

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE¹

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ABSTRACT *Intermediate schooling in New Zealand has always been a controversial sector of the education system. For the first time since the implementation of two year intermediate schools over sixty years ago there is now opportunity for structural change. Since the 1989 educational administration reforms, the Educational Development Initiatives have enabled schools to restructure and a number of schools have, for a variety of reasons, decided to change their existing structure.*

Through restructuring it was hoped that schools would be able to deliver a more appropriate education for the children in their community. To date, restructuring has not been widespread but where it has occurred it has raised a number of important educational and employment issues. Certainly there has been much debate and, in some cases, conflict. This restructuring process has spawned a number of reports that focus on the middle school area (Education Review Office, 1994; Stewart & Nolan, 1992). However, apart from two year intermediate schools there have not been any other forms of middle schools in New Zealand so there has not been any recent research that specifically has the middle school as its focus.

Recently, a number of intermediate schools applied to the Ministry of Education to add Form 3 and Form 4 classes, and in 1994 the Ministry gave the go-ahead to three of them. One of these new 'middle schools' is the subject of this paper. In 1995, a Form 3 class was added and in 1996 a Form 4 class was added. Such a restructuring provided a unique opportunity to monitor the process of change and to investigate the implications of an intermediate school moving towards a Form 1 to 4 middle school. This paper documents that process.

BACKGROUND

The 1877 Education Act provided for universal primary schooling up to the age of fourteen years to be governed by regional education boards. Secondary schools were administered by a board for each school. Thus, from the early years of the state-supported schooling system, primary and secondary schools were seen as separate entities (Watson, 1964). However, even in these early years there was official concern about how to link primary and secondary schooling to provide continuity. The first report of the Minister of Education in 1878 drew attention to the issue. As a result, a commission was established to consider the most effective way of bridging primary and secondary education. Considerations have a familiar

ring to them: the best age to transfer, what curriculum should be taught, and what staffing provisions were required (Watson, 1964).

The first middle school was not established until 1922. Called a junior high school, it was a three-year school based upon American arguments that such schools had distinctive advantages, for example, reducing the high rate of leaving school at the primary school level, providing for the particular needs of early adolescence, providing vocational guidance, and tailoring the curriculum to the practical needs of life (AJHR, E-11, 1921, p. 3).

The term 'intermediate' school was adopted in 1932 regulations that reduced the time span of middle schools to two years, and consolidated the schools as part of the primary sector. Since then, four issues regarding intermediate schools have persisted to today.

1. *Transition:* For as long as students have had to move from one school to another, there have been concerns associated with transition. Two aspects stand out: the adjustment to a new environment and the co-ordination of curriculum between schools. For many years, some schools have taken steps to reduce the negative impact of these factors (McGee, 1987), but there is room for further research into the effects of transition.

2. *Curriculum:* Throughout most of New Zealand's educational history, primary and secondary curriculum was separate. In recent decades, some syllabuses have covered the Form 1(primary) to Form 4 (secondary) years in an attempt to connect primary and secondary curriculum. *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) finally bridged all years of compulsory schooling with a co-ordinated set of curriculum levels, at least in terms of the official national subject statements.

3. *Facilities and specialist teaching:* For many years there have been anomalies and debates about what facilities and specialist teachers intermediate schools should have compared with secondary schools. Technicraft and languages have been particular examples. To complicate matters further, technicraft lessons (such as woodwork, metalwork, cooking, sewing), were taught by teachers employed under secondary conditions even though they worked in primary schools.

4. *Teachers:* To overcome staffing issues, the *Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand* (1962), recommended that secondary schooling commence at Form 1 and that teachers and curriculum be organised to reflect Form 1 to 6 continuity. However, the proposals were never implemented and the current situation is much the same as it has been for a very long time, that is, separate secondary and primary teaching services with different conditions of employment.

Currently, there are several major types of schools, including Form 1 to 7, Form 3 to 7, Area Schools (for all the years of schooling), intermediate schools (two years' duration), full primary schools (up to Form 2) and contributing schools (up to Standard 4 or Year 6). Under the terms of the Education Act, 1989, it has become possible for Boards of Trustees to seek ministerial approval to create alternative

school structures. Recent examples are where contributing schools have established classes for Form 1 and 2 students, intermediate schools have established Form 3 classes, and secondary schools have established Form 1 and 2 classes.

It is out of this 'climate' that this paper reports a case study of an intermediate school's transition to a four year middle school: the initial impetus for the change, the process of change and the perceptions of interested and affected groups and individuals.

THE CHANGE PROCESS: FROM INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Context

The move for the intermediate school to be designated as one of New Zealand's first middle schools occurred after the suburb's residents spent more than 15 years lobbying for the provision of secondary schooling in the area. The final decision, however, was contingent on policy which had developed since *Tomorrow's Schools* which provided the opportunity to introduce the middle school concept, and to design an innovative school programme which would meet a long-awaited community need.

At a time when capitation and recapitation were being examined by many schools throughout New Zealand as viable alternatives to the structuring of the school system, the community's Secondary School Steering Committee called a meeting to discuss alternative solutions to the problem of secondary schooling in the area. Several scenarios were presented at the community meeting, one of which was the Forms 1 to 4 concept. It was during the course of this meeting that the Principal, Board of Trustee members, and staff of the intermediate school became involved in the discussions, as a number of the alternatives and future directions proposed had direct implications for the school.

Due to the major contributing schools having large, growing rolls, recapitation was an unlikely possibility. It was accepted that the intermediate school's site was not large enough to accommodate a full secondary school, and after the Secondary School Steering Committee surveyed the community late in 1993, the Forms 1 to 4 option was viewed as the most viable option.

At the intermediate school Board of Trustees' meeting on 23 February 1994, it was unanimously agreed that if the Board was given sufficient community support, the school would apply to become an urban composite Forms 1 to 4 school in 1995. In seeking the level of community support, surveys outlining a rationale for moving from an intermediate school to a middle school, and what a middle school could offer students were conducted early in 1994.

The reasons for moving to a Forms 1 to 4 school included the site being large enough to support the physical requirements; the research evidence both from New Zealand and overseas sources supporting the appropriateness of Forms 1 to 4 schools to the educational needs of 10 to 14 year old students; the original intention that intermediate schools would be three or four year institutions; the clear link to the Forms 1 to 4 syllabuses; and the greater stability which would

encourage wider commitment and enhance the student/parent sense of belonging.

Community members were informed of how a middle school could offer an alternative to the traditional educational structure available for 10 to 14 year olds. Students, it was argued, would benefit from a highly qualified and motivated teaching staff, totally supportive of the new concept and familiar with Forms 1 to 4 syllabuses in all curriculum areas; an emphasis on basic skills in all core areas of the curriculum through student-centred learning and teaching programmes; and a school which would welcome the chance to work alongside independent reviewers in assessing the value for students in the changes made and education delivered providing much needed data not currently available. The results of surveys to determine community support showed that of those who responded, 89% of the school's community, 96% of the Māori community, and 83% of the wider community supported the middle school proposal. However, it must be noted that the response rate of those surveyed was, families (55%), Māori community (58%), and the wider community (45%). From these results, there was no doubt in the Board's mind, that given approval, the community would support and take up the option of middle schooling for their children.

The Board of Trustees applied to the Ministry of Education for a change of class to a composite Forms 1 to 4 school on 28 April 1994. In making the application to restructure, the intermediate school was faced with the unusual problem of not applying as a school at risk, nor as a school with a declining roll. Therefore, the stipulation from the Ministry that an application to restructure would be acceptable only if spare accommodation was available, was inconsistent with the situation at the intermediate school, as the school was already housing an extra class without a classroom. The Board believed that if the Ministry was genuinely interested in trialing a middle school then their intermediate school provided a unique opportunity.

By August 1994, the school was still awaiting an official response from the Ministry of Education. Planning continued on the assumption that the school would be catering for an additional Form 3 class of approximately 30 students in 1995. On 8 September 1994, the intermediate school received official approval from the Ministry, allowing the school to be designated as a middle school in 1995, subject to a proviso that the school finance any buildings or resources required other than teachers' salaries in the first 12 months of operation. For the Ministry's part, the establishment of the middle school was to be "fiscally neutral" for 1995, in which time new resourcing policy (including accommodation) would be developed.

Consultation

Throughout the planning process, the Principal and Board of Trustee members endeavoured to keep parents fully informed of details as they came to hand, and frequently made themselves available to parents to discuss ideas and clarify uncertainties. Staff at the intermediate school first began discussing the possibility of a middle school at a full staff meeting on a teacher-only day in 1993. At that stage, the middle school concept was just one of the options being suggested, but staff were keen to investigate the middle school concept further. Each staff member was individually interviewed by the principal. Information

was collated on the teaching qualifications and specialist skills and abilities of staff, which had particular relevance to teaching at the Forms 3 and 4 levels. In 1994, the school was offering a wide range of specialist, semi-specialist, and optional subjects.

Staff examined the third and fourth form prospectuses from each of the local secondary schools to determine what specialist subjects were currently being offered at that level. After visiting the secondary schools, several teachers commented on the advantages they could see for pupils remaining at the intermediate school in terms of their optional subject choices. They believed the pupils would not have the constraints of subject choices which were placed on secondary school students due to student numbers and inflexible timetabling. The teachers were encouraged to express their views, both the benefits they envisaged and any concerns they wished to raise. Generally, staff were supportive, although the disadvantages they expressed were two-fold. The anomalies within the pay conditions at the intermediate level had been apparent for some time. Teachers believed that adding Forms 3 and 4 level teaching might further exacerbate the problem. Other teachers commented that the limited social interaction would be a disadvantage for middle school students, although they added that this would be dependent on the amount of co-operation shown by the secondary schools.

The intermediate school's teacher-only day in 1994 was spent reviewing the school's assessment procedures. While the emphasis was to investigate procedures for assessing pupils as they entered the school at Form 1, the teachers also discussed assessment procedures which would be appropriate at Forms 3 and 4. Various types of assessment such as the Progress and Achievement Tests (PATs) when pupils first entered the school, the comments written on pupils' profile sheets by previous teachers, standardised tests, and pupil self-evaluations were utilised at the school for Forms 1 and 2 pupils. Teachers believed a similar range would be appropriate for the 3rd and 4th formers and would provide key information for secondary schools.

There was undoubted enthusiasm on the part of the intermediate principal. Interview data revealed that there was a recognition of a number of issues to be resolved if Form 3 students were to be retained in 1995. However, there was a certain amount of optimism that issues to do with staffing and curriculum could easily be resolved.

In April 1994, the Board of Trustees wrote to the local secondary schools informing them of the proposal to introduce a middle school and invited them to respond. The two teacher unions and a local rural new entrant to Form 2 school whose Forms 1 and 2 pupils attended the intermediate school for technicraft classes was also informed of the proposal. Responses were received from the Board of Trustees of the rural school, who were concerned about the effect, if any, of a middle school on their pupils attending technicraft classes, and the Board of Trustees of one of the secondary schools. The secondary school held reservations about the middle school proposal on both educational and strategic grounds.

Principals of the three secondary schools most affected expressed reservations that the issues were as easy to resolve as was being assumed. In spite of this, one school principal had no difficulty with the proposal, while the other two had more mixed reactions, including cautions about difficulties in transfer

from the middle school into Form 5. It seems that the scale of the proposal may have encouraged a somewhat benevolent attitude. It might be speculated the benevolence would have been less forthcoming if the proposal had been from a much larger intermediate school which would have involved a lot more students staying put for Form 3.

The Outcome

In 1995, the middle school enrolled 24 pupils in the Form 3 class. The ethnic balance of the pupils was 18 Pakeha, 4 Māori, and 2 Cambodians. There were 19 males and 5 females. The pupils remained with one 'hometeacher' for their core curriculum subjects which include art. In addition to the core subjects, all the Form 3 pupils took part in a technology course. The Form 3 teaching position was advertised in the Education Gazette and a primary-trained teacher who had extensive experience in the secondary sector won the position. She had been a long term relieving teacher at the intermediate school.

After consultation with parents, the school is offered a range of optional subjects. In 1995 pupils were taking French, Japanese, Māori, Keyboarding, Economics, Horticulture, Pottery, and 'booster' Mathematics and Language (English). Due to the flexibility of the timetable, the Form 3 class was able to spend a week together participating in an outdoor education programme.

After six months as a middle school, the principal believed the signals were very positive. Although seamless education and the middle school concept was being viewed positively by the Government, in May 1995 the middle school was still awaiting approval by the Ministry of Education for additional accommodation for 1996. Three primary schools in close proximity to the middle school had received official approval during May for additional classrooms in 1996. However, as was the case in 1995, planning for 1996 was continuing to be a problem for the school as central policy decisions concerning the middle school were still to be determined.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

A qualitative case study approach was considered to be the most appropriate research method because of the unusual nature of the situation, i.e., only three middle schools have been established in New Zealand. This study focuses upon one intermediate school that capitulated, but also refers to three secondary schools to which the intermediate mainly contributed.

Gathering the Information

Information was gathered in two ways. First, face to face and telephone interviews were conducted with four principals, 10 secondary school trustees, 124 secondary school students, 10 secondary school staff and 12 parents (six of whom had decided to continue their child at the middle school and six who had decided to send their child on to secondary school). In addition, the teacher, kaiawhina and one parent involved in the Māori Enrichment Programme at the new middle school were also interviewed. Six months after the inception of the new third form at the intermediate school, the teacher appointed to the secondary school

position and six students were interviewed. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and returned to interviewees for comment, except in the case of students who were interviewed in groups and the parents who were interviewed over the telephone.

Interviewing a wide range of people with differing responsibilities and perspectives was carried out to ensure the validity of the study. In particular, this enabled the researchers to make comparisons between the perceptions of the process of consultation, and the advantages and disadvantages of a middle school, held by those involved in establishing the middle school (staff, principal, parents and Board of Trustee members of the intermediate school) and those connected with the secondary schools to which the majority of the intermediate students would normally have gone.

Second, while the process of interviewing was being undertaken, written documentation on the establishment of the middle school was gathered. This included such items as: letters to the intermediate school parents; a survey of the intermediate school parents; a copy of the intermediate school's application to establish a middle school; copies of letters sent from the intermediate school to the high schools it contributes to; a copy of the reply from one of the secondary schools.

Once all the interviews were completed and the written documentation gathered a theme analysis was carried out. Themes to emerge included: staffing; transition to secondary school; curriculum needs and delivery; consultation; familiarity and location; and industrial and employment issues.

THE FINDINGS

The findings presented in this section present the views and opinions of a wide range of people interviewed: the principals, staff, parents, pupils, and Board of Trustee members of both the middle school and the secondary schools. Not all issues were of concern to all groups. However, five major themes emerged: transition, curriculum, consultation, familiarity and location, and finally industrial and employment issues.

Transition

The intermediate school principal was strongly in favour of extending the school to a four-year middle school. He argued that the future of secondary schools lay in catering for senior classes. At the same time, he was aware that there were problems with 'selling' the changeover to a middle school to parents and students:

We've got a lot of parents who are saying we think it is a great idea but we are loath to let our children be guinea pigs. If you can show that it works then we would certainly consider it.

Peer pressure was alone seen as a factor in children's decisions about their own future schooling.

The three secondary school principals whose schools were most affected by the middle school proposals, believed that they had had minimal involvement in the phase leading to the establishment of the middle school. However, all three

drew attention to potential difficulties of transference to another school at Form 5 level, particularly in terms of adjustment to a new school climate in a year when School Certificate or units of assessment had to be faced. One school had a 'capped roll' and would possibly not be able to take Form 5 students from the new middle school. Related issues were raised including adjustment to different teaching styles and degrees of specialisation, disruption in the continuity of a subject, and the adequacy of knowledge of those entering a Form 5 class from another programme. Technology was cited as an example. The principal of the intermediate school considered that maintaining close liaison with each secondary school would overcome any problems.

Half of the ten secondary teachers who were interviewed raised concerns about transition. Like the principals, they were cautious about the academic and social impact of transferring in Form 5. Seven of the ten trustees believed the Form 5 transfer would create difficulties, especially in an examination year. On the other hand, most secondary school trustees thought their school would be able to minimise any negative effects of transition, especially if good links were kept between the secondary and middle school. Five of the six parents of students who remained at the middle school who were interviewed, thought their child would get more individual attention, and several were afraid their child could get 'lost in the system' in a large secondary school.

Intermediate school Māori staff saw the middle school as offering advantages to Māori students of a smaller whānau-oriented atmosphere, and closer bonding with friends. In a bigger secondary school, Māori children were possibly vulnerable in terms of being marginalised.

Curriculum

The intermediate school principal believed the Forms 3 and 4 students could be offered the core subjects normally offered in secondary schools and a range of options. However, the secondary principals were not convinced. All saw the need for well-qualified teachers who could offer the continuity of curriculum from Forms 3 to 7.

Related to the need for adequately qualified staff was the provision of suitable resources and resource rooms. All principals acknowledged the high capital cost of extra classrooms and equipment, two drawing attention to the advantage of larger schools being able to offer more opportunities in terms of the range of subjects, finance extra facilities and courses, and acquire extra resources.

To some extent, the notion of 'adequately' qualified staff was related to the secondary school setting where, because of Form 7 curriculum requirements, well-qualified staff were already available, and able to have a long-term perspective on the development of their subjects.

The principal of one of the secondary schools summed up the view of many when she noted the likelihood of problems in specialist areas such as mathematics and science. She put it in the following way:

...for example, New Zealand is really quite low as far as maths results are concerned, and one of the things they do say about it is that the teachers of mathematics are not highly enough qualified in that subject

area. And we're not talking about 7th or 6th or even 5th form, we're talking about 4th and 3rd form maths, and maybe actually have to have highly qualified mathematics people as teachers, and I suppose with the middle school concept you worry a bit about that because they will obviously be using their own staffing for quite a while.

This was a view shared by many parents. As one put it:

My concerns would be as to whether the middle school can provide what Form 3 and Form 4 students need, not so much the basic curriculum...but the additional aspects of the less traditional subjects. The options courses and extension work would be very difficult to provide. The secondary schools have got a lot of the buildings and the workshops needed, and are already into technology and those sorts of areas are already established.

From another standpoint the secondary schools, by the very nature of their larger numbers, were able to apply an economy of scale enabling the provision of facilities for a wider range of pursuits.

While acknowledging that the provision of specialisation might be a problem, the principal of the intermediate school was of the view that adequate staff and facilities were already available. He claimed that greater flexibility (i.e., less reliance on a fixed timetable) would allow a third form class to have half its time with a home-room teacher and half with a specialist teacher. The use of shared facilities with another secondary school was also suggested, but this was not viewed with any enthusiasm by secondary principals.

Six of the ten teachers had serious concerns about curriculum delivery. A major focus of concern was teacher specialisation. As one interviewee pointed out:

I had some real concerns that they [the intermediate] have the belief that one teacher, a super teacher will be able to teach third form English, maths, science, and social studies curriculum but not only that, they will also be able to teach fourth form English, maths, science, and social studies curriculum....

The attitude of the intermediate school was commented on by another secondary teacher who said:

Personally, I felt that the principal at [the intermediate school] tended to brush the value of having specialist teachers in the third and fourth form areas aside a bit...in New Zealand we're the only OECD country to my knowledge that starts specialist teaching at age thirteen. The other OECD countries start at age twelve. It seemed to me that when you look at the sorts of results we get from Form 3 level in international mathematics testing where we don't particularly score well, you have to line that up with where your specialist teaching starts, and for those students out there, to perhaps put specialist

teaching off for another two years could be a severe disadvantage for them, I feel.

One teacher said that when the changes were initially proposed she did not think that the idea would get off the ground because the intermediate school might not be able to offer a full range of options. That concern would not change unless the Ministry agreed to certain things like installing science laboratories.

Five of the ten trustees had serious concerns about curriculum delivery, mostly that specific curriculum requirements needed to be met in order for students to cope academically at secondary school level. With this in mind, the issue of teacher education and specialisation was raised by most of those who had concerns regarding curriculum. A common thread which arose out of the concerns of these five trustees was the view that existing staff at the intermediate school were not equipped to teach secondary school curriculum. As one trustee pointed out:

There are presumably specific curriculum requirements that secondary teachers have...which either the existing teachers will have to get or they have to buy in.

From this comment there appears to be an assumption that the school did not have staff adequately trained to meet curriculum requirements. However, this view was not shared by all. One trustee said that third and fourth form curriculum is at a relatively basic level and so it would not make a lot of difference if students stayed on at the intermediate school or went to a secondary school. The teachers from the intermediate school, however, did not envisage any problems in terms of curriculum delivery. They believed that the school had existing strengths which it could draw upon in terms of curriculum delivery and in relation to any areas of deficiency which might be apparent. The school would be looking to recruit additional staff who would be capable of enriching the development of the school programme at third and fourth form levels.

The most common reasons given by students themselves as to their preference to transfer at the end of Form 2 included access to a wider range of subjects and teachers and to get better preparation for examinations. Curriculum matters were not mentioned by those students who preferred to remain in the middle school. None of the parents of students who intended to go to a secondary school were negative about the idea of a middle school, but they were swayed by the 'track record' of the secondary schools, and two doubted that the intermediate school could offer enough subject options.

An interview with the newly-appointed middle school teacher revealed her concern that there were no specialist science and mathematics teachers for the Form 3 students, no science laboratory and a very heavy workload for her to set up studies in the core subjects. On the other hand, curriculum integration was possible because one teacher was largely teaching all core subjects, and there was strong support from intermediate school staff.

Consultation

The intermediate school believed they had a full and thorough consultation process before going ahead with the application to become a middle school. While there is no doubt that the school followed the procedures to the letter of the law, we found that while the intermediate school community was regularly updated on developments as the school moved through the process of changing to a middle school, the consultation with parents and other affected schools concerning educational issues was considered minimal and not as thorough as it could have been. For community members, one questionnaire was administered to three community groups - the school community, the Māori community, and the wider community. However, the response rate to this, as would be expected, was moderate. The support for the proposal cannot, therefore, be said to be widespread.

The principals of the most affected secondary schools did not believe they had been adequately consulted. The principal of the intermediate school personally contacted each of the three secondary schools' principals informing them about the school's proposal. However, regular meetings between the principals to discuss developments and issues regarding the proposed middle school failed to transpire.

Location, Size and Familiarity

A major factor in selecting the middle school seemed to be related to geographic location. Earlier in this paper we commented on the demands of parents for the location of a secondary school in the suburb. The nearest secondary schools which are available at the present time are several kilometres from the intermediate school's suburb. Moreover, to get to the schools the students have to traverse major highways at considerable risk. Many parents made a point of this; and it was interesting to note that the boys interviewed at one of the secondary schools stated quite clearly, that if a secondary school had been available in their area that would have been their choice. It seems, therefore, that geographic location was seen as an advantage for a school in the intermediate school area.

A considerable number of the respondents noted that the size of the organisations delivering education was also very important to them. Trustees, staff and parents spoke of children getting 'lost' in large organisations which in their view would be inevitably bureaucratic and impersonal in their operation. A smaller school was thus seen as being advantageous as the teachers would have the ability to come to know their pupils better than would be the case in a large school. Both parents and teachers (albeit in small numbers) commented that the size of the organisation related to the style of operation. They mentioned the short periods of time allocated to subject areas in secondary schools, the need to shift from place to place, and the students suffering dislocation from the subject area because of the lack of time in a continuous sense that was available. 'Bells' and 'regimentation' were specified as undesirable features of large secondary schools, which would be overcome in a smaller middle school. Some parents also believed that the smaller size of the organisation, and the fact that it went only to Form 4, would allow these pupils to take more responsibility for the operation of

the school and that there would be less bullying or, as one parent put it, 'fagging' in the smaller middle school.

The smallness of the likely Form 3 and Form 4 classes was also seen as an advantage by several respondents, who claimed that the teachers would be able to get to know this group of pupils better than would be the case if they went on to the secondary school. Prior knowledge about the pupils was also seen as an advantage. For example, the principal of the intermediate school commented:

The fact that we have worked with kids here for two years, and I think pretty successfully, and the chance of working with some of those children for another two years and building on what has already happened, is exciting [and will be advantageous for those children].

Having four years at a middle school rather than two years was seen as an advantage by pupils also. Two respondents said that students at intermediate are just getting settled at school and then have to change to a secondary school.

The middle school teacher also viewed the small school and small class as an advantage as strong parent and community links had been established, and there was wonderful support from other staff. The teacher was also able to provide a supervised homework evening one hour per week. Pupils who had decided to remain at the new middle school in 1995 agreed that the small class size meant that pupils got individual attention and there was more possibility of school trips or day outings. The pupils felt that because students at secondary school moved between teachers for different subjects, teachers would not get to know the students they were teaching.

In the middle school's Form 3 class, pupils were grouped (sitting arrangements) according to how well pupils worked together. This was organised to complement personalities and maximise each pupil's overall performance. Pupils also commented that one of the advantages of staying at the middle school was that they had friends not only in Form 3 but also in Forms 1 and 2.

All students said they liked the third form teacher. There was general agreement that as senior students in a middle school, Form 3 pupils were given much more responsibility and were 'treated their age.' Two pupils said they felt that because the middle school was new, Form 3 pupils were role models for the rest of the school and for the local community.

The teacher, kaiawhina, and one parent involved in the Māori Enrichment Programme at the middle school believed that the smaller school environment had created more of a whānau atmosphere and so was more comforting for Māori students. One of the reasons for this was that four years of networking allows students to form closer bonds with their peers. The smaller size of the middle school was thought to be an advantage. The perceived tendency for children to get swallowed up in the bigger high schools and possible marginalisation of Māori students were mentioned earlier.

It was also argued that being a senior student at a middle school rather than a junior student at a secondary school allowed students to assume more responsibility and this tended to enhance self-esteem. Those people involved in

the Māori Enrichment Programme also believed there would be less financial pressure on Māori parents in terms of travelling costs.

Industrial and Employment Issues

The main findings that related to staff working conditions focused on the middle school being able to attract appropriate specialist staff, the middle school staff having to work in a climate that, being fiscally neutral, resulted in poor working conditions, and reducing secondary rolls causing staff loss. Although some staff of the middle school commented that negotiating pay parity between primary and secondary staff was an issue this did not receive much attention.

The three secondary school principals expressed considerable concern regarding the middle school being able to attract high quality specialist staff. Also, concern was expressed by some secondary school teachers that the secondary schools might not be able to retain current staffing levels. As one secondary teacher put it:

I think the only implication for our school re: curriculum would simply be just the general staffing reduction which will take place...with the reduced roll.

The issue that caused the greatest concern was that of the middle school being able to provide adequate resourcing. This concern was expressed mainly by the middle school teacher herself and less directly by the students. No money was provided by the Ministry of Education for teaching resources. Resources had to be bought with existing school funds. The middle school students were concerned about the lack of computers and that there was no facility at the school for the teaching of science. This contributed to the very heavy workload of the middle school teacher. She was primary trained but had had extensive secondary school teaching. She taught the Form 3 middle school class all the core subjects (English, Science, Maths and Social Studies) plus two option classes (Art and French). She commented that she worked very long hours, especially in the setting up phase, and that it would not have been possible for her to cope without the help of her husband who was a trained primary school teacher who happened to be on leave. As well as having to prepare for six different curriculum areas she was also having to travel to the local polytechnic to use their science laboratory facilities. Although enthusiastic about the middle school she did confess to being very tired.

CONCLUSIONS AND SPECULATIONS

This section of the paper offers some tentative conclusions and speculations. However, at this point it is important to note that the researchers see this study as the base-line of what needs to be a three year study. That is, for the study to be more fully useful, the 1995 third form middle school students need to be tracked into their fourth form (1996) and fifth form (1997) years. This will produce a clearer picture of the educational and social implications for these students. What

follows are a number of issues that have come to light during the course of undertaking this study.

1. There has been no evidence found, to the researchers' knowledge, that shows that changing the structure of a school improves the learning outcomes for students. Other factors have been identified as improving learning but school structure is not one of them.
2. It is important to note at this stage that these new initiatives are being implemented in a New Right ideological climate of choice, efficiency and competition. The three intermediate schools that were given permission to add on Form 3 and Form 4 classes were those that were fiscally neutral (apart from teacher salaries). It could be viewed that this is therefore an effective way for the government to save money. There were some involved in this study who saw the implementation of a middle school as threatening and antagonistic. There were others, in the secondary schools, who saw the implementation as having very little impact. That is, when small numbers of pupils are involved little threat is perceived. If more intermediate schools choose to capitate a greater threat may be seen.
3. We would also want to draw attention to the procedures followed in obtaining middle school status. We found that the consultation with parents and other affected schools was minimal. While the extent of consultation which occurred and the willingness of all parties to consult, may be a matter for debate, we have reached the conclusion that there needed to be more in-depth consideration of the issues relating to the secondary schools during the procedures adopted by the intermediate school. We are of the view that a much more thorough working through was required. Indeed, we are surprised that the educational initiative procedures were not adopted in full in this case.
4. Since this study was first commissioned there have been a number of changes in policy that may affect the viability of middle schools. For example, it is intended that some School Certificate subjects will be sat at the end of the fourth form. This may mean that the concern over transition from the middle school into the fifth form, where School Certificate is usually sat, will no longer be the same kind of issue. However, that does not mean that transition will no longer be a problem. The social aspects of transition are still important and both middle and secondary schools will need to work together to ensure that there is minimal disruption for the student.
5. In some areas of New Zealand there is a teacher shortage and it is predicted that this will worsen in future. There are a number of industrial issues such as teachers' pay and conditions of service in middle schools that are not yet sorted out. This has always been an issue in intermediate schools with some staff being on primary salary scales and others on secondary salary scales. In a climate of teacher shortage, unless this issue is satisfactorily resolved then middle schools may have difficulty in attracting staff.

6. Although there was little evidence collected that demonstrated clear implications for other schools, such as contributing primary and Kura Kaupapa Māori schools, the staff of the Māori Enrichment programme were all very positive about the middle school concept and saw many advantages for Māori students. It may be that middle schools have a positive role to play in Māori education. On the other hand, it may be argued that the concept of a middle school is not appropriate for Māori students. Certainly, it cuts across the notion of whānau, separating siblings into different schools. It is interesting to note, for example, that Ramsay and his colleagues (1981) recommended the closure of intermediate schools in Southern Auckland on these very grounds. We can, therefore, reach no major conclusion on the value of these schools for a Māori enrichment programme.
7. Raising the school leaving age to 17 will put increasing pressure on secondary school rolls. It may be that in the future middle schools may be viewed more positively as they assist in reducing the pressure on secondary school rolls.
8. The establishment of middle schools has implications for teacher education. At present Colleges and Schools of Education in New Zealand prepare their teachers for teaching in either primary schools (up to Form 2) or secondary schools. With middle schools spanning both the primary and secondary school curriculum, teacher educators will need to adjust their programmes to cater for the middle school structure.
9. To date, there are still a number of questions that remain unanswered. One of the areas of greatest uncertainty is continued funding and resourcing. For example, the provision of guidance counsellors and careers advisers for middle schools which will require changes to the building code to provide adequate facilities such as toilets, the length of the school day and year (whether primary and/or secondary), and the rate at which a middle school is funded (composite scale, primary scale or secondary scale) are all issues that have yet to be worked through. It will be difficult for middle schools to plan with any great certainty until clear policy is forthcoming from the Ministry of Education.
10. The setting up of this particular middle school has been done 'on the cheap' and could be viewed as a way of saving the government some money. Resource provision is non-existent and it is only through the extremely hard work of the newly-appointed teacher and the generosity of other professionals that resources are available for the students.

In summary, this study has raised as many questions as it has answered. While it is important to track a new educational initiative such as the one described in this study, it is necessary to view this as Stage 1 of a three-stage project. As well as tracking the 1995 Form 3 middle school cohort for two more years, it is also important to follow up on those families who had older children who went on to

secondary schools but who returned a younger child/children to the middle school.

FOOTNOTE

1. This paper has been written from the original research report titled *Middle Schools: A Case Study*, copies of which are available from The Educational Leadership Centre, School of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton.

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