

New Charters

Last week I drew attention to the relationship between the new NEGs framework and the new School Charter framework, both of which have been changed by the 2001 Education Standards Act.

According to this new Act, the School Charter is "to establish the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the Board **that will give effect to the government's national education guidelines** and the Board's priorities". And that's only some of it. The Ministry of Education, in promoting its new planning and reporting requirements (which it says will help raise student achievement and reduce disparity), has been going gently gently on what their new statutory provisions actually say.

In the Ministry's latest "Sharpening the Focus" (June 2002), they say that in many cases, the only addition to current paperwork "will be for the school to bring together its current charter, strategic plan, annual plan, and budget to form the new charter". Easy peasy! Cool! But of course, "Sharpening the Focus" is not the Education Standards Act!

So what does the Ministry's new Education Standards Act really say about the Charter? Basically, it says the charter will have three sections, thus:

Section 1

NZ Cultural Diversity, Maori Culture, Maori Language

This section includes the aim of

- (a) developing for the school policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity, and the unique position of Maori culture; and
- (b) the aim of ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to provide.

Section 2

Long Term Strategic Plan

- (i) Board's aims and purposes.
- (ii) For next 3 to 5 years:

- aims,
- objectives,
- directions,
- priorities

for

- intended student outcomes,

the school's performance,

- Use of resources.

Section 3

Annual Plan

- i) The Board's

- aims,
- directions,
- objectives,
- priorities, and
- targets

relating to

- intended student outcomes,
- the school's performance,
- use of resources.

(ii) Set targets for key activities and achievement of objectives for the year.

Furthermore

A school charter must include the Board's aims, objectives, directions, priorities and targets in the following categories:

(a) Student achievement

(b) Activities aimed at meeting both general government policy objectives for all schools (referred to in NEGs) and specific policy objectives applying to that school.

(c) The management of the Board's capability, resources, assets, and liabilities, including its human resources, finances, property, and other ownership matters;

(d) Other matters of interest to the public that the Minister may determine.

Moreover

A school charter must contain all annual or long-term plans the Board is required to have or has prepared for its own purposes; or

A summary of each plan or a reference to it.

So, on the one hand we have Easy Peasy message of Sharpening the Focus, but on the other, we have the Cut and Thrust of the Education Standards Act. We might ask, therefore, what is going on here? Thin edge of the wedge?