



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

TE RŪNANGA O AOTEAROA MŌ TE RANGAHAU I TE MĀTAURANGA

Principal vacancies and appointments 2008–9

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Summary

School leadership has come to the fore in New Zealand educational policy in the last few years. To gain a national picture of patterns of attraction and retention to the principalship, and the number and quality of applicants for school leadership positions that can inform policy, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) has started a database on principal vacancies and appointments.

This brief report analyses principal vacancies advertised in the *Education Gazette* in 2008 and 2009, and information about appointments made in 2008, with some relevant information on principal careers and teacher interest in becoming principals from recent NZCER national surveys:

- Two hundred and eighty-five state and state-integrated schools (around 11.5 percent of New Zealand schools) advertised for a new principal in 2008, which may have been a bumper year for vacancies. In 2009, 189 state and state-integrated schools (around 7.6 percent of New Zealand schools) advertised for a new principal.
- Small, rural, full primary schools have higher vacancy rates, and are most likely to need to readvertise, though the number of schools needing to readvertise is low (16 schools over 18 months).
- The median number of applications for each vacancy is 8.5, with a range from one to 27.
- Seventy percent of board chairs thought the quality of applicants for their school's principalship was all right or better; 78 percent thought they had been able to get a very good to excellent shortlist; 86 percent were very satisfied with their choice.
- All but 5 percent of boards used some expertise other than their own to advise them on the principal appointment. There is some interest in having Ministry of Education advice on who to use, and to a lesser extent, in having Ministry of Education advice on the actual appointment.
- A key aspect in appointments is judgement of applicant suitability for the school and its community.
- While women are 53 percent of shortlisted candidates, they make up 49 percent of those appointed. There are some differences related to gender, ethnicity and age in terms of the school characteristics of schools applied for and appointed to.
- At least half the principal appointments in 2008 were first-time principals.
- There is increased interest from secondary teachers in the principalship: 13 percent in 2009, up from 8 percent in 2006, with 44 percent of deputy and assistant principals interested in the role.
- Male secondary teachers are more likely to be interested in the principalship than female secondary teachers (19 percent, cf. 9 percent).
- Principals who left the positions advertised in 2008 were most likely to go to another school (34 percent), or retire (20 percent). Eighteen percent went into other positions in education, including advisory work. Nine percent went overseas.

- Principals have been staying longer in their positions than a decade ago, an increased stability that has implications for projections of the size of the pool needed to replace principals, and for providing existing principals with sufficient support and challenge. Fifty-five percent of secondary principals would like more career opportunities in education; and 18 percent feel stuck in their current role because these opportunities are limited.

The policy issues around principal supply suggested by these patterns are not just around supply in terms of number and interest, but also of quality. There are also issues of support and refreshment for existing principals, and of how as a system we can use principal knowledge beyond the individual school.

Introduction

School leadership has come to the fore in New Zealand educational policy in the last few years. A number of issues of system coherence and capability around school leadership were identified in the NZ country report for the OECD School Leadership project, in 2007.¹ Since then, the Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework has been developed,² and the Best Evidence Synthesis on school leadership and student outcomes has provided a powerful lens on the leadership practices that contribute to improved learning.³ The Ministry of Education has also worked with the sector to develop a Professional Leadership Plan, whose overarching aim is to provide strong leadership in every school, with mention of “attract, develop, retain”. In 2009–10, the plan focuses on development programmes and resources for principals (aspiring, first-time principals and experienced), and starts to address leadership needs of those with middle and senior school management responsibilities.

The 2007 NZ country report noted the absence of national data on the number and quality of applicants for school leadership positions, and that the age profile for principals might mean a greater need for recruitment over the following decade.

NZCER decided to complement its existing three-yearly national surveys of primary and secondary schools with ongoing collection of information about principal vacancies that would provide a national picture of trends over time. We started a database of all principal advertisements in the *Education Gazette*, which are free to schools, and are probably used by all New Zealand schools wishing to recruit a principal, in late 2007. We have also surveyed the board chairs of all those schools that have advertised for a principal, to find out more about the pool of applicants, and the destinations of the departing principals.⁴

In this report, we provide information from the 2008 and 2009 advertisements, and from the 2008 survey (the 2009 survey is not yet complete). Our 2008 survey of board chairs in schools seeking new principals had a response rate of 66 percent, matching the school characteristics of the advertisements pretty well, with some underrepresentation of state-integrated schools, U5 and U6 schools and urban schools. We also include some relevant data from the most recent NZCER national surveys on principal plans and teacher interest in the principalship.

¹ Ministry of Education (2007). *New Zealand Country Report on Improving School Leadership. OECD Background Report*. Wellington: author.

² Ministry of Education (2009). *Kiwi Leadership for Principals. Principals as Educational Leaders*. Wellington: Author.

³ Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

⁴ NZCER staff who have worked on this project are Keren Brooking, Sandi Schagen and Magdalene Lin. Analysis for this report was undertaken by NZCER’s Head Statistician, Edith Hodgen, and Cathy Wylie.

Principal vacancies 2008 and 2009

In 2008, 285 state and state-integrated schools advertised for a new principal. This is about 11.5 percent of the total number of schools in the national system.

In 2009, 189 state and state-integrated schools advertised for a new principal. This is about 7.6 percent of the total number of schools in the national system.

This reduction by almost a third in the number of principal positions available between 2009 and 2008 cannot be explained by any reduction in the number of schools. Eight primary schools closed between 2008 and 2009, but eight composite schools and two secondary schools were opened.

It is in the primary schools that we see most of the decrease; the number of secondary principal vacancies remained much the same for both years.

But because we had only two years of principal advertisements, we did not know whether 2009 is an unusual year for primary schools, departing from an ongoing pattern, or whether 2008 was an unusual year. We therefore looked at loss rates from the principalship, for which there is longer trend data. Loss rates are measured by the Ministry of Education, using payroll data. This is a different measure, which does not translate directly into advertisements (loss rates include staff on parental leave and leave without pay).

Ministry of Education figures for loss rates from 2000–1 to 2006–7 show a consistent loss rate of between 7–8 percent for primary principals, more towards the 7 percent end, but then a jump to 9.2 percent in the 2007–8 year. In May 2006–May 2007, 135 primary principals left their jobs, cf. 177 in May 2007–May 2008. So the 2008 year, with 235 primary principal vacancies (12.6 percent of primary schools), may be the odd year out; in 2009, there were 139 vacancies (7.4 percent). Perhaps 2008 was a peak year for external factors to play a role, such as attractive role changes for primary principals, including overseas contracts (which attracted some media and sector interest).

Secondary principal loss rates show more volatility, ranging from 12.3 in 2001–2 (around 39 positions—three secondary schools closed between 2001 and 2002), to an outlier of 4.1 in 2004–5 (around 13 positions—including two secondary school closures). But for five of the eight years for which loss data are publicly available, the loss rate has been between 7.6 and 10. The advertisement data for 2008 and 2009 show around 10 percent of secondary principalships, 32–33 positions, vacant in each year.

It will be interesting to see what happens in 2010, and how the patterns relate to external factors (e.g., the level of existence of opportunities beyond the school) and the controversial introduction of national standards in primary and intermediate schools.

Table 1 shows the school characteristics of the principal vacancies for 2008 and 2009, with a comparison with the national pattern of school characteristics (using July 2009 Ministry of Education school roll data). Small and rural schools continue to show higher vacancy rates than

other schools. Integrated schools are also overrepresented in 2009. Decile and proportion of Māori enrolment are not associated with any marked differences in vacancy levels. Intermediate schools and U5 and U6 schools show lower vacancy rates than other school types. Six of the 2009 schools advertising were Kura Kaupapa Māori (but none in 2008); this is 8.6 percent of the total number of Kura Kaupapa Māori.

Table 1 Principal advertisements in *Education Gazette* 2008 and 2009—school characteristics

	2008		2009		MOE national total 2009 for state and state- integrated schools	
	N = 285	% of ads	N = 189	% of ads	(N=2,486)	%
School type						
Full primary	146	51	90	48	1,075	43
Contributing primary	89	31	49	26	796	32
Intermediate	8	3	5	3	121	5
Composite	6	2	10	5	103	4
Secondary	33	11	32	17	319	13
Special	3	1	3	2	62	3 ⁵
School size (U grade)						
U1 & U2	106	40	65	34	671	27
U3 & U4	92	33	60	32	870	35
U5 & U6	54	19	46	24	696	28
U7+	23	8	18	10	249	10
Location						
Urban	161	56	119	63	1,760	71
Rural	124	44	70	37	726	29
Socioeconomic decile						
1–2	49	17	41	22	532	21
3–4	68	24	31	16	495	20
5–6	58	20	45	24	500	20
7–8	61	21	35	19	478	19
9–10	48	17	37	20	477	19
Proportion of Māori students on roll⁶						
Less than 8%	34	12	29	15	366	15
8–14%	58	20	32	17	524	21
15–30%	86	30	62	33	738	30
31%+	98	34	61	32	816	33
Authority						
State	258	91	159	84	2,159	87
State-integrated	27	9	30	16	327	13

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

⁵ This includes The Correspondence school, special schools, teen parent unit, Years 7–10 schools, and kura teina.

⁶ Māori proportion of enrolment is not available for 42 schools in the Ministry of Education data-set.

Only 16 schools needed to readvertise their principal position twice within an 18-month period, some because appointments did not stay, some because they did not attract suitable applicants. These schools were almost all full primary, U1 or U2, with an overrepresentation of rural schools.

Interest in becoming a principal

What about the supply of future principals? There are indications for secondary schools of both an increased interest, and of a good sized pool who appear to want the job for its substance, more than for its status.

In NZCER's 2009 secondary national survey, 13 percent of secondary teachers said they were interested in becoming a principal in future, with a further 8 percent unsure. This is an increase on the 8 percent who said they were interested in the 2003 NZCER secondary national survey (which also found 8 percent unsure).

Almost half the deputy and assistant principals are definitely interested in becoming a principal (44 percent).

Wanting the challenge (45 percent of those who are interested in becoming a principal), and interest in implementing ideas they have (39 percent) are the main reasons: dimensions that are related more to the substance of the role than liking the idea of the responsibility (21 percent), or getting a better salary (mentioned by only 15 percent).

Currently, 32 percent of secondary principals are women, whereas women make up 58 percent of the secondary teaching force. Is gender related to interest in becoming a principal? It is. Nine percent of female teachers expressed interest in becoming a principal, cf. 19 percent of male teachers. Thirty-one percent of female deputy or assistant principals expressed interest, cf. 58 percent of male deputy or assistant principals. Males were more attracted than women by the idea of responsibility (46 percent, cf. 28 percent of females interested in the principalship), and by getting a better salary (39 percent, cf. 28 percent). Male teachers who were not interested in the principalship were more likely than female teachers who were not, to think that the principal's workload was too high (51 percent, cf. 40 percent).

If we look at secondary schools, then we would have at least 280 senior staff⁷ who are interested in the principalship; and there were 32 vacancies in 2009. Current patterns of appointment show that first-time principals make up at least half the new appointments.

NZCER will run its next national primary survey in Term 3 this year. The 2007 data show 13 percent of primary and intermediate teachers were interested in becoming principals, the same proportion as in 2003. A further 15 percent were unsure, slightly more than in 2003. Compared with secondary schools, primary and intermediate school deputy principals show less interest in

⁷ Based on a conservative estimate of two senior positions at each school, and 44 percent interest in the principal's role.

becoming principals (28 percent), as do assistant/associate principals (19 percent). This translates into a pool which could approach the marginal range, and with interest not always geographically close to particular vacancies. One way to estimate this conservatively is to assume that 20 percent of senior staff in primary schools are interested in the role; and multiplying by 1,815, the number of U3 schools plus (that are more likely to have senior staff than U1 and U2 schools), gives 363 who might be interested; and there were 144 primary and intermediate vacancies in 2009.

Challenge and interest in implementing ideas were also the main reasons behind an interest in the principalship—mentioned by 79 percent or more of those primary and intermediate teachers who expressed interest—but there was more interest shown by these teachers in status and reward (66 percent liked the idea of the responsibility of the position, and 55 percent, a better salary).

Application numbers

Overall, most schools are able to compile a shortlist of four or five applicants from their applications. The median number of applications for principal vacancies reported by the state and state-integrated board chairs responding to our 2008 survey was 8.5, with a range from one to 27. The preliminary 2009 survey data show a median of 9, with a range from one to 30.⁸ But the range is quite wide, with some (primary) schools getting only one application. Table 2 sets out the median and range of applications reported for different types of school in 2008.

⁸ The survey responses received so far for 2009 are somewhat underrepresentative of the number of full primaries and U1 and U2 schools that advertised in 2009, which may account for the difference in median from 2008.

Table 2 Number of applications for vacancies 2008—school characteristics

(N=187)	2008		
	N	Median	Range
School type			
Full primary	99	6	1–23
Contributing primary	58	11.5	1–27
Intermediate	4	12.5	9–18
Composite	5	5	4–9
Secondary	19	8	4–18
Special	2	10	6–14
School size (U grade)			
U1 & U2	80	6	2–18
U3 & U4	66	11	2–27
U5 & U6	27	12	4–27
U7+	14	8.5	2–18
Location			
Urban	97	10	1–27
Rural	90	6	2–23
Socioeconomic decile			
1–2	31	9	3–27
3–4	45	6	2–21
5–6	36	7	1–27
7–8	47	9	2–19
9–10	28	11.5	1–23
Proportion of Māori students on roll⁹			
Less than 8%	44	10	4–23
8–14%	59	12	2–23
15–30%	85	8	2–27
31%+	101	6	1–20
Authority			
State	177	9	2–27
State-integrated	10	3	1–12

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The median number of applications was lower for schools that are U1 and U2, composite, full primary, rural, high Māori-enrolment and deciles 3–4 schools. The lowest median was for state-integrated schools (this makes some sense in terms of any particular requirements related to the religious affiliation or special character of the school, but only 37 percent of the board chairs of the state-integrated schools advertising for a new principal responded to the survey, so these may

⁹ National data on Māori enrolment are not available for 42 schools.

not be representative). The most attractive schools for principal applications appear to be intermediates, U5 and U6 size, deciles 9–10 and/or low to medium proportions of Māori enrolment.

Board use of advice in appointing principals

The quantity of applications is only part of the picture of ensuring that all schools can appoint good-quality principals. Boards are responsible for making principal appointments. All but 5 percent of the schools appointing principals in 2008 made use of some additional expertise in their appointment process. Boards of U7+ schools were most likely not to use additional expertise (21 percent).

Forty-eight percent of the boards used private consultants (often former principals), 34 percent used another (current) principal, 21 percent used other sources (including the Catholic Education Office and teachers in the school), 13 percent used the School Support Services advisers, 11 percent the school's current principal and 3 percent the Limited Statutory Manager appointed by the Ministry of Education to work with schools facing major issues (most of these were working with full primary schools). Private consultants were used more in contributing and composite schools, in rural areas and state schools.

Thirty-nine percent of trustees responding to the 2009 NZCER secondary national survey said they would like Ministry of Education advice on professional experts to help with principal appointments, and 20 percent said they already got such advice. Those who got or wanted such advice from the Ministry of Education outweighed those who did not want it (23 percent). Twenty-eight percent of the trustees would also like Ministry of Education advice on making this crucial decision for their school, and 18 percent said they already got such advice. Thirty-five percent did not want Ministry of Education advice on the appointment.

Board chair views of the quality of applications for principal

What did board chairs think of the quality of the applications they received? Overall, 29 percent thought the field of applicants for their school's principalship was very good to excellent, and 41 percent that it was all right. Twenty-four percent said the quality of applicants was patchy and 4 percent that it was disappointing. But 78 percent of the chairs thought they had been able to get a very good to excellent shortlist; 18 percent said the quality of their shortlist was all right, and 1 percent that it was patchy or disappointing.

There were some differences in board chair views of the quality of applicants: half the secondary school chairs thought the overall quality was patchy or disappointing, translating into shortlists that were (only) all right for 27 percent of the secondary schools. None of the state-integrated school chairs rated the quality of their applicants as patchy or disappointing, though views of the shortlist were much the same for both state and state-integrated schools. Deciles 9–10 school chairs were most likely to rate the quality of their applicants as very good or excellent (46

percent), but decile was not a factor that appeared to make a difference when it came to making a shortlist. Thus while the median number of applications was lower in some kinds of school, the lower numbers did not appear to limit the quality of the shortlists.

Only four schools (all primary) were unable to appoint their first choice of the applicants they had. Eighty-six percent of the board chairs were very satisfied with their appointment, 10 percent were reasonably satisfied and 2 percent were satisfied. Most of those who were not very satisfied were from full primary, U1 and U2 and rural schools.

We also asked the board chairs to rate each shortlisted applicant's suitability for their school and community on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = will probably cope, to 5 = an ideal match). This seemed to be a key aspect in appointments. Only 10 percent of the shortlisted applicants who were not appointed were rated an ideal match compared to 65 percent of those appointed. Most of the rest of those appointed received a rating of 4 out of 5.

Deciles 9–10 schools seemed to have somewhat more choice of shortlisted applicants who seemed an ideal match (36 percent, cf. 22 percent in deciles 1–4 schools), and to have made such an appointment (75 percent). Urban principal appointments (76 percent) and those in U7+ schools (79 percent) were also more likely to seem an ideal match to the school and community, though views of the shortlisted applicants' suitability were much the same across rural and urban schools, and different size schools.

Social characteristics of shortlisted applicants and those selected

We do not know the social characteristics and experience of all those who applied; we do have information on 595 shortlisted candidates, and 186 of these who were selected for principalships, in 2008.

Gender

Women now make up 53 percent of the shortlisted applicants for principalships, but 49 percent of those appointed. They were most likely to be among the shortlisted applicants for U1 and U2 schools (67 percent, and 61 percent of those selected), schools with high Māori enrolment (63 percent, and 60 percent of those selected), full primary schools (59 percent, and 56 percent of those selected), state-integrated schools (65 percent, and 70 percent of those selected) or special schools (67 percent, and 50 percent selected). They were least likely to be among the shortlisted applicants for secondary principalships (22 percent of shortlisted applicants, and 16 percent of those selected) or for U5–7 schools (36 percent, with the same proportion selected).

Ethnicity

Eighty-four percent of the shortlisted applicants were Pākehā, 10 percent were Māori, 3 percent were South African, 1 percent were Pasifika and 0.3 percent, Asian. Three percent were of other ethnic origins. There were some marked differences in the patterns of Māori cf. Pākehā shortlisted applicants.

Māori shortlisted applicants were more likely to be applying for composite (21 percent), and full primary schools. All the Māori shortlisted applicants were applying for state schools, and all but one of the Māori shortlisted applicants were applying for U1–U4 schools. Seventy-three percent of Māori shortlisted applicants were applying for deciles 1–4 school principalships, cf. 34 percent of Pākehā shortlisted applicants. Seventy-one percent were applying for principalships of high Māori enrolment schools. They were also more likely to be applying for rural principalships (68 percent, cf. 43 percent of Pākehā shortlisted applicants). Māori were less likely to be among the shortlisted applicants for intermediates, secondary schools or contributing schools.

Eighty-two percent of the appointed candidates were Pākehā, 11 percent were Māori, 3 percent were South African, 2 percent were Pasifika and none were Asian. Four percent were of other ethnic origins. Patterns in terms of school characteristics were much the same for the appointed principals as they were for the shortlisted applicants.

Age

The Ministry of Education payroll data showed that 21 percent of secondary principals were aged over 55 in 2007, as were 14 percent of primary principals.

Forty-two percent of the shortlisted applicants were in their forties, and another 25 percent were aged 50 or older. Twenty-six percent were in their thirties, and 2 percent in their twenties. Almost all the latter were shortlisted for full primary, rural and U1 and U2 schools. Shortlisted applicants for secondary principalships were least likely to be aged under 40 (11 percent).

Among the appointed candidates, we find the same age profile as the shortlisted candidates for those aged under 40. There is a somewhat higher proportion of those in their forties (46 percent), and a somewhat lower proportion of those aged 50 or more (22 percent).

All of the successful applicants in their twenties were appointed to U1 and U2 schools that were rural and deciles 7–10. Deciles 1–2 schools were most likely to appoint candidates aged 50 or more (32 percent), as were U3 and U4 schools (35 percent) and urban schools (27 percent, cf. 16 percent of rural schools).

Qualifications

Half of the shortlisted applicants' highest qualification¹⁰ was reported to be a teaching degree. Twenty-four percent had a postgraduate degree; 17 percent a teaching diploma; and there was no information about the highest qualification levels of 10 percent of the shortlisted applicants. The selected candidates had a similar qualifications profile: slightly more had a postgraduate degree (27 percent), and slightly fewer a teaching degree (46 percent).

Teaching experience

Shortlisted applicants for the 2008 principal vacancies usually had at least 10 years' teaching experience (45 percent had 16 or more years, and 31 percent 10 or more years). Eighteen percent had four to nine years' teaching experience, and 2 percent less than four years'. Most of the latter were applying for positions in full primary schools, which also attracted most of those with four to nine years' teaching experience. Most of those applying for secondary principalships (78 percent) had 16 or more years' teaching experience. Shortlisted applicants for rural schools tended to have less teaching experience (31 percent had less than 10 years teaching experience, cf. 9 percent of those shortlisted for urban schools).

The teaching experience profiles of those appointed are very similar to the profile for the shortlists.

Leadership professional development

Twenty-six percent of the shortlisted applicants (155) were reported to be undertaking the Aspiring Principals pilot programme, which ran in 2008.¹¹ A quarter had undertaken the First Time Principals programme, which is offered free to all first-time principals. A higher proportion of the shortlisted applicants for rural schools (31 percent, cf. urban 20 percent) were undertaking or had undertaken the First Time Principals programme.

Another 20 percent had (also) undertaken the Principals Development and Planning Centre programme, which was offered to principals with more than five years' experience up to 2009. Higher proportions of those who had undertaken the latter programme were on the shortlists for U5 and U6 schools and intermediates and on low Māori enrolment schools; all those who had undertaken this programme were applying for state schools.

Those who had undertaken the First Time Principals programme were somewhat more likely to be among the selected candidates (32 percent), as were those undertaking the Aspiring Principals

¹⁰ Information here is based on 409 shortlisted candidates, including 186 successful candidates.

¹¹ Some applicants were reported by board chairs to have undertaken programmes aimed at different stages of principal careers—some combinations (e.g., First time Principals programme and the Principals Development and Planning Centre programme) that would be feasible; and others that were not (e.g., the new Aspiring Principals pilot and the Principals Development and Planning Centre programme). These data on leadership professional development may not be entirely accurate.

programme (29 percent), with those who had undertaken the Principals Development and Planning Centre programme (18 percent) somewhat less likely to be amongst those selected (this did not seem to be related to age).

Principal careers

The survey of board chairs making principal appointments sheds some further light on where principals come from, and where they go. At least half of the new appointments in 2008 were first-time principals:

- 33 percent of new principals come from another principalship
- 42 percent come from a senior school management position
- 14 percent come from a teaching position (scale A)
- 10 percent are unspecified.

State-integrated, U5 and U6 schools, intermediate school and urban school principals were more likely to come from another principalship, and those of Years 9–15 secondary schools, less likely. Secondary schools and contributing primaries were more likely than others to make appointments from candidates who had been in senior school management positions. Almost all the appointments from teacher ranks were for full primary, U1 or 2 and rural schools.

Most new principal appointments are made from external candidates (73 percent, with 20 percent internal candidates, and 7 percent unreported). Forty percent come from a larger school (which is consistent with the proportion coming from senior school management or teacher positions), 24 percent from smaller schools and 10 percent from the same size schools. Most of those who were already principals came from smaller schools (60 percent), with 19 percent coming from schools of the same size, and 13 percent from larger schools. There are no marked differences related to school type in these patterns.

The two main destinations of principals who left these positions that were advertised in 2008 were to another principalship (34 percent, pretty well matching the proportion of principalships that went to existing principals), or retirement (20 percent).

Eight percent returned to the classroom, and 5 percent went to senior management positions in larger schools. Eighteen percent went to other positions in education: 8 percent into school support services; 3 percent became private consultants; 3 percent took up relieving work; 2 percent joined tertiary education institutions; 2 percent joined the Ministry of Education; and 1 percent joined ERO.

Nine percent went overseas, 5 percent switched to a career outside the education sector and 2 percent pursued study. Six percent (also) left for personal, family or health reasons.

With such varied destinations, it is a little hard to see clear patterns in relation to school type. The figures suggest that there may have been a higher retirement rate among principals from contributing primary and intermediate schools, U5 and U6 schools and urban schools, and that

secondary principals were more likely to go overseas or study. All but one of those returning to the classroom, and all of those going to senior management positions in larger schools, had been principals of full primary schools. Most of these were also from rural schools, or U1–U2 schools. Urban principals were more likely than rural to go overseas, study or get another nonschool position in education. The larger the school, the more likely it was that the principal would go overseas (from 5 percent of U1–U2 principals, to 21 percent of U7+ principals). State-integrated principals were more likely to go on to another principalship.

The preliminary board survey data for 2009 show very similar patterns of where New Zealand schools' next principals come from, and the destination of the departing principal.

Trends in the NZCER national survey data indicate that principals have been staying longer in their positions. For example, only 12 percent of the principals responding to the 2003 secondary survey said their current school had had only one principal in the last 10 years; in 2006, this had risen to 32 percent, and in 2009 it was 28 percent. In 2003, only 37 percent of secondary principals thought they would continue as principal of their school in the next five years; by 2006 this had increased to 59 percent, and in 2009, 65 percent. Twenty-two percent of secondary principals thought they would like to change to the leadership of another secondary school in the next five years, 21 percent would like a different role within education and 17 percent (a little more than in 2006 and 2003) thought they would probably retire. A quarter of the principals were thinking of at least two options (other than sabbatical leave). For example, just over half those who thought about retirement were also thinking they would stay as principal of their current school.

This may mean fewer opportunities for both first-time principals and those looking to change schools. This increased stability may reflect a combination of reasons which affect individual decision making, and which warrant further exploration. Some principals may feel better supported (e.g., a substantial minority have come through the First Time Principals programme, which began in 2002); they may find sufficient ongoing challenge in their roles within one school setting (e.g., the introduction of NCEA, the new curriculum) or they may not wish to move; or they may find it, or think it, more difficult to win jobs despite their experience.

One major reason may be the lack of career opportunities in education past the principalship. Fifty-three percent of the secondary principals in the 2009 NZCER national survey would like more career opportunities in education, other than the principalship, and 21 percent would like to change to a different role in education over the next five years. Eighteen percent felt they were stuck in the principal role (simply) because there were no other opportunities.

The policy issues around principal supply then are not just around supply in terms of number and interest, but also of quality. There are also issues of support and refreshment for existing principals, and of how as a system we can use principal knowledge beyond the individual school.