However, this type of argument is one of the reasons why the New Zealand education system has failed to be fundamentally reoriented towards equality. The 20% ‘tail’ remains a constant feature in New Zealand education. Modern concerns about achievement still echo Beeby’s words twenty-five years previously:

[Director of Education William] and I agree that major reforms are needed in the education system to cater for the 20 percent of students [who] leave the school without any qualifications that will give them a fair chance in life.⁹¹²

It seems that as far as educational underachievement is concerned, outcomes have not improved since Beeby’s time of writing, which was shortly after the re-elected Labour Party began its extensive and radical reforms of New Zealand’s education system.

The history of the Department of Education is too often characterised as a history of Ministers of Education. The focus is often placed on the political party they belong to, the policy that they campaigned on, and the policy they have sought to implement. Too little focus has been placed on the officials actually implementing the policy. Far from being faceless, neutral entities, Chapter 3 demonstrated how each Director had their own very specific quirks that determined exactly how new policies should be implemented. Even when complex administrative machinery threatens to overwhelm administrative policy, each administrator has had their own way to address educational problems. None of them had specific control over the Minister under which they served, but it is easy to imagine that if each administrator had served under a different Minister then the resulting shape of the education system would have been different. Between authoritarians like Hogben and Strong, and liberals like Caughley, the Department contained a complex combination of competing ideas ready for a long-termed Director to sort, select, and unify the prevailing philosophies.

Beeby’s confidence in his vague notion of equality shaped his view of equality, which in turn shaped his Directorship. Equality was of primary concern for Beeby. It features in his early writings, the statement above, and was the focus of his intellectual biography, *A Biography of an Idea*. By being the Director of Education for twenty years, Beeby influenced the form that equality in education would take in New Zealand. I have argued that the form of equality Beeby promulgated was not originally his own—it was acquired and adapted from Fraser and then amended to reflect Beeby’s own dispositions. Beeby was never just an administrator, as some have argued. His psychological background, his ex-religious fervour for education, and his particular

⁹¹² Beeby, letter to Lawrence A. Cremin, 15 July 1988.

understanding of educational equality all contributed to a complex concept of what equality was and what it demanded. Beeby was able to implement his vision under various Ministers across the political spectrum.

From Beeby's experiences we can appreciate the reforming power that a dedicated Administrator can have. He demonstrated the ability to not only implement policy but also shape and mould the policy through official documents. Through an empowered Beeby, the prevailing social context also prevailed—he brought into the Department a renewed interest in social efficiency, and later on set in place a focus on the benefits of human capital theory. He also absorbed and was influenced by both the NEF and his time at the NZCER. Beeby reorganised the Department to emphasise professional leadership, reformed the curriculum and assessment system, and steadily increased financial allocations for particular kinds of school buildings and facilities. In doing so he took the opportunity to increase the Department's direct influence in an energised progressive direction.

To broaden his Department's effectiveness Beeby was willing to draw on a wide range of sources. Even throughout contentious battles he still listened to the desires of his Education Boards and Teachers. He maintained an open mind, listening to his colleagues and the men that he served under—five Ministers of Education and two Director Generals of UNESCO. He also listened to economists and national planners, and each guided and reshaped his educational direction.

Beeby's Directorship represented a particular strand of progressivism. He demonstrated the extent and limits of an authoritarian paternalism. His paternalism was bound up both in his passion for equality and for retaining control over the education system. It was an authoritarian paternalism based on certainty—Beeby believed in the certainty of education to change the world, he was certain of the mental testing espoused by psychology at the time, and he was certain that the best outcome would be achieved under his guidance. However, as modern reformers have experienced, when opposing groups both share certainty then an impasse is reached preventing progress. Beeby sometimes struggled with accepting that his certainties were in fact uncertain. His wide-ranging set of objective beliefs thus put up walls that future reforms were all too willing to tear down.

This thesis has shown how a few key personality characteristics can have a huge effect on the aims and goals of reformers. The lesson for all reformers is to the need to identify personal prejudices, as they may limit the ability to reform. Beeby proved to be

unable to stop his pseudo-religious educational zeal, his psychological objectivism, and his belief in progressive interventionism from preventing him from implementing some of the goals that his egalitarianism sought. He was bound to a particular idea of the role of the state and of the school to guide and shape student's careers and character. None of these beliefs are inherently right or wrong, but when they contradict wider goals then conflict is bound to occur.

I have also showed the difficulty that even a talented, influential Administrator can have in reforming an education system. As Kandel noted, in 1938 the New Zealand educational administration was dominated by the aim of 'securing efficiency in a somewhat narrowly conceived round of educational prescriptions and requirements'.⁹¹³ Throughout his Directorship Beeby tried to implement egalitarian policy to reorient the education system towards one suitable for all students. What Beeby struggled to do was overcome his own background and prejudices—the demand for efficiency remained in place throughout his Directorship.

Beeby's struggle to reform the education system over two decades gives a good lesson to any modern political reformer. Some of the most contentious reforms that can be implemented, such as changing the curriculum or assessment system, will not actually change the underlying education system. Beeby was bequeathed a utilitarian system with a few years of egalitarian reforms, and in turn bequeathed a utilitarian system with twenty years of reforms. The reforms of course did not last, they were stripped away by waves of liberal and conservative reformers. From Beeby's struggles we might even conclude that no matter how much top-down reform on the 'instruments' of education in school occurs, school-driven reforms can never address the causes of inequality in the education system while it remains an educational constant.

One hypothesis that I have defended is the existence of educational constants explained by the persistence of an underlying educational philosophy in New Zealand that was never effectively challenged in the reforms during the twentieth century. Notwithstanding party political and philosophical disagreements, I have argued that an underlying efficiency-driven utilitarian conception of the social services has underpinned reforms of the compulsory education system up until the time that Beeby became Director. This liberal utilitarian conception remained the influential philosophy

⁹¹³ Kandel, 1938, p. 82.

during Beeby's tenure, and still remains the dominant philosophy of education in New Zealand today.

Beeby's failure to implement a firm, clear philosophy of education is one of the core reasons for his overall inability to address the underlying constant of utilitarianism. His 1939 statement was sufficiently vague to appeal to a wide range of reforms, yet it was too vague to give clear direction. This appears to have been a deliberate decision by Beeby, yet it also enabled the National government of the 1950s and most other successive governments to gradually undermine his egalitarian achievements. The decision to not have a definite philosophy is directly referred to in the Thomas Report, which warned:

The state exceeds its function if it tried to impose a cut and dried philosophy on the schools or to control the curriculum in any detail.⁹¹⁴

While the sentiment to not impose a 'cut and dried philosophy' is fair, the lack of a 'cut and dried philosophy' overall was one of the Beeby's core problems. Aspirational goals simply lose power if they are too aspirational, or too vague. Telling someone to 'do good' will likely have little effect in the long run regardless of the aspirational intent. Beeby's 'Equality of Opportunity' instead provided a tool and a myth for future reformers who did not share his fundamental belief in equality.

So what would a clear and precise Beebian 'Equality of Opportunity' actually entail? On the matter simply of outcomes, as outlined in Chapter 9, perhaps we should seek an even balance of achievement across students of all groups. Of course doing this via scaling would be possible but would somewhat miss the point of the goal. In writing on the persistent educational gap Beeby wrote that he doubted that 'it is a problem that can ever be solved within the school system alone'.⁹¹⁵ If Beeby is right and the outcome gap cannot be solved within the school system then this is a fundamental critique of the consistent focus on the current instruments of education—curriculum, assessment, and teachers. This is consistent with the critiques throughout this thesis. However, it is also to point a light to a modern form of Beebism.

Perhaps a 21st century version of Beeby's vision should be 'Equality of Availability'—raising all students up to the same level of preparedness and support at each stage of education. This could recognise and address issues outside of the school system. Obviously, 'availability' is vague but unlike during the 1930s, there are a now

⁹¹⁴ New Zealand Department of Education, 1944.

⁹¹⁵ Beeby, 1992, p. 198.

many more nuanced critiques of such terms. Availability can refer to a broad idea of educational access, informed by sociological analysis about the impact of student's background and ongoing life. The new version might also call upon the work of philosophers such as Amartya Sen who have argued for both freedom and equality in terms of equality of access in contrast to both utilitarianism and welfare economics.⁹¹⁶

Even with ongoing budgetary constraints it remains important for New Zealand to continue to reflect on its educational priorities. Discussion and debate between individuals and political parties still tend to remain at the level of individual educational opportunity and national investment in education. There is rarely much debate on the shift in overall educational philosophy, rather the focus is on the short term impact that changes in educational policy will have on the education system.

Beeby always sought to keep a sense of direction for his reforms, and this led to the development of the educational myth. His desire to come up with a way of describing the overall direction of educational reform was borne in part from trying to explain his twenty-year Directorship. It has also served to a tool to dissect the various educational myths about Beeby himself—that he was neither an *Architect* nor *Administrator*, but a strongly-driven *Navigator*. He sighted the polestar of equality of opportunity (that he helped establish), and then spent twenty years directing his ship towards it over the rough seas of changes in government and policy. Regardless of his successes and failures, and regardless of the type of his long-term impact, Beeby was and remains a model of an administrator who tried his very best to do the very best for all students. For the wider egalitarian mission, it can perhaps only be hoped that other reformers learn from his mistakes, and then follow in his wake.

⁹¹⁶ See, for example, Sen, 1985.

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Copies of Beeby's correspondence and personal records are held by the Alexander Turnbull Library Collection in the New Zealand National Archives.

APPENDIX 1:

An overview of education in New Zealand from the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 to the founding of the Department of Education in 1877

Overview

This appendix provides a brief background to Chapter 3 by summarising key events in the nineteenth century leading up to and including the 1877 Education Act.

The Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi

On 6 February 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Captain William Hobson, as representative of the British crown, and most Rangatira (Maori chiefs) of the Northland region.⁹¹⁷ The declaration greatly accelerated European colonisation as ‘the British colonists, aided the proclamation of sovereignty, were able to determine that New Zealand should be a land British in language, customs, religion and temperament.’⁹¹⁸

The Education Ordinance 1847

On 7 October 1847, Governor Grey and his Legislative Council passed a measure regarding education, entitled *An Ordinance for Promoting the Education of the Youth in the Colony of New Zealand*. The Ordinance was to provide for the establishment and support of schools in each province and represented the Government’s decision to intervene and regulate what had previously been privately run education. The full text is:

Whereas it is fitting that provision be made for promoting the education of youth in the colony of New Zealand; be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof, as follows :—

1. It shall be lawful for the Governor for the time being, with the advice of the Executive Council, out of the public funds of the colony, to establish and maintain schools for the education of youth, and to contribute towards the support of schools otherwise established, as he shall from time to time see occasion.

2. Every such school shall be subject to inspection in manner hereinafter provided.

3. In every school to be established or supported by public funds, under the provisions of this ordinance, religious education, industrial training, and instruction in the English language, shall form a necessary part of the system to be pursued therein; but in order to provide for the instruction of the children of parents dissenting from the religious doctrines to be taught in any such school,

⁹¹⁷ For an extensive analysis of the events surrounding the Treaty of Waitangi, see Orange, Claudia. 2011 and 2013.

⁹¹⁸ New Zealand Herald, 1919, p. 13

such children as shall attend the same as day-scholars only, may, upon application to be made in that behalf by their parents or guardians, be taught therein without being instructed in the doctrines of religion.

4. Every such school shall be placed under the superintendence and management of such one of the persons named or referred to in the Schedule hereunto annexed, as the Governor with the advice of the Executive Council shall in the case of each such school especially direct.

5. The teachers of every such school shall be appointed by the person under whose superintendence and management the same shall respectively be placed as aforesaid, and shall be removable by him at pleasure.

6. In order to secure the efficiency of schools, to be supported by public funds, every such school shall be inspected once at least in every year, by an inspector or inspectors to be for that purpose appointed by his Excellency the Governor.

7. As soon as conveniently may be after the inspection of any such schools, such inspector or inspectors shall make a report in writing to the Governor for the time being, setting forth the name or description of such school, the number of children educated therein, the funds out of which the same may be supported, and the amount thereof respectively, the salaries paid to the teachers thereof, and the yearly cost incurred for the support and education of each pupil maintained therein, and shall also report upon the discipline and management of the school, the nature and extent of the industrial instruction pursued therein, the attainments of the children, and the state of the school generally as regards its efficiency.

8. As soon as the several schools which may be supported under the provisions of this ordinance shall have been inspected as aforesaid, the whole of the reports relating thereto, shall be together laid before the Colonial Legislature, if the said Legislature shall be then in session, and if not, then within one calendar month next after the commencement of the then next ensuing session.

9. Provided always, and be it further enacted, that the whole amount of the sums to be advanced under the authority of this ordinance, in any one year, shall not exceed one-twentieth part of the estimated revenue of the colony, or province, as the case may be, for such year.

10. In the construction of this ordinance, the word "Governor," shall be taken to mean the Lieutenant- Governor, or the Officer administering the Government of the colony for the time being.

SCHEDULE.

The Bishop of New Zealand.

The Bishop or other the head of the Roman Catholic Church in the colony of New Zealand.

The Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission.

The head or minister of any other religious body, who shall have engaged in the education of youth in the colony of New Zealand.⁹¹⁹

The Ordinance laid a series of precedents for educational reforms in both the mid-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries including under Beeby's Directorship:

1. That money can be taken from public funds for (primary) schools;
2. That there is limited state provision of pre-primary or post-compulsory education
3. That all public schools will be subject to inspection;
4. That school inspections include ensuring that schools are making efficient use of public funds;
5. That post-inspection reports on each school be submitted to the government;

⁹¹⁹ Quoted in the Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, Rōrahi VI, 29 Kohitātea 1848, p.189

6. That in schools where religious education occurs, children have the opportunity to opt out;
7. That industry-related education and instruction in the English language be a dominant feature.

Provincial Schools

In 1853, Governor Grey rejected the view that there should be a comprehensive national system of education. He instead supported:

[A] coherent system regulated by some fixed and general rules ... The country was to be divided into convenient education districts. All schools were to be conducted upon 'the principle of a religious education, industrial training, and instruction in the English language'.⁹²⁰

The provinces were thus where the earliest educational administrations were developed. Grey's support for religion, industry and instruction in English reinforced prior suppositions about the nature of education in New Zealand. However, each province was still able to design an educational system that reflected the strongly-held beliefs of the group of colonists that settled that region:

This led to a very uneven pattern of education, created by Provincial Education Acts during the 1850s. ... Wellington ... promoted secular education and gave no aid to church schools, ... Nelson ... was based on the principle of public schools under public control teaching undenominational religion, ... Otago ... [provided] virtually a Presbyterian school system as religious instruction was prescribed, and ... Auckland ... funded individual church schools.⁹²¹

English Laws Act 1858

In passing the English Laws Act 1858, the New Zealand government inherited all the relevant laws of England up to 14 January 1840. This included historical statutes such as the Magna Carta of 1215 as well as any laws regarding the provision of education.

New Zealand thus directly inherited England's decentralised approach to education. However, although each province was empowered to design its own form of educational system, they all gradually began to align:

Each of the six Provinces evolved its own distinct pattern for the provision of education. ... As the years passed, however, the various Provincial systems of education tended to conform more and more to one pattern.⁹²²

This gradual conformity laid the foundation for the shift to a national education system a decade later.

The 1858 Act also effectively nullified any pre-existing Maori customary law:

⁹²⁰ Cumming and Cumming, 1978, p. 21

⁹²¹ Fraser, 1986, p. 332

⁹²² Mackey, 1967, p. 23

The two systems did not merge; instead, the English system dominated and effectively excluded the Maori system. English constitutional theory stated that no other system of law could exist in a British colony.⁹²³

Thus the Act overrode any inter- or intra-tribal⁹²⁴ customary Maori law with regards to education and left the majority of education-relevant laws in the hands of the provincial governments. Although Maori customary law regarding education could still have been incorporated into the law, it would have had to be formalised and adopted via the English political and legal system. The dominance of the provincial system and the marginalisation of Maori legal structures set a precedent for state-run and state-regulated education for Maori.

Native Schools Act 1858 and 1867

The Native Schools Act 1858 built on the 1847 Education Ordinance by providing £7,000 per year for seven years for the education of Maori and half-caste children or adults in Maori schools. So just like the mission schools, the government provided financial assistance but did not get directly involved in the education system itself. Nine years later, this *laissez faire* support was replaced by direct government control.

The Native Schools Act 1867 was the primary expression of the colony's educational paternalism. The Act provided £4,000 for the establishment of secular primary schools in Maori communities. However, to get the government subsidy to books, teachers, buildings, and land, Maori were required to donate land and contribute towards a new school building and teacher. In doing so, the government took control over Maori education, including requiring that English be the only language of instruction, and established a system of primary schools under the control of a new Native Department.⁹²⁵ The Native Schools system persisted through Beeby's administration and were integrated with the public system in 1969.

The Education Act 1877

With the Abolitions of the Provinces Act 1875, New Zealand abolished its provincial system, eliminating a significant amount of provincial legislation and necessitating new national legislation on education.

⁹²³ Morris, p. 31

⁹²⁴ Both iwi (tribe) and hapu (sub-tribe) can be spread over a wide geographical area. The best example might be the Ngai Tahu iwi, which covers most of the South Island, and thus was spread over several provinces.

⁹²⁵ Barrington and Beaglehole, 1974

By 1877 the general consensus of the colonial government had shifted from opposing a national system to supporting one. This shift was in part due to practical experience gained during the running of the provincial systems:

[P]ractical experience ... modified the doctrinaire quality which had been a feature of the earlier expressions of opinion about education.

William Gisborne, the Colonial Secretary, expressed what seemed to be the general consensus of opinion when he said that 'It is the paramount duty of the state to put itself at the head of any educational movement, and it is the duty of the state to aid in promoting, controlling, and directing that movement'.⁹²⁶

Parliamentary Debates mainly revolved around the basic premise that the state provision of schools would enable equal access to standardised education. Much of the debate over the nature of the national system focused on practical concerns, such as whether the system should be fully or partially subsidised, the place of religion, and whether schooling should be compulsory.⁹²⁷

Passage of the Act

The 1877 Act required the provision of primary education that was universal, publically-funded, generally compulsory, and secular. The Act was very heavily debated during its passing but is now generally recognised as one of the foundational documents of the New Zealand education system. The original intent of the Bill was to maintain the majority of administrative powers in the local regions. At the time, the Education Bill's sponsor, Charles Bowen, argued that

The Bill ... provides entirely for local administration, subject to ultimate control in certain particulars, especially in matters of expenditure. ... The expenditure on a Central ... will be very small, because a secretary and clerk will probably do all the work of the Central Department for some time to come.⁹²⁸

In response to the Act's passage, the Catholic Church set up its own system of schools.

Between the new public and private schools attendance greatly increased and illiteracy decreased, as described by one historian:

By 1891, four-fifths of the colony's 167,000 European children aged five to fifteen were receiving elementary education at one of the 1,255 public primary or the 281 private schools. As many girls as boys attended these schools. The colony's illiteracy rate had been further reduced, from 23 per cent in 1871 to 18 per cent twenty years later.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁶ Mackey, 1967, pp. 142-143

⁹²⁷ Mackey, 1967. Mackey provides a wide-ranging analysis and commentary on the decades leading up to the 1877 Act. For a similar analysis of the compromises that led to the 1877 Act see Bates, 1969.

⁹²⁸ Bowen, Parliamentary Debates, 24 July 1877, p. 32

⁹²⁹ Rice, 1992, p. 132

The Founding of the Department of Education in 1877

The Act required the establishing of a national Department of Education under a Minister of Education. It was to be responsible for oversee the financing of the education system, making regulations to govern general administration, writing and maintaining curriculum regulations, training teachers, and overseeing a national inspectorate. The Department would be supported by education boards, to organise school districts, and school committees, to be responsible for the management of each school.

While the administration of public schools was left in the hands of district education boards, the new Department of Education took over the control of the Maori village schools from the Native Affairs Department in 1879 and maintained the previous practical socialisation of Maori:

Under the direction of James Pope ... [m]uch emphasis was put on the learning of English and practical matters such as agriculture and hygiene.⁹³⁰

As Pope himself explained, the role of the native school system was to:

Bring to an untutored but intelligent and high-spirited people into line with our civilization ... by placing in Maori settlements European school buildings and European families to serve as teachers, especially as exemplars of a new and more desirable mode of life.⁹³¹

Although a key component of the 1877 Education Act was to found the Department of Education, the role of the Department was not very clearly defined by the Act. Sir Edward Gibbes, described the new Department as ‘sketchy’:

[T]he Education Act 1877 was not the expert and statesmanlike measure that it is commonly thought to be, for in essentials its form was determined not by the knowledge and insight of competent men, but by the restrictive political influences of the time. ...

The Act provided for primary education only, and the business of the Department established by the Act was confined to that subject. A very sketchy department it was, even on those lines. It had to “generally administer” the Act, to make some regulations of a general character, to supply the statutory allowances to the Boards that were the real operative power, and to make an annual report. That’s about all.⁹³²

So although the Department was set up to be small, the Act’s open-ended vagueness provided the potential for a much larger, more dominant administration.

The two men appointed to run the new Department were John Hislop and the Rev. W.J. Habens. Hislop, former Secretary of Education to the Otago Provincial Council and the drafter of the Education Act 1877, became the first Secretary of

⁹³⁰ Fraser, 1986, p. 333

⁹³¹ AJHR, 1880, E-2, p. 16

⁹³² Gibbes, in Davey, 1928, pp. 10, 12.

Education from 1877 to 1886. Habens, educated in London and received into the Congregational Church Ministry in 1863, was appointed the Inspector-General of Schools in 1878. Upon Hislop's retirement in 1886, Habens also became Secretary of Education.⁹³³ In 1915 these two roles were formally combined into the new position of Director General. Chapter 3 describes the course of the Directorship from Habens through to Beeby.

⁹³³ Davey, 1928, p. 24.