

**Forgotten Students, Forgotten Teachers:
Positioning the middle years in New Zealand
teacher education**

by
Brenda Shanks, MEd.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

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Abstract

For over a century the New Zealand education system has been defined by a bipartite organisation of schooling that is divided philosophically, pedagogically and structurally along primary and secondary lines. Initial teacher preparation and in-service professional development provision perpetuate this two-tiered division by providing programmes of teacher education in almost exclusively primary and secondary education. While the New Zealand education system has achieved many successes, concerns have been expressed in recent years about the variable quality of education young adolescent students in Years 7-10 experience in New Zealand schools. Current research shows that it is what teachers know and do in the classroom that is the most significant factor influencing student learning. In view of the concerns around the provision of effective middle level education, it is timely to place New Zealand teacher education under the lens. This research investigates how the middle years are catered for within initial and in-service teacher education across a number of key New Zealand institutions. Using qualitative methodology the study examines how, and to what extent middle level teachers are prepared through their primary or secondary programme of initial teacher education, and through in-service support, to meet the specialised needs of young adolescent students. The findings are informed, through an in- depth interview with an internationally recognised expert in middle level education, to ascertain the wider systemic factors influencing the uptake of specialised middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. Additionally, comparative insights have been obtained from the perspectives of six international teacher educators involved in middle level teacher education programmes in Australia and the United States. The findings from this study have been synthesised to provide recommendations for the reform of New Zealand teacher education so that it is cognisant of the middle levels of schooling. It is hoped that these recommendations will inform future directions and will result in the learning pathway for Years 7-10 identified in the current New Zealand curriculum, becoming a reality.

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Glossary

Associate Teacher	A teacher in the schooling sector who mentors student teachers during teaching practicum.
Composite Schools:	Schools that cater for children from Year 1 through until Year 13.
Early Adolescence	The term used to denote the period of human growth and development that occurs between the ages of 10 and 15 years.
ERO:	The Education Review Office evaluates and reports publicly on the quality of education in all New Zealand schools and early childhood centres.
Education Support Services:	Education Support Services, usually under contract to the Ministry of Education provides teacher professional development programmes to schools.
Initial Teacher Education:	Undergraduate and postgraduate tertiary education programmes that lead to a qualification to teach in New Zealand schools.
Intermediate Schools:	A particular type of school that is unique to NZ and caters for middle level students in Years 7 and 8.
Māori:	The indigenous people or tangata whenua (people of the land) of New Zealand.
Middle Level Education:	Educational provision designed to meet the specific needs of young adolescent students in Years 7-10 and across a range of school configurations.
Middle Schooling:	A term that refers to a particular philosophy or set of principles about teaching, learning and curriculum for young adolescents.
Middle Schools:	A specific school structure or organisational unit that caters for young adolescent students in Years 7-9 or 10.

Ministry of Education:	The Ministry of Education is the government's lead advisor on the New Zealand education system, shaping direction and developing strategic policy for the education sector.
NCEA:	The National Certificate of Educational Achievement is New Zealand's national secondary school qualification.
NZAIMS:	The New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools whose aim is to promote early adolescent education.
NZEI:	The New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI) is New Zealand's largest education union.
New Zealand Curriculum:	The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) is the official policy for teaching, learning, and assessment in New Zealand schools.
NZ Teachers' Council:	The professional and regulatory body for teachers in English and Māori medium settings for early childhood, schools and other related education institutions.
Pākehā:	New Zealanders of European descent.
PPTA:	The professional association/union representing teachers and principals in secondary and area schools, and teachers in intermediates, technicraft centres, and community education.
Primary Schools:	Primary schooling represents the first stage of compulsory school education from New Entrants to Year 6, or in the case of a full primary school up to and including Year 8.
Restricted Composite Schools:	The official Ministry of Education designation for middle schools catering to students in Years 7-9 or Year 7-10.
School Network Reviews:	The extensive process undertaken by the New Zealand Labour-led government between 2003-2005 in reviewing schooling provision.
Secondary Schools:	Secondary schooling represents the final stage of compulsory school education in New Zealand and caters for students in either Years 7-13 or Years 9-13.

SPANZ:	Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand. National association and professional body representing secondary school principals or those with a vested interest in secondary education such as secondary teacher educators within institutions.
TEC:	The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) is responsible for policy development and implementation in the tertiary education sector. They are also responsible for funding the government's contribution to tertiary education and training.
Young Adolescent	The broad term used to describe a young person experiencing growth during the period of early adolescence or 10-15 years age span.
Wānanga	Maori tertiary education institutions.
Whanau	Maori word denoting the concept of family.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Preamble

This thesis investigates how, and to what extent, the characteristics and needs of young adolescents are represented in programmes of initial teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The stage of early adolescence, broadly encompassing young people from 10-15 years of age, is characterised by a period of profound physical, intellectual and social emotional change that has been compared to that of infancy in terms of rapid development and growth (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, 1984; National Middle School Association, 2003). Contemporary constructions of early adolescence also articulate the generational traits of young adolescents and the influences of living in global communities. Bahr and Pendergast (2007) advance a more contemporary conception of early adolescence that recognises the socio-cultural and generational influences of living in a globalised society. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2009a) identifies global interconnections, social change, interaction and diversity, economic decision making and trade and technological change as the most important social science concepts associated with globalisation. While internationally, the concept of early adolescence is increasingly recognised through the establishment of specialised middle level teacher preparation, the specific educational needs of young adolescents in New Zealand have been largely ignored within programmes of primary and secondary teacher education. Despite the presence of a relatively small but vigorous national middle schooling movement advocating for the reform of middle level education and the need for dedicated programmes of middle level teacher preparation, calls for reform have gone unheeded.

In 1893, New Zealand was the first country in the world to adopt universal suffrage for men and women. In the ensuing 117 years this small country of 4.2 million people situated in the South Pacific, has continued to bat above its weight in many areas of human endeavour. With 99% of its work-force literate, New Zealand has built an enviable international reputation of instigating innovative practices in its education system. This is particularly evident in the areas of progressive literacy and numeracy education. For instance, pioneer Marie Clay established highly

effective reading recovery programmes of intervention for 6 year old children (Gaffney & Askew, 1999) and the Ministry of Education has initiated a numeracy project that facilitates nation-wide teacher professional development based on a new and innovative approach to the teaching of mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2010). Additionally, early childhood education for children under five is free and is based on a progressive model of education underpinned by a widely acclaimed national curriculum. International scores on tests of academic performance also present a positive picture with New Zealand students consistently performing well in global surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). New Zealand data from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), which assesses students in Year 4 and Year 8 across all subjects through a rotating system, also shows that there are significant increases in student achievement from primary through to the middle levels (Durling, 2007).

These positive aspects, however, conceal a reality that is characterised by a number of disparities. Across all levels of schooling in New Zealand there is a yawning gap between the best students and those who are not achieving as well (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009). While the international statistics show that a large proportion of New Zealand students are achieving well, there exists “a long tail” (Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 5) of middle level students, across Years 7-10, who underachieve in the educational system. Students from communities with the greatest socio-economic disadvantage have significantly lower rates for qualification attainment, numeracy and literacy, and student engagement. Since indigenous Māori students and Pasifika students are over-represented in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, they are particularly at risk. The overall academic achievement level of Māori students is low. Māori students are three times more likely to be stood down, suspended or excluded from school, they are over-represented in special education programmes, and they leave school with fewer formal qualifications than Pākehā (New Zealand European) students (Bishop, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2007a). Māori boys are particularly at risk. While recent initiatives, such as the Ministry of Education’s *Te Mana* and *Ka Hikitea* programmes have focused on addressing disparity and improving student outcomes for Māori students and these have resulted in

substantial improvement in the achievement of Year 8 Māori students in particular (Ministry of Education, 2007b), their achievement in literacy and numeracy in New Zealand English medium schools is still a major area of concern for policymakers and educators.

While the student achievement data reflects disparities in the level of academic achievement, further attitudinal information and engagement data from a range of sources (including TIMSS, PISA, NEMP, Youth2000, NZCER Engagement Survey) have provided evidence that many students' attitudes to school deteriorate during the middle years (Bolstad & Hipkins, 2009; Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Crooks, 2008; Dowden et al., 2009; Durling, 2007). Since research, both in New Zealand and internationally, identifies the importance of student engagement during the middle years as an important factor in student achievement and retaining students at school beyond Year 10, these findings are of major concern. Additionally, a New Zealand-based longitudinal study entitled „Competent Children, Competent Learners' (Hodgen, 2007) has tracked 500 children from early childhood centres through their school years until the most recent round when the students were 16 years old. Surveying the students, their parents and teachers, the study traced the development of their cognitive, attitudinal and social competencies and the interactions between these. The cognitive areas sampled included literacy, mathematics and logical problem-solving. In reporting on the study, Bolstad and Hipkins (2009) presented findings that showed that between the ages of 10 and 12, or by Year 8, there was an increased disparity in the cognitive competencies and a much more marked disparity in their attitudinal competencies (Bolstad & Hipkins, 2009). They commented:

At 12, the young people who would leave school by 16 were giving up, playing up and increasingly alienated, with lower social skills. This trend was even more marked at age 14 (Bolstad & Hipkins, 2009, pp. 14-15).

The escalation during the middle years, of student disengagement from learning, indicates the pivotal nature of this period of schooling if students are to continue and succeed in the education system (Durling, 2007). More specifically, Bishop (2007) has stated that students in Years 7-10 progressively report feelings of disempowerment, disengagement and of being unsupported by their teachers. Despite recent research (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, 2007; Hattie, 2002) identifying the quality of teacher-student

relationships as being pivotal to student engagement in learning, “fewer young adolescents report that their teachers help them to do their best, treat them fairly, praise them, and listen to them” (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009, p. 143).

The Education Review Office (ERO) in describing the period from Years 7-10 in New Zealand schools as the “forgotten years” have raised concerns since the early 1990’s about the variable quality of schooling young adolescents experience during the middle years of schooling in New Zealand (2003, p. 6). In their report entitled *Students in Years 9 and 10* (ERO 2003), that analysed the extent to which New Zealand schools catering to students in Years 7-10 respond to the developmental needs of young adolescents, ERO called for an improvement in the quality and delivery of teaching and learning programmes. Their findings showed mixed results across the range of school types catering to students at this level.

Interestingly, ERO (2003) reported that the four restricted composite (or middle schools) reviewed were found to provide “a higher quality of education than other school types” (p.46). ERO’s 2003 report concluded with a call for specific initial teacher education that at its core had a clear focus on the developmental characteristics and needs of young adolescents along with the imperative to develop progressive and responsive pedagogies. A further recommendation of the report was the need for school leaders to provide targeted professional development for middle level teachers. Constrained however within an entrenched two-tiered system of educational provision, students in Years 7-10, are sandwiched between the primary and secondary years of schooling that involve students in Years 1-8 being taught by primary teachers and students in Years 9-13 being taught by secondary teachers. In echoing ERO’s sentiment, Neville-Tisdall (2002) remarked that when negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school young adolescent students in New Zealand have typically “fallen through the crack” (p. 45).

Internationally, particularly in the United States and Australia, the period of early adolescence (10-15 years old), is increasingly recognised as a distinct stage of human development that requires differentiated provision from the earlier primary and the later adolescent years (Beane & Brodhagen, 2001) however this concept is poorly understood in New Zealand. Despite the existence of a middle schooling

reform movement that has advocated vociferously for the distinct developmental and educational needs of young adolescent students to be recognised, the status quo represented by an entrenched two-tiered system of schooling remains. Middle level students experience their schooling in primary and secondary learning environments that are largely unresponsive to their specific physical, socio-emotional, intellectual and moral needs (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). Young adolescent students in New Zealand attend schools across a plethora of different schooling configurations and in recent years this wide range of school types has been viewed as a major inhibiting factor to addressing disparities and improving student outcomes. A recent focus on school types as the lever for change, however, has proven to be problematic and inconclusive (Bishop, 2008; Durling, 2007, Hinchco, 2004).

Rather than focusing on school type, New Zealand-based research on young adolescent education has more recently turned to the quality of teaching as the most influential factor impacting on student outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2003; Atkin, 2001; Hattie, 2002; New Zealand Educational Institute, 2006). In articulating this changed focus, the National President of the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) stated:

This debate is not about school structures per se, but about achieving quality educational provision specific to the needs of students in the middle years of schooling, so that they are successful, motivated learners. Having a better understanding of best practice during these crucial years can have nothing but a positive effect on our education system as a whole (New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Association, 2006, p.18).

Recent developments, including the opening of two new purpose-built middle schools, Albany Junior High School in 2005 and Jeffs Road Junior High School in 2009, as well as the commissioning of a number of middle level research projects and targeted initiatives by the Ministry of Education, seem to indicate a change in government policy towards middle level education in New Zealand. This change in thinking at the systemic level was further evidenced when then Minister of Education Steve Maharey stated:

New research is needed on issues such as teacher training, teacher recruitment and effective teaching practices at our newly-opened schools (2006, p. 7).

The launch of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) with its differentiated learning pathway for Years 7-10, has given advocates for middle level reform reason for optimism since it describes three „learning pathways’ across Years 1-6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-13 which challenge the hegemony of the traditional two-tier system represented by the primary-secondary sectors. The inclusion of an extra learning pathway in the national curriculum, that specifically recognises the middle years as a unique period distinct from the primary years and later adolescent years, mandates all types of school catering for Years 7-10 students to provide schooling that is suited to the specific needs of young adolescents. Furthermore, research shows that the greatest leverage on improving student outcomes lies with the quality of teaching in the classroom (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2002), thus the focus in Years 7-10 must necessarily turn to teacher education. The question is: how are beginning teachers prepared for teaching at the middle levels, and to what extent are the specific needs of young adolescent students dissipated or lost within the primary-secondary hegemony of initial and in-service teacher education in New Zealand? This question has provided the motivation for this research inquiry.

Motivation for the research topic

The topic was motivated by my experience as a middle level teacher, as well as my current experience as a teacher educator in a New Zealand university college of education. As a beginning teacher, I completed a three year primary programme of initial teacher education that enabled me to teach from New Entrants (NE) to Year 8 in New Zealand schools. Despite experiencing little course content focused on the teaching of middle level students and experiencing only one teaching practicum experience of 3 weeks duration in an intermediate (Years 7-8) setting, I found myself teaching a Year 8 class of 35 students in the second year of my teaching career. As with many colleagues, it became a case of „learning on the job’ since young adolescent students did not conform to the patterns of learning and behaviour previously experienced with younger primary students. With an absence of professional development support, other than that focused generically on curricula, meeting the specialised and diverse needs of this group of young people became by necessity a process of trial and error. Young adolescent students in New Zealand schools deserve to be taught by effective teachers who have the essential

knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable them to provide classroom programmes that engage, challenge and extend learners.

Overview of the thesis

This study investigated how prospective teachers, within programmes of either primary or secondary initial teacher education, are currently prepared for teaching middle level students and also how they are supported on graduating with ongoing professional development. School programmes should be centred on a relevant, inclusive, exploratory and integrative curriculum that utilises relevant, exploratory and meaningful pedagogies linked to students' lives and the communities in which they live (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009). Moreover, in enacting the overarching vision of “fostering lifelong learning,” as advocated in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c, p. 7-8), middle level educators need to consider how the generic key competencies of thinking, using language, symbols and text, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing, are made specific to the middle level and, furthermore, how this is integrated within programmes of initial and in-service teacher education?

My thesis uses qualitative methodology and is underpinned by a theoretical orientation of social constructivism. It investigates the concept of early adolescence, responsive curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, advocacy for effective middle level teacher education and inhibiting factors that prevent its implementation, and models of middle level teacher preparation; through a synthesis of supporting North American, Australian and New Zealand literature. In order to background my study, I situate the concept of middle level teacher preparation within historical, philosophical, political and educational contexts. The scope of my thesis encompasses an investigation into provision for the middle levels that is delimited to a sample of New Zealand institutions offering teacher education. Contrasting perspectives have been obtained through investigating provision in a selected sample of Australian and American institutions providing dedicated middle level programmes of teacher education. A prominent academic leader and middle level advocate in New Zealand informs this investigation by providing an overview of the current sociological and political climate in relation to middle level reform and the implementation of specialised teacher preparation.

The findings from these three perspectives are synthesised and discussed. I make key recommendations for increased recognition of the middle years and conclude with a call for the implementation of specialised middle level initial teacher education programmes and in-service professional development by teacher education providers in New Zealand.

NB: I have used the terms *early adolescence* and *young adolescent* within this thesis. Rather than using these terms interchangeably as is frequently the case in the extant literature, I have instead differentiated my use of the terms by using “early adolescence” to refer to the particular period of human development experienced during the stage from 10-15 years, and the term “young adolescent(s)” as the term to refer to a young person(s) between the ages of 10-15 years experiencing this period of growth.

The thesis structure

Chapter 2 commences by reviewing the current middle level research and literature originating from the USA and Australia. This is further informed and contextualised through an investigation and synthesis of the small but developing evidence base of current research and publications produced in New Zealand. While the concept of middle level reform is not restricted to these three countries, there is a paucity of published material from other countries that documents specialised provision for early adolescent education. This chapter explores the characteristics and needs of young adolescents by considering both developmental and contemporary constructions of early adolescence. Progressive approaches to curriculum, assessment and pedagogy are explored, before focusing on the topic for this investigation, which is that of advocacy for teacher preparation. Documented models of programme design for middle level teacher education are critically discussed and the review of the extant literature concludes by identifying and examining generic factors that hinder or prevent the uptake of specialised teacher preparation.

Chapter 3 situates the study by describing the historical, political, philosophical and structural contexts that have shaped New Zealand’s current educational system. The origins and entrenched nature of the bipartite system of primary and secondary

education is presented as a platform for understanding current schooling provisions. The chapter outlines the often contested development of middle schooling in New Zealand from its earliest beginnings in 1894 through to the present day. History demonstrates that schooling provision for young adolescents has often been characterised by philosophical differences, political rivalry and vigorous debate. The emphasis in current New Zealand research on effective teaching and the recent launch of a curriculum that differentiates a learning pathway for students in Years 7-10, are presented as the possible forerunners to change. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of teacher education in New Zealand and the influences through which it has been shaped.

Chapter 4 begins by outlining the purpose for this qualitative study and the key questions that have provided strategic direction for the design and implementation of this study. The chapter describes the role of social constructivism as a philosophical orientation for the research design and its influence on my role as the researcher. The procedures and processes involved in the selection and recruitment of the participants and in the collection and analysis of data are described and this is followed by a section outlining the steps taken to enhance validity. The ethical issues that needed to be considered in the course of this research are discussed and the chapter concludes with an explanation as to the reporting of the findings.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the findings of this research. Chapter 5 presents the findings from in-depth interviews with the participating New Zealand teacher educators. This chapter is divided into three discrete sections to represent the three sub-groups of participants involved in primary programmes, secondary programmes and in-service professional development. Each section of Chapter 5 begins by presenting the participating New Zealand institutions and a brief description of the programmes that formed the basis for the interviews. The subsequent findings and discussion are organised under sub-headings that represent the themes that emerged inductively from the interview data. Consistent with the qualitative methodology used in this research the voices of the New Zealand teacher educators are integrated within the discussion of findings.

The findings from the interview with academic leader and key informant Dr Pat Nolan are presented in Chapter 6 through the aforementioned thematic reporting structure before concluding with a summary of the key themes. Chapter 7 presents the findings and integrated discussion in relation to three teacher educators involved in the coordination and implementation of programmes of specialised middle level teacher education in Australian universities. In a similar vein, Chapter 8 discusses the findings from the interviews with three teacher educators involved in dedicated middle level teacher preparation in American universities.

Chapter 9 presents a synthesis and critical discussion of the findings from this investigation. It reiterates the key premise underpinning this thesis that young adolescents in the 21st century have distinct developmental and generational needs that are shaped by their socio-cultural environment and increasingly the globalised society in which they live. The chapter asserts that, if existing disparities are to be addressed in the New Zealand school system and if middle level teachers in New Zealand schools are to enact an effective learning pathway for students in Years 7-10, they must have teacher preparation that is specifically focused on the educational needs of young adolescents. This chapter calls for an end to systemic and institutional inertia by advocating for the introduction of middle level teacher preparation by teacher education providers in New Zealand.

Conclusion

This initial chapter presented the case for the introduction and implementation of specialised middle level teacher preparation programmes in New Zealand institutions. It asserts that if outcomes for young adolescent students are to be substantially improved, and current disparities addressed, middle level teachers require specific preparation through programmes of initial teacher education that are focused on responding to the unique educational needs of this age group. Chapter 2 situates the topic of this thesis within the broader field of middle level education through a review and synthesis of the extant literature.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This thesis contends that disparities in the New Zealand education system could be mitigated by the introduction and implementation of specialised middle level teacher preparation. The framework for this present study was obtained by situating the topic of middle level teacher education within the existing literature. Establishing the state of previous research in the broad area of middle level education was integral to delimiting the topic of this inquiry to that of teacher preparation for the middle levels. Much of the documented material originates from North America and Australia and for this reason publications from these two countries provided the foundation for this synthesis and review. The need for documentation of wider international perspectives in the area of middle level education was recently acknowledged with the publication of Volume 7 in „The Handbook of Research in Middle level Education’ series entitled, *An International Look at Educating Young Adolescents* (Mertens, Anfara & Roney, 2009). In this thesis the review of the international literature is supported and contextualised through an investigation and synthesis of the developing research and literature base in New Zealand. This review is organised around a conceptual framework that identifies five relevant and interdependent aspects that underpin the topic of this thesis. These are:

1. The distinctiveness of early adolescence;
2. Responsive schooling provision for the middle levels, incorporating the theoretical aspects and curriculum, assessment and pedagogy,
3. Advocacy for middle level teacher preparation;
4. Models of middle level teacher education; and
5. Factors inhibiting specialised teacher preparation.

The review concludes with a synthesis and reiteration of these key concepts in a summarising statement.

1. The distinctiveness of early adolescence

Advocacy for specialised middle level teacher preparation is predicated on the belief that young adolescents between the ages of ten and fifteen, have educational and holistic needs that can only be effectively catered for by teachers who have been prepared through programmes of initial teacher education and ongoing

professional development that are specifically focused on meeting the needs of middle level learners (Andrews & Anfara, 2003; Bishop, 2008, de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, 1984; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002; National Middle School Association, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Stewart & Nolan, 1992). While recognising that the period of early adolescence is characterised by considerable variability in terms of growth and development, proponents believe young adolescents demonstrate developmental characteristics that delineate them as a unique group that require differentiated provision in the classroom (National Middle School Association, 1995, 2003). Traditional constructions of early adolescence that are grounded in developmental theory, such as that advanced by Lipsitz (1984), emphasise the biological, cognitive and socio-emotional characteristics that distinguish young adolescents from the earlier middle childhood and later adolescent stages of development. Such conceptions of early adolescence view the onset of puberty with its inherent growth spurts, hormonal changes and the development of secondary sexual characteristics as the framework for the predictable behaviours and emotional characteristics of young people (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007). These biological constructions of adolescence, while recognising the concepts of identity, behaviour and family and peer relationships, are nonetheless firmly grounded in the maturational process (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007). A further traditional construction of early adolescence was that advanced by Piaget (1955) and others who viewed this period from the psychological-social standpoint. In making links between the biological and socio-emotional processes, writers advancing this theory recognised the developmental characteristics as interactive and individual, but framed these within rigid and sequential age-stage models of development (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007).

Recent contemporary constructions of early adolescence (Bahr, 2005; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; Carrington, 2006; Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2007; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2003; Stevenson, 2002) emphasise both the diverse nature of this period of human development and the interconnections between the nexus of biological, psychological and social processes with the social and cultural contexts

of young adolescents. Such conceptions recognise early adolescence as a time of profound physical, social, emotional and intellectual change where young people are transitioning from semi-concrete to more abstract forms of thinking, are constructing their identity and renegotiating relationships with peers and adults as they strive for independence (Groundwater-Smith, et al., 2007). The roles of social class, ethnicity, family structures and geography are viewed as important factors in shaping young adolescents' identity and their worldviews. Contemporary constructions further recognise that young adolescents are growing up in a rapidly changing world that differs markedly from that of previous generations. The influences of the mass media, popular culture, consumerism and information and communications technologies make increasing demands on young people (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Carrington, 2006; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Matters, 2006). Current views, while recognising the developmental characteristics of young adolescents, eschew chronological age-stage conceptions of early adolescence, and instead focus on the social and cultural patterns of contemporary society and the mediating influences of these factors on the development of young peoples' identities.

Contemporary constructions of early adolescence are also shaped by socio-cultural theory and make defining this period somewhat nebulous. Chadbourne (2003) states that it is the nature of early adolescence that makes the application of schooling to meet the needs of young people distinctive, because it is at a time when many young people become disengaged and alienated. He explains that while the generic dimensions of effective teaching are not distinctive, their application to young adolescents is. Young people have a range of affective and cognitive needs that need to be considered by teachers in middle level classrooms. In arguing that it is no longer sufficient to force an adapted primary curriculum or a downscaled secondary curriculum onto young adolescents Barratt (1998), advocates for a radical rethinking of schooling provisions for young people. This has major implications for the nature of middle level curriculum, assessment practices, pedagogical approaches as well as the philosophies of teaching and learning that underpin them.

2. Responsive schooling provision for the middle levels

In the middle level classroom the elements of theoretical underpinnings, responsive middle level curriculum, and assessment and pedagogy are inextricably linked. In this review, however, each element is critically examined and discussed separately with reference to the literature. The rationale for this decision is that separate conceptualisations of the elements of responsive middle level schooling is essential to an understanding of their collective application with respect to the needs of young adolescents.

(i) Theoretical underpinnings

What young people learn in the classroom is influenced by teachers' assumptions and understandings of the nature of students' development and how they learn. Such assumptions and understandings shape the relationship between the teacher and learner in the classroom (Sewell, 2008). The range of paradigms through which teachers view the teacher-learner relationship are referred to as theories of learning (Coker & White, 1993). Some paradigms encompass traditional views such as that represented by behaviourist and transmission models of learning. A more contemporary theory of learning espouses a social constructivist paradigm that views learning as a social activity that involves negotiated understandings through social discourse between two or more people. Socio-cultural theory also positions social interaction as the origin of thinking and development but goes further to recognise the influence of language and other cultural tools as mediating factors (Sewell, 2008).

The principles of social constructivism (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Piaget, 1932) and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) provide an effective theoretical foundation for the teaching and learning in the middle level classroom. The social constructivist paradigm is strongly holistic in that it views knowledge as being dependent on not only social interaction, but also the attitudes, emotions, values and actions of the learner. These principles are congruent with the nature of developmentally responsive, middle level pedagogy because they are cognisant of the specific characteristics and needs of young adolescent learners. A mainstay of the social constructivist approach to learning is the recognition and valuing of the

learner's prior knowledge and experience and the linking of this to new learning and understandings. While social constructivism interprets the learning context as that which is represented by the instructional context in the classroom, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) extends this interpretation to also encompass the broader cultural dynamics of the classroom including the historical and cultural backgrounds of students. Greater emphasis is placed on learners as a member of a learning community and on learning as a collaborative process where knowledge is constructed through negotiated and shared dialogue. The teacher is positioned as a co-learner and an active participant in the learning process in instigating opportunities for students to reflect on their learning, and make connections with their prior knowledge, and real life experiences and concerns (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2007).

Both social constructivism and sociocultural theory are relevant theoretical orientations for teaching and learning at the middle levels, since both position the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning process and emphasise the importance of social interaction in students' construction of meaning. Sociocultural theory is particularly relevant to the increasingly, multicultural makeup of New Zealand classrooms because it is inclusive in recognising the unique perspective each learner contributes. Teachers' valuing of the cultural input of the learner is responsive to the young adolescent student's quest for affirmation and identity (Bishop, 2007).

(ii) Curriculum

Curriculum is defined by Print (1993, p. xvii), as "all the planned learning opportunities offered by an organisation to learners and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented." Schubert (1986) avoids defining the curriculum however, and refers to characterisations of the curriculum as a means for understanding the concept. Some of these characterisations include: curriculum as subject matter, curriculum as experience, curriculum as intention, curriculum as cultural reproduction and curriculum as '*currere*' (Print, 1993, p. 6). The latter characterisation of curriculum is particularly relevant to conceiving curriculum at the middle levels or Years 7-10 since it views curriculum as a process of providing continuous meaning to individuals. It places emphasis on the

social and shared nature of learning, and emphasises the learner's capacity to "actively participate through an experiential approach to learning that enables them to come to a greater understanding of themselves, as well as others and the world" (Print, 1993, p. 6).

At a time when statistics show greater student disengagement from learning in the middle years (Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Crooks, 2008; Durling, 2007; NZCER Engagement Survey, 2006) attention has increasingly focused on the nature and intention of the curriculum and its influence on student engagement. In placing the blame squarely on the outdated single-subject curriculum design that is predominantly used in schools catering to young adolescent students Beane (1997) stated, "the traditional distinctions drawn between subject areas do not serve young adolescents well" (p. 3) before advocating for a democratic curriculum where the knowledge is "more accessible" through studies situated in real life themes and contexts. The idea of democratic principles underscoring curriculum is not a recent innovation. Dewey (1916) advocated for a curriculum that provides opportunities for students to experience a democratic way of life through teacher and student collaboration in making decisions with regard to the content, and learning processes inherent in a course of study.

Current middle level research advocates for a relevant, challenging, integrative and exploratory curriculum design that is responsive to the socially conscious interests and needs of young adolescents (Atkin, 2001; Barratt, 1998; Beane, 1997; Dowden, 2007; Education Review Office, 2003; National Middle School Association, 1995, 2003; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Such a curriculum utilises themes drawn from the authentic concerns and questions of students, rather than from pre-determined prescriptions of content knowledge, as the basis for study. A responsive and relevant curriculum positions students at the centre of the learning process, and teachers as facilitators and co-researchers. This focus on socially significant issues through the active engagement of learners within real life contexts, results in students developing an increased sense of responsibility and autonomy. Significant issues provide a meaningful context for knowledge and respond to young adolescents' curiosity about self, now and in the future (Beane, 1997). In articulating the need for curriculum to flexibly respond to the needs of

learners, Caskey and Johnson (1996) stated, “to be truly authentic, curriculum is a fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing script for learning” (p. 105).

An integrative curriculum design differs markedly from the separate subject approach traditionally provided in schools where the primary focus is on transmission of knowledge and coverage of the curriculum. The efficacy of integrative curriculum was demonstrated by Nolan and McKinnon (1991) when they implemented this curriculum design in Years 9-11 classrooms at Freyberg High School in Palmerton North, New Zealand during 1986-1991. Their project utilised a student-centred curriculum integration design and incorporated the purposeful integration of information and communication technologies within collaborative learning communities. In this five year study of a group of students in Years 9-11, the findings showed that student achievement increased markedly in comparison with a control group of students who experienced a single-subject approach. Specifically this equated to Year 11 students achieving one standard deviation above the norm in national examinations for English, mathematics and science (Nolan & McKinnon, 2003). The Freyberg Project reconceptualised and presented an alternative form of curriculum that was responsive to the specialised needs of young adolescent students. The project was pivotal in producing evidence-based data that demonstrated the efficacy of a student-centred approach to the curriculum for students in Years 9-11. A later doctoral thesis by Dowden (2007) that investigated the concept of curriculum integration, built on the earlier research conducted in the Freyberg Project by differentiating between the student-centred integrative model of curriculum integration as advocated by Beane (1993, 1997), and the subject-centred multidisciplinary model of Jacobs (1989). Dowden presented evidence to support his stance that it is the student-centred model that should be implemented with students in Years 7-10. He reasoned that conceiving the curriculum in this way is responsive to the educational and wider holistic needs of young adolescents.

Current literature (Beane, 1997; Caskey & Johnson, 1996; Dowden, 2007; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005, & Stevenson, 2002) recognises that there are different forms of integrative curriculum. The confusing terminology used within the literature however, makes implementing curriculum integration in the classroom

difficult for teachers (Dowden, 2007). An example of this is evident in Wallace, Venville and Rennie's (2005) continuum that describes six different forms of curriculum integration that comprise, "synchronised, cross curricular, thematic, project-based, school-specialised and community-focused" approaches (p. 2). In their model Wallace et al. do not differentiate between student-centred and subject-centred approaches to curriculum integration. It is student-centred approaches however, that are most responsive and applicable in the middle level classroom (Beane, 1997; Dowden, 2007). In investigating the theory underpinning curriculum integration and particularly an authentic design for student-centred curriculum integration Beane (1997) uses the term "integrative curriculum" (p. 2) to refer to the student-centred model of curriculum integration and "multidisciplinary curriculum" to refer to subject-centred models. (p. 1). In defining integrative curriculum he states,

Curriculum integration is a curriculum design that promotes personal and social integration through the organisation of curriculum around significant problems and issues, collaboratively identified by educators and young people, without regard for subject area lines. Planning for integrative curriculum begins with an organising theme followed by the question, "what significant activities might be done to address the theme?" With its emphasis on real-life themes, contextual application of knowledge, and constructivist learning, the integrative curriculum approach is particularly well suited to help students integrate learning experiences into their developing schemes of learning" (Beane, 2001, p. 2)

Any form of curriculum where there is a focusing of energies and ideas around 'big ideas' that facilitate a sense of the whole, rather than a fragmentation of concepts, is meaningful for young adolescent students. Such an approach however, is not without conceptual, pedagogical and practical challenges. Schools and teachers catering to young adolescent students require ongoing, and in-depth professional development focused on responsive curriculum designs to successfully address these challenges.

(iii) Assessment

Middle level students are at a critical juncture in the "pathway of learning" (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005, p. 272). At this time when young adolescents are highly self-aware, often lacking in self-confidence, needing opportunities to demonstrate their intellectual strengths, and seeking independence and autonomy, they require effective assessment practices that identify what is valued in the learning, ways of

learning, and what they have to do to succeed in their learning (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005). While it is widely recognised that effective assessment is integral to learning across all stages and levels of schooling (Assessment Reform Group, 2006; Davies & Hill, 2009), authentic assessment is particularly responsive to the characteristics and needs of young adolescent students because it is driven by the learning, and is authentically embedded within the learning. Atkin (2001) identifies authentic assessment as “demonstration and celebration of what has been learned, and demonstration of the relevance and power of the learning in real life situations” (p. 6). In refining the concept of authentic assessment Torrance and Pryor (2001) identify the terms “divergent assessment” and “convergent assessment” as the predominant forms of assessment that teachers use in the classroom (p. 617). In advocating for divergent assessment Torrance and Pryor (2001) align this approach to constructivist theories of learning and describe a view of assessment as a task carried out collaboratively by teacher and learner. Key aspects of this approach to assessment involve the use of flexible planning or complex planning that incorporates alternatives, open questioning and tasks, the use of descriptive rather than judgemental evaluation, and importantly the involvement of students as initiators of assessment as well as recipients (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2007).

Research over the last decade has shown that the most effective form of authentic assessment is formative assessment (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Torrance & Pryor, 1998) and that, when used effectively, it results in significant gains in student achievement. Often referred to as assessment for learning (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Davies & Hill, 2009), formative assessment is predicated on seven key principles. These are: the importance of clarifying the learning intentions of periods of study at the planning stage; the sharing of these learning intentions with students; involving students in self and peer evaluation in relation to the learning intentions; focusing oral and written feedback around the learning intentions; involving students in target or goal setting; the centrality of appropriate questioning; and the importance of assessment in raising students’ self esteem (Clarke, Timperley & Hattie, 2003). In advocating for the use of formative assessment Wiggins (1998) states that this approach to assessment “should be used to improve teaching and learning progressively, not

just to audit student performance” (pp. xi, xiii). Black and Wiliam (1998) concur, and go further, by identifying over reliance on marking and grading as factors that can lower student self esteem.

In the middle level classroom the use of authentic assessment practices needs to be flexible and adaptable in measuring what a student knows, applies and performs (Meyer, 1992; Zessoules & Gardner, 1991). Early adolescence is characterised by diversity and variability in the reasoning abilities of students so assessment practices must be responsive in being able to represent multiple perspectives. Summative assessment with its emphasis on measuring student achievement through reliance on standardised tests and other forms of outcome-based procedures, does not achieve this aim because its unstated purpose is one of accountability (Stowell & McDaniel, 1997). While the use of summative assessment in formal reporting to parents, and in the aggregation of school-based data for reporting to the Ministry of Education has a place in the middle level classroom, research shows that it is formative assessment that has by far the most influence on student learning (Assessment Reform Group, 1999). The use of formative assessment may involve informal classroom observations and oral interactions with students about their learning, or more formalised activities such as recorded anecdotal comments on student work such as portfolios or on checklists (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005). Using classroom-based assessment in this way allows for a picture of each student’s learning and achievement to be established over time. When implemented effectively, formative assessment identifies what learners can do and also next learning steps. This resonates with the constructivist nature of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, as advocated in the middle level literature because it is responsive to the individual learning needs of students (Atkin, 2001; National Middle School Association, 2003).

In summarising the “hallmarks” of quality middle level assessment Pendergast and Bahr (2005) identify practices that make provision for “connectedness and responsiveness; explicit recognition of the increasing autonomy of middle year students as learners; a tailored, diverse and yet balanced range of learning and assessment options and modes; room for teacher and student talk and other interactions around quality; and the deliberate integration of a mix of new,

emerging and traditional technologies in assessment practices” (p. 278). They reason that utilising such assessment practices is critical in engaging middle level students because it results in increasingly self regulated learners. The challenge for middle level teachers is to design authentic learning and assessment experiences that provide real and meaningful challenges for students (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005).

(iv) Pedagogy

The term “pedagogy” is seldom used in the literature emanating from North America. Instead the terms “instructional methods” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 19) or “teaching techniques” (National Middle School Association, 1995, p. 24) are used to describe teaching strategies that are responsive to the needs of young adolescent students. The term pedagogy generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction used by teachers in the classroom. A further definition provided by Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell and Mockler (2007) states that it is the interaction between teaching and learning and associated theories, beliefs and values. In justifying his use of the term Alexander (2000) believes pedagogy lies at the heart of classroom practice, underpins communication and relationships between teachers and learners and provides the interface between teaching and learning.

The new millennium and the globalisation of the economy has resulted in the emergence of a wide range of telecommunications technologies that include the use of mobile phones, the internet and the worldwide web (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007). Young adolescents have been born into a rapidly changing technological world where the use of multiple forms of information and communications technology play an important role. In describing this generation Prensky (2006) coined the terms “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” to differentiate respectively between young adolescents, for whom computers are natural part of their context and their parents, for whom computers are innovations. In advocating for the use of digital technologies as a tool to support learning in the middle level classroom Bahr and Pendergast (2007), Jackson and Davis (2000); National Middle School Association (1995, 2003) collectively assert that the purposeful integration of information and communications technologies embedded within the learning is an essential component of effective middle level pedagogy and practice. This has

obvious implications for programmes of initial and in-service teacher education as well as the infrastructure that supports them.

In her report into effective middle schooling practices in Australia, Barratt (1998) identified several distinguishing features. These were that students: “engage in whole class discussion, group work and individual activities; negotiate a significant proportion of the learning and assessment tasks; choose when to start and finish tasks; use multiple intelligences in carrying out their learning tasks; learn within an integrated curriculum framework; participate in community-based learning; use digital technologies to assist in their learning; enjoy quality relationships; participate in intellectually challenging learning experiences; use appropriate time for critical reflection and the development of cooperative learning strategies; and apply acquired learning strategies to new and meaningful contexts” (p. 31). In using such strategies, Barratt asserts that teachers enable students to focus on the „what’ of learning so that the knowledge is relevant and engaging, the „how’ of learning so that they are able to make connections to their own lives, and importantly the „why’ so that students are able to engage in reflection and problem-solving using real life questions, problems and contexts. A focus on thinking and learning has been shown to result in learners developing greater self awareness, more effective learning strategies and greater autonomy and self regulation as learners.

Atkins’ 2001 report on how learning in the middle years may be enhanced, emphasised the importance of developing students’ thinking abilities as well as their ability to reflect on their learning through the process of metacognition. The National Middle School Association (2003) reasons that a focus on thinking is responsive to the changes in intellectual development at a time when young adolescents are able to communicate a more abstract view of the world, as well as demonstrate their ability to think about their own learning. A clear focus on thinking is also affirmed by Jackson and Davis (2000) who promote the importance of helping “all students to learn to use their minds well” (p. 11). They are unequivocal in stating that the primary purpose of middle level education is to promote the intellectual development of young adolescents through learning experiences that utilise higher order thinking skills. The need for intellectual rigour

was further reiterated in the „Productive Pedagogies’ initiative implemented in 2001 in Queensland, Australia (Lingard, Ladwig, Luke, Mills, Hayes & Gore, 2001). This project of teacher professional development specifically focused on enhancing student learning outcomes in the middle years by ensuring, “analytic depth; intellectual challenge and rigour; critical thinking; and critical literacy and higher order analysis” (Carrington, 2006, p. 121).

In her New Zealand study of best practice in the classroom, Alton-Lee (2003) identified ten generic characteristics of quality teaching derived from a synthesis of research evidence linked to student achievement. In reflecting the increasingly multi-cultural nature of New Zealand society, Alton-Lee emphasised the concept of diversity and the need for teachers to respond to the individual learning needs of diverse students. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) builds on the work of Alton-Lee (2003) including a section entitled „Effective Pedagogy’ and is specific in defining this term as, “teacher actions promoting student learning” (p. 34). These actions are listed as, “creating a supportive learning environment, encouraging reflective thought and action, enhancing the relevance of new learning, facilitating shared learning, making connections to prior learning and experience, providing sufficient opportunities to learn, and teaching as inquiry” (pp. 34-35). The latter action, “teaching as inquiry” (Ministry of Education, 2007c, p. 35) involves teachers in a cyclical process of reflection on the impact of their teaching on their learners. While generic to all levels of schooling, these teacher actions are particularly applicable to the middle levels and are consistent with the philosophical orientation of social constructivism, discussed previously in this review. Applying generic principles of quality teaching to the teaching of middle level students in New Zealand schools however, tends to fuel a school of thought whereby critics of differentiated middle level pedagogy and practice argue that there is no point of difference, since effective teaching should apply to all students. In countering such claims, Chadbourne (2003) asserts that effective pedagogy and practices, which view the learner rather than the curriculum at the centre of the learning process, should underpin all schooling, since it is the very nature of early adolescence that makes the application of schooling to suit young adolescents’ needs distinctive.

3. Advocacy for middle level teacher preparation

The rationale underpinning specialised middle level teacher preparation is that young adolescent students have holistic needs that require differentiated provision from that provided in programmes of primary or secondary initial teacher education. The efficacy of specialised teacher education is supported by the key finding of a study undertaken by Mertens, Flowers and Mulhall (2002) into the relationship between middle level teacher certification and that of interdisciplinary teaming and middle level best practice. In an extensive study of over two thousand teachers across elementary, middle grades and high school sectors that was part of the Michigan Middle Start Initiative, teachers who had attained an elementary or middle grades teacher certification were more responsive and effective in using developmentally responsive pedagogy and practice with their learners (Mertens, et al., 2002). Advocates for middle level teacher preparation accordingly reject the notion that the educational needs of young adolescent students are adequately met through the dimensions of effective teaching and best practice without attending to the distinct needs of this developmental stage (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005).

Internationally, advocacy for specialised teacher preparation grew following the publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). The report proposed key recommendations involving major structural, philosophical and curriculum reform to halt the decline in educational provision for students during the middle years of schooling. One of the eight recommendations of the report stated that: “Teachers for the middle grades should be specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and be recognised distinctively for this accomplishment” (p. x). An updated *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* elaborated on the earlier edition by synthesising research gathered over the preceding decade and by providing more “flesh on the bone” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. xi) to enable practitioners to implement the recommendations. While a key recommendation of the 1989 report articulated the need for specialised initial undergraduate and graduate teacher education, *Turning Points 2000* extended this to also incorporate the need for the “continuous, high-quality professional development of teachers” (2000, p. xii). In the two decades since the release of *Turning Points* (1989) the calls for specialised middle level teacher education have been many with Barratt

(1998), Bahr and Pendergast (2007), Beane and Brodhagen (2001), Bishop (2008), Chadbourne (2002), Cumming (1996), Education Review Office (2001, 2003), McEwin and Dickinson (1995, 1997), Stewart and Nolan (1992), National Middle School Association (1995, 2003), Nolan, Kane and Lind, (2003), New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools (2006), Stevenson (2002) and Swaim and Stefanich (1996), adding their voices to the call for the establishment of middle level teacher preparation. Such advocacy represents a range of international contexts.

In the USA intense lobbying, over an eighty year period for the introduction of middle level licensure, that supports specialised middle level teacher preparation, has resulted in a steady increase in the number of programmes being offered by teacher education institutions. In 1991 the number of institutions in the USA offering such programmes represented 34% of the total number of teacher education institutions, however this had increased more than half of such institutions by 1996 (McEwin & Dickinson, 1997). In commenting on the increase in the number of institutions offering specialised middle level teacher education programmes, Bishop (2008) stated that there is a direct correlation between the establishment of middle level licensure or credentialing, and the growth of middle level teacher education programmes in institutions. The substantial increase in the number of states offering a middle years teaching license or endorsement, from two states in 1968 to 43 states in 2002, supports Bishop's contention. Despite the statistics showing "the increasing availability of middle grades teacher preparation programmes, many thousands of prospective and practising middle grades teachers find these programmes inaccessible or even nonexistent" (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 98). Only eleven states out of the fifty in the USA have established mandatory middle level licensure for middle grades teachers.

In Australia, advocacy for specialised middle level teacher education began in the mid 1990s in response to a number of specific developments and influences (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005). Catalysts included the growth in the number of middle schools across a range of school configurations in Australia, the introduction of state-wide curriculum frameworks that identified young adolescence as a distinct developmental stage, and research studies and reports in Australia and the USA

that promoted specialised middle level teacher education programmes. The latter reports included *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) and *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 2003). In Australia, a number of studies including: the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (1996), Barratt (1998), Chadbourne (2001), Hill and Russell (1999), the Middle Years Research Project (2002) and Pendergast et al. (2005) were influential in focusing attention on middle level education. These studies reflected a developing knowledge around the concept of middle schooling and middle level reform (Bahr & Pendergast, 2005). As a result of these reports and research initiatives the focus in Australia turned to the role of teacher education and specifically the need for specialised middle level teacher preparation in moving the reform agenda forward. Two dedicated middle level teacher education programmes at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia and at the University of Queensland in Brisbane were established in 2002. Since then, the number of dedicated middle level teacher education programmes has steadily increased. The most recent statistics available report 20 programmes offered in 2005 (Bahr & Pendergast, 2005). These programmes consist of a diverse suite of middle level certifications or endorsements as well as undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

In New Zealand middle level reform has seen steady progress over the last decade and a half however the provision of specialised middle level initial teacher education and in-service professional development has not become a reality. New Zealand teachers are by and large, prepared as either primary or secondary teachers by teacher education institutions (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). Several developments over the last five years however, have given proponents of middle level teacher preparation reason for optimism. These developments included the recent establishment of two new middle schools in the North Island of New Zealand after a hiatus of several years, the launch in 2006 of the New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle School's Strategic Plan, the recent commissioning of research into best practice in middle schooling settings by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the Ministry-initiated review of the middle level literature that was undertaken by Dinham and Rowe (2007), and the launch of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) that specifically incorporates a distinct and

separate „learning pathway’ for students in Years 7-10. These developments, together with the establishment of the Middle Schooling Steering Group with its terms of reference to continue to develop an evidence base to inform future middle level policy, are recent initiatives at the systemic level that show a commitment to improving educational outcomes for young adolescent students. Collectively these reflect a renewed focus on the middle levels of schooling in New Zealand.

Additionally, the publication of a number of significant reports in New Zealand over the last two decades, have been instrumental in advocating for middle level teacher preparation. The first such report was that of Stewart and Nolan (1992) entitled *The Middle School: Essential Education for Emerging Adolescents*. This publication made a case for early adolescence to be considered as a distinct phase of human development that required teaching and learning provision of a different kind than that provided within the existing bipartite system of secondary and primary education in New Zealand. One of the key recommendations of this report was that middle level teachers should have an in-depth of understanding of early adolescence, have specialist subject knowledge, and should be skilled in teaching core subjects. A further recommendation called for the establishment of middle schools that catered for students in Years 7- 9 or Years 7-10. Stewart and Nolan reasoned that, given the identified developmental needs of young adolescents, this schooling configuration would be a more “appropriate form of educational provision” (1992, p. 33). As mentioned in Chapter 1 questions and concerns were raised in successive reports by the Education Review Office (ERO) (1994, 2001, 2003) concerning the evaluation of the quality of educational provision for middle level students in New Zealand schools. By labelling Years 7-10 as “the forgotten years” (ERO, 1994, 2003), the reports refocused attention on the ad hoc nature of schooling provision for young adolescents. The *Te Kōtahitanga* project conducted by Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2003, 2007) investigated practices in mainstream secondary classrooms that have the greatest influence on raising the educational achievement of Māori students. These were important reports given the ongoing concerns regarding the increasing disparity between the achievement of Māori and non-Māori students, the incidence of early school leaving for Māori students, and the ineffectiveness of Ministry of Education initiatives such as *Closing the Gaps* (Ministry of Education, 2000) in addressing these issues. A

further study investigating the major sources of variance influencing student achievement found that teacher effectiveness was the most important variable (Hattie, 2003). Accordingly, Hattie called for systemic initiatives to focus on teacher improvement.

A „statistical snapshot’ of teaching and learning in the middle years that was obtained from a synthesis of the international and national data of student achievement across a range of different middle level settings in New Zealand, was carried out for the Ministry of Education by Durling (2007). The findings from this synthesis, when viewed in tandem with the literature review conducted by Dinham and Rowe, (2007) provided evidence-based data to further inform the Ministry of Education’s policy decisions in relation to middle schooling provisions in 2008-2009. A further report by Bishop (2008) into middle level teacher credentialing in New Zealand and its intersection with middle schooling provisions for young adolescents from the perspectives of a range of stakeholders, concluded with a number of recommendations. Two of these recommendations placed a considerable focus on teacher preparation within primary and secondary programmes. Bishop articulated specific knowledge, skills and values specific to the middle levels that should be included in existing teacher education programmes. She went further to advocate for a pilot programme of “evidence-based middle years teacher preparation” (p. 66). These initiatives and research publications when viewed collectively, represent a critical mass of advocacy not only for a continued, concentrated focus on middle level education, but also for a restructuring of teacher education that reflects greater responsiveness to the learning and developmental needs of young adolescent New Zealanders.

4. Models of middle level teacher education

There is a consensus in the literature with respect to the essential components of effective middle level teacher education. Seven components are consistently identified as foundational for middle level programme design (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005; National Middle School Association, 2003; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003; Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 1996; Smyth, McInerney & Hattam, 2003; Swaim & Stefanich, 1996). These components transcend the nature of specific middle level

qualifications and comprise, “a comprehensive understanding of early adolescence and the needs of young adolescence; a study of the philosophy and organisation of middle level education; in depth study of middle level curriculum; middle level planning, teaching and assessment; concentrated study in two broad teaching fields; middle level field experiences” (McEwin, Smith & Dickinson, 2003, pp. 12-16). In *Turning Points 2000* Jackson and Davis (2000) elaborate on the above essential components of middle level preparation in relation to seven recommendations they identify as being essential to improving middle level education. These recommendations encompass: a relevant, broad and rigorous curriculum, the use of inclusive and responsive pedagogy that promotes the concept of lifelong learning, students being taught by expert middle level teachers who are committed to ongoing targeted professional learning, learning being situated in learning communities where importance is placed on respectful interpersonal relationships and interactions, schools adhering to democratic governance, young adolescent health promotion, and communication with families through staff-parent partnerships. The importance of student teachers experiencing teaching practicum in high quality middle level settings that follow “a pattern of increasing complexity and involvement” (p. 100) as well as the need for them to complete in depth study of two or more teaching fields, is emphasised by Jackson and Davis (2000). In elaborating on the latter recommendation they stress the need to focus both on in-depth disciplinary knowledge, as well as on concepts and principles that transcend subject boundaries, as essential preparation for teaching in an interdisciplinary or integrative manner in the classroom.

In commenting on the paucity of targeted professional in-service support available to practising middle level teachers Jackson and Davis (2000), emphasised that initial teacher education programmes need to be followed up with effective advice and guidance and quality programmes of professional development. Their belief, that such support should be integrated into the daily lives of practising teachers through collaborative inquiry carried out in small group structures such as teaching syndicates or teams, and through networking, both within, and beyond their schools, reflects the principles of effective middle level pedagogy and practice discussed earlier in this review. An important element of middle level professional development is the strengthening of teachers’ content knowledge. Translating this

subject knowledge into purposeful and challenging learning experiences in the classroom is key to improving student achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003).

In countering claims that current primary and secondary programmes already cover teacher preparation for the middle years, Chadbourne (2002) and de Jong and Chadbourne (2005, 2007) outlined the Middle Years Graduate Diploma programme they co-coordinate at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. The first difference they cite is that the programme and subsequent qualification is “adolescent-specific” (p. 15). They list cooperative learning, collaboration, authentic assessment, the purposeful integration of information and communications technology, emphasis on higher order thinking, success for all students, and participative decision-making as key practices that are modelled within the programme. The authors argue that while these principles are generic to effective teaching at all stages of development, they need to be modelled, explained and applied by teacher educators within “adolescent-specific educational contexts” in dedicated programmes of middle level teacher preparation. This “practice what you teach” approach to teacher education (Swennen, Lunenburg & Korthagen, 2008, p. 15) underpins the programme design at Edith Cowan University. de Jong and Chadbourne (2005, 2007) argue that this form of congruent teaching, where prospective teachers actually experience middle level principles and pedagogical practices within their programme of teacher education, results in future teachers developing a philosophy of ‘adolescent-centredness’. Another prominent feature discussed, modelled and applied within the programme is the unifying concept of the community of learners. While a congruent approach to the design of middle level teacher education is obviously highly desirable, unfortunately de Jong and Chadbourne (2005, 2007) do not elaborate on the implementation of the approach within the structural and organisational constraints of the university environment. There are obviously implications for optimal student enrolments, funding, staffing, assessment procedures and processes as well as the provision of professional development for teacher educators working in the programme, however these were not elucidated.

In outlining the model underpinning the two-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education with the endorsement of Middle Years of Schooling at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, Pendergast, Whitehead, de Jong, Newhouse-Maiden and Bahr (2007) identify key features of the programme that exemplify best practice in the middle level classroom. In the process of demonstrating democratic principles, the programme involves student teachers by actively enlisting them to negotiate individualised learning paths based on their previous experiences and interests. The programme is integrative and utilises multiple pedagogical practices that facilitates student teachers working in teams as well as collaboratively with colleagues, teacher educators and classroom teachers to create a community of learners. There is a focus on flexibility in allowing for the development of expertise across key learning areas and particularly that of literacy and numeracy. Extensive staff development in the use of technology is ongoing to enable its integration within all courses. The design reflects progressive views on teaching and learning that reflect a social constructivist theoretical orientation. Knowledge of adolescence, diversity, and middle level reform, combined with teaching practicum experiences within specific middle level settings are also hallmarks of the programme. Consistent with the need to engage middle level students in higher order thinking, this programme has a focus on engaging student teachers in deep learning and critical reflection.

Both of the above models support student teachers' engagement with not only the complexities of teaching and learning but also the emergent knowledge and practices of middle schooling (Mitchell, Hunter, Stevens & Mayer, 2005). In identifying a model of teacher education that makes connection between fields of knowledge, educational policy and issues, and pedagogical practice, Mitchell et al. identify layers of connections across courses or curriculum areas, as well as between the people involved, that reflect the principles of socio-cultural theory by taking into account values, actions, beliefs and experiences. A third layer is focused on exploring responsive pedagogical tools and processes. The model identified by Mitchell et al. (2005) seeks to expand student teachers' thinking so that they challenge the values underpinning current curricular and pedagogical practices through reflective discourse. This focus on developing students' critical reflection is important on middle level field placements where the effectiveness of pedagogy

and practice is variable and inconsistent with best practice. Utilising a similar theoretical orientation Hoban (2005) proposes a multi-linked conceptual framework of teacher education design that, while not specific to the middle level, promotes quality learning within teacher education programmes. Links to concepts, theory-practice, identity and socio-culture form an interrelated framework. Hoban believes that these four elements complement each other and result in greater coherence across the programme. Rather than a “one-size-fits-all” approach, Hoban argues for many models of teacher education since these develop in light of contextual influences (p. 290). Hoban advocates for the use of this multi-conceptual framework to guide teacher education design. He believes this will result in student teachers viewing teachers as a “complex profession” that requires ongoing inquiry (Hoban, 2005, p. 290).

The use of a multi-linked conceptual framework also resonates with the model of middle level teacher preparation proposed by Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003). Their model also adopts central themes or ethics that link the components of the programme through coherent threads that enable student teachers to develop knowledge of themselves as teachers. This model incorporates a process approach (developmental, integrative, and constructivist) that values student teachers’ prior knowledge and experience and views them in a state of change actively constructing their knowledge of themselves as middle level teachers. While integrating a number of theoretical orientations, the Nolan et al., (2003) model is primarily underpinned by socio-cultural theory. Knowledge of the cultural, social, and political context is particularly relevant given the multicultural nature of New Zealand society. It requires student teachers to be inclusive in continually reflecting on their own attitudes, beliefs and values in relation to knowledge and in their construction of knowledge about teaching and learning.

The need for collaborative working partnerships between university-based teacher educators and middle level schools in restructuring and designing teacher preparation for the middle levels is emphasised by the National Middle School Association (2006) and Harnett (2008). While identifying these partnerships as a new phenomenon, the National Middle School Association (2006) points out that the advent of middle schools preceded specialised middle level teacher preparation.

In arguing for more collaborative partnerships between middle schools and teacher educators, they believe this should integrate both institutions in collaborative planning, implementation, explicit teaching as well as in the assessment and evaluation of initial teacher preparation programmes. Such collaboration is organic in reflecting a signature practice of responsive middle level pedagogy and practice. Middle level teachers must be competent in collaborating with colleagues, families and communities, therefore a significant focus of teacher preparation programmes should involve authentic experiences of collaboration. A natural extension of this collaborative approach is the establishment of professional development schools where there are multiple opportunities for “authentic teaching performances with appropriate audiences” (National Middle School Association, 2006, p. 4).

5. Factors inhibiting the implementation of specialised teacher preparation

The extant literature identifies several factors preventing the uptake of specialised middle level teacher preparation. In their synthesis of successful middle level teacher education programmes McEwin, Smith and Dickinson (2003) cite fifteen reasons for the failure of teacher education institutions and other agencies to implement specialised middle level teacher education programmes. These reasons include: the lack of knowledge and recognition of the specific characteristics and needs of young adolescents, a lack of advocates at the university level, the high demand for teachers who are able to teach any age groups, a lack of knowledge among the general public of what middle level curriculum, teaching and learning should be like, the lack of effective middle level teacher preparation programmes that are available as models, the lack of demand from schools for specially prepared teachers, and the difficulty faced by middle level teachers in trying to find graduate programmes that focus on what middle level teachers need to know and be able to do. Significantly, it is the lack of availability of undergraduate and graduate middle level teacher education programmes that McEwin, et al.(2003) cite as the main reason for the paucity of middle grades teachers in the USA with specific teacher preparation. The barriers to the specialised preparation of middle level teachers, identified by McEwin, et al. (2003) are reiterated in the ‘Position Statement’ on the professional preparation of middle level teachers released by the National Middle School Association (2006). However this document goes further to identify the negative and stereotyped image of young adolescents, and the lack

of teacher educators in institutions who have the specific knowledge and expertise, as further impediments to implementation of specialised teacher preparation. Both McEwin, et al. (1995) and the National Middle School Association (2006) emphasise that the single most influential factor in preventing the implementation of middle level teacher education programmes in the USA is the “failure of states to establish mandatory middle level teacher licensure” (National Middle School Association, 2006, p. 2). The belief, that the design and implementation of licensure regulations that actively promote the distinctive knowledge, dispositions and dimensions needed to effectively teach young adolescent students, is essential to the establishment of specialised middle level teacher preparation programmes, is a view commonly expressed in the American literature.

Australian middle level proponents Mitchell, Kapitzke, Mayer, Carrington et al. (2003) argue for the alignment of school reform and teacher education reform. They argue that non-alignment is “problematic” and reflects “endemic ideological and pragmatic divisions” (p. 73). They warn that institution-based teacher education programmes may be viewed as irrelevant and there is a real danger of “substantial parts of teacher education being located in schools” (p. 73). This increasing non-alignment results in teacher preparation being caught in the university preoccupation with research and a school sector that is “increasingly sceptical of the relevance of the research and theories underpinning the content of teacher education programmes” (Mitchell et al. 2003, p. 73). The concern of Mitchell et al. in relation to the lack of alignment between the schooling sector and teacher education institutions is very relevant when viewed in the New Zealand context since hitherto, middle level reform has been driven by the New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools, the schooling sector and the New Zealand Ministry of Education (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). Apart from a very small number of committed teacher educators and researchers, universities have been largely absent in the movement for middle level reform.

The generally unchallenged acceptance of the traditional primary-secondary structure of the compulsory system of schooling in New Zealand is the most influential factor preventing the implementation of middle level teacher preparation (Nolan, et al., 2003). Rigid adherence to this dichotomy, along with its underlying

assumptions rejects the middle years as a developmental stage that requires differentiated provision and so preparation for teaching in New Zealand continues to be dominated by the three-year undergraduate degree for primary teaching and the one-year post degree diploma qualification for secondary teachers (Nolan, et al., 2003). Overcoming the “hegemony” (p. 94) of the primary and secondary models, that currently dominates the school system and continues to be supported by teachers, administrators, teacher educators and the wider community, is the stumbling block preventing reform of teacher education in New Zealand (Nolan, et al., 2003).

Some of these inhibiting factors were addressed in the aforementioned study of Bishop (2008) when she investigated the intersection of middle level teacher credentialing with the education of young adolescents in New Zealand. The perspectives, of a range of stakeholders that comprised school principals, teacher educators, researchers and other educationalists were canvassed and reported on. Key findings of the study revealed that the majority of stakeholders believed that teachers in Years 7-10 require specialised skills, knowledge and values, and viewed specialised middle level teacher preparation as a “desirable pathway” (p. ix) to improving student outcomes and in facilitating student engagement. Rather than whole programmes however, stakeholders advocated for the inclusion of core papers, a fourth year or a postgraduate specialisation added to the existing primary or secondary teaching qualification. Only a small number of participants advocated for the establishment of a stand-alone middle level teacher education programme. The participants also favoured the flexibility of the current general teacher registration process rather than stage-specific teacher registration which they believed would be too restrictive. In investigating barriers to a change in policy and practice Bishop (2008) identified a number of cultural, historical, political and structural conditions, that stakeholders believed prevented the implementation of middle level teacher preparation. These included: “a perceived lack of Ministry of Education priority on the middle years; an historical tendency to divide the tiers of schooling into primary and secondary, as evidenced in reports, legislation and policy; a strong teachers’ union presence divided along primary and secondary lines; a relative lack of identity for middle years schooling given as many as six different school types are catering to young adolescents; and tertiary institutions’

concern about overall programme time and financial viability” (p. x). Bishop (2008) contends that many of these factors are “more perceived than actual due to stakeholder assumptions and lack of communication about the issues” (p. x). The apparent stalling of middle level reform and, more particularly, the lack of progress in the implementation of specialised middle level teacher education within New Zealand institutions, appears to support the assertion of Nolan, et al. (2003) that the entrenched nature of the bipartite system of schooling in New Zealand is the major impediment preventing the implementation of middle level teacher preparation.

Summary

The implementation of middle level teacher preparation is predicated on two premises. Firstly, there is a need for schools to develop specific practices that are responsive to the identified needs of students in the middle years. The underlying assumption is that students have specific physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs and schools are not adequately catering for these needs. The second premise is that initial teacher education programmes have a responsibility to prepare teachers to work specifically with young adolescent students.

Disengagement from learning and student alienation are frequent terms used in the literature, with blame apportioned to irrelevant curriculum that fails to take account of students’ interests and concerns, and the use of outdated pedagogical practices that fail to enthuse and challenge learners. Acknowledgement of the evolving nature and changes associated with globalisation and living in a knowledge-based economy as well as the explosion of innovative communication technologies heightens the argument for middle schooling provisions that are more responsive within this environment. There is recognition that young adolescent students will lead lives that are radically different from their parents. In some parts of the USA and Australia various reform initiatives over the last two decades have facilitated a concerted focus on improving student outcomes during the middle years. These initiatives have led to the establishment of specialised middle level teacher education programmes within institutions. The philosophy underpinning these programmes is that they are adolescent-centred and are focused on generating new types of knowledge through progressive models of teacher education design that have as their foundation, the development of critical reflection.

New Zealand has not followed international initiatives in implementing specialised middle level teacher preparation. Teachers for New Zealand schools complete either a primary or secondary programme of initial teacher education. While the literature advances a number of reasons for such inaction, in New Zealand the entrenched and unchallenged nature of the bipartite primary-secondary compulsory schooling system, the current general teacher registration process, and the plethora of school configurations catering to young adolescent students have been identified in the New Zealand-based literature as major barriers to reform. Recent developments and initiatives provide proponents of specialised middle level teacher preparation reason for guarded optimism. A key initiative at systemic level has been the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) with its differentiated learning pathway for Years 7-10. It is now two years since the launch of the national curriculum and the question arises as to how current programmes of primary and secondary teaching education are preparing prospective teachers to implement the philosophy and intent of the national curriculum. Given that two years have elapsed since the implementation of the curriculum it is time to place teacher education in this country under the spotlight to investigate provision for the middle levels in New Zealand's schooling system. This is the focus for this research study. Chapter 2 situates and embeds the topic of middle level teacher preparation within the New Zealand historical, socio-political and historical context.

Chapter 3

Background to the New Zealand Educational Context

Introduction

In order to fully understand the nature and intent of this inquiry into middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand it is necessary to contextualise the kinds of questions this research raised for me as the researcher. Teacher education, by its nature, lies at the heart of the education system and is shaped by policy and processes that are in a constant state of change. A wider historical and contextual discussion of the educational landscape and systemic influences in New Zealand, that has provided the background for this investigation, is covered in this chapter.

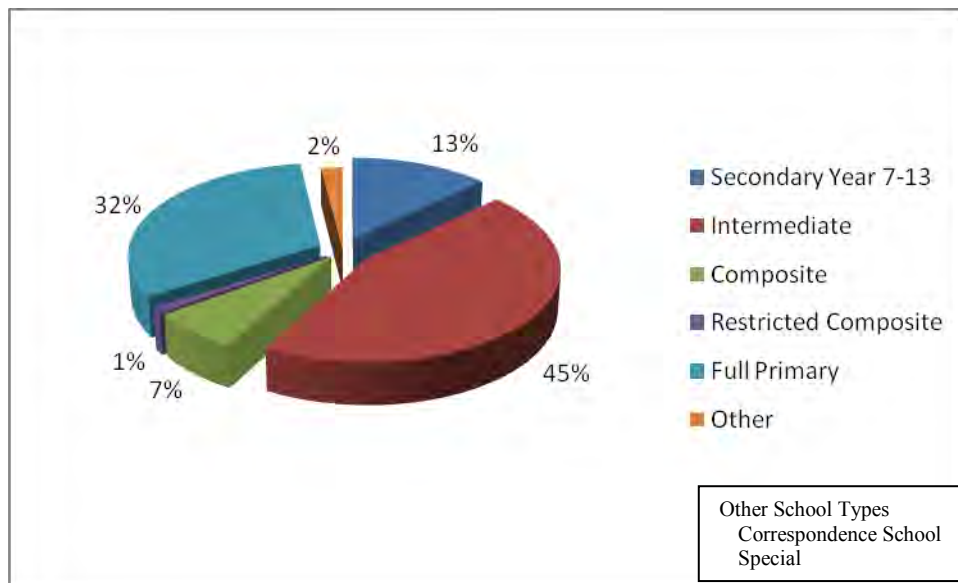
New Zealand's Education System

As a former colony of Great Britain, New Zealand's educational system has largely been imported from England. The first colonists arriving in the mid-1800s brought with them deeply entrenched ideas as to the organisation of schooling which promulgated a bipartite primary-secondary system that still exists today (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009). Originally, schooling was reserved for the children of more affluent colonists however this elitism was tempered by the more democratic and egalitarian views of some of the migrants who advocated for universal elementary schooling (Watson, 1964). The national Education Act of 1877 saw this become a reality with New Zealand achieving a system of "free, secular and compulsory education for primary students up to the age of fourteen years" (Watson, 1964, p. 2). Secondary schooling, however, was largely reserved for the wealthy, or those few children who demonstrated particular ability, and mainly consisted of a formal education in Latin and Greek classics, French and mathematics. This separation of primary and secondary schooling has endured for more than 130 years and provides the basis for the organisation of the current school system. Over time, the influences of physical geography, and changes to the socio-political, economic and cultural makeup of New Zealand has resulted in an educational system that, while retaining vestiges of the earlier colonial system, has become increasingly cognisant of its unique position as a bicultural nation in the South Pacific (King, 2003).

As a result of the Education Act of 1989 New Zealand's education system changed from a centralised structure, to one where governance and management was devolved to individual schools and tertiary institutions. Working within guidelines, with requirements and funding structures determined by central government and administered through the Ministry of Education, schools and institutions were given greater autonomy for determining their own management and educational priorities (Ministry of Education, 2002).

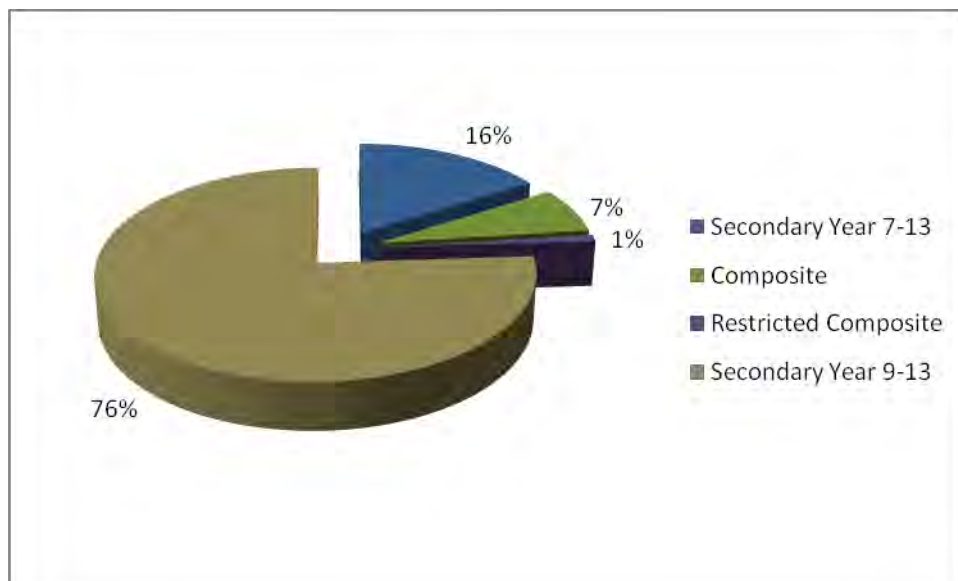
Schooling in New Zealand starts at age 5 and is compulsory from age 6 to 16. The educational system is still divided along primary and secondary lines, with primary education beginning at Year 1 and continuing until Year 8, and secondary education catering to students from Years 9-13 who are generally aged 13-17 years. Most schools are English language medium but, in reflecting the bicultural nature of New Zealand some schools, teach in the Māori medium. Secondary schools are variously known as high schools, colleges or area schools (Ministry of Education, 2002). Young adolescents in Years 7-10 attend schools across a range of school configurations that comprise: full primary (Years 1-8); intermediate (Years 7-8); restricted composite (Years 7-9 or Years 7-10); composite (Years 1-13); and secondary (Years 7-13 or Years 9-13). The distribution of students across these configurations in Figures 1 and 2 (adapted from Ministry of Education, 2009) shows that the majority of Years 7-8 students (77%) attend full primary or intermediate schools while nearly all Years 9-10 students (92%) are educated in either Year 7-13 or Year 9-13 secondary schools. As can be seen from these statistics, schooling options for young adolescent students span the divide between the primary and secondary sectors with virtually all Years 7-8 students being taught by primary teachers, and most Years 9-10 students being taught by secondary teachers (Dowden, Nolan & Bishop, 2009). Primary and secondary teachers are represented by separate teacher unions, with the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) representing the interests of primary teachers and the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) representing secondary teachers.

Figure 1: Distribution of Students in Years 7 and 8 by School Type in 2009



Source: Ministry of Education (2009b).

Figure 2: Distribution of Students in Years 9 and 10 by School Type in 2009



Source: Ministry of Education (2009c).

The two-tiered division reflects the differing philosophical and pedagogical focus of primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand. Primary education is predominantly focused on providing a broad, general education that is based on literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning, as well as “the development of generic attitudes, knowledge and skills” (Dinham & Rowe, 2008, p. 11). Social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) underpins the teaching and learning in many

primary classrooms. Secondary education is focused on a “discipline-specific, compartmentalised, and academic curriculum” (Dinham & Rowe, 2008, p. 11), and on preparing students for the National Certificate of Achievement examinations (NCEA) that begin for most students in Year 11 of their secondary education. Many secondary teachers employ a transmission model of pedagogy (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). While for many students the transition from primary to secondary education is experienced without difficulty, a significant minority of young people experience problems (Cox & Kennedy, 2008).

The Origins and Development of Middle Schooling in New Zealand

Ever since the 1890s debate and discussion has taken place as to the most effective schooling options for young adolescent students. Philosophical differences and political rivalry have often characterised this debate (Hinchco, 2004). The two acts of parliament, the Education Act 1877 and the Education Reserve Act 1877, firmly established the concept of primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand that remains in place today as the blueprint for educational policy decisions (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009).

Nelson Central School, situated at the top of the South Island, was established in 1894. Catering for boys in Years 7-9 this was the first of a number of experiments to establish middle schooling in New Zealand. One of the defining features of these early schools was early access to secondary specialisation (Hinchco, 2004). For a number of reasons the experiment was not successful, and was eventually disbanded in 1911. During the 1920s three-year Junior High Schools catering to 11 to 14 year old students predominated in Great Britain, Europe and North America. These were considered by policymakers in New Zealand to be the most favourable option and were vigorously promoted during the first two decades of the twentieth century (Hinchco, 2004). The ideas of Minister of Education James Parr, and educationalists Frank Milner and Thomas Wells were informed by the progressive ideas of John Dewey who had set up his laboratory school in Chicago. This culminated in the establishment of the stand-alone Kowhai Junior High School in 1922 and within three years a further five junior high schools were established, although these were attached to existing high schools (Dowden, et al., 2009). The junior highs adopted some aspects of the American model and endeavoured to

provide “a common foundation for all pupils before they entered upon the specialised courses of the secondary school” (Watson, 1964, p. 35).

The Depression of the 1930s resulted in cut-backs to education, and saw policy decisions increasingly determined by economic and political considerations (Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Professional rivalry between secondary and primary teachers was a further aggravating factor. Central to this disagreement was the forced merging in the junior high schools of two different philosophies as to the nature of schooling. Combining the child-centred, subject exploration approach that typified primary education, with secondary-oriented, early specialisation, which was the model adopted by junior high schools, opened deep sector divisions (Dowden, et al., 2009). This discontent, combined with financial constraints, resulted in the discontinuing of the junior high movement.

Prominent educationalist and policy maker Clarence Beeby advocated for the development of intermediate schools in the early 1930s. His vision was for junior high schools to be replaced by the two-year intermediate school as the preferred form of schooling for 11-13 year old students. This was realised in 1932 when the government introduced legislation that effectively established the Years 7-8 intermediate school. These schools adopted the philosophy of a child-centred pedagogy and broad subject exploration, and were staffed and administered by primary teachers (Dowden, et al., 2009). Additionally, “their performance was judged by primary rather than secondary standards” (Stewart & Nolan, 1992, p. 6). Although Beeby envisaged the intermediate model extending to a four year school “at its upper end” (Watson, 1964, p. 74), the intermediate school in its original form has, for over 70 years, become an integral part of the New Zealand educational system with enrolments peaking in 1976 with 72% of Year 7-8 students (Dowden, et al., 2009). In the late 1980s and early 1990s however, the purpose and future of intermediates became a topic for debate (Ennis, 1991; Lee & Lee, 1996). The lack of a clear and coherent philosophy for intermediate schools lay at the heart of this educational discourse (Hinchco, 2004). A developing disenchantment with intermediate schooling, together with a growing middle school movement internationally, resurrected the interest in alternative school structures for young adolescent students (Dowden, et al., 2009; Hinchco, 2004). Advocacy for the establishment of three or four year middle schools was met with concerted criticism from the Post Primary Teachers’

Association (Cooney, 1997) and academic researchers, including Lee and Lee (1998, 1999) who tellingly argued that primary teachers were unlikely to have the necessary specialist knowledge and expertise to teach students in Years 9 and 10. They argued that students, transitioning from Year 10 of a middle school to Year 11 in a secondary environment, would be significantly disadvantaged because they would be ill-prepared for the series of high stakes national examinations in the final three years of secondary schooling (Cooney, 1997). They reasoned that schooling in Years 9-10 should be the particular domain of secondary schools and, therefore, specialist subject teachers. Although the above argument was both politically astute and essentially sound with respect to preparation for examinations, it failed to address or even acknowledge the specific learning needs of young people in Years 7-10.

In the 1980s, a significant reform of educational administration, now generally referred to as „Tomorrow’s Schools’, was instigated by the New Zealand government (Ministry of Education, 1988). These reforms resulted in a restructuring of the New Zealand education system so that schools became self-governing. In particular the reforms gave intermediate schools (Years 7-8) the opportunity to restructure, by applying to become either 3 or 4 year middle schools. The effect of gaining middle school status was that a school could retain students beyond Year 8 for one or two more years. In the early 1990s the Intermediate Schools Principals’ Association commissioned Dr David Stewart and Dr Pat Nolan of Massey University to review the middle schooling literature and summarise research evidence that could inform debate about the future direction of intermediate education. In their subsequent publication, Stewart and Nolan (1992) argued that young adolescents in the 10-14 age band represent a distinct developmental group, based on physical, cognitive, social and moral characteristics, and because of this, require a different kind of schooling than that provided in the traditional primary and secondary school structures. The Stewart and Nolan (1992) publication was the first recognition by academics in the New Zealand context of early adolescence as a differentiated stage of human development, as now reified in the current New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007c) through the inclusion of three learning pathways. The Stewart and Nolan recommendations started to chip away at the bipartite hegemony entrenched in New Zealand’s educational system. They called for “three to four year middle schools to be

considered as a more appropriate form of educational provision for 10-14 year olds” (p. 33). The publication of Stewart and Nolan’s 1992 review, in conjunction with the concerted efforts of a number of progressively minded intermediate school principals, was instrumental in marshalling support for the development of the stand-alone middle school in New Zealand in the 1990s (Hinchco, 2004).

In 1994 the Ministry of Education gave approval for three intermediates situated in the North Island of New Zealand to become stand-alone Years 7-9 or Years 7-10 middle schools. In 1996 a further three schools across both the North and South Islands were granted approval. A philosophy of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) was promoted as the preferred approach to teaching and learning in these middle schools. Consistent with this theory a student-centred, rather than teacher-directed approach was largely adopted; students were actively involved in determining the content and pace of learning; and were involved in “learning by doing” through inquiry learning (Stewart & Nolan, 1992 p. 9). The importance of both developing positive and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students in the classroom and the need for teachers to provide opportunities for students to work cooperatively in groups were emphasised. Students spent significant time during the school day in homeroom classrooms with either individual teachers or interdisciplinary teams of teachers. These newly-established middle schools were staffed predominantly by primary teachers and administrators. During the 1990s a total of eight middle schools were established (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Hinchco, 2004; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). While in some cases approval was granted by the Ministry of Education for educational reasons, some intermediate schools sought middle school status in order to arrest declining enrolments (Hinchco, 2004).

The road for the introduction and establishment of middle schools in New Zealand has proven to be a rocky one with opposition from a number of quarters. The influential Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) has been “intent on preserving union membership and repelling any attempt to divert Year 9 students from secondary schools” (Dowden, et al., 2009, p.147). As well, both the public and educational professionals in New Zealand have lacked sympathy for a change from the traditional bipartite system to the proposed three-tiered system of

educational provision. Other factors that have contributed to the lack of recognition of middle schooling include: the existence of a cultural perspective that identifies principles of effective teaching generally, rather than developmentally; the existence of two separate teacher unions demarcated along primary-secondary lines; a teacher registration system that registers teachers generally rather than by stage or level of schooling; and the existence of no fewer than six different school configurations catering to young adolescent students within the NZ education system (Bishop, 2008).

Recent New Zealand research has found that teacher practice and pedagogy (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2002) is more influential on student learning and outcomes in the middle years than the school structure or configuration. This finding is supported by the general lack of research in the international context “regarding the relationship between school type and students’ engagement” (Bishop, 2008, p. 16). The outcome of the school type versus teacher practice debate in favour of good teaching practice has seen a renewed focus on middle level pedagogy and practice rather than on specific school types catering to young adolescent students. The role of positive relationships between teachers and students has been identified in New Zealand-based research (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003, 2007; Dowden, et al., 2009), as a key factor for enhancing student engagement and retention. Recent criticism from a number of New Zealand educationalists has also questioned whether newly qualified teacher graduates have the necessary “cultural knowledge, skills and understandings to form effective relationships with children and young people, their families, and whanau” (Ministry of Education, 2007d, p. 21). This focus on the importance of student-teacher relationships and effective pedagogy has, by extension, focused educational policy on teacher quality (Bishop, 2008).

In its „Strategic Plan 2006-2010’, the New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools outlined key areas requiring urgent discussion and implementation (New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools, 2006). An intended outcome in relation to curriculum, teaching and assessment was that “an age appropriate curriculum characterise all educational programmes for this age group which will lead to increased engagement, stronger motivation and focus, and

intellectually challenging programmes to be developed” (New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools, 2006, p. 8). One of two key strategies the Association identified for achieving infrastructural development was the gaining of support from teacher education providers for the development of specialised initial teacher education programmes, as well as ongoing in-service professional development for teachers of young adolescent students. An online search of New Zealand University and College of Education websites I conducted in 2006, revealed only five references to programmes, individual papers/courses or to special topics within papers that addressed the middle years of schooling. A table presenting the results of this web-based search is included as Appendix A in this thesis.

The launch of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) with its differentiated learning pathway for Years 7-10, officially acknowledges early adolescence as a distinct stage of human development. This endorses the seminal work of Stewart and Nolan (1992) by redefining the 130-year-old two-tiered system as a three-tiered system with three “learning pathways” for Years 1-6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-13 (p. 41). Schools are mandated to design a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of students within these three learning pathways. While both national and international research suggests a number of practices that are developmentally responsive to the needs of young adolescent learners, there has been no research undertaken in New Zealand into how the identified knowledge, skills and values intersect with the content of teacher preparation programmes in New Zealand institutions (Bishop, 2008).

Teacher Education in New Zealand

The provision of teacher education in New Zealand is diverse and complex. Up until the 1990s most New Zealand teachers completed their initial teacher education in one of six specialist colleges of education (Rivers, 2006). Since 1996 there have been several reviews of initial teacher education amid concerns about the quality of teacher preparation (Rivers, 2006). There have also been a number of attempts over the years to bring teacher education into the universities and to promote greater cooperation between universities and colleges of education (Tertiary Education Advisory Commission, 2001) The 1988 Picot Report, from the

„Tomorrow’s Schools’ reform, recommended that all colleges of education be made semi-autonomous schools of teacher education within universities (Tertiary Education Advisory Commission, 2001). The Hawke Report of 1988, however, urged that individual colleges be allowed to choose whether to merge with a university or to remain autonomous. The New Zealand government eventually adopted the recommendations of the Hawke report and also allowed other institutions, such as universities, *wānanga* and private-sector organisations to provide teacher education. The deregulation of teacher education, the introduction of a competitive market, and changes in funding policies combined to result in the considerable growth in the number of teacher education providers and ensuing qualifications (Rivers, 2006). However, reduced funding to the autonomous colleges of education over the last decade has seen mergers of teacher education providers with universities. Situated within the Humanities Divisions of universities they retain the title of „colleges of education’. In 2007 the last two remaining colleges, the Dunedin College of Education and the Christchurch College of Education merged respectively with the University of Otago and the University of Canterbury. The number of teacher education providers has proliferated from the original six colleges of education prior to 1990, to 26 providers of teacher education in 2009 (New Zealand Teachers’ Council, 2009c). These 26 providers are comprised of seven universities, three *wānanga*, seven polytechnics or institutes of technology, and nine private training establishments. Collectively these institutions offer 182 programmes of initial teacher education across early childhood, primary and secondary sectors (New Zealand Teachers’ Council, 2009). A diverse range of degree-level teacher education qualifications and diploma programmes are provided by these institutions (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). All initial teacher education programmes go through a quality assurance process to be approved and accredited by the New Zealand Teachers’ Council.

While the provision of initial teacher education is the core service delivered by university-housed colleges of education, in-service professional development support to practising teachers is also provided through a separate Education Support Services (ESS) department within university faculties. Education Support Services have the responsibility for tendering for, and through advisory staff, facilitating Ministry of Education contracts to schools, through individual teacher

and whole school professional development. The nature of these contracts is determined by the educational priorities of the current government through its agency, the Ministry of Education. Currently, the Ministry's priorities are largely limited to literacy and numeracy, the New Zealand Curriculum Project and educational leadership. There is no targeted in-service, professional development support for middle level teachers.

The 1988 reform of the education system resulted in teacher education becoming increasingly competitive. The recent change of government in 2008, from a Labour-led government somewhat sympathetic to progressive ideology, to a more conservative National-led coalition focused on a back-to-basics approach along with financial constraints due to the ongoing global financial crisis, has resulted in further changes to tertiary funding. Institutions remain pressed to develop ever more "efficient" models of teacher education (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003, p. 87). It is within this conservative and fiscally-constrained context that initial teacher preparation and the provision of in-service support to practising teachers is embedded. Initial teacher education continues to be dominated by primary and secondary schooling. Despite advocacy for the adoption of specialised middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand institutions (Bishop, 2008; Dowden, et al., 2009; Nolan, et al., 2003; New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools, 2006), and the inclusion of the learning pathway for Years 7-10 in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c), no such provision has eventuated.

Within the range of programmes offered by teacher education institutions, the three-year undergraduate degree that prepares student teachers for primary teaching and the one-year post-graduate diploma qualification that prepares students for teaching in the secondary sector, predominate (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). The primary under-graduate degree, variously entitled Bachelor of Teaching, Bachelor of Education, or Bachelor of Teaching and Learning, is comprised of four components that include education studies, professional practice or professional studies, curriculum studies and subject studies. At The University of Otago, the component of Education Studies involves learning and thinking about the roles and influences of education in society and of society on education and how children

learn; Professional Studies is focused on becoming a skilled and reflective teacher and developing relationships with children, parents and teachers in schools; Curriculum Studies develops knowledge, understanding and practical skills needed to facilitate effective learning experiences for children across the curriculum; and Subject Studies provide opportunities for student teachers to develop in-depth content and pedagogical knowledge in a chosen subject area (University of Otago, 2008). During their preparation for secondary teaching, students typically complete an undergraduate degree with two areas of specialisation that are also teaching subjects in the New Zealand curriculum. This initial undergraduate degree is followed by a one year post-graduate diploma qualification in teaching that includes programme content similar to the components of the undergraduate degree for primary teaching and builds on the subject knowledge acquired in the initial degree studies (Nolan, et al., 2003). Criticism has been levelled at primary teacher education programmes for the lack of focus on the development of student teachers' subject or content knowledge, while secondary teacher education programmes have come under attack for their over-reliance on subject knowledge and curriculum coverage at the expense of pedagogical content knowledge (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Nolan, et al., 2003).

The New Zealand Teachers' Council has responsibility for the registration of teachers in New Zealand. This is a general, rather than stage-specific teacher registration process that begins with provisional registration following graduation from an approved programme of initial teacher education. The first two years as a provisionally registered teacher are an extension of initial teacher education, and it is the responsibility of the employing school to provide professional support through a targeted advice and guidance programme to beginning teachers. Following this two year period, and subject to the teacher meeting the Satisfactory Teacher Dimensions and conditions, the New Zealand Teachers' Council confers full registration, and a current practising certificate is issued (New Zealand Teachers' Council, 2009). Full registration indicates that a teacher is of sound character and has the skills, knowledge (including practical knowledge of pedagogies that are responsive to cultural contexts), and disposition to be an effective teacher (Ministry of Education, 2007d). The fully-registered teacher's

practising certificate must be renewed every three years in order for the teacher to continue employment as a registered teacher in New Zealand schools.

Summary

The New Zealand educational system is characterised by a two-tiered primary and secondary organisation of schooling that has endured for over a century. The majority of teachers complete their initial teacher education in universities that adhere to this bipartite system in providing primary and secondary programmes of teacher preparation. Despite the existence and growth of a small but vigorous movement advocating for the reform of middle level education, the status quo represented by the two-tiered system of schooling largely remains. While internationally, and particularly in the United States and Australia, middle level reform has resulted in the development and implementation of specialised programmes of middle level teacher preparation, to date New Zealand has not followed suit.

The lack of professional recognition of early adolescence as a distinct stage of development has been identified as a key factor inhibiting the uptake of specialised middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. Other contributing factors include the entrenched nature of the two-tiered system of schooling, the existence of two quite separate teacher unions, the general rather than stage-specific system of teacher registration and the myriad of school configurations within which young adolescent students experience their schooling. In recent years the last factor has precipitated a school type versus teacher practice debate and uncharacteristically placed effective middle level pedagogy and practice in the spotlight, and by association, teacher education. The launch of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) gives advocates of middle level reform reason for optimism because, for the first time, the national curriculum acknowledges Years 7-10 as a distinct learning pathway. With its origins in the ground-breaking work of Stewart and Nolan (1992), this acknowledgement represents a firm mandate for change at both the systemic and institutional levels. The next chapter explains the methodological decisions and processes that have shaped the design and implementation of this research.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

This research has been motivated and driven by the desire to investigate and understand the social phenomena of teacher preparation in New Zealand and its intersection with the concept of middle level education. The theoretical and methodological tools that have been used in the construction of meaning in this qualitative study are discussed in this chapter. The research process undertaken has been strongly influenced by the social constructivist movement that recognises that there are multiple constructions of social reality and ways of viewing the world (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Within this paradigm the qualitative researcher becomes the research instrument (Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2002) with the ability to listen, question, reflect and gain critical insight into a complex social organisation. Social constructivist theory is embedded within the process of both method and analysis since the researcher not only gathers data but is also pivotal in its interpretation.

This chapter commences with the purpose for the study followed by a description of the research questions and their rationale. The philosophical framework and the elements of research design, including the role of the researcher and the processes involved in the selection and recruitment of participants, are explained and the participants are described. The next section describes the data collection procedures and strategies that were utilised and explains the rationale for the approach used in the analysis of data. A section outlining the steps taken to enhance the validity of the research is presented, and this is followed by an explanation of ethical issues that were considered in the course of this study. The reporting of findings is outlined in the next section, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the theoretical and methodological decisions that have been made in the design, implementation and reporting of this research project.

Purpose of the Study

The review of the literature in Chapter 2 showed that early adolescence is widely accepted as a distinct stage of human development, that requires qualitatively

different provision in the classroom from the earlier middle childhood, or later adolescent stages of schooling. There is a substantial body of research that suggests such provision requires differentiated curriculum, assessment and pedagogy that is developmentally responsive to the individual needs of young adolescent students in Years 7-10 (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; National Middle School Association (NMSA), 1995; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Stewart & Nolan, 1992). In Australia and the United States the movement for middle level reform has resulted in the establishment of specialised middle level teacher preparation as well as in-service professional development provision, within an increasing number of institutions (Andrews & Anfara, 2003; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005). The purpose of this study was to investigate, through documentary analysis and the analysis of interview data, how and the extent to which middle level education is represented within initial and in-service teacher education in New Zealand institutions. The study goes further to examine six dedicated middle level programmes in Australian and American institutions to obtain comparative insights for the New Zealand-based data. The ideas and concepts that arose from the review of the middle level education literature facilitated the development of the key research question and secondary questions that provided direction for this study.

The following key question was devised to provide strategic direction for this investigation. „What provision is made for the middle years or Years 7-10 in New Zealand teacher education?’ In fine-tuning the research focus, this key question was further conceptualised to form four inter-related secondary questions that provided operational direction for the study. These secondary questions were:

1. What does the North American, Australian and New Zealand literature identify as developmentally responsive practice for teachers working in middle level education?
2. How is the current literature of best practice in the middle years reflected in initial teacher education programmes in New Zealand?
3. How does provision, in relation to teacher education for the middle levels within New Zealand institutions, compare and contrast with that of Australia and the United States?

4. What recommendations for teacher education in New Zealand arise from the findings of this study?

The first question was focused on current research and literature within the field of middle level education and specifically that relating to effective pedagogy in the teaching of young adolescents. The second question was informed by the literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and was designed to link and compare effective middle level pedagogy and practice, as advocated in the literature, to current teacher preparation within institutions in New Zealand. The third question was formulated to provide comparative insights between the research findings from the New Zealand based data and that obtained from a selected sample of overseas institutions. The final question was designed to assist the synthesis of the findings from this study to provide recommendations for future policy and practice in the area of middle level teacher education at both the systemic and institutional levels in New Zealand.

Philosophical Underpinnings

The term „theoretical perspective’ has been defined by Crotty (1998) as the philosophical stance underpinning a methodology and the inherent assumptions contained within it. The theory of social constructivism (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) has provided the epistemological, ontological and methodological framework (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) for the decisions that have been made in carrying out this qualitative research. Social constructivism is an interpretive paradigm that is underpinned “by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 33).

According to Creswell (2003), Denzin and Lincoln (2003), Flick (2002) and Kardorff and Steinke (2004), the researcher working within the interpretive paradigm, believes that there are multiple versions of reality. The researcher and participants interact and, therefore, co-construct understandings. Meaning is made of these ideas via an interpretive perspective that utilises naturalistic tools and methods. It is these beliefs and assumptions that have shaped my actions, and influenced the questions asked, and their interpretation.

Research Design

After identifying a topic of study and a key research question the researcher plans how the study or research project is to be carried out (Neuman, 2000). Since the broad field of education is situated within the social sciences, I determined that a qualitative paradigm would be the most appropriate methodology to utilise in this investigation. Qualitative research is essentially interpretive, therefore a number of strategic, ethical and personal issues needed to be considered during this project (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, subsequent decisions made in the selection and recruitment of participants, collection of data, analysis of data, and in the formulation and reporting of findings; adhered to the principles of qualitative research. The method used was that of a multiple case study since this design was most effective in enabling rich, detailed and in-depth information to be obtained from multiple participants across a range of national and international settings. The multiple case study design allowed for comparisons to be made and contrasting perspectives to be ascertained across several contexts. The theoretical perspective of social constructivism linked the method to theory. This philosophical orientation required me, as the researcher, to engage in ongoing reflection on my role in the research.

The Role of the Researcher

According to Mason (2002), qualitative researchers should engage in critical self-scrutiny or “active reflexivity” (p. 7) so that they constantly reflect on their role and their actions during the research process. Reflexivity is described by Denscombe (1998) as a term used to describe the nature of the relationship between the inquirer or researcher and the social world. In qualitative research the researcher plays a key role in the research process since he or she has the responsibility of being both the collector of relevant data which is usually in the form of people’s words or actions and the interpreter of that data (Creswell, 2009; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). It is therefore not possible for the inquirer to adopt a totally objective position because the concepts used to study the particular social phenomena are actually part of that social world (Denscombe, 1998). At times referred to as “the researcher as a human instrument” (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1988), data is filtered through this ‘human instrument’ rather than through instruments developed by other researchers. For this reason I needed to continually reflect on my personal biography, that included

dual roles as a researcher and a teacher educator – including being an „insider’ at one of the participating institutions – and, thus, that research is not neutral but value-laden. The influence of these factors on how the research was carried out, how data were interpreted and how the findings were to be reported, was ongoing throughout the research. During the process I, as the researcher, endeavoured to be open in identifying values, biases and personal interest in the topic with the participants; and I was aware of the influence of these factors in shaping interpretations formed during the course of the study. Such reflection involved being aware of the need to be objective as possible, particularly during the data collection and analysis stages of the research, whilst also recognising that the meaning ascribed to events and social situations is inherently shaped by my experience, values and norms (Denscombe, 1998).

Selection and recruitment of participants

According to Blaikie (2000), the nature of the sample selected and the sampling technique or method used, has a major influence on many other aspects of the research design. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique (Creswell, 2003; Davidson & Tolich, 2007; Neuman, 2000) that was utilised in this study because it was neither feasible nor desirable to interview all teacher educators employed in New Zealand universities and colleges of education. It was not the objective of this study to generalise the findings to a larger population but, in line with the social constructivist orientation of this research, to achieve a deeper understanding of the incidence and nature of middle level teacher preparation from the viewpoints of the selected participants. The sampling procedure utilised in this research has been therefore purposeful in its aim to achieve variability across a range of selected settings. My knowledge as a teacher educator in a New Zealand university helped facilitate the identification of prospective participants. This attention to selection was to “increase the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data” (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000, p. 45). The process for the selection and recruitment of participants is outlined and elaborated on in the following four sections.

1. Selection and recruitment of New Zealand institutions

During the period of data collection for this study, teacher education in New Zealand was provided by 27 institutions (Kane, 2005). These are outlined in Table 1. Due to temporal and financial constraints it was not possible to conduct this investigation within all of these institutions. A key decision was therefore made in August, 2005 to focus on a selected sample of institutions, specifically that of New Zealand universities and colleges of education. The justification for this decision and for the subsequent data collection was informed by the Ministry of Education (2005) national statistics for the distribution of students enrolled in teacher education institutions across the range of providers. The statistical information that provided the basis for this decision can be drawn from Table 1.

Table 1: Student Intake by Sector at Each Type of Teacher Education Institution in 2005

	No. of institutions	Primary		Secondary		Total Students	% of Total
		No. of Students	% of Primary Students	No. of Students	% of Secondary Students		
Private training establishment	9	52	2.4	46	3.1	98	2.7
Polytechnic	7	24	1.1	0	0	24	0.6
University	6	1314	61.5	1059	70.9	2373	65.4
<i>Wānanga</i>	3	109	5.1	0	0	109	3.0
College of Education	2	638	29.9	389	26	1027	28.3
TOTAL	27	2137	100	1494	100	3631	100

Adapted from Kane (2005)

The Ministry of Education (2005) statistics showed that the overwhelming majority of students completed their initial teacher education programme in either a university (65.4%) or college of education (28.3%) setting. This constituted approximately 94% of the total student intake across all institutions whereas in

comparison, the 19 polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments collectively accounted for only 6% of enrolments in a teacher education institution. Over the ensuing four years there has been little change in this demographic trend (New Zealand Teachers' Council, 2009). As the most significant providers of teacher education, the six universities and the two remaining colleges of education were selected as the prospective institutional sample that would provide the basis for this study. The institutions were: University of Otago, Dunedin College of Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch College of Education, Victoria University, Massey University, University of Waikato, and University of Auckland. It should be noted that during the period of the research the Dunedin College of Education merged with the University of Otago, and the Christchurch College of Education merged with the University of Canterbury.

According to Wolff (2002), research is always an intervention into a social system. Gaining access to secure the collaboration of potential participants, employed in institutions across three different settings in New Zealand, Australia and the United States proved a lengthy and difficult process. It involved obtaining consent at two levels, that of institutions as well as individual participants. Gaining entry to New Zealand universities and colleges of education involved sending an introductory letter, a detailed information sheet outlining the nature of the study (see Appendix B), and an informed consent form (see Appendix C) to the vice-chancellors and principals of the institutions seeking permission to carry out the research. The information sheet assured institutional leaders that data was not being obtained as a means of assessing or judging institutions or individuals, but as a nationwide analysis of current trends that might be used to inform future directions for middle level teacher education. The institutional leaders were further informed that their institutions would be identified as participants in the research report, but that the identities of participating teacher educators would not be divulged. As a result of the recruitment process, five New Zealand universities and two colleges of education provided institutional consent. These institutions were the: University of Otago, Dunedin College of Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch College of Education, Victoria University, Massey University and the University of Waikato. Subsequent approval by Deans of Education and identification of potential teacher education participants occurred in each of these institutions with

the exception of Massey University. It was from these six institutions that the data for this study was collected.

2. Selection and recruitment of New Zealand teacher educators

The nature of the key research question determined that teacher educators working in New Zealand colleges of education and universities would be the key participant group in this study. Following the granting of institutional consent, communication was required at the faculty level to identify prospective teacher educator participants. As a result of this process the potential participants were subsequently sent an introductory letter, information sheet, and informed consent form that invited them to participate and collaborate in the research. Since middle level education for young adolescents in Years 7-10 bridges both primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand, the potential teacher educator participants in this study were selected across both the primary and secondary teacher education sectors within each of the selected institutions. In all cases, the proposed participants were responsible for coordinating either the primary or secondary undergraduate teacher education programmes in their respective institutions. Four teacher educators, working in institutions to provide professional development support to practicing teachers, were also selected as prospective participants because of the two-pronged focus of this study into both initial teacher education and in-service professional development provision. Three of the latter potential participants held leadership roles as Directors of Professional Development. In addition, one was Coordinator of Professional Development within the Education Support Services department of their institution. The participants' provision of in-service, professional development support encompassed both primary and secondary schools and practicing teachers. The participating teacher educators within the selected sample of universities and colleges of education were therefore drawn from primary initial teacher programmes, secondary initial teacher programmes, and from in-service school support services. In total, thirteen teacher educators within these institutions provided their informed consent to participate in this study. Of these, five teacher educators were involved in primary programmes, four coordinated secondary programmes within their respective institutions, and four participants were involved in school support programmes delivering professional development to

schools and teachers. Figure 3 presents a visual representation of the three cohorts of New Zealand teacher educators.

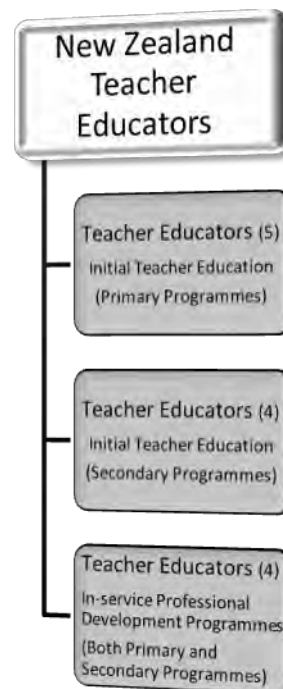


Figure 3: Participating New Zealand teacher educators

3. Selection and recruitment of key informant

According to Gilchrist (1992) and Neuman (2000), key informant interviews are those that involve the interviewing of people who are totally familiar with the culture under investigation and who are prepared to share their knowledge and skills. They have access to particular perspectives unavailable to the researcher (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The individual or „expert’ may or may not be currently involved in the field, however they will generally have had several years of experience in a centre position in the culture. Such people, according to Davidson and Tolich (2003) are “opinion leaders and stakeholders for particular communities of interest” (p. 131). The purpose of key informant interviews is “to gain insight into the structure of the cultures and groups under study” (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 131). Dr Pat Nolan was approached to participate in this study as a key informant because of his deep and extensive knowledge of the field of middle level education and research, his prior experience as a teacher educator working within a university to deliver a specialised middle level postgraduate paper, and his nuanced

understanding of the sociological and political context with respect to education in New Zealand. Dr Nolan is recognised as a key proponent in the area of middle level reform. Formerly holding the title of Associate Professor at Massey University, Nolan recently retired after a distinguished career spanning some 30 years as both a teacher educator, and researcher in the areas of educational sociology, middle schooling and middle level curriculum design. He established a postgraduate paper focusing on middle level education while at Massey University, and was prolific in conducting research, most notably that conducted in the Freyberg project (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Nolan & McKinnon, 1991, 2001), as well as in contributing extensively to scholarly journals on the topic of middle level education. He is currently the foundation and current editor of the magazine *Middle Schooling Review*. In the 1990s he was a leading advocate for the establishment of middle schools in New Zealand. Nolan continues to take an active interest in middle level education both in New Zealand and internationally. During the recruitment process an introductory letter, information sheet and informed consent form was sent to Dr Nolan seeking his participation in this study. He was informed that he would be identified in the research report and he consented to this.

4. Selection and recruitment of international institutions and teacher educators

Although New Zealand represents a unique socio-cultural context because of the nature of its geographical location, its size and the diversity of its people; the concept of middle level teacher education is not specific to New Zealand. As discussed in Chapter 2, at the international level the concept of specialised middle level teacher preparation is situated within a much wider movement focused on the reform of middle level education. As a result of the Chapter 2 literature review, it became apparent that the findings obtained from the New Zealand-based data needed to be informed through wider and more expert perspectives extending to relevant educational contexts in Australia and the United States. This involved gaining access to three Australian institutions, as well as three institutions in the United States to secure the participation of six teacher educators with responsibility for coordinating specialised middle level teacher education programmes. It was hoped that the insights gained would provide a point of reference and a comparison

for the New Zealand based data, and inform future directions for middle level education in New Zealand.

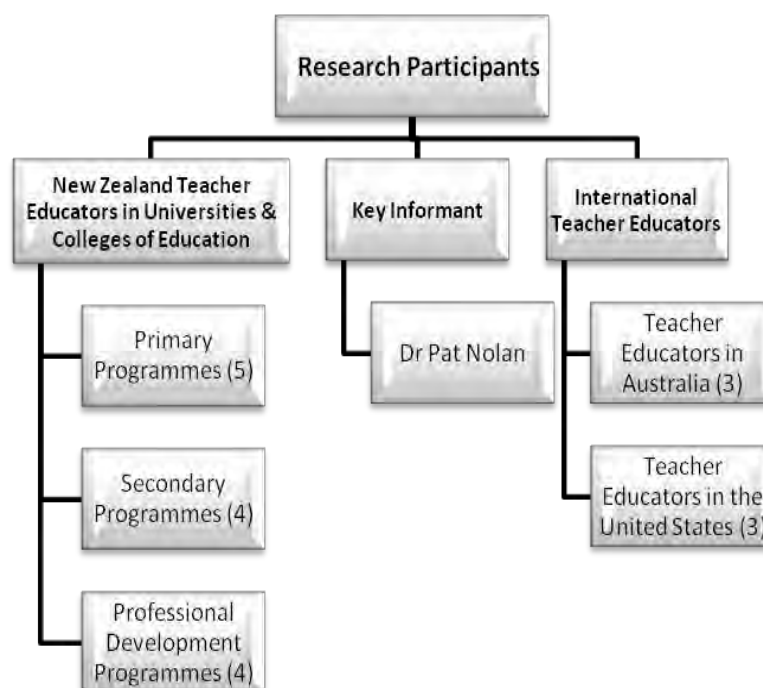
Gaining access to overseas institutions and teacher educators closely replicated the process undertaken in recruiting the New Zealand participants. An initial email sent to Vincent Anfara, who was editor of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* (for example Anfara, 2001), outlined the purpose and nature of the research, and invited him to identify possible American institutions and teacher educators who could be approached as potential participants in this study. In his reply Dr Anfara identified ten teacher educators and their respective institutions. Institutional consent and individual participant consent was then sought. As a result of this process, three institutions in the United States, and three teacher educators responsible for coordinating designated middle level teacher education programmes consented to participation in this research. They were Associate Professor Penny Bishop of the University of Vermont, Associate Professor Gayle Andrews of the University of Georgia, and Associate Professor Kathleen Roney of the University of North Carolina.

A sample of Australian institutions and teacher educators were drawn from a journal article by Pendergast, Whitehead, de Jong, Newhouse-Maiden & Bahr (2007). The article identified and critically examined a number of specialised middle level teacher education programmes that had been established in Australian institutions. From the six programmes that were examined within the publication, three institutions and three teacher educators were identified as prospective participants in this project. The previously described process to gain access was replicated in seeking the collaboration of the selected Australian institutions and teacher educators. As a result three Australian teacher educators provided informed consent. They were Associate Professor Kay Whitehead of Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, Associate Professor Donna Pendergast of the University of Queensland in Brisbane, and Dr. Terry de Jong of Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia.

These three cohorts: (1) a selected sample of teacher educators employed in New Zealand Universities and Colleges of Education, (2) a prominent academic leader

and key informant in the field of middle level education in New Zealand, and (3) a selected sample of six international teacher educators involved in specialised middle level teacher education programmes in Australia and the United States; were recruited as participants in this study. Figure 4 presents a visual overview of the participants.

Figure 4: The Participants



Data Collection

According to Davidson and Tolich (2003), “the strength of qualitative research lies in its validity” (p. 34). In defining this concept, Bryan (1984) asserts that validity involves the logical integration of data from different sources and different methods of analysis into a single, consistent interpretation. Rather than a validation strategy, however, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that triangulation of data obtained from different sources, at different times and from different people in different locations; adds depth and leads to a deeper understanding of the social issue under investigation because of the generation of additional knowledge. Accordingly, data has been gathered from three sources, at different time periods, and from multiple cohorts and participants in the course of this research. As foregrounded in Chapter 2, an initial web-based search of New Zealand university and

college of education websites was undertaken to ascertain baseline information. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the purposively selected sample of New Zealand teacher educators, the key informant and a sample of teacher educators in Australia and the United States of America. Additionally, relevant supplementary documentation, such as programme information and course outlines, provided enrichment data.

The initial online search of eight University and College of Education websites undertaken in mid 2006 was exploratory in its purpose to determine the incidence and nature of designated middle level teacher education programmes within these institutions. An advantage of conducting a web-based, as opposed to a manual search of textual documentation, is that the information posted on institutional websites is current, and frequently updated. Additionally, the use of the internet is relatively simple, fast and cost-effective in providing for the rapid transmission of information by distance (Neuman, 2000). While recognising that there is no quality control of such information through peer review or other such processes, Neuman (2000) states, “sources that originate at universities, research institutes, or government agencies usually are more trustworthy for research purposes than ones that are individual home pages of unspecified origin or location, or that a commercial organisation or a political/social issue advocacy group sponsors” (p. 465). The baseline information obtained from the web-based search of institutional websites enabled the formulation of the key question, and secondary questions that guided this research project. A table presenting the results of this online search is included in this thesis as Appendix A.

Since qualitative inquiry usually involves the collection of data that reflects participants’ words and ideas, the predominant strategy used in this study involved in-depth interviews. This particular data gathering technique was considered the most appropriate for investigating the focus of this inquiry. The interview process was carefully constructed to align with the social constructivist underpinnings of my study. In the initial stages this involved building rapport and credibility with participants during the recruitment process, and in obtaining their informed consent (Berg, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Neuman, 2000). The participants were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study and what their participation

would involve. The interviews took place in a setting chosen by the participant and at a time convenient to them. Interviewing is defined by Berg (2001) as “a conversation with a purpose – specifically, the purpose to gather information” (p. 66). According to Patton (1990), the primary purpose of qualitative interviewing is to “provide a framework within which the respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms” (p. 290). A semi-structured interviewing format (Babbie, 1995; Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2003; Denzin, 1978; Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004) was therefore used so that a number of prepared questions could be asked in a systematic way, while also allowing for flexibility to digress beyond preparation to probe interesting perspectives arising from the participants’ responses. Guided by an interview schedule (Bouma, 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 2000), the interviews were specific to each group of participants in listing the key questions to be asked, as well as possible probes (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). Consistent with the ideas of Neuman (2000), the probes were used to clarify a response, to explore an incomplete response or to elicit a relevant response. Separate interview schedules were formulated as the basis for the interviews with the New Zealand teacher educators involved in initial teacher education programmes (see Appendix D), with teacher educators involved in in-service professional development support (see Appendix E), with Dr Nolan (see Appendix F), and with the international teacher educators (see Appendix G). A copy of the interview schedule was sent a week prior to the interviews being conducted so that the participants had time to consider their response.

Within each interview schedule there was a structured layering of questions that linked conceptually to the secondary questions that provided the framework for this research. Open-ended questions (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Neuman, 2000) were most frequently used because the purpose of the interviews was to find out the existing provision for middle level teacher preparation within the programmes, and the respondents’ thoughts and attitudes in relation to this. According to Creswell (2009), the combination of open-ended questioning and careful listening results in the researcher obtaining a clear understanding of the area under investigation. Conversely, the use of closed questions tends to obscure rather than illuminate the participant’s viewpoint (Flick,

2002, p. 92). The exploration to find meaning in this study involved the scaffolding and co-construction of the participants' ideas through a number of specific strategies and techniques that included the use of probes and rephrasing of questions where necessary. As Maykut and Morehouse (2000) have stated, "the qualitative posture is one of flexibility and responsiveness to the expected emergence of unanticipated twists and turns in the content of the interview" (p. 97). Accordingly, as salient aspects of the investigation emerged, the researcher was able to respond to these leads through broadening and refining the interview questions as the data dictated.

The interviews were carried out in a sequential manner that resulted in the New Zealand teacher educators being interviewed during February-October, 2007 with Dr Nolan being interviewed in March, 2008, the teacher educators in Australian institutions in June, 2008, and the teacher educators in American institutions being interviewed in July-September, 2008. Where possible, data was collected from interviews with the New Zealand participants in the settings within which they worked. As stated by Maykut and Morehouse (1994), "the natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover, or uncover, what is to be known about the phenomenon of interest" (p. 45). Where face-to-face interviewing was impractical because of geographical distance or financial constraints, as was the case with the overseas teacher educators as well as some New Zealand participants, interviews were conducted via telephone or teleconferencing technology. The interviews were simultaneously recorded on audiotape and later transcribed. Each interview was between one and one-and-a-half hours in duration. On several occasions I returned to the field to clarify participants' responses or to elicit further information. The interviews were completed when no new insights were forthcoming, responses became repetitious and the data had reached saturation. A total of 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted in the course of this study. After each interview a hard copy of the transcript was sent to the participant so that they could review and, if they wished, amend their responses.

The examination of relevant documentation, relating to teacher education programmes within the participating institutions, was an unobtrusive strategy that yielded interesting and rich information when read in tandem with interview data.

According to Berg (2001) “in some instances, unobtrusive indicators provide access to aspects of social settings and their inhabitants that are simply unreachable through any other means” (p.189). This supplementary information provided a further source of data and comprised institutional prospectus and handbooks, programme descriptions, programme approval information and individual course outlines. According to Atkinson and Coffey (2004), documentary sources are “social facts that are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways” (p. 58). They caution against using them as “firm evidence” or as a representation of social organisation, instead urging inquirers “to approach documents for what they are and what they are used to accomplish” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 58). In this research the descriptive information obtained from documentary sources was used to corroborate and inform the interview data.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2003), “qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive” (p. 182). Interpretivism is a common approach used in qualitative research (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Neuman, 2000) and is often viewed in conjunction with the social constructivist worldview. The object of inquirers holding this worldview is to rely as much as possible on the views and perspectives of participants in relation to the issue, problem or situation being investigated. Meaning is frequently negotiated and constructed through oral interactions between the researcher and the participants. In this way, the researcher or inquirer, by using an interpretive orientation, can develop a pattern of meaning through the process of inductive analysis that describes and explains the specific contexts within which people live and work (Creswell, 2009; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The researcher then interprets this pattern of meaning in relation to the original question of inquiry. Consistent with the constructivist theoretical orientation of this research an interpretive “strategy of inquiry” was utilised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 36). Interpretive analysis was used in creating meaning from the interview data, and occurred concurrently with data collection. Guided by the research questions and informed by knowledge of the field of inquiry, the raw data was organised into conceptual categories and themes that represented patterns of meaning that were derived inductively from the data. As the

researcher I was looking for a complexity of views rather than collapsing multiple perspectives into tightly-defined narrow categories for ease of analysis.

The process of constructing meaning from the interview data began with a limited editing of the written transcripts of the interviews. This involved the removal of unintelligible verbal fillers or utterances as well as incomplete repetitive statements. It was not the intention to produce an exact transcription as this can conceal or distort meaning (Flick, 2002). A thorough check of the transcripts against the audio tapes was carried out and a further check was made to ensure that complete anonymisation of data, particularly that of New Zealand teacher educators' names, was achieved. Multiple readings of each transcript were completed and on some occasions it was necessary to return to the field to clarify lines of inquiry with the participants. Where programme documentation, such as prospectus and course outlines were available, this information was read and analysed in conjunction with the interview data and was useful in providing descriptive information in relation to the teacher education programmes.

Concepts or 'frames of analysis' for interpreting the findings were broadly identified at the design stage of this research and further refined at the data analysis stage. According to Hatch (2002), "frames of analysis are essentially levels of specificity within which data will be examined" (p.163). Through the iterative process of inductive analysis (Creswell, 2009), each transcript was first skim read to obtain an holistic overview of the content. During subsequent readings relevant and interesting perspectives were noted in the right-hand margins of manuscripts in the form of memos. In further readings of each transcript several categories of meaning became apparent and these provided a framework for viewing each individual participant's responses. Each discrete set of transcripts such as that of the primary teacher educator sample, and secondary teacher educator sample was then re-read, and then in tandem, to identify patterns and relationships within and across the sets of data, in relation to the identified categories. Following multiple readings the categories were conflated into the broad concepts or themes that represented the relationships within and between each cohort. These themes were then visually represented in a number of data displays in the forms of matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994). On each formulated matrix the thematic structure

formed the (Y) axis and the individual respondents within the specific sample group formed the (X) axis. Within the body of each matrix, evidence was included in the form of abbreviated quotations extracted from the transcripts. These matrices formed a thematic and evidential overview that provided the basis for the reporting of findings. During data analysis, two independent observers were engaged to cross-check a sample of transcripts in order to, in the first instance, identify categories and, later, develop themes derived from the data. Notwithstanding a high level of inter-coder agreement, where there was a difference in categorising or in the identification of themes, I re-examined the data to look for verifying evidence. Instances of negative or discrepant information that disagreed with the identified themes are discussed in the findings.

Ethical Considerations

This study received approval from the Northern Social Sciences Human Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania in early 2006. The ethical approval reference number for the project was H0007650. The process to gain entry to the field began in October, 2006. The tenets of voluntary participation and informed consent (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Hatch, 2002) were adhered to in the course of this study. Institutions and individual participants were fully informed of the nature of this research through introductory letters, written information sheets, and informed consent forms that outlined what participants would be involved in, and the potential risks of participation. They were informed that at any time they could withdraw from the research. Deceiving people or prospective participants is unethical (Davidson & Tolich, (2003). Such deceit can cover a range of situations including the non-disclosure that the inquirer is a social researcher. Accordingly, the researcher was open in disclosing her position as a teacher educator and emerging researcher at a participating university during the process of gaining access. The participating New Zealand institutions were informed at the outset that they would be identified, but that the names of individual teacher educator participants would not be included in the research report. As the key informant, Dr Nolan was also advised that he would be identified. The Australian and American universities and teacher educator participants were also notified during the process of gaining access that they would be identified in the findings of this study and subsequent research reports. The

New Zealand institutions, Dr Nolan, and the overseas institutions and teacher educators all gave their permission to be identified in this thesis and any subsequent research reports.

Every attempt was made to remove from this research any identifiers that could potentially disclose the New Zealand teacher educators' identities. Codes were assigned to these participants in the reporting of the findings. „Confidentiality’ is defined by Berg (2001), as “an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects’ identities” (p. 57). While these teacher educators remained nameless it was not possible to promise them anonymity because of the relatively small geographical size of New Zealand and the teacher education community. Participants were therefore assured of a high degree of confidentiality. The verification of interview transcripts by participants was included as an important aspect of the data collection process. In some cases participants indicated material they wished to remain uncited and these requests were carefully addressed. According to Davidson and Tolich (2003), research participants have the right to receive a summary of findings or some other form of feedback in relation to the outcomes of the research. Consistent with this principle, participants were informed at the outset of the research project that they would be given a summary of the findings on completion of the study.

Reporting of Findings

According to Geertz (1973), a “thick description” of human behaviour where the context as well as the behaviour are explained, results in “the behaviour becoming meaningful to the outsider” (pp. 9-10). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) concur by stating that the results of a qualitative study are “most effectively presented within a rich narrative” or “thick description” format where the voice of participants is heard and the reader is able “to determine whether the findings of the study are able to be applied to other people or settings” (p.47). Accordingly, relevant extracts from the raw data are integrated within the narrative so that the voices of participants may be communicated. As outlined in the previous section, the participating New Zealand teacher educators were assigned codes in the reporting of findings. Accordingly, „PTE’ refers to teacher educators involved in primary programmes of initial teacher education, ‘STE’ to those in secondary programmes

and 'PDTE' to those involved in providing in-service professional development. Each code is followed by a number, such as PTE1 or PTE2, as an identifier to differentiate between participants.

As explained in Chapter 1, Chapters 5-8 report the findings of this research and are sequenced according to when data were collected. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction describing the particular participant group and an explanation of the reporting structure within that particular chapter. The themes that emerged during the process of inductive analysis provide the sub-headings for the reporting of findings. Quotations from the raw data or transcripts have been included, not only to allow the voice of the participants to be heard within the research report, but also as corroborating evidence for the validity of the findings. A critical analysis and discussion in relation to each theme is integrated within the presentation of findings and explicit links have been made to the literature.

Summary

An initial web-based search of institutional websites revealed limited reference to the existence of specialised middle level teacher education programmes in New Zealand. The results of this online search provided the catalyst and the focus for this qualitative inquiry into how the middle years of schooling, and the needs of young adolescent students are represented and catered for within current teacher preparation in New Zealand. Since a significant majority of prospective teachers in New Zealand undertake their initial teacher education in universities or colleges of education, teacher educators from these institutions provided the selected sample for the focus of this inquiry. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen New Zealand participants responsible for coordinating programmes of initial teacher education and in-service professional development. An interview with a key informant or „expert’ in the area of middle level education, further informed the findings by providing an overview of the systemic factors influencing the development of the middle schooling concept in New Zealand. Comparative insights have been gained from in-depth interviews with six international teacher educators, responsible for the coordination of programmes of specialised middle level teacher education, in Australia and the United States. The findings and subsequent discussion are presented in Chapters 5-8.

Chapter 5

Findings: The perspectives of New Zealand teacher educators

Introduction

This chapter presents the perspectives of the participating New Zealand teacher educators. The findings demonstrate that respondents have limited understanding of the concept of middle level education or the period of early adolescence, and more specifically, the developmental and educational needs of young adolescents. In addition, the participants displayed a lack of understanding of the language used in the middle level discourse with their responses highlighting ambiguities related to the use of the terms: „middle schools’, ‘middle schooling’ and „middle level education’.

In this chapter the findings are presented in three sections to represent the primary, secondary and in-service professional development sectors. Each section begins by identifying the participating institutions and by describing the programmes and qualifications that formed the basis for the interviews with the respective teacher educators. As previously mentioned, codes were assigned to the New Zealand participants to ensure their anonymity in the reporting of findings. Accordingly, the code „PTE’ has been assigned to teacher educators involved in primary programmes, ‘STE’ to those coordinating secondary programmes and „PDE’ to those teacher educators involved in facilitating in-service professional development. Each code is immediately followed by a designated number between 1 and 5 as an identifier to distinguish between participants (for instance „PTE1’). Within each section the findings are organised into subsections that represent the key themes that emerged from the interview data. It is within this thematic structure that the ensuing interpretation and discussion is structured.

Section 1: Teacher educators involved in primary teacher education programmes

The participating institutions and the five primary-based programmes or qualifications that provided the basis for the interviews with teacher educators are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participating Institutions and Description of Primary Programmes or Qualifications

Institution:	Programme and Descriptor:
University of Otago	Bachelor of Education (Primary) (A three year undergraduate degree that enables graduates to teach from New Entrant (NE)-Year 8 in NZ schools)
Dunedin College of Education	Bachelor of Education (Teaching) Primary Education – Junior Secondary Year 10 option. (A two year programme for graduates who have completed a first degree. It enables them to teach from NE-Year 10 in NZ schools)
Christchurch College of Education	Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (A three year undergraduate degree that enables graduates to teach from NE-Year 8 in NZ schools)
Victoria University	Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Primary) (A one year primary programme for graduates who have completed a first degree. It enables them to teach from NE-Year 8 in NZ schools) Bachelor of Teaching (Conjoint Degree) (A four year Conjoint qualification that combines a Bachelor of Teaching degree with another Bachelor's degree e.g. BA, BSc, BCom. It enables graduates to teach from NE to Year 13 in NZ schools.)

Five conceptual themes emerged as a result of the interviews with the teacher educators involved in primary programmes. The themes were: (1) teacher educator attitudes to middle level education, (2) a generic theoretical framework for programmes, (3) provision for the middle levels within programmes (with five sub-themes), (4) a perceived emphasis on subject-specific knowledge, and (5) a focus on easing the transition from primary to secondary schooling.

Theme 1: Teacher educator attitudes to middle level education

A range of attitudes in relation to middle level education were evident across the five primary participants. The responses ranged from a strongly articulated rejection of the notion that the middle level is a distinct developmental stage,

through to positive and optimistic expressions about education in the middle years. One teacher educator, when asked to comment on his understanding of middle level education, focused his comments on school structure:

I remain unconvinced that there is a need for any such thing as a specialised middle school. My own children, one of them went to an intermediate School and another is currently in Year 8 in a fully primary school, so I've got children who have been through two different systems and as I say I really find it very hard to be convinced that focusing on this age group as somehow different is of any real value. Yes, so that's my personal viewpoint (PTE2, p. 2).

This comment was interesting because the discourse around the most appropriate schooling for young adolescents in New Zealand has, in recent years, changed from a focus on school type or structure to that of effective teaching to meet the needs of young adolescent students. Following clarification that the current study was not focused on school organisational structures but rather the philosophy of middle level education across the range of school configurations, the respondent elaborated:

I mean my feeling is that teachers need to be teachers. Now obviously, teachers need to pay attention to the age of learners, of course they do and they need to pay attention to the age and development levels and maturation, social development of their learners but I think that's true of any age group and I don't see young adolescents or pre-adolescents or whatever you call them as being in any way different from a teaching point of view (PTE2, p. 2).

The respondent's comments were inherently contradictory. While emphasising the importance of teachers' understanding learner needs from the developmental perspective, his comments reflect a lack of recognition of early adolescence as a distinct phase that is in any sense different from other age groups or requiring differentiation in the classroom. His comments reflect a „one-size-fits-all' approach to classroom provision.

Whilst acknowledging that young adolescents have educational needs that need to be considered, another teacher educator believed these could be catered for within the generic dimensions of effective teaching practice:

Well that's what I like about this degree, because good teaching's good teaching. So we're teaching them (student teachers) a set of principles or a whole lot of principles about a lot of different things, aspects of teaching and it doesn't matter really if the kids are five or 15, although there will be times when we need to think about these kids as a group but generally the principles, like the assessment for learning principles and that, apply across the board (PTE3, p. 22).

The views of these two teacher educators reflect the recent findings of Penny Bishop (2008) who found that there is a strong cultural conviction shared by New Zealand educationalists that there exists a single set of generic teaching and learning principles “that are not developmental or stage specific” (p. 44). Comments such as “good teaching is [simply] good teaching” are representative of this view. Bishop believes that this widely-held belief presents a significant barrier to the establishment of specialised preparation for middle level teachers in New Zealand.

At the opposite end of the spectrum another teacher educator expressed the need for greater public awareness of this stage of human development by stating “I just think there’s not enough recognition I guess, that those middle years are a separate developmental stage” (PTE1, p. 12). The respondent further elaborated:

Recognition of middle level education is one of the primary planks of preparing teachers to teach in middle level education. There’s got to be recognition of the philosophy. I’d also like in our own primary programme to see more courses like the one I was talking about such as the English one which recognises that teaching young adolescents is a different process and requires a different set of skills, content knowledge and approaches from teaching at the junior level (PTE1, p. 11).

Throughout the interview, this participant advocated for early adolescence to be recognised as a differentiated group and also expressed a need for more New Zealand-based research as important in facilitating this:

Well, I’d just like to say that the more research there is like this that will focus on the needs of young adolescents the more likely we are to come up with something worthwhile for them because it does seem to me at the moment to be a bit ad hoc and a bit hit and miss (PTE1, p. 12).

This teacher educator’s concerns echo those of Bishop (2008) who draws attention to the lack of evidenced-based research into specific middle level practices that engage New Zealand youth. She poses the question: “How does the content of teacher preparation programmes intersect with the skills, knowledge and values teachers ultimately need to teach this age group effectively?” (p. 30). The New Zealand Ministry of Education had, earlier in 2006, recognised this gap in the literature when then Minister of Education, Mr Steve Maharey commissioned a stocktake and synthesis of New Zealand-based research and literature on the topic of teaching and learning for the middle years. This review entitled *Teaching and*

learning in middle schooling: A review of the literature, a report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education was subsequently undertaken by Australian researchers Dinham and Rowe (2007).

Theme 2: A generic theoretical framework

The sub-question: „How is the current middle level education literature (both international and national) reflected in initial teacher education and professional development programmes in New Zealand?’, is addressed in this section and aims to explore the extent to which primary programmes in New Zealand institutions are informed by middle level research and literature. During the individual interviews the participating teacher educators were asked to identify the literature that was used in providing a theoretical foundation for their respective programmes. Texts such as *Human Development in Aotearoa* (Drewery & Bird, 2004), *The Professional Practice of Teaching* (Fraser & McGee, 2008) and *Educational Psychology* (McInerney & McInerney, 2006) were mentioned as significant generic texts used in courses focused on human development and education theory and pedagogy. Further supporting New Zealand-based literature including: *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Alton-Lee, 2003), *What are the attributes of excellent teachers?* (Hattie, 2002), *Culture Counts: Changing power relations in education* (Bishop, 1999) and *Kaupapa Messages for the Mainstream* (Bishop & Glynn, 1998), was identified as important publications used in Educational/Professional Studies and Professional Practice course components.

Three participants emphasised the importance of literacy and numeracy in their respective curriculum courses and identified Ministry of Education publications such as *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5-8* (Ministry of Education, 2006) and the numeracy booklets that support the Ministry of Education’s National Numeracy Project (Ministry of Education, 2010) as examples of important texts underpinning English, and mathematics courses within their programmes. The *Building Science Concepts* series (Ministry of Education, 2004) was mentioned as a significant resource used in science classes. In reconceptualising the curriculum, the texts and publications of James Beane (1997), *Curriculum Integration: Designing the core of democratic education*; Deborah Fraser (2000), *Curriculum integration: What it is*

and is not, and Kath Murdoch's *Classroom connections: Strategies for integrated learning* (1998) were singled out as being key references used within courses focused on integration of the curriculum and inquiry learning. Texts focused on key issues such as transition and its impact on literacy achievement Hawk and Hill (2001); assessment for learning Clarke, Timperley and Hattie (2003) and providing effective feedback Clarke (2003) were identified as significant references by two participants. When a respondent was asked by the researcher if any specific literature focused on the middle levels was used in his Professional Studies/Professional Practice or Education courses, he responded:

No, I can't think of any that would be specifically about middle level teaching. I mean, I think the general approach is everything we're doing is pretty well appropriate to any level" (PTE2, p. 3).

When further pressed by the researcher as to whether or not he used specific literature relating to the teaching of middle level students within any components of the programme the interviewee reiterated, "No specific middle level stuff" (PTE2, p. 3). These comments were consistent with his stance articulated earlier in the interview when he stated his belief that young adolescence should not be seen as a stage of human development differentiated from other age groups. Another teacher educator coordinating the Primary to Year 10 programme did mention that the course was developed in response to the work of Dickinson and McEwin (1997), and also that of New Zealand academics Lee and Lee (1999).

So I know that their [Lee & Lee] work was considered to be a significant reason to have a focus on Years 7-10 and also at that point, we had thought that there was going to be a rise in middle schools and I don't think that's happened. But at that time, that was the thinking, that there was going to be an increase in middle schools in New Zealand (PTE4, p. 1).

While the work of Dickinson and McEwin, in the area of middle level teacher preparation is widely recognised, Lee and Lee (1999) have consistently been opposed to the concept of middle schools being established in New Zealand as well as to the wider precept that young adolescent is a phase of human development that requires differentiated educational provision. It is paradoxical, therefore, that the work of Lee and Lee contributed to the establishment of an initial teacher education programme that was focused on preparing teachers for teaching at the middle levels.

Theme 3: Provision for the middle years within programmes

The participating teacher educators were asked a number of questions that were designed to elicit responses as to how they provided specifically for the middle years within their respective initial teacher education programmes. Their responses were analysed and subsequently classified into five categories. These are critically discussed in the following sub-sections:

3.1: Course content covered in the Education Theory /Professional Studies and Professional Practice components of programmes

Most commonly this limited provision occurs through a 100 level study of human development and the wider socio-cultural influences. There is a specific focus on theories and particularly those of Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) as well as research in educational psychology and life span psychology within the course. Topics typically focus on infancy, early and middle childhood and adolescence, as well as aspects of adult development, family structures, cultural dimensions and the development of people with disabilities. In response to the question: „Is any emphasis placed on the young adolescence period of physical/cognitive/socio-emotional change in the course on human development?’, one of the teacher educators replied, “no, not specifically, it would be covered generally as part of the wider topic of adolescence” (PTE3, p. 2). When another respondent was asked if anything in relation to early adolescence, was covered in the course entitled „Human Development’ she vaguely respond:

I don’t think so. Well, to be honest, I’d have to look at the human development course outline to see whether there’s anything there about early adolescence but I suspect that there isn’t (PTE4, p. 4).

In explaining the main focus of the course, the teacher educator articulated an increased emphasis and importance placed on socio-cultural theory within human development courses generally:

So children as members of families and because, you see, we have that socio-cultural emphasis in our programme, and of course that focus is on children as part of a socio-cultural context (p. 6).

Before further elaborating:

We spend a lot of time talking about Bronfenbrenner and you know the notion of the systems that are working around kids. So students should have a good education theory underpinning what they’re doing in the classroom because that is a significant part of their education studies (p. 6).

Another participant took care to point out how life-span psychology was incorporated within courses, by stating:

We don't have a specific course we call „Human Development' but there is human development content in each of our Professional Education or Professional Studies courses. So they're contained within that. So our courses are a mixture of – I guess you could say educational theory and professional practice. We do cover general patterns of maturation and so on and we do talk about the differences between you know, five year olds and 10 year olds but only at that kind of level (PTE2, p. 3).

In New Zealand institutions the study of human development commonly occurs in the first year of primary programmes. It involves study of the traditional life-span frameworks for studying this development, and increasingly the wider role that culture plays in the development of human beings. A closer review of the texts and course materials used within these courses showed that the life-spans are represented through infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Adolescence is represented across the broad 12-18 years stage of development and is not delineated into early or later adolescence. This disregards the considerable base of research and academic literature (Bishop, 2008; Lipsitz, 1984; Lounsbury, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Knowles & Brown, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2003; Stewart & Nolan, 1992; Stevenson, 2002); that recognises the period of early adolescence as a distinct stage of development. The National Middle School Association's *Position Statement on the Professional Preparation of Middle Level Teachers* (2006) is unequivocal in stating:

Successful middle level teachers, at their most fundamental level, must be experts in the development and needs of young adolescents. Prospective middle level teachers attain this expertise through formal study of young adolescent development and opportunities to work directly with young adolescent students while applying this knowledge in middle level field experiences. Practicing middle level teachers seeking advanced middle level education degrees develop a more comprehensive understanding of the age group as they analyse the concepts, principles, theories and research related to young adolescent development. The resulting comprehensive understanding of the developmental stage of early adolescence provides a substantial basis on which middle level teachers can create curriculum, utilise effective teaching strategies and use assessment wisely and effectively. When individual teachers do not have a solid grounding in young adolescent development, middle level programmes as a whole are severely limited (NMSA, 2006, p. 1).

Swaim and Stefanich (1996) concur by stating:

Middle level teacher education must enable prospective teachers to transfer their knowledge of the growth and development of young adolescents into ways and means of creating a classroom climate that is not only developmentally appropriate, but also provides young adolescents with a safe and caring environment in which to learn (p. 41).

It is interesting that not all programmes included a human development course within the Education/Professional Studies component of their primary qualification. Where a focus was placed on the study of life-span psychology, this only involved a generalised and rather superficial study of adolescence that incorporated the broad 12-18 age span. It is apparent that the discourse of developmental psychology with its focus on the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and associated characteristics and needs across the life-spans is increasingly losing favour and devolving to a broader study of the individual and society and the wider socio-cultural influences on the development of the individual. While socio-cultural theory is recognised as increasingly important (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Carrington, 2006; Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell & Mockler, 2007; Jackson & Davis, 2000) such study must be complemented by an in-depth understanding of human development across the range of life-spans. Where there is only a cursory understanding of the stages of human growth and development there is little basis for studying wider societal influences.

3.2: Integrating a constructivist theme of ‘knowing the learner’ within courses

A second, somewhat nebulous pathway for providing for middle level learners is the purported focus within primary programmes on the teacher ‘knowing their learners’. The notion of ‘knowing learners’ is a lynchpin of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning and is predicated on the assumption that if teachers understand and relate to their students, they will be responsive to their individual learning and associated needs. One of the teacher educators coordinating a BTeach Conjoint programme spoke of the constructivist and co-constructivist approaches underpinning the Professional Education courses within the programme:

They are general pedagogical courses so they cover planning, preparation, assessment, building cohesive environments, collaboration, working with parents, behaviour management. So they’re not curriculum-focused (PTE3, p. 2).

In response to a question inquiring as to whether any of these courses focused specifically on related aspects of early adolescence she added:

Even though we don't specifically talk about Years 7-10 I think these are actually developmentally responsive practices. One of our courses focuses on teaching diverse learners which includes gender, sexuality and ethnicity. We have quite a focus on building cohesive classroom environments and developing positive relationships with learners and kids being actively involved in the learning process. I mean we come from a constructivist perspective and so we are thinking about student-centred teaching although we teach them about other approaches and the suitability of picking an approach to fit what it is they're trying to teach, and that sometimes it may be more appropriate to use a different sort of approach. But we certainly push a certain barrow I suppose (PTE3, pp. 2-4).

Another participant also articulated a constructivist philosophy underpinning the undergraduate primary programme he coordinated:

One of the underlying philosophies of our teacher education programme is to know who you're teaching and being very clear about the students that you're teaching, the community that you're working in, the parents that you're working with and being responsive to that. I think particularly knowing who you're teaching and obviously pitching your teaching at an appropriate level I think is something that we obviously think is important but in terms of the strengths of the programme I think there is a real emphasis on getting to know who your students are and establishing those relationships (PTE4, pp. 2-5).

The teacher educator who coordinates a Conjoint programme that enables graduates to teach from New Entrants (NE) to Year 13, and who had previously articulated that he did not view young adolescence as a distinct stage of human development, spoke of knowing the learner from the primary and secondary perspectives where the focus is on school level rather than the development of the learner:

We have one course which while we call it [„Teaching adolescents’] it probably would be more accurate to call it „Teaching in the Secondary school.’ Yes, so while it does talk a wee bit about adolescence we are mainly focusing on the strategies, methods and approaches used in secondary schools in that particular course. So really our approach is more from the school level rather than the development of the learner (PTE2, p. 2).

Consistent with constructivist theory as espoused by Dewey (1938), Piaget (1967) and Vygotsky (1978), most of the teacher educators spoke of the importance placed in their respective programmes on „knowing learners’ and the pedagogical approaches that promote this so that graduates will be responsive to student needs. Few of the primary teacher educators, however, clearly articulated what knowing

the learner entails other than through a socio-cultural lens. Whilst stating that the learner should be positioned at the centre of the learning process and that relationships are very important, little collective emphasis was placed on student teachers' knowledge and understanding of the unique developmental psychology of the individual and how this intersects with the background experiences, and the socio-cultural context within which the learner exists. In some instances „knowing the learner' appeared to be confined within the bipartite boundaries of the primary-aged learner and the secondary-aged learner and therefore did not extend to „knowing' the young adolescent learner. The socio-cultural emphasis in programmes focuses on the external factors influencing the learner such as assessment, the use of information and communication technologies, classroom environment, classroom management, establishing relationships, and working with parents and, while these influences are extremely important, little emphasis is placed on the specific internal input such as personality, cognitive ability, motivation, level of engagement and interests the individual learner contributes to the mix. The earlier statement "... and it doesn't matter really if the kids are five or fifteen, the principles, like the assessment principles apply across the board" (TEP3, p. 22) is representative of a „one-size-fits-all' philosophy of teaching and learning. It is inconsistent with the principles of both constructivist and socio-cultural theory. Mayer (2004) and Wilson (2005), both cited in Dinham and Rowe (2007), caution that constructivism should not be viewed as an operational theory of teaching, but rather as a „legitimate theory of learning and knowing'. They believe that teachers perceive the formula for „constructivism' to be that of „hands-on activities' and when this narrow approach to learning is implemented it results in „educational disaster'. The authors argue that rather than implementing learning by doing, the most effective approach to constructivist learning is learning by thinking and that it is this cognitive approach that involves selecting, organising and integrating knowledge that promotes meaningful learning (p.14).

The respondents identified teaching for diversity as an important aspect of their programmes. They explained catering for diversity or difference in the primary classroom in relation to the variables of gender, intellectual ability, ethnicity, culture, and disability. Yet such focus on diversity did not extend to the more basic difference in relation to the age and level of the learner or that which distinguishes

the middle childhood learner from the learner at the middle level or Years 7-10. Interestingly, as a consequence of this approach student teachers might conceivably graduate with a greater knowledge and understanding of the Māori or Pasifika learner than that of the young adolescent learner.

3.3 Emphasis of the centrality of positive relationships in the classroom

When the participating teacher educators were asked about the emphasis placed on establishing and sustaining relationships with learners within their programmes, they were unanimous in their response:

Absolutely there is. I think for all of our students that is a major emphasis - the ability to build relationships with children, because you can have all the understandings of curriculum in the world but if you can't build up a sense of warmth and trust and respect with young people and their families, then that's all fairly empty (PTE1, p. 6).

We have quite a focus on building cohesive classroom environments and building positive relationships and they've had that in each of their courses. It seems the people that struggle at these levels, teaching kids at these levels [Years 7-10] are the people who perhaps, don't treat them as people. So, to me, it's about the importance of building strong relationships with your learners. It's that whole area of teacher knowledge that sometimes is forgotten about which is the knowledge of context, knowing your learners, and knowing about them. It's the stuff Russell Bishop and all those people are clapping on about (PTE3, p. 13).

Another participant concurred:

That [relationships] is key, and I guess thinking about the work that Ted Glynn and Russell Bishop have done with *Te Kotāhitanga*; yes, that certainly plays a big role in our programme (PTE4, p. 2).

The latter teacher educator reiterated the link between relationships with learners, and effective classroom management and the integral nature of these to effective teaching and learning:

I guess my approach is rather than, and particularly with Year One students, giving explicit behaviour management strategies and, of course, you do, but rather than focusing on that, I emphasise the provision of quality learning experiences, on knowing who your students are and on establishing positive and meaningful relationships with your students (PTE4, p. 5).

The participant considered the emphasis placed in the programme on the establishment and maintenance of meaningful and respectful relationships with learners, as a real strength of the primary programme he coordinated. Another

teacher educator also spoke of the importance of positive relationships with learners and the centrality of this aspect within the programme:

Oh, very heavy emphasis. We would see that as the sort of key really ... absolutely the key and we try and, if possible, avoid the idea that there is some kind of magic recipe or magic formula that is going to help you manage kids. But rather, take the approach that, by knowing your kids, by building relationships, by developing a good climate in the room, by your planning and your effective teaching, that's the main way to get your management in line. So we encourage our students to be focused on learning rather than on behaviour (PTE2, p. 12).

All of the participating primary teacher educators articulated the emphasis placed on establishing positive relationships with learners as the basis for effective classroom management within their respective programmes. This is consistent with the sentiments expressed in the current middle level literature. In relation to enhancing learning during the middle years of schooling, Atkin (2001) identified five key elements. One of these elements advocated for a “stronger focus on relationships between students and teachers” (p. 4). Atkin’s rationale was that a learning environment, in which a learner feels valued and acknowledged and in which they experience care and high expectations, has the most significant impact on student learning. (p. 4). Three of the participants cited the longitudinal research led by Russell Bishop (2003; 2007) in the *Te Kotāhitanga* project as research that demonstrated the importance of teachers developing positive relationships with Māori students. A key finding of this research, now in its seventh year, was the importance young adolescent Māori students placed on their relationships with teachers and importantly, how this influenced their engagement as learners. A further finding of the research was the lack of emphasis, teachers in the project placed on relationships as the foundation for teaching and learning. In her statistical snapshot into teaching and learning across middle schooling provisions in New Zealand, Durling (2007) reported that student-teacher relationships tended to deteriorate after Year 6. As a result, young adolescent students felt less supported and also felt their teachers had lowered expectations of them. A natural consequence of this breakdown in relationship between teacher and learner is greater student disengagement in learning between Years 7-10. This is consistent with national statistics (Data Management and Analysis Division, Ministry of Education, 2010) that continue to report increases in student stand downs, exclusions and truancy. Māori students are frequently over-represented in such

statistics. The middle level literature emphasises that making connections with middle level learners by building and maintaining positive and respectful relationships with them is crucial to their engagement in learning. In his study into improving opportunities and outcomes for middle level students, Schollum (2007) identified environments and relationships that create, “an inclusive and caring atmosphere of trust and belonging, active engagement where learning is valued, communication skills fostered and cooperative and collaborative efforts encouraged,” as one of seven key principles, that should underpin effective pedagogy at the middle levels (p. 18). Schollum went further to extrapolate these principles into practical dimensions of classroom practice and pedagogy.

3.4: Ensuring field experience in a middle level setting

One of the key recommendations of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) was that student teachers should be provided opportunities, during their initial teacher education, to teach in middle level settings where they saw effective pedagogy modelled and where they received expert mentoring from associate teachers. The importance of teaching practicum experience at the middle levels has also been articulated by the National Middle School Association (2006), Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003) and Stevenson (2002). In New Zealand teacher education teaching practicum is a key component of Professional Studies, Professional Education or Professional Practice components of programmes. The primary participants in the current study placed emphasis on ensuring all student teachers experienced teaching practicum placements across the range of year levels, including at the upper primary level or Years 7-8, during the programme. The participating teacher educators coordinating primary programmes emphasised the importance of student teachers experiencing field experiences across the range of levels during their initial teacher education programme. Their thinking was based on the rationale that obtaining a primary teaching qualification enabled graduates to teach NE-Year 8 in schools so experience at each broad level was important from the point of view of future employability. This notion of coverage involved student placements at the junior primary (NE-Year 3), middle primary (Years 4-6) and upper primary (Years 7-8) levels. In describing the structure of teaching practice within their programmes the participants articulated the importance of students experiencing all levels.

I guess, in terms of placement, we try to ensure that each student has coverage at each level of schooling over the three years they're here. Well not each level but at the junior, middle and intermediate levels ... they will have at least one, if not two, placements in an intermediate or middle level setting (PTE4, p. 3).

This emphasis on coverage across the levels was further reiterated by two other participants:

All our students are required to carry out a placement that incorporates significant teaching, so like four days full management, seven days, whatever. They must have experience at each of the levels of the school so junior, middle and upper. When they go on their upper school placement – that could happen any time during second or third year (PTE5, p. 3).

In that programme (one year primary diploma programme), the students have three main teaching experience blocks. We try to have them have some experience in a junior school, say up to Year 3, in a middle primary, that is between Years 4-6, and in a senior primary or Years 7-8. So we try to make sure they have one practice at each of those levels. Sometimes for logistical reasons that doesn't quite work out but that's our general approach. We try to make sure students have experience right through the three levels of the primary school (PTE2, p. 4).

Another respondent generally concurred with this approach but was more pragmatic in stating:

So we aim to have them cover junior, middle, senior, which is intermediate basically. They don't all do an intermediate. Some do maybe two Years 5-6 postings. It depends what placings or postings we can get for them but we like them to have at least got to Year 6 if they haven't done a Years 7-8 posting (PTE3, p. 9).

The latter comment reflects a lack of recognition that children at the middle primary level or in Years 5 and 6 have different characteristics and teaching and learning needs from young adolescent students at Years 7 and 8. It reflects an underlying assumption that the primary curriculum and pedagogical approaches can simply be extended upwards, and apart from the size of the students, everything else such as relationships, classroom management, student engagement; largely remains the same. Importantly, it demonstrates a lack of recognition of early adolescence as a distinct stage of development. The participant's comment also pinpoints one of the difficulties faced by teaching practice coordinators in ensuring student teachers in a primary-based programme have teaching practice experience across the range of year levels. Problems in obtaining sufficient numbers of associate (mentor) teachers and field placements, particularly at Years

7-8 are a common occurrence for course coordinators. This problem has been exacerbated by the existence of the wide range of school configurations catering to the middle levels. School reviews carried out by the Ministry of Education have resulted in some geographical areas being restricted to full primary schools (NE - Year 8), or Years 7-13 secondary schools because the intermediate schools, that have traditionally been the school structure for 11-13 year old students have been forced to close. As a result, many student teachers who are placed at Years 7 or 8 in a junior secondary setting, such as that represented by a Years 7-13 secondary school, experience problems. This is because many of these schools, instead of formulating a junior timetable that provides the level of homeroom contact and support required by their Year 7-8 students, have instead, extended the senior secondary timetable downward to encompass their young adolescent students. As a result the school schedule is commonly broken up into six 50 minute teaching periods. The lack of homeroom contact with one class and one associate teacher proves very demanding for even the most astute student teacher. In effect, the student teacher is faced with trying to make a primary model of teaching and learning fit within the restrictions of an inflexible secondary timetable.

Student teachers enrolled in a conjoint or double degree programme commonly experience teaching practicum across both primary and secondary settings because their teaching qualification enables graduates to teach NE-Year 13. A teacher educator coordinating one such programme explained:

In the Bachelor of Teaching programme, the longer programme, everybody does a Years 7-8 posting. So the first of their major teaching experiences is in a Years 7-8 setting. So that'll either be in a full primary school or in an intermediate setting. So they actually do a six week placement with Year 7 or Year 8 and then after that they will do a teaching experience in a secondary placement and another one in a primary placement. We do that because the programme is about secondary and primary and that gives us a good sort of middle position with features of both primary school and secondary school in them (PTE2, p. 4).

In adopting this pragmatic approach the teacher educator demonstrated lack of recognition of early adolescence as a separate stage of development and also reflected the entrenched nature of the two-tiered primary-secondary hegemony. This stance was reiterated by another of the participants who also coordinated a conjoint programme:

The Bachelor of Teaching programme is quite different. The conjoint degree is a four year programme but that first year is spent in their other degree so they come to us as a second year but they're actually in their first year of the BTeach. At the start they have two minor teaching experiences. In the first one they do a week in a primary school and the other a week in a secondary school, very much involved in just observation and interacting with students. The second major teaching experience involves two weeks in a primary and two weeks in a secondary setting. Teaching Experience 3 is their big one. So it happens in their third year and is for six weeks and we put them all in an intermediate and our reasons for that – we couldn't get enough secondary placements for them. But then we decided well actually, when we put them in secondary, it's difficult because they often have three or four associates so we decided to put them in a school where they would get one associate and work with one teacher for that sustained period of time and actually get to grips with the complexities of a teacher's role. And then we decided, well let's go for intermediates and that way because it's a conjoint degree and they're training for primary/secondary they're getting to see the endpoint of where primary kids are finishing up and where the secondary kids are coming from if they want to go secondary. So it puts them in that middle place (PTE3, pp.10-11).

The insights provided by these latter two teacher educators are interesting in that they have intimated that the placement of student teachers in a middle level setting such as an intermediate or Years 7-8 school represents, for a range of pragmatic reasons, a default position. The central focus appears to be on student teachers experiencing students in transition from primary to secondary school rather than on the middle years as a differentiated period of growth and learning in its own right. It also reflects the dominant discourse that views „youth' as a period of transition (Drewery & Bird, 2004). The comments of the participants, mentioned above, are further evidence of the invisibility of the middle years in primary teacher education programmes. Furthermore if, as these teacher educators state, it is the aim of initial teacher education to ensure student teachers experience teaching practicum experiences across the range of levels during their course, and moreover, that a placement within a middle level setting may occur at any time in a student teacher's first, second or final year; then issues in relation to equity arise. Student teachers in the first year of their programme are focused on an introduction to teaching and learning within their courses, so naturally do not have the depth of understanding of theory and pedagogy that they will have developed in their final year when they begin transforming their philosophy of teaching and learning into practice. It therefore follows that a student posted to a middle level setting in their

second or third year will gain considerably more from the experience than a student posted during their first year of the programme.

3.5: Reliance on mentoring from associate teachers during practicum

It is important to note that traditionally associate teachers in New Zealand have been provided limited support and remuneration to mentor student teachers on field placements. Additionally, teachers have been undergoing continual curriculum and pedagogical change ever since 1993 when *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) was launched. In the ensuing period many have been involved in extensive personal and whole school professional development. Mentoring a student teacher is therefore often viewed as an onerous imposition on top of a full workload. Securing sufficient associate teachers to cover student placements on field experiences is often difficult for coordinators of teaching practice in institutions. In her report entitled 'Initial Teacher Education Policy and Practice', Kane (2005) confirmed this trend by stating:

Additional factors reported as decreasing the availability and quality of associate teachers include the trend for many primary (and early childhood) teachers to focus on upgrading their qualifications to degree status. This thus limits their availability for the added responsibility involved in student teacher supervision. Those providers who position themselves within a particular philosophical perspective or worldview report challenges in securing practicum places with teachers who understand and are able to support and evaluate students operating within these particular domains. In general, the ongoing challenge of having access to appropriate associate teachers is evident through providers signalling that, due both to shortage and established practice, they do not have the liberty to choose which teachers are allocated to their student teachers (Kane, 2005, p. 207).

The New Zealand Education Review Office (1994, 2001, 2003) has also identified the variable quality of schooling provision for middle level students in successive reports. It is within this context that the primary teacher educators outline their expectations of associate teachers in mentoring student teachers on field experiences in middle level settings.

Students will have at least one five week placement in the upper (primary) school (Years 7-8) and whether it's the first posting, or the second one in their second year will depend on how many days full management and how much curriculum they have to teach. Most of the preparation for this is school-based so we rely a lot on the associate teacher as they're the experts (PTE5, pp. 6-7).

In reporting how students are placed with associate teachers she responded:

Because there's a great body of knowledge here of the local associates, they (student teachers) will be matched where possible to an associate that can meet their needs. So if they're worried by behavioural issues and wanting to develop strategies there, then they'll go to somebody who can model that for them. Whereas, if they're concerned about their ability to plan for that level, they'll go to a good planning model (PTE5, p. 8).

Another participant alluded to the difficulties faced in obtaining school placements as well as sufficient associates and the importance of developing partnerships between institutions and schools to facilitate this.

I guess the quality of your associate teacher and the feedback and guidance that they receive from the associate teacher as well as the relationship the university lecturer, student and associate have as well, so that's obviously the key to ensuring a good placement and as you say unfortunately, we don't often have control over that but I guess we make the best of it (PTE4, p. 4).

He qualified this statement by stating "and of course, that applies at any level" (p. 4). Another teacher educator outlined his expectations of associate teachers, but also indicated problems in securing quality teaching practice placements at the middle level.

I guess the most powerful thing really is for them (student teachers) to see effective teaching with that age group. We are hopefully providing them with a general set of strategies, tools and approaches which are going to allow them to work at any level but the thing that's going to make the most difference is if they're working with effective teachers while they're on teaching experience. I think, in the end, that's the thing that really does make the difference. I mean it's the same with teaching new entrants, isn't it? But sometimes I get a wee bit disappointed with the quality of some of the teaching and that our students are not seeing best practice and, in fact as a sweeping generalization, I would say the best practice our students are seeing is actually in junior classrooms (PTE2, p. 14).

The latter comment reflects a widely-held cultural belief among New Zealand educators that there are a generic set of effective teaching practices that are not age or developmentally specific. There is little recognition that effective teaching at the middle level requires in-depth understanding of the developmental and wider socio-cultural needs of the learner as well as knowledge and understanding of responsive curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment practices.

Another respondent explained the importance of associate teachers modeling reflective practice.

I was talking to a student today and they've got an associate teacher who's just really good at saying, "look, I'm having trouble with this class. I've tried this and now I'm going to try that and if that doesn't work, I'm going to try this." So the associate's actually kind of modeling this problem-solving approach to classroom management, and it's really great when associate teachers are honest enough to say, "look, you know this is a bit of a struggle here" and it's really great for a student teacher to see that because they can see the associate trying different things. I mean that's the best kind of associate isn't it (PTE5, p. 5).

This latter comment highlights the importance of student teachers actually observing and experiencing effective pedagogy in the middle level classroom. Such experiential learning makes the pedagogy and approach real to student teachers and scaffolds them in transforming their philosophy and theory into practice. However, given the concerns of the Education Review Office (1994, 2001, 2003) regarding the quality of educational provision for young adolescents in New Zealand schools, a salient question is to what extent are student teachers on field experiences in middle level settings observing and experiencing current and effective pedagogy and practice? By placing the onus on associate teachers to prepare perspective teachers for the middle levels, teacher education providers are delegating responsibility. The comments of the participants reflect an underlying assumption that student teachers will experience quality mentoring and support and be exposed to effective teaching and modelling. Ongoing concerns in relation to the variable quality of schooling provision for young adolescents suggest that the reality may be quite different.

Theme 4: Perceived emphasis on subject-specific knowledge

The National Middle School Association stated that "it is crucial that middle level teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject areas they teach" (2006, p. 2). This statement is universally supported by the current middle level literature including Bishop (2008), Dinham and Rowe (2007), Dowden, Bishop and Nolan (2009), Jackson and Davis (2000), Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003), and Stevenson (2002). Most advocate for graduates from an initial teacher education programme having in-depth specialist knowledge in at least one, but preferably two specialist disciplines.

The Post Primary Teachers' Association's opposition to the growth of middle schools in New Zealand is based on their perception that graduates from primary

teacher education lack depth of subject-specific knowledge. The PPTA argue that primary teachers have generalist knowledge rather than the in-depth specialist knowledge essential for the effective teaching of middle level students. They have been generally dismissive of the counter argument offered by reform proponents that primary graduates possess in-depth pedagogical knowledge that places an emphasis on teaching students ‘how’ to learn rather than ‘what’ to learn and that it is this approach that is more relevant to teaching young adolescents. In their review of the middle level literature for the New Zealand Ministry of Education, Dinham and Rowe (2007) identify the tension that exists in preparing middle years teachers, and the difficulties faced in “achieving the right balance between generalist teaching knowledge, which can work against depth and subject specialisation, which can work against breadth of curriculum knowledge, pedagogy and understanding” (p. 13). During the interviews with primary teacher educators, the key issue of content knowledge was discussed and participants were asked about the emphasis placed in their programmes on the development of student teachers’ content knowledge. Depending on the nature of the qualification a range of perspectives were expressed:

Yes, I’ve found from my own personal observation it is a problem, particularly with numeracy and science. That seems to be an area where content knowledge can be an issue for some students but again, I guess the student’s responsibility is to ensure that they have the requisite content knowledge before teaching. So, you know, that’s obviously something that we address (PTE4, p. 10).

While another participant acknowledged lack of subject specific knowledge was a problem for some students, in her response she focused on difficulties in relation to classroom management.

Yes, it’s the two things. It’s their own [student teacher’s] level of content knowledge and their fear of the age group. Because there’s such a strong transitional level, they get students at Level three, four or five and sometimes students in their second year of training are a bit daunted at the thought of that. But then when they realize that it’s not like trying to take a junior class where the associate’s got seven reading groups and you’re trying to get them through in 30 minutes. We do have to make sure that they remain more hands on with them and don’t fall into the worksheet trap (PTE5, p. 8).

This teacher educator put great store in the programme’s emphasis on ensuring student teachers graduated having reached a content level commensurate with Level 4 of the New Zealand Curriculum, across the key areas of English, Science

and Mathematics. Many students in New Zealand schools will have achieved Level 4 of the curriculum by the time they have completed Year 7. One of the teacher educators coordinating a four year conjoint or double degree also identified content knowledge as an issue for some students:

You mean content across the curriculum? It can still vary. Maths seems to be an area that most of them worry about (PTE3, pp. 18-19).

This comment, by the coordinator of a programme that caters to student teachers intending to teach across both primary and secondary areas, or from NE-Year 13, was somewhat surprising given programme prerequisite that requires students to complete one year of their first degree before gaining entry into the teaching programme. There is an assumption that these student teachers have the necessary mathematics, science and literacy knowledge gained from study at the upper secondary level as well as through their previous undergraduate studies, however this may not be the case. If a student's first degree does not include a major in English, mathematics or science they may experience difficulties with content knowledge. The teacher educator, who coordinated a Primary to Year 10 graduate qualification, identified depth of subject-specific knowledge as a strength of students enrolled in the programme. She reasoned that students could make links between learning areas and alluded to their ability to implement integrated curriculum in the classroom on graduating.

So they would come out with the ability to teach right across the curriculum as well as have a strength of subject knowledge in one or two areas, depending on what their degree is. But the fact that they have taught across the whole curriculum, would mean that they would have a very holistic and integrated understanding of the essential learning areas. So I see that as a strength for these people. They would have, what I would consider depth of pedagogical content knowledge, so as well as their subject knowledge, they have these understandings about current thinking in pedagogy including assessment (PTE1, p. 5).

Another teacher educator coordinating a conjoint programme was critical of a growing trend in some urban intermediate schools to focus on subject specific knowledge as the basis for teaching through adopting a highly specialised timetable:

They're (intermediate schools) setting themselves up as if they've got specialist teachers, but, in reality, the teachers are not specialists in the sense that they are in secondary schools because they don't usually have a degree in science or a degree in maths. So yes, two quite big intermediates have followed that pathway which seems to me, to be rather questionable. Whereas some of the other intermediates have continued more or less in a traditional intermediate style with the students mainly working with one

teacher and with some specialists in technology, physical education etc. So there is a bit of a split in the philosophy of intermediate schools. Some seem to think that they need to get students ready to go to secondary school which is strange because what they've ended up with is the kind of worst features of a secondary system with none of the benefits. They haven't got the specialist knowledge. In a secondary system you can buy the timetable hassles because the students are getting people who are specialists in their subject. So that's a trade off. But in these schools that I'm thinking of, there isn't actually that specialist knowledge (PTE2, pp. 5-6).

The respondent's comments were relevant, given the issues that have been raised during the last decade about intermediates' the lack of purpose and clear vision for the education of young adolescent students. It was significant that two of the participating teacher educators in this study raised concerns about the structure, and quality of intermediate schooling and their provision for Years 7-8 students. A large percentage of middle level students attend intermediate schools in New Zealand. Nine years have elapsed since the Education Review Office (2001) last evaluated the schooling provision available to Years 7-8 students so perhaps the time is ripe for an in-depth evaluation of all aspects of the intermediate model of schooling. The penchant for some intermediate schools to organise their structure and delivery of the curriculum around a compartmentalised and discipline-specific model that is predicated on depth of teacher content knowledge, is at odds with the philosophy espoused by Clarence Beeby (1937; 1938) the founder of intermediate schooling in New Zealand.

In their position statement on the professional preparation of middle level teachers at the undergraduate level, the National Middle school Association (2006) advocate for in- depth preparation in two academic areas. They reason that this provides a solid academic foundation for effective teaching and enables middle level teachers to cross curricula boundaries in making connections between subject areas when using an interdisciplinary approach. In her report on initial teacher education in New Zealand, Kane (2005), investigated the emphasis placed on depth of subject knowledge generally across the range of teaching qualifications offered by institutions. She found that primary qualifications reflected variation in the level of commitment to enhancing the subject or content knowledge of student teachers. She suggested that the reform in the 1900s to reduce the length of primary degree qualifications to three years had resulted in depth of subject knowledge being "sacrificed" (Kane, 2005, p.106).

In their review for the New Zealand Ministry of Education mentioned earlier, Dinham and Rowe (2007) highlight the „tension’ that exists in middle level teacher preparation between ensuring an accurate balance between generalist teaching knowledge and that of subject specialist knowledge. They draw attention to the fact that there are major limitations when either approach is used exclusively.

Introducing a degree of subject specialisation at the primary level, they believe, will go some way to alleviating teachers’ concerns about under-preparedness, particularly in the areas of mathematics and science. Bishop (2008) concurs and calls for a more effective balancing of the focus on subject matter with a focus on the whole learner, within all primary and secondary New Zealand teacher preparation programmes. A key recommendation of her report advocates for in-depth content knowledge, especially in numeracy, above and beyond that which primary preparation currently offers.

Theme 5: A focus on easing the transition from primary to secondary schooling.

Students make educational transitions as they progress through the compulsory years of schooling. Sometimes transitions pose challenges for students as they adjust to a new learning environment, new routines, and new peer group and teachers. How students manage these transitions may influence their educational achievement and their engagement in learning generally (Cox & Kennedy, 2008). In New Zealand, students may progress through two transition points during the middle years of schooling. One transition involves a move from Year 6 in a primary, contributing setting, to Year 7 in either an intermediate Years 7-8 school, or to a junior secondary setting within a Years 7-13 school. A second transition point occurs for students moving from Year 8 in either a full primary or intermediate school, to Year 9 in a Years 9-13 secondary school. Many middle level students in New Zealand schools therefore experience two significant transitions within as many years.

Some of the teacher educators during this study expressed interesting perspectives in relation to middle level transitions. One participant believed that a more coherent or seamless approach generally across the compulsory years of schooling would go

some way to addressing transitional concerns. He elaborated on the need for such focus:

I think there's a real need to ensure greater coherence from kindergarten to Year 12. I think my sense about high school and student disengagement, and all the rest of it is that students don't sense any coherence in what they're doing at school. You know, they're jumping from subject to subject to subject and I think this can be problematic in terms of the transition from intermediate or full primary, to secondary school. Up until then, you've got your home teacher that you know very well and he or she knows the student very well. And then all of a sudden, (students are) 50 minutes here, 50 minutes there and I think that is a huge source of concern and anxiety (PTE4, p. 5).

This teacher educator believed there was a real tension between the differing pedagogical focus of primary education and that of secondary education and it was this that created problems for some students in transition. He advocated for a more integrative model of secondary teaching and pedagogy, whilst recognising the considerable difficulties this presented in relation to teacher attitudes, timetabling and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement qualifications framework. He continued:

I was more than aware that in Year 8 you taught an integrated programme and you planned accordingly, and yet, you're mindful that students were going into this compartmentalised model the following year and for me that was always a huge source of tension and I still haven't quite reconciled to it. Adopting a more integrative model of education might be worth looking at. I don't know how practical and feasible that would be in practice and I know that people who teach in subject areas at high school would baulk at that, but I just think that perhaps, when I'm talking about coherence we are perhaps looking at a more integrative model of teaching. I mean we talk about negotiated curriculum at primary level but I'm yet to hear that word mentioned in a secondary context (PTE4, p. 7).

The respondent made the assumption that a progressive and integrative curriculum is a common feature of intermediate schooling yet the evidence, such as that of the Education Report Office (2001), does not support this. The comments above of some of the primary teacher educators, that a number of intermediate schools are emulating traditional secondary school approaches to teaching and curriculum, is further evidence that current and responsive approaches to curriculum and pedagogy are not the norm in middle level settings such as intermediate schools.

In their synthesis of the middle level literature, Dinham and Rowe (2007) identify the primary to secondary transition as a key issue underpinning middle level education in New Zealand. They argue that this should not be overstated though, since many students enjoy the changes and challenges associated with the transition to a larger school, with a greater number of teachers, a larger peer group and the greater variety and opportunities available to them in the secondary school context. The teacher educator involved in the Primary to Year 10 programme was critical of the lack of focus on issues related to transition within the content of the programme:

In the junior secondary subject that students do, and also in [identifiable paper/unit code], I would have to say that I think there is a gap in terms of a specific focus on the issues to do with transition. So even though that's one of the major reasons for having this programme at all, I'm not convinced that we specifically focus on the issues to do with transition and particularly the issues to do with literacy across the curriculum, as is relevant to Years 7-10. So I think I see that as a problem with the current content of the programme. I think that the transition from a primary school setting to a secondary school setting, that self-management, is a particular issue to think about and also just those issues to do with independence, initiative, different relationships, all of those things, I think these are particular stress points for young people that are important for our student teachers to be extremely aware of (PTE1, pp. 3-4).

This participant strongly believed that initial teacher education programmes should include a focus on preparing middle level students to make smooth transitions and on ensuring a primary focus on literacy as the basis for learning. She also believed the integration of the key competencies as set down in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007c) and specifically that of managing self, and relating to others, should be emphasised within the teaching and learning programme. The emphasis on developing students' literacy at the middle levels is a recurring theme in the current middle level literature. While some of the participants were concerned about the lack of emphasis within primary teacher education programmes on student transitions, a key finding of Cox and Kennedy's (2008) recent evidenced-based research was that transitions from primary to secondary schooling do not pose problems for most middle level students. They found that while student achievement in mathematics, reading and writing is initially impacted upon in the first few weeks of transition, by the end of the first year at secondary school, students generally make sound progress. Their key finding was that, rather than student achievement, attitudinal information in relation to less positive attitudes towards subjects, and lower levels of student

engagement in teaching and learning, to be of greater concern. These findings are consistent with those of other such studies conducted in New Zealand and the United Kingdom that advocate for a focus on policy and practice that places importance on ensuring students' maximum level of engagement in learning as well as on greater responsiveness to young adolescents needs. The difficulty, with focusing on issues related to primary-secondary transitions in primary teacher education programmes, is that student teachers may misconstrue the focus and rather than maximising the teaching and learning for middle level or Years 7-8 students at that particular time, the focus becomes one of preparing students for a period sometime in the future.

Section 1 summary

The teacher educators involved in coordinating primary teacher education programmes, demonstrated a lack of recognition of the stage of early adolescence and the principles of middle level education. There was an almost complete lack of awareness that students in Years 7-10 have specific developmental and generational needs that differ from students at the middle primary or Years 4-6 level. The participants' attitudes reflected a conviction that effective teaching was not based on age or developmental level, but rather generic in responding to the needs of all learners. They justified their collective belief by identifying the constructivist foundations for their particular primary programmes and particularly its inherent principle of teachers knowing their learners. This belief is fundamentally flawed because it fails to recognise that constructivist philosophy articulates the importance of linking learners' prior experiences and knowledge to new learning. This necessitates in-depth knowledge and understanding of not only the developmental psychology of the young adolescent learner but also knowledge of the wider socio-cultural influences of society. Without a specific focus on the stage of early adolescence, future teachers have no sound basis for making teaching decisions. The emphasis on developing student teachers' pedagogical knowledge at the expense of subject knowledge in the primary programmes further serves to disadvantage prospective middle level teachers. Furthermore, by placing the responsibility on middle level associate teachers to orient student teachers to the middle levels, institutions are delegating responsibility. The variable quality of teaching provision at the middle levels has been well-documented by the Education

Review Office. Moreover, the primary teacher educators themselves identified difficulties in obtaining placements in quality settings.

Section 2: Teacher educators in secondary initial teacher education programmes

Graduates from secondary initial teacher education programmes are qualified to teach from Years 7-13 in New Zealand schools and across a diverse range of school configurations that include intermediate, middle schools, Years 7-13 and Years 9-13 secondary schools, as well as the senior levels of area, or NE-Year 13 schools. The participating institutions and four programmes/qualifications, that provided the basis for the interviews with secondary teacher educators, are identified and briefly described in Table 3.

Table 3: Participating Institutions and Secondary Programmes/Qualifications

Institution:	Programmes:
University of Otago	Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) (A two year graduate entry programme that complements an initial Bachelors degree, and leads to a double degree qualification. eg. BSc/BTchg)
Dunedin College of Education (Southland Campus)	Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Sec) (A one year programme for graduates who have completed a first undergraduate degree (or equivalent) that incorporates two teaching subjects)
Christchurch College of Education	Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning(Sec) (A one year, 120 credit programme for graduates who have completed a first undergraduate degree that incorporates two teaching subjects)
Victoria University	Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) (A one year programme for graduates who have completed a first undergraduate degree (or equivalent) that incorporates two teaching subjects)

The following five themes emerged as a result of interviews with teacher educators involved in coordinating secondary programmes: (1) one predominant teaching qualification, (2) a generic theoretical framework, (3) provision for the middle levels in programmes, within which four sub-themes are explored, (4) teacher

educator knowledge and attitudes to middle level education, and (5) specialised middle level programmes not a viable option. These themes are examined in this section:

Theme 1: One predominant teaching qualification

The one year Graduate Diploma in Teaching qualification dominates initial teacher preparation for secondary teaching in New Zealand (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). Of the four teacher educators participating in this study, three were involved in implementing secondary teacher preparation through the one-year graduate diploma programme. The fourth participant was involved in the implementation of a two-year graduate entry Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) qualification. Two of the participants involved in implementing the graduate diploma within their respective institutions provided a brief description of their programmes:

So it's a graduate diploma and the students already have an undergraduate degree that includes two teaching subjects from the New Zealand Curriculum (STE1, p. 1).

This is a one-year 120 credit programme. So it's a graduate diploma and the students have already completed an undergraduate degree with two teachable subjects (STE4, p. 1).

As evidenced by these descriptions, students gaining entry to the programme must have already completed an undergraduate degree, and this accredited degree must contain at least two subjects at appropriate levels of study that are relevant to the New Zealand secondary school curriculum. These two subjects are usually described as the 'major' and 'minor' teaching focus of the student teacher. Relevant programme documentation showed that the major teaching area must have involved academic study up to 300 level, and up to at least 200 level in the second teaching area.

The participating teacher educators represented across both secondary qualifications within this sample were consistent in stating that graduate entry ensures depth of subject content knowledge. Whilst acknowledging the importance of subject knowledge in implementing cross-curricular links, Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003) state it is the emphasis placed on the 'major' teaching area that later

defines the professional identities of secondary teachers. They reason that, rather than perceiving their identities as teachers of learning, secondary graduates are conditioned to think of themselves as for example, a chemistry teacher, a geography teacher or an English teacher. They are critical of the over-emphasis in secondary teacher education on subject content knowledge to the detriment of pedagogical knowledge, believing this is a constraining influence on the future effectiveness of teachers.

In focusing on the length of the graduate diploma programme, the participants were asked if they envisaged the programme being extended from a one-year to a two-year qualification. One teacher educator's comments reflected the competitive nature of tertiary education and particularly of teacher education in New Zealand.

We've talked about increasing the number of credits and we've fought the Tertiary Education Commission on that. But we haven't managed to win. In an ideal world, absolutely, yes but, from a commercial perspective, if we increased our course to two years, we'd have an enormous sales job to do to persuade potential students that it would be worth coming to here to do a two year graduate diploma programme, when lots of other providers around the country do it in a year. So you've really got to sell losing a year's income. I mean by doing it unilaterally we would be cutting our throats, I think educationally, I would have no difficulty at all in working towards that (STE1, pp.10-11).

All three teacher educators coordinating the graduate diploma programme within their respective institutions reiterated these sentiments. They agreed that acting in isolation to lengthen the duration of their programmes to two years would result in students going further afield to enrol in one-year diploma programmes at other institutions. For marketing and fiscal reasons, extending the length of these programmes was not considered to be a viable option.

The fourth participant involved in coordinating a two-year Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) qualification explained that the programme was designed for undergraduates who make decisions to embark on a career in secondary teaching during or on completion of their initial undergraduate degree. He further described how the qualification was established in 2004 in response to an anticipated growth in secondary school enrolments between 2000-2008. Ministry of Education sources projected these enrolments to peak at a level 36% higher than previously and in

response to subject-specific shortages. The respondent outlined the academic rationale underpinning the longer programme:

The conceptual framework is based on research into the design of coherent and effective teacher education programmes by Howey, Beattie, & Ethell and the writings of John Dewey. These conceptions underpin the curriculum, teaching approaches, professional practice programme and assessment procedures of the Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary). Notwithstanding the essential depth of subject knowledge required by secondary teachers, these specific conceptions in relation to teaching, learning, schooling and learning to teach emphasise the critical importance of ensuring that the teacher education curriculum is represented to, and engaged in, by student teachers in pedagogically powerful ways (STE3, pp. 4-6).

The teacher educator articulated that the programme was well-supported by students with an annual intake of approximately 20 students. He stated that the future of the programme was to be decided as part of an extensive review of programmes resulting from a merger with a college of education. It is important to note that, as a result of the post-merger review process, it was determined that the Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) qualification, that provided the basis for this interview, would be phased out by the end of 2009.

During the interviews, the teacher educators described the nature and structure of their respective qualifications. All identified „Education Studies’ ‘Curriculum Studies’ and „Professional Practice’ as the three broad components around which their respective secondary programmes were structured and implemented. This programme structure is consistent with the findings of Kane (2005) in her report on initial teacher education in New Zealand. Analysis of programme documentation shows that the „Education Studies’ component of these programmes is focused on pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning and those factors that enhance these processes, as well as on the role of the teacher in the classroom. The mainstay of the „Education Studies’ component of the programme is the typical „Teaching and Learning’ course, or similar title, that accounts for a significant 20 of the 120 credits for qualification. The „Curriculum Studies’ component incorporates courses that are designed to develop student teacher competence in those specialist subjects that provide the major focus within their undergraduate degree. Depending on the size and capability of a given institution, the „Curriculum Studies’ component of their programme may be delivered on-site in the institution or via school-based

tutoring. This incorporates pedagogical approaches, as well as activities, assessment and resources that are appropriate to the teaching of each subject. The third strand, „Professional Practice’ or similar title, commonly consists of 14 weeks spent on field experiences in secondary schools. This is where student teachers apply their knowledge, skills and theory to classroom practice. Increasingly, the 14 weeks of classroom practice is configured into a one week introductory placement, then six week and seven week placements in two different secondary school settings (University of Otago, 2008). The conceptual structure of the two-year, Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) programme also adhered to the three-component structure of the graduate diploma programme but, because of its longer duration, greater emphasis was placed on „Education Studies.’ While the three graduate diploma programmes were similar in content, and consistent in implementing their respective courses around the above three components, the weighting and emphases applied to individual courses within the components differed according to the institution. In her report into initial teacher education in New Zealand, Kane (2005) identified such variation between institutions as confusing when evaluating the quality of secondary teacher education provision.

Theme 2: A generic theoretical framework for programmes

As with the primary qualifications, it was important to examine the literature foundation for the secondary programmes to determine to what extent specific middle level research and relevant literature was used. The three texts, *Human Development in Aotearoa: A journey through life* (Drewery & Bird, 2004), *Educational Psychology: Constructing learning* (McInerney & McInerney, 2006) and *The Professional Practice of Teaching* (Fraser & McGee, 2008) were commonly identified by the participants as essential texts for courses particularly within the „Education Studies’ component of their respective programmes. Their content focuses on human development, theories of learning and effective pedagogy as well as the professional role of the teacher. A closer examination of these texts showed a broad focus on the stage of adolescence spanning 12-18 years. There was no differentiation between the stages of early and later adolescence.

Alton-Lee’s „Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis’ (2003) was considered by the four teacher educators to be an essential

text because it articulated the dimensions of effective teaching. While frequently referred to in relation to a number of courses, it was most often referred to as the most significant reading to underpin the typical „Teaching and Learning’ course in „Education Studies’ because of its focus on effective pedagogy. Further publications such as the research reports of Bishop et al. (2003; 2007) in the longitudinal *Te Kotāhitanga* project and their subsequent findings in relation to the role of teacher-student relationships within the learning process, were also considered essential reading for students. The participants commented that they used this research when focusing on positive classroom environments for learning and, specifically on establishing and sustaining relationships between teachers and learners. Other texts and authors commonly referred to by the participants, included *Unlocking Formative Assessment* (Clarke, Timperley & Hattie, 2003), *Curriculum Integration: Designing the core of democratic curriculum* (Beane, 1997), *Learning Links* (Murdoch & Wilson, 2004) and *Classroom Connections: Strategies for Integrated Learning* (Murdoch, 1998).

As the National Middle Schools Association (NMSA) (2006) states in its position statement on middle level teacher preparation, effective middle level teachers must be experts “in the development and needs of young adolescents” (p. 1). This requires formal study of young adolescent development grounded in literature that presents and analyses the key principles, theories and research related to young adolescent development. NMSA argues that it is from this foundation that future teachers are able to develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding on which to base their later teaching decisions in creating and implementing the curriculum, choosing teaching strategies, and in the use of assessment. They believe developmentally responsive classroom programmes for the middle levels are “severely limited” when teachers of middle level students do not have a solid foundation in young adolescent development, and knowledge and understanding of how “developmental realities play themselves out against a context of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, family and community” (p. 1).

Providing a theoretical foundation for human development, educational psychology, and pedagogy that is focused broadly on the period of adolescence, reveals a lack of recognition or understanding that the period of early adolescence is in any way

distinctive from the later adolescent years and requires differentiated teaching. Without a theoretical foundation that differentiates between younger and later adolescence, prospective teachers do not have an adequate frame of reference for making teaching decisions that are responsive to the needs of students in Years 7-10. The educational needs of young adolescents are not considered and results in them being subjected to a „one-size-fits-all’, teaching methodology being utilised across Years 7-13 classes. Given the nature of the generic literature underpinning secondary programmes, it appears incongruous that the „Curriculum Studies’ component in programmes is most frequently divided into „Junior Secondary’ and „Senior Secondary’ areas. The rationale for grouping secondary school students in this way is explored in the following section.

Theme 3: Provision for the middle levels within programmes

The participating secondary teacher educators were asked to respond to questions that explored how they provided for the middle years within their respective programmes. In the ensuing discussion four distinct pathways became apparent. These are examined and analysed under the following sub-headings: Junior secondary/senior secondary differentiation in „Curriculum Studies’, learning and teaching in „Education Studies’, ensuring field experience in middle level settings, and integrating an emphasis on relationships.

3.1: Junior Secondary/Senior Secondary differentiation in ‘Curriculum Studies’

The curriculum tutoring that students experienced within their major and minor subject areas was largely focused on developing pedagogical knowledge and, in particular, effective approaches to classroom management. As stated earlier this was delivered through school-based or institution-based tutoring. Often this involved differentiation into „Junior Secondary’ (encompassing students in Years 7-10) and „Senior Secondary’ (students in Years 11-13). One of the participants described the extent of differentiation within his programme:

Well most of our programmes, or all our curriculum options, cover Years 7 to 10. There are two that don’t. One’s English and the other’s commerce but all the rest specifically identify Years 7 to 10 as being the junior [secondary] I mean for example science education goes from Year 7 through to Year 10 and then you’ve got senior chemistry, physics and biology. Physical education is the same. There’s a junior physical education course which

covers Years 7 to 10. And you'll find the same thing with social studies, and maths. I think it's a historical quirk that English is Years 9 to 13 really. So yes, maths teaching in Years 7 to 10 and we have two courses there, and then the senior maths, Years 11, 12, 13. So that's the normal model (STE1, p. 1).

The participant commented that this was a natural division since most graduates from the programme often found themselves teaching in Years 7-13 secondary schools upon graduating. When asked whether the student teachers viewed students in Years 7-10, as being a distinct developmental group requiring different pedagogical approaches than students in Years 11-13 the participant responded:

Yes, I think so. I don't think students look at the learning needs as such but they certainly see two distinct groups. Unfortunately, I think they see the two distinct groups more from a curriculum and assessment perspective, something which has dominated New Zealand education for years anyway, at the expense of teaching and learning, you know? And they see the senior school I think as equating to NCEA (National Certificate in Education Achievement) and to curriculum and to higher stakes learning as opposed to junior school (STE1, p.12).

The participants' comments were revealing. It appears that while student teachers involved in secondary programmes are encouraged to view the students across Years 7-13 as representing two distinct groups, this is largely for curriculum-organisation and assessment purposes rather than from a developmental or learning perspective. The National Certificate of Educational Achievement, (NCEA) New Zealand's national secondary school qualification, is a powerful driver within the school system. The key focus between Years 11-13 is on students' progressive achievement across the three levels. The differentiation of Curriculum Studies into Junior and Senior areas, that exists in schools and is replicated within New Zealand secondary teacher education programmes, not only results in student teachers viewing students from a narrow curriculum-assessment perspective, but also perpetuates the view that teachers are teachers of subjects, rather than teachers of young people. Shulman (1987) believes that teacher preparation for the middle levels requires a much broader focus than the current narrow curriculum emphasis that characterises initial teacher education. One of the participating teacher educators expressed the belief that the philosophy of secondary teacher education should change to a more student-centred approach and where the emphasis is placed on integrative curriculum:

I would like, if possible, for the students to experience some work where they see teachers working across subjects together, and some schools and

teachers are doing that, but it's very hard for our student teachers to be able to experience this. So for instance, where they can see science and English and maths and social studies incorporated into an inquiry project together. I think that would really help show them some of the strengths of what we're talking about in the college environment. That, you know, we are teachers of students and not subjects. They're seeing it happen and they're seeing the benefits of curriculum integration and interdisciplinary teaming but at the moment, it's very difficult for them to see that at all in a Years 9 to 10 setting (STE4, pp. 7-8).

While many secondary teacher education programmes are progressive in promoting student-centred pedagogy that is focused on knowing the learner and responding to learner needs as well as on encouraging alternative conceptions of the curriculum, this is reliant on a synergy with the philosophy and pedagogy of curriculum tutors or mentors within school settings. The participants commented that their student teachers spend considerable time in the Junior Secondary area because of the workload and assessment demands NCEA places on teachers at the senior levels. They identified difficulties they encountered in obtaining sufficient curriculum tutors, across an increasingly diverse range of subject areas. In light of these concerns questions arise about the effectiveness of the mentoring and the quality of the teaching that student teachers experience in Junior Secondary settings. One of the participants identified difficulties in this area:

Most of the curriculum is school-based in our programme. We have most of the students going out into schools where teachers are their curriculum lecturers and, to be quite frank, it often depends on how much that teacher is in touch with Years 7 and 8 and what they're doing and in some cases, it's quite a lot and in others, it's none at all (STE4, p.1).

Given that two of the four secondary teacher educators commented that the curriculum tutoring that their student teachers received was wholly school-based, the quality of mentoring becomes an important focus. Other related perspectives raised by the participating teacher educators included: student teachers' concerns about classroom management in Junior Secondary classes and particularly in Years 9-10, student teachers experiencing larger class sizes in Years 7-10 as opposed to Years 11-13, and initially negative student teachers' attitudes to teaching Junior Secondary students. There was little recognition by the participants that many of these concerns could be attributed to the lack of developmentally responsive teaching in Years 7-10. The teacher educators expressed a common belief that there was a greater focus generally on the teaching of students in Years 9-10 rather than younger students in Years 7-8. Given the range of school configurations at the

middle levels, the growth of Years 7-13 schools in some regional areas and, more importantly, the inclusion of Years 7-10 as a Learning Pathway in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c); the quality of teaching and learning within Years 7-10 of secondary schools needs to be evaluated. Moreover, differentiating „Curriculum Studies’ into Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary areas within secondary teacher education programmes without providing student teachers with the relevant specialised knowledge and understanding of young adolescent development, theories of learning, and relevant and responsive pedagogies as a foundation; results in the content-driven and often didactic pedagogies found in the senior secondary levels being applied to the teaching of young adolescents in Years 7-10. In the school setting such practice results in student disengagement from learning.

3.2: ‘Teaching and Learning’ in Education Studies

All four participating secondary teacher educators identified one paper in the „Education Studies’ component of their respective qualifications as being particularly relevant and “the backbone of the programme” (STE2, p. 1) in catering for students at the middle levels. Variouslly entitled „Teaching and Learning’, „Learning and Teaching’, or „Teaching for Learning’, this is a diverse paper that focuses on developing student teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge in their preparation for secondary teaching. As stated previously, the paper equates to 20 credits towards the 120 credit Graduate Diploma qualification. During the interviews the four participants identified key elements of their particular Teaching and Learning course that were responsive to the teaching of students in Years 7-10. The five key themes and associated elements of the course are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: *Teaching and Learning* themes and course content

<p>Educational Theory: How people learn; scaffolding learning; experiential learning; cooperative learning; teaching to promote thinking; constructivist theory; learning communities; reflective practice.</p>
<p>Curriculum Implementation: The New Zealand Curriculum Māori & Pasifika achievement; inclusive education; understanding the adolescent learner; personalising learning; planning.</p>
<p>The Role of the Teacher: Classroom management (particularly relationships); effective pedagogy; guidance systems & networks; career programmes; co-curricular programmes.</p>
<p>Education Administration: The role of school management and external administrative agencies such as the, Boards of Trustees, Ministry of Education, Education Review Office, and New Zealand Teachers' Council.</p>
<p>Career Preparation: Applying for teaching positions; teacher registration, advice & guidance programmes, stress management, peer support programmes.</p>

During the interviews with teacher educators the scope and purpose of the „Teaching and Learning’ course was explored further. When questioned as to the emphasis placed on the characteristics, needs and responsive practices in relation to young adolescent students, one participant responded:

Yes, I did have a query about what you actually mean by responsive practices. I mean so that we’re actually talking about the same things. Within the [Teaching and Learning] course, the students actually do a mini-seminar to a small group of people on a particular topic to do with adolescence, and they actually do like a jigsaw activity within their group (STE2, p. 2).

Following clarification of the term „responsive practices’ the teacher educator was questioned further as to whether relevant strategies in relation to the teaching of young adolescents were included within the course. The participant commented:

Yes, well there’s behaviour management strategies and there’s strategies to engage the kids. Behaviour management, I think is covered in a number of aspects in the [Teaching and Learning] course. There’s quite a heavy emphasis on things like communicating with students and managing students. I’m just trying to think what else... (STE2, p. 2)

When pressed further to identify the approaches that engaged young adolescent students the participant experienced difficulty. Instead he articulated his deficit

conception of young adolescents in general and the need to provide a „toolbox’ of behaviour management strategies. Another participant described how a particular course in the „Professional Studies’ component of the programme tended to focus on classroom management and identified pedagogical content knowledge as being most often covered in „Curriculum Studies’ courses:

There are five themes in professional studies. There’s learning and teaching, class management which I think, just by its whole definition tends to be skewed towards the junior school. There’s a Māori context, safe and inclusive classrooms, looking at student diversity and equity and the professional role of the teacher. So particularly around that class management area there’s a major focus on the junior school and I think that’s sort of reinforced by what students perceive as the things that they most want to know about and to be reasonably competent in, I think managing junior school classes. Probably with a bias towards Years 9 and 10 but not exclusively so. But in our curriculum studies, each curriculum focuses on its own pedagogy and, for example, in science, there’s a lot of emphasis on managing students in a laboratory situation (STE1, p. 3).

The participant described the programme’s reliance on curriculum tutors to provide student teachers with knowledge of specialised pedagogical approaches that are responsive to the needs of young adolescents in Years 7-10 within specific subject areas.

So the „Professional Studies’ approach tends to be quite strongly generic, whereas in the „Curriculum Studies’ area we’re working at more specific details (STE1, p. 3).

While the key paper „Teaching and Learning’ is often considered by secondary teacher educators as the lynchpin of their respective programmes in developing student teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, the content and focus of the course varies across institutions. There appeared to be considerable focus on classroom management in relation to teaching young adolescent students rather than a focus on pedagogical approaches that challenge and engage learners at the junior secondary level. Furthermore, only three of the five courses themes focused on theory, curriculum or pedagogical approaches. The remaining two themes covered content more related to governance and school management. The diverse course content and the condensed time allocation for the „Teaching and Learning’ course allowed for only superficial exploration of responsive curriculum designs and progressive approaches to pedagogy. Consistent with other aspects of the programme the course was focused on the broad period of adolescence from 12-18 years. There was no differentiation for students in the middle years.

3.3: Ensuring field experience in middle level settings

The participating teacher educators emphasised the importance of student teachers, experiencing a range of levels during teaching practicum. They indicated that this was a conscious and sometimes pragmatic decision made by the coordinators of teaching practice. Difficulties experienced in organising student placements were alluded to by one of the participants:

In schools, we expect our students to get a range of classes from junior through to senior, and obviously we find that it's easier to get students into junior classes, than into senior classes, particularly towards the end of the year (PTE1, p. 6).

In further discussion, the teacher educators elaborated on the reasons for placing student teachers at particular levels. In the second half of the year decisions were more likely to be made to place students in either Years 7-8 or Years 9-10, rather than in senior classes, because of the pressures faced by associate teachers of Years 11-13 students in relation to NCEA demands. A common theme expressed by the respondents was that programme lecturers, carrying out observations of student teachers on field experience, found it much easier when students were placed in Years 7-10 settings. When asked to explain this, they cited a more flexible timetable, more homeroom time, larger class sizes, and the benefits gained from students being mentored by a single associate teacher.

When we visit our students, I think that it's staff preference to see students teaching junior classes, rather than senior classes because that's where the classroom management strategies can be seen to be being demonstrated more explicitly than when you go in and sit down and watch a student teaching a Year 12 History class with eight students in it. It's a totally different experience to a Year 8, or 9 or 10 Science class with 25 students in it (STE1, p. 6).

Three of the teacher educators mentioned the initial concerns some student teachers in the secondary programme experienced when placed in Years 7-8 or Years 9-10 classes on teaching practicum:

They're often getting a bit of experience in actually teaching Years 7 and 8 as well as Years 9 and 10. One of the things was that when some of them were posted to an intermediate school on their first teaching experience they'd get really quite upset. They'd say you know I came here to become a secondary teacher (STE4, p. 5).

Well, as I said, some of them were concerned when they were actually put into Years 7 and 8, but as I said, they usually get over that quite well and

actually see positives in it. I guess people that are highly-qualified or well-qualified in their subjects have a wealth of knowledge and often find it difficult to get down to the level that is needed for the younger students (STE2, p. 6).

Probably one of the things I've found is that we've got a huge age range and we've got a real variety from BA's to doctorates and I find at the beginning, most of them (student teachers) talk about really wanting to teach senior students. This is where they want to teach. By the end, most of them are really excited about the idea of teaching junior students (STE3, p.10).

These responses and student views reflect the differing status that is often accorded to primary and secondary teaching, both in the profession and within society generally. Although not readily admitted, a similar professional divide exists between early childhood teachers and primary teachers in New Zealand. Such hierarchical attitudes are a further by-product of the entrenched bipartite divide that characterises the New Zealand educational system. Elevated status is accorded to secondary teachers, ostensibly due to their specialised content knowledge demonstrated by their completion of an undergraduate degree. Furthermore, within the secondary school system, greater status is bestowed on teachers of senior secondary, as opposed to junior secondary, because they contribute to their schools' academic reputation or profile by teaching senior students undertaking NCEA examinations. Understandably the preferred level of teaching for many prospective graduates is Years 11-13. The comments of Dr Sally Hansen cited in Bishop (2008) illustrate this prevailing attitude:

If people train to be secondary teachers, they want to work with big kids because they have specialist knowledge. I'm not sure how many people say, "wow, I really want to work with that difficult (middle level) age group." People might end up there by default rather than by design (p. 41).

When the participants were asked about specific preparation for students placed in middle level settings on teaching practicum, a range of responses were expressed. Their responses ranged from no specific provision, other than from a structural or organisational perspective, to a concentration on classroom management.

Not specifically. I think it's much the same as what they have for other things. One of the biggest things is really getting them to understand how intermediate schools might work or even full primary, might work differently from secondary. But I don't think there's anything specific to going into intermediate schools or dealing with those students that is any different from perhaps in secondary schools (PTE2, p. 6).

Our first teaching practice is actually in fifth week of their year here. So it's pretty early on and the thing we're talking about this afternoon is what we can manage to load into those five weeks so that students will have the confidence to be able to go into a junior class and have some strategies which they can use on that first teaching practice. Our coordinators in schools tell us that it is pretty important for them, and students say exactly the same thing. I mean students' big anxiety is how am I going to manage that big junior class when it's in front of me (STE1, pp.6-7).

The latter teacher educator placed considerable importance on the need for student teachers to experience time, during the teaching practicum debrief on critical reflection. Another teacher educator stressed the modelling of effective pedagogy within the programme as important preparation for placement in middle level settings. The participant firmly believed this was integral to overcoming the tension between the traditional pedagogy student teachers recently experienced in obtaining their undergraduate degree within a tertiary institution, and current pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning:

I mean it's very much experiential learning. There's a huge focus on students, we just don't have lectures. So there's a huge focus on students actually experiencing the kinds of learning and a lot of modelling of the kind of teaching and learning we would like to see. They have a lot of exposure to cooperative learning or, integrated inquiry and all that sort of thing. I think that's a strength of the programme. I think that because they're very rarely lectured at they are less likely then, to go out and do that [teacher-directed approach] (STES4, p. 6).

Such congruent teaching or „walking the talk' is identified by Korthagen, Loughan and Russell (2006) as a defining characteristic of all responsive teacher education programmes. Korthagen et al. state that, “learning about teaching is enhanced when the teaching and learning approaches advocated in the programme are modelled by the teacher educators in their own practice” (p. 1036). Often student teachers are influenced by the approaches to classroom management they observe on teaching practicum. The teacher educators were consistent in identifying classroom management as a key issue for student teachers placed in middle level settings. All four participants stressed the importance of developing student teachers' abilities to reflect and make teaching decisions based on this reflection. One of the participants elaborated on the need to develop students' abilities to critically reflect on their practice:

It's interesting in their feedback when they come back from teaching practice and they've seen good examples of classroom management and

bad examples and they start to reflect on the successful teacher in the classroom and the consistency of comments that you get around, “it was really interesting because that teacher used all sorts of overt strategies and that teacher was very quiet in the way they spoke to the class,” as opposed to the other teacher who was having a problem, who yelled at the kids and flicked out detentions like confetti, you know. And they start to build up that picture of what effective classroom management is, I think, based on their shared experience. I think they absolutely do need that and then the opportunity to come back and reflect with their colleagues on what worked. Then link in what they saw working, along with where they’re at in their own thinking, and what they’ve been learning in terms of what the evidence is saying is good practice in classroom management (STE1, p. 7).

As evident in this response, the participants alluded to the variable quality of associate teachers and mentoring student teachers experience on teaching practicum. All four teacher educators considered the development of student teachers’ critical reflection as essential, both in relation to their own teaching, and to that of other teachers’ on field experiences. The respondents believed this was the most effective approach to overcoming the good practice-bad practice dilemma.

3.4: Integrating an emphasis on relationships

Two of the teacher educators spoke of the importance of establishing positive relationships with learners as a foundation for effective classroom management. When asked to elaborate on this focus within the programme they responded:

For instance, one of the questions that student teachers often have is, you know, professional distance and forming relationships and what would be the difference, say, between a 16 and 17 year old to a 12 year old and that forming relationships is probably the fundamentals of management in the classroom and then, differentiated again depending on students’ ages. And that comes into that course *Teaching and Learning* we discussed (STE4, pp.1-2).

We have incorporated a lot of Russell Bishop’s work which is sort of pretty strong on student relationships, and I guess the importance of appropriate relationships and we talk a lot about relationships as a means of managing behaviour. I guess positive relationships are a far more appropriate behaviour management strategy than overt classroom discipline. You know, if your behaviour management or if your relationship management strategy with kids is working fine your need for overt discipline structures and things will be reduced. I mean students are often saying, how do I manage behaviour and tend to have pretty much a sort of punishment focus. Whereas we’re saying, hey, pull back from there and pick up [on] some of those sorts of Roger’s [ideas] and what kids are saying about what they respect in teachers (STE1, p. 4).

Establishing and sustaining positive relationships with learners is fundamental to effective teaching at all levels but is critically important with young adolescent learners as evidenced by a wealth of research that includes that of, Alton-Lee (2003), Atkins, (2001), Bahr and Pendergast (2007), Bishop (2003), Education Review Office (2003), Hattie (2002) and Stevenson (2002). Where teachers create a caring, supportive environment that values young adolescents, students develop a sense of belonging. According to Dowson (2002), at the “heart of belonging is the need for early adolescents to become part of a network of meaningful relationships within the school community” (p. 3). Central to this is the connection that young adolescent students form with their classroom teachers. Where the focus in a classroom is on relationships and developing an environment that enhances and celebrates learning and achievement, and where young adolescents feel valued and supported, there is generally a greater sense of engagement in learning and less need for a generic ‘toolbox’ of strategies that are utilised without regard for the particular needs of the learner.

Theme 4: Teacher educator knowledge and attitudes to middle level education

As with the teacher educators involved in primary programmes, the secondary teacher educator participants expressed a range of attitudes, although their responses reflected greater awareness of the issues in relation to middle level education. Some confusion in relation to the use of the terms ‘middle schools’, ‘middle schooling’ and ‘middle level education’ was nonetheless still evident. At the secondary level more emphasis was placed on students in Years 9-10 even though changes to school configurations in some geographical areas have resulted in large numbers of Years 7-8 students receiving their schooling in Year 7-13 secondary schools. While one teacher educator stated that she viewed the middle years as a distinct developmental phase, the two other participants spoke of young adolescence as a ‘progression’. Throughout the interviews with the teacher educators there were constant referrals to teachers having to ‘manage’ young adolescents. Considerable emphasis was placed on classroom management.

Theme 5: Specialised middle level programmes not a viable option

The participants were unanimous in stating that it was not viable or feasible in New Zealand to have specialised middle level teacher preparation. Reasons given included the financial costs to institutions as well as the restrictions it would place on prospective teachers in relation to future employability. The former reason is a valid one, given that the economic recession has resulted in significant financial restraints by institutions that have included programme and course cuts. However, given that the Learning Pathway for Years 7-10 has been included in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) teacher education providers have a responsibility to support its implementation by providing dedicated programmes of middle level teacher education. The latter reason, that student teachers graduating from a middle level programme of teacher education would be restricted in finding employment, is not sustainable: given the number of different middle level school configurations in New Zealand and, more particularly, the rapid growth of Years 7-13 secondary schools in some areas.

Section 2 summary

That themes that emerged during the interviews with teacher educators involved in secondary teacher education, were consistent with many of those that arose from the interviews with primary teacher educators. The one-year Graduate Diploma of Teaching qualification is the predominant pathway into secondary teaching for prospective secondary teachers. The participants showed limited recognition of early adolescence as a distinctive stage of human development. A broader focus on adolescence or the period from 12-18 years provided the basis for the secondary programmes however there was little time allocated within the one-year qualification, for the study of human development. While depth of subject-specific knowledge was not an issue for students, there was limited opportunity within the constraints of one-year programmes to focus on developing student teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Only one course, 'Teaching and Learning', provided the opportunity to explore and develop curriculum design and effective approaches to teaching and learning. An emphasis on progressive and effective teaching approaches was articulated as being responsive to all learners. The participants reasoned that they provided for the needs of young adolescents by differentiating

needs, both in their programmes and in Junior secondary and Senior secondary school settings; however closer examination revealed that this was more so for curriculum organisation and assessment purposes, than for the differentiation of learner needs. The emphasis placed on developing relationships with learners was also promoted as being responsive to adolescent learners; however, without in-depth knowledge of young adolescents, their characteristics, and their specific physical, cognitive and socio-emotional needs; there is little foundation for establishing and maintaining effective relationships. In echoing the approach of the primary teacher educators, the secondary participants placed considerable responsibility on curriculum tutors to mentor student teachers and to orient them to the secondary setting. The participating secondary teacher educators were unanimous in their collective opposition to specialised middle level teacher preparation, citing funding costs and constraints on future employability as the primary reasons.

Section 3: Teacher educators providing in-service professional development

As well as initial teacher education, institutions provide in-service professional development support to schools and teachers. Education Support Services (ESS) operates as a separate department within university colleges of education and is staffed by school advisors who facilitate professional development contracts that are commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The participating teacher educators in this study were employed as either directors or coordinators of professional development within the following participating institutions: the University of Waikato; Dunedin College of Education, Christchurch College of Education, and Victoria University. Five themes emerged from the interviews with the four participants involved in school support. These were: (1) bipartite structure of provision, (2) school support determined by Ministry of Education priorities; (3) a focus on effective teaching; (4) the issue of subject content knowledge; and (5) problematising transition points.

Theme 1: Bipartite structure of provision

Consistent with the two-tiered structure of the schooling system in New Zealand, the organisation and structure of in-service professional development is also

delineated along primary and secondary lines. The participants stated that secondary advisors deliver professional development support to secondary schools that encompass Years 7-13 and Years 9-13 school configurations, and primary advisors deliver across the range of school configurations catering to students from NE-Year 8. While there is some overlap across sectors this is generally limited. One of the participants spoke of the difficulty of having such a large number of different school configurations and the problems this poses for secondary advisors working in schools:

Now all of a sudden we've got these increased numbers of Years 7 to 13 schools and all of a sudden, you know, what do we do with the Years 7 and 8 teachers? Are the primary advisors working in there or is it the secondary advisors or how do we actually cater for them? I think that's something that we're you know, working through and we have talked about, and I know it's been raised a couple of times, that perhaps we need to have a bit of a discussion about how we best serve the Years 7 to 13 schools and what approaches we can take to support them (PDT3, p. 4).

Increases in the numbers of Years 7-13 schools in many geographical areas, presents a problem for advisors because it challenges the two-tiered system of schooling that has dominated for so long. In-service provision to schools no longer involves a clear cut primary-secondary advisory division of labour. The inclusion of Years 7-8 students has muddied the waters and advisors are struggling to cope with this change. The participants recognise that changes are needed to the way professional development is organised and structured for middle level schools and teachers. They showed a developing realisation that primary and secondary professional development is inappropriate for schools and teachers at the middle levels. One participant suggested that a different approach to in-service support is needed, that may include collaboration between primary and secondary teachers within schools such as urban composites catering to students in Years 7-13. The participant's comment is revealing in that it implies that educational provision for Years 7-8 students can be accomplished by simply melding primary and secondary methodologies. There was little or no recognition of early adolescence as a distinct stage of human development that differed from the middle childhood or the later adolescent years. The participants' comments showed, however, that there is a sense of unease among advisors that the two-tiered system of provision is not working, particularly for young adolescent students, in Years 7-13 secondary schools. The Education Review Office (1994) has labelled the middle levels in

New Zealand schools as “the forgotten years” (p. 51) because of the invisibility of young adolescent students within the primary-secondary divide. Until recently, students in Years 7-8 were considered to be primary school students and students in Years 9-10 to be high school students. For the first time in the urban context, apart from a very small number of Years 7-9 or years 7-10 middle schools (and a sizable number of Roman Catholic Years 7-13 schools), the two cohorts have been united within the Years 7-13 composite school.

Theme 2: School support determined by Ministry of Education priorities

The participating teacher educators were consistent in stating that priorities for the provision of professional development to schools and teachers was determined, not by institutions or local school needs, but by the government through its agency of the Ministry of Education. The National-led coalition government, elected in 2008, has accentuated the focus on numeracy and literacy initiated by the previous Labour-led administration. The respondents also identified these two key areas, as well as the implementation of the New Zealand curriculum, the National Certificate of Education Achievement qualifications framework, and a focus on school leadership and management; as the five broad areas of professional development delivered to schools. Contracts to deliver the professional development are tendered out by the Ministry of Education and funding for their delivery is provided on the basis of teacher numbers within regional areas. While there is some allocation of outputs to address local school needs, this is minor compared with the emphasis placed on numeracy and literacy. National Standards for benchmarking student achievement across these two key areas, as well as for science, are currently in the process of being implemented, amid much controversy and heated debate. One of the teacher educators commented on the extent to which the Ministry of Education determines priorities for professional development support to schools and teachers:

The bulk of our professional development is provided by advisors working under contract with the Ministry. So, in other words, it's Ministry-driven and works to specific outputs that the Ministry identify they want to achieve in schools. The four foci that we specifically work to at the moment are lifting the skills, improving the skills of teachers around the use of data to inform their decision-making around student achievement and the second one is about challenging teacher practice and beliefs. The third one is in the area of lifting the subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of

teachers and the fourth one is around developing inclusive school communities, professional learning communities. So those are the four strands that all of our advisors, who work within the Ministry contracts, are expected to work towards (PDTE1, p. 2).

Two of the participants spoke negatively of the lack of flexibility ESS experienced in providing professional development support, and in particular the lack of outputs and time allocated for responding to individual schools' targeted needs. They reasoned that this was because delivering Ministry of Education contracts took up most of their time allocation, so little time was left to respond to school-initiated needs. When questioned as to what specific professional development was, therefore, provided to middle level schools, all responded that the numeracy and literacy contracts were the main form of support; with, to a lesser extent, some curriculum development. The majority of this school support was whole-school rather than individual teacher development. In her response to criticisms of the lack of Ministry of Education focus on the middle years, Bishop (2008) highlighted the developing research base the Ministry has built up over recent years. This research includes, but is not limited to, a review of middle level literature, a statistical snapshot of New Zealand-based data across Years 7-10, students' transitions from primary to secondary schooling, and student engagement research. While disparities have been identified in the research and the student and engagement data paints an increasingly negative picture, the Ministry of Education has not mandated a focus on the middle years by providing middle level-specific professional development support to schools and teachers in any of its contracts. The participants described regular oral and written recording and reporting of outputs to the Ministry of Education, as accountability processes that ensure the focus is maintained on their stated priorities. Accordingly, the middle years are missing systemic initiatives and the needs of both students and teachers in the middle level remain forgotten.

Theme 3: A focus on effective teaching

The inclusion of an explicit section on effective pedagogy in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) has resulted in a considerable focus on quality teaching in the provision of professional development to schools and teachers. Such development is delivered within the constraints of the five priority

areas identified in the previous section. During the interviews, participants were asked about the nature and extent of professional development support they provided to middle level teachers. The participants identified the delivery of the Ministry of Education's numeracy and literacy projects as professional development initiatives where a dual emphasis was placed on the development of teachers' content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge. There was general consensus that the constructivist learning approaches utilised in the delivery of this professional development were responsive to „learners at all levels'. There was no recognition by the participants that effective teaching at the middle levels requires in-depth knowledge and understanding of the nature of early adolescence in order to be responsive. They explained that much of the support they provide to schools and teachers is underpinned by literature such as that of Alton-Lee's 'Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis' (2003) and Bishop's *Te Kotāhitanga* (2003, 2007) research. One of the respondents outlined the importance of the New Zealand-based literature in providing a foundation for the delivery of professional development to schools:

Well, I mean, obviously the literature that we are relying on very heavily now is that around quality teaching, „the best evidence'. That's the literature that we are using ourselves to provide a foundation for our work. I mean obviously the specific contexts have their own particular sets of literature that they use for instance in literacy, numeracy and so on (PDTE1, p. 4).

The foundation for effective teaching is predicated on knowing and understanding the learner and their particular developmental characteristics and educational needs. It requires understanding of individual difference in relation to age and developmental stage. In their broad-brush philosophy and approach to the provision of professional development to schools, teacher educators working in ESS disenfranchise both young adolescent students and middle level teachers by differentiating for only primary and secondary learners.

Theme 4: The issue of subject content knowledge

The participating teacher educators involved in the provision of professional development support to schools expressed concerns about the content knowledge of primary teachers at the Years 7 and 8 level and particularly those teaching within intermediate schools. They reasoned that this makes delivery of the Ministry of Education's numeracy projects particularly difficult as it relies on teachers

having sufficient mathematics content knowledge in order to implement the student-centred approaches advocated within the project. One participant's comments expressed these collective concerns:

In numeracy, teachers have had to overcome the lack of content knowledge. They've had to work really hard at the content knowledge to keep up with what we're promoting through the project. Unfortunately at these levels I still believe we've got too many teachers there that haven't got the content knowledge (PDTE4, p. 18).

Two of the teacher educators also expressed concerns about the practicality of having Years 7-8 primary teachers teaching the entire range of subjects in the national curriculum. One respondent spoke of the need for in-depth knowledge of subject content when implementing an integrative approach to curriculum in the classroom and went further to suggest a level of specialisation at this level:

It's the teachers that feel inadequate, I think, in terms of their own knowledge and I think at these year levels, I'm wondering whether we do need to go into some areas with specialist teachers because we can't all be experts in everything (PDTE4, p. 16).

This participant cautioned, however, that specialisation works against the homeroom approach so necessary for teaching students at this level and in effect results in compartmentalising those subjects. The concerns in relation to the subject content knowledge of primary teachers are not new. The current middle level literature is unequivocal in stating that teachers of young adolescents require in-depth content knowledge in at least two specialist areas (Bishop, 2008; Dowden, Nolan & Bishop, 2009; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003; National Middle School Association, 2006). If, as one participating teacher educator stated, the objective of a particular primary programme is to ensure graduating students achieved subject content knowledge up to Level 4 of the curriculum, this has important implications for those intending to teach in Years 7 and 8. The literature shows that in order to challenge and extend young adolescent learners, teachers require in-depth content knowledge in at least one, and preferably two, subject areas. The concerns about teacher content knowledge has obvious implications for the preparation of primary teachers however, without a specific emphasis on the middle years within teacher education programmes, middle level teachers and students will continue to be disadvantaged. When the cognitive needs of young adolescents are not being provided for, they will invariably disengage from learning.

Theme 5: Problematising transition points

Three of the participating teacher educators commented on the need to address issues related to the two transition points that occur when students move from a Year 6 class in a contributing school to Year 7 in schools catering to young adolescent students. Most commonly this involves students moving to an intermediate or Years 7-8 school, or increasingly to a Years 7-13 secondary school. The second transition point occurs when students move from Year 8 in an intermediate or full primary setting to a Years 9-13 secondary school. One of the participant's comments indicated criticism of the lack of communication between schools in ensuring smooth student transitions:

I think that the transition issues within Years 7 to 10 are quite large in terms of what teachers know and understand about what is actually being done with those kids at that level and also a lack of willingness, at times, to actually find out, check, share information, so there's a bit of resistance there. I think the transition issues are quite huge really and need to be tackled (PDTE2, p. 10).

There was little elaboration by the participants, however, on the specific nature of these „transition issues.’ Another teacher educator described a significant collaborative schools initiative that had received Ministry of Education funding in his area to focus on improving relationships and collaboration between secondary and intermediate schools. This professional development initiative was considered to be highly effective in addressing transitional issues and in developing teacher's understanding of current pedagogy and practice. While research by Cox and Kennedy (2008) has shown that some young adolescent students experience difficulty in affecting transitions, their findings show that the majority of young people navigate the divide from primary to secondary with few difficulties. Apart from an initial dip in student achievement in the first nine months in the new setting, most young adolescent students experience little difficulty. Engagement data, however, reflects a different reality. This shows that students' attitudes to school increasingly deteriorate as they move further up into Years 9 and 10. The problems are not caused by student transitions but rather the lack of congruency between the educational and holistic needs of young adolescent students and the middle level environments they find themselves in (Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2007).

Section 3 summary

The organisation and provision of in-service professional development mirrors the two-tiered primary-secondary structure of the schooling system. The nature of in-service support is not determined by institutions, schools or teachers, but by Ministry of Education priorities that are determined at the government level. As a result Education Support Services within universities have limited flexibility in the nature of professional support they provide to schools. Currently, the Ministry of Education's prioritisation of the numeracy and literacy projects, the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), the National Certificate of Education Achievement at the secondary level, and school leadership and management collectively provide the focus for professional development support to middle level schools and teachers. While the government, through its agency the Ministry of Education, has commissioned considerable research into aspects of middle level education, targeted professional development in the area of middle level education is not seen as a current Ministry priority. The growth in the establishment of Years 7-13 schools in many geographical areas presents problems for ESS because it necessitates that they bridge both primary and secondary sectors. There is no longer a clear-cut divide between primary and secondary schooling and teacher educators working in school support recognise that there are difficulties for both students and teachers at the middle levels. In the next chapter, an interview with key informant Dr Nolan explores attitudes, systemic factors and the wider context influencing middle level education in New Zealand.

Chapter 6

Findings: The perspectives of key informant Dr Pat Nolan

Introduction

Dr Pat Nolan was the key informant in this research study. He was selected because of his deep knowledge of middle level education, and because of his leadership role in the middle schooling reform movement in New Zealand. The interview with Nolan was designed to be wide-ranging in eliciting ideas and in exploring the „big picture’ of middle level education in New Zealand. The ensuing discussion drew on his own research and initiatives, his knowledge of systemic influences and processes in New Zealand education, his experiences in working with key stakeholders in the field, and on his in-depth knowledge of the work of others in the area of middle level education. The interview schedule that provided the basis for the interview has been included as Appendix F.

During the interview ideas were shared and elaborated on. The following key themes emerged: (1) an evaluation of current middle level provision, (2) recognition of the concept of middle level education, (3) an outmoded and unresponsive education system, (4) institutional conservatism, (5) the paradox of New Zealand education, (6) responsive pedagogy for the middle levels, (7) effective middle level teacher preparation, and (8) a way forward. These themes are critically discussed in this chapter.

Theme 1: An evaluation of current middle level provision

In the opening question of the interview Nolan was asked for his appraisal of middle level education in New Zealand. He summarised in one word “struggling”. He justified this terse response by referencing the high proportion of young adolescent students attending schools that were ill-equipped to respond to their needs:

Well, the word that comes to mind is struggling. I mean it’s metaphorical and it doesn’t capture the full range of things that are happening but the reason I use struggling is that 50% of all the students in Years 7-8 in this country are in schools, other than intermediate schools, that is, they’re either in full primaries or they’re in composite schools. That’s area schools or they’re in Years 7-13 high schools, and all of those latter schools, by and large, are using methodologies that were developed not for the middle years but for secondary teaching or primary teaching. I think, whether those schools

recognise it or not, by and large, they're struggling to deal with students in a developmentally appropriate way (p. 3).

His comment, that approximately half of the young adolescents in New Zealand are being educated in school structures that utilise either secondary, or primary teaching pedagogies, is further evidence of the entrenched and hegemonic nature of the two-tiered primary-secondary schooling system that currently exists. Nolan reiterated throughout the interview, that it is this bipartite organisation of schooling that results in a large proportion of middle level students being taught using approaches that are not developmentally responsive. He emphasised that the specific educational needs of this group are not being met by either the existing primary model that extends upward from Year 6, or the secondary model that extends downwards from Year 13. The findings of successive Education Review Office reports (1994; 2001; 2003) support Nolan's criticism. In evaluating middle level provision across a range of school configurations catering to young adolescents, ERO identified the variable quality of teaching and the lack of responsive practice in schools, as a major concern. The principle, that young adolescents require educational provision substantially differing from that delivered by current primary and secondary schooling, is congruent with the philosophy of middle level education. The extant literature, including Anfara and Stacki (2002), Beane and Brodhagen (2001), Pendergast and Bahr (2005), Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), Jackson and Davis (2000), National Middle School Association (1995, 2003) and Stevenson (2002); articulates emphatically the importance of schools being developmentally responsive to the specific characteristics and needs of young adolescent students.

Research by Alton-Lee (2003) and Hattie (2002) has shown that the most influential factor in raising student achievement is teacher effectiveness, as opposed to school configuration or structure. Nolan contends, however, that it is the dominance of the bipartite organisation of schooling into primary and secondary sectors, and how schools and teachers perceive their role within the constraints of this system; that determines the pedagogy used in the classroom. He contends, therefore, that it is the organisational structure of schooling that presents a serious barrier to the provision of developmentally responsive education for middle level students in New Zealand schools.

Theme 2: Recognition of the concept of middle level education

Throughout the interview Nolan emphasised the importance of raising awareness and understanding of the concept of middle level education in order to bring about reform. This resonates with the findings presented in the previous chapter that identified New Zealand teacher educators' lack of recognition or understanding of the stage of early adolescence and, consequently, knowledge about responsive pedagogy and practice at the middle level. Nolan identified recent innovations in New Zealand that have raised the profile of middle level education. He identified the launch of The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007c) with its distinct learning pathway for Years 7-10 as one key initiative because it mandates schools to take appropriate actions to meet the needs of young adolescent students.

In acknowledging the historic origins and the contested nature of middle level education in New Zealand, Nolan commented that the foundations of the New Zealand curriculum may be traced to the earlier work of eminent educationalist Clarence Beeby (1937, 1938) who argued that early adolescence involves four years, not two, and requires differentiated provision from that provided in the primary and secondary schooling structures that have dominated the compulsory education system in New Zealand. He explained:

I've started to do quite a lot of work with area schools, especially in light of the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum which identifies Years seven to 10 as a pathway. Some people think that's radical and new. Well, it is, in one sense, but it's not in another because in the past, we used to always think that way. For example, when, in this country Clarence Beeby thought up the idea of a Form one to four social studies syllabus and introduced that as a new subject for the curriculum, he was thinking about the middle years as a stage of development. It's just that we've now caught up with it and the national curriculum or the New Zealand Curriculum actually, formally acknowledges this as a stage of development and mandates schools to do something about it. So the area schools around the country, quite a lot of them, 20 or so, are starting to say well, what are the implications of this for how we structure our schools and they're starting to think about a three-in-one model, primary, middle and secondary (p. 2-3).

Throughout the discussion Nolan was positive about the progress he observed towards more responsive provision for young adolescent students in particularly area or composite schools. The growth in area or Year 7-13 schools, as fallout from national school reviews has resulted in some schools and teachers questioning the appropriateness of the current school organisation and provision for young

adolescents. In proposing a three-in-one model or a three tiered system of schooling, Dowden, Bishop and Nolan (2009) and Dowden and Nolan (2008) have called for appropriate recognition of the developmental and educational needs of young adolescents.

Nolan also acknowledged the important role of the New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Association (NZAIMS) in advocating for greater recognition of the stage of early adolescence and in improving provision for young adolescent students. NZAIMS is an organisation that has, in recent years, developed greater prominence because of its broader focus on young adolescents attending Years 7-10 of intermediate and middle schools, through encouraging research into all aspects of middle level education; through the establishment of the flagship magazine *Middle Schooling Review*; and through its work counteracting the arguments put forward by the secondary teachers' union in New Zealand, the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA). Nolan contrasted the ethos of these two organisations:

Recently, over the last two or three years, NZAIMS has changed its philosophy and its mission as being the organisation that promotes the interests of young people more generally across Years 7-10, and this is a pretty courageous sort of step to take because it puts them a bit out of sync with the PPTA, for example, which I believe has still got its head in the sand when it comes to how we should be thinking about the way we construct education for students across Years 7-10 (p. 4).

While critical of the PPTA, Nolan contrasted this with the positive influence of another group of secondary educators who had contributed to raising the profile of middle level education in New Zealand:

I think the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand, or SPANZ, is playing a much more active role in thinking about how the leadership of secondary schools might want to shape those schools for the future and I think that's optimistic and hopeful (p. 4).

He also identified the work of visiting American middle level teacher educator Dr Penny Bishop as an example of an initiative that could inform systemic policy and decision-making:

Also, at the moment [2008], Penny Bishop, as you know, has won the Sir Ian Axford Policy Fellowship to work in the Ministry of Education alongside the professionals there, helping the Ministry to clarify its thinking about directions for middle years schooling (p. 4).

In her subsequent report into middle level teacher credentialing in New Zealand, Bishop (2008) identified the widespread lack of recognition of the middle years as a significant barrier to middle level reform and, more particularly, to the implementation of middle level teacher preparation. In reiterating the variability of educational provision for young adolescent students in New Zealand, Nolan also acknowledged the many innovative teachers and professionals working in transformative ways across the range of school configurations. Identifying and researching these examples of exemplary middle level practice and actively celebrating the work of these schools and teachers, was a further strategy he identified as important to raising the profile of middle level education. He described his proposed research to showcase responsive middle level practice:

I have submitted a proposal for case study research of a systematic kind that will document the exemplary practice in supporting young people, currently happening in our New Zealand schools. I think out there, especially in intermediates and middle schools, but also in secondary schools all around the country, we've got some pretty forward-thinking teachers and principals who are working in ways quite different to how we've worked in the past in secondary schools. So, while we're struggling, there's a dawning recognition out there in the community and in the system that it's time for change and to do something different (pp. 4-5).

Nolan commented that the establishment of the New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Association's publication MSR Youth, formerly the Middle Schooling Review, of which he is founding editor, as another initiative that has been integral to maintaining and enhancing the current focus on the middle years. He emphasised the importance of the publication as a vehicle for disseminating research, sharing ideas and for raising understanding of middle level education generally:

Its purpose is to raise awareness within the profession and within the community about the importance of, and the need for well-constructed middle years' education provisions. It's a magazine about supporting teachers and supporting schools to put into place the practice that's appropriate and responsive for young people, which may build on some of the things that we're doing at the moment but which is probably quite different. So the magazine exists to disseminate information which is always evidence-based, and to generate awareness on the one hand, but also promote development and change (p. 14).

While individually these three innovations are not groundbreaking, when they are combined with the evidenced-based work conducted by the Ministry of Education over the last three years, including the commissioning of a literature review of

international and national research (Dinham & Rowe, 2007), a statistical snapshot of teaching and learning in the middle levels (Durling, 2007) and a report into primary to secondary transitions in relation to student achievement and other related issues (Cox & Kennedy, 2008), evidence begins to emerge of a concerted attempt, at the systemic level, to raise the profile of middle level education in New Zealand.

Theme 3: An outmoded and unresponsive education system

During the interview Nolan highlighted pockets of exemplary middle level practice in some schools and, also, the generally high calibre of both primary and secondary teachers in New Zealand. He was highly critical, however, of the current educational system which he believes was designed to meet the demands of the industrial age rather than the present information and knowledge era. He reiterated his belief that the PPTA plays a key role in perpetuating this outmoded system by refusing to support middle level reform:

It's a very curious phenomenon because the PPTA is a trade union, and yet it's prompting a form of school organisation that's ill-suited for teachers. It's a punishing system to work in and it's ill-suited for the students (p. 4).

The central theme of an anachronistic system that is entrenched and that fails to meet the needs of students in the 21st century permeated through the interview with Nolan. The mismatch between the obsolete system design and the educational needs of young people, he believes, is the key issue facing policymakers, administrators and teachers working at the middle level. The idea, that teachers have to teach differently and better across the middle in a way that is neither primary nor secondary, is the challenge for those wanting change. In concurring with this notion Prensky (2005-2006) asks, "schools are stuck in the 20th century. Students have rushed into the 21st. How can schools catch up and provide students with relevant education?" (p. 9). Current middle level literature (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Carrington, 2006; Matters, 2006) emphasises the importance of designing middle level education that reflects the socio-cultural influences of society and of the global community.

Nolan stated that young adolescents require a consistency, stability and coherency of approach sustained across Years 7-10 rather than the fragmented schooling provisions and diversity of approaches currently available. While acknowledging

that a more responsive model is generally provided in intermediate and middle schools, he commented that schools generally still have a considerable amount of work to do in moving from a transmission style of teaching to teaching as facilitation. He spoke of the huge shift in mindset needed by both primary and secondary teachers in moving away from the traditional approaches to models that are more appropriate for the information era:

So if that's the direction society's developing, the big question we face is, how can we develop our school system so that it produces young people who are competent and able to work in that society, and it requires a school system very different from what we've known in the past. I would think the primary sector is making more rapid strides in that direction than is secondary. But we've got to make that further break (p. 6).

Nolan views the current school system as a “conservative rather than a progressive force” however expressed optimism that schooling in New Zealand may undergo restructuring so that schooling provided to, particularly middle level students, will be more responsive and will better prepare young people for living in the 21st century:

I think school systems around the world are facing some serious challenges about the way they're structured, the way they're organised, the methodologies they use. We're no different, but I think for reasons related to who we are and where we're located and how we've done things and can do things, we can be more optimistic in this country about reforming the system positively and actually accomplishing something – than we can in a great many other countries. So my question is: why don't we? And it's about time, especially in respect to the middle years (p. 24).

Nolan's believes the time is ripe to address educational provision for young adolescents and, also particularly relevant given the current New Zealand Curriculum and its differentiated learning pathway for students in Years 7-10.

Theme 4: Institutional conservatism

When questioned further about the position of teacher preparation in middle level reform, Nolan was critical of teacher education institutions, particularly New Zealand universities, identifying them as conservative rather than progressive forces for change. He believes these institutions are at least partly responsible for perpetuating the current two-tiered educational system. When asked about the future role institutions providing teacher education might play in instigating middle level reform Nolan was pessimistic:

I see very little evidence of leadership in our teacher education institutions that will move us away from the models of the past to the models of the present and the future. We've got a few people around the country who are thinking in the directions that we need to take things, but they're still not strong on the ground. So, we haven't got too many Clarence Beeby's and characters of that ilk who are stirring the pot. We need a lot of stirring the pot and we're not getting much of it (p. 10). I think New Zealand universities and New Zealand teacher education institutions have been remarkably tardy in doing something. They, who you might have thought would have been leading the charge and proposing new initiatives, by and large, have been stuck in the mud, perpetuating the very divisions and structures that we need to break away from. So I think those institutions have been neglectful of their responsibility to support the school system to develop itself to reform and to be innovative in ways that we desperately need them to be (p. 7).

His criticism of teacher education institutions and particularly their lack of alignment with issues in the schooling sector, reflects the ideas of Mitchell et al. (2003). In countering these claims of non-alignment Bishop (2008), contends that the perception that New Zealand tertiary institutions, and universities in particular, are "steeped in tradition and slow to change" (p. 58) is not wholly supported by her research which was conducted during her recent sojourn in New Zealand, as Ian Axford Fellow with the Ministry of Education. Bishop is an American middle level teacher educator who was also interviewed for this study. The findings are presented in Chapter 8 of this thesis. Her study canvassed the views of teacher educators as well as other stakeholders and she found that while participants expressed concern about issues of programme funding and time, some teacher educators, expressed positive interest in offering specialised middle level teacher education programmes. Their interest was tempered though by the proviso that middle level education should be considered a priority by the Ministry of Education. As previously mentioned, the Ministry of Education has started to develop an evidence base of middle level research to inform policy and decision-making in relation to the education of young adolescents in Years 7-10. Nonetheless, my findings from interviews with in-service teacher educators presented in Chapter 5 show that this initial interest has not transferred to the work of school advisors or the delivery of in-service professional development for the middle years.

As well as institutional barriers, Nolan believes it is the way people are socialised into the teaching profession that present significant barriers to change:

Well the fact of the matter is, that the process by which we socialise people into the profession, either to primary or secondary or tertiary, is enormously powerful and resistant to change on the one hand, and the professional identities that we socialise people into and confer upon them, and which they internalise so strongly, constitute a serious impediment to change. So when you talk to teachers in secondary school systems, by and large, they still think of themselves as a teacher of Latin or physics or English. They don't think of themselves as educators of young people though that's what they are. They think of themselves in terms of their professional identity, as somebody who knows something about a subject that they want to teach to some students (p. 7).

The lack of focus in secondary teacher education programmes on human development and particularly the lack of differentiation between the stages of early and later adolescence results in teachers having little or no understanding of the developmental characteristics and needs of young adolescents. The implications of this are that students in the middle levels are subjected to curriculum and pedagogical approaches that are not responsive to their needs. The over-emphasis on teaching subjects, rather than learners as such, results in student disengagement from learning.

Theme 5: The paradox of New Zealand education

Nolan spoke of the many educational achievements pioneered in New Zealand, including those in relation to the „Tomorrow's Schools' legislation (Ministry of Education, 1988), early childhood education, and literacy and child-centred education in primary schools, before contrasting these innovations with a “weddedness to the past” in maintaining the current outmoded educational structure and systems:

We're a sort of paradoxical lot in this country. On the one hand, we used to be the educational laboratory of the world. We pioneered early childhood education. We've pioneered a whole pile of things in literacy. We've pioneered child-centred education for primary schools. Our teachers, in secondary schools are every bit as good as any in the world, but our problem, like other systems in the world, is that we have a model, and a structure that's inappropriate for the job of work that we need to do and it's inappropriate in providing an environment that's supportive of teachers and supportive of students. To me, this is a real paradox because we can be so innovative on the one hand and so blindingly conservative on the other. So we've got to change the structure, and the organisation and the model so that our teachers can do what a great many of them want to do (p.18).

Many of the innovations Nolan spoke of originated from inspirational individuals with considerable foresight. These included Clarence Beeby who advocated for

middle level reform, Marie Clay who founded reading recovery and Sylvia Ashton Warner who was a pioneer of child-centred education. Such achievements resulted from the work of progressive educationalists who demonstrated insight, knowledge, passion and resilience in bringing about the widespread reform of existing educational practices.

Theme 6: Responsive pedagogy for the middle levels

As an advocate for middle level reform in New Zealand, Nolan articulated his belief that there must be a major paradigm shift from teacher directed, subject-based teaching to student-centred inquiry learning across all levels of schooling. This requires a shift from didactic teaching to teaching as facilitation or, as the Ministry of Education have recently advocated, a mind-shift to a ‚personalising learning’ model of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2008). In response to questions about the nature of responsive middle level pedagogy and practice Nolan identified approaches that reflect the essential knowledge, values and skills that are needed for the information and digital age identified by Bahr and Pendergast (2007). He describes the types of people needed in the future as problem solvers, effective communicators, technology users, creative thinkers, and imaginative thinkers. Nolan rationalises that the business community and society generally, are moving away from the industrial model to a model that is more appropriate for an information age; therefore our schooling system needs to be reconceptualised and developed to reflect the changing emphasis. His statement that the New Zealand education system needs to produce young people who are confident, competent and able to work in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised society is consistent with the vision outlined by the Ministry of Education (2009a) in its publication *Building Conceptual Understandings in the Social Sciences: Being part of global communities*:

So if that’s the direction society’s developing, the big question we face is, how can we develop our school system so that it produces young people who are competent and able to work in that society, and it requires a school system very different from what we’ve known in the past (p. 6).

Such thinking is supported by Bahr and Pendergast (2007), who label these young people as ‚Generation Y’ or the ‚millennial generation’. In appraising the big picture Prensky (2005-2006) believes education requires transformation from the systems and processes involved in managing education, to the role and

effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom. Nolan views the middle years as being transformative in bringing about this change and innovation because this is the stage when young people are most vulnerable and because of the sobering statistics in relation to school stand-downs and expulsions, unemployment and youth crime. He contrasts these stark realities with young adolescents' potential for increased metacognitive thinking and the need to align these abilities with the teaching and learning they experience in the classroom:

But the focus of our interest is early adolescence because that's the period where kids tend to drop through the cracks. At the very point when they're at the height of their intellectual powers. I mean when you think about it, it terms of visual acuity, memory capacity, powers of incidental memory, ability to learn and remember things once and not have to use aids to prompt memory. All that transition to metacognitive thinking in terms of straight, logical, spatial ability, it peaks between age 13 and 15 (p. 20).

In *Turning Points 2000* Jackson and Davis emphasise the importance of middle level education being focused on maximising the intellectual development of young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Nolan identified the pivotal nature of early adolescence as further justification for a focus on the middle years:

At this time in their lives when their brains are getting hard-wired for the rest of their lives what we do now stacks the dice. Yet we're turning kids off in their droves so when you ask the question, is our focus Years 7-10? Well, of course it is. We're mindful of the consequences if we get it right in this period, then we stack the decks for getting it right subsequently. If we mess it up in this period, then the odds are we won't have the kids staying at school to do anything with (p. 21).

The student disengagement data obtained from New Zealand-based research (Durling, 2007; Cox & Kennedy, 2008) supports his contention. When asked to define developmentally responsive pedagogy and practice for the middle years, he responded:

When I talk about developmentally responsive practice that concept is linked to an understanding of the characteristics which make kids distinctive at this stage and different from being children and different from being older, more mature adolescents verging on adulthood. They have needs linked to their identity. They have issues, concerns and interests that are distinctive at a time when they're developing, for the first time in their lives, capacity for metacognitive, reflective thinking. They can think about situations from the point of view of others rather than just themselves. They have a capacity to take control of their learning and take responsibility for it. So when you put all those things together, there are some aspects of our teaching as primary teachers that are appropriate, but there are some aspects of primary methodology, especially the nurturing sort of aspects, that are inappropriate at a time when kids are hankering to be independent. Now, of course,

independence just doesn't happen. You have to learn it and while you're learning it, you need a secure, supportive environment and boundaries. But this is the time when youngsters can carry through fairly complex projects, conceive them, initiate them, execute them, carry them through to completion in a way that is not possible although, I'm not saying they don't do projects in primary school, but kids are capable of doing things with a kind of sophistication that they don't have earlier on. This necessitates a response from teachers other than a didactic, „telling them what to do' response. They need conversation. They need tasks that stimulate them to do things for themselves (p. 22).

Nolan articulated the need for active and interactive learning that is developmentally responsive because it links to students' lives and their development at the time. Teaching and learning in this way enables students to be self regulated and places teachers in the role of facilitator, advisor and mentor. He was careful to point out the need for explicit teaching at the point of need, should students require it. His comments echo that of the current middle level literature, that advances the notion that effective teaching at this level relies on the teacher having an holistic understanding of the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and ethical characteristics of young people and their need for a sense of identity and purpose. Using this knowledge of the learner to make links to relevant and authentic issues and concerns within their socio-cultural contexts, as the basis for the learning provides the foundation for the teaching and learning at the middle levels. The quality of interpersonal relationships between teacher and student is integral to making these meaningful connections with middle level learners. The centrality of relationships in engaging middle level students, as espoused by Bahr and Pendergast (2007), Beane (1993), Jackson and Davis (2000), Lipsitz (1984), National Middle School Association (2003), Stevenson (2002), is a recurring theme in the extant literature.

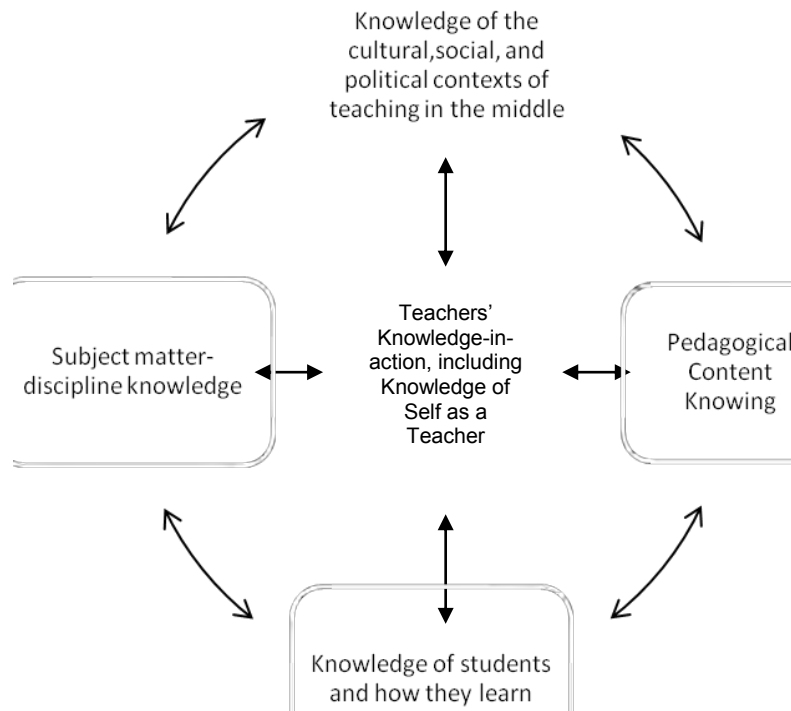
Theme 7: Effective middle level teacher preparation

Nolan, Kane and Lind argue that “teacher preparation programmes [in New Zealand] do not address the needs of schools in terms of preparing middle level teachers to teach in them. Nor do they provide targeted professional development support for practising middle level teachers” (2003, p. 78). When questioned about the essential components of a specialised middle level teacher education programme Nolan prefaced his comments by identifying five characteristics that characterise a middle level teacher. According to Nolan these are:

1. Depth of knowledge of the characteristics, processes and mechanisms of early adolescent growth and development and the distinctive needs of this stage;
2. In-depth knowledge and understanding of the cultural, social and political contexts and circumstances within which young adolescents live in New Zealand;
3. Depth of subject knowledge in at least one, but preferably two disciplines within the New Zealand Curriculum;
4. Depth of understanding of pedagogical content knowledge appropriate for the middle level; and
5. A preparedness to work across subject boundaries with colleagues in an interdisciplinary manner.

Nolan spoke of the need for teachers to understand the interrelatedness of the aforementioned dimensions. When briefly elaborating on what the teacher preparation process would like, he stressed the importance of achieving “interdisciplinary and organic” programmes by actively enculturating student teachers into the actual processes they would use with young adolescent students when they graduate. According to Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2008) congruency between the pedagogy used in the programme of initial teacher education and effective pedagogy and practice used in the classroom is the hallmark of effective teacher education. It involves modelling, verbal articulation and the application of teaching strategies so that student teachers are able to experience effective teaching in action. During the discussion Nolan referred to the article that he co-authored with Ruth Kane, and Peter Lind entitled: ‘Approaching and Avoiding the Middle: Teacher Preparation in New Zealand’ (2003) and within that, the model of middle level teacher education he and his co-authors formulated to represent the design model for a proposed programme. The model is reproduced in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Model of Teacher Preparation for Middle-level Education (Nolan, Kane & Lind 2003)



Unlike other models of initial teacher education that commonly view essential elements as distinct and often unrelated, the Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003) model represents the interdependent and dynamic nature of the core elements through the use of double-headed arrows. Central to this model is the student teacher and their prior knowledge and experiences. By placing the prospective teacher at the centre of the process there is an emphasis on “actively becoming a teacher rather than learning to teach at the middle level” (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003, (p. 88)). The other four elements, while interconnected, rely on their intersection and subsequent integration with the student teacher’s own personal beliefs, values and conceptions of teaching; so that over the course of the programme the student teacher develops an understanding of their own identity as a teacher. The teaching practicum is an important part of the proposed model in that it engages the student teacher in purposeful learning and ongoing reflective practice.

Theme 8: A way forward

Nolan, whilst acknowledging the challenges internationally in relation to school systems and structures, expressed optimism about the future of middle level reform in New Zealand. When asked to identify a way forward to increase the momentum

of middle level reform in this country he articulated two pathways to enact reform: (1) start small and identify „willing adopters’ who want to participate in an initiative that has the potential to bring about innovation, and (2) provide support and encouragement, monitor and evaluate the change process, demonstrate it and celebrate its success. He explained:

I mean we don’t attempt to bring about change unless we’re fairly confident that it’s going to work. So when we’ve demonstrated it, given it all the acclaim and celebration and acknowledgement that it deserves and in that way, gradually bring aboard others who, once they’ve seen the value of the innovation, are prepared to give it a go themselves. So find those who want to bring about change and bring them together and fund them and support them and encourage them and then the good news will start spreading. I think we’ve got to do a lot more of that in this country and I think we need our government and our Ministry (of Education) to club together to adopt this approach (p. 19).

In utilising Nolan’s approach, NZAIMS could adopt an advisory role with the Ministry of Education in identifying both individuals and opportunities for innovation. Nolan and other proponents of middle level reform in New Zealand have close ties to this organisation and between them, many years of collective knowledge and expertise. The acknowledgement and celebration of innovations could be further reported through evidenced-based, case study research carried out by leading researchers such as Nolan. NZAIMS’ magazine MSR Youth provides a vehicle through which these success stories may be disseminated and celebrated.

Summary

Dr Pat Nolan believes the middle level movement in New Zealand is „struggling’. He blames the traditional two-tiered educational system inherited from Great Britain and which has existed for over 100 years, for the lack of traction in instigating reform. He contends that the existing bipartite system is perpetuated by a number of institutions, including universities and the secondary teachers’ union (PPTA) because they have vested interests in retaining the status quo. Student teachers are socialised into the teaching profession when they choose their initial teacher programme. They adopt one of two professional identities, perceive themselves as either: primary teachers, whose focus is on the nurturing and holistic aspects of children beginning to learn; or secondary teachers, whose focus is on the specialist teaching of a subject or discipline. Nolan believes that neither of these teaching specialisations is appropriate for teaching at the middle level.

Nolan believes that the New Zealand education system represents a „paradox’ because, despite earlier innovations that have resulted in radical change in several areas of education, there remains an entrenched attachment to how things have been done in the past. This particularly applies to the two-tiered system of primary and secondary schooling and it is this structure of school provision that provides the most significant barrier to reform of the middle level. He believes that young adolescent students have distinct needs that require different provision from those of students in the earlier primary years and later secondary levels. He contends that there needs to be a move away from subject-based, teacher-directed pedagogy to a methodology that places the student at the centre of the teaching and learning process and that involves them in active and interactive learning that links with problems, issues and concerns that directly relate to their own lives. Teaching at the middle level requires teachers to establish and sustain mutually respectful relationships with students and act in a facilitative role in providing opportunities for students to: problem solve, communicate, use multiple forms of technology, and be creative and imaginative thinkers. Responsive pedagogy requires students to use higher order thinking skills and be increasingly self-regulated.

Nolan collaborated with colleagues Kane and Lind to formulate a model of middle level teacher preparation that is based on constructivist philosophy that views the role of a teacher more expansively (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). In this model the teacher preparation process is focused on becoming a teacher of learners, rather than a teacher who is learning to teach at the primary level, secondary level or indeed the middle level. A key component at the centre of this approach is the teacher’s own knowledge of themselves as a teacher and the intersection of this knowledge with knowledge of the socio-cultural aspects of teaching at the middle level, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of students and how they learn, and subject area knowledge. A unique aspect of the devised model is the importance of teacher educators modelling effective middle level pedagogy and practice within the programme.

Nolan expressed optimism in relation to the launch of The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007c) because it includes a differentiated learning pathway for Years 7-10. This acknowledgement, he believes, mandates

schools, regardless of their configuration, to make changes to how they cater for the needs of their young adolescent students. The curriculum together with the increased Ministry of Education emphasis on developing an evidence base of information and research, and the broader philosophy and focus of NZAIMS in combination with a number of other initiatives, has resulted in middle level education achieving greater national recognition and provided renewed impetus to the reform movement. The next chapter presents the perspectives of selected specialist teacher educators involved in implementing middle level teacher education in Australian institutions.

Chapter 7

Findings: The Australian Perspective

Introduction

In recent years specialised middle level teacher education programmes have undergone a period of sustained growth in Australian universities in Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia. The most recent statistics reported that, up to 2005, twenty programmes of specialised middle level teacher preparation had been established in Australian universities (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005). The aim of these programmes is to develop specialist teachers with the dispositions, knowledge, skills and values essential for teaching students in the middle years of schooling. During this study, three teacher educators with responsibility for coordinating specialised middle level programmes in Australian institutions were interviewed to explore the philosophical underpinnings, scope and nature of these programmes. The rationale for this was to obtain comparative insights and perspectives that could be used to enlighten and inform the findings from the New Zealand-based data. The chapter begins with a brief outline of each programme, or suite of programmes, within the three universities. Common and distinguishing features that characterise the structure, pedagogy and implementation of the three programmes are presented next, followed by a discussion of systemic and institutional factors that hinder the functionality and sustainability of the programmes.

The Programmes

The one-year Graduate Diploma of Education (Middle Years) at Edith Cowan University, in Perth, Western Australia was established in 2002. Coordinated by Programme Director Dr Terry de Jong, this programme aims to contextualise the generic principles of effective teaching by ensuring they are explained, modelled and applied through the use of middle years examples and experiences. Congruent teaching that reflects a „practice what you preach’ approach (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2007) to teacher education is a key feature of the programme.

The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Queensland has established, on its Ipswich Campus, a suite of dedicated middle years teacher education programmes

that includes a dual degree programme which combines a Bachelor degree with a two-year Bachelor of Education (Middle Years of Schooling), a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, a one-year Graduate diploma in Education (Middle Years of Schooling), a Masters of Education with a major in middle level education, a Graduate Certificate (Middle Years), and EdD and PhD doctoral studies focused on the field of middle level education. Coordinated by Associate Professor Donna Pendergast, the aim of the programmes is to develop prospective and in-service teachers who will design and approach pedagogy, assessment and curriculum in alternative and innovative ways that encourages their learners to “embrace diversity and change” (Pendergast, Whitehead, de Jong, Newhouse-Maiden & Bahr, 2007, p. 79).

Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia has also developed a suite of middle level programmes that includes a Bachelor of Education (Upper Primary/Lower Secondary) that was established in 1982, and a number of double degree configurations comprising a Bachelor degree with either a science or arts major, combined with a Bachelor of Middle Schooling degree. Coordinated by Associate Professor Kay Whitehead, the programmes are underpinned by the concepts of social justice and aim to develop reflective teachers who demonstrate critical social awareness in making informed choices that reflect progressive stances towards middle level education.

Common Features of Programmes

While the three middle level teacher education programmes differed according to their specific contexts and the nature of the qualifications, there were several commonalities that characterised their design, structure and implementation. These are discussed in the following nine sections.

Theme 1: A commitment to middle level education

In the interviews with Pendergast, Whitehead and de Jong it was evident they were deeply committed to the philosophy of middle schooling and to providing programmes of teacher education that embraced progressive and innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of young adolescent students. They emphasised that, while middle schooling principles and practices are common to all

innovative programmes, their implementation needs to be context-specific in focusing on the middle years. They reiterated that it is this contextualising of the generic effective teaching dimensions that provides middle level teacher preparation with its point of difference and distinguishes it from early childhood, primary and secondary programmes of teacher education. All three teacher educators placed considerable focus on making generic principles specific to the middle years within their respective programmes.

Theme 2: An authentic literature base

While some literature from North America is utilised, the participants spoke of the importance and benefits of using Australian research and literature to underpin the programmes. When questioned about specific examples Pendergast identified her own research and publications such as *Teaching Middle Years: Rethinking curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* (Pendergast & Bahr, 2005) and *The Millennial Adolescent* (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007), as well as the research and publications of Cumming (1998), Barratt (1998) and Carrington (2006). She spoke of the importance of having a model that reflected a synergy with the Australian context with real examples:

We're quite aware that we didn't want to prepare our students using other literature and where we had to keep saying, but hang on, our system actually doesn't work like this (pp. 9-10).

The work of James Beane (1993, 1997) in relation to democratic education and integrated curricula was also used extensively in the three programmes. The last decade has seen a proliferation of Australian literature focused on the middle years and the work of Whitehead, Pendergast and de Jong features prominently in these publications. The philosophy, structure, content and implementation of each of the programmes is evidence-based and strongly influenced by the interviewees own personal research. They stressed the importance of middle level teacher educators being actively involved in conducting research focused on the middle years.

Theme 3: The essential elements of programmes

All three programmes are influenced by the National Middle School Association (NMSA) (2001) and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) statements on the essential elements of middle level teacher education programmes. These seminal works articulate the essential components of such programmes as

comprising: a comprehensive understanding of early adolescence and the needs of young adolescents, a study of the philosophy and organisation of middle level education, in-depth study of middle level curriculum, planning, teaching and assessment, concentrated study in two broad teaching fields, and middle level field experiences. The programmes that formed the sample group for this investigation are underpinned by a theoretical orientation of social constructivism and socio-cultural theory. Embedded within the essential components are the principles and practices that promote an outcome-based, authentic, constructivist, student-centred and developmentally appropriate pedagogy for young adolescent students.

Theme 4: A dual focus on developing subject content and pedagogical knowledge

There is a very clear dual focus in the three programmes on ensuring depth of subject content knowledge as well as middle level pedagogical knowledge. This is predicated on the key middle level principle that the primary purpose of middle level education is to promote the intellectual development of young adolescent students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). The one-year Graduate Diploma programme at Edith Cowan University that is comprised of eight university units and two teaching practica, includes three units on developing student teachers' subject knowledge in literacy, numeracy and science specifically for the middle years. A further unit in the programme is focused on curricula and pedagogical approaches that are responsive to the needs of young adolescent students. Pendergast outlined the importance of developing students' discipline-specific knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge in the Bachelor of Education (Middle Years of Schooling) dual degree or graduate entry programme. Subject selection is dependent on students' previous experience and interest and involves them in selecting two key learning areas, typically English or mathematics. This is combined with courses that are multidisciplinary and integrative, and that utilise responsive pedagogical practices. Whitehead expressed similar sentiments in outlining the four-year double degree programme at Flinders University that incorporates a Bachelor of Education degree with either a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Health Science degree. Students undertake study in one major and one sub-major in relevant content areas. These are combined with a range of curriculum and pedagogical courses focused on the

middle years. The three programmes reflect a clear emphasis on developing students' content knowledge in the core areas of literacy, numeracy and science.

Theme 5: A congruent teaching approach

Congruent teaching, as articulated by Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2008), involves teacher educators in modelling effective pedagogy within programmes of initial teacher education. This approach involves three key components that include verbal articulation, modelling and the explicit application of strategies and approaches. While all three participating teacher educators articulated the importance of the modelling component within their respective programmes, the concept of congruent teaching was a key feature of the Graduate Diploma of Education (Middle Years) programme at Edith Cowan University. de Jong provided examples of this significant aspect of the programme:

One of our claims is that what we try to do in this course is practice what we preach. What makes us different is that we work as a very close knit team. We work as a community of learners with our students. We acknowledge that we can't do that in all cases, and we aren't always successful. We critique each other in front of students in a supportive way, when taking a session a colleague gives feedback, and we invite feedback from the students (p. 12).

de Jong elaborated that this modelling of effective middle schooling principles and practices by the teaching educators in the programme involved not only „telling' student teachers about the principles of effective pedagogy and practice, but also „showing' them what this looks like in middle level classrooms. It involves congruence between the pedagogical approaches demonstrated by teacher educators and the principles underpinning the course. A key feature of the University of Queensland's suite of middle level programmes was modelling the use of digital technologies within courses. Effective practice in the middle level classroom should involve the use of multiple forms of information and communications technology because young adolescents are “digital natives” (Prensky, 2005-6, p. 9). Pendergast explained that all teacher educators involved in the programmes received extended professional development in the use and integration of technology, to facilitate this.

Theme 6: The importance of relationships

Pendergast, Whitehead and de Jong emphasised the considerable focus in their respective programmes, on the promotion of positive relationships as a foundation

for teaching and learning. The importance of relationships, particularly those between teacher and learner is a key principle of current middle level philosophy (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; Bishop, Berryman et al., 2003, 2007; Dowden, 2007; Knowles & Brown, 2000; NMSA, 2003; Stevenson, 2002). Early adolescence is a time when young people are building a sense of identity and when they are developing and renegotiating relationships with peers and adults. In reflecting a congruent teaching approach, de Jong and Pendergast explained the importance of explicitly modelling relationship-building strategies in all courses within the programmes. In mirroring effective pedagogy and practice in the school setting all three participants identified the staff and student teachers in their programmes as communities of learners. de Jong identified team teaching with colleagues and teacher educators critiquing each others' practice in front of students as further examples of relationship-building strategies modelled in the programme.

Theme 7: Teaching practicum in middle level settings

Consistent with the current literature (Bishop, 2008; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003) the teacher educators stressed the importance of student teachers being placed in middle level settings during teaching practicum. In the programmes surveyed, the frequency and duration of practicum placements was determined by the nature of the qualification and the availability of effective mentor teachers and schools. The Graduate Diploma programme at Edith Cowan University included two field placements one of which was spent in a Years 6-7 setting and a second prolonged placement of eight weeks spent in a middle school providing for students in Years 8-10. The rationale for this was that the programme needed to pragmatically prepare graduates for teaching Years 6-7 primary school classes and Years 8-10 high school classes, as well as for teaching in middle schools; because in Australia, schooling options for young adolescents span both primary and secondary sectors. The participants placed emphasis on aligning the specific objectives and focus for teaching practicum with the scheduling of course content. de Jong described strategic partnerships that were forged with the schooling sector so that a critical mass of schools and exemplary associate or mentor teachers could be targeted for student placements. Nonetheless,

he identified the variable quality of middle level teaching as a concern and emphasised the need for programmes of middle level teacher preparation to develop student teachers' abilities of critical reflection.

In explaining the dual degree at the University of Queensland, Pendergast reiterated the developmental nature of the programme in building students' knowledge and understanding of young adolescents and of pedagogical approaches that are responsive in middle level settings. She also articulated the importance of aligning course content with field experiences. The Bachelor of Education (Middle Years of Schooling) comprised four semesters, each concluding with a teaching placement in a middle level setting. Pendergast elaborated on the need to develop critically reflective student teachers because of the variable quality of middle level practice that they experienced in schools:

They learn to audit what is happening even if it is quite advanced or you know, traditional in its approach. So we have some tools – some audit tools that students can use when they go out, they know what they're looking at. They can get a sense of it and they can contextualise it accordingly. For example, would I use this? Does it reflect middle schooling practices? What else can I learn from this? That kind of more reflective component (p. 12).

Pendergast spoke of the collaborative relationships developed with targeted schools as being integral to ensuring a critical mass of effective middle level placements. An important element of this collaboration involved bringing into the university, practising classroom teachers with middle level expertise, to take lectures and workshops with student teachers. In demonstrating reciprocity teacher educators were proactive in running in-service workshops and seminars and in providing professional development to practicing teachers. Pendergast spoke of the ongoing need in Queensland, to utilise the media in raising the profile and efficacy of middle schooling and middle level education generally.

In the four year double degree programme at Flinders University, Whitehead spoke of the dominance of the specialised first degree over the Bachelor of Middle Schooling component of the qualification. The largely two-tiered nature of the schooling system in South Australia, despite the existence of middle schooling options, presented difficulties for those teacher educators involved in the dual degree programme because student teachers on teaching experience in middle level

settings observed few examples of quality teaching and practice. Whitehead elaborated:

You know, not many of them (students) are going to walk into a middle school where it's actually middle schooling because, I mean, I've also talked to them about a number of schools around here that call themselves middle schools. It's on the sign at the front of the school and that's where it stops (p. 11).

Elaborating further, Whitehead identified school and wider systemic factors that negatively impacted on student placement in middle level settings:

The major problem, as I've said, is the lack of effective examples of middle schooling and the fact that the secondary subject specialisations dominate the 'prac' placements because they can't get a rating or can't get employment with the major employer, and this has been the case ever since I've been here. Unless they have done sufficient amounts of practicum in secondary schools with their curriculum specialisations they're going to be disadvantaged in the job market (p.14).

Since many student teachers are placed in secondary settings for field experiences, Whitehead highlighted the importance of the programmes' aim in producing critically-aware graduates, who are able to critique various ideological positions and clarify and articulate their own positions in relation to this.

Theme 8: The evaluation of programmes

All three teacher educators identified the formal and informal processes that occur in the evaluation of programmes. These include cyclical reviews of the programmes by an external review team or monitor, student evaluations and more informal interactions between staff in the programme. Dr Pendergast spoke of three levels of review that comprised an external advisory committee made up of principals, teachers, students, and teacher registration representatives, an external reviewing body at the state level that included the Minister of Education, and reviews by the registering authority responsible for accrediting programmes so that graduates are able to be registered to teach in schools. The latter involved a rigorous process of evaluation. As with most universities the University of Queensland has multiple internal review mechanisms in place for appraising and evaluating programmes and courses. The three teacher educators articulated a commitment to rigorous appraisal and review and to revising and making changes to their respective programmes in light of the evaluations and feedback provided.

Theme 9: Ongoing factors influencing the sustainability of programmes

de Jong articulated the need for ongoing vigorous marketing of the programme in order to attract students to the Graduate Diploma programme at Edith Cowan University. Despite the presence, in Western Australia, of dedicated middle schools and delineated middle and upper levels within secondary schools; the two-tiered system of primary and secondary schooling prevails. He identified the lack of state-wide support for middle schooling generally and, to counter this, the need for middle level teacher education programmes to align and develop relationships with „partner’ schools that were enacting middle level philosophy and practices. When established in 2002, the programme had 120 students, however numbers in recent years have dwindled to a paltry 20 enrolled students. de Jong believes that tertiary education courses tend to be cyclical in nature and this, along with varying attitudes and the „patchy nature’ of middle schooling in Western Australia, has contributed to the lower student numbers in the programme. The reduced student enrolments threaten the sustainability of the Graduate Diploma programme, since programmes have to be financially viable in the contemporary highly competitive tertiary environment. Pendergast reiterated the importance of ongoing and strategic marketing of the University of Queensland’s middle years programmes and envisaged a timeframe of 10-15 years before specialised middle level programmes develop efficiencies and are fully accepted as a legitimate programme within initial teacher education.

Whitehead spoke of the entrenched bipartite system of schooling in parts of South Australia. This causes difficulties for students when they graduate from the dual degree programme because position vacancies are usually advertised as either primary or secondary positions, rather than middle level positions. Future employability exerts a powerful influence on student enrolments in the programme. A further factor influencing the integrity and sustainability of specialised middle level programmes of initial teacher education, is the „watering down’ of middle level content in many dual degree programmes. Whitehead identified the dominating influence of the discipline-specific Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees over the Bachelor of Middle Schooling qualification, in the dual degree programme at Flinders University. She described the dominance of the specialist subject degree as a major factor that threatens the integrity of the middle

level specific qualification because of the gradual diffusion of the middle years' focus during the programme.

A further key factor influencing the sustainability of these programmes is the shortage of effective middle level associate teachers and school placements for students on teaching practicum. The literature promotes the alignment of course content with practical experiences in middle level settings as an essential component of middle level teacher education. Since middle schooling is a relatively new phenomenon in Australia, some middle level programmes of teacher education exist in states where there is little infrastructure in the schooling sector to support such programmes. While the programmes all aim to develop student teachers who are reflective practitioners, the lack of effective middle level schools and mentor teachers in some areas means there is a mismatch between the theory espoused by the programme and the reality student teachers observe in schools. de Jong's comments reflect this dilemma:

We were advocating a particular approach to working with middle level students. We also pushed the agenda that you (students) have to be an advocate, that when you go out there, you're not going to walk into an environment which is already necessarily embracing the needs of young adolescents. Yes, you will see some of that and you'll see some brilliant practice with individuals but it's not a field that is well-developed (pp. 16-17).

All three participants reiterated the importance of establishing strategic, collaborative relationships with not only effective middle schools but also with secondary schools demonstrating a genuine commitment to improving outcomes for young adolescents. The attrition of staff from the programmes was a further factor that two of the participants mentioned as a factor influencing their sustainability. This is particularly evident when key staff involved in establishing middle level programmes, either retire or take up other appointments. New staff coming into programmes have not been part of their inception and, typically, do not understand the particular culture or ethos of middle years programmes. Frequently, staff appointments to positions are made for pragmatic reasons. Pendergast spoke of the need to staff middle level teacher education programmes with teacher educators deeply committed to the philosophy and principles of middle level education. Despite the existence of a range of negative factors, de Jong, Pendergast and Whitehead all advocated for specialised middle level preparation for teachers of young adolescent students, regardless of school configuration.

Importantly, all three stressed the need for middle level specific programmes to include a specific middle level title within their moniker. Pendergast emphasised that middle schooling needs to be a named part of any particular degree of study because it is a specialised area requiring specialised teacher preparation.

Chapter Summary

The three teacher educators involved in coordinating middle level programmes of teacher education in three Australian universities were deeply committed to the philosophy and principles of middle level education. They articulated their belief in the efficacy of specialised middle level teacher preparation to improving educational outcomes for young adolescents in Australia. The teacher educators emphasised the importance of contextualising the quality teaching dimensions, so that these were specifically focused on the middle years of schooling. Drs Pendergast, Whitehead and de Jong stressed the importance of using Australian-based literature as a foundation for the programmes as this reflected their particular socio-cultural context. All three programmes utilised a range of design models and frameworks but were consistent in adhering to the essential components of middle level teacher preparation espoused in literature such as the NMSA's *Position Statement* (NMSA, 2006) and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The participants placed equal importance on the development of both students' subject knowledge along with pedagogical content knowledge. They highlighted the importance of modelling effective middle level pedagogy and practice and particularly, strong relationships between the teacher and the young adolescent learner. While two of the teacher educators identified difficulties in placing students in middle level settings on field experience, they all agreed that this was an essential element of their programmes. Developing ongoing collaborative partnerships with targeted schools was identified by the participants as important in ensuring congruency between the principles espoused by the course and the practice observed in schools. The teacher educators articulated the importance of rigorous evaluation and review of the programmes through internal institutional as well as external processes.

The participating teacher educators identified several factors that threaten the viability and sustainability of their programmes. These included fluctuating student

enrolments in some programmes, the tendency for employers in the schooling sector to advertise positions as either primary or secondary rather than middle level positions, the entrenched nature of the two-tiered schooling system in some states, the „watering down’ of middle years’ content in some dual degree programmes, the difficulty in finding sufficient effective middle level settings for student placements on field experience, and the difficulties caused by the attrition of key staff from the programmes. The participants stressed the need for ongoing and strategic marketing of the middle level programmes in order to ensure their sustainability. They unanimously and emphatically stated that specialised middle level teacher preparation is essential to improving outcomes for young adolescent students in Australia.

Chapter 8

Findings: The American Perspective

Introduction

The first middle schools were developed in the United States in the 1960s, however the majority of young adolescents in American schools are still taught by teachers who have completed either an elementary or secondary programme of initial teacher education. Indeed, only a minority of American teachers in middle level contexts are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; McEwin, Smith & Dickinson, 2003). Only eleven states have established mandatory middle level licensure that requires teachers in the middle grades to have completed a specialised middle grades programme of teacher education leading to certification. In the United States there are clear links between the type of licensure available and required, and the incidence of teacher education institutions offering programmes of specialised middle level teacher preparation (Jackson & Davis, 2000). These eleven states, by establishing specific middle grades certification, subscribe to the National Middle Schools Association's (NMSA) position that teachers of young adolescent students need specialised professional preparation in order to become highly successful teachers (NMSA, 2006).

During this study three teacher educators across three different states were interviewed. These teacher educators had responsibility for the coordination of specialised middle level teacher education programmes, within their respective institutions. The participants were Associate Professor Kathleen Roney of the University of North Carolina (Wilmington), Associate Professor Penny Bishop of the University of Vermont and Associate Professor Gayle Andrews of the University of Georgia. The three states of North Carolina, Vermont and Georgia are states that have introduced mandatory middle level licensure for teaching in the middle grades. During the course of the interviews ten conceptual themes emerged. The themes were: (1) A clear vision and philosophy, (2) Teacher educators committed to middle level teaching and, (3) Institutional support for programmes, (4) Dual foci on subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, (5) The centrality of middle level literature within programmes, (6) Modelling of middle

level pedagogy and practice, (7) Extensive field experiences in middle level settings, (8) The importance of ongoing, quality professional development, (9) Programmes subject to rigorous accreditation and ongoing evaluation, and (10) Advocacy for specialised middle level preparation. The chapter begins with a brief outline of the programmes implemented within each of the participating universities. This is followed by a critical discussion of the aforementioned themes.

The Programmes

The Watson School of Education at the University of North Carolina (Wilmington) has established three programmes of specialised middle level teacher education. One of these programmes, the undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in Middle Grades Education is coordinated by Associate Professor Kathleen Roney. Roney is a strong advocate for middle grades reform and is a co-editor of the recently published *Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education: An International Look at Educating Young Adolescents* (Mertens, Anfara & Roney, 2009). The goal of the undergraduate programme is to assist in providing an education for young adolescents in Grades 6-9 through the preparation of teachers who are well educated and professionally competent. A Masters degree leading to the next level of licensure is also available. A recent addition to the suite of middle level programmes is a Master of Arts in Teaching (Middle Grades) degree. This postgraduate qualification enables teachers with an undergraduate degree to focus their previous coursework into an academic concentration that leads to their obtaining an A level licensure.

Associate Professor Penny Bishop is the Director of the undergraduate and graduate licensure programmes of middle level teacher education at the University of Vermont. The four year Bachelor of Science in Education (Teaching Endorsement Middle Grades) qualification licenses teachers to teach students in Grades 5-9. Originally established by prominent middle level advocate and former Faculty member Chris Stevenson, the programme is now in its eighth year of implementation. The rationale for this undergraduate programme is that young adolescents are a unique group of learners who have specific needs and interests that are best served by educators specifically trained to teach with those needs in mind. A one year graduate programme is also available through the Master of Arts

(Teaching) qualification that focuses on preparing students with a prerequisite undergraduate degree, for licensure in teaching Grades 5-9. Bishop spent time in New Zealand during 2008 as Ian Axford Fellow in Public Policy. This Fellowship facilitates and reinforces links between the United States and New Zealand by enabling Fellows to share their expertise and knowledge in particular fields of endeavour on both sides of the Pacific. During her sojourn to New Zealand as the Ian Axford Fellow, Bishop conducted middle level research and published a report entitled „Middle Years Teacher Credentialing in Aotearoa/New Zealand’ (Bishop, 2008).

The College of Education at the University of Georgia is located in Athens, Georgia. As one of the largest Colleges of Education in the United States, the College offers extensive teacher education specialising in middle level education programmes at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. Associate Professor Gayle Andrews is Programme Coordinator for the University of Georgia’s Middle School Education Programme. The focus for the 2-year undergraduate middle school initial certification is on preparing pre-service teachers to teach in Grades 4-8. Andrews is a prominent middle level advocate and co-editor of the handbook, *Leaders for a Movement, Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators* (Andrews & Anfara, 2003). The students’ journey through the undergraduate programme is guided by the overarching question: What does it mean to be a middle grades teacher?

Theme 1: A clear vision and philosophy

As with the teacher educators involved in implementing middle level teacher preparation in Australian Universities, Drs Roney, Bishop and Andrews articulated a clear vision for their respective programmes of middle level teacher education. While the programmes reflect subtle differences in their structure, organisation and implementation, according to the nature of the particular socio-cultural setting within which they are situated, all three participants communicated that their programmes are designed to produce professional, competent and caring teachers who are highly qualified to teach young adolescent students. Underpinning this vision is their collective ideological belief that students in the middle grades have specialised characteristics and needs that can only be met with teachers who have

been specifically prepared through an initial programme of middle level teacher education. The provision of graduate programmes within their institutions, as well as quality professional development for practising teachers in middle grades schools, further reflects their belief that middle level teacher education is an ongoing process of continuous teacher learning and development.

Drs Roney, Bishop and Andrews stated that their programmes adhere to the performance-based National Middle School Association's standards for the professional preparation of middle level teachers (NMSA, 2006). The NMSA standards are underpinned by current middle level philosophy that espouses that young adolescents differ from younger children and older adolescents and therefore require programmes and learning opportunities that are qualitatively different from schooling at the primary (elementary) or secondary levels. The NMSA standards are committed to ensuring that middle grades teachers have the knowledge, skills and dispositions essential for the effective teaching of young adolescent students. Academic rigour, a focus on developmental responsiveness, and a common theme of equity and catering for cultural diversity were common features that characterised the programmes across the three settings. These features are consistent with the themes underpinning current middle level philosophy and practice in the classroom.

Theme 2: Teacher educators committed to middle level teaching and research

Roney, Bishop and Andrews stated that a pre-requisite for appointing teacher educators in the middle level teacher education programmes was that they showed a commitment to middle level education and specifically to improving outcomes for young adolescent students. Bishop described how she deliberately sought out prospective staff who had experienced teaching at the middle grades and who had a real interest in young adolescents:

I think that is how you get to know the type of learner and I think it just enhances your credibility with the teacher candidates tremendously and it also enhances your credibility with the professional development schools. You know to be able to say, well, I used to be a teacher. I think that's a very valuable piece that people bring to the position. And then I also look for a philosophical match. I mean we're not an objective programme. We have some pretty strong beliefs about kids, you know, and what they deserve. If they aren't believing strongly in changing kids' lives for the better, then they're probably not a really good match for our programme (p. 21).

Roney expressed similar sentiments:

Those of us who are teaching in the programme have, at one point in our histories, been middle grades teachers. So we recognise that we ourselves, as Professors of Education need to have had some experience actually teaching middle grades and young adolescents (p. 4).

Andrews described recent difficulties she had encountered in balancing the need for staffing the programmes with teacher educators who had a real interest in middle level education with the need for teacher educators with subject-specific knowledge in one or two content areas:

It was challenging to find higher education folk and to find faculty members who combined a concern for and an interest in young adolescents and their education, with expertise in one or more content areas. We do bring that content background to everything we do of course (p. 19).

Dr Andrews commented that sometimes state shortages of teachers with subject-specific expertise influenced the appointment of teacher educators appointed to the programme. Recent appointments of staff with expertise in mathematics and science reflected this pragmatic approach. The dual programme emphasis on content-specific knowledge in two teaching fields as well as on pedagogical content knowledge reflects the current literature on elements of effective middle level teacher preparation (Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin, Smith & Dickinson, 2003; National Middle School Association, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003).

All three participants are actively involved in research in the area of middle level education, as are many other staff members involved in the programmes. There is a definite expectation within the programmes that tenured staff should be involved in teaching and research, as well as in producing publications. In addition to conducting research to generate knowledge and add to the field of middle level education, a further objective of such research endeavours is to gain funding for their respective institutions. Some staff members are involved in research in the generic field of teacher education or in conducting research within their subject disciplines.

Theme 3: Institutional support for programmes

During the interviews with the three teacher educators it became clear that their respective institutions fully supported their middle level programmes. Andrews,

Bishop and Roney reiterated that their institutions were committed to the programmes and demonstrated this through providing considerable infrastructural support to ensure their sustainability. Roney spoke of the importance of technology facilities since most of the courses within the middle level programme she coordinated were web-enhanced. She elaborated on the allocation of resources:

Yes, we are very fortunate. I feel very fortunate. We have a Dean who says to us, “if you don’t have what you need to do your job, you haven’t asked for it.” So she’s constantly going out, finding monies and then putting out a call for proposals where we can propose to her, we need this or we would like to use this and she pretty much funds us. Yes, we have a very good infrastructure. I’m very lucky here (p. 10).

Bishop spoke of difficulties in the early years of the middle level programmes and particularly of the adverse reactions of colleagues in other faculties who saw resourcing diverted into programmes that they were not supportive of. As the programmes at the University of Vermont became established and developed momentum, however, these negative attitudes abated. Now the University’s middle level teacher education programmes are considered a valued asset to the institution. Institutional support in funding staff for programmes, resourcing library and technology facilities, providing ongoing funding for staff professional development, and generally advocating for the middle level programmes were common examples, articulated by the three teacher educators, demonstrating the commitment to their programmes shown by their respective institutions. Such institutional support was consistent with the view expressed by Australian middle level expert Donna Pendergast during her interview reported in Chapter 7, when she articulated the importance of having „buy-in’ by institutions if middle level teacher education programmes are to succeed.

Theme 4: Dual foci on subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge

One of the core components of an effective middle level programme of teacher education is that student teachers should complete in-depth study in at least two discipline-specific areas (Bishop, 2008; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003; Stevenson, 2002).

Andrews, Bishop and Roney all described the content of their respective middle level programmes in detail and, in the process it became clear that they placed dual emphases on developing teachers with subject content knowledge in two specific areas as well as pedagogical knowledge in relation to the teaching of young

adolescent students. The rationale underpinning the focus on subject content as well as pedagogy was that teachers at the middle levels needed to be able to develop and extend the cognitive abilities of their students at a time when young adolescent brains are moving from the semi-concrete to more abstract thinking. This required expert subject-specific knowledge and the ability to determine students' existing knowledge and, most importantly the next learning steps.

Andrews described how student teachers in the two-year Middle School Initial Certification programme at the University of Georgia are certified in two out of four core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science or social studies taken at the third year level or above. Students undergo intensive study and need to have passed exams in their two chosen subject areas during the programme in order to receive certification. In reflecting the needs of young adolescents, a key focus on enhancing literacy as well as the development of student knowledge and use of information and communications technology (ICT) is integrated across all courses in the programmes. Running parallel to content-specific study are courses focused on middle level philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy and practice. Dr Andrews described the middle level methodological course „Educating Young Adolescents’ as an example of the latter and where student teachers learn what it means to be a middle grades teacher. The course explores the seven NMSA „Standards’ for initial certification as well as the six domains set down in the Georgia State Framework.

Similarly, Bishop described how the four-year Bachelor of Science in Education qualification at the University of Vermont requires students to concentrate in two disciplines such as science and mathematics, or science and English:

They come out licensed to teach Grades 5-9 and in those two subject areas along with their Bachelor of Science, and it’s a four year degree. In order to receive national accreditation students have to complete study in two disciplines as required by the NMSA „Standards’. This is important for curriculum integration (p. 1).

The middle level literature is consistent in stating that teachers are more effective in implementing curriculum integration or to assist young people to make cross-curricular connections if they have specialist knowledge in one or two subject areas (Beane, 1997; George, 2003).

Dr Bishop also stressed the importance of literacy within the programme:

Literacy is a key thread that runs through a lot of our courses and we have a very strong literacy faculty. Not only do students do the literacy course in their first and second year they also do a curriculum block on literacy in their particular content area and a further literacy course in their final semester (p. 17).

Combined with this focus on discipline-specific knowledge is middle level coursework that occurs in all four years of the undergraduate programme. Bishop explained that these courses are based on increasing student teachers' understanding and knowledge of young adolescent development. This comprises study of the traditional educational development and psychology domain with the more contemporary socio-cultural perspectives on young adolescent development and identity. The four themes of efficacy, excellence, engagement and equity permeate through the courses within the programme.

Roney described how students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Middle Grades Education at the Watson School of Education, University of North Carolina (Wilmington) must complete coursework in an academic concentration, as well as an additional teaching field in order to be licensed in two subject areas. These are selected from language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Student teachers also complete a pedagogical course for each area of licensure. In addition to core professional studies courses such as those focused on 'Teacher, School and Society', 'Instructional Design and Evaluation' and 'Adolescent Psychology'; students complete coursework in 'Middle School Programs and Practice', 'Meeting Needs of Special Students in Middle Schools' and 'Developing Reading Competence in the Middle Grades'. Roney explained the rationale underpinning this dual focus within her programme:

So, students need to be an expert in both their academic concentration – and again that would be science, math, social studies, language arts – and they need to be an expert in understanding young adolescent development and that would impact their teaching and learning situation (p. 3).

All three programmes that were the basis for the interviews had a clear focus on developing both student teachers' content knowledge in two disciplines, as well as developing their knowledge and understanding of young adolescent development and appropriate pedagogical approaches. While the programmes were accredited and mandated by the NMSA's 'Standards' to ensure students completed

concentrated study in two academic areas; Roney, Andrews and Bishop also emphasised the importance of prospective teachers having in-depth content knowledge not only to facilitate teaching and learning, but also so that they are able to make cross-curricular links. Andrews commented that having subject-specific knowledge and expertise also afforded graduates greater flexibility in obtaining future employment in schools.

The participants commented that coordinating the programmes, given the range of academic concentrations in the middle level components of the programmes, can at times prove challenging. Nonetheless it was clear that an effective balance between the various components of the programmes has been achieved. This is in contrast to the comments by Australian middle level expert Kay Whitehead in Chapter 7 who described the difficulty of balancing discipline-specific courses with methodological courses in the Flinders University programme. Whitehead described the tendency of the academic concentrations, to either dominate or „water down’ other components within the programme. This is particularly evident in dual degree or conjoint qualifications.

Theme 5: The centrality of middle level literature within the programmes

While generic texts underpinned the various components of the programmes, all three teacher educators spoke of the importance of using middle level-specific literature to develop their student teachers’ knowledge and understanding of young adolescent development, middle level philosophy and school organisation, middle level pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, and the professional roles of the middle grades teacher. Andrews, Roney and Bishop each identified the seminal texts *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), and *This We Believe: Successful schools for young adolescents* (NMSA, 2003) as key texts for their respective programmes. The conceptual framework represented in this literature underpinned all three middle level programmes. In addition, Bishop identified *Teaching 10 to 14 year olds* (Stevenson, 2002) and *What every Middle School Teacher should Know* (Knowles & Brown, 2000) as significant and practical texts used in the programme she coordinates. As a measure to address gaps in the literature, Bishop also explained that she compiles course packs for students

comprised of readings and articles focused on topics such as middle school organisation.

Consistent with the sentiments expressed by the Australian teacher educators in Chapter 7, Bishop, Andrews and Roney articulated the importance of accessing relevant literature – focused on the middle grades and young adolescent development – to underpin their programmes. Both the United States and Australia have produced an enviable wealth of literature and research that provides a strong evidence base for young adolescent development, schooling provision and best practice in the middle years. More importantly, this information is context-specific in reflecting the particular socio-cultural environments within which the young adolescents are situated. Although in recent years more middle level research and literature has been produced in New Zealand, it is scant by comparison and, in any case, often draws from the Australian and American literature. There is a real need for material that specifically focuses on the young adolescent living in Aotearoa/New Zealand both from the developmental and socio-cultural perspectives.

Theme 6: Modelling of middle level pedagogy and practice

Bishop, Roney and Andrews highlighted the importance of relationships and of creating a community of learners within the middle level programmes. All valued getting to know student teachers enrolled within their middle grades programme. Dr Bishop reasoned that such modelling emulates a community of learners in a middle level classroom. She elaborated on this focus:

We really try to model the importance of relationships through our advising. We're fortunate to be a small programme which has its pros and cons, but a huge advantage of it is the opportunities to really get to know our students well. So we advise them and they have us in class as well, and so as a result, the students, you know, they get close to one another and to us. So it creates a really nice community and I think that's an important piece of modelling as well, of what it should feel like for kids. And then there's that piece around theory, the practice, that's a really key part of who we are conceptually. The idea of being reflective practitioners, the idea of modelling collaboration. For example we team teach a couple of the courses (pp. 7-8).

Emeritus Professor Christopher Stevenson, who originally established the undergraduate programme at the University of Vermont, articulated the importance of creating smaller communities of learners in particularly larger schools as a way

to develop young adolescents' sense of affiliation and belonging. In his text *Teaching 10 to 14 Year-Olds* (2002) he promoted the importance of developing three-way relationships between teacher-student, student-student and teacher-parent/caregiver as the basis for learning. Bishop reiterated that building a sense of community with young adolescent learners is an important need, and that teaming and teacher advisory are an important element of this. Roney concurred with these sentiments in describing the modelling of advisories and pastoral care with student teachers enrolled in the programme, as well as through the focus of valuing diversity threaded throughout courses.

The three participating teacher educators were unanimous in stating that modelling effective middle level pedagogy in courses was an integral feature of their respective programmes. Andrews elaborated on the use of congruent teaching (Swennen, Lunenberg and Korthagen, 2008) within the undergraduate programme:

One of the things that we do in every class is to model instructional strategies that they could use with young adolescents. We do it in a way that's also appropriate for adults and we spell out what the strategy is, what the steps are to using it and how it could be used in a democratic classroom. We talk a lot about student voice in the programme and about young adolescent voices and making sure those are respected, addressed and included in decisions about teaching and learning. None of us lecture. They're seeing it happen and we're trying to be explicit. With my students I call it teaching out loud. So I'll make a decision or a mistake and I'll verbalise the decision or verbalise the mistake and talk about why it was a mistake and how that changed or could have changed the direction that we took (p. 18-19).

Similarly Bishop described the importance of modelling strategies and instructional techniques that are responsive to middle grades learners within her undergraduate programme:

Modelling best practice is a huge, huge piece of what we do. So for instance if we're teaching about constructivism we're helping them craft the syllabus around their own student questions. If we're teaching about cooperative learning, then we're learning about it in a jigsaw style (p. 7).

Additionally, Roney described the proposed implementation of staff teaching in interdisciplinary teams within the programme so that students enrolled in the programme could experience teaming as a signature practice of middle grades' education. While generic modelling of effective pedagogy within programmes of teacher preparation is not a new innovation, modelling, – and more specifically congruent teaching, is particularly relevant and indeed powerful in demonstrating

age-appropriate and responsive pedagogy and practice that may be used in the middle level classroom. The use of congruent teaching by teacher educators could also redress the variable pedagogy and practice student teachers experience in middle level settings.

Theme 7: Extensive field experiences in middle level settings.

A key feature of all three programmes was the amount of time students spent on field experiences in middle grades settings. Andrews commented that entry requirements for students applying to the undergraduate middle school initial certification programme required students to spend 100 hours in pre-professional experience working with young adolescents. At least fifty of those hours have to have been with young people whose backgrounds are different from the student teacher. Much of this time is spent in working with young adolescents in schools. This is consistent with the theme of teaching for diversity that underpins the programme philosophy. Andrews described the integral nature of practical field experiences to the programme:

The students do a lot of hours in schools, and with kids once they're officially in the programme. I had to add this up actually for a report I had to write a year or so ago and counting that 100 hours that they bring in, our students do about 830 hours with young adolescents in schools. They do a substantial number of field experiences prior to student teaching and they get a lot of time with kids and in different settings (pp. 6-7).

Andrews outlined that each of the methods courses in the middle grades programme had a corresponding and parallel eight-week field experience in each semester. Student teachers attend university classes from 8:00-11:00am and the balance of the day is spent in their field setting or in attending other classes in their area of content specialisation. Student field placements are determined by their major discipline area. Her reasoning for this scheduling is that such synchronisation results in student teachers being able to carry out focused observations related to their coursework as well as providing opportunities for them to apply the theory to practice within their area of academic concentration or content area.

Roney also echoed the importance of extensive and frequent field placements in middle grades settings for students in the programme:

Each of our courses has a field experience component. So we believe that, as the research indicates, the earlier and more often you get the candidates into the schools in field experiences, well, the better they will be for the classroom when they take it over and the higher the retention rate will be because student teachers have had experience in the classroom with young adolescents (p. 5).

Bishop also emphasised the importance of early and frequent field placements in middle level settings to ensure that student teachers are making informed and intentional decisions in relation to teaching young adolescent students. Across the four years of the undergraduate programme student teachers experience middle level course work that corresponds with four teaching practica, which increase in level of responsibility and duration over the semesters. All four field experiences are spent in middle grades schools, on middle level teams with experienced middle grades teachers. Bishop expressed the importance of aligning course content with field experiences:

So, in all situations we set student teachers up for live opportunities to reflect on theory and practice. No matter what courses they're taking, they have a field-based experience that accompanies it so that they can try things out, and they can ask those critical questions (p. 7).

When questioned about possible difficulties in obtaining sufficient field placements for student teachers in middle level settings, all three participants were unanimous in stating that, while at times scheduling was logistically difficult, they had no problems in finding placements. This was because over the years since the programmes had been established there had been a focus on developing infrastructure in the schooling sector to support the respective programmes. This involved building reciprocal relationships with schools. Such reciprocity facilitated mutual benefits for both those involved in the programme as well as in the middle grades schools within the respective communities. Providing individual and whole school professional development, the provision of postgraduate middle level courses for teachers, establishing middle grades collectives and inviting middle grades teachers to contribute to middle level seminars facilitated by the University Faculty were just some of the opportunities afforded schools and middle grades teachers within the respective communities. This resonated with the earlier comments of Australian teacher educator Donna Pendergast in Chapter 7, when she spoke of the importance of building reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships with the schooling sector, and the considerable efforts of those

involved in the middle level programmes at the University of Queensland to facilitate this.

Theme 8: The importance of ongoing, quality professional development.

Jackson and Davis in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) state, “effective professional development in middle grades schools is results-driven, standards-based, and embedded in teachers’ daily work” (p. 110). The goal for such professional development should be on improving outcomes for students through the continuous development of teachers’ knowledge and skills (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

The three teacher educators expressed a commitment to providing on-going and sustained professional development to support graduating teachers, as well as practising middle grades teachers and schools. In addition to providing postgraduate programmes that included qualifications at Masters level, and in one institution at the doctoral level, Bishop, Roney and Andrews described the forms of professional development their respective programmes facilitated with schools and teachers. Bishop described partnerships through a professional development school model that was based around the concept of mutual reciprocity and where the Faculty provided targeted professional development, based on identified school needs. In return the schools mentored students during their field experiences.

Bishop elaborated on the benefits of these partnerships:

We’ve developed some pretty strong relationships with area schools and I think that’s largely because we have used a professional development school model. We have a real commitment to being on site and also in being a resource to the school itself. You know, helping them if they need some research done on their action planning or if they want some lessons modelled or if they want some teacher professional development (p. 19).

Roney described a similar system used in North Carolina where approximately 30 middle grades schools formed a professional development partnership. Also based on the principle of reciprocity, this involved the university faculty in training practising middle grades teachers in a coaching model of supervision and in acting as partners with Faculty supervisors when student teachers were placed on field experience. Benefits for schools involved in the collective included individual teacher or whole school professional development. As an example of this support Roney identified a recent reading across the curriculum initiative she had facilitated

with three middle grades schools in the partnership. On graduating, teachers from the Watson School of Education at the University of North Carolina were also supported through a „First Years of Teaching Support System’.

Andrews further reiterated this collective commitment to ongoing professional development for teachers:

When we talk in that chapter on professional development in *Turning Points 2000* we describe it as a continuum. Your development as a teacher begins when you first decide you’re going to be a teacher, you enter a pre-service programme and it continues until the end of your career. My hope and my belief is that people should always be looking for what else they can learn. How else can I make connections with kids? What else can I learn about my content? What else can I learn about pedagogical content knowledge? Always trying to do more and do it better (p. 22).

The three teacher educators’ commitment to on-going professional development for middle grades teachers reflects the important concept of lifelong learning, a key principle espoused by *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c). While the promotion of this concept with learners in classrooms is essential, it is equally important that teachers model life-long learning through undertaking and participating in continuous professional development throughout their careers.

Theme 9: Programmes subject to rigorous accreditation and ongoing evaluation

All the middle level teacher education programmes at the participating universities were subject to an initial process of review leading to accreditation carried out by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in collaboration with the NMSA. These two organisations developed rigorous standards in the late 1990s that all middle grades programmes in the United States must address, in order to be accredited. The standards encompass essential elements for middle level teacher preparation that reflect current trends in the field, best practice for middle level teacher preparation and the developing research base (NMSA, 2006). Following initial accreditation programmes are reviewed on a regular basis in order to be reaccredited. Bishop described the rigorous reaccreditation process:

The NMSA/NCATE accreditation is a very extensive and time-consuming process where we have to provide a lot of evidence. All the middle grades programmes have to outline the assessments used with students and how they

align with the national standards. This includes providing evidence of student pass rates for each assessment conducted, student evaluations and videotapes of staff teaching and so on and so forth (p. 23).

Further accreditation reviews are conducted at the state level since a number of states have also devised their own standards. Roney outlined this process:

North Carolina has just published its newest rendition of professional teaching standards following our NCATE accreditation two years ago. Well, it feels like yesterday because it was such an extensive programme. Now we have a new set of (State) standards which reduces everything to five and so we are looking and revising our programme to make sure it fits with the new standards that North Carolina has just produced for the profession (p. 14).

Bishop commented that the state standards in Vermont did not align well with the national standards as the former were more generic rather than middle level-specific and accreditation therefore, involved two quite separate and extensive processes. In addition to the national and state reviews Andrews, Roney and Bishop described ongoing programme reviews and evaluation at the institutional level. These involved faculty observations, student surveys and student course evaluations that evaluated and included feedback on faculty supervisor observations on field experiences as well as on their mentor teachers. Teachers and schools within the community also contributed to evaluations of the programmes. Consistent with generic programmes of teacher education Faculty and staff appraisal and promotion procedures were integral and ongoing processes.

The three participants commented that they valued student feedback on all aspects of their respective programmes and endeavoured to make changes in light of this.

Roney described the dynamic nature of the programme:

We are reflective practitioners so we're always looking at our programme and seeking to make it better. At the end of each course and each semester students are given a survey to determine how the course was for them. When they complete a programme evaluation we look upon those items one by one and make changes to our programme based on the feedback we get from students. As an example students mentioned they wanted more information on working with parents so we have incorporated more of that and given greater attention to this aspect during their studies with us. Classroom management is another area students have identified and we have responded to (p. 7).

During the interviews with Roney, Bishop and Andrews it became clear that they were committed to ongoing development and improvement of their respective programmes of middle level teacher preparation. This involved initiating and

implementing new innovations and in responding to ongoing feedback and evaluation at the national, state, university and faculty levels. Accountability gained as a result of rigorous accreditation and evaluation processes was seen as a vital lever to ensure the sustainability of their programmes and, importantly, to realise the programme goals by developing highly effective middle grades teachers with the essential dispositions, knowledge and skills to teach young adolescents.

Theme 10: Advocacy for specialised middle level preparation

As may be expected of committed professionals who have dedicated considerable time and effort in their careers to developing and coordinating programmes of middle level teacher education, Andrews, Bishop and Roney are firm advocates for specialised middle level teacher preparation. Their comments reflect their advocacy.

Roney commented:

I've put my whole professional life on the line for developing middle grades teacher preparation programmes. I'm a firm believer. I left Pennsylvania because it didn't have programmes leading to certification of middle grades teachers. I came to North Carolina because it did. I think it's of the utmost importance, but you wouldn't expect any other response from me. I just know that I'm here because North Carolina supports the professional development of middle grades educators (p. 15).

Andrews commented:

I think it's critical. Now I'm sure I would be considered a biased spokesperson for that. But I think it's absolutely critical. I work with several colleagues who don't share that perspective and who think it's all about content. That if you know a lot of mathematics, you can be a great math teacher and it doesn't really matter what age group is in front of you. I think it does matter. As I said, the strength of our programme is that we focus on kids, and I absolutely do think it matters who those kids are. You can't make decisions about what to teach, how to teach and how to assess unless you know your students really well. So I think it's vital (p. 21).

Bishop concurred with these comments:

You know that's a huge bias of mine, of course, so I don't know how objective I can be on that one. I think it's really critical, frankly. I was just chatting with a principal in Auckland [New Zealand] about this concept of specialised teacher preparation and you know, he was saying, "well if you can teach a six year old you can teach an eleven or twelve year old" and I really disagree with that. I think the types of relationships that kids need at that age and the way they need to be treated is dramatically different than what you need at six. There are a whole host of people who really need to understand those basics of personal efficacy for kids at this age.

In countering the often-heard claims in New Zealand that effective teachers are able to meet the needs of all students regardless of age, Bishop suggested that middle level teacher educators in New Zealand should analyse the existing student engagement data, in order to recognise that there are significant problems in relation to the current provision of schooling for young adolescents, that need to be addressed.

Summary

A deep commitment to improving outcomes for young adolescent students in middle grades schools provided the main impetus for the programmes of middle grades teacher preparation coordinated by the three participating teacher educators. Andrews, Roney and Bishop articulated a clear vision and philosophy that underpinned their respective programmes. The overarching goal for their respective programmes was to develop highly effective teachers with the essential dispositions, knowledge and skills for teaching young adolescent students. Each institutions' middle grades programme was subject to exacting accreditation and evaluation procedures conducted at national, state, university and faculty levels – processes the teacher educators viewed as being essential to ensuring the quality, accountability, and sustainability of the programmes. By subscribing to the standards prescribed by the NMSA, the programmes reflected the six essential elements of middle level teacher education programmes identified in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Considerable infrastructural support for the programmes was provided by institutions. The participants considered this „buy-in' by their respective institutions to be a key lever in their respective programmes' development and success. Within each programme there were dual emphases on developing student teachers' subject knowledge in two subject areas and developing pedagogical content knowledge. Literacy and the use of ICT were considered vitally important elements and were integrated across courses within the programmes. Middle level-specific research and literature provided the foundation for middle level coursework. The modelling of effective level pedagogy within courses was an integral feature of the three programmes. Student teachers in the programmes experienced early and frequent field placements in middle level settings and these were scheduled to closely align with course content. Finding sufficient placements for students was not considered a problem because of the collaborative and

reciprocal partnerships that had been established with schools. One of the benefits to the middle grades teachers and schools was the provision of professional development. Roney, Bishop and Andrews while admitting to bias, all strongly advocated in favour of specialised middle grades teacher education programmes. Their stated bias was nonetheless based on a wealth of professional experience in middle level teacher education. They argued that middle grades teachers must have a genuine interest in teaching and interacting with young adolescents, and a deep understanding of their developmental and educational needs. In-depth study of the psychology and developmental aspects of early adolescence, combined with study that represents a more contemporary view of the young adolescent incorporating socio-cultural theory and perspectives, can only be realised through programmes of specialised middle grades teacher preparation.

Chapter 9

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this final chapter I critically discuss the findings of my investigation into the provision of teacher education for the middle level (Years 7-10) in New Zealand. I draw parallels between the level of provision for the middle years in New Zealand institutions providing teacher education, and that provided by programmes of specialised middle level teacher preparation in the USA and Australia. The findings are synthesised to allow for conclusions to be drawn with respect to the provision of middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. The implications as to how any reform initiatives may be implemented have been considered in relation to policymakers, administrators, institutions, middle level advocates and teachers of young adolescent students. I propose areas for further research in the area of middle level teacher education and conclude the chapter by making key recommendations for the introduction and implementation of middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. I begin the chapter by describing how the study was conceptualised.

Section 1: Background to the study

The topic of this investigation was motivated by my experience as a teacher of young adolescents in New Zealand. As a primary-trained graduate I obtained a qualification that enabled me to teach students from New Entrants (NE) to Year 8 in New Zealand schools. Early in my teaching career I became acutely aware of the shortcomings of my initial teacher preparation. The nurturing nature of primary education, with its focus on the holistic development of children's attitudes, knowledge and skills through a broad exploratory approach to the curriculum, was at odds with the diverse and more demanding educational needs of Year 8 students. The strategies for developing positive relationships, that had previously proven effective with younger children, were inadequate for relating to and connecting with young adolescent students. With no targeted in-service professional development support it became a case of 'thinking on my feet' in order to survive. More recently as a teacher educator in a New Zealand university I have been concerned with how current graduates are prepared for teaching at the middle levels in the range of school configurations, catering to young adolescent students.

Aware that the Education Review Office (1994, 2001, 2003) has labelled the middle years „the forgotten years’ in New Zealand’s education system and further informed by the New Zealand statistics (Durling, 2007; Bishop, 2008; Cox & Kennedy, 2008; Education & Science Committee, 2008) that paint an increasingly grim picture of student disengagement during the middle years, I determined to carry out an investigation into provision for the middle years within teacher education institutions. The following key research question was therefore formulated to provide strategic direction for the study: *What provision is made for the middle years or Years 7-10 in New Zealand teacher education?*

In Chapter 1, I presented my case for a critical investigation of current teacher education provision for the middle years within New Zealand institutions. I identified the disparities that exist in the current schooling system that disenfranchise students in Years 7-10. I explained that students living in low socio-economic communities are at most risk of underachieving, and since Māori are over-represented in these communities (Bishop, 2008) Māori students are particularly affected by these inequities. As well as identifying disparities in relation to student achievement, I discussed research that documents the increasing disengagement from learning of young adolescent students. I reasoned that the current national focus on quality teaching (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2007c), in addition to the increased emphasis on the middle years at the systemic level (Dinham & Rowe, 2007; Bishop, 2008), could provide a favourable platform for the introduction of middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. To refine the focus for the investigation the key research question was reconceptualised into four sub-questions. It is these research questions that provide the framework for the discussion of findings in the following four sections.

Section 2: The theoretical investigation

The research question – *What does the North American, Australian and New Zealand literature identify as developmentally responsive practice for teachers working in middle level education?* – provided the focus for my literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis. My review identified four related elements that form the basis for responsive provision in the middle level classroom. These comprise the elements of theories of teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Although they

were explored separately in the review, I also emphasised that they are inextricably linked in the middle level classroom. Social-constructivist theory (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Piaget, 1932) and socio-cultural theory as espoused by Vygotsky (1978, 1986) provide an effective theoretical orientation for teaching and learning because they respond to the specific characteristics and needs of young adolescents. I highlighted the student-centred, integrative model of curriculum as an appropriate design for curriculum at the middle levels because it adheres to the principles of democratic education through facilitating greater student choice, negotiation and autonomy (Beane, 1997; Dowden, 2007; Fraser, 2000; National Middle School Association (NMSA), 1995, 2003). At a time when young adolescents are seeking greater independence and developing deeper interest in real life issues, integrative curriculum designs involve them in active inquiry. In short, a relevant, challenging, integrative and exploratory curriculum design encourages young adolescents to actively engage in their learning (Beane, 1997; Dowden, 2007).

Chapter 2 also identifies authentic assessment (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Atkin, 2001; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Davies & Hill, 2009; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005; Torrance & Pryor, 2001) as a practice that is particularly applicable to the middle years since it is a process that is collaboratively carried out by both the teacher and learner, it is naturally embedded in the curriculum, and because it recognises young adolescents' increasingly need to exercise agency. The centrality of relationships in the teaching and learning process was identified as a key theme in the middle level literature (Alexander, 2000; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Barratt, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 1995, 2003; Stevenson, 2002). Progressive pedagogical approaches that emphasise active and interactive learning opportunities and that promote student autonomy and enhance student engagement are responsive to the needs of young adolescent learners. There needs to be a clear focus on thinking (Atkin, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 1991; Manning, 2002; NMSA, 2003; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005) and on developing the cognitive abilities of middle level learners. In reflecting Prensky's notion of young people as "digital natives" (2005-2006, p. 9) in the contemporary digital environment, the integration of information and communication technologies as tools to support learning is highlighted as an essential component of responsive middle level classrooms (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Carrington, 2006; Matters, 2006).

As the investigation and data collection progressed, the review extended to incorporate literature focused on the concepts of advocacy for middle level education, models of teacher education, and factors inhibiting the implementation of middle level preparation. The review showed that advocacy for middle level teacher preparation is based on the belief, now supported by considerable research evidence (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996; Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Bishop, 2008; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1995, 2003; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003; Pendergast & Bahr, 2005); that the stage of early adolescence represents a unique stage of human development, when young adolescents demonstrate specific developmental and generational characteristics distinguishing them from the earlier childhood and later adolescent groups.

In my investigation of the historical development of advocacy for middle level teacher preparation, I examined the North American, Australian and New Zealand literature. This showed that, while calls for change to the educational provision for young adolescents were not new, it was the publication of the seminal report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) that provided the catalyst for middle level reform internationally. In the two decades since the release of *Turning Points*, and as a result of supporting developments and influences, advocacy for middle level teacher preparation resulted in the implementation of a steadily increasing number of dedicated teacher education programmes in the USA and Australia. Implemented in response to the increased disengagement of young adolescent students, the rationale underpinning the reform was that young adolescents have specific needs that require different provision from that provided in programmes of primary or secondary teacher education. In contrast, the review of the New Zealand literature showed that despite the existence of a reform movement and the actions of more recent middle level advocates such as Bishop (2008), Nolan, Kane and Lind (2003), New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools Association (2006), Stewart and Nolan (1992) and Dowden, Bishop and Nolan (2009), the implementation of middle level teacher preparation has not been realised.

Rather than concentrating on the generic elements that characterise all quality teacher preparation, my theoretical investigation of models of middle level teacher education design focused on those essential components that are specific to middle level teacher education. A defining element of the designs was that, rather than being student-centred they were ‚adolescent-centred’ (Chadbourne, 2002; de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005, 2007). The review identified essential components of specialised middle level teacher education programmes. A unifying thread within the design models was the integration of opportunities for student teachers to develop knowledge of themselves as teachers as a precursor to the active construction of their identities as middle level teachers (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003).

The review presented in Chapter 2 provided the theoretical framework for this study. I determined that the topic of middle level teacher education needed to be contextualised within the New Zealand setting by investigating the influences that background and shape the current system. The findings are presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis and are summarised in the next section.

Section 3: Investigating the background of the New Zealand educational context

Chapter 3 documented my investigation into the influences that have shaped New Zealand’s educational system. This encompassed a broad examination of the historical origins of schooling provision generally, a more specific concentration on the development of middle schooling and an overview of the structure of teacher education in New Zealand. A range of information sources, including historical texts, research reports, official Ministry of Education and New Zealand Teachers’ Council reports, the *Strategic Plan* of the New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Association (2006) and *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c), provided the background for the investigation. I explain that the traditional two-tiered primary and secondary schooling structure of the New Zealand education system was imported from Great Britain through the process of colonisation over 130 years ago. Despite the efforts over the last century of a number of progressive New Zealand educationalists, and a small but vigorous middle level reform movement to affect change to middle schooling provision; the bipartite system of schooling remains firmly entrenched as the defining feature of the this country’s educational system. I documented the development of intermediate schooling catering to Years 7-8 students, and its

acceptance as an integral part of education in New Zealand, through to the contested implementation of a small number of standalone middle schools in the early to mid 1990s. In the investigation I acknowledged the sustained efforts of middle level proponent and eminent academic Dr Pat Nolan who, with colleagues, spear-headed the movement for middle level reform in New Zealand over a period of thirty years.

Section 4: Investigating provision for the middle levels in New Zealand institutions

The research question – *How is the current literature on best practice in the middle years reflected in initial teacher and in-service teacher education programmes in New Zealand institutions?* – provided the focus for the New Zealand-based data collection in this investigation. In Chapter 5 of this thesis I presented the findings of my inquiry into the nature and extent of teacher education for the middle levels within New Zealand universities and colleges of education. A key finding in this study was that teacher educators interviewed across both primary and secondary sectors, showed little or no recognition of early adolescence as a distinct stage of growth and development. The middle level literature (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Beane & Brodhagen, 2001; Bishop, 2008; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2003; New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Association, 2006; Stewart & Nolan, 1992) is unequivocal in defining the period between 10-15 years old as a stage of development distinct from the middle childhood and later adolescence years. The New Zealand teacher educators demonstrated a lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. Most of the participants articulated a „broad-brush approach’ to provision, and a „one-size-fits-all’ philosophy through comments such as “effective teaching is effective teaching, it doesn’t matter if the students are 5 or 15 ... the principles are the same.” Comments such as this support a further key finding of this study that there is a widely-held cultural belief among New Zealand teacher educators that there exists a generic set of effective teaching practices that are not developmentally or age-specific, and the needs of all learners, including young adolescents, are met when these are implemented in the middle level classroom. These assumptions were expressed through cryptic phrases such as “good teaching is [simply] good teaching.” The dimensions of quality teaching, the teacher educators refer to, are those espoused by Alton-Lee (2003) and Hattie (2002) that include the establishment of positive relationships with learners, effective

classroom management, determining learner's prior knowledge, scaffolding learning, enhancing the relevance of new learning through interactive learning opportunities, a focus on developing thinking skills, cooperative learning and critical reflection. Many of these quality teaching dimensions represent a constructivist theoretical orientation that is predicated on the principle that teachers must in the first instance know their learners. The findings of this investigation showed that by and large teacher educators in New Zealand do not recognise or acknowledge the stage of early adolescence. The concept of middle level education is not valued within the culture of their institutions or by the wider community and so is not part of their 'approved' cultural understandings or knowledge base.

„Knowing the young adolescent learner' and building effective relationships with young adolescent learners requires an understanding of their developmental psychology, as well as the generational and wider socio-cultural factors that influence their growth and development. The NMSA (2006) states that “successful middle level teachers, at their most fundamental level must be experts in the development and needs of young adolescents” (p. 1). On examination of the course content and structure of the primary and secondary teacher education programmes in this study it became obvious that, where courses in human development formed a core component of the programmes, there was only a superficial examination of adolescence (12-18 years) with no differentiation between early adolescence and later adolescence. Moreover, the generic nature of the literature used as a foundation for courses, in both primary and secondary programmes, reflected a complete absence of middle level-specific material. The literature shows that an essential component of teacher preparation for the middle levels is an in-depth study of young adolescent physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development as well as the socio-cultural influences of contemporary society (Chadbourne, 2002; Harnett, 1991; Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1997; NMSA, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). Some of the teacher educators stated that socio-cultural theory provided a theoretical framework for their courses and this contributed to student teachers' understanding of their learners in relation to variables such as gender, intellectual ability and ethnicity. There was little or no recognition by the respondents that understanding and knowledge of the more basic differences, represented by age and developmental level, was fundamental to the broader application of socio-cultural theory in understanding learners.

A further finding of this study was the limited opportunities provided to student teachers, in both primary and secondary programmes, for field experience in middle level settings. This disregards the considerable literature base that emphasises the importance of student teachers experiencing frequent field placements in middle level settings (Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin, Dickinson & Smith, 2004; NMSA, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003). The teacher educators across both programmes emphasised that they ensured all student teachers experienced teaching practicum or field experiences in at least one middle level setting. For most student teachers enrolled in a primary teacher education programme this, however, represents only one out of approximately six field placements in schools catering to middle level students. Secondary student teachers enrolled in a one year post-graduate diploma programme will usually experience one middle level field placement in a Years 7-13 or Years 9-13 secondary school or, occasionally, a rural area school with NE-Year 13. More commonly, secondary field experiences involve secondary student teachers in teaching a combination of both junior secondary and senior secondary classes.

Several teacher educators spoke of the difficulties in obtaining sufficient associate teachers and the variable nature of mentoring and teaching pedagogy that student teachers experience on middle level field experiences. This reflects the findings of the Education Review Office (1994, 2001, 2003) in their evaluation of the quality of middle level provision in New Zealand schools. It was a point of relatively serious concern, therefore, that when the primary teacher educators were asked about the level of preparation and support they provided to students while on teaching practicum in middle level settings, many stated that they relied almost solely on the mentoring and modelling of effective teaching by associate teachers. While some of the respondents spoke of the importance of developing relationships with schools to ensure a steady flow of associate teachers, none spoke of developing collaborative and reciprocal partnerships with professional development schools as a means to address the difficulties they experienced in student placements.

The primary teacher educators articulated a tension that exists in achieving the right balance within their programmes between generalist or pedagogical teaching knowledge and subject specialist knowledge. Interestingly, one of the respondents

believed it was the responsibility of the student teachers themselves to ensure they had the necessary subject area-specific knowledge to be able to teach Years 7-8. Another primary teacher educator believed that ensuring students reached Level 4 (commensurate with Year 8) of the New Zealand curriculum in the key areas of English, science and mathematics was a goal of the programme. This is of concern as a considerable number of Year 8 students may be able to achieve at Level 5 or 6 of the curriculum. At a time when young adolescents are increasingly developing their cognitive abilities, they require teachers who challenge and extend their thinking (Barratt, 1998; Dowden, Bishop & Nolan, 2009; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, 1984; Stevenson, 2002). In her report into teacher credentialing for the middle levels in the New Zealand context, Bishop (2008) stated that middle level teachers require a depth of subject content knowledge beyond that which primary teacher education currently offers. Conversely, the secondary teachers interviewed during the study spoke positively of their students' in-depth subject knowledge. This is not surprising since a prerequisite for entry into a secondary diploma programme is an undergraduate qualification in two subject areas of the national curriculum. Of concern, however, is the condensed nature of secondary programmes and the lack of courses focusing on the development of students' pedagogical knowledge. In one case, the sole opportunity for the development of knowledge about effective pedagogy and practice in the middle years was a generic 'teaching and learning' paper.

In reflecting the principles of congruent teaching as espoused by Korthagen, Loughan and Russell (2006), one of the secondary teacher educators articulated the importance of modelling effective pedagogy and practice so that student teachers experience effective teaching approaches in their courses. During discussions about the concept of differentiation between junior secondary and senior secondary within secondary programmes with the teacher educators; it became obvious that the reasoning for such delineation was not based on young adolescent or older adolescent needs, but for pragmatic reasons more to do with the organisation of curriculum and assessment within secondary schools. As with the primary teacher educators, the secondary participants spoke of their reliance on associate teachers and school-based curriculum tutors to mentor and model effective teaching practice. While many of the secondary teacher educators spoke of the condensed nature of the one-year Graduate Diploma programme, most agreed that extending the programme to two years was unrealistic

within the highly competitive, contemporary tertiary education environment in New Zealand.

The secondary teacher educators were unanimous in their opposition to the implementation of specialised middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. They cited reasons such as the financial costs to institutions and the restrictions it would place on graduates in gaining employment, as factors that would make specialised teacher preparation unfeasible. Given the entrenched nature of the two-tiered system of educational provision in New Zealand their attitudes are hardly surprising. The lack of recognition of early adolescence as a distinct period of development, limited awareness and understanding of middle level education, and the absence of support for the reform of teacher education to respond to the needs of young adolescents was conspicuous in all but one of the interviews with the New Zealand teacher educators. There was little or no understanding of either the „learning pathways’ mandated in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) or the disparities existing in New Zealand education. For instance, none of the respondents mentioned the worrying statistics in regard to Māori achievement or the sobering statistics in regard to middle level students’ disengagement from learning.

Section 5: Dr Pat Nolan’s perspective

As an academic, researcher and recognised leader in the area of middle level in New Zealand, Dr Pat Nolan was in a unique position to provide an overview and an evaluation of the current climate for middle level reform. His critical insights, presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis informed the investigation by situating the perspectives of NZ teacher educators within the „bigger picture’. He explicitly stated that the middle level reform movement was currently “struggling”, placing the blame for this on the hegemony of the two-tiered primary/secondary system of schooling in New Zealand. He painted a picture of an anachronistic system of schooling that fails to meet the needs of both students and teachers because its organisation and philosophy is firmly entrenched in the past. Rather than attributing blame to systemic failure, Nolan identified teacher education institutions as the culprit due to their insistence on perpetuating the existing system. He was highly critical of their invisibility in middle level reform and their conservatism in initiating change. He viewed the way teachers are enculturated or socialised into the profession, through their programme of initial

teacher education, as fundamentally flawed because it results in developing teachers of subjects rather than educators of young people. More optimistically, Nolan highlighted the innovative initiatives that are occurring in some middle level school settings to affect change and improve outcomes for young adolescent students. Despite identifying pockets of exemplary practice at the „grassroots’ level, in isolated schools with innovative teachers, he identified a lack of alignment between teacher education institutions and the schooling sector.

In justifying a focus on middle level reform Nolan identified the negative national statistics (Bishop, 2008; Durling, 2007) in relation to student stand-downs, exclusions from school and the associated problems of youth unemployment and crime, as factors that indicate serious deficiencies in existing schooling provision. Throughout the interview he reiterated the potential of schooling in the middle years to be „transformative’ in terms of radically improving educational outcomes. Nolan advocated for developmentally responsive practice in the classroom that was grounded in an in-depth understanding of the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. In elaborating on effective provision, Nolan’s comments reflected the principles of current middle level philosophy articulated by Bahr and Pendergast (2007), Barratt (1998), Beane and Brodhagen (2001), Jackson and Davis (2000), NMSA (2003) and others in Chapter 2 of this thesis. He emphasised young adolescents’ increased cognitive abilities and the importance of linking the learning to their personal interests, concerns and questions through active and interactive learning experiences. In emphasising the need for teacher education to prepare teachers to teach in middle level settings, Nolan articulated the essential components of middle level teacher education identified by Jackson and Davis (2000), McEwin and Dickinson (1997), NMSA (2003), Swaim and Stefanich (1996). His proposal for a design model that has as its central core a socio-cultural focus on developing teachers’ identities as middle level teachers was presented in Chapter 6. In advocating for middle level reform, Nolan expressed optimism that the implementation of the 2007 New Zealand curriculum, with its new learning pathway for Years 7-10, would result in changes to how middle level schools across the range of school structures catered for the educational needs of young adolescent students.

Section 6: Contrasting international perspectives

The research question – *How does provision, in relation to teacher education for the middle levels within New Zealand institutions, compare and contrast with that of institutions in Australia and the United States?* – provided the focus for data collection in two international settings. In Chapters 7 and 8 I presented the comparative and contrasting perspectives of six American and Australian teacher educators involved in specialised middle level teacher preparation in their particular contexts. I highlighted their clear vision, their commitment to the philosophy of middle level education, and their collective belief in the efficacy of middle level teacher preparation to improving outcomes for young adolescent students. I explored the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the programmes and noted that each programme reflected the nuances of the socio-cultural landscape within which they were embedded. In these two chapters I drew parallels between the essential components of middle level teacher preparation (Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1997; NMSA, 2006; Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003) identified in the review of the literature in Chapter 2 and the content of the programmes under investigation. I identified the defining concept of „adolescent-centredness’ (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2007) as a foundation for the programmes and the centrality of middle level-specific literature in supporting this. Chapters 7 and 8 further described the use of signature, or „organic’, pedagogical practices (Nolan, Kane & Lind, 2003) of middle schooling within the programmes and the underlying rationale for this. A key finding in the investigation was that middle level teacher education programmes should be characterised by academic rigour and have a dual emphasis on developing student teachers’ subject area-specific knowledge as well as their pedagogical knowledge. There is no tension between these two essential elements as identified in the New Zealand investigation. I highlighted a further finding that, when implementing specialised middle level teacher preparation, teacher education institutions must work collaboratively with the schooling sector in order to establish the essential infrastructure to support programmes and to ensure their sustainability. Such relationships should be grounded in the principles of collaboration and reciprocity. A further key finding that emerged during this stage of the investigation was the importance of institutional support to the establishment and sustainability of middle level teacher education programmes.

Section 7: Further research

My discussion in the preceding chapters suggests a number of possibilities for further research. These areas of research may inform and support the implementation of pilot programmes of middle level teacher preparation within New Zealand institutions. The first area is exploratory research into the possible design of teacher education models that are responsive within the New Zealand socio-cultural context. While Australian and American programmes provide a generic model of effective teacher education, these reflect their particular unique geographical, socio-political and educational contexts, so research is needed to determine the theoretical and conceptual framework for a model that distinctly represents the multi-faceted nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The second area of research would involve an evaluative investigation into how, and to what extent middle level schools have implemented the learning pathway for Years 7-10 as mandated in the 2007 New Zealand curriculum. More than two years have passed since the launch of the national curriculum and research is needed into how schools and teachers have conceptualised and implemented the Years 7-10 learning pathway. A third area of research involves a sociological investigation into teacher educators' and student teachers' attitudes in relation to the efficacy and use of the congruent teaching pedagogical approach within teacher education institutions. A fourth area is action research jointly conducted by teacher educators in university colleges of education, and teachers and administrators in middle level settings. Such research would investigate the implementation of networks of reciprocal and collaborative models of in-service professional development. This research has potential to facilitate greater alignment between the institutional and schooling sectors.

Section 8: Conclusions and recommendations

For too long the middle years have been forgotten in New Zealand's education system. Young adolescent students, in Years 7-10, have languished in an outdated, two-tiered schooling system originally designed for the industrial age and that fails to recognise, let alone provide for, their developmental and educational needs. There is no recognition of the stage of early adolescence in institutions providing teacher education and only limited awareness and understanding of the philosophy and principles underpinning middle level education. As a result students at the middle level in New Zealand schools are subjected to an inappropriate curriculum and to „hit-and-miss' pedagogical approaches that ignore their unique and well-documented needs.

Evidence, in the form of successive Education Review Office reports and research that points to the variable quality of schooling provision and increasing student disengagement from learning, confirms that young adolescents have „fallen through the crack.’ The findings from my investigation show that this situation has been perpetuated at both the systemic and institutional levels. Successive New Zealand governments have been content to tinker around the edges by focusing on curriculum change, national standards, school types and short-term initiatives and policies; however these have failed to significantly improve learning outcomes for young adolescents. Such measures have tended to address the symptoms rather than the cause. The crux of the problem lies with the lack of middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand. By providing only primary and secondary programmes of initial teacher education and by ignoring the well-documented educational needs of young adolescents, the 26 teacher education providers in New Zealand have abrogated their responsibility as agents for innovation and change. As the major provider of teacher preparation, universities have disadvantaged middle level teachers, young adolescent students and schools. Despite the increased implementation and success of specialised middle level programmes of teacher preparation in American and Australian universities, New Zealand institutions have not been proactive in following suit. By not implementing middle level teacher preparation, New Zealand institutions demonstrate a lack of awareness of the current issues and disparities in the school system. Such a lack of awareness and the failure to effectively align programmes with needs, places teacher education institutions in New Zealand at risk of becoming irrelevant and, potentially, losing prospective New Zealand-based student teachers to more relevant courses of initial teacher preparation in Australia or elsewhere.

This investigation concludes that it is no longer tolerable for young adolescent students in Years 7-10, across the range of school configurations, to experience either an up-scaled primary or a down-scaled secondary schooling experience. Nor is it equitable for middle level students to be taught using pedagogical methods and approaches that fail to take account of their specific developmental and educational needs. The teacher educators who participated in this study demonstrated a general lack of recognition of the stage of early adolescence and a lack of awareness and understanding of responsive and appropriate schooling for young adolescents. Their widely-held view, that quality teaching is not age-specific or developmentally-specific but rather, can account for all

learner needs; is both untenable and unacceptable because it disregards the considerable evidence provided by middle level research and described within the readily accessible middle level literature. Without in-depth understanding of the nature of early adolescence, the characteristics and needs of young adolescents, knowledge of relevant and appropriate curricula, assessment and pedagogy; together, with an understanding of the philosophy of middle schooling, teachers are simply unable to competently plan and implement engaging and challenging programmes that connect with the needs and interests of young people. Such knowledge, skills and dispositions can only be obtained by preparing teachers for the middle levels through dedicated programmes of teacher education.

If current disparities identified in the previous chapters are to be addressed, specialised middle level teacher preparation, and ongoing professional development support must be urgently implemented by institutions providing teacher education. Such reform must be initiated by the Ministry of Education by either applying concerted pressure on institutions or, if need be, through directives that demand that they take action. The vision for schooling in the 21st century communicated within *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007c) is underpinned by the principles of social justice and inclusion, yet two years after its launch, the middle years in New Zealand schools are still defined by entrenched inequities. By including a separate learning pathway for Years 7-10 within the curriculum, thus redefining the former two-tier system of schooling as *three* tiers encompassing NE-Year 6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-13, the Ministry of Education is obligated to ensure that the Years 7-10 pathway is properly implemented and becomes fully functional in all schools catering to the middle level.

This thesis contends reform of middle level education in New Zealand must begin with the urgent implementation of pilot programmes of middle level teacher education programmes in university colleges of education. The New Zealand government, through its agency the Ministry of Education, must collaborate with universities to provide the infrastructure to support such implementation. The provision of fellowships, to facilitate coordinators of middle level teacher education programmes in the United States and Australia visiting New Zealand to share ideas and to provide leadership and professional expertise in the implementation of pilot programmes, is

essential. In order to support teacher education reform, the Ministry of Education must provide extensive, in-service professional development to middle level teachers and schools to enact the learning pathway for Years 7-10 prescribed in the curriculum. Collaboration and participative decision-making through the establishment of networks between universities and the schooling sector should be seen as integral to the reform process. Close alignment between systemic, institutional and school levels is essential to affecting change so that the implementation of middle level teacher preparation becomes a reality. The futures of our young people depend on it.

The final research question – *What recommendations for teacher education in New Zealand arise from the findings of this study?* – enabled me to synthesise the findings from the theoretical investigation, the New Zealand-based data and the international data to formulate recommendations for the reform of teacher education in New Zealand. I therefore conclude this thesis by making the following seven recommendations:

1. That the Ministry of Education initiate the establishment of a national body of researchers, teacher educators, principals, teachers and Ministry personnel who share a demonstrated interest, and expertise in middle level education. The aims of this body should be to raise the profile, and increase national recognition of middle level education in New Zealand through: liaising with teacher education providers, the active promotion of the philosophy and principles of middle level education, contribution to policy, and dissemination of information to the wider community and media;
2. That the New Zealand Ministry of Education urgently convene meetings with all teacher education providers to communicate their expectations for the reform of teacher education to include the middle years. A timeframe should be given for the introduction of pilot programmes of middle level teacher preparation. If necessary this should be enforced through Ministry directive. Implementation should be coordinated by Australian or American middle level teacher educators who have previous experience in the establishment of middle level teacher education. Pilot programmes should be monitored and evaluated by the Ministry of Education;

3. That the Ministry of Education support the learning pathway for Years 7-10 identified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) by placing priority on the middle years and particularly that of responsive schooling provisions. This should include extensive in-service professional development provided to schools and teachers (catering to students in Years 7-10 across the range of configurations) through contracts implemented through Education Support Services within institutions;
4. That university colleges of education take a more proactive leadership role in the reform of teacher education through actively recruiting academics whose research and teaching focus is middle level education and, where possible, middle level teacher education;
5. University colleges of education need to work to enhance reciprocal and more effective partnerships with both middle level schools and associate teachers through closer collaboration and sharing of expertise so that there is congruence between the philosophy and pedagogical approaches student teachers experience within their programmes and that which they experience in field experiences in middle level settings;
6. That the Ministry of Education provide fellowships to international middle level teacher educators to visit New Zealand on one or two-year sabbaticals to provide professional leadership and expertise in the area of middle level teacher education; and
7. That New Zealand teacher educators with an interest in middle level teacher education facilitate mentoring networks with international teacher educators directly involved in middle level teacher education, for the purpose of sharing professional expertise and knowledge and as a means to combat isolation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Web-based Search of Institutional Programmes

The following table presents the results of a 2006 online search of New Zealand University and College of Education websites, for evidence of specialised middle level teacher education programmes:

Specific Middle Level Programmes in NZ Teacher Education Institutions and Universities

Institution	Preservice Primary	Preservice Secondary	Inservice	Postgraduate
University of Otago Faculty of Education	No specific courses found			
Dunedin College of Education	Primary to Year 10 Graduate Programme		No specific courses found	
NZ Graduate School of Education	Programme information not available on website			
University of Canterbury/Christchurch College of Education	EDUC 210 Understanding Adolescents	No specific courses found	EDUC 645 Studies in Adolescence	
Victoria University	No specific courses found	Primary to Secondary Retraining Course One module within the certificate entitled “The Adolescent Learner”	No specific courses found	
Massey University	No specific courses found		211.733 Special Topic: The Curriculum, Learning and Teaching in the Middle School Years	
University of Waikato	No specific courses found			
University of Auckland	No specific courses found			

Information Sheet New Zealand Institutions

Brenda Shanks is a doctoral student studying through the University of Tasmania and is undertaking this research to fulfil the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Education). Her supervisor and the Chief Investigator for this research is Dr Natalie Brown.

Purpose of this Research

Over recent years the quality of middle level education in New Zealand has been increasingly under scrutiny. At the New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools Summit Conference on 7 June of this year Minister of Education Steve Maharey officially launched a strategy to investigate the educational provisions for young adolescent students across the diverse range of school structures catering to these students within New Zealand. One of the initiatives within this strategy aims to encourage research into issues such as teacher training, teacher recruitment and effective teaching practices within the middle levels.

It is timely then to investigate the extent and nature of teaching in middle level education within the major providers of teacher education in New Zealand. As well teacher and student perspectives will be investigated to determine the nature and characteristics of developmentally responsive pedagogy and practices for students in the middle years or Years 7-10 of their education. It is hoped that this study and its findings will provide much needed information on current trends and future directions for those teacher educators responsible for the formulation and implementation of programmes within New Zealand Universities and Colleges of Education.

As a major provider of teacher education you are cordially invited to participate in this project.

Your Institution's Involvement

This would involve the participation of a selected sample of academic staff responsible for the formulation and implementation of both secondary and primary courses, as well as those involved in lecturing specialist courses/papers in middle level education, in an audio-taped interview that would take approximately 50 minutes. Participants will be requested to provide a copy of relevant teaching materials, including study guides, course outlines, course readings and modules for document analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to add detail to the interview responses. Information gleaned from the interview transcriptions and document analysis will provide institutional data regarding the extent and nature of programmes, courses and teaching for the middle levels.

Your approval is therefore sought to conduct this research within the faculty of Education at the University of Otago.

Participant's Rights

Information sheets detailing the study will be sent to all participants with a letter of invitation and an informed consent form. The subjects' participation will be entirely voluntary. Following the return of the informed consent forms individual interviews will be arranged with subjects. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be assured; however the institution will be named in the final research report. The written

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transcriptions of interviews will be returned to those interviewed for verification and amendment and during this process interviewees may indicate information they wish to remain uncited.

The information participants provide will only be used for the purposes of this research and any publications and presentations that may arise. This information is not being collected as a means of assessing or judging institutions or individuals but as a nationwide analysis of current trends and future directions for teacher education.

Participants may withdraw from the research (including any data or information provided to that point) at any time without prejudice. At all times information will be treated in the strictest confidence and every step will be taken to ensure that no individuals will be identified in the final report. All data collected in the course of this project will be securely stored and will be destroyed by incineration after a period of five years.

Once the final research report is complete a summary of the findings will be sent to participants and your institution.

This project has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tas) Network, which is constituted under the National Health and Medical Research Council.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which this project is conducted you may contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tas) Network:

Marilyn Pugsley: email: Marilyn.Pugsley@utas.edu.au.

If you require more information about the study you may contact:

Chief Investigator

Dr Natalie Brown
University of Tasmania
GPO Box 252 – 66
Hobart 7001
Australia
0061 3 62262550
Email: Natalie.Brown@utas.edu.au

Research Student

Brenda Shanks
29 Ingram Street
Invercargill
Ph: (03) 216 8576
Email: B.Shanks@xtra.co.nz

The full research report resulting from this project will be presented as a thesis and will be held at the University of Tasmania Library in Launceston, Tasmania.

It is hoped that you will view this as an opportunity to reflect upon your institutional and professional involvement in middle level education. If your institution agrees to participate in this study, please sign and return the enclosed institutional consent form in the stamp addressed envelope by _____. Participants will be informed of your agreement.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering the researcher's request.
Your valuable time and assistance is appreciated.

Chief Investigator: _____ Research Student: _____
(Signature) (Signature)

INSTITUTIONAL CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the institution being named in the final report but only in relation to descriptive data concerning our paper(s) and programme(s) in middle level education and which has been reviewed by our institution's participants. I understand that individual academic staff members will not be named in the final report.

Our institution agrees to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full Name – printed:

Institution – printed:

**Interview Schedule (New Zealand Teacher Educators)
(Initial Teacher Education)**

Introduction:

Questions/Probes

1. Could you please identify the programme/s that will form the basis of our discussion?
 - primary
 - secondary
 - postgraduate
2. To what extent does this programme incorporate content, specific to Years 7-10 or the middle levels? (Please elaborate).
3. What emphasis is placed within courses in this programme on developmentally responsive practices? (in relation to):
 - characteristics of young adolescents
 - needs of students
 - dimensions of responsive practice
4. Please elaborate on any middle level literature that you use in providing a theoretical foundation for the programme.
5. Please explain the links or connections between course content and professional practice in schools?
 - teaching practice in Years 7-10, how long, how frequent?
 - student initiated or programme initiated?
6. What, if any, specific preparation or support is provided to students posted to a middle level setting?
7. What, if any difficulties have you encountered in preparing students to teach at this level?
8. In terms of preparing students to teach at the middle levels what do you consider to be the strengths of your programme?
9. If you could recommend or bring about some changes to better facilitate students to be effective middle level teachers what would they be and why?
10. As a teacher educator what do you consider to be the key areas for future development in the area of middle level education in this country?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?

Conclusion:

**Interview Schedule (New Zealand Teacher Educators)
(In-service Professional Development)**

Introduction:

Questions/Probes

10. Could you please identify the professional development that you provide for middle level teachers i.e. Years 7-10?
 - specific courses
 - whole school PD
 - one-to-one support
 - curriculum specific
11. How do you determine the content and nature of professional development for this group of teachers?
 - Ministry initiatives and contract
 - Availability of international educators
 - School advisers expertise
 - School/teacher requests
12. To what extent do middle level teachers request specific professional development focused on the philosophy and classroom practices (pedagogy) related to the teaching of young adolescent students?
13. What form/s does this professional development usually take?
14. What are some of the barriers or difficulties you have encountered in providing professional development for this group of teachers?
15. Please identify any literature that you use to provide a theoretical foundation for your professional development programmes for these teachers?
16. In terms of providing professional development for teachers at the middle level what do you consider to be the strengths of your programmes?
17. As a provider of professional development to middle level teachers what do you consider to be the key areas for future development?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our discussion?

Conclusion:

**Interview Schedule for Key Informant
(Dr Pat Nolan)**

1. In general, what is the „state of the nation’ in terms of middle level education in New Zealand?
2. What do you consider to be the key issues facing middle level education at present in NZ?
3. Where do you see specific middle level teacher education in the ongoing international reform?
4. What do you believe are the key components of an initial or preservice teacher education programme for the middle levels?
5. What do you consider to be barriers to specific middle level teacher education in NZ?
6. Can you describe the rationale, background and impetus for designing and implementing the post graduate Middle Level paper (Massey)?
7. Can you outline the process and thinking that led to the development of the journal entitled „*Middle Level Review*”? Who are the contributors? What is your vision for *MLR*?
8. Given the global context what do you think might be the issues for middle level education in NZ in the future?

**Interview Schedule (Teacher Educators)
(International Teacher Educators)**

Introduction:

Questions/Probes

19. Could you please outline the setting and identify the programme/s that will form the basis for our discussion?
 - Middle level qualification obtained?
20. What was the rationale underpinning the establishment of the programme/s at the University of _____?
3. What problems or barriers were encountered in instigating and setting up the programme/s?
 - attitudes within the educational community?
 - attitudes within the wider community?
4. To what extent does this programme/s incorporate content specific to middle level students? (Please elaborate).
5. What emphasis is placed within courses in this programme on developmentally responsive practices? (in relation to)
 - characteristics of young adolescents
 - needs of students
 - dimensions of responsive practice
6. Please elaborate on the literature used to provide a theoretical foundation within the programme/s.
7. Please explain the links or connections between course content and teaching practicum experience?
 - teaching practice placement in middle level settings, how long, how frequent?
 - student initiated or programme initiated?
 - problems/barriers.
8. What, if any, specific preparation is provided for students placed in a middle level setting?
9. What difficulties have you encountered in preparing students to teach at this level?

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- staffing
- resourcing
- mismatch between philosophy underpinning programme and reality in field settings etc.

10. In terms of preparing students to teach at the middle level what do you consider to be the strengths of your programme?
11. How is the programme/s evaluated (internal and external processes)?
12. What evidence do you have that the programme/s at your institution is providing positive benefits for middle level or young adolescent students?
13. How important is specific middle level teacher preparation in achieving positive outcomes for young adolescent students?
14. What importance do you place on the provision of ongoing professional development for in-service or practising teachers of middle level students and what form should this take?
15. Can you describe the „pulse’ or „state of the nation’ within the United States in relation to specific middle level teacher education?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our discussion?

Conclusion