

Statler (Hamish) and Waldorf (Leo), a monthly vent from the balcony.....

(often referred to as a bit of dribble from two crusty old principals...)

Over the past fortnight I have managed to catch up with a swag of Waikato Principals to share a few coffees, the odd cold beverage (hops is a vegetable) and share some wars stories. Now I always enjoy these opportunities to chat, learn something new, explore who had the biggest challenge of the week and on the odd occasion, just seize the moment to wind up a colleague. These magic moments with peers often serve as a bit of fuel for our monthly rant and to get some stuff off the well preserved liver.

Disclaimer: To any people we offend through the rant, or for those of you who are slightly sensitive, we do apologise. If you are REALLY upset, disagree or feel like hurting one of us, please contact Hamish directly. (He lives in Cambridge, address available on request.)

So what's on top in June 2022, what's cooking the goose.....

Right here we go. What is the story around the one-off wellbeing payments to boards for FTP with less than 3 years of experience? Now don't get me wrong, I love my newer Principals colleagues and I truly do appreciate they need support and recognition too. The issue I have is, if a FTP gets \$12,000 to support their hauora or wellbeing, what support is there for an aging, balding fossil like myself? For some unknown reason the song lyrics "What about me, it isn't fair.." come to mind. (Moving Pictures 1982 pop reference.)

Where is the recognition for **ALL** Principals have battled, struggled, responded and have gone above and beyond during the last two years of COVID. Where is the recognition for those who have; taught, filled in as caretaker's, dropped off home packs, reassured communities, maintained staff wellness, worked as truancy agencies and generally raced around attempting to keep the world as 'normal' as possible during times of uncertainty. Was there no thought on behalf of the MOE or the Government in around this. Could the Labour government not form another review team or working party to investigate? (We definitely need more bureaucrats).

I question, were we (Principals) omitted again because 'we are **not** essential workers?' Mate, two years into a global pandemic and we are still yet to be acknowledged. Did the brain surgeon who came up with the idea,

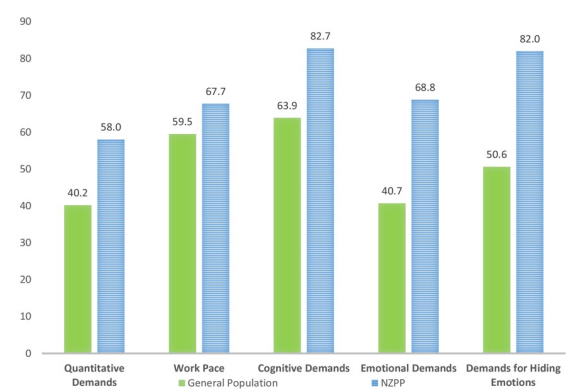


Figure 3.4 Demands at work

4.1. SOURCES OF STRESS RELATED TO RESOURCES

School leaders reported that resourcing needs are a significant source of stress. This was reported as their biggest stressor after the workload stressors (see Figure 4.1).

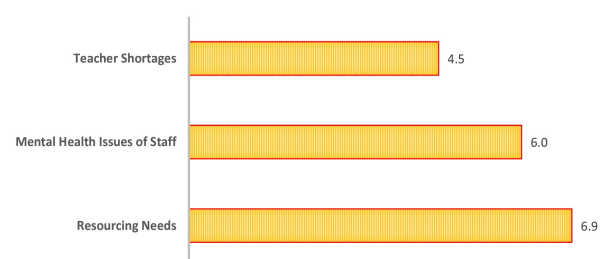


Figure 4.1 School leaders' sources of stress related to resources (average out of 10)

Did they not consider the turnover rate for principals across the sector, or listen to the feedback of principals from recent negotiations. At a time when we are haemorrhaging more experienced leaders, this approach seems more like a band aid fix or quick vote winning strategy, as opposed to a notion of merit.

To me it is concerning when I have colleagues across the sector sharing challenges and stresses pertaining to resourcing needs (some which would make you cry), many highlighting an inability to find staff (made harder by COVID, illness and an appealing International market) and others discussing the massive pressures associated with maintaining staff wellness, that nothing seems to have changed. (see Fig 4.1)

My challenge to the MOE and to the Government is that someone actually has to employ some foresight, utilise the overwhelming feedback and evidence collated over the last few years and take the brave step towards valuing ALL principals. Something has to change and current lip-slapping doesn't seem to reflect a vision going forward. The three suggestions listed in the NZPF Friday mailing were probably a good place to start, but hey whose listening? Hearing the 'Sound of Silence' now.

I am also keenly aware that on top of the 3 key stress challenges listed above, our Principals are also having to negotiate, learn about and come to grips with:

- A revised appraisal system;
- The new equity index (and the budget connotations associated with this);
- Changes to annual, strategic and Tiriti planning and accountabilities;
- The new curriculum roll out, the restructure of Te Mahau;
- The 'High Needs' review
- COVID wave 2 (**predicted for August / Sept**) , flu, measles and sickness, staff COVID PTSD;
- Student attendance;
- Budget concerns pertaining to roll decline, staffing costs, sickness;
- A changing ERO School Improvement Framework;
- and somewhere in amongst the mix of this all, time to focus on pedagogy and learning.

How many other organisations would honestly require leaders or CEO who could cope with consistent change, demand, uncertainty and both community and Ministerial pressures?

The second half of the monthly rant comes actually isn't original (no surprises there) and comes from a mate of mine from a school up the road. Now don't tell him but there are **few** occasions when I actually think he knows stuff. He was having a crack at me over a coffee around the Principal Negotiations and how he couldn't fathom the amount of bureaucratic crap associated with the process and how he felt organisations who were supposed to be supporting us, could make it so difficult.



Funnily enough over the course of the week he decided to have a bit of a crack and voice his concern in the form of a letter. Now this is the sort of action I always applaud and I am a firm believer, that if you want to effect change, **you have to take a stand or use your voice.**

I have inserted his letter below.....

Dear Lynda and Denise,

I'm writing to you quickly to express 2 serious concerns.

Firstly I'm really disappointed to hear that PPCB (Primary Principals Collective Bargaining) and NZEI seem to be like ships crossing in the night. At a meeting last week my local PSO clearly stated that NZEI has offered to work alongside PPCB in negotiations but had been rebuffed. By the same token PPCB reports that it too has had its approach to NZEI rebuffed. As a member of both organisations, notwithstanding any awkward recent history, I believe you should be talking to each other. The stakes are simply too high this time which is why PPCB emerged in the first place.

Secondly - and leading from my last point - I was shocked to see the email from Stephanie Mills proposing that our Collective Agreement negotiations (whoever leads them on behalf of principals!) be subsumed into a Public Sector Pay Initiative. This may have been a decision taken in good faith by some peak bodies, not including NZPF? (and subject to certification by membership) but it yet again indicated to me that the 2000 odd NZ primary principals are not at the very forefront of some peoples thinking. We remain just another small part of a larger 'campaign' and our voice will likely become lost in the noise - just like 3 years ago.

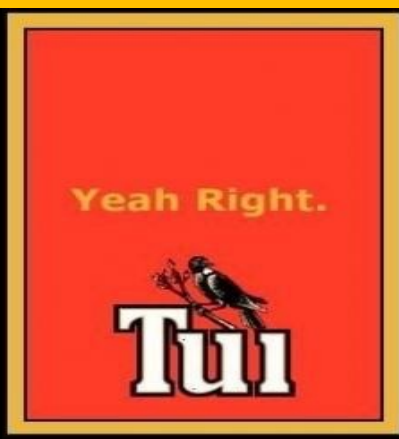
I joined PPCB because I strongly believe the voice for principals has been diminishing. The endless focus on campaigns by NZEI (for groups other than principals) are due to the very nature of the organisation and the wide remit it has - I understand that. However, my selfish interest lies in my own collective agreement. Talking to colleagues, I believe this is the last chance for NZEI and PPCB to get it right. The workload ahead of schools (to be led by principals) is immense. Our collective agreement and negotiations should reflect the pivotal role we have. This latest email and the apparent stoush between NZEI and PPCB leaves me with little faith that principals will be in any way prioritised over the coming months.

I commend you both for the work that you are doing - but please remember to act for principals first.

Kind regards,

PRINCIPAL (A bloody good bloke with grey hair from up the road)

NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS FEEL VALUED BY LABOUR



Few Useful Links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbR78Jd1nGU>

Dr Rangi Matamua- Living by the Stars

A great staff video if you are looking at an introduction to Matariki.

Dr Matamua is a captivating and inspiring speaker. Please note there are a couple of fantast type graphics probably not suitable for younger viewers.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/jamie-phillips-painful-lessons-from-a-mathematics-class/F2UA7NA5NQFAAMXEHX4ZFDYNYA/>

A great read when considering the implications of equity, fairness and why one shoe does not fit all.

<https://ero.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media-documents/2022-04/School%20Improvement%20Framework%20March%202022.pdf>

Te Ara Huarau School Improvement Framework-
New ERO Tool

