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Teacher's perceptions of the introduction of a middle school within a Western Australian independent girls' school

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Teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a middle school within a Western Australian independent girls' school.

S.M. Lienert (B.A in Ed.)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Education with Honours

at the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia

Date of Submission: 26th October 1996

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

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Declaration

I certify that to my knowledge, this thesis does not contain, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge this thesis does not incorporate any material previously published or written by another person other than that which has been referenced appropriately in the text.

Signature:

Date: 26/10/96.

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Abstract

In 1995 an independent girls' school in Perth, Western Australia, decided to introduce a Middle School. This meant changing the traditional structure of grouping children aged between 5 and 12 years into primary school and children aged between 13 and 17 years into secondary school. The aim of the Middle School was to provide increased educational opportunities for 12 to 14 year old students.

When the introduction of a Middle School was announced teaching staff expressed a number of concerns with respect to their new roles and the new school operations. These concerns raised questions about whether years of teaching experience and subject department membership had any effect on the staffs' perceptions of the introduction of the Middle School. The study investigated these questions within the framework of qualitative methodology by collecting data from participant observation, interviews and documents, and analysing it by using the constant comparative method.

In broad terms, the findings in the study indicated that the teaching staff at the school were willing to implement the educational changes associated with introducing a Middle School. This acceptance, however, was conditional upon their concerns being satisfactorily addressed. In general the concerns focussed on the need for whole school communication, the availability of appropriate and practical professional development opportunities and the capacity to be involved in the decision making process. These concerns tended to be consistent among staff regardless of years of teaching experience or the department to which they belonged.

This study provided an opportunity for staff to express views about the

impact of introducing the Middle School. It also gave the school's administration a chance to become aware of teachers' concerns that had to be addressed when attempting to manage a major structural change. Ultimately the study may enhance the prospect of other schools being able to more effectively implement a Middle School because they will be better placed to anticipate and accommodate staff uncertainties.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1996, St Anne's [1], an independent girls' school in Western Australia, introduced a major structural change to its pattern of grouping students. The new structure is known as the Middle School. Up till then, St. Anne's had adopted the standard Western Australian practice of grouping students into primary school (Years K - 7), lower secondary school (Years 8 -10) and upper school (Years 11 -12). Under the new structure the groupings are: Primary School (Years K - 6), Middle School (Years 7 -9) and Senior College (Years 10 - 12).

The aim of changing to a Middle School is to provide young adolescents with a system of education that is more appropriate to their needs within modern society. This initiative recognises that the dominant framework and structure of the traditional education system not only perpetuates inappropriate patterns of student groupings, but also exercises a detrimental influence on curricula, pastoral care, resources and staffing patterns.

More specifically, the Middle School concept is designed to make students self-managing rather than dependent, make learning pro-active rather than passive and enable student grouping to be more flexible rather than fixed. Under the Middle School arrangement, St. Anne's has moved from a rigid structure with specialist faculties and control-centred administration, to a flexible, multi-disciplinary organisation with a service-centred administration. The management style of the Middle School now aims to be open and subject to community-based accountability. This is intended to make all staff feel

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[1] For the purpose of this study an alias, St. Anne's', will be used for the school in order to protect the identity of all participants. See **Notes on text** p10.

free to offer ideas on the management of the Middle School. The role of the teacher also had to change. Teachers are required to assume the role of guide and mentor, use a constructivist approach to learning and adopt a student-centred curriculum; that is, to teach for understanding rather than for content. (Eyers, 1992)

In 1995, in order to plan the Middle School, five developmental working parties were organised by the administration to address the issues of pastoral care, timetabling, curriculum content, administrative structure and resources. (Figure 1) One of these, the Administrative Working Party addressed the human resource issues. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1991), the major areas of professional significance for any teacher include appointment, deployment, professional and career development and the culture of the school. These assume even greater priority when a major change appears on the horizon.

Figure 1 : The Middle School Project - St. Anne's Planning Structure

Principal/Administrator, Council

Middle School Review Committee

Heads of Departments

Languages other than English

Sub-Committees

Physical and Vocational education

Organisation   Pastoral Care   Design and Technology
Year 7/8/9   Curriculum
Integrated Studies   Technology Initiatives

Junior & Senior
School Staff

(NOTE: This is a flow chart, not a hierarchy of organisation)

Among the points considered by the Administrative Working Party was the need for teachers to work in teams and to be responsible for a core group of students. It was deemed important that teachers be given the opportunity to teach a combination of Senior College and Middle School classes. It was also considered crucial to encourage the Design and Technology teaching staff to move into the new school because they are viewed as Middle School 'specialists'. Other 'special' appointments included a Head of Middle School and counsellor for the Middle School, along with Year Coordinators and the appointment of staff who will teach specifically in the Middle School.

Further points raised by the Administrative Working Party and deemed to be essential for staff in the Middle School included regular professional development, time-tabled "planning meetings" for each team, offices for staff teams rather than departments, the requirement of a teaching assistant for each 'team', and the maintenance of specialists (such as Mathematics teachers) to maintain essential skill levels.

The items mentioned above are consistent with what Hargreaves and Fullan (1991) describe as natural requests. These tend to appear as soon as changes are proposed to a school. It is interesting to note that at St. Anne's, one group of staff felt that most Middle School teachers should come from the Design and Technology subject department whereas another group felt that subject department experts must be maintained within the Middle School. Also, the first group felt that staff could teach a combination of Senior College and Middle School classes whereas the second group indicated that staff should teach specifically in either the Middle School or the Senior College. These differences in perceptions could be the result of factors including subject department membership and number of years of teaching experience.

The current structure at St. Anne's is divided into the following departments;

Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, English, Physical Education, Outdoor Education, Design and Technology (which includes Art, Craft and Trade skills, Home Economics, Computing, Drama and Communications), Personal and Vocational Education/Religious Education and the Junior School (Kindergarten to Year 7).

Since the decision to adopt the Middle School, some staff have raised questions such as: What about departments like Maths? Do they feel that their subject matter could be taught effectively as a team project related to a particular theme or should maths remain as a discrete unit? What about the Junior School staff? Are the year seven teachers going to feel comfortable working with a larger group of students and with older students? Would they rather remain as primary school teachers? How would the broad based non-specialist approach of the Junior School combine with the specialist oriented Senior School? Will graduate teachers be more responsive than teachers who have been at the school for many years? Will the teachers' reactions be influenced by the perceived benefits or losses for the subject department to which they belong? Will teachers' perceptions vary when their own individual interests are discussed as opposed to those of the subject departments they belong to?

It is questions like these and the differences and similarities in the comments from the two working parties (Administrative and Curriculum) that have encouraged the investigation not only of staff perceptions of how they will be personally affected by the introduction of a Middle School but also how each individual department will react to the proposed changes. Research on these could of benefit by taking into account how teachers' perspectives are affected by their membership of a subject department, other teaching areas of interest and years of experience.

In light of all of these considerations the central research question chosen for

this study is:

Do the staff in different subject departments with different years of teaching experience believe that their interests will be enhanced or threatened by the introduction of a Middle School?

Staff at St. Anne's were also asked to share any information they had about the background of the concepts relating to the introduction of a Middle School. Establishing the expertise of the staff participating in the study allowed the opportunity for a more balanced interpretation of results. It was assumed that comments from staff could either be from personal opinion or from a well researched and informed viewpoint. Another assumption was that noting differences in staff responses would provide a more evenly weighted view that allowed for the different levels of staff expertise.

To set the central question in a broader conceptual context, it can be noted that "school life is a continuous process of negotiation...(where) each seeks to maximise his(her) own interests" (Woods, 1984, p.11). Each department is an entity where "social identities are the groups, statuses or categories... to which an individual...is socially regarded as belonging" (Rosenburg, 1979, in Ritzer, 1983, p.311). And within these departments, "identity construction, projection and preservation are some of the most important concerns" (Woods, 1984, p.15). Success in negotiation is then dependent on the level of commitment to the constructed identity. The proposed reorganisation of subject departments in the Middle School is designed to decentralise departments into teaching teams. Each team will consist of some experts and teachers who will be required to teach a range of subject areas. Consequently the social identity and status of the departments, as they currently exist, will be threatened by the Middle School restructure.

Faules and Alexander (1978, p.196) indicate that change is achieved through a process of diffusion, a "process consisting of the innovation, communication, a social system and time." How effectively this process occurs is dependent on the rate of adoption of change. Five distinct groups emerge when people are confronted with change. The groups are: the innovators, who come up with the initial idea; early adopters, who are willing to take the innovators' idea and implement it; the early majority, for whom once the innovation has been clarified and more information about its consequences has been establish will accept the change; the late majority, who will eventually join the others in accepting the change once it has been observed to be successful; and finally the laggards, for whom no amount of communication and information will encourage them to accept the innovation (Faules and Alexander, 1978; Katz, 1988; Strasser and Randall, 1981). In general, the distribution of individuals amongst these categories tends to follow that of a Normal Population curve (Figure 2). Figure 3 demonstrates the rate at which the groups tend to adopt the proposed changes. In both figures L refers to laggards, LM refers to late majority , EM refers to early majority, EA refers to the early adopters and I refers to innovators.

Figure 2. Distribution of change groupings.
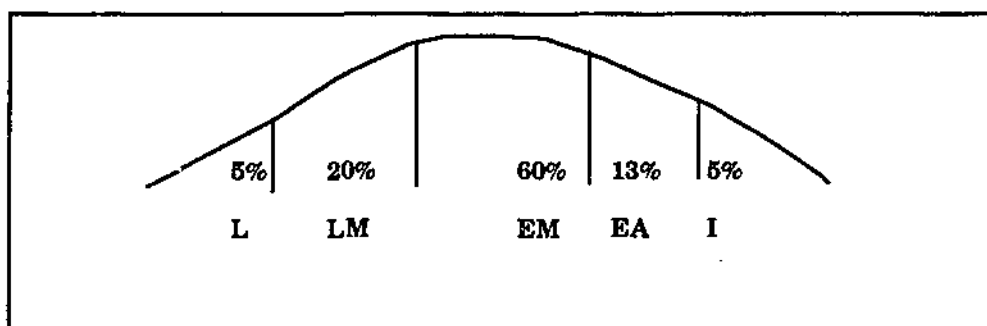
Figure 3. Rate of change adoption
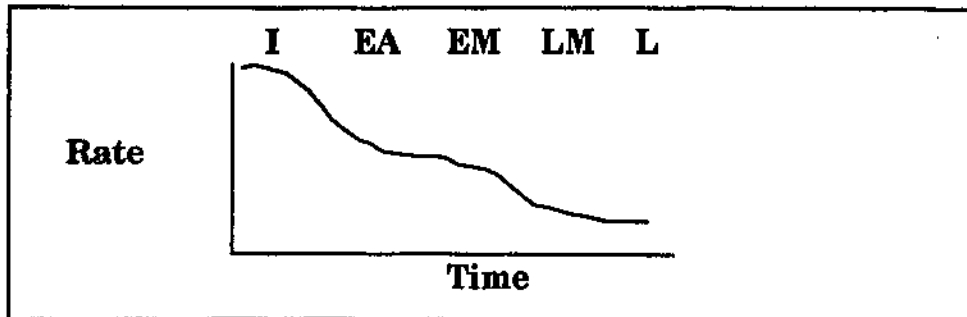
It is necessary to consider how willingly teachers react to pedagogical reforms because teachers in today's education system are faced with many changes. The calls for change have often been made from outside of the classroom and often have ignored the teachers' positions and reactions. In major school operational changes, teachers' attitudes hamper change. Staff willingness to accept change may be based on what subject departments perceive they can gain from them, the length of the teachers' work experience and how long they have been teaching. The aim of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of a proposed major structural and curriculum change within a well established and successful school.

Settings

The study was conducted in St. Anne's, an independent girls' school in Perth, Western Australia. St. Anne's consists of approximately 900 students who attend from Kindergarten through to Year 12. The school has been well established in an upper socioeconomic area for over 80 years. Approximately 70 permanent teaching staff are employed, as well as a number of support staff. The teaching staff are all highly qualified and only a handful of staff having less than five years teaching experience. Many of the staff have been employed at the school for over five years. The study was completed over a period of twelve months.

Middle school pedagogy

The introduction of a middle school does not just entail physical change but also adjustment to teaching strategies and content focuses. Eyers (1992) provides a list of conditions necessary to ensure effective learning for middle school students. This list was developed after reviewing junior secondary schools in South Australia and was designed for teachers to consider during professional development and planning of a middle school. Eyers concluded that for effective learning, young adolescents need explicit models and/or demonstrations of what they are expected to be able to know and do. All achievements (cognitive, practical and social/personal) need to be recognised and that the assessment criteria for these achievements need to be fully understood by the students.

Eyers also suggests that teaching should accept the home/cultural backgrounds of students and provide opportunity for physical activity, practical application of ideas, challenges and the showing of initiative. Despite the emphasis on practical application, critical thinking needs to be developed through tasks which recognise and allow for multiple means of achieving outcomes, and different learning styles and rates of working.

Eyers' report concludes that school work needs to relate to personal growth and social issues relevant to students by using a variety of 'real-life' resources, technologies and interactions with the community. This work also needs to provide the opportunity for collaborative activity, and assistance in developing leadership and team work. The report notes that it is important for technology levels to at least be equivalent to everyday technology found in the home.

In 1993 the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Schools

Council (NBEETSC) developed principles to be considered when improving the quality of middle schooling. The key areas investigated were; needs during adolescence, learning, teachers, outcomes, structures, aims, curriculum, assessment, development and leadership, participation, equity and social justice and resourcing. These areas cover most of those examined in the Eyers' report.

The NBEETSC decided that when dealing with students at the adolescence stage, teachers should aim to promote increased understanding of content, positive relationships with students, practical support and youth participation in activities in school and in the community. To achieve this the Council suggested that learning should be purposeful, self-directed and cooperative. Consequently teaching should be rigorous, holistic and adaptive. In order for these factors to be achieved, structures and organisations should be flexible and small enough to allow for personal contact, and for the establishment of appropriate group processes. Ultimately, according to the NBEETSC, middle schooling should be challenging, responsive and empowering. More specifically, the curriculum principles should be worthwhile, integrated and inclusive with valid, fair and cooperative assessment. The development of student leadership should be participatory and systematic and student participation at school needs to be authentic, productive and mutually beneficial. Equity and social justice requires fairness, quality and flexibility. Resourcing should be equitable, flexible and needs-based.

These criteria and principles from the Eyers and the NBEETSC reports provided the basic principles and framework St Anne's decided to adopt as aims and justifications for the development and implementation of the Middle School.

Notes on the text

The school in the study is referred to as St. Anne's. This is a pseudonym. When discussing the topic of the middle school it is necessary to differentiate between St Anne's Middle School in particular and the theories and concepts to do with middle schools in general. St. Anne's Middle School will be reported using capitals as it is a title and is consistent with St. Anne's Junior School and Senior College. When referring to middle school theories and concepts in a general sense, lower case will be used.

Unless otherwise indicated, the term "staff" refers only to the teachers at St. Anne's who were interviewed for the study. The percentages calculated from staff responses have been rounded to the nearest percent. This accounts for minor discrepancies in some tables' totals.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature reviewed for this chapter focuses on studies of middle schools, subject department structures and their responses to changes, general reactions to change, and teacher reactions to innovations in education. Qualitative research methods, specifically in terms of symbolic interactionist approaches to research and the use of participant observation as a data gathering device will also be reviewed (the latter in Chapter 3).

The literature review of middle school ethos and background will focus on the criteria for successful middle schools. Some of this will be in the form of documents which examine the background of successful middle schools. These were used as the basis for the development of St. Anne's Middle School ethos and provided the theoretical framework for the school's decision to introduce a Middle School.

The review of research on the general reactions of teachers and specific subject area reactions will include the examination of beliefs and goals of subject departments when faced with major changes to their structure and operations. The emphasis will be on staff attitudes, changing from the department-oriented organisational structure that currently exists to interdisciplinary teams, and how teachers can be encouraged to accept and benefit from the changes.

The literature reviewed regarding qualitative research methodology, symbolic interactionism and participant observation generally will be confined to post 1980 studies due to the vast quantity of information available on these topics and the need to examine recent developments.

Middle school background

A number of factors are indicative of successful middle schools. According to Fibkin (1985) these are pride in the program, optimism concerning its effectiveness, variety in offerings and scheduling opportunities for professional development, staff loyalty, efficient use of resources, effective community leadership, high parent involvement, and healthy competition among staff members. Fibkin's claims are supported by the research of Sarapani's (1991) report on *Middle grades teacher preparation; A future focus* and Harvey Allen's paper, *Teachers' and principals' attitudes about characteristics and functions of middle schools (1980)*. The findings in these documents are based on the studies of American Middle Schools which been in operation for some time.

In 1993, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Schools Council (NBEETSC) produced a paper, *In the middle: Schooling for young adolescents*, as part of the Compulsory Years of Schooling Project. The paper claimed that the "conditions of teaching in Secondary Colleges are generally more attractive to teachers than those in Middle Schools" (p.61). The paper provided a list of principles for improving the quality of middle schooling which included possible structures and the various perspectives involved. This information provided the guiding theory used for the development of the Middle School criteria for St. Anne's.

Similarly, Eyers (1992), in the *Report of the junior secondary review*, also provided a list of principles for effective learning that need to be incorporated in a middle school structure. This list was used by St. Anne's as a reference for the development of its Middle School curriculum and ethos, as Eyers suggested it should be. St. Anne's planning structure is shown in Figure 1. This structure was developed according to the criteria outlined by Eyers and

the NBEETSC. Further to this, research by Stringer (1990) provides the dimensions that should be involved in a successful curriculum (Table 1). This table indicates the ultimate educational goals that need to be achieved by schools. It might be argued, though, whether these 'ultimate goals' are merely the other end of the continuum.

Table 1. Dimensions involved in curriculum K - 12 (Stringer, 1990)

Kindergarten- - - - - - - -> A SERIES OF CONTINUUMS - - - - - - - - - - ->12

ORGANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Integration ————————————————————————————> Specialisation
Skills emphasis ————————————————————————->Disciplines Based
Child - centred ——————————————————->Further education/work oriented

SOURCE OF CURRICULUM IDEAS

Community ————————————————————>Workplace/Further Education

PURPOSE OF CURRICULUM

Develop Basic Skills ———————————————————->Work Needs/Credentials

LEARNING PROCESSES

Concrete and Personal ——————————————————->Formal and Abstract

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Socialisation ——————————————————————> Qualification/Selection

ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Dependent ——————————————————————————————>Independent
Accepting ————————————————————————————->Challenging/Rejecting

Stringer developed a number of criteria believed to be needed for a middle school to successfully achieve the desired curriculum outcomes. These included giving room to teachers and students to work and learn in their own appropriate ways and insisting students exhibit a mastery of their school work. To do this, the incentives for both both staff and students needs to be

appropriate. Stringer suggested that middle school students' abilities should never be under-estimated, and that school work focussed on the development of higher order communications and thinking and problem solving skills in adolescents. Finally, the structure must be kept simple and flexible. Flexibility is achieved by using a core group of teachers in the middle school who collaborate with each other. This core group or team of teachers work together in establishing the timetable and programs to be taught. Because they are in control of these factors, immediate change to programmes is possible. For example, if the day begins with a Mathematics lesson on volume and students are investigating engine capacities, the session may develop into a Science lesson and continue into an Environmental Studies lesson. At no stage are the students required to stop their learning because the allotted has ended, or because according to the timetable they need to be taught English during second period.

All of these studies and reports support each other and offer a rationale for a change in curriculum ideals, teaching methods and pastoral care systems for youth in transition at St. Anne's.

Subject departments

One of the key curriculum changes required for an effective middle school is to move from the traditional subject areas or disciplines of knowledge toward interdisciplinary teams of teachers (NBEETSC, 1993). James Beane (1991, p.12) suggests that because "the subject approach has been with us for so long and is so deeply entrenched in our schooling schemes it has virtually paralysed our capacity to imagine something different." Consequently subject-centred organisation has often continued to dominate middle schools.

Roland Tharp (1989) suggests that the formal organisation of schools and

tension between the administration and subject departments accounts for resistance to reform and innovation. Schools are complex social communities, a fact which educators are required to recognise in order to change self-conceptions and begin to value learning as a social process. (Heine, 1989; Wideen & Holburn, 1984; Beane, 1991).

Research has indicated that despite educators being aware of what is required for an appropriate middle school curriculum, curricula are not being implemented effectively. (Beane, 1990; Abell, 1989). Evertson (1980) found that Mathematics teachers prefer textbook and teacher-centred approaches and English teachers prefer strong interaction with students. Weiss (1987) discovered that Science and Mathematics teachers are lacking in adequate training and are generally unprepared to use computer assisted instruction. Toepfer (1988) and Lounsbury (1988) both indicated that Social Studies teachers need to make middle school curriculum more relevant to transition students by emphasising and encouraging the development of individual opinions and responsible social attitudes. All of these findings indicate that when introducing a middle school "it may be necessary to reshape the attitudes held by members of the school community" (Riley, 1978, p.2).

Extended professional development of teachers who are involved in middle schools has resulted in significant changes of teacher attitude toward curriculum change and the use of appropriate strategies (Lawrence, 1984; Abell, 1989). Often these courses are subject-department-related. Beane (1991, p.9) suggests that "when we seek to integrate the curriculum, we need to inquire into the questions and meanings that young people create rather than contrive connections across academically constructed subject boundaries." Bennett (1984, p.10) backs up this suggestion with the idea that "faculties must put aside narrow departmentalism and work to shape a challenging common curriculum with a core of students".

As awareness of the necessity for subject integration increases and as St. Anne's Middle School curriculum evolves into interdisciplinary teams, it is important that these teams operate not only on the basis of themes. All facets of knowledge and learning must be explored. If teachers are trying to teach to a theme, there is a danger that the content may become oversimplified and the emphasis is on the theme rather than the concept. It is more appropriate to explore any inherent themes which may appear from a concept being taught. For example, if the theme is "the ocean" and the concept is speed, it does not make sense to work in kilometres per hour when boat speeds are measured in knots. The time spent explaining the differences could cause confusion. If however, the concept of speed is taught, further exploration into different measures of speed such as knots and machs can be done, and the basic concept has been learnt.

At this stage "the usual membership of those teams continues the historic differentiation of status between the 'big four' subjects and others like home economics, industrial arts, art and music" (Beane, 1991, p.10). The 'big four' subjects refers to Mathematics, Science, English and Social Studies. For a fully integrated curriculum to be implemented in a middle school, staff needs to realise that the subject approach is only one method of organising knowledge required by students and that this approach has serious limitations (Beane, 1990; Riley, 1978).

Bernstein (1973) divides formal schooling into classifications and frames. The classifications comprise curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Frames, says Bernstein (1973, p.271), "refer to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship." The relationships between classifications and frames are also related to the relative status of subject departments. This status is defined by how much time and content is

devoted to the subject. The more time units a subject has, the more significant it is perceived to be by staff and pupils. By nature, people cling to the structures and view change away from strong frames as destructive (Bernstein, 1973).

The Middle School requires a shift from strong frame and classification to a more open and integrated educational code. The integration can occur through subjects or through relationships with other teachers. The integration of teachers can be either within common subjects or between different subjects. Bernstein (1973, p.236) suggests that,

> the nature of classification and framing effects the authority/power structure which control the dissemination of educational knowledge, and the form of knowledge transmitted.

The current specialised nature of subject departments increases the difficulty in recoding structure and framing so it is compatible with the integrated methods supported by middle school theorists.

Teachers need to realise, however, that the challenge of producing a new curriculum for a middle school is a great opportunity for professional growth and change in the education system. The degree to which this is embraced will effect the degree to which a middle school can be viewed to be successful (Beane, 1990, 1991; Riley, 1978; Wideen & Holburn, 1984; Bennett, 1984; Vin Villas, 1993). As Woods (1986, p.155) indicates, "Teachers are the kind of professionals who tie their energies and loyalties to the school system, and often their personalities become identified with the job they do." This suggests that when it comes to changing the identity of a subject department, the reaction will be more negative, as teachers will view the change as a very personal one. The advantage of this characteristic of teachers' roles is that, once the innovation is accepted, it will be implemented wholeheartedly.

Reaction to change

This dissertation focusses on the broad field of human attitude to change. As indicated in Figure 3, some researchers claim that people's acceptance of changes tend to follow that of a normal distribution curve. This suggests that regardless of what the change is, there will always be those who support the innovation and wish to implement it immediately, and there will always be those who, regardless of the amount of communication, will not accept the change at all.

Fullan (1992, p.40) provides a simplified model of the change process displayed as follows:

Initiation -» Implementation -» Continuation -» Outcome

The problem with this model is that, firstly, it is too simple. It does not provide information on the numerous factors that affect each stage. Secondly, the model does not account for the fact that change is a highly dynamic process. Finally there is no allowance for the time perspective.

Faules and Alexander (1978, p.197) provide an alternative and more in-depth model of change, reporting that adoption is "a five-phase process pertaining to a decision made on a wholly new idea": During Stage 1, participants develop an awareness of ideas; During Stage 2, interest is shown in the idea as more information is communicated about it; During Stage 3, evaluation is made mentally using systems of trial and error and discussion with personal sources; During Stage 4, a physical trial over a time period is made; During Stage 5, adoption of the idea occurs in the broadest possible sense. This process can break down at any stage if the innovation is rejected. Reasons for the rejection of change, although varied, tend to revolve around the lack of

appropriate communication about the innovation. Although change is often rejected out of preference for tradition, this can often be overcome with the provision of appropriate development of those involved. Other reasons that affect the level of adoption include perceived risk levels, motivation towards the idea, competing needs, opposing information and intrinsic perceptions (Faules and Alexander, 1978; Fullan 1992; Woods, 1986). Strasser and Randall (1981, p.27) indicate that "change should be seen as a process among other processes characterised by the fact that its source is located outside the structure in the narrower sense". They further claim that this perspective is often ignored in educational change. Consequently, change may be seen as an attempt to deregulate current departmental structures and hence reduce teachers' control over what they teach, how they teach it and how it is assessed.

Fullan (1992) indicates that there are generally three dimensions to educational change. These dimensions are the provision of new or revised materials, new teaching strategies and the possible alteration of beliefs, especially in the face of new structure. Middle school changes require the addressing of all of these dimensions, which highlights some of the difficulties faced by the innovators and early adopters. Their problems with educational change arise as "any attempt to weaken or change classification strength may be felt as a threat to one's identity." (Bernstein, 1973, p.239) Consequently, these feelings provide a source of resistance to change of an educational code. Further more, a possible consequence of encouraging teachers to accept a weakening of existing frames is that a structured changes may occur without any marked change appearing in the educational code, especially where specific identities already exist (Bernstein, 1973). As Fullan (1992, p.33) suggests,

> whether or not people develop meaning in relation to these (the three
> dimensions of educational change) aspects is fundamentally the
> problem ... The more the teachers or others have had negative

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experiences with previous implementation attempts.., the more cynical or apathetic they will be about the next change presented regardless of the merit of the new idea.

This is very applicable to the introduction of a Middle School at St. Anne's given the long teaching experience of most teaching staff, and the very strong classification and framing that exists within the School's educational code. Many staff have seen the rotation of teaching styles and believe there is a danger in the Middle School being simply a past method under a different name.

Teacher attitudes to change in general

According to folklore, teachers tend to be cynical and difficult to convince that changes in teaching styles and pedagogy are necessary. In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (12th, Chicago, IL, October 19, 1990) Yvonne Meichtry claimed that "teachers' attitudes, cognitions, and beliefs are socially constructed and maintained through daily organisational life". It is important then that teachers are empowered as their attitudes will effect the degree to which they are involved in the decision-making processes. Having the opportunity for collegial exchange allows the opportunity for staff to continue to construct beliefs socially. The school administration's willingness to recognise teachers' needs and desires to be involved in the decision making process and have control over daily routines will improve teacher satisfaction with changes in the school. (Chissom, 1986; Hawthorne, 1986; Mielenyzer,1990)

One of the major changes for teachers moving to a middle school structure is the idea of working in interdisciplinary teams instead of the traditional faculties or departments. As already indicated, for change to be successful in education, communication of information and the empowerment of teachers in the decision making process need to be addressed. Husband and Short

(1994) identified multiple facets of empowerment of individuals: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. They found that

> teachers in interdisciplinary teams perceived themselves to be significantly more empowered than departmentally organised teachers on each of the six dimensions of empowerment (p116).

In 1991, Rita O'Sullivan found that interdisciplinary team organisation teachers expressed more positive attitudes toward their colleagues and described their principals as more effective goal setters. All teachers, regardless of their school organisation, felt that their contribution to school-decision making was inconsistent. O'Sullivan recommended that teachers should be provided with more input into decisions that affect their work. It is important to note, however, that O'Sullivan suggested that school organisation did not significantly effect teachers' attitudes toward work, beliefs about professional life, or involvement in their school's decision-making process. These findings were supported by Busman's (1992) findings in his paper, *The myth of the teacher resister; The influence of authenticity and participation on faculty trust* . Again the dimension of communication was raised as an important issue in terms of acceptance of educational change by teaching staff. On a similar note Fullan (1992:72) when suggested that "New meanings, new behaviours, new skills depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals." Lortie (1975) and Saranson (1971) in Fullan (1992) suggested that other factors include exchanging ideas, support and positive feelings about their work.

Patricia Ashton's report, *Middle school organisation, teacher job satisfaction, and school climate* (1981), found that, when compared to teachers in other schools, middle school teachers considered teaching to be more important to them and were more likely to choose teaching as a career again. They had

higher expectations of academic success for their students, were more concerned with their students' affective development and reported greater satisfaction in teaching. On the other hand, Jeffrey Gordon (1979), in a comparative study, discovered teachers of the middle grades tended to have more negative attitudes towards their students than teachers in the other two groups, particularly the high school teachers. Middle grade teachers generally felt the students are more irresponsible and less interested in the school work and believed their own students' interests were more often at cross purposes with the schools' interests than did teachers of other grade levels.

Other conflicting reports of teacher beliefs about a middle school environment come from Cronin-Jones (1991) and Newell (1992). Cronin-Jones found that science teachers felt the most important student outcome was factual knowledge. Middle grade teachers felt students learnt best through repeated drill and practice, and that these students require a great deal of direction. Newell, however, found science teachers were willing to implement alternative forms of assessment mainly due to their dissatisfaction with the status quo and a belief that alternative assessment would help student learning. According to Vin Villas (1993, p.17), teachers should realise that "participating in a transition to a middle-level school provides the most potential for professional growth within a given school culture".

Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods are often the subject of much debate, especially when compared with the traditionally accepted quantitative method. Huberman and Miles (1984, p.429) indicate that "abstractly, qualitative data refer to essences of people, objects and situations." According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.227) the purpose of a qualitative study is to

"accumulate sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding". More specifically, Evelyn Jacob (1987, p.5) suggests that "qualitative traditions may offer richer and fuller understanding of education". Terry Holburn (1986, p.408) supports this with the comment that "researcher involvement in personal document research is viewed as an advantage, since the researcher and documenter develop a trusting, mutual relationship". Further advantages of qualitative data are summarised by Huberman and Miles (1984, p.15) who claim

> Qualitative data are..a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring during local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to ... new theoretical integrations...Words, ... have a concrete, vivid meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader - another researcher, a policy maker, a practitioner - than pages of numbers.

It is important to realise that qualitative research methods are used to interpret behaviour in a given context, the way the social environment influences the people in it and how individuals interpret and respond to the environment (Candy,1989). In terms of educational implications, however, there some criticisms have been levelled at this approach. McNamara in Woods (1986, p.150), has "accused ethnographers who have been working in schools of being.. unappreciative of the problems faced by teachers in their work" . This problem can be overcome in studies where the researcher is involved in working in schools, is aware of the problems faced by teachers, and is a participant observer.

Symbolic interactionism

In general terms, the topic of this study can be productively explored by a qualitative approach to research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.227) the purpose of a qualitative study is to "accumulate sufficient

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knowledge to lead to understanding". In this study, a qualitative approach allows for the documentation of teachers' opinions about the introduction of a Middle School and how they feel they will be affected. It provides the opportunity to understand the problems faced by teachers. Symbolic interactionism provides an appropriate conceptual framework for achieving this purpose. Foster (1981, p.18) indicates that "the methodology of symbolic interactionism is based on the process of identification with others" and that "the researcher must also be able to grasp the world from the subject's point of view". Faules and Alexander (1978, p.5) provide further evidence to support the use of this method by noting that,

> Because the symbolic interaction perspective stresses both interior and exterior influences, concepts such as meaning, symbols, self, role, interaction, group activities, and behaviour in large social settings need to be exposed.

The commonly recognised founding researchers of symbolic interactionism are Blumer and Mead. Both were able to justify the approach by advocating that it allows for the fact that people think and develop in distinctly different ways (Ritzer, 1983) and affords us a different perspective on teacher resistance to change. As Hargreaves (1982, p.16) suggests,

> the objective approach holds the danger of the observer substituting his view of the field of action for the view held by the actor. We cannot afford, therefore, to ignore ... the interpretive process.

Symbolic interactionism provides a conceptual framework for accumulating sufficient knowledge of how people interact with their environment (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Foster (1981, p.18) indicates that "the methodology of symbolic interactionism is based on the process of identification with others" and that "the researcher must also be able to grasp the world from the subject's point of view".

Symbolic interactionism attempts to explain how cooperative social

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behaviour is possible. Faules and Alexander (1978, p.4) offer the definition that, "Symbolic interaction is essentially a sociological-psychological perspective of the entire spectrum of human behaviour". Woods (1984, p.1) suggests that the heart of symbolic interactionism is the "notion of people as constructors of their own actions and meanings". Interactionists also tend to "focus on the micro- rather than the macro-level of human interaction" (Browne and Foster, 1983, p.xv). This concept is central to a study which attempts to examine how individual teachers react to the inception of a middle school in terms of others' responses, and subject department influence.

According to Woods (1984) symbolic interactionists believe that: individuals construct their own actions, meanings, interpretations and definitions; use negotiation processes to construct meanings; take the social context into account; and are able to 'take the role of others'. These ideals relate strongly to how teachers perceive their own roles and positions, thus making the use of a symbolic interactionist approach appropriate to this study (Goffman in Woods, 1984 and Goffman in Ritzer, 1983).

For research based on this approach to be effective, researchers must put themselves in the place of the participants they are studying in order to understand the situation from their point of view (Hargreaves, 1982, p.16; Blumer in Ritzer, 1983, p.319). Blumer goes even further to say that "scientific models are to be developed and tested in and against the real world, and are only useful if they help us understand that world" (Ritzer, 1983, p.319). It can be said then, that the symbolic interactionist framework

> emphasises that human beings are active, creative beings who negotiate meanings with one another rather than seeing individuals as passive beings, operating in roles largely controlled by forces outside themselves (Browne and Foster,1983:xv).

Summary of key propositions in the conceptual framework

From this review of literature an educational change, the principles of middle schooling and the adoption process, three main propositions for the conceptual framework of this study have been formulated. The first proposition is that Middle School changes involve shifting boundaries of traditional subjects and pedagogies. The second is that teachers' identities are constructed around subject areas and years of teaching experience. Thirdly, from these career identities, there are likely to be significant influences which shape the way teachers respond to the Middle School idea.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim

The aim of this study is primarily to examine how teachers in an independent girls' school in Western Australia believe the introduction of a Middle School will affect them. The study attempts to determine whether the teachers believe their interests will be enhanced or threatened by the implementation of this new educational concept. In addition the study attempts to find if the number of years of teaching experience, or the subject department to which the teachers belong, influence their reactions.

To achieve this aim, a qualitative rather than quantitative approach was adopted since it was considered that qualitative methods would provide the opportunity to conduct the study as a participant observer and record participants' feelings in an attempt to understand the affect the introduction of the Middle School at St. Anne's would have on the staff. This involved conducting the study in its naturalistic setting rather than by using an experimental design. It also involved using a method designed to map the meanings that the participants had constructed about the Middle School.

The methods used for collecting data included formal interview, document review and participant observation. Once collected, the raw material was coded, processed, and analysed with the aim of identifying any linking patterns or themes. Then the data was displayed in appropriate forms such as tables and charts and commented on in relation to the literature on middle schools. Finally, the participants were asked to comment on the analysed information from the interviews.

These processes are now explained more specifically in terms of the identification of the sample used, the size of the sample, data collection strategies used, and the strategy used for data analysis. Matters concerned with the validity, reliability, ethics and the significance of the study are also covered.

Sample identification and selection

Given the qualitative nature of the study, a purposive sampling approach was deemed to be most appropriate. This meant that as the study evolved, the sample could be extended if necessary through a process of 'snow-ball' sampling. Factors that had to be considered in selecting an initial sample included the settings, people involved, the events which occurred and the review of the processes that would take place (McCall and Simons, 1969; Huberman and Miles, 1984).

The settings in this study included the general school environment of staff rooms, staff meeting rooms, offices and classrooms. Because participant observation was one of the data collection devices, all staff and administration became part of the population sample. However for the interview, more specific criteria were established. Interviewees were selected by choosing a 'senior' member of teaching staff (greater than 15 years' experience) and a 'junior' member of staff (less than 6 years' experience) from each subject department. Where they had indicated they were available, the Heads of Departments were also selected. This sample allowed for the comparison of staff responses to the Middle School in terms of years of teaching experience and departmental attitudes. All staff were asked to complete a form to determine whether they would volunteer to be involved or not (Appendix 1). Those who met the appropriate criteria were asked to participate in the interview (Appendix 2).

Sample size

The responses to the request for interview are demonstrated in Table 2. Only one person said 'no'. Table 3 demonstrates the final distribution of those selected for interview and the final number of staff selected for the interview.

Table 2. Request for interview responses

Department	No. issued	No. +	No. -	No. not returned
Art	3	2	0	1
Design/Tech	10	3	1	6
English	6	4	0	2
Junior School	3	0	0	0
LOTE	4	3	0	1
Mathematics	7	3	0	4
PCE	3	3	0	0
PE	4	3	0	0
Science	6	4	0	2
Social Science	6	4	0	2
Music	3	1	0	2

where   No. + is the number of 'Yes' responses
        No. - is the number of 'No' responses

Table 3. Participants in interview

Department	HOD	+ 15 years	- 6 years
Art	N	N/A	Y
Design and Technology	Y	N	Y
English	Y	Y	Y
Junior School	N	N	N
LOTE	Y	Y	N/A
Mathematics	N	Y	Y
PCE	Y	Y	Y
PE	N	N	Y
Science	Y	Y	Y
Social Science	Y	Y	N/A
Music	N	N	Y

where   N - No
        Y - Yes
        N/A - not applicable as no one exists for this criterion

After the initial selection, a change was required to the sample, because some of the respondents became unavailable. The final sample for the interview then consisted of 17 respondents which included six Heads of Departments, five teachers with 15 or more years of teaching experience and six teachers

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with less than six years teaching experience. This outcome helped satisfy a requirement of purposive sampling, namely, maximum representation.

Data collection strategies used

A variety of methods was used to collect data. This was done in order to gain as much information as possible increase the credibility of the results. The use of a symbolic interactionist approach meant that it was most important to be aware of factors which assured validity of data and led to insight into the subjects' definitions of the situations. For symbolic interactionists "the researcher is essentially in the same position as the subject in trying to make sense of a social situation" (Foster, 1981, p.25). The methods of collection attempted to focus on these points. The actual methods used reflect those advocated by symbolic interactionists: participant observation, document review and extensive interviews.

Participant observation

Participant observation is based on taking part in the ordinary everyday life of the group or institution under study, accepting a particular role, and observing both the group and one's self. Participant observation is defined by Fredrichs and Ludtke (1975, p.3) as the registration of "perceptible actions in 'natural' situations on the basis of a present scheme." The purpose of participant observation as a data gathering process for examining how individuals react in their natural environment, and how people relate to issues in their environment (Spradley, 1980). Participation "enables analysis of ... reactions, motives and intentions" (Woods, 1984, p.16) which is exactly what happens on an everyday basis. As with any instrument of data collection, however, there are advantages and disadvantages.

According to Bell (1987, p.97) the major advantage of using participant observation is that "observation can often reveal characteristics of groups or individuals that would have been impossible to discover by other means." This includes the opportunity for the researcher to collect both verbal and non-verbal data. Participant observation also enables access to otherwise privileged information, especially in meetings and reviewing internal documents (Foster, 1981). Because the informants are in their natural environment, there is a reduced degree of control and manipulation of variables, which, in turn, increases the validity and reliability of the data (Archer, 1984; Bell, 1987; Spradley, 1980). Crabtree and Miller (1992) reiterate these points and adds that participant observation also creates scope to ask questions in local jargon and the chance to recognise the sequence and connection of events.

The biggest disadvantages of using participant observation to collect information relate to the skills of the actual observer. Firstly, the observer must be accepted into the population. This problem is overcome, however, as the researcher is a teacher at St. Anne's and Woods (1986) indicates that teachers are ideally placed to use this method as they already occupy a role within their institution. This also overcomes the problem of acceptance of an outside observer by the population, and reduces the chance of behaviour changing in reaction to the presence of the observer, which is the second disadvantage of using participant observation. Other disadvantages primarily relate to the difficulty that an observer may have in objectifying responses to the experiences examined, as a result of being so closely involved with the participants. This could raise some doubt about the validity of the findings (Archer, 1984; McCall and Simons, 1969). As Bryn in Woods (1986, p.36) indicates however, "If the researcher is aware of the hazards and the rules of the method of participant observation, then he (she) should be able to accurately find the cultural meanings contained in any group he (she)

studies." This researcher was very aware of the hazards. The other major problem associated using participant observation is the large amount of time required to collect sufficient data.

Overall though, the disadvantages are possibly outweighed by the advantages. As Woods (1986, p.42) suggests, 'There is no real substitute for what the researcher sees, hears, and experiences in person." Crabtree and Miller (1992, p.72) indicate that "whether participant observation is a suitable method depends entirely on the research question being asked and the overall design of the study". The research question in this study requires the collection of information on perspectives and opinions of teaching staff involved in a specific environment. This makes the use of participant observation a most appropriate form of collecting data on the necessary issues.

In this study, participant observation took place at staff meetings, at professional development conferences, during staff room discussions, departmental meetings, and general everyday functions of the school.

The information was gathered by recording general staff room discussions, noting teachers' reactions and comments at staff meetings and observing teachers' reactions to any documents produced by St. Anne's administration.

Review of documents.

During 1994-95 a number of documents were issued to staff indicating administrative decisions on the various facets of the Middle School. As St. Anne's was still in the developmental stage of producing the final structure for the Middle School it was important that these documents were reviewed and the reactions of the staff to them recorded. Included in these documents

were the minutes from all preliminary meetings, which involved staff in the decision making processes, staff meetings and official communication reports to the staff. Other documents were also sent to parents of incoming and enrolled students. The relevance of these was also examined. The documents provided a useful memory spur for certain episodes and information. The documents also confirmed approaches and responses in writing, hence providing a check on the reliability and validity of other data gathered (Archer, 1984; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Woods, 1984, 1986).

Interviews.

Interviews provide in-depth information that can be specifically related to the concepts being examined. They enable the discussion of sensitive topics and have the added advantage of allowing observation of non-verbal responses (Archer, 1984; Le Compte, Preissle and Tesch, 1993). To some extent, interviews can be seen as an extension of participant observation on an individual basis.

As with participant observation, interviews have their disadvantages. Firstly, interviewing can be an expensive process in terms of both dollars and time. Time was the main component affecting this study, but due to the nature of the participants this was overcome because of the participants willingness to cooperate and wanting to be involved. The other disadvantages are mainly to do with the skill of the interviewer. Respondents can be turned off, and become unwilling to participate if they feel threatened in any way.

In this study, the interview allowed for the researcher to investigate how staff really viewed the concept of the Middle School in relation to themselves, their subject department and their experience. It was assumed that staff members participating had some idea of what was being proposed. The

questions were semi-structured in order to allow for as much information to be gathered as possible. A total of 17 members of staff participated in the interview. These interviews were conducted during third and fourth terms in 1995. Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour.

When structuring the interview the following areas were considered to be important: curriculum and assessment, pastoral care, administrative structure, resource allocation (both human and other resources), timetabling and professional development. These topics were used as subheadings for structuring the interview. This also assisted with identifying themes and patterns in the data when analysing the results. The interview questions were trialled with informed associates. Their feedback helped to ensure that the questions were as meaningful as possible. The final set of questions is documented in Appendix 3.

Data analysis strategy

Consistent with the emergent approach to qualitative research, analysis of data for this study was early, ongoing and inductive (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The analysis was also descriptive and interpretive.

More specifically, the method used to analyse the data in this study was the constant comparative method (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). This involves searching for particular patterns and themes as they emerge from the qualitative data. The themes which emerge can then be analysed and interpreted with respect to other results because themes tend to occur over and over again in the connection of different components (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980).

This form of theoretical orientation has met with some criticism. Kuhn (1964)

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in Ritzer (1983, p.319) states that "all scientific fields, including social, should aim toward generalisation and laws" and that symbolic interactionism fails to do this. Foster (1981) indicates that it is possible that encounters are not as free and equal from bias as theorised and that social constraints are not accounted for in some descriptions. These arguments can be countered by the claims that verbal accounts enable insight into a point of view and that "participation rather than detachment allows improved analysis" (Foster, 1981, p.26). Geetz in Huberman and Miles (1984) suggests that description, whilst not as easy as numbers to analyse, is able to render more meaning than numbers alone and should used throughout the data analysis. This applies particularly where results are presented through "thick description".

To add further strength to the results some componential analysis occurred. This process is described by Le Compte et al (1993, p.256) as being one where "social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories." The steps in componential analysis include the selection of a domain, the listing of contrasts, identification of the domains affecting the contrasts, combining the dimensions into fields of values and then on the basis of these processes, searching for extra information as required (Spradley, 1980).

Further to the description and categorisation of the themes and issues which emerged in the interviews, documentary evidence was also analysed. In qualitative research the significant documentary information needs to be recorded and analysed. Not only does this serve as a check on the validity of the other types of data but it also enables the facts to be established about situations which are unable to be directly observed (McCall And Simons, 1969; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Spradley,1980; Woods, 1986). Bell (1987) indicates that documents should be selected on the basis of relevance, balance of information and appropriateness of the time available. Primary

documents, those which exist during the research period, were the main source of information in this study.

To summarise, the steps used in analysing the data included immersion of the researcher within the situation in order to give meaning to the data, and componential analysis. The search for appropriate similarities in dimensions was then done by coding the results and using the support of analysed documents. Finally the organisation of the outcomes into appropriate categories was completed in order to allow comparison of results with the existing literature.

Trustworthiness of the findings

The reliability of the data collected and hence the results interpreted is something that is often questioned in qualitative data. Le Compte et al (1993, p.268) suggests that "what is critical to the integrity of each report is that the data adequately addresses the questions raised and that they are used with a level of theory which is appropriate to the data under analysis." For this study, using key informants required a comparison of their interview responses with other information gained from observation and documents. The use of multiple participants from each subject department and different years of experience provided the ability to constantly compare the consistency of each source of data; observation, interview and document review. McCall and Simons (1969) suggest that employment of these processes improves the stability and plausibility of results.

Qualitative research is used to make sense of behaviour in a given context, the way the social environment influences the people in it and how individuals interpret and respond to the environment. The emphasis is on observation and the use of description rather than measurement. These factors makes

validity difficult to measure using standardised quantitative methods. (Candy, 1989)

Guba (1981) suggests the use of member checks and triangulation as forms of ensuring validity when using qualitative research methods. Woods (1986, p.87) describes triangulation as "the use of three or more different methods .. to explore an issue to greatly increase the chances of accuracy" and goes on to say that "the strongest bond is when interviews are accompanied by observation." This method of data validation has been employed in this study and as such complied with techniques advocated by Huberman and Miles (1984). Also, to further assist with ensuring validity member checks were conducted by circulating a draft of findings to all participants in the study so that they could comment on the authenticity of the themes and patterns that emerged after analysis of the data collected. Six participants responded to the request for validation. Their responses indicated they were glad that anonymity had been maintained. The participants' were mainly concerned with the accuracy of reporting of their own comments. Little feedback was given on other staff comments or results.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the commencement of the study ethics clearance was acquired as human subjects were involved in the study. Ethics clearance ensured the fair and appropriate treatment of all subjects involved in the study. All staff were notified that anything they contributed to this study may appear in the final document. Staff were made aware that the study was in progress. Anonymity has been maintained in the reporting of the findings. Departments and contributors have not been referred to by name. Although this may make the writing of conclusions bland, it was necessary to make this commitment in order for the study to proceed at St. Anne's. Individual

members of staff felt that it would be too easy to identify them given the nature of the school community and felt that they may be singled out if they criticised any processes. Prior to the commencement of the gathering of the data, permission was sought from the Principal of the School to enable the study to proceed. This was readily provided in writing, again on the understanding that the anonymity of the school would be maintained. The letter of permission was submitted to the University Ethics Committee.

Significance of the study

This study provided the opportunity for staff to express, without fear of reproach, all the perceptions they had towards the introduction of a Middle School, whether they were positive or negative. The study also aimed to highlight areas of concern associated with changes being implemented in St. Anne's and to determine what could be done to accommodate the staff's concerns. This may lead to a review of strategies and negotiation processes within the school when implementing change in the future. As importantly, it is hoped that this study will provide opportunity for the school to address issues of staff concern about the Middle School[2]. This study may also add to the knowledge base of school administration by highlighting issues which affect the degree to which teachers accept educational changes.

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[2] This is significant because in 1995 another independent girls' school in Western Australia introduced the Middle School without fully consulting staff and addressing areas of concern. Since its inception, many of the problems which have arisen could have been avoided by improving levels of staff involvement and communication. This was disclosed in discussions during professional development courses with other schools.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The key research question was: Do the staff in different subject departments with different years of teaching experience believe that their interests are served or threatened by the introduction of a Middle School?

The headings under which the results are examined have been chosen to reflect the main areas involved in most systems of education. These are curriculum, pastoral care, administrative structure, human and other resources, timetabling and professional development. In order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents involved in the interview the following codes have been used:

Tx - Is the teacher where 'x' (a number) has been randomly allocated for reference purposes

Dy - Is the department to which the teacher belongs where 'y' (a number) has been randomly allocated for reference purposes

I - indicates that the teacher has less than six years of teaching experience. This is referred to in-text as less experienced staff.

E - indicates the teacher has 15 or more years of teaching experience. This is referred to in-text as experienced staff.

H - indicates that the teacher is the Head of Department.

For example, the code IT24D35, would indicate that the respondent has less than six years teaching experience (I), is respondent number 24 (T24) and is from department number 35 (D35).

It was important to establish the level of background knowledge that each

participant had, or in some cases thought they did not have, for each concept relating to the introduction of the Middle School at St. Anne's, in order to determine the foundations on which responses were based. That is, were the responses of staff to the Middle School based on common knowledge and experience, school information or just personal opinion? Not that this would effect the reliability, but in some instances it may have a bearing on the validity of results when making final conclusions. Regardless of the amount of background knowledge the teachers had, they were able to still make conjectures and offer opinions about the effect that introducing the Middle School would have on them, their departments and the school in general.

Why introduce a Middle School?

Principle reasons

Responses to the National Board of Employment, Education and Training Schools Council's (NBEETSC) 1993 Discussion Paper indicated a number of areas where education departments, teacher training institutions, unions and school associations were unhappy with the current system of education for adolescents. The Department of Education in Tasmania felt that, "Stability and consolidation are two key elements for the middle years of schooling" (p61) and the Ministry of Education in Western Australia indicated that principals needed more options and different strategies for dealing with disruptive students. In the same paper the Australian Teachers Union suggested that,

> The needs of children in middle childhood should be considered in their own right, not just in some hierarchical order which gives preference to the needs of senior secondary schooling. (p61)

Further to just recognising the intrinsic value of education the Association of

Independent Schools in Western Australia commented in the discussion paper that, with regards to Years 7 to 10,

> The school is often the only stable, social and emotional support that some children have, and it is unwise and unsound to imagine that intellectual development can in some way be fostered and nurtured without attention being paid to the other dimensions of development. (p61)

The Ministry of Education in Western Australia went further by claiming that in order to successfully achieve a holistic education for middle school children the curriculum must be changed to enable teachers to respond to individual student needs, especially in literacy and learning. These contextual factors provide part of a framework underlying reasons why it was deemed necessary to introduce a middle school at St. Anne's. The school was also influenced by research on the benefits for the students from such an innovation, which has been deemed to be the new future for successfully educating eleven to fourteen year olds (Beane, 1990, 1991; NBEETSC, 1993)

Why a Middle School at St. Anne's?

In the letter to parents and prospective parents (Appendix 4) St. Anne's was able to state a number of ways in which students would benefit immensely from a Middle School. Although the results of this study generally supported the claims made in this letter, other reasons for introducing a Middle School were indicated when the respondents were asked: Why introduce a Middle School at St. Anne's? In response to this question, staff were able to give more than one reason if they desired.

Table 4 shows that staff believe 'student needs' to be a major reason why St. Anne's introduced the Middle School. This is to be expected, given the nature of teaching. One would assume (or hope) that any educational change is introduced for the benefit of students and that everything else then becomes

associated with that. This is best summed up by the comments from one of the Heads of Departments:

> Introducing a Middle School is nothing to do with St. Anne's, it is something that has been needed for years. You could interpret it using Piaget's levels or whatever, but what it comes down to is that the Year 7s were marching on the spot and they needed something more substantial. It gives the opportunity to use student-centred learning techniques, without curriculum pressure. Students can observe and handle ideas more efficiently by doing, especially in Year 7, 8 and 9. That is where you need to *do* it. By Year 10 they (the students) have the ability and maturity for conceptual understanding so then you can move to the next level. (HT12D9)

Table 4. Reasons for the establishment of a Middle School: Responses from teachers

Variables	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	% Total
Marketing (including funding, numbers)	15	3		18
Innovation (both School and Principal)	9	9		18
Trends in Education	17	15	3	35
Student Needs	9	12	9	29
Total % Response	50	38	12	~100

The most common perceived reason why St. Anne's introduced a Middle School was a desire to keep up with an educational trends. Staff comments here could be classified as introducing the Middle School for the 'right' reasons or for the 'wrong' reasons. Twenty one percent of responses fell into the latter category. To quote several examples:

> I think to some extent we are jumping on the change band wagon. I

think the change has been too quick and has become just a bit of a glossy image. (T10D1)

I think really because it is a current trend, not that it is for all the wrong reasons mind you, but ultimately it is still a trend. (T13D7)

I think St. Anne's is a school at the forefront when it comes to implementing the latest ideas. A Middle School is the opportunity to attempt to overcome the Year 8 problems with transition. Suddenly their love of school reverses, they hate school etcetera. Specific year group areas of need can be identified and addressed. (HT15D8)

Marketing was the next strongest first choice of reason. Marketing is obviously necessary in an independent school situation and is something to consider in nearly every decision that is made. Although it could be seen as simply a case of economics, the marketing value of a Middle School whilst not hidden, is certainly not publicly emphasised either. At this stage, however, some teachers felt that marketing has been given priority, over the needs of the students. They expressed concerns that future changes would occur mainly for marketing purposes, and that the ratio between marketing forces and students' educational needs will become further imbalanced.

There was no clear evidence that staff membership of departments exercised any influence on why teachers believed the Middle School was introduced at St. Anne's. Interestingly, though, teachers who indicated that the Middle School introduction is a positive educational trend, tended to be less experienced, whereas those who felt the trend had negative connotations were either experienced staff or Heads of Departments.

The perceived reasons by staff for St. Anne's introducing a Middle School really depends on the individuals' points of view. If staff view the new ideas in terms of the St. Anne's position within the outside community, then their first reason given for the introduction of the Middle School tended to be marketing. If staff viewed the ideas only in terms of the immediate effect on St. Anne's itself, their comments tended to indicate that the main reason introducing the

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Middle School is because it is an educational trend.

Implications of introducing a middle school at St. Anne's.

With regard to the implications of introducing a middle school, the staff were asked to look at three different perspectives: how it would affect them personally, how their subject department may be effected and the possible effect on the school in general. The spread of responses is shown in summary in Table 5. The categories used to analyse the responses data; negative, no change, potentially good,, very positive. 'Negative' responses refer to comments outlining only problems and pessimism about the Middle School implementation really working. 'No change' responses are those that suggest the introduction of a Middle School would not affect the current school operations. The 'potentially good' responses are those which tended to follow the theme of being able to see the benefits of the Middle School in theory, yet were unsure of the practicalities. 'Very positive' responses included all those comments which indicate a willing acceptance of the proposed structures and a tendency to see the possibilities of success.

Table 5: Implications of the establishment of a Middle School: Summary of staff responses

Implications for:	Negative	No Change	Potentially Good	Very Positive	Total
Staff personally	18	23	35	23	~100
Subject Department	12	47	35	6	100
School in General		12	70	18	100

A slight majority of staff took a positive view on how the Middle School would affect them personally. Less than a fifth made negative comments on how they would be affected. Where such comments were made, they tended to be in terms of class allocation. For example, as one teacher said, "What about

my upper school teaching, and the status!" (ET10D1)

The staff who saw no real change happening to them tended to be members of non-core subject departments. In this case, realistic resource limitations require them to make fewer adjustments than members of some other departments. This applies especially in terms of balance of teaching load because the usual combination of upper and lower school classes is likely to be maintained for these teachers.

Over half of the staff saw themselves as either potential or actual beneficiaries of the move to introduce a Middle School. They wanted to be involved in teaching in the Middle School because of the possible improvements in job satisfaction and career opportunities. In a key statement an experienced teacher said:

> I would like to be involved in a pastoral care capacity. It will be a new challenge. I've been wanting to be involved with the younger students for a while now. Also there is now more promotional opportunity. (ET4D8)

Most of the very positive staff were the less experienced teachers. Perhaps they are able to see the potential and are not worried about, or even aware of, the associated practical problems mentioned by other staff. This is possibly because the identity of the teachers isn't so strongly connected to their teaching role and subject. Typically, some of the less experienced teachers commented:

> Great, I think there will be lots of opportunities. (IT13D7)

> It will give me a chance to work with other teachers I wouldn't normally work with. It's always good to be involved in something new. (IT1D1)

What impact did the staff consider the Middle School would make upon their subject departments? Nearly a half said 'no change'. They tended to feel that the theories outweighed the practicalities and that, especially initially, this

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would cause their departments to continue to function in the same manner. The following comments indicate how they felt.

> Given the nature of the department, it (the Middle School) won't really change anything at all. (HT5D2)
>
> They are quite protective in (department 5), so ideally there will not be many changes. (IT8D5)
>
> I don't think they're really keen; although the younger staff and the Head of Department seem to like it. (ET14D9)
>
> No idea! (HT18D10)

A third of the staff took a more positive view by saying that, although there may be problems in the practicalities, ultimately the changes would occur and they would be beneficial. An experienced core subject teacher made the observation that:

> The department is generally amenable to change, but there are certainly reservations especially regarding resourcing. I don't think the change will end up being as big as what was initially feared. We use student-centred learning techniques anyway. (ET4D8)

Another interesting observation was that the members of D1, who were well informed when it came to the associated theories of the Middle School, tended to feel that their departmental would either experience no change or suffer a detrimental change as a result of introducing the Middle School. According to a dissenter, a possible reason for this reaction is that, "They (D1) think it is a disaster. It is a shame as I am sure it could be quite interesting." (ET10D1)

An analysis of the data on how staff felt the school in general would be effected by introducing a Middle School, found no real negative responses. Over 70 percent of them tended to feel that potentially the whole school stood to benefit. Of these staff, about half considered it would be a matter of 'wait and see'. For them, there was not as yet sufficient information to make a final judgment. As one Head of Department commented:

> There are a lot of unknowns about numbers and things at the moment, like where the greatest in-take years will be and so on. We may just have to wait and see. (HT6D6)

Other teachers were more positive, with one commenting, for example:

> It will go in stages, but I'm sure it will work eventually. (ET10D1)

The main reasons given for not voicing a clear opinion about the success or failure of the implementation of the Middle School focussed on space, fragmentation of the school and departments, and the level of staff commitment, which would need to be great enough to make it work. The theme of these responses is highlighted in the following comments:

> It depends on how wholeheartedly aims are implemented, if the theory is put into practice then it will be very exciting. If there is a large gap between rhetoric and practice, then you will end up with only the rhetoric. (IT7D2)

> It depends on whether a wholehearted effort is directed towards it and it just doesn't become a name and a theory. (HT18D10)

> Staff will soon realise that the change is not as big as what they expected and that the teaching methods are the same anyway. More information is needed about what is happening before a commitment can be made. In some departments I can see that they will have difficulties as change will be necessary. It comes down to curriculum overlap versus time, and we all want more time. (ET4D8)

Despite these reservations, about one fifth of the staff were committed to the idea that changes would occur and that those changes would be beneficial. Some of the reasons for this 'positive' response are typified by a Head of Department:

> I think the change will be made. We can then head towards eliminating the pressure associated with the need to learn content, keep the core or key learning areas and make a list of competencies and from there - go for it. (HT12D9)

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Significantly, all staff taking this positive stance were Heads of Department who had very strong background knowledge with regard to the theories supporting the introduction of a Middle School. Staff views on how the introduction of a Middle School at St. Anne's would effect individual departments and the school in general tended to be similar. This is to be expected to a certain degree because teachers could experience difficulty seeing the school from a holistic view, having been 'departmentalised' for so many years.

Summary

These results suggest that, regardless of department membership and years of teaching experience,staff reactions to the introduction of a Middle School contain the same verbalisation of fears and benefits across the board.

For some, the benefits included the opportunity to work with colleagues across a range of subjects, while others thought there would be an increased opportunity to develop their teaching skills in a new area. For example, the integration of Year 8 science, social studies and mathematics curriculums was seen as a positive step toward reducing current content overlap in graphing techniques. More time would then be available to fully explore other concepts.

Introducing the Middle School would provide further opportunities for promotions for teachers. These promotions would centre around the pastoral care of students and include the positions of Year Coordinators.

The status of Year 11 and 12 teaching is still very important to some staff and consequently these people felt that teaching in the Middle School would pose a threat to this. Staff who were interested in teaching in the Middle

School feared that they may be 'stuck' in the Middle School. The absence of concrete outcomes as to how the introduction of a Middle School will effect teaching allocations, current department structures and teaching strategies were raised as the main concerns by staff. The members of some departments felt that integration of content and subjects would result in their department being 'swallowed" by others.

Other areas effected by introducing a Middle School are curriculum, pastoral care, administrative structure, resourcing (human and other), timetabling and professional development. Each of these facets are explored separately.

Curriculum

Principles of a Middle School curriculum

On reviewing Junior Secondary Education, Eyers (1992) reported a number of items that should be used as a reference guide by teachers to encourage effective learning in the middle years of schooling. For effective learning to occur, Eyers indicated that young adolescents need explicit models and demonstrations of what they are expected to be able to know and do. It is important that cognitive, practical and social achievements are recognised. Assessment of this range of skills needs to be well documented using explicit criteria which is understood by the students.

According to the NBEETSC (1993), the assessment outcomes of the Middle School need to be divided into the categories of basic attributes, essential knowledge and key competencies (Appendix 5). A clear set of outcomes helps decrease the amount of unnecessary overlap that exists in the current curriculum. The use of competencies allows for curriculum overlap to be used

in a manner which encourages further stimulation and learning, rather than the revision of old content (Beane, 1990; NBEETSC, 1993; Eyers, 1992).

Other factors needing to be included in an effective middle school curriculum include recognising and accepting diverse student backgrounds and needs. Higher order thinking needs to be developed along with opportunity for the practical application of ideas and taking on challenges.

Tasks for implementing these factors need to allow for different thinking styles, and learning and working rates. These tasks should also incorporate experiences which reinforce skills of personal organisation including planning, scheduling, reflecting and evaluating. Such skills need to be imparted using a combination of 'real-life' and technology-based methods. It is suggested that the level of technology used should at least match the everyday technology used at home.

It is important that students' interests in personal growth and social issues form part of the content, and that opportunities be provided for collaborative learning and leadership development.

These principles have been adopted by St. Anne's as the basis for developing the Middle School curriculum. In the initial stages, St. Anne's does not expect an instant and complete cha..ge of curriculum in all subject areas. In structural terms, each core department will remain isolated from the others. This situation will change within three years in order to attempt to effectively incorporate all of the necessary curriculum changes.

St. Anne's staff reactions to the proposed curriculum changes

When endeavouring to discover what St. Anne's staff reactions were, it was

important to establish the their degree of understanding of the required curriculum changes to help make sense of their comments. The majority of respondents knew something about the curriculum background with respect to Middle School theories. Only three respondents admitted to not knowing anything about the theories.

It is useful to examine staff reactions to the proposed Middle School curriculum in terms of curriculum outcomes, teaching styles and strategies and alternative forms of assessment.

Change in curriculum outcomes

Prior to 1996, one non-core subject department at St. Anne's was already looking at changing the core curriculum in the middle years of schooling. It had been working with a team of staff from a number of other schools. As a result St. Anne's Head of Design and Technology was able to produce a summary document for members of her department. This document indicated what changes in teaching focus would be required. The table is shown in Appendix 6.

St. Anne's staff perceptions of proposed curriculum changes were examined in relation to the effect on the individual teacher, the department and the whole school. In general, although most staff knew the names of the changes, there was less understanding associated with curriculum changes when it came to discussing the consequences of their introduction. Often when asked about personal implications, the Heads of Departments interviewed made comments in departmental terms and were unable to distinguish between the department and their individual needs.

Of the responses to do with the effects of curriculum changes on individuals,

nearly three quarters of the staff tended to suggest the changes were potentially good . Nearly half of these people thought that the changes would be extremely good. The following comments reflected the general tone of their responses.

> ..if anything the changes will add more excitement. (HT18D10)

> I will have to work on changing my style for the Year Eights and Nines. It will be very hard for Maths teachers, I think. It will require a lot of extra time and this needs to be considered carefully, although I think it is necessary. (ET17D5)

> It should give me a chance to work with other teachers that I normally wouldn't get the chance to work with. I feel that the kids will be happier. It's always good to be involved in something new. (IT1D1)

About 70 percent of the respondents indicate a willingness to try a different curriculum approach, provided that a number of areas of concern were examined and resolved. The most common of these concerns were the amount of time available to change systems and how to effectively produce appropriate assessment tasks and criteria. These concerns are exemplified by an experienced teacher who said:

> You need to know the nuts and bolts. How does it apply directly? How do you teach it? If someone would show me how, I'd be happy to do it. But really, I just haven't got the time or energy to do it by myself. (ET17D5)

It was interesting to note that despite the expression of some concerns, no individual disagreed with the proposed curriculum changes.

Similarly, no staff member said that the departments would be effected adversely by the curriculum changes. In fact, a significant number of staff felt that it would work provided the departmental structure remained. However, not many of them thought that the members of departments would like to see integration of subjects to the degree that is proposed in middle school curriculum theories. This reates to the consent that the Middle School

requires a shift in focus from traditional subject department boundaries. An experienced core-subject department teacher commented:

> They (the staff in the department) can be convinced, provided it (the new curriculum) is introduced slowly and not forced. You want staff united, not split. You also need to allow for the opportunity of staff input and the option for expressing any concerns. I think this would also help. (ET10D1)

A less experienced teacher said:

> I wouldn't want to be forced to change and use outcome statements and the like, but I would be willing to use them if I was taught how. I would try and apply the new curriculum as much as possible. (IT7D5)

One Head of Department suggested that:

> The department is prepared to change as is required. There is still a long way to go before the student outcome statements will be finalised. I'm still a bit unsure about it. I'll just wait and see what happens. (HT6D6)

A majority of staff suggested that the change in curriculum structure had potentially good effects on the departments. The Heads of Department from two non-core subject areas said they thought the proposed changes could have a positive effect on the departments. One of them thought that the success of the change depended on the attitudes of those involved directly:

> With anything new, you have to be careful not to be too 'airy-fairy', you still have to teach the basics. Will the 'three r's' still be around at the end of it all? People panic and feel that they are not in control if there is not some concrete mark to give at the end of it all, with some concrete lesson and seated kids for extra security - if the curriculum is perceived to be all over the place, control is seen to be decreased which is often, wrongly, correlated with work rate. (HT18D10)

In general, comments made during interviews showed that regardless of what is thought or said by staff members, if St. Anne's wants the staff to implement a change, they will, whether or not they totally agree with the new idea. At the same time it may be noted that the school is foresighted enough

to see that input from staff is important and would not force an issue where there is no support. The majority of the staff responses indicated that the individual departments would be positive about the use of an alternative curriculum. Others emphasised that they felt any change would be done if required by St. Anne's.

Comments regarding the success or failure of curriculum implementation at St. Anne's tended to fall into a consistent departmental pattern. In departments from which there was more than one participant in the study, the responses tended to be similar. An interesting comment was made by a less experienced teacher regarding his department's position:

> I don't think they would be too thrilled about the idea in general but they'd do it if they had to. (IT8D5)

The qualified acceptance of curriculum change implicit in this comment was elaborated upon by an experienced member from the same department who said:

> It (the department) will have no choice, but it will be difficult to change to a new way of thinking that has been resisted for so long. You see so many things, you tend to get cynical after a while and end up using experience as a guide. You see many wonderful theories that unfortunately all too often aren't backed up with practice. They never seem to be as effective as they sounded. (ET17D5)

From observation, this core-subject department is seen as an extremely experienced and effective department but one which is somewhat set when it comes to change. It can be concluded that in this case, the teachers' responses are bounded by their identity with their subject departments and their current career structures.

In Figure 4, one exception to the pattern of grouped departmental responses as analysed from the individual comments is D1, where the responses have spread across two categories. An experienced teacher in this department

explains the situation as follows:

> They (D1 members) can be convinced, provided it is introduced slowly
> and not forced. You want the staff united,not split. You also need to allow
> opportunity for staff input and the option for the expressing of any
> concerns. I think this would also help. (ET10D1)

It is interesting to note that once again the provision for staff input into the
issue has been raised as a concern. This theme continues to run quite
strongly throughout the results, especially with those respondents who still
have reservations and concerns that they feel need to be addressed.

Figure 4. Responses from staff about the perceived implications of introducing an
alternative Middle School form of curriculum, categorised by the department
to which the teacher belongs.

Categories		Total %
Some Resistance	D1, D5, D5	29
Potentially Good	D1, D1, D2, D2, D4, D8, D9, D9	50
Very Positive	D6, D6, D10	21

With respect to the staff perceptions of how introducing a Middle School
would effect the curriculum across the school, the general view was that the
proposed changes to the curriculum would be accepted. However, despite the
overall acceptance of the curriculum changes, concerns were still expressed.
These concerns were mainly related to the fact that a lot of the future still
remains unknown. In the words of one teacher:

> Due to the nature of the staff I am sure there will be no problems
> provided that there is no frustration involved. Generally I think the staff
> are very open minded and willing to try things. (ET9D6)

What the curriculum changes actually end up being however, can only be
speculated upon at this stage. The result that nearly half of the staff
responses see the proposed changes as being positive for St. Anne's and

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another quarter see the changes as having a very positive influence on the school, augers well for success for the changes proposed once the common concerns are resolved. These concerns included class room allocation for the Year Sevens, the expected classes for teachers in the Middle School, an appropriate meeting times for Middle School staff and the provision sufficient development opportunities for staff to learn the required skills for developing and teaching a Middle School curriculum.

Preferred teaching styles and strategies

Theories of middle schooling identify preferred methods of achieving learning objectives, or teaching styles. The style used must be able to impart the curriculum content in the method outlined by Eyers (1992).

In this study, the teaching styles of staff at St. Anne's were examined to see how consistent they were with those outlined in middle school theories. An underlying assumption was that if there is too much of a difference between currently preferred teaching strategies and styles, and those required to operate a successful middle school, it would be difficult to successfully implement the Middle School without a vast amount of staff retraining. Conversely, it was assumed that if there is consistency then the task of encouraging teachers to use the required strategies will be much easier and the staff will feel more positive about being involved in the Middle School because less change is needed (Beane, 1990; Faules and Alexander, 1978; Fullan 1992).

The preferred teaching styles at St. Anne's fall into four main areas; teacher instructed , teacher instructed-student centred activities, student centred and a combination of styles. One teacher admitted freely that her style was teacher instructed. She said:

> My lessons are teacher instructed. You have to be in (D7) as it is
> dangerous otherwise. In team situations it might change a bit,
> especially when there may be one or two kids who are experts, but not
> often. (IT13D7)

She said this almost as if it was a crime to teach using this method. All of the other staff indicated that they used one, if not all of the other teaching styles. The less experienced teachers tended to favour more student centred work, whereas the more experienced teachers tended to use a combination of styles. From this information it can be assumed that the staff at St. Anne's have the right methods of teaching for a middle school curriculum to be imparted successfully.

Table 6. Teaching strategies used as indicated by St. Anne's staff

Exposition	Consolidation & Practice	Peer Tutoring	Group Learning	Experiential Learning	Combination as required
ET17D5	ET17D5	ET17D5	IT1D1	IT1D1	HT3D1
ET14D9	ET14D9	ET14D9	IT7D2	IT7D2	HT12D9
IT13D7	IT13D7	IT13D7	IT16D3	IT16D3	ET4D8
	IT8D5		IT8D5	ET9D6	IT2D4
			ET9D6		HT18D10
					HT15D8
					ET10D1
					HT6D6
					HT5D2

Table 6 shows that no staff member claimed to restrict him/herself to only one teaching strategy. Even the teacher who commented that her teaching style was teacher centred, used a variety of teaching strategies. Research-based theories and teaching experience support the use of a variety of strategies within each subject. Of the teaching strategies listed in Table 6, exposition, consolidation and practice, and peer tutoring tend to be more teacher-centred approaches. The remainder are more student-centred approaches to teaching the curriculum.

The patterns in Table 6 suggest that at St. Anne's experienced teachers

tended to prefer teacher-centred approaches. The less experienced teachers
tended to support more group work and experiential learning and were
prepared to name specific strategies used rather than just answer, "a
combination". This finding tends to support the framework that years of
teaching experience affects teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a
Middle School. The Heads of Departments and the other experienced teachers
generally indicated the use of a combination of styles. The responses from
teachers in the same departments generally tended to match each other.

When asked if they thought their teaching styles and strategies incorporated
any of those advocated by middle school theories, nearly all said yes. The only
doubts came from the following three people who stated:

> Possibly. They have to be teacher instructed due to dangerous
> situations that can occur and so on, but the learning would have to be
> student centred. I think I am probably a bit too teacher oriented at
> times, but sometimes you need to be. (ET14D9)

> Yes, with the Eights anyway, the Twelves are more structured and
> there are a few more restrictions. I like to use the students' ideas to
> determine the central outcome of the lesson. (IT16D3)

> No. But that needs to be changed. Hopefully we can try and change it.
> At the moment, until someone can show me something new, there is not
> much choice for any of us in the department. (IT13D7)

Therefore, it can be assumed that, where possible, staff at St. Anne's are
willing to adopt the strategies needed for the Middle School curriculum to be
successful. Staff realise that even though they all have preferred styles, and
strategies, in teaching, their capabilities are such that they are willing and
able to use the appropriate strategies. It is possible that the degree of change
may not be as big as that which was feared initially. This also possibly
highlights an area of confusion that may be causing some resistance towards
the idea of the Middle School; namely, if staff feel that they are already doing
what is preferred, then unless they are shown something new, frustration
may emerge from the feeling of 'marching on the spot'.

Assessment

The aim of Middle School assessment is to record the students progress in learning required skills and content, rather than just testing the final product (Beane, 1991). To do this effectively, it is believed to be necessary to use alternatives to the traditional grade-related descriptors. This means moving away from traditional assessment items such as testing and assignments toward a list of student outcome statements, which assess the level of development the student has reached.

About a third of the staff at St. Anne's generally felt uneasy about moving away from traditional assessment items. The Heads of Departments were the most uncertain. They wanted much more information before making a commitment to the change. Bernstein (1973) indicated this would be a probable reaction from staff as they needed to conform not only on what was to be assessed but how and why. This reaction is highlighted in the following comment:

> Currently I am profiling it but there have been no specific outcomes. There have been some problems. I'm waiting for more information. I need more information. (HT3D1)

Another third of the staff indicated that they could see potential benefits in the change of assessment structure. The main concerns were again the lack of information and the feeling that, although St. Anne's is willing to change, society certainly is not. The following three comments are representative of this theme:

> I think it is a good idea, although kids like marks; they focus on it as their reward. The whole of society's thinking would have to be re-focussed. (ET9D6)

> The theory is fine but in practice there is still a hell of a long way to go, as it would involve the retraining of student and societal attitudes to the

value of school. At the moment this is only determined by a grade. (HT5D2)

It looks good an paper. So far the "big sell" has produced a nice theory. But how do you convince employers and the rest of society who aren't interested in reading progress charts? All they want to see is a grade on a piece of paper, they don't really have time to look at anything else. (IT8D5)

The remaining group of staff thought the proposed assessment changes were definitely appropriate and several had already begun to use some of the methods within certain subject areas. This group felt that the idea of assessment alternatives was a good one and were willing to try it immediately. According to one Head of Department,

It is good to have different types of assessment as there nothing wrong with trying everything. The more methods used for evaluation, the better the chance of getting it right. (HT18D10)

The implications of alternative forms of assessment for the school were then examined. Some concerns were raised regarding community acceptance, including the idea of a clash of assessment systems, and the idea that staff may not be willing to accept the changes. Virtually all participants in this study, however, indicated some interest in the idea of using alternative assessment forms. Even so, there were some hesitations. For example:

I think the change needs to happen across the board, but I'm sure the problems of acceptance will continue outside of the school and into the community. (HT3D1)

There is some resistance due to change although I think in general, staff are willing to have a go. (ET4D8)

It is difficult to run a system that grades both formatively and summatively where society and the TEE subjects expect formal assessment. To some extent the options are reduced because of this. (ET10D1)

If it was an across the board school policy then I guess you'd do it. Otherwise I don't see much of a change happening. (ET9D6)

I can see how in English and Social Science it can be done. It would be a lot of work. It could be done, but how well it could be done has to be the

question, because it must be done well. (IT7D2)

Summary

Overall the teachers said they were willing to try the proposed curriculum changes in the Middle School at St. Anne's provided they are supported by the whole staff. At the same time they voiced concerns about the lack of background information and professional development. This is especially evident with respect to changing the assessment structure. One very experienced teacher made an insightful comment which tends to summarise the ideas of other staff.

> Looking at it from an old point of view, it goes back to the upper school. If it remains TEE driven then the same problems remain. The other problem is that they are seen to be American ideas which is not always well received, especially in education. If emphasis is always on relevance to needs, where do you draw the line at trends? Maybe the Middle School will help the students to know what they do need. Maybe for learning's sake they will be challenged. Sounds nice doesn't it? To some degree I think all the changes may be more trouble than the results achieved, especially in Year 9. I have to wonder if the theory of the Middle School is good. Are 13 and 14 year olds really ready to assume responsibility for their own learning? I have doubts of the maturity of that age group to handle the situation of self motivation and self control and discipline all of the time. There will have to be an increase in the coordination of and communication between staff. We often get a situation of all or nothing, even with new staff. If the departmental structures are reduced in the Middle School as the theory indicates they should be, then all of the reforms might work. (ET17D5)

Despite the recognition by staff that curriculum changes are necessary and that ultimately students may benefit, a number of concerns were raised. Staff reactions to the issues associated with curriculum changes tended to coincide with the membership of subject departments. Members of some departments felt that any change in a Middle School curriculum could only be successful if the communication of information between St. Anne's administrators, Heads of Departments and teaching staff was improved. Staff felt they would be more comfortable working towards changes in

curriculum outcomes and assessment if this was done. This reaction further indicates the need for a paradigm' shift by staff before they are willing to accommodate the proposed curriculum changes.

Where communication was not a factor, the most obvious concern was the provision of time for coordination with other subject departments to achieve the desired curriculum outcomes. Staff felt that they were busy enough already without adding the extra burden of more meetings and restructuring the curriculum.

On a more individual basis, staff tended to resent what they felt was the forcing of particular teaching styles on them. All staff felt that using a variety of teaching strategies was necessary to be successful, regardless of school structure. Staff also indicated that they would prefer to teach across a range of year groups. Some felt that their job may be threatened if interdisciplinary teams are introduced, because the departmental structure would be reduced and so would the number of staff. It was generally felt that the remaining staff would then be required to take a greater load of classes and the provision of part time work opportunities would be reduced, because of the expected co-curricular commitments.

Despite not seeing many benefits to the proposed curriculum changes, staff at St. Anne's indicated that there would be more than enough teachers available to work in the Middle School if need be and most would certainly do so if required by the school.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care issues contain some of the most important factors that St. Anne's considered in developing a middle school. In part, a middle school aims

to reduce the number of contact teachers that students see, increase the opportunities for students to develop their self esteem, assertiveness and values, and develop a consistent set of rules through a process that involves student input.

Maintaining a high level of pastoral care at St. Anne's is accorded the highest priority. The introduction of Middle School at St. Anne's was designed to help reduce the stress caused to students-in-transition when entering high school and puberty concurrently. Generally, responses from staff interviewed, reflected the idea that pastoral care is a priority at St. Anne's and that any system that can improve the degree of pastoral care should be trialled. Information gathered by observation at staff meetings and discussions and from documents also indicated that both curriculum innovations and pastoral care issues have high priority within the school.

It was interesting to note certain patterns which emerged when the staff were asked about how much background knowledge they felt they understood with respect to pastoral care in the Middle School. Firstly, those who felt they had complete understanding of the issues tended to be the Heads of Departments. Secondly, the more experienced teachers generally felt they were only aware of information about middle school theories for pastoral care which the school had passed on to them. Thirdly, the majority of the less experienced teachers said that they not only knew what St. Anne's wanted them to know, but some extra details as well.

A check was made to see if similar patterns occurred with acquisition background information about curriculum changes required in a middle school. Only the Heads of Departments said they were well prepared in terms of such information. This could be because Heads of Departments meet directly with Administration once a week, or that they received and read the

information first, before deciding whether to pass it on. These results suggest that an emerging common factor at St. Anne's may determine the success of the Middle School. This factor is the effective communication of information to the members of staff who are involved in, or affected by, any proposed major change at St. Anne's.

Another explanation for the different degrees of background knowledge among staff could be the following. The Heads of Departments maintain full knowledge as they need to be able to directly answer staff questions and be responsible for implementing Administration's policies directly with the staff. By contrast, both the experienced and less experienced staff work on a need to know basis.

As mentioned previously, pastoral care is certainly a priority of St. Anne's and always has been. It is also one of the selected priorities in the theories about effective middle schooling. For instance, the first issue discussed at St. Anne's was the introduction of Year Coordinators for each year group, Seven to Twelve. All staff agreed with the introduction of these new roles mainly because of successful past experiences. In the words of several teachers:

> It's a good idea. Past experience has seen it work very well. (HT3D1)

> Excellent. From personal experience as a student I think it is really necessary and it works really well. (IT2D4)

The idea that a Year Coordinator would provide a consistent point of contact for students, parents and staff alike was another reason given for the approval of the new positions. Comments from staff included:

> It's good for students to have an individual to relate to. This should improve consistency. (ET17D5)

> Good, because there will be more contact with the kids; feedback from other schools has always been positive about the use of Year Coordinators. The Deputy of Pastoral care needs a watered down version of him(her)self. It should work well provided the Year

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> Coordinator has enough power and professional freedom to do their job properly." (HT18D10)

The traditional combining of pastoral care and Inter House competition was not appropriate according to staff who felt that this clash of interests would be revoked with the introduction of Year Coordinators. One teacher remarked:

> Finally! It was a mistake to try and combine House competition with pastoral care strategies. It never quite made any sense. (HT12D9)

Given the introduction of the new positions and that teachers are still the students' first points of contact, an issue arose as to whether staff at St. Anne's had been properly prepared for their required roles. This is especially important with the new emphasis on encouraging students to be more open with discussions on problems and difficulties they may be experiencing. Despite the priority previously placed on pastoral care, the staff complained that they were not properly prepared to deal with situations as they arise, and they questioned whether the daily time available for pastoral care group contact is being used in an appropriate and effective capacity. A tutor group is a 'class' of approximately 15-20 students for which the teacher in charge is responsible for the students' personal development. Heads of Departments are not responsible for a tutor group. The development of staff to carry out pastoral care is certainly perceived as a distinct area of need which has largely been ignored to date. All staff felt that something needs to be done, provided it is relative to the point of need. There was a strong feeling from staff that they were just expected to know what to do and that it basically came down to the natural skills and personality of the individual involved. The following cross-section of comments epitomise the feelings toward staff professional development in pastoral care strategies.

> There has never been much (professional development) given in terms of pastoral care. (IT8D5)

> There has been no preparation made whatsoever! I don't think there are enough guidelines or activities. (HT6D6)

It's needed. At the moment it is just left up to everyone's personalities. (IT13D7)

The opportunity should be made for those people who need it, but those who are more experienced are probably all right now. (ET14D9)

Some PD (professional development) would be good especially for people who are new at dealing with a particular age group. A list of possible problem areas and the appropriate strategies to cope would be a help. (ET17D5)

There are so few people who know how to really operate a tutor group. It is too easy to get caught up in the admin. side of things. Structured activities require skill and planning. Professional development in this area needs to be a priority. (HT12D9)

There has never been any. If it is a good group of kids then generally you cope, but if it were any different the you'd need to have some strategies in place. (IT2D4)

These comments came from staff regardless of the length of their teaching experience. This indicates that pastoral care professional development certainly appears to be perceived as a priority area by staff at St. Anne's.

Observations at meetings scheduled prior to the inception of the Middle School have shown that professional development of staff in pastoral care strategies has been already recognised as being of primary importance by both the Middle School and whole school administration (Agenda at Staff Meetings 28th March 1995; 23rd May 1995; 20th June 1995; 11th December 1995). Some pastoral care development strategies have already been reviewed and a booklet of activities has been produced for all tutors to use with their students in the Middle School. The aim of the booklet is to provide tutors with appropriate personal development and group development activities for students. These activities are easily performed during the currently allocated 20 minutes of pastoral care each day. This booklet does not address all of the points of concern raised by staff. Further development of appropriate pastoral care strategies, especially for students who are in transition, still needs to be undertaken.

Staff at St. Anne's indicted that they were aware of the emphasis and priority given to pastoral care of students. This is significant because it is an issue which is not influenced by teacher identity based on subject department or years of teaching experience. The introduction of a Middle School provides further opportunity for pastoral care strategies to be provided specifically for transition students. The teachers felt this was one of the most positive aspects.

Despite indicating a willingness to assist in student development, staff felt that some situations they were expected to deal in the Middle School with would be too threatening. Most indicated that they did not feel adequately prepared to cope with common problems affecting adolescent girls. These included student reactions to the death of relatives or friends, student reactions to crimes committed by their peers, personal issues of parent relationships, friendships with boys and experimentation with drugs and alcohol. Staff suggested that further training was necessary, even in terms of how to develop a trusting relationship with Middle School students. At this stage, staff did not believe they had the opportunity to improve their skills in these areas.

Administrative Structure

Except for one teacher, all staff indicated that they had adequate background knowledge about the theories regarding middle school administration structure in general and St. Anne's proposed Middle School administration structure in particular. What the theorists advocate, and St. Anne's experience suggests, is that an appropriate structure for the Middle School

should include the use of Year Coordinators and a separate Head of Middle School. Ideally the staff would be committed to teaching only in the Middle School. At this stage at St. Anne's it would appear more likely that teachers will continue to teach a combination of Middle and Senior School classes for at least the first year. After that, greater commitment to the Middle School would be sought. The proposed administration structure at St. Anne's is shown in Appendix 7.

The state of staff background knowledge about administration structure is similar to that for curriculum and pastoral care in the Middle School. The only slight difference comes in terms of a smaller number of staff indicating that their knowledge is only as diverse as the information they have received from St. Anne's.

Establishing Year Coordinator and Head of Middle School positions has changed the overall school hierarchy at St. Anne's. Appendix 7 contains the document issued to staff indicating how the new positions fit into the existing echelon. These positions were introduced by the Principal at the Staff Meeting, 23rd May 1995, with the following explanations:

i) The Year Coordinator will improve the current pastoral care structure.

ii) The positions will provide staff with improved career options.

iii) The positions will be open to all staff.

iv) Rewards will be in terms of time or money.

v) House Leaders will organise House activities.

vi) Year Coordinators will coordinate Year activities, assist year group teachers, be the first point of contact for parents and provide information to parents.

Although staff generally indicated they felt the Year Coordinator and Head of

xii. The Year Coordinator in 1996 is a pastoral care role
ix. The House Leaders will organise House activities with the School
Arts Coordinator and the PE (Physical education) Coordinator.

Combining the positions of Year Coordinator and House Leader was trialled in 1995 with the Year Eights. As one of the tutors involved and able to observe the reactions and comments of other tutors at bi-term meetings, my impression was that no real problems arose. Arguably, the use of a Year Coordinator as the first point of contact improved the consistency in communication of information to tutors. To the extent that these observations are valid, it can be assumed that the roles of House Leader and Year Coordinator will emerge concurrently with the development of the Middle School at St. Anne's.

Despite accepting the necessity and hierarchy of the Middle School positions, many staff said that the workload was too heavy for the Head of the Middle School. The following comments from staff reflect their feelings on this matter.

> I think the teaching loads are probably too big for the Head of middle School. it should be similar to the other Deputies. (IT2D4)

> The Head of Middle School should be 0·4 of a full-time teaching load max. This way he/she is still involved with the kids and what is going on, but less than half the normal load would give him/her more time for all of the other duties. (IT1D1)

> Ideally the head of a school would have a minimal teaching load. This would also add weight and credibility to the position as a true promotion, not just a superficial position. (IT8D5)

> I don't think of any of them being worth the money offered for the positions. (ET9D6)

> The office is awful to start with, I have no idea of the provisions but she/he should at least have a secretary. (HT6D6)

A 0·6 teaching load was perceived to be too great for the Head of Middle

School to do the job properly. Hopefully, this position, along the the Middle School itself, will evolve over time to reflect even more of the proposed theories and ideals upon which they are based. One of the theories is that staff in the Middle School should be kept to a minimum number. One would expect that the Head of Middle School would then need to teach some classes; what and how many would have to be decided specifically in relation to the needs of the school. So while 0·6 may seem a heavy load initially, it may also be necessary. One suggestion was the provision of a secretary for the Head of Middle School to bring the position level with those of the school Deputies. Again this would have to be a 'wait and see' situation to determine the extent to which the position develops. One comment reflecting the idea that the Middle School and its associated facets at St. Anne's will continue to evolve and expand was as follows:

> It (the positions of Head of Middle School, Year Coordinators and House Leaders) has created the opportunity for promotion. I hope to see all of the roles evolving much more from where they are now. It is important that those appointed to the positions act as role models in the Middle School; demonstrating teaching styles, and providing a link between pastoral care and curriculum. (HT18D10)

Summary

Overall, the staff reactions to administrative changes at St.Anne's required by the Middle School contained quite similar themes. Nearly all staff felt that the use of Year Coordinators, House Leaders and a Head of Middle School were necessary and positive changes to the existing administration structure. With these changes many staff felt an overall restructuring of St. Anne's administrative hierarchy was warranted.

Those who felt they would benefit most from the change in administration tended to be the less experienced staff. These staff felt that there would be a

much greater opportunity for them to receive a promotion and were prepared to apply for the positions despite some concerns about the number of duties required. The opportunity for early advancement and an increase in pay were of greater priority. One staff member was promoted to a House Leader position after only 18 months teaching experience. The more experienced staff tended to indicate that the administration was becoming far too top heavy. They also tended to feel that some of the positions available were far more demanding than what the pay increase indicated. This was especially the case for the position of Head of Middle School.

Human resources

James Beane (1990; 1991) and others indicate that, ideally, a middle school staffing structure should consist of the minimum number of teachers as is practical. These teachers would work in inter-disciplinary teams in order to maintain the expertise required in delivering the appropriate content and demonstrating the appropriate skills. The teachers themselves must also have special characteristics. Donald Steer (1994, p.154) indicates an effective middle school teacher is one,

> who likes and respects people, who is committed to working with young people in transition from childhood to adolescence: listening to and talking with them: and assisting in their development of positive self concepts.

At St. Anne's, all staff were asked to complete a survey indicating their teaching preferences for 1996. One question asked if they were interested in committing themselves entirely to the Middle School. The aim of this survey was to determine the degree to which staff can be successfully allocated their preferences, while still maintaining the aims and goals of staff allocation within the Middle School. Discussion about the results tended to indicate that a sufficient number staff would be willing to work within the Middle School to

make it successful. In 1996, most staff continue to teach across a range of years with the largest Middle School teaching load being 0·8.

Determining whether the teachers were interested in working in the Middle School provided an indication of the weighting of staff attitudes. The results indicated that slightly more than half of all staff said they would work in the Middle School with the remainder preferring not to. Some of the reasons given by teachers interviewed, who indicated they would like to be involved in teaching in the Middle School at St. Anne's, are reflected in the following comments:

> I like the age group. Secondly, it's a good chance of developing my professional skills in another 'specialist' area. (ET4D8)
>
> Yes, if I was more confident about what to do. I want to learn how. I need to increase my knowledge base in that area. There are plenty of theories but no one can show me how! (ET17D5)
>
> Definitely, especially with the chance for promotion and opportunity to develop my skills further. I think in the Middle School you actually have to be able to 'teach', not just lecture. (IT7D2)

The main reasons for wanting to be involved in the Middle School included belief in the associated ideals, opportunities for staff promotion, further professional development in a 'new' area and personal interest in the 11- 14 year age group of children.

The major arguments for not being involved included a fear of being 'stuck' in the middle school, a perceived loss of 'status' from not teaching TEE subjects, the degree of personal stimulation gained in specific content terms by working with older students, and the feeling that the 15 to 17 year age group is a preferred area of interest in high school teaching. The following comments from staff give examples of some of these reasons:

> In (D3) it is far more challenging working with older students. They have more complex, mature and creative ideas. I would like to keep a

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balance. (IT16D3)

I like my Year Twelves! (ET14D9)

I would like to keep in touch with Senior College content. Maths is always building, changing, therefore upper school classes are certainly much more stimulating. (IT8D5)

I'm protective of my career. I don't want to be 'stuck' in the Middle School. I'd like to keep a balance, although short term would be OK. (HT3D1)

These comments provide further examples of how teacher identity related to curriculum subjects is very strong in both framing and classification (Bernstein, 1973). During the interviews staff were asked to estimate their level of background knowledge related to the allocation of staff in an ideal middle school. All Heads of Departments said they were fully aware of what was required; a committed team of staff that would work solely within a middle school. The majority of staff said they knew what staffing situation was desired by middle school theorists. This facet of restructuring indicates direct consequences for the Heads of Departments and so they would be very keen to know exactly what the situation was and how each respective department was to fare. In comparison to the level of background knowledge about curriculum, pastoral care and administration issues within a middle school, the staff said they knew the least about human resource allocation. Possibly this is because of the personal nature of the topic, and any perceived implications by the individuals involved. Most staff, however, said that there would be enough staff willing to participate in the Middle School. This conjecture was supported by staff attendance at the first meeting of Middle School teachers (10th November 1995). It was observed that each department was able to provide two committed members of staff to be involved, teaching mainly in the Middle School. In some cases, due to other restrictions, three were needed. It was interesting to note that all core subject Heads of Departments except Mathematics were involved.

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The staffing of the Middle School at St. Anne's is an important factor in ensuring success at the implementation stage. The staff need to be committed to the new curriculum and pastoral care structures. In the event, some staff tended to feel quite threatened by the thought of having to make a choice between teaching in the Senior College or in the Middle School. These feelings continue to exist despite assurances that a combination of classes can still be taught across all year levels.

Some staff felt their interests would be well served by teaching the age group of children in the Middle School, whereas many others were most concerned about losing the perceived status and stimulation associated with teaching upper school classes. For example, teaching in the Middle School does not give teachers the opportunity to mark TEE papers or operate revision courses and other extra curricula programmes. Those staff from non-core subject departments tended to be the most concerned about not being able to teach Year 12. The reasons for this generally included the desire to be stimulated in their areas of expertise, and the opportunity to provide talented students with extension work, rather than dealing with students who don't necessarily want to be learning the subject.

Other resource allocation

St. Anne's is a heavily resourced school compared to the average high school. Participation in the Apple Macintosh Computer Laptop Programme ensures that all students in the school have their own laptop computer and access to other associated software and hardware, including the Internet. When questioned about other resource allocation for the Middle School, staff tended to be less aware of any specific resource requirements for the students. Most

staff were quite familiar with the school's policy on resources. About one third, however, indicated that they did not know a lot about how resources were allocated at St. Anne's and consequently, how the introduction of a Middle School may effect resource allocation. Those who were most aware of what the general theories advocated about resource allocation in middle schools were again the Heads of Departments.

Available documentary evidence suggests that no clear budgeting priority has been recorded. This is possibly because it is extremely important that the allocation of resources be examined in both an on-going capacity and at the achievement of any prior goals set. This constant review and evaluation of resource allocation is necessary to ensure maximum usage of resources, and encourage a reduced amount of wastage. Teachers have been informed at staff meetings, however, that resources will certainly be strained, initially. This was reiterated at the Heads of Department weekly meetings. An added instruction from St. Anne's administrators was to take great care of the resources that already exist. St. Anne's commitment to the Laptop Programme is one factor which will continue to be a funding priority. As one comment points out:

> The priority is certainly the computer technology. Especially in the
> first couple of years, then it can slowly be reduced. (HT15D8)

One could assume that the Administration are certainly aware of the need to constantly improve the resources available to both staff and students, but also to be realistic in terms of dollars actually available. Although aware of the school's limited resources, staff raised a common concern regarding room allocation. Staff could not see how a school already stretched with current numbers, would be able to include a three classes of Year 7 students. One would assume that this factor would have already been considered by St. Anne's administrators and that opportunity for evaluation and feedback regarding any resource allocation in the Middle or Senior School will be closely

monitored. As one teacher said:

> You often don't know what you really need until you are there.
> (HT18D10)

In order to determine if introducing the Middle School was perceived to effect
resource allocation to specific departments, staff were first asked to indicate
where their department was currently placed within the overall hierarchy and
hence what priority it had with the respect to the of distribution of funds,
building space and equipment. Table 7 presents the spread of staff responses
to the first part of this question.

Table 7. Staff reports of how their department is perceived by other teachers and administrators

Bottom	Near Bottom	No Idea	OK	No Problems
ET17D5	HT12D9	HT3D1	IT2D4	HT18D10
IT17D2	ET14D9	IT13D7	IT1D1	
HT5D2	HT15D8	ET10D1		
HT6D6	ET4D8	IT8D5		
ET9D6	IT16D3			

From Table 7, it can be seen that responses from members within
departments tended to be very consistent, but no other patterns are evident
in the data. It is interesting to note, however, that of the three departments
in the Bottom category, D2 and D6 are non-core subjects. These results are
supported by Bernstein's (1973) findings. It can be seen that teacher identity
within departments is very consistent and consequently a shifting of focus
may be difficult unless benefits for the department are obvious to its
members. In the words of one teacher:

> They (St. Anne's administrators) basically don't know we exist until we
> bring in some food; or some external influence brings attention to the
> language, like the French nuclear testing in the Pacific. (ET9D6)

At the other end of the scale is the Head of Department from D10. This department's curriculum and ideals reflect those of the Middle School in many ways and to some extent provided the catalyst for its inception. It is also a traditionally non-core subject department.

It was then necessary to see if staff thought that these perceptions effected the allocation of resources to the individual departments. A significant number thought there would be an effect. The following comments indicate some of the reasons why teachers thought their department's resources are effected by perceptions of the importance of their subject area compared to others at St. Anne's:

> It's probably not a good thing, I'm not sure. We do tend to be last when it comes to any money or upgrades. (ET14D9)

> Yes. We have asked for lots and got nothing. The resources desperately need updating, the 'sixty's' stuff is no longer really relevant. (IT7D2)

> We have the support from 'Admin.' fortunately. It could be very different otherwise. (HT5D2)

Staff were also asked if they thought the introduction of the Middle School would in any way change the resource allocation to their specific department. Most said there would be no negative effect towards the department resources. Members of four departments, 2, 3 ,5 and 6 (D5 is the only core-subject department) said there will be a positive change. The reason given for this was that the changes would come about mainly if interdisciplinary teams were formed, rather than maintaining the historical departmental structure. Generally, as far as resource allocation and perceived departmental status are concerned, the staff felt there will be little change, especially initially.

On a whole school basis, it was found that about the same number of teachers who felt the department resources would not change, thought that resourcing the Middle School would not effect resource allocation to the Senior

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College. Common sense suggests that distribution will come down to the school's priorities. One would assume that the Middle School would be first priority for the next two years or so, with minimal impact on existing Senior College resources. One teacher typified the views of others:

> There is only a finite number of resources, but hopefully it has been planned to account for this. I don't think upper school classes should expect anything new for a while. Generally we are a quite well resourced, so it shouldn't be a problem. (IT8D5)

Summary

The responses from staff as to how they felt the Middle School would effect resourcing at St. Anne's fell into two main patterns. One group of staff suggested that the departments to which they belonged were not a school priority and, hence, were not well resourced anyway. The members of these departments did not think they would lose any resources, but felt that the situation would not be improved either. The other group of staff also thought that the current situation of resourcing would not effect their departments, but felt that the Middle School would be a priority and consequently, did not expect to receive any extra materials or equipment for upper school classes.

Timetabling

Ideally a middle school timetable provides the opportunity for as much flexibility as possible. The flexibility needs to occur in lesson times, so that if students are developing an appropriate theme they will not be limited by time constraints. The idea is that subjects are 'blocked' so overlap can occur where necessary without being restricted by time. Timetable 'blocking' is seen to be the most effective method to meet the curriculum and content requirements in a middle school (Beane, 1990; NBEETSC, 1993).

Only a few of St. Anne's staff had any knowledge about Middle School timetabling. Most teachers had heard of buzz words such as 'blocking' and 'flexibility' but were unsure what these translated to in real terms. These findings are quite understandable as timetabling is often seen as the Administration's or Head of Department's responsibility. As is often the case in terms of professional knowledge, teachers will acquire knowledge only about key areas which affect them directly (Fullan, 1992; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Le Compte et al, 1993). Staff meeting minutes from 28th March 1995 indicate that the paper, Draft 2 (Appendix 8) was issued to all staff by St. Anne's Director of Curriculum. Attention was directed particularly to pages 4 to 6 and staff were asked to provide written comment to the Director. Not many did. Of those who did respond, the main concerns raised were to do with practical implications of the ideals. For example:

> I definitely see problems in blocking of time being able to improve flexibility. (ET10D1)

The teacher was unable to say exactly what the problems would be, but felt that blocked time would decrease the flexibility for staff, mainly in terms of teaching loads. From observation and staff room conversations it would appear that the members of working party who were associated with looking at timetabling for the Middle School became very disillusioned when it was discovered that the majority of their work had been ignored. The differences between the proposed timetable structure in Draft 2 and the Working Party suggestions from 1994, could be one of the reasons why so few teachers have been willing to offer further input. At the same time, it could be argued, that in some cases executive decisions about timetabling do need to be made especially when St. Anne's administrators are faced with the practicalities of its implementation. The structure of the timetable will be a strong determining factor in the success of the Middle School because of the desired curriculum innovations to be introduced (Beane, 1990; 1991).

Timetabling issues were also related to the possibility of staff still being able to teach a combination of middle and upper school classes. Teachers were asked if they thought it would be possible to maintain the combination that currently exists in terms of a balance between lower and upper school classes. The majority thought that it would be. Of these people, nearly three quarters felt that continuing to operate St. Anne's with staff teaching a combination of year groups was not ideal. Their views are supported by middle school theories which strongly advocate the use of a reduced number of teachers in the Middle School. Some research suggests that teachers should be committed solely to working in the Middle School as inter-disciplinary teams (Beane, 1991; NBEETSC, 1993). Teachers tended to comment along these lines, even though indicating that they would prefer to continue with the current system. As one teacher who supported these views said:

> It would be nice (to continue as is), but really I think that 'either/or' should be the case for it (the Middle School) to work properly. (IT16D3)

Until a complete commitment to the Middle School by staff is expected at St. Anne's, it is doubtful whether the timetable will change much in comparison to previous years. It should be noted, though, that staff were informed through Heads of Departments, that the timetable would be structured from the 'bottom up' to allow teachers interested in teaching in the Middle School to have as many classes there as possible.

Staff at St. Anne's did not think that the proposed timetable changes would have any great effect on the existing departmental infrastructures. The members of one department did however, feel that a positive change would come for their department within the proposed Middle School timetable. One member commented that the department's requests for a fewer number of extended teaching periods per day, and that all of the Middle School classes in

this subject be timetabled together had already been granted. One teacher indicated, however, that logic dictates there would have to be some effect:

> There will definitely be forced restrictions on everybody in some way, but then I suppose in a way there is now anyway.Not everyone can teach Year 12 can they? (IT8D5)

Summary

The restructuring of a timetable at any level is made difficult by a number of restrictions. Satisfying the needs of the upper school curriculum and those required for the Middle School creates even more difficulty. The upper school subject departments tend to advocate separate periods of time per subject whereas an effective Middle School requires an open and flexible structure. Openness and flexibility are needed to encourage the exploration and understanding of concepts being taught.

In general, staff at St. Anne's were uncertain about how much change the Middle School timetable would cause on a whole school basis. While some teachers thought there would be little or no change, the majority were not as sure. The majority indicated that there was a possibility of some restructure occurring, but whether the results would be positive was not known. It was felt that achieving results by changing the existing timetable at St. Anne's would have to be a matter of 'wait and see'.

Professional development

At the first staff meeting of 1995 the principal stated that one of St. Anne's goals for the year was to continue to successfully organise for the opening of the Middle School in 1996. Some of the specialised skills that would have to be developed by teaching staff at St. Anne's included planning Middle School

subject programmes, team-teaching, teaching strategies and how to deal with specific year group pastoral care patterns. All staff wishing to be involved in the Middle School development were keen to seek further professional development in these and other associated areas. Some even indicated that further professional development may make them more positively committed to teaching in the Middle School. Despite feeling they needed further professional development, nearly half of the teachers were not sure which areas were of greatest priority. Even if the priorities had been organised, the teachers were still unsure from where they should seek assistance in their skill development. Some the staff did indicate, however, that they were fully aware of not only the areas of need but also from where to gain assistance to improve in those areas. For example, knowing which courses to take, what the appropriate publications were or from were to gain peer assistance.

The members of staff who felt they had complete understanding of how to achieve appropriate professional development tended to be the Heads of Departments. These staff said that they have a complete understanding of the background to Middle School curriculum, pastoral care, resourcing and timetabling issues. Of those staff who indicated they were unsure about how to receive professional development, the majority were the less experienced teachers. The more experienced teachers provided a more mixed response, although most said that they were aware of what their needs were and how they could be satisfied.

To a certain extent, one would expect the Heads of Departments to be up to date on any professional development courses available. They are the first point of contact for any incoming information about professional development available for staff. What is interesting are the comments by less experienced members of staff. For example:

I don't know anything (about the professional development needed, or

the professional development available), other than I don't think that anything has happened. Has it? (IT8D5)

What professional development? Everyone else seems to be going off somewhere, but I don't ever seem to know anything about it (professional development courses). (IT16D3)

If the Heads of Departments are receiving the appropriate information, it would appear that this is not being passed to the other members of the departments. The results do indicate, however, that one department (D1) is certainly setting the example; all of its members said they were aware of their professional development needs and indicated that they knew how to have those needs met. Regardless of the reasons, though, the staff responses seem to suggest that, unless they have professional development information readily available to them, they will remain confused. As mentioned earlier, the professional development of staff has always been a priority at St. Anne's. Staff commented that in the the area of pastoral care, although a school priority, not enough extra training has been provided. It is important that this information is readily available to all staff. As Judith Little (in Fullan, 1992, p.264) points out, for change to succeed, "teachers must have the opportunity to interact with each other ... and must have some external assistance".

"Middle school", the document available for parents (Appendix 4) reveals that staff were involved in professional development activities in 1994 and 1995. These professional development activities were a series of workshop seminars known as 'Learning for the 21st Century', presented by Dr. Julia Atkins. Initially volunteers were called for, and then later, another programme of work was implemented by Dr. Atkins for the remainder of the staff. These sessions culminated in a single whole staff day at the beginning of third term 1995, again coordinated by Dr. Atkins. Staff were asked to identify what they felt the aims of the day were. While a few staff where unclear about the aims of the seminar, the aims most commonly identified

were the opportunity for staff to clarify Middle School concepts, and the opportunity to 'sell' the Middle School concept to staff. Other staff thought an aim was to provide teachers with new teaching strategies that may be used effectively in the Middle School (see Appendix 10).

The notes from Julia Atkins show that the aims for the day were to provide a brief clarification of ideas, more of a refreshment of concepts that were thought to be known by the staff, with the majority of the session to be devoted to the development of strategies for use in the Middle School. Those who thought the main aim was to clarify concepts of the Middle School tended to be the less experienced staff and those who did not 'volunteer' for the first series of development. It could be assumed these people had not taken a keen interest in developing themselves in terms of new approaches in the Middle School. Alternatively it could mean that these teachers were more willing at this stage of their careers, to wait for direction from the school. Other than the Draft 2 document (Appendix 8), Dr. Atkins' seminar was the first organised by St. Anne's to present information and develop skills associated with the Middle School since 1994. Appendix 9 documents examples of the type of material presented at her seminar.

The reasons for staff being unsure about the aims of the seminar were varied. One teacher, who has shown no interest in participating in the Middle School, said:

> I am not sure (what the aims were) but I felt it was quite pointless. A lot of the information was lost. It would have been better to have something like that with just the Middle School teachers. It was a waste of time for me really. (ET14D9)

Another teacher however, having attended the other sessions on a volunteer basis, felt that the aims weren't straight forward at all. She commented:

> I think it was a set up. I think Julia was coerced into solving problems in one day that 'Admin' knew existed but weren't game to confront. I don't think either party was given the full picture. I think it was all handled very unprofessionally. (ET6D6)

Most of the staff did not think that all of the aims were achieved. Generally these teachers thought that the main aim of the day was to clarify some of the Middle School concepts and help them improve their teaching skills. As one teacher stated:

> There were lots of questions that remained unanswered. I don't think we've been given enough background to be able to evaluate properly. We still haven't. (IT16D3)

It was mainly the Heads of Departments and one less experienced teacher who considered that the seminar was a 'sell' of the Middle School to staff. The less experienced teacher was heavily involved in the background development of the Middle School and trials conducted in 1995. Generally, the teachers who felt the aim of the seminar was a 'sell' of the Middle School concept to staff, also felt that the aims were achieved. One comment perhaps sums up the feelings of those staff at the completion of the seminar:

> Because I am pro the idea (of a Middle School) I found it a bit depressing to see the general attitude. I hope some of those that are 'anti's' at the moment will pick up later on and got something positive out of it (the seminar). (HT5D2)

From observation, it appeared the seminar could have been a highly productive day and successful in developing and clarifying staff concepts about the Middle School. Unfortunately, due to the large range of expectations, it became more of a session of clarification. If however, this is what staff felt the aim was, then the seminar could still be deemed a success. It was observed from discussions both during and after the sessions that those who were strongly interested in the Middle School and in previous Dr. Atkins' sessions, tended to feel quite disenchanted at the end of the day. The Administration appeared to be quite surprised at the demand for clarification

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and information that was required by staff. From one teacher's point of view:

> It was a good start to get ideas going, but the last 15 minutes of explanations and questions should have been first, then we all would have had a better level of understanding. (IT16D3)

Despite all of the variables on the day, most of the staff still said they felt the seminar was worthwhile. This of course may say more about the skill of Dr. Julia Atkins in conducting the seminar to adapt constantly to the needs of St. Anne's staff than it says about staff acceptance of the challenge of preparing for the Middle School.

Finally, staff were asked to indicate areas for further professional development. The most common response was middle school teaching strategies, followed by pastoral care information. Other perceived areas of need included whole school communication, technology, assessment and student leadership roles in the middle school.

Generally, most staff felt that further professional development would help them become more involved with and committed to the introduction of St. Anne's Middle School. Staff also indicated that they wanted the development to be practical and that the participants themselves, be willing and open to new ideas. These responses consistent with Michael Fullan's (1992:264) claims that for change to succeed

> (1) professional development must focus on a need; (2) ensure that the emphasis is on in-service education .. and.. in relation to the needs of principals and teachers; and (3) that teachers must have the opportunity to interact with each other ... and must have some external assistance.

Summary

Professional development at St. Anne's is a priority. Any opportunity for

professional development, especially in the areas of technology and the Middle School, is strongly supported by the school's administrators. Staff are aware of the school's priorities and are prepared to undergo any course they feel is appropriate to their own needs. What staff tend to object to is what they see as 'forced' development. These feelings were strongly expressed with regard to the Julia Atkins' seminars. Staff who were interested, and attended on a voluntary basis, were very supportive of the course. The other staff felt they did not wish to waste their time on attending development courses they were not interested in. These staff felt that their needs could be better served in other ways. Using the Middle School development courses for only those staff who were interested in teaching in the Middle School and allowing staff time to work together, outside of the departments to which they belong, on developing integrated programmes, were two suggestions for better serving staff professional development needs.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

This study was undertaken to examine teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a Middle School in an independent girls' school in Perth, Western Australia. Of particular interest was whether these perceptions were affected by the membership of subject departments and length of teaching experience. More broadly, the study sought to examine teachers' reactions to a major structural change and see what needs should be addressed to ensure successful implementation of future educational ideas.

The key question researched was: Do the staff in different subject departments with different years of teaching experience believe that their interests will be served or threatened by the introduction of a Middle School?

This question was investigated in a broad sense by looking at why the Middle School was introduced, what suggestions were made for addressing concerns, and how the findings relate to background knowledge of staff.

Overall Acceptance of the Middle School in Principle

This study found that, regardless of the subject department to which a teacher belonged, or the length of their teaching experience, most teachers had reasonable knowledge of the main concepts underpinning the Middle School. It also found that most staff were willing to accept the introduction of the Middle School provided that a number of concerns were addressed. The main concerns focussed on the clarification of promotional positions, and how effectively the Middle School curriculum, class allocation and timetabling

issues are implemented. Teachers also felt that, so far, the professional development they have received has been too theoretical and they need demonstrations of new skills. The primary areas identified for more professional development were pastoral care, whole school communication, the use of technology, middle school teaching strategies and assessment alternatives.

Teachers at St. Anne's felt that their interests would be served by the introduction of the Middle School if they were looking for increased opportunities for promotion. They also felt that additional opportunities would arise for working with members of staff from other departments and improving the current curriculum for Middle School students. On the other hand, staff indicated that their interests would be mainly threatened by being forced to teach in either the Middle School or upper school and, the amount of time they were expected to spend in participating in unnecessary professional development.

The members of mainly non-core or non-priority subject areas suggested that their departments may be adversely affected by being ignored for timetabling and resourcing. However, most indicated that this was no different to the pre-Middle School situation. Some members of several core subject departments felt that the removal of structured departments would see their subject areas 'swallowed' by other more powerful departments. Some members of non-core departments which are now combined to form Design and Technology felt that the Middle School would enhance their new department by providing a greater allotment in the timetable and extra resources.

Regardless of whether the individuals and departments felt their interests would be served or threatened, there was still a tendency to support the introduction of the Middle School in theory, yet virtually all staff expressed

some concerns about what this might involve. These concerns mainly focussed on the amount of extra time staff would be expected to commit to the new structure and the current difficulty in communicating information about the proposed changes.

It can be concluded from the evidence in this study that teachers' acceptance of a major educational change depends on the clarity of the initial proposal, the availability of information about the key concepts underlying the change, the perceived costs and benefits to the staff in terms of time, energy and tangible recognition, and how well the overall implications, and outcomes of the proposed change are communicated to all. These findings are consistent with those reported by Fullan (1992). The conceptual frames of years of teaching experience and subject specialisation are key variables which over-ride other factors and consequently act as critical filters for the development of teachers' identities and acceptance of change (Bernstein, 1973).

Other researchers have claimed that the ability of an educational system to introduce change effectively and efficiently depends on the attitude of the staff involved regardless of years of experience or the subject department to which they belong (Archer, 1993; Fullan 1992, 1986). Researchers have also suggested that the degree of acceptance by the teachers affected by the change depends upon how effectively the communication of external and internal information occurs (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1991). This study supports these claims.

Concerns about the Middle School in Practice

The teaching staff at St. Anne's perceived the main reasons for introducing a Middle School were threefold: to keep up with educational trends, provide direct educational benefits to the students, and improve the marketing power

of the school. While they regarded these reasons as honourable, they were worried about a perceived lack of physical space, possible staff and departmental fragmentation between the Middle School and upper school, and whether staff were sufficiently committed to the new structure. Concerns were also raised regarding staff professional development. In general it was felt that the information available was not relevant to the teachers' professional development needs and that the communication of information about appropriate professional development activities was not satisfactory.

Middle school theorists advocate that the curriculum should be relevant to the interests and needs of students' in transition, and that more emphasis needs to be given to the development of students' self concepts, leadership skills and group processes. For St. Anne's, this requires staff to shift the focus of their teaching from delivering content to developing students' understanding of processes. In terms of implementing curriculum changes, staff were generally prepared to accept that, in theory, there were benefits to be gained. However, they had some doubts about how practical the change process would be. Less experienced staff and teachers from the non-core subject departments, tended to be the most accepting and least concerned with the difficulties of instituting the curriculum changes. These findings are to be expected to some extent as less experienced teacher will still be in the process of establishing their professional identity and consequently more willing to support ethos changes. The non-core subject departments do not regard themselves to be as important as other subjects and have learnt to accept changes to the structure of the curriculum.

The general feeling of staff was that the changes would not be as great as initially feared as their teaching styles reflect those advocated by the middle school theories. That is, reportedly, they already use a combination of

teaching styles, technology and activities to assist student learning for understanding. Some teachers, however, expressed the need for more practical demonstrations of new methods and ideas for teaching the curriculum to Middle School students. Overall, staff felt that they needed more information before they could become committed to implementing the new curriculum in the Middle School. These results tend to reflect Fullan's observation (1992, p.129) that,

> One of the most pressing needs in education is for teachers to have the opportunity to restore their sense of confidence, meaning and efficacy in making improvements through carefully considered changes in instruction.

The teachers' views on pastoral care development in the Middle School reveal a need for more information on the availability of professional development, particularly in the area of appropriate strategies to deal with issues affecting transition students.

The proposed Middle School administration structure and the overall hierarchy of positions were unclear to a number of staff. A major problem appeared to be the lack of clarification on the role of the new positions of Year Coordinators and House Leaders.

The staff generally thought that the implementation of a Middle School would not change the existing resource allocation priority for departments. Their views on resourcing the Middle School were less clear as many felt that not enough information was available to enable them to decide what impact there might be. It was mainly the Heads of Departments who had information regarding resourcing, with those from non-core areas indicating that support from Administration reduced the possibility of their departments missing out on any resources. Staff considered there would be a sufficient number of appropriate teachers who would work predominantly in the Middle School.

Most felt that if more information was available to them about specific areas, such as timetabling and class allocation, they may be more prepared to teach solely in the Middle School. This was regardless of the fact that teachers were assured that they would still be able to maintain a combination of classes from most Year levels. Interestingly, despite staff wishing to maintain their current teaching profiles, most felt that the Middle School would be far more effective if it had its own group of teachers.

Other specific areas of need raised by teachers were the need for practical demonstrations of teaching strategies for the Middle School, pastoral care strategies for youth in transition, alternative assessment forms, and technology use. Much of this indicates the staff's underlying concern with the effectiveness of the current whole school communication system at St. Anne's. This point was highlighted by less experienced staff who said that, although they knew they were required to undertake professional development, they were generally unsure how to access it. Staff also indicated a wish to be involved in planning professional development and that professional development must be directed at the point of need.

The teachers indicated that many of their concerns could be satisfied by improved consistency in communication between St. Anne's administrators and the staff, between Head of Departments and their department members and between staff in different departments. Some teachers suggested that inter-departmental communication may improve with a weakening of the current department structure and the introduction of interdisciplinary teams of teaching staff. Despite this view, few teachers were willing to advocate the complete restructuring of the existing departments.

A number of teachers thought that staff at St. Anne's would generally not approve the introduction of a Middle School. The results of this study show,

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however, that staff responses were actually far more positive than expected. In fact, compared to the normal distribution of change resistors, St. Anne's teachers are more accepting of changes than people in a normal population.

Suggestions for further research

This study could have been enhanced initially by increasing the sample size to include surveying the opinions of all staff members at St. Anne's. In a wider study, staff members at other schools, independent boys' schools, independent co-educational schools and government schools could be surveyed. This would provide a much broader base of information on the Middle School. Further research might also compare the staff attitudes now and in subsequent set time periods, as the Middle School evolves.

This study focussed on teachers' perceptions. Other studies are needed to identify administrators' points of view, within and across schools. This applies also to students' attitudes toward middle schools, along with a comparison between the academic results in Year 12 of Middle School and non-Middle School students. Self esteem levels could also be measured and compared using appropriate psychological-sociological methods.

A follow up study could be conducted to determine if the concerns raised in this study have been addressed or if were these concerns were successfully accommodated in the implementation of the Middle School at St. Anne's. This would reveal whether the teachers' concerns still existed or if they were warranted in the first place.

Final comment

St. Anne's is certainly a farsighted school, whose priorities are to maintain

the highest standards of education at all times. Consequently, the school is often piloting innovations and is prepared for success and failure. An example of this is St. Anne's commitment to the Apple Macintosh Laptop Computer Programme, where all students in the school have their own laptop computer.

Even with the advent of a major curriculum overhaul and the introduction of a new school, the Middle School, St. Anne's staff, generally, are still willing to support the school's ongoing innovative efforts. The Middle School may only be successfully established, however, if the concerns raised by the teachers are addressed adequately. These concerns primarily involve a request for an improvement in communication of information at all levels in the school, and the opportunity for interested staff to continue to be actively involved in the development of the Middle School. Staff too, must realise that not every suggestion will be adopted. The teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a Middle School at St. Anne's are quite positive, provided there is the opportunity for real staff input and a provision for future evaluations. Many staff believe that consistent communication of information is the key for educational changes to be willingly adopted by teachers.

Finally, this study shows that teachers can be encouraged to support a structural change that in the short term may be seen as a threat to their interests. This is provided they are involved in identifying the benefits of the innovation for the students.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Letter of request for participants

Suzanne Lienert

28/7/95

Dear Staff Member

As you may or may not know, I am currently attempting to complete my Honours Thesis. In order to do this however, I require the services of as many Staff as possible to participate in a short interview.

The title of the study is *Teachers' perceptions of the introduction of a Middle School.* Could you please fill in the form and return it to my pigeon hole by Monday 31st July.

Thank you

Sue Lienert

Name: Department:

Number of years teaching experience:

Number of years at St. Anne's:

I **am/am not** available to participate in the interview.

Please return this to **Sue Lienert's** pigeon hole by **Monday 31st July.**

APPENDIX 2: Request for interview

Not Required for Interview

Sue Lienert
LEC

15th August 1995

Dear

Thank you for responding affirmatively to my request for interview participants. At this stage your services will not be needed.

If however you have a strong desire to be involved, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be more than happy to accommodate you.

Thanks again.

Sue Lienert

Required for Interview

Sue Lienert
LEC

15th August 1995

Dear

Thank you for responding affirmatively to my request for interview -participants. If you are still available to be involved could you please read the attached forms and return the consent form to my pigeon hole by **Wednesday 30th August.**

If you are no longer available could you please let me know by returning the blank forms.

Thank you.

Sue Lienert

APPENDIX 3: Interview questions

A. General Information

Name:
Age:
Years of teaching experience:
Years at this school:
Current subject department:
Other subjects previously taught or of interest:

B. Middle School background knowledge

What do you know about the concepts of a Middle School regarding:

Curriculum
Pastoral Care
Administrative Structure
Resource Allocation - Human
                      - Other
Time tabling
Professional Development

Why do you think this school has decided to introduce a Middle School.?

Given your views, what do you think the implications will be for

a) you,
b) your department,
c) the school in general

C. Curriculum Implications

Outcomes for Middle School curriculum are

i) Basic Attributes, ii) Essential 'subject' knowledge and iii) Key Competencies

Do you understand what is meant by this?
(If no, then explain)

Given the explanations, what do you feel the implications are for
a) you,
b) your department,
c) the school in general

How would you describe your preferred teaching style?

What learning strategies do you currently employ in your classroom?
Do you feel that your strategies incorporate any of those advocated by a Middle School?

What do you feel about the suggested alternative forms of assessment being advocated by the Middle School?

What effect do you think these will have on

a) you,
b) your department,
c) the school in general

Any other comments regarding Curriculum changes?

D. Pastoral Care

Year Coordinator will now operate for years 7 to 12 . What are your thoughts on this new system?

The pastoral care responsibilities: Has adequate provision for professional development in this area been made, especially with respect to transition students?

Any other comments you wish to make?

E. Administration structure

The creation of positions of Year Coordinators for years 7,8 and 9 and the appointment of a Head of Middle school has increased the opportunity for promotion. The job descriptions were available to all staff.

What is your reaction to
the invention of these positions;

the pay and conditions for these positions;
and how these positions fit into the overall school hierarchy?

Changes have been made to the duties of House Advisers. What do you think about the changes, if anything?

Any other comments?

F. Resource Allocation

i) Human
Expressions of interest from teachers who wish to work in the Middle School have been called for. Would you be interested in working in the Middle School?

What are your major reasons why/why not?

Do you know what interdisciplinary teams are?
(If yes then next question, if no then explain)

What do you feel the implications of these will be to

a) you
b) your department
c) the school in general

Any other comments?

ii) Other resource allocation

How do you feel that your department is perceived by other staff members in the school?

To what extent do you believe these perceptions effect the level of resource allocation to you department?

Do you feel that the introduction of a Middle School will in any way change the perceived status of your department?

Do you think that a Middle School will effect resource allocation to the upper school students?How?

Any other comments?

G. Time tabling

Year 7 will be based in home rooms with year seven teachers plus specialists. What comments are to be made about this? Is it practical?

Given the proposed timetable structure and evaluating what currently happens, do you think it will be possible to teach a combination of both Middle School and Senior College classes?

To what extent do you think time tabling restructure will affect the functioning of the whole school for

a) you
b) your department
c) the school in general?

Any other comments?

H. Professional development

The draft indicates that opportunities for internal appointees to Middle School positions will be available for professional development with regard to whole staff and departmental pedagogy, especially with regard to 'technology immersion'. As yet no further information is available as to the extent of this professional development or when it will occur.

Julia Atkins Seminar - Whole Staff

What do you think the aims were?

Do you think that they were achieved?

What do you feel you gained?

Was it worth while?

What other areas do you feel need to be addressed?

*Do you think appropriate professional development would encourage (you or others) to participate more or less in the middle school?

Thanks.

Middle School

Middle School will formally open in 1996.
We would like to take this opportunity to answer
some questions about the Middle School.

| What is a Middle School? |

It is a focus on the middle years of schooling. Years 7 to 9, which is designed to recognise the particular needs of this age group. At the same time the needs of older students are acknowledged through the identification of a Senior College in Years 10 to 12. These will still exist within the traditional organisation of   They are not about separate buildings but are an individual ethos and identity.

| Why have a Middle School? |

- In recent years a number of people have been challenging the status quo regarding the division of school years into the traditional primary and secondary sectors.
- The entrance into Year 8 is often viewed as difficult for some students as the Senior School appears large and complex after the smaller Primary School. Movement into a Middle School with a more limited range of ages makes this transition much easier.
- At   we continue to seek ways to enhance our pursuit of academic excellence. Making the middle years of schooling more flexible and more specifically addressing the developmental needs of young adolescents is designed to further maintain these standards. The physiological and psychological needs of students in this age group are different from students in earlier primary years and therefore they need different teaching styles.
- We see a need to provide a learning environment that provides increasingly stimulating and challenging learning experiences which foster the intellectual development of young adolescents.
- We intend that the curriculum clearly prepares the student for a future of constant change.
- We believe that a smaller, structured, clearly identifiable Middle School provides a safe environment for students to grow and take responsibility for their own learning.

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| What preparations have been made to a Middle School? | in order to ensure the success of the transition |

1994

- The whole staff were involved in ongoing professional development activities designed to ensure effective teaching and learning in the Middle School.
- Subject departments began the process of re-focusing the Middle School curriculum.

1995

- We are continuing the staff professional development for the Middle School. Curriculum development which encompasses enquiry based and student centred learning is also in progress.
- appointed Year 8 Co-ordinator for this specific Year group.
- Year 8 Classrooms have been located around the Learning Enrichment Centre and the Year 8 students will remain in their home rooms, only moving for specialist classes.
- Leadership roles in the Junior School have been broadened to allow the transfer of these roles to Year 6.
- Extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, have been introduced.

What will happen in 1996?

- The Middle School will formally open.
- We will follow our traditionally challenging academic programme.
- Our Design and Technology programme will continue to be enquiry based.
- At all times Middle School students will be able to promote their learning using a broad range of technologies, including the use of their own personal laptop computer
- Outdoor Education initiatives will provide varied and challenging opportunities designed for this age group.
- Year 7 students will have their own home rooms on the Senior School premises near the Learning Enrichment Centre and the Year 8 home rooms.
- Opportunities for leadership roles will be available for Year 9 students.
- Concurrently there will be a development of the Senior College in Years 10 to 12.
- Extra-curricular activities will be further developed especially in the performing arts area, providing more opportunity for Middle School students.

Should my daughter start in Year 7 instead of Year 8?

Entry to the Middle School can be successfully accomplished in either Year 7 or 8 because of the orientation programmes we have in place. Our Learning Enrichment Centre runs small programmes to help new students feel comfortable entering the PLC environment.

A Comprehensive Range of Outcomes for Middle Schooling

Basic Attributes	Essential Knowledge	Key Competencies
All students will be able to exhibit significant levels of:	All students will be able to understand, appreciate and apply fundamental elements of:	All students will be able to demonstrate the capacity to:
• self-esteem • self-confidence • optimism • respect for others • self-motivation • self-reliance • self-directed learning • personal excellence	• English • Mathematics • Science • Technology • The Arts • Languages other than English • Studies of Society & Envt • Health & Physical Education	• collect, analyse & organise information • communicate ideas and information • plan and organise activities • work with others and in teams • use mathematical ideas & techniques • solve problems • use technology • *develop cultural understandings*

Source: Schools Council, National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1993, 109

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Appendix 6: St. Anne's Design and Technology department's concept of learning in the Middle School; and how teachers need to shift their current focusses.

A lower secondary (or middle school) concept of learning

Table 1.   SHIFTING THE FOCUS

FROM	TO
Learning objectives	Student outcomes
Teacher as instructor	Teacher as facilitator
Passive learning (teacher decides what is to be taught)	Active learning (Student identifies goals and strategies to achieve them)
Teacher's ideas/values	Students' ideas/values
Content focus	Process focus
Abstract context	Relevant context
Discrete skills	Relevant, transferable skills
Discrete subject areas	Integrated skills, subjects
Absolute assessment (right/wrong)	Negotiated assessment (student/teacher)
Predictable classrooms	Unpredictable classrooms
Identical tasks	Collaborative, diverse tasks
Finite goals	Infinite possibilities

PROPOSED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Students				
Year House Mistresses	Tutors	Classroom Teachers	Junior School Class teachers	Senior Teachers 1 & 2
	House Leaders	Year Co-ord.	Directors of Technology, LEG, Library, Music, Drama, Outdoor Education, Counsellor, Chaplain	Assistant HODs Subject Co-ordinators	Junior School Co-ord
Residents in Boarding House	Arts & Sports Co-ordinators		Heads of Department	
Director of Boarding	Heads of School			
Deputy Principals				
Principal				

APPENDIX 7: A diagramatic representation of St. Anne's staff structure including the Middle School.

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IDENTITY / ETHOS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

Uniform differentiation Kookaburra section	Decide by end Term 3	HMS, Principal, Whole Staff, Student Council
Re-writing of all school publications e.g. course summaries, prospectus, handbook	by publication dates	Those currently responsible for production
Zoning (7s in F215, F216; 8s in D125, E127, F128, F129 (+D124 if required) 9s tutor rooms near lockers)		DP(C)
Sub-school assemblies		HMS, Principal
MS extra-curricular activities		see separate section
Leadership structure (HMS and Year Co-ords)		see separate section
Student leadership roles		see separate section

LEADERSHIP / MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE PROCESSES

Head of Middle School Prepare job description and background briefing	Advertise start Term 2. Appointment by Term 3 or by arrangement.	Principal & DPs
Year Co-ordinators in Years 7 and 9 Prepare job description. Determine allowance. Call for 'expressions of interest'.	By end of Term 2.	Principal & DPs

PUBLICITY / PROMOTION

Send letter to current JS parents and those on waiting lists	By end of Term 1	
Hold information evening for existing PLC family	May 10th	Organised by Principal, DPs, Head of JS
Information evening for new entrants as required	Date in May?	Organised by Principal, DPs, Head of JS
Advertise in West Australian, Community Newspapers existence of MS	Coincide this information with ads for leadership positions	*PR office / Registrar*
Information packages prepared for outsiders Staff briefings e.g. for *Registrar / DC's secretary* or *Psychologist*, rest of staff		*Property officer, PR officer, / Registrar* DP(S)?

PASTORAL CARE

Position of House Leaders clarified	By end of Term 3	Principal
Job description prepared and based on pts 3 & 4 of current HADs job description.		
Time allocation fixed		
General rotation of tutors to be on Year 7,8,9 and Year 10,11,12 basis		
Tutors unlikely to stay with same house for ever		
Staff duties to be rostered on non-house basis		
Year co-ordinators to operate in Years 7, 8 and 9.		
Job description to be reviewed to include some administrative matters e.g. homework policy and homework timetable, co-ordination of 'study, skill / computer orientation	By end of Term 3	HMS, Principal
Deputy Principals to have watching brief over Year co-ordination in Years 10 - 12		Principal, DPs
Whole school assemblies retained (possibly once a week in period zero)		
Opportunities for additional MS assemblies		Principal & HMS

ORIENTATION

Excellent, effective orientation for entry at all levels		
Groups to be targeted to include		
i) new Year 7s		Programme from liaison between HMS, DPs and Counsellor
ii) new Year 8s (23rd Nov)	Identify suitable dates	
iii) our 6s to 7s	by end Term 3	
iv) our 7s to 8s (22nd Nov)		

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STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

MS House officials	By end Term 3	Principal & HMS
MS Forum (perhaps chaired by SC prefect?)	By end Term 3	Principal & HMS

PEER SUPPORT

9s look after new 7s	Before camp planning	., DP(PC) , *AE .coordinator*
11s look after 8s		

SCHOOL RULES

No change required owing to generalised nature of current rules. Interpretations to be developmentally appropriate.		Principal & DP(PC)
Differentiation of SC through minor uniform change	By end Term 3	Principal, HMS, Whole Staff, School Council

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Sport

Inter-school sport as now Inter House competitions for MS ·and SC, run at A, B etc. levels	Planning day	*Head of PE* , Planning Group

Drama

To be separate MS & SC school productions To be separate MS & SC house plays	Planning Day	*Head of Drama*, Planning Group

Other arts activities

To be separate where possible (e.g. public speaking, debates, dance etc.	Planning Day	*Arts coordinator*. Planning Group

Music

To be MS musical groups but still retain concept of School bands, orchestras etc. Timetable MS choir Aim for MS musical evening	Planning Day	*Head of Music*, Planning Group

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AWARDS / STRIPES etc

Different awards for MS activities	By end Term 3	HMS, *Head of PE, Arts coordinator*
Dovetail with House points system		DP(PC) and House Leaders

TEACHING AND LEARNING MIX

Curriculum to embrace:
  i) Essential 'subject' knowledge
  ii) Life skills (Key competencies)
  iii) Basic attributes
ii) & iii) mainly through special features and
extra-curricular programme
	By end Term 3	HMS, DP(C), HODs

Organisation and responsibility for content
'subject' based but special attention placed on;
  i) cross subject communication and coordination
  ii) opportunities for joint ventures
	By end Term 3	HODs & HMS

Special focus on sequencing to avoid overlap one year to next		HMS, HODs to liaise with JS teachers
Topic outlines for 1996 to HMS	By end of Term 3	HODs
Preparation of MS course summary handbooks	By end of Term 3	DP(C)

Continued expectation of use of variety of
teaching and learning strategies with attention
paid to:
  - constructivism, active learning
  - flexible groupings
  - whole brain, multiple intelligences
  - student centred, recognition of difficulties
  - responsibility for own learning
		HODs, whole staff

PD opportunities continued		DP(S)
Identification of teachers with particular interest in Middle School. Determine nature of incentives & status for those working in mainly in MS	By end Term 3	Principal and DP(S)
Identification of other timetable opportunities	By end of Term 3	DP(C)

Continue to timetable Year 8 teachers in pairs   HODs & DP(C)

Extension and enrichment from LEC and   *LEC coordinator,* HODs and HMS to determine.
'Middle School Challenge' concepts

TIMETABLING

Year 7 home rooms based in F214 and F215   *Property Officer*
Appropriate furnishings organised   1st Feb 1996!
Year 7 to be based on class teacher as now   HMS, DP(C).
plus specialists
Year 7 teachers may be used elsewhere

Year 8 as 1995, Home Rooms for SS, SC, M, PVE
Retain D125, E127, F128, F129 (+D124 if required)

Year 9s more movement to 'specialist areas'   DP(C)

Pattern for 8s and 9s to be;
    - Key subjects (M, Sc, SS, E)
    - LOTE
    - PVE, PE etc
    - Performing Arts (Music or Drama)
    - Practical Arts (via DT)

Subject choice to be restricted and made as late   Mid Term 4
as possible

SPECIAL FEATURES OF MS TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

    • Academic rigour (especially in 'core areas')
    • LEC flexibility, extension and enrichment
    • Outdoor Education
    • Technology Immersion (including laptops)
    • DT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provide opportunities for any internal appointees
to develop skills required for MS.

DP(S)

Whole staff or department based activities
on 'appropriate' pedagogy

DP(S) & HODs

Continued emphasis on 'converging technology'
awareness and skills

Head of Technology

ASSESSMENT & REPORTING

Review reporting procedures - develop profiles	By end Term 4	HMS & HODs
Write guidelines for MS assessment		HMS with DP(C) to draft
Put in appropriate handbooks	By publication date	DP(C)
Modify SC assessment policy		DP(C)
Put in appropriate handbooks	By publication date	DP(C)

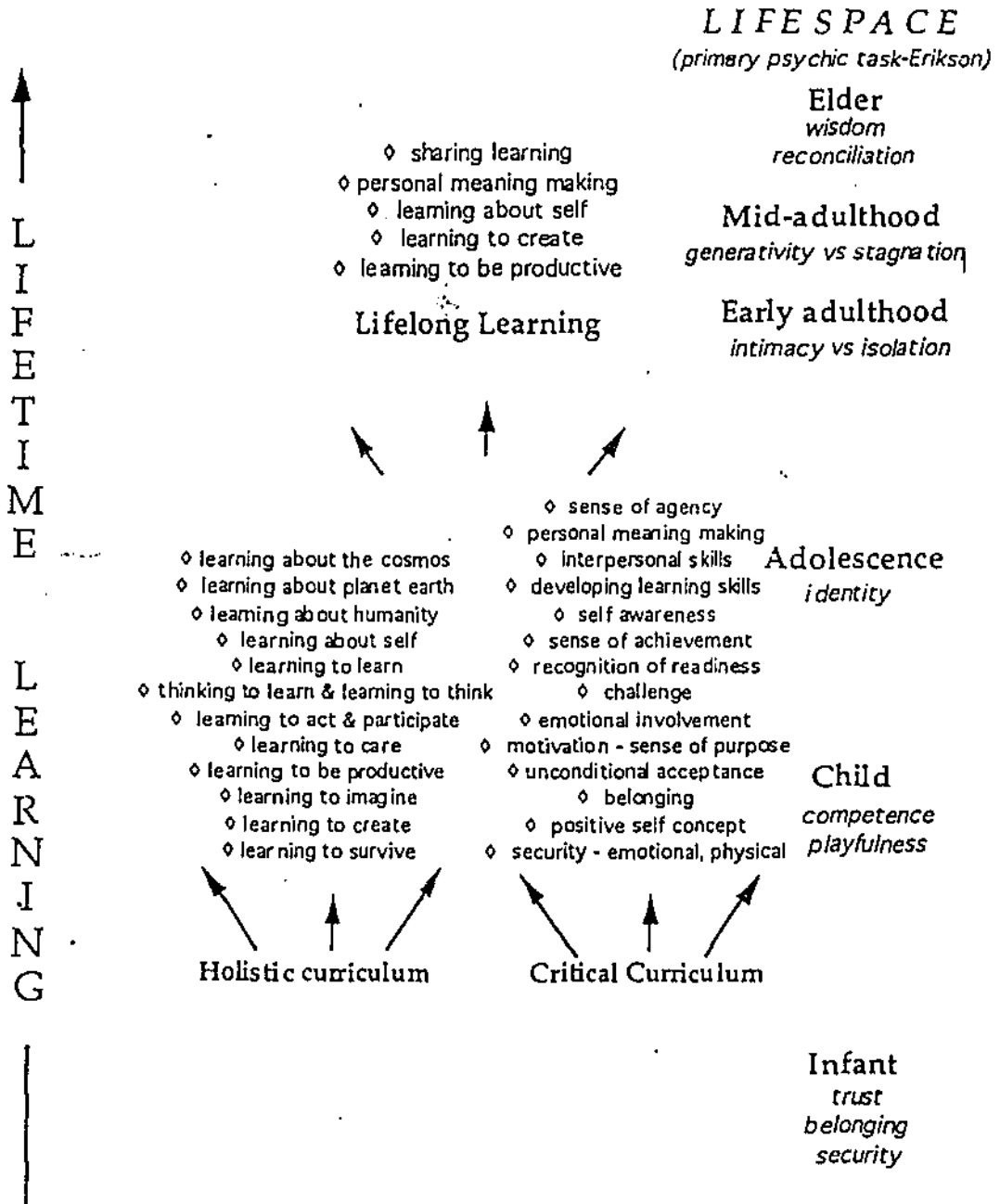## SCHOLARSHIPS

Continue to offer scholarships for Year 7 & 8

School Council & Principal

Offer entry scholarships for 10 and 11
  - as many as we can afford

A Vision for Lifelong Education

L I F E S P A C E
(primary psychic task-Erikson)

Elder
wisdom
reconciliation

◊ sharing learning
◊ personal meaning making
◊ learning about self
◊ learning to create
◊ learning to be productive

Mid-adulthood
generativity vs stagnation

Lifelong Learning

Early adulthood
intimacy vs isolation

◊ sense of agency
◊ personal meaning making

◊ learning about the cosmos
◊ learning about planet earth
◊ learning about humanity
◊ learning about self
◊ learning to learn
◊ thinking to learn & learning to think
◊ learning to act & participate
◊ learning to care
◊ learning to be productive
◊ learning to imagine
◊ learning to create
◊ learning to survive

◊ interpersonal skills
◊ developing learning skills
◊ self awareness
◊ sense of achievement
◊ recognition of readiness
◊ challenge
◊ emotional involvement
◊ motivation - sense of purpose
◊ unconditional acceptance
◊ belonging
◊ positive self concept
◊ security - emotional, physical

Adolescence
identity

Child
competence
playfulness

Holistic curriculum   Critical Curriculum

Infant
trust
belonging
security

L I F E T I M E

L E A R N I N G

The Three Zones of
Educational Restructuring

Version of "Culminating"

- Exit System
- Leave Building
- Year End
- Semester End
- Grading Period
- Each Week
- Each Day

Transformational *System Change*

Transitional *School Challenge*

Traditional *Classroom Comfort*

- Content Information
- Content Skills
- Functional Skills
- Higher-Order Competencies
- Task Performances
- Role Performances
- Life-Role Functioning

Version of "Outcome Demonstrations"

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APPENDIX 10: Summary of staff responses when asked what the aims of Dr. Atkins' St. Anne's Seminar were.

Dr. Julia Atkins' Seminar: Patterns of responses from staff

Aim: Clarification	'Selling' concept	Teaching Strategies	Unclear
IT2D4	IT13D7	ET17D5	ET14D9
IT1D1	HT18D10	HT15D8	ET9D6
ET4D8	HT5D2		
HT3D1	HT12D9		
ET10D1	HT6D6		
IT8D5			
IT7D2			
IT16D3			
raw: 8	5	2	2
%: 47	29	12	12