

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN NEW ZEALAND

Tony Dowden (EdD)
Lecturer, Middle Schooling
School of Education
University of Tasmania
Locked Bag 1307
Launceston
TAS 7250
Australia
Phone: ++61-3-6324-3352
Fax: ++61-3-6324-3048
Email: Tony.Dowden@utas.edu.au

Penny Bishop (EdD)
Associate Professor and Director, Middle Level Teacher Education
University of Vermont
85 South Prospect Street
Burlington, Vermont 05405
Phone: 802-656-9641
Fax: 802-656-1406
Email: penny.bishop@uvm.edu

C. J. Patrick Nolan (PhD)
Editor, Middle Schooling Review
Director, Innovation Research Consortium NZ Ltd
49 Lincoln Terrace
Palmerston North 4410
New Zealand
Email: Pat.Nolan@ircnz.co.nz
Phone: ++64-6-3538442
Mobile phone: ++64-0-212030317

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN NEW ZEALAND

ABSTRACT

Schooling for young adolescents in New Zealand (NZ) is problematic. Although NZ education has an enviable international reputation, the bipartite primary-secondary system has responded poorly to many young people who struggle to negotiate the transition between the two types of schooling. In this chapter we discuss the emergence of an indigenous middle schooling movement in NZ. We trace the history of middle level schooling from the first middle school in 1894, to a dalliance with a junior high school model in the 1920s, to the founding of the ubiquitous ‘intermediate’ school in the 1930s and, recently, the development of a handful of middle schools in the 1990s. We then evaluate current research and practice pertaining to middle level schooling in NZ. In particular we focus on current indictments on middle level schooling and recent reform efforts. We conclude by suggesting future directions for the education of young adolescents in NZ.

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN NEW ZEALAND

1. CONTEXTUAL NARRATIVE

The bipartite primary-secondary school system of England, which British colonists brought to New Zealand (NZ) in the mid 1800s, has shaped the nature and structure of schooling in NZ to the present day. Considerations of physical geography, changing demographics, political economy and ethnicity have all modified the colonial system to produce schools adapted to NZ's distinctive landscape and South Pacific society.

NZ is a relatively stable social democracy whose social context has been shaped by a bicultural discourse between indigenous Māori and Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent). Over the last 30 years, biculturalism has been cemented by the willingness of Māori and Pākehā to honour the Treaty of Waitangi, signed between the British crown and Māori tribes in 1840 to record the ceding of Māori land rights to the crown (King, 2003). English and Māori translations of the document were at variance, however, allowing multiple interpretations; ultimately leading to a process of reconciliation and reparation between Māori and Pākehā enshrined in legislation at the end of the 20th century.

NZ, the first country in 1893 to adopt universal suffrage for men and women, also granted voting rights to Māori at the same time as Pākehā; in contrast, indigenous Aborigines in neighbouring Australia gained the right to vote only as recently as 1967. It is noteworthy, too, that in the last 20 years women have filled almost every conceivable leadership role in NZ society. Notably, Helen Clark has been Prime Minister (the nation's political leader) for the last nine years.

The colonists of the 1800s who brought British schooling to NZ also brought Christianity, which played a role shaping NZ's political and social institutions, including

schools. While the state school system, which predominates, is secular, private and state-integrated church-aligned schools also exist alongside it. Today, religion plays a less dominant role in NZ culture, and in education, than the past. The wider trend is towards a lack of church affiliation, although the Christian heritage is still strong in Maori and Pasifika (people from South Pacific nations) communities.

The landscape in many ways defines NZ. One of the last and most remote landmasses to be inhabited, the two main islands – North Island and South Island – and several minor islands stretch over 2000 kilometers in a north-south direction. Shaped by a meeting of two tectonic plates, the NZ landscape features sharply rising mountain ranges and alluvial plains in South Island, and volcanoes and other spectacular geothermal activity in North Island. The temperate, maritime climate with its plentiful rainfall gives rise to lush vegetation with verdant farmland and remnant rain forest harbouring ancient flora and fauna.

The NZ economy, dominated by agriculture, tourism and service industries, generates a GDP of about US\$125 billion. The work-force is 99% literate and relatively well educated. NZ has two official languages: English and Māori. According to OECD figures in 2004, the NZ infant mortality rate was 5 out of 1000 live births (OECD, 2008). In addition, the 2004 OECD figures for NZ life expectancy were 81 years for women and 77 years for men.

NZ has a relatively small population of 4.2 million people comprised of 67.6% NZ European, 14.6% Maori, 9.2% Asian, 6.9% Pasifika, and 1.7% other. NZ culture is becoming more multicultural, due to a steady flow of immigrants from the United Kingdom, the South Pacific, East Asia, and South Africa as well as refugees from South East Asia and Africa.

2. HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLING

Schooling in New Zealand starts at age 5 and is compulsory from age 6 to 16. The school structure is two-tiered: primary schooling (Years 1-8) and secondary schooling (Years 9-13).

Young adolescents (Years 7-10) are distributed in various permutations of primary and secondary school type: full primary (Years 1-8); intermediate (Years 7-8); restricted composite (Years 7-10); composite (Years 1 to 13); and secondary (Years 9-13 and 7-13). As shown in Figures 1 and 2 (adapted from Durling, 2007), most Years 7-8 students (83%) are educated in full primary and intermediate schools while nearly all Years 9-10 students (95%) attend secondary schools.

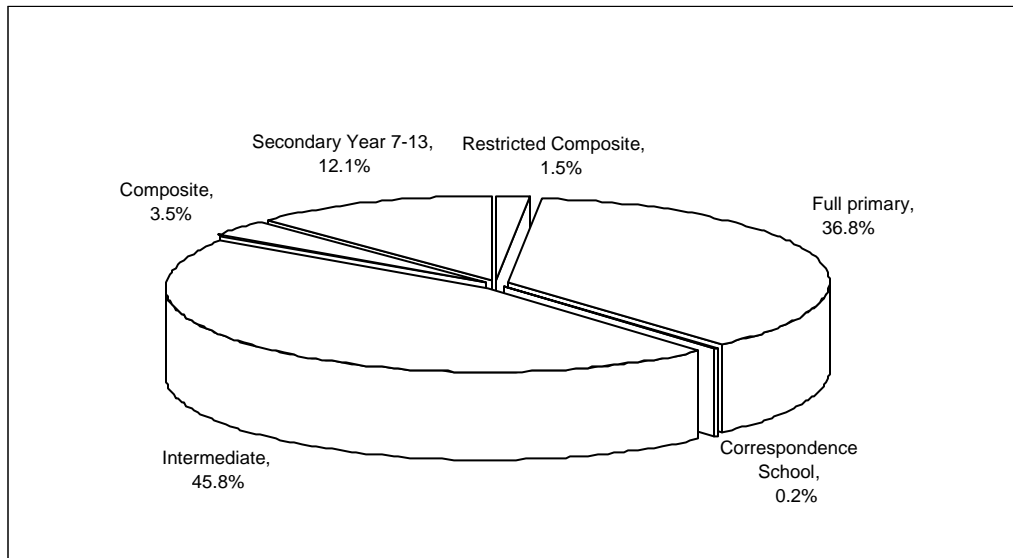


Figure 1: Distribution of students in Years 7 and 8 by school type in 2006

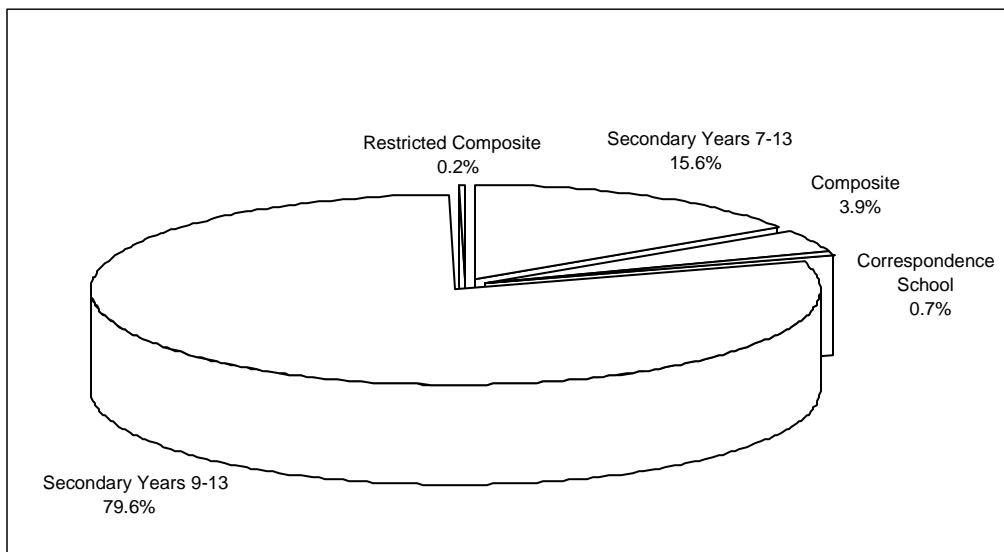


Figure 2: Distribution of students in Years 9 and 10 by school type in 2006

Yet, the data depicted in Figures 1 and 2 do not fully reveal the extent of the pedagogical and cultural divide between primary and secondary schooling in NZ. Students in Years 7-8 are taught by primary teachers and almost all Years 9-10 students are taught by secondary teachers. The primary and secondary schooling division is further accentuated by the conflicting interests of the influential national teachers' unions: the secondary teachers' union, the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) and the primary teachers' union, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI).

Over the last century, schooling for young adolescents in NZ has been shaped by an awkward transition – plumb in the middle of young adolescence – between primary schooling (Years 1-8) and secondary schooling (Years 9-13), and a political struggle concerning the type of school structure in which these students should be accommodated and taught. Also traceable, but almost imperceptible outside official documents, is the development of an increasingly robust discourse concerning the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents in NZ.

Origins of the New Zealand Middle School

Advocates of middle schooling in NZ, such as the New Zealand Association for Intermediate and Middle Schooling (NZAIMS) and a few academics argue for a unique pedagogy in Years 7-10 (Nolan & Brown, 2002; Stewart & Nolan, 1992), yet they do so in a political context that has not historically recognized middle schooling as a distinct tier in the structure of NZ education.

Early Middle School Types

Philosophical differences and political rivalry has typified the debate concerning how to best educate young adolescents ever since the 1890s (Hinchco, 2004). Two acts of parliament,

the 1877 Education Act and the 1877 Education Reserve Act, established primary and secondary schooling in NZ. The 1877 Acts remained the guide for national policy on schooling (Hinchco). This was despite the fact that as early as 1885, Minister of Education Robert Stout expressed concern about the ‘disjunction’ between primary and secondary schooling (Watson, 1964); and in 1925 Frank Tate, Director of Education in Victoria, Australia noted the ‘general lack of articulation’ between primary and secondary schooling in NZ (Butchers, 1932 cited in Hinchco). In between these criticisms, however, the establishment of Nelson Central School (Years 5-9) in 1894 at the top of South Island became the first NZ experiment with middle schooling. The experiment echoed the ‘central’ school movement in England and Scotland. It provided primary schooling with access to early secondary specialization. The experiment did not spread beyond the Nelson district, however, and it finished in 1911 (Hinchco).

Nonetheless, from about the time of John Dewey’s Laboratory School in Chicago at the turn of the 20th century and especially during the first flush of the progressive ‘New Education’ movement in the 1920s, NZ educators sought to establish middle schooling. Reciprocal visits between NZ and the USA by educational leaders catalyzed change. Frank Milner, a long-serving secondary school principal, and primary school principal Thomas Wells visited the USA. They were followed by Clarence Beeby – Director of Education (1940-1960) – who was the architect of major educational reform in NZ. The school practices the three observed in the USA, particularly the ideas advanced by Dewey and other progressives such as Abraham Flexner and Isaac Kandell, strongly influenced their thinking (Dowden, 2007a). In particular, all three articulated the notion that young adolescence is a unique developmental stage requiring a distinctive approach to middle level schooling.

The educational ferment of the 1920s saw an ambitious attempt to bring about structural change to the bipartite NZ school system with the introduction of junior high schools (Years 7-9 and Years 7-10). The junior high was based on the American model where exploration of subject areas and early specialization of subjects were intended to sit together. The first, Kowhai Junior High School (Years 7-9) opened in 1922. The others were attached to existing high schools as junior departments, thus Kowhai Junior High was the only stand-alone junior high school (Hinchco, 2004).

The Intermediate School

In 1932 the government changed the legislation and established the Years 7-8 'intermediate' school (Watson, 1964). With the exception of Kowhai Junior High, that continued to accept Year 9 students until 1957, the junior high experiment ended. Hinchco (2004) argued that junior high advocates failed to recognize that a forced marriage of (primary-oriented) exploration and (secondary-oriented) early specialization was always likely to lead to conflict. The 1932 decision was also influenced by the Great Depression which dictated a need for major cuts to the national budget. For instance, in a parallel austerity measure, the government excluded all five-year-old children from state-run schools in 1932 (Alcorn, 1999).

The outcome of the effort to develop middle schooling in the 1920 and 1930s was, therefore, the establishment of the intermediate school (Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Intermediate schools soon assumed the child-centred primary school culture with a philosophy of subject exploration (Beeby, 1938; Stewart & Nolan, 1992; Watson, 1964). Since 1932, therefore, schooling in NZ has had two tiers: primary and secondary, with the intermediate school capping the final years of primary schooling.

Enrollments in intermediate schools peaked in 1976, with 72% of Years 7-8 students. Intermediates were subjected to a period of sustained criticism from the public in the late 1970s and 1980s (Hinchco, 2004). The intermediate school lost its predominance (Neville-Tisdall, 2002) and by 2006 only accounted for 46% of Year 7-8 students (Durling, 2007). The decline in popularity of intermediates, along with a lack of a clear middle schooling philosophy, provided the conditions for renewed attention to alternative school structures, including the stand-alone middle school.

Origins of a Philosophy for Middle Schooling in New Zealand

In 1938 Beeby appraised the new intermediate school for the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Steeped in the progressive ideas of Dewey and Kandel, Beeby laid out a philosophy for middle schooling in NZ. Beeby (1938) acknowledged that, as in primary schooling, an important function of intermediate schooling should be exploration; thus he promulgated what he called a “multi-track ‘try-out’ curriculum” (p. 50) – also used in junior high schools in the USA at the time – where students could sample several subjects. Beeby favoured expanding the two-year intermediate into a four-year middle school. Citing the developmental needs of young adolescents, he stated that “the four-year intermediate is advocated on both psychological and administrative grounds ... the group from (age 11-15) is relatively homogenous emotionally and socially” (pp.179-180). Beeby thus envisioned a three-tiered schooling structure for NZ education. In the 1930s a four-year middle school would have limited secondary schooling to a span of one or two years which, as Beeby realized, would have resulted in an untenable 6-4-2 year structure for primary-middle-high schooling.

Nonetheless, Beeby wished to secure the general education of all young New Zealanders, especially those without academic aspirations (Alcorn, 1999). Conversant with developments in

the USA, Beeby adopted the progressive idea of ‘general education.’ Founded on Dewey’s (1916) democratic education, the 1930s concept of general education was based on the notion of “common learnings ... essential for all mature citizens in a democratic society” (Vars, 2000, p. 71). Beeby realized that middle schooling had a crucial role to play in general education. Refining his position on the function of the intermediate, he stated that “the chief function of the intermediate 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” (1938, p. 210). Beeby’s position of national leadership enabled him to infuse other school types then extant – the Native (Maori) Schools, District High Schools, and Maori District High Schools – with the progressive spirit of the American junior high school. In particular, the integrated curriculum designs utilized in Maori schooling in the 1930s and 1940s were inspired by practice in the USA (Dowden & Nolan, 2007).

The Thomas Report on the secondary school curriculum (Department of Education, 1943) echoed Beeby’s thinking. The Report featured an innovative common core curriculum designed to develop democratic citizenship in Years 9-11. In particular, the 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 adolescents (p. 25).

3. OUTCOMES OF THE SCHOOLING OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Educational Performance of Young Adolescents

Measures of educational performance of young adolescents in NZ paint a complex picture: at first glance it appears to be rosy but closer inspection reveals various problems and issues related to the two-tiered nature of NZ schooling.

Academic Measures of Achievement

On the surface, academic achievement of young adolescents in NZ appears to be steady and positive. NZ students perform well in international surveys of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries. In 2006, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked NZ 15 year olds third in scientific literacy, fourth in reading literacy, and fifth in mathematical literacy. Similarly in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Year 9 students have been achieving at above the 46 country average since 2000 (Chamberlain, 2007). NZ educators and policy makers regularly collect data on student achievement and competencies. Within NZ, data from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), which assesses Year 8 students in all their subjects on a rotating basis, and from the Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTLe) which provides teachers with student, class, and school-specific data on literacy and numeracy, shows that “student achievement increases in all subject areas from primary to middle schooling (and) some of the largest gains in reading, writing, and mathematics achievement occur during the middle school years” (Durling, 2007, p. 4). In addition, Cox and Kennedy’s (2008) research on student transitions into secondary schools showed that students’ asTTLe test results revealed sound or good achievement gains in the middle years.

While the data on academic achievement offer largely good news, they do not provide for clear differentiation between Years 7-8 and Years 9-10 and may obscure a complete view of student outcomes in the middle years. Indeed, the middle years are no exception to the very wide spread of achievement between NZ’s top and bottom students. The large gap between the low achievers and the rest, combined with the relatively large number of low achievers, causes this group to be referred to as ‘the long tail’ (Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 5). The long tail phenomenon is related to the disparity in achievement between Pākehā and Māori

students. On a positive note, although Māori achievement in literacy and numeracy in English medium schools is still below average (Education Review Office, 2007), disparities between Māori and Pākehā students declined between 2002 and 2006. And recent achievement of Year 8 Māori students, in particular, has shown substantial improvement (Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Affective Measures

The current New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) states that schools have a key role helping students “develop the values, knowledge and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives” (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 8). Three of the NZC’s five ‘key competencies’ relate directly to socio-emotional development: managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing. The key competencies align with and support the New Zealand Association for Intermediate and Middle Schooling’s (NZAIMS) advocacy for developmentally responsive schooling. Many NZAIMS member schools address students’ socio-emotional development directly; for example, they give equal emphasis to pastoral care and academic achievement. This emphasis fits with NZAIMS’ strategic plan that teacher-student relationships are “not pre-empted by academic demands divorced from the students’ social and emotional needs” (NZAIMS, 2006, p. 2). The Plan invites schools to address explicitly “the needs and known challenges of students’ growth and social development while in the middle years of schooling” (p. 9).

Although a majority of young adolescent learners achieve well in NZ schools, the degree to which all students feel engaged, empowered, and supported tells a different story. NZ attitudinal and engagement data from several sources (including NEMP, asTTLe, TIMSS, PISA, Youth2000, and NZCER Engagement Survey) show that many students’ views of schooling turn

negative in the middle years; and that a sizable minority become dissatisfied with school in Years 7-8 (Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Crooks, 2008; Durling, 2007). NEMP data show that, with the exceptions of technology and physical education, “between Year 4 and Year 8 quite a lot of students change from a very positive to a moderately positive view of school subjects, and a significant percentage move from moderately positive to moderately negative” (Crooks, p. 8).

Teachers of Years 7-8 students in NZ traditionally have believed that student engagement is linked to the quality of teacher-student relationships (Watson, 1964), yet contemporary research shows that student-teacher relationships in Years 7-10 often deteriorate substantially (Durling, 2007). Fewer young adolescents report that teachers help them to do their best, treat them fairly, praise them and listen to them. Students’ perspectives on school work become equally negative, as they are unable to link their schooling with their futures. In addition, absenteeism, suspension, and exclusion from school are most common in Years 7-10, when behavioural and social problems often escalate. Similarly, the rapid increase of suspension rates starting at age 11 indicates loss of engagement (Durling).

The trends for Years 9-10 particularly are of interest because, here, the greatest decrease occurs in the proportion of students who report liking school a lot, trying to do their best, and getting on well with their teachers (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003); accompanied by decline in positive attitudes towards mathematics, reading and writing (Cox & Kennedy, 2008). Young Māori adolescents display the lowest levels of engagement, with the decrease more apparent in Years 9-10 than in Years 7-8. Stand-down, suspension, exclusion, and expulsion rates for Māori students are triple those of Pākehā (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Indeed, the general data for Māori, especially boys in Years 9-10, indicate the extent of disengagement with high truancy and 20% leaving school before age 16 (Education and Science Committee, 2008).

4. CURRENT ISSUES RELATED TO THE SCHOOLING OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Indictments

The two-tiered structure of the education system has the effect that Years 7-10 is split awkwardly between primary and secondary schooling. In the transition between the two, many young adolescents traditionally have “fallen through the crack” between primary and secondary school (Neville-Tisdall, 2002, p. 45). Attention to school types and teacher qualifications has not been effective.

School Type

For over a century the question of where to educate NZ’s 10 to 15 year olds has been laden with tension, philosophical difference, and political rivalry (Hinchco, 2004). Some educationalists assert that the two-year intermediate school is too short and seriously limits the potential for developmentally responsive schooling (Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Others claim that secondary schooling for young adolescents is unsuitable. Notably the strong emphasis in Years 9-10 on preparation for national qualifications tends to result in learning environments poorly suited for increasing personal efficacy; and the pedagogies used, which focus on coverage before active inquiry, generally are unresponsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents and result in lower motivation and engagement (Eccles et al., 1993). Attempts to link school type with achievement have been complex and uncertain at best (e.g. Weiss & Kipnes, 2006). An outcome of note in NZ is to focus less on the structure of the schooling system and more on what happens inside the classroom (Maharey, 2006).

Teacher Qualifications

If quality teaching is the most influential point of leverage on student outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2003), then teacher education is a crucial arena in which to effect change in schools by changing teacher registration: that is, change the current system that prepares teachers to be either primary or secondary teachers (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). This idea appears timely since school principals and teacher educators have rightly questioned the appropriateness of the current system for teacher preparation for the middle years. This may prove difficult since in NZ, 27 tertiary providers offer a total of 85 different qualifications through 131 teacher education programs (Kane, 2005). Yet no program offers a middle-years specialisation (Bishop, 2008).

Inadequate Preparation for Teaching: Years 7-10

On the one hand, primary teacher education programs in NZ have been criticized for too little focus on subject knowledge; and the self-contained classroom model typical in full primary and intermediate schools requires teachers to be generalists able to teach most, if not all, subject areas. Some argue that it is unrealistic for Years 7-8 teachers to prepare the full range of subject content at this level, given the increasing cognitive abilities of their students. For instance, Dinham and Rowe (2007) suggested introducing a degree of subject specialization at the primary level to address teachers' concerns about feeling under-prepared to teach mathematics and science, in particular.

On the other hand, the focus of secondary teacher education programs content knowledge and curriculum coverage seems no less appropriate. When interviewed, Crooks said the prime aim of middle school teaching, and by implication teacher preparation, should be "to maintain engagement, to (keep young people) interested and excited and not worry too much about what gets covered" (Bishop, 2008, p. 71). Crooks (2008) added that Year 10 is the "low point in school enthusiasm and academic commitment for many students" and speculated that this might

be due to “limited subject choice that students have in the middle school years, and the extensive use of whole class teaching methods.” According to the Education Review Office (2003), this is because secondary school teachers are not sufficiently aware of the needs of young adolescents in Years 9-10 and because “the focus of many secondary schools and of government policies for these schools is the education of senior students” (p. 51). By implication, both are arguing that in NZ it is time to change the way teachers are prepared to teach young people; the focus should be on meaningful and positive relationships and teachers assisting students to connect schooling with their everyday experiences (Stevenson, 2002).

The challenge for teacher preparation for Years 7-10 in NZ is to find a middle course between primary programs perceived as lacking in subject area content; and secondary programs, seen as lacking in practical classroom pedagogy and educational philosophy. Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003) suggested that the way ahead could be a judicious balance between subject area generalization and specialization, the study of young adolescence, specialized classroom pedagogy, design of assessment and curriculum, and a sound understanding of middle schooling philosophy.

5. REFORM INITIATIVES AND NATIONAL POLICIES

Three reform efforts in NZ education over the last 20 years reflect the growing commitment to improving educational outcomes for young adolescents. In the mid-1980s, the Freyberg Integrated Studies Project implemented a student-centred curriculum design in Years 9-11. Rationalizations of schooling in the 1990s led to innovative reconfigurations and the appearance of a handful of schools with a Years 7-10 structure. In 2007, the New Zealand Curriculum recognized Years 7-10 as a distinct developmental stage requiring its own ‘learning pathway’ (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 41).

The Freyberg Integrated Studies Project

The 'Integrated Studies Project' at Freyberg High School in Palmerston North (1986-1991) provided evidence that middle level schooling in NZ – especially Years 9-10 – was in need of reform. Responding to widespread criticism of middle level schooling at the time (Department of Education, 1984), the Project implemented an 'integrated studies' curriculum in an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) environment to develop collaborative learning communities in several Years 9-11 classrooms (Nolan & McKinnon, 1991). Over its five year-term the Project's research reported student achievement outcomes demonstrably superior to those achieved by non-Project students via the traditional single-subject approach. Specifically, the Project research demonstrated achievement effects of one standard deviation above the norm in students' national Year 11 examination results for English, mathematics and science (Nolan & McKinnon, 2003). Although the Project design relied on British theory and practice (Bernstein, 1971; Pring, 1976; Stenhouse, 1968), it paralleled American middle level developments of the period; for instance, Lounsbury and Vars' (1978) student-centered curriculum design. Initially the researchers were optimistic that the 'right' conditions might have arrived for the systemic implementation of student-centered integrative curriculum designs in Years 9-10. Longer term, however, the Project encountered persistent resistance from secondary teachers who rejected the student-centred design in favour of traditional subject-centered pedagogy. Nonetheless, the Project clearly showed that an integrative curriculum design responds to the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents and that it is a feasible curriculum model for middle level schooling in NZ. The long-run outcome of the Project suggested that schooling in Years 7-8 – involving primary trained teachers – might be more fruitful for integrative curriculum. Indeed, later trials of integrative curriculum designs in full

primary and intermediate schools confirmed the Project findings that student-centered approaches are especially effective in Years 7-10 (Harwood & Nolan, 1999).

The Re-emergence of Middle Schools in New Zealand

In the early 1990s, a small minority of school leaders – mainly innovative intermediate school principals – challenged the hegemony of the two-tiered primary-secondary education system in NZ (Hinchco, 2004). In particular they questioned the capacity and capability of the system to adequately address and meet the distinctive development and educational needs of young adolescents and help young adolescents achieve outcomes commensurate with their diverse and rapidly emerging abilities, interests, and capacities (Stewart & Nolan, 1992).

Eight middle schools (Years 7-9 or Year 7-10) were formed in NZ during the 1990s (Hinchco, 2004). In 1995 the Ministry of Education granted permission to three communities to form middle schools: Raumanga Middle School in Whangarei (Years 7-9), St. Andrews Intermediate School in Hamilton (Years 7-10), and Clover Park Middle School in South Auckland (Years 7-10). In each case the outcome followed rationalizations of local schooling, thus favorable decisions may have been driven as much by economic imperatives concerning the distribution of resources, as the intention to improve educational outcomes at the middle level. Later in the 1990s, and following further rationalisations of local schooling, five more schools (all Years 7-10) were formed.

The formation of middle schools – and by extension, the wider philosophy and practice of middle schooling – was strongly resisted by the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA), who were intent on preserving union membership and repelling any attempt to divert Year 9 students from secondary schools (Neville-Tisdall, 2002). Nonetheless, PPTA President Martin Cooney (1996, cited in Hinchco, 2004) commented that “it has been accepted for some time”

that young people go through two “reasonably clear stages of educational development ... [age] 11-14 and [age] 15 and over. This provides [the] logic for treating the needs of [Years 7-10] somewhat differently from [Years 11-13] students” (p. 96). Thus the PPTA was, apparently, unwilling to endorse stand-alone middle schools, yet it recognized that young adolescents have distinct developmental needs.

Following changes in the political wind no more middle schools were formed until 2005 when Albany Junior High School (Years 7-10) in northern Auckland was opened by Prime Minister Helen Clark. She commented that the new school was a ‘model’ for future middle level schooling in NZ. The opening of Albany Junior High seemed to signal a new direction in government policy. Unlike the middle schools formed in the 1990s, this school was brand new and not born from a calculated rationalisation of resources. Soon after, Minister of Education Steve Maharey (2006) stated that effective middle level schools need to be able to respond to “the specific needs” of young adolescents and that appropriate curriculum design should be a “key element” of middle schooling practice (p. 7).

The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum

For advocates of middle schooling, the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007b) is perhaps the most important official document in NZ education, since the 1930s. The NZC effectively puts the middle years of schooling on the educational map of NZ; and presages reconstruction of the NZ educational landscape to acknowledge *three* distinct stages of development within the years of compulsory schooling. In particular, the NZC’s three ‘learning pathways’: Years 1-6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-13 (p. 41) redefines the traditional primary-secondary split of Years 1-8 and Years 9-13 accepted since the inception of state schooling in 1877. If school communities accept and move to enact the NZC statement, they arguably could alter substantially young

adolescents' educational experiences and outcomes and make them radically different from the traditional experiences of primary and secondary schooling in NZ.

The learning pathways reflect the findings of ERO (2000; 2003) that caused the Ministry of Education and the wider NZ research community to redirect their gaze towards middle schooling. It was here that government policy for the curriculum, and thus schooling itself, started to change; not too surprisingly since in NZ, ERO is most closely in touch with how schooling is affecting students and producing – or failing to produce – satisfactory learning outcomes. ERO's (2000; 2003) message that Years 7-10 were 'the forgotten years' appears to have struck a responsive chord with successive Ministers of Education. Following the Stewart and Nolan (1992) report, NZAIMS exercised due diligence, constantly putting the case to restructure schooling and the national curriculum, which they envisaged as the key to achieving a better outcome for students: a new kind of schooling for Years 7-10 that is more responsive to, respectful of, and effective for young adolescents. NZAIMS persistently argued (e.g. NZAIMS, 2006) that student outcomes in the middle years should be defined broadly so that wider considerations pivotal to young adolescents' developmental needs, not just subject areas, shape the curriculum.

The NZC provides school communities with an official mandate to change their ways. As intermediate school principal John McAleese (2007) remarked, the NZC represents a "quantum leap ... now [teachers] can put students first and not teach driven by achievement objectives" (2007, p. 13). The NZC ushers in a new era and may achieve the outcome that advocates have long articulated for young adolescents in NZ: a broad, inclusive, and integrative curriculum; with exploratory, relevant, and meaningful pedagogies linked to community; and subject areas taught

by specialists sparingly and only as needed (Beeby, 1938; Stewart & Nolan, 1992; Watson 1964).

6. RESEARCH

Despite the two-tiered schooling structure in NZ, a growing research base contributes to the country's developing understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning during the middle years. These studies employ a variety of methodologies and have occurred primarily in the field of education. The research falls generally into the following categories: reviews of middle schooling, curriculum integration, transitions into secondary schooling, and young adolescents' experience of schooling.

Reviews of Middle Schooling

Each of the major reviews of middle schooling in NZ relied heavily on the use of qualitative methodology, ranging from archival document and literature review to observation and interview. Watson (1964) completed the first review of NZ middle schooling since Beeby's 1938 appraisal of the then fledgling intermediate school. Examining the intermediate's history, structure, and pedagogy, Watson's work culminated in 21 recommendations that largely endorsed Beeby's work. These included a call to continue, strengthen, and extend intermediate schools; to situate them as stand-alone schools; and to staff them with teachers who understand young adolescents and are specialists in at least one subject area. In particular Watson argued that a robust teacher-student relationship was prerequisite to establishing a positive classroom climate for young adolescents.

Thirty years later, the Stewart and Nolan (1992) report, *The Middle School: Essential Education for Emerging Adolescents*, investigated the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents. Their work deliberately built on Watson's (1964) work by reviewing the

middle schooling literature and summarizing the research to inform the debate about the future of intermediate schooling. In a nutshell, Stewart and Nolan recommended: (1) the adoption of three- or four-year middle schools; (2) the addition of counseling in the middle years; and (3) employing primary and secondary teachers who understand young adolescent development, have specialist subject expertise, and are skilled in teaching core subjects.

Hinchco (2004) examined the emergence of three- and four-year middle schools in NZ in the 1990s. He employed a qualitative research methodology and a blended theoretical approach to analyse the tension between political and pedagogical considerations on the middle schools in the 1990s and the extent to which their presence proved to be problematic. Hinchco concluded that political pressures, most notably from the PPTA, constrained the development of stand-alone middle schools.

Integrative Curriculum at the Middle Level

The Freyberg Integrated Studies Project of the mid-1980s (Nolan & McKinnon, 1991) along with James Beane's work (1990; 1997) – who, echoing the reciprocal visits by educational leaders in the USA and NZ that had been so influential in the 1920s and 1930s, visited NZ and collaborated with Nolan – inspired continuing research on curriculum design for young adolescents in NZ (see Harwood & Nolan, 1999) along with a recent doctoral study.

Dowden (2007a) investigated the concept of curriculum integration with respect to the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents in NZ. Drawing extensively from Dewey's work and more recent American progressives including Lounsbury, Vars, and Beane; he provided historical, theoretical and ethical evidence to support his argument that any kind of integrated curriculum design for middle schooling worthy of trial in NZ should be based on Beane's (1990; 1997) student-centered integrative model of curriculum integration; as opposed

to the subject-centred multidisciplinary model (Jacobs, 1989) that has been widely implemented in middle schools in the USA. Although NZ teachers have traditionally interpreted integrated curriculum in the multidisciplinary sense (Fraser, 2000), the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007) offers strong support for implementing integrative designs in Years 7-10. Dowden (2007b) concluded that that student-centered pedagogies and schooling for young adolescents should be aligned with student-centered curriculum designs.

Young Adolescents' Experiences of Schooling

Outside the field of education, the Adolescent Health Research Group (2003) conducted a self-reported, anonymous survey of a random sample of almost 10,000 middle years and secondary students from 114 schools. The findings suggested helpful insights into young adolescents' perspectives on culture and ethnicity, home and family, school, health, and community. The research noted a significant decrease between Year 9 and Year 10 in the proportion of students who like school a lot, the proportion of students who report trying hard to do their best, and the proportion of students who get along well with their teachers.

Nelson's (2006) research also included a focus on students' experience of schooling. Combining image-based methods with the genres of voice research and participatory research, she invited 38 young adolescents across three participating schools to partake in auto-photography and photo elicitation interviews. Participants explored their perceptions of school and learning, their identity as young persons and learners, and the world in which they live. The findings revealed students' sound understandings of their educational and personal needs and provided a framework for teachers to reflect on their development as distinctly middle level practitioners.

Māori Learners

Related to this study of students' schooling experiences, 'Te Kōtahitanga' is an on-going project working to improve student outcomes in 'mainstream' (English-medium) secondary schools. As most Years 9-10 students in NZ attend secondary schools, this work is particularly relevant to young adolescent schooling. The study examined Years 9-10 Māori students' experiences in mainstream classrooms and identified the quality of interactions between the teachers and Māori students as a key factor to improving student achievement. The project then provided extensive, embedded professional development as a school-wide intervention. Mixed methods, including several measures of academic achievement, linked teacher participation in the project with improved student outcomes. The findings also revealed a decrease in truancy and suspensions (Bishop, Berryman, Powell, & Teddy, 2007).

Transitions to Secondary School

Students' movement from one school to another has been the focus of concern in NZ for many years, as – at least until very recently – school structure has taken prominence in the middle level debate. One longitudinal study of 500 students revealed that the transition to secondary school demonstrated the most marked shifts in engagement of any year span from early childhood to secondary school (Wylie, Hodgen & Ferral, 2006). Researchers identified reduced engagement for those who were previously engaged and no increase in engagement for those who had shown signs of disengagement at age 12. There was no evidence that the transition to secondary school negatively affected students' academic performance; prior academic achievement and school engagement had a greater influence on early secondary school performance than the transition itself. However, taking longer to settle into a new school over the transition period negatively affected students' confidence and attitudinal scores (Wylie et al.).

Cox and Kennedy's (2008) mixed methods research on transitions studied a diverse group of approximately 100 students for 18 months as they moved from primary to secondary schooling. The purpose of their research was to identify factors that affect a smooth transition in terms of achievement, social adjustment, and learning attitudes. Participants were interviewed and tested in mathematics, reading and writing at each of four phases of the study. The majority of students quickly adapted to the move to secondary school both socially and academically. However, a significant minority of students found the Year 8 to Year 9 transition particularly challenging, either academically and socially; the difficulty being exacerbated in some cases by emotional issues or home circumstances. Cox and Kennedy identified the second half of Year 9 as the biggest 'danger period' for students to become more negative about schooling.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

For over a century the educational experience for young adolescents in NZ has been conceptualized, resourced and practiced as either primary or secondary schooling. Although international comparisons and national monitoring indicate that the majority of young adolescents in NZ successfully negotiate their way through primary and secondary school, qualitative data from a range of sources demonstrate that a significant minority of young people struggle in the middle years. Young Māori boys are especially prone to failure during the transition from primary school to high school. Despite promising beginnings and a sound philosophy, middle schooling has not been established at the systemic level in NZ. In conclusion, the inability, thus far, of NZ policymakers to implement a satisfactory type of schooling for young adolescents represented by a full cross-section of NZ society has been as much for political reasons as educational reasons.

Recently, however, the signs are that momentum is gathering for the introduction of a third tier of schooling in the education system that will genuinely respond to the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents in NZ. In 2005, Albany Junior High School was opened as the first new stand-alone middle school within the state system since 1932. In 2006, the NZAIMS' (2006) 'Strategic Plan' and, then Minister of Education, Steve Maharey (2006) stressed the need for pedagogical reform in the middle years regardless of school type. In 2007, the NZC 'Learning Pathways' explicitly recognized that young adolescents have particular developmental and learning needs (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 41). In 2008, the Ministry of Education (2008) formed the 'Middle Schooling Steering Group' to develop a coherent evidence base for informing future middle schooling policy.

The time is ripe to reform middle level education in NZ by:

1. Restructuring teacher training to include preparation for middle schooling;
2. Encouraging schools to adopt, develop and implement middle schooling philosophy, concepts and strategies;
3. Restructuring or reorganizing existing sites so that:
 - (a) Schools in the same locality form communities of practice (full primaries and secondaries; intermediates and secondaries) to ensure coherency and consistency of program design and delivery across Years 7-10, and
 - (b) Schools with Years 7-13 or Years 1-13 structure develop autonomous Years 7-10 schools within their larger school;
4. Building new Years 7-10 middle schools in areas of rapid population growth and linking them to Years 11-13 senior colleges; and
5. On an on-going basis the Ministry of Education should:

- (a) Work with schools to develop the particular design, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment needed for Years 7-10,
- (b) Run communications campaigns to develop awareness and understanding in both the community and the teaching profession, and
- (c) Fund case study survey research to document existing (and developing) exemplary practice across school types.

References

- Adolescent Health Research Group. (2003). New Zealand youth: A profile of their health and wellbeing. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.youth2000.ac.nz/>
- Alcorn, N. (1999). *To the fullest extent of his powers: C.E. Beeby's life in education*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Beane, J. A. (1990). *A middle school curriculum: From rhetoric to reality*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Beane, J. A. (1997). *Curriculum integration: Designing the core of democratic education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Beeby, C. E. (1938). *The intermediate schools of New Zealand: A survey*. Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs.
- Bernstein, B. (1971). On the classification and framing of educational knowledge. In M. F. D. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and control* (pp. 47-69). London: McMillan.
- Bishop, P. (2008). *Middle years teacher credentialing in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Policy Report to Fulbright Board of Trustees and NZ Ministry of Education. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Powell, A., & Teddy, L. (2007). *Te Kōtahitanga: Improving the educational achievement of Māori students in mainstream education (Phase 2)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Chamberlain, M. (2007). *Mathematics and science achievement in New Zealand: Summing up New Zealand's participation in three cycles of TIMSS at Year 9*. Retrieved June 22, 2008, from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2571/timss_200203/15581
- Cox, S., & Kennedy, S. (2008). *The impact of the year 8 to Year 9 transition on students' achievement*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Crooks, T. (2008, April). Goals for middle schooling. *Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand Journal*, 7-9.
- Department of Education. (1943). *The post-primary curriculum: Report of the committee appointed by the Minister of Education in November, 1942*. Wellington: Government Printer.

- Department of Education. (1984). *A review of the core curriculum for schools*. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: MacMillan.
- Dinham, S., & Rowe, K. (2007). *Teaching and learning in middle schooling: A review of the literature*. A report to the NZ Ministry of Education. Wellington: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Dowden, T. (2007a). *Curriculum integration for early adolescent schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand: worthy of serious trial*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Massey University, NZ.
- Dowden, T. (2007b). Relevant, challenging, integrative and exploratory curriculum design: Perspectives from theory and practice for middle schooling in Australia. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 34(2), 51-71.
- Dowden, T., & Nolan, C. J. P. (2007). Curriculum integration in historical perspective: key innovations in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1930s and 1940s. *Proceedings of 2007 NZARE National Conference*. Christchurch, NZ: NZARE.
- Durling, N. (2007). *Teaching and learning in middle schooling: A statistical snapshot*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C. M., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & Mac Iver, D. (1993). Development during adolescence: The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*, 48(2), 90-101.
- Education and Science Committee. (2008, February). *Inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child*. Report of the Education and Science Committee, Forty-Eighth Parliament. Retrieved May 25, 2008 from http://www.parliament.nz/NR/rdonlyres/6BCFBA0F-EF08-43EC-BD52-2B774716E8EF/73434/DBSCH_SCR_3979_58291.pdf
- Education Review Office. (2000). *Students in years 7 and 8*. Wellington: National Evaluation Reports.
- Education Review Office. (2003). *Students in years 9 and 10*. Wellington: Author. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.ero.govt.nz/ero/publishing.nsf/>
- Education Review Office. (2007). *The Achievement of Māori Students*. Wellington: Author.
- Fraser, D. (2000). Curriculum integration: What it is and what it is not. *SET*, 3, 34-37.

- Harwood, C., & Nolan, C. J. P. (1999). *Integration insights: Journeys from theory to practice*. Report for Institute for Professional Development and Educational Research, Massey University, NZ.
- Hinchco, B. J. (2004). *Politics or pedagogy? The development of the New Zealand Middle School*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Waikato University, NZ.
- Jacobs, H. H. (Ed.). (1989). *Interdisciplinary curriculum: Design and implementation*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kane, R. (2005). *Initial teacher education policy and practice*. Wellington: Ministry of Education and New Zealand Teachers Council.
- King, M. (2003). *The Penguin history of New Zealand*. Auckland: Penguin.
- Lounsbury, J. H., & Vars, G. F. (1978). *A curriculum for the middle school years*. New York: Harper.
- McAleese, J. (2007). Welcoming the draft. *Middle Schooling Review*, 3, 10-15. Hamilton, NZ: NZAIMS.
- Mac Iver, M., & Mac Iver, D. (2006). *Privatizing education in Philadelphia*. Paper presented at the American Political Science Association conference. Philadelphia, PA.
- Maharey, S. (2006). The middle years of schooling. *New Zealand Middle Schooling Review*, 1, 6-7.
- Ministry of Education. (2007a). *Ngā Haeata Mātauranga/ Annual Report on Māori Education*. Wellington: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2007b). *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2008). *Middle schooling steering group: Terms of reference*. Wellington, NZ: Author.
- Nelson, E. (2006). *Co-constructing early adolescent education through image-based research*. Unpublished masters thesis. Massey University, NZ.
- Neville-Tisdall, M. (2002). Pedagogy and politics in New Zealand's middle schools. *Middle School Journal*, 33(4), 45-51.
- New Zealand Association for Intermediate and Middle Schooling. (2006). *NZAIMS Strategic Plan*. Hamilton, NZ: Author.

- Nolan, C. J. P., & Brown, M. A. (2002). The fight for middle school education in New Zealand. *Middle School Journal*, 33(4), 34-44.
- Nolan, C. J. P., Kane, R., & Lind, P. (2003). Approaching and avoiding the middle: Teacher preparation in New Zealand. In G. A. Andrews & V. A. Anfara, Jr. (Eds.), *Leaders for a movement: Professional preparation and development of middle level teachers and administrators*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Nolan, C. J. P., & McKinnon, D. (1991). Case study of curriculum innovation in New Zealand: The Freyberg Integrated Studies Project. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 11(4), 1-10.
- Nolan, C. J. P., & McKinnon, D. (2003). Enhancing the middle in a New Zealand secondary school: integration, experiential learning and computer use. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 12(3), 230-243.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2008). Country statistical profiles (New Zealand). Retrieved July 10 from <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/viewhtml.aspx?queryname=475&querytype=view&lang=en>
- Pring, R. (1976). *Knowledge and schooling*. London: Open Books.
- Stenhouse, L. (1968). The Humanities Curriculum Project. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1(1), 26-33.
- Stevenson, C. (2002). *Teaching ten to fourteen year olds* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Stewart, D., & Nolan, C. J. P. (1992). *The middle school: Essential education for emerging adolescents*. Palmerston North, NZ: Massey University Educational Research and Development Centre.
- Vars, G. F. (2000). Common learnings: A 50 year quest. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 16(1), 70-89.
- Watson, J. E. (1964). Intermediate schooling in New Zealand. Wellington: NZCER.
- Weiss, C. C., & Kipnes, L. (2006). Re-examining middle school effects: A comparison of middle grades students in middle schools and K-8 schools. *American Journal of Education*, 112(2), 239-272.
- Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., & Ferral, H. (2006). Completely different or a bigger version? Experiences and effects of the transition to secondary school. Evidence from the Competent Children Competent Learners project. Retrieved April 30, 2008, from http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?cpath=139_133&products_id=1675