SECONDARY TEACHER WORKLOAD STUDY REPORT

Lawrence Ingvarson Elizabeth Kleinhenz Adrian Beavis Helena Barwick Imelda Carthy Jenny Wilkinson

2005

Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of study

The study consisted of case study and survey components.

Fieldwork was initially conducted in twenty schools, mainly through individual interviews with principals and a small selection of middle managers and teachers. This work assisted the preparation of the survey instruments. Detailed case studies were written up for six schools. These schools were selected to provide a cross-section of school types and a range of workload issues.

Survey forms were sent to all New Zealand secondary schools during late 2004. Surveys were sent to the principal, up to five teachers and up to four managers within each school. Responses were received from 1150 teachers and 936 managers and 235 school principals. Replies were received from 357 schools. There was an average of 6 responses from teachers and managers for each school. There was a good coverage of age, gender and experience amongst the respondents to the survey. The study had data from a wide range of schools – schools that differed in size, location, social context, and traditions of governance.

Actual workload

In the survey, senior managers (including Associate Principals, Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Heads of Faculty with more than five 'salary units') reported working on average 59 hours in the week prior to the survey, middle managers 52 hours and teachers 47 hours (this is referred to as *actual workload* in this study). These figures for actual workload do not differ significantly from earlier survey studies of teachers' workload in New Zealand. However, teachers interviewed face to face during the case studies reported working an average of 43 hours per week. For managers the average was 51 hours. It can be seen that these estimates are lower than figures obtained from the survey.

Manageability of workload

A new measure of *perceived manageability* of workload was developed for this study. While *actual workload* measured as the number of hours worked the previous week has some uses, it is not necessarily related to dissatisfaction or detrimental effects on teaching or health. Our measure of *perceived manageability* was designed to provide a measure of the latter. There was a strong association between *perceived manageability* of work and satisfaction with work. Middle managers were less satisfied than either senior managers or teachers with their perceived workload and the balance of this work with private life.

Senior and middle managers, on average, perceived their workload to be significantly less manageable than teachers. The following findings, however, give reason for concern about the extent to which both middle managers and teachers perceive their workload as

manageable overall, and the extent to which workload is having detrimental effects, particularly on the quality of their teaching, the support they can give to colleagues, and their health.

Middle Managers: 57% of middle managers thought their workload was unmanageable; 63% did not have good balance between home and work; 77% felt their workload was affecting the quality of their teaching; 84% felt their workload was heavy; 71% felt they could not do what they needed to do in a reasonable time; 23% were thinking of leaving their school because of the workload; 40% felt they have little time to get to know their students well; 70% felt they had no time to provide professional support to colleagues; 27% were thinking of leaving teaching because of the workload; and 47% felt their workload was adversely affecting their health.

Teachers: 48% of teachers felt their workload was unmanageable; 57% did not have good balance between home and work; 71% felt their workload was affecting the quality of their teaching; 75% felt their workload was heavy; 73% felt they could not do what they needed to do in a reasonable time; 21% were thinking of leaving their school because of the workload; 39% felt they have little time to get to know their students well; 66% felt they have little time to provide professional support to colleagues; 28% were thinking of leaving teaching because of the workload; and 43% felt their workload was adversely affecting their health.

Relationship between workload and other variables

The survey component of the study revealed few statistically significant relationships between school size, geographic location (urban rural), type of school (e.g. secondary, composite), and governance (state, state-integrated, private), socio-economic status (decile level), ethnicity, single sex and co-ed schools – and actual or perceived workload. Any such relationships were weak. Gender did not appear to influence workload, except that females reported a slightly higher level of dissatisfaction with the balance between work and private life. There were few differences between school subject taught and workload measurability, except for Physical Education and Health (see Table 13, p. 96).

Factors related to perceived workload manageability

This study was designed to enable analysis of the relative influence of a range of school factors on teachers' workload, as set out in the conceptual framework for the study. These included a set of designated stressors, level of school support, teacher autonomy, school innovativeness, staff collaboration, strength of school guiding values, and school leadership.

This study found that the main factors related to perceived manageability of workload were a set of potential stressors identified in the questionnaire, such as paperwork, student behaviour and class size. Perceived workload manageability was not, however, related to number of hours worked per week.

The most significant stressors for middle managers, the group who perceived their work as least manageable, were the numbers of hours they spent at school, the amount of non-contact time, the amount of paperwork required, the level of resources, relations with other teachers and relations with parents.

For senior managers the profile of stressors was slightly different. Numbers of hours spent at the school, the amount of non-contact time, and the amount of paperwork were still the most important stressors, but developing new assessment procedures was also a significant stressor.

For teachers, once more the numbers of hours spent at the school was still a significant stressor, though less so than for managers. However, the amount of paperwork was equally significant as a stressor for teachers, as was the amount of non-contact time. The number of support staff in the school and performance appraisal were also significant stressors for teachers, though less so.

It is equally interesting to note the stressors that did not relate to workload manageability for the teachers and managers in this survey. These included class size, introduction of new curricula, developing new assessment procedures, accountability reviews, reporting requirements and collating and processing of assessment data.

The next most significant factors associated with manageability, for teachers and middle managers, were the level of support teachers thought they received from their school (e.g. I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in this school), and the degree of autonomy they felt they had in their work. No associations were found between school innovativeness, school leadership, collaborative teaching, clarity of school values and workload manageability for teachers or middle managers.

How to improve workload manageability in schools

Principals were asked about which factors would make workloads more manageable for: (1) themselves, (2) middle managers, (3) teachers. Managers were asked about which factors would make workloads more manageable for themselves and for teachers. Teachers were asked what would make the workload more manageable for teachers in schools.

Principals indicated that simplified compliance requirements, more teachers and greater ability to attract good teachers, and guaranteed planning time would assist in making their workload more manageable in schools.

Principals indicated that additional staff and guaranteed planning time along with reduced compliance requirements would assist in making the workload of managers more manageable in schools.

Principals felt that, on average, additional staff, guaranteed planning time, more support and more specialists were among the highest rated supports that would assist in making teachers' workload more manageable.

Managers saw additional staff, guaranteed planning time, reduced compliance requirements and the capacity to attract good teachers as most likely to assist in improving their workload. They also believed that these factors would be most likely assist the workload of teachers in schools.

Teachers saw additional staff, smaller classes, guaranteed planning time and more specialists as among the most important factors for assisting with their workload.

Typically, principals, managers and teachers saw increased support to reduce workload coming from the provision of additional staffing and additional provision for time to do professional work outside of the classroom.

Main findings from the case studies

- Teachers and managers in five of the six case study schools found their work to be manageable most of the time, apart from certain peak periods during the year. However, many teachers and managers in other schools, visited in the fieldwork stage of the study, reported difficulty managing their workload.
- Teachers interviewed for the case studies reported working an average of 43 hours per week. For managers the average was 51 hours. These estimates are lower than figures obtained from the survey.
- Teachers spent an average of 22 hours on scheduled classroom teaching duties; 5 hours on other scheduled duties (home group, pastoral, yard duty etc.); and 2 hours on meetings. This is a total of 28 hours on formally scheduled activities. For managers, the corresponding figures were 16 hours (teaching) 3 hours (other scheduled activities) and 3 hours (meetings).
- Teachers and managers spent an average of 10 hours on professional activities outside the classroom, mostly marking and preparation. This work was done after and before school, in non-contact periods during the day, at weekends and in holiday periods. Some people preferred to work at home (the great majority did some work at home every week). Some liked to work at school in 'quiet' times when students and most other staff were not in the building and access to facilities and equipment was easier.
- All people interviewed showed very high levels of personal commitment to their work. For some, especially teachers in the Kura, the lines between duty and personal dedication were blurred.
- For some teachers, high levels of personal commitment appeared to be taking a toll in terms of stress.
- The main workload problem identified was that of finding longer, uninterrupted periods of time to complete professional duties outside the classroom.
- Most teachers and managers believed strongly that they themselves were the main 'managers' of their work. Principals agreed with this view.
- Teachers in four of the six case study schools said that student behaviour management did not cause them workload problems. However, this was not the case in other schools visited in the fieldwork phase of the project, where teachers reported high levels of stress caused by poor student behaviour.
- Most people interviewed said that they were satisfied with the physical conditions of

their work but workspaces were viewed by the researchers and found to be less than optimal.

- All people interviewed said that they needed more clerical and administrative support.
- All case study schools enjoyed strong leadership, and had good levels of professional community.
- Subject departments were the main units of professional community and professional learning.
- Heads of Department said that they enjoyed their work of leading and mentoring teachers, but that the time available for this was grossly inadequate.
- Principals', managers' and teachers' use of ICT varied between schools. On the whole the uptake of ICT was not great.
- People who used ICT regularly appeared to be more organised and more in control of their workload than people who did not.
- Teachers did not perceive performance reviews as stressful or too time consuming. Managers said that they did not have the time to carry out performance reviews to their satisfaction. Principals were anxious to protect teachers and managers from time consuming performance review processes.
- In most of the case study schools, NCEA implementation was mentioned as a major workload factor.
- The NCEA workload problems that teachers and managers resented most were those concerned with excessive paperwork.
- Teachers who understood the NCEA and philosophically supported it were much less likely to report problems with workload than teachers who did not, although these teachers, too, resented the amount of paperwork attached.
- Teachers generally felt that the work involved in implementing the NCEA was becoming more manageable as people were growing more familiar with it, though, overall, the NCEA curriculum and assessment procedures will entail a permanent increase in teacher workload over the previous procedures.
- Some examples of observed good practice in schools included an effective system for managing student welfare and behaviour (Hillary Boys' High School and a strong program of teacher professional development and capacity building (Gladstone High School).

Areas in which the greatest improvements could be made

The research findings showed that there were few and low relationships between workload and school characteristics as school size, leadership style, geographic location, governing authority, or decile level. The findings suggest instead that factors that affect workload are largely common to all schools and teachers. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the following areas where improvements could be made.

Areas **for improvement fall under the headings below:**

At the system level:

1 Compliance
2 Curriculum and assessment requirements, including the NCEA
3 Performance review
4 The nature and pace of change
5 The amount of paperwork
6 Recognising and rewarding effective teaching

At the school level:

7 Actual workload: deployment of teachers' time
8 Student behaviour management
9 Working environment and access to resources in schools
10 Building a professional culture in schools, professional development, professional community and leadership
11 The work of Heads of Department
12 Use of ICT in schools.

At the individual teacher level:

13 Variation in individuals' capacity to manage workload efficiently and effectively
14 Recognising what motivates teachers
15 Unrealistic expectations and burnout.

These areas were categorised for convenience of identification. There is a great deal of overlap between them.