CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY:
MIDDLE LEADERS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of a new national curriculum is a huge undertaking. The formulation of the revised New Zealand Curriculum in 2007, with its three year implementation period, came near the end of a decade of intensive pedagogical change in New Zealand secondary schools. It is in this context that middle leaders, with their unique position in schools' hierarchical structures which enable them to have a direct influence on the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, were tasked with an important role in developing and implementing a school curriculum which reflects the change of national curriculum. This is in the midst of an already crowded workload. This research explores the personal responses of middle leaders to this major curriculum change and identifies both the challenges that they have faced and their responses to them in the course of the implementation process. Finally, the implications for the roles of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools are explored.

This interpretive study looks to explore middle leaders' perceptions and espoused views of their practice in curriculum implementation. A pragmatic methodological approach employed both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods with greater emphasis on the qualitative. Data was gathered from a wide range of secondary schools in the Northland region with interviews conducted in three schools in the area. The research indicates that there exist in secondary schools some significant barriers to effective curriculum implementation and that interpretation and practice amongst middle leaders is highly variable. The response of middle leaders to these challenges is mostly a managerial one rather than leadership. Questions are raised about the preparedness of middle leaders to implement a curriculum which is significantly different to the previous one without significant support and guidance from both government agencies and school leadership.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

National Curriculum changes are an example of a top down approach to change where the middle leader has little influence over change proposals. Leadership, collaboration and a willingness to make decisions will make the difference between poor and excellent practice.(Blandford, 2006, p. 143)

With the above sentiment in mind, this thesis examines the perceptions of secondary school middle leaders as they seek to interpret and implement New Zealand's revised national curriculum. Above, Blandford (2006) clearly states the dilemma middle leaders face when interpreting and implementing mandated curriculum change, but, is the solution as easily defined as she has proposed? My own personal experience as a secondary school middle leader suggests that it is not. There are many factors which shape and influence middle leaders' responses to curriculum change. I have noticed, in the course of my own curriculum implementation experiences, a wide variety of reactions from resistance to enthusiastic acceptance. This has caused me to question why middle leaders would respond in such radically different ways to the same curriculum document. One thing is certain, the importance of middle leaders in leading curriculum change is unequivocal (Blandford, 2006; Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Busher, Harris, & Wise, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Kedian, 2006; Ruding, 2000).

This chapter outlines the historical and current policy environment in the New Zealand compulsory sector setting and its influence on the national curriculum as the broader context of this thesis. An overview of the last 25 years of education policy shows the immense pace of change which has been imposed on schools and its effect on leaders. This has created an environment which is conducive to the expansion of the role of middle leaders. The development of national curricula over this same period is reviewed, and culminates in the development and implementation of the revised New Zealand Curriculum. In addition, the definition of middle leadership used in this study is outlined.

With consideration of the historical and policy context this chapter then outlines the rationale for the research, the research aims and questions and, finally, the outline for the rest of this thesis.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

Change and Schools

The past 25 years has been a time of immense change in the New Zealand education system and, in particular, the compulsory sector. This period of change has been mirrored all over the western world, and New Zealand has been at the forefront of this.

The 1984 election of a Labour government led to a raft of reforms in the area of social policy with market-led initiatives in health, education and welfare (Philips, 2000). The 'Tomorrow's Schools' (Lange, 1988) paper outlined moves towards a decentralised system of self-governed and managed schools under the umbrella of a much reduced educational bureaucracy (McGee & Hampton, 1996). The impetus for the reforms was the desire for more efficiency in the schooling sector and it emerged from the background of the recommendations provided by the 'Picot Report' (Philips, 2000). Similar reforms took place in Australia, England and Wales, and Scotland over the same period (Philips, 2000).

The impact on schools has been wide and far-reaching. In particular, the role of the principal has irrevocably changed. Principals are no longer just the head teacher, or leading teaching professional of the school, but the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in charge of human resources, financial management and property, as well as meeting targets for educational achievement. The principal's role has become increasingly complex (Gunter, 2002). According to Helsby (1999), "the sort of professionalism that is coming into the top end of the teaching profession now is that of manager more than educationalist" (p.135) and it is hard to argue this has not been the case, particularly during the late 1980s and 1990s.

With the changing role of the principal there came a need for clearly defined hierarchical organisational structures, especially in larger schools, a structure more commonly associatedwith private sector organisations and the business world (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Gunter, 2002). The principal took on the role of CEO as already mentioned, while other senior managers, deputy and assistant principals mainly, became responsible for specific areas and portfolios, far more specialised than before (Cranston, 2009). Middle leaders who had traditionally been chosen for their expertise as teachers and subject specialists became increasingly seen as line managers, responsible for the monitoring of staff and a conduit for information and managerial tasks handed down from the top (Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 2000). This, inevitably, created tension for middle leaders caught between their role as professional and curriculum leader and the expectations of senior management (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007). As a result of this, the middle leader role, while becoming more concrete, has moved away from the traditional role as leading professional or expert teacher and more towards that of administrator. Middle leaders are still coming to grips with these issues today and they are likelyto affect their interpretation of the introduction of a new national curriculum.

The New Zealand Curriculum: What's Changed?

The period of reform, initiated in the late 1980s, carried on throughout the 1990s in New Zealand and elsewhere. Inevitably, the policy shift resulted in demands for not only the restructuring of schools but the content of what was taught. Rather than a content based curriculum, The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF) (Ministry of Education, 1993) specified outcomes which children would be expected to meet at various stages of their progression. In addition to this, essential skills, and attitudes and values were included as desirable outcomes for New Zealand students. This curriculum project was undertaken in the context of the reforms outlined above and was heavily influenced by increased central control over, and through, the work of teachers (Philips, 2000). The nature of the curriculum which focused on specific achievement objectives across a range of subjects and at multiple levelsled to a narrow interpretation by schools and implementation was monitored by the Education Review Office (ERO).

The election of a Labour government in 1999 marked a softening of the policies of the New Right which had dominated the 1980s and 1990s resulting in the decision to review the effectiveness of the national curriculum. However, this is not to suggest that there was a move away from monitoring the work of teachers and school leaders (Codd, Olssen, & O'Neill, 2004). The result of extensive research by a curriculum working group was the 'Curriculum Stocktake: Report to the Minister' (Ministry of Education, 2002). This report concluded that a significant gap existed between those achieving and those not and that there was significant under-achievement amongst minority groups such as Maori and Pasifika students. While positive about many aspects of the curriculum, revisions were recommended to try to meet these disparities (Ministry of Education, 2002). Resulting from this, cross-disciplinary groups were brought together to implement the recommendations of the working group. After a process of writing, consultation and revision, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1992) was replaced by the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) for full implementation in 2010 (Hipkins, Cowie, Boyd, & McGee, 2008).To distinguish between the 1992 and the 2007 curriculum, the latter is referred to as either the "revised" or "new" curriculum in places throughout this thesis.

Many aspects of the NZCF were retained, such as the achievement objectives, although these were much broader in scope than the original. The 57 essential skills were condensed into the five key competencies which were derived from an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on desired adult competencies (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). A vision statement was developed which aspires New Zealand students to become "…confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.8). In addition, the seven essential learning areas were expanded to eight but each learning area was condensed from an entire document into an essence statement and achievement objectives forming only a minor part of the curriculum. Finally, as suggested in the original curriculum stocktake report, a section focusing on effective pedagogy was added to guide teachers in their delivery of the curriculum. Essentially, the balance shifted from subject based curriculum to one where the 'front-end' aspects such vision, values and key competencies now held equal weight to the learning area-specific achievement objectives. This constituted a major shift in emphasis and was

therefore a challenge for teachers and leaders in New Zealand schools. An additional challenge was the extra flexibility allowed to schools to interpret the curriculum according to the needs of their own communities, the document is only intended "…to provide guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.6). While this appears to provide an opportunity for curriculum leadership, it remains to be seen how middle leaders will respond to the opportunity with the possibility of external monitoring agencies, such as the ERO, having a different view of the local interpretation (Cowie et al., 2009).

Secondary schools in New Zealand are constrained by the differing demands of the NZC and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which is administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) mainly through the senior school qualification the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The NQF and, in particular, NCEA in most schools is an important determining factor in the curriculum delivered in Years 11-13 (Youngs, 2008). A number of New Zealand schools also offer international qualifications such as Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or International Baccalaureate (IB). The NZC, then, is only one of a number of demands on the time of teachers and leaders in secondary schools. Currently, an alignment is taking place between the NZC and the NCEA which should help clarify expectations for teachers as to the place of the NZC in senior school education but, in the meantime, leaders are required to balance the requirements of a qualifications system and curriculum.

For the purposes of this topic, I chose to narrow down my focus to middle leaders with responsibilities which include the implementation of the NZC. This group included Heads of Department or Heads of Faculty, single subject leaders and/or combinations of the above. I also chose to include pastoral leaders such as Deans and Heads of Year as much of their traditional roles are now encompassed by the 'front end' aspects of the NZC such as values and key competencies. It is important to note that some middle leaders may hold a number of middle leadership roles.

RATIONALE

Middle leaders in secondary schools are situated in contexts which are increasingly conducive to work intensification, role overload and ambiguity, and an increase in managerial administrative tasks (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Gunter, 2002; Ingvarson et al., 2005). This is the case both in New Zealand and overseas. In addition to this, middle leaders in New Zealand schools have the added burden of implementing a new curriculum; one that has an entirely different focus to previous national curricula and can only add to the workload pressures faced. There is little knowledge of how middle leaders respond to implementing a new curriculum under the current work climate other than that individual leaders will interpret national level change in different ways (Fitzgerald, 2009).

The implementation of the revised NZC is, perhaps, a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the opportunity for change and improvement in teaching and learning could potentially be revolutionary due to the change in focus from traditional subject area achievement objectives to an integrated approach, based on a vision, values, key competencies and effective pedagogies, such as, teaching as inquiry (Ministry of Education, 2007b). On the other hand, the onus of implementing this change falls to already over-worked and under-resourced middle leaders and teachers with limited access to professional development, both in the leadership field and curriculum implementation and a lack of adequate resources to effect change. Therefore, "…the intensification of work teachers have experienced in recent times as a result of educational reforms and changes to curricula and national examinations has been forced downwards," (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 12), causing overload in the middle. In addition to this, a lack of clear definition of role has led to role ambiguity and confusion which, in turn, has muddied the waters in which curriculum change must take place (de Lima, 2008).

Much of the literature surrounding leading implementation of the revised NZC focuses on the role of the principal in leading change (Cowie, et al., 2009; Ministry of Education, 2007a). There is some acknowledgement of the middle leader's role (Cowie, et al., 2009), but a significant gap exists as to their perception of the process. This gap is exacerbated by the acknowledgement in the literature of middle

leaders' critical ability to have a direct influence on teaching and learning and implementing change for school improvement (Bennett, et al., 2007; Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2009; Gunter, 2002; Kedian, 2006).

Middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools are likely to be facing a number of issues as they take up the leadership challenge of implementing a new curriculum. However, these potential issues have yet to be explored in depth and middle leaders operating in isolation may be bogged down. It is my intention to analyse the responses of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools to the implementation of the revised NZC in order to identify these issues and understand the impact that this has had on their roles.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature the perspective of middle leaders who have been given the task of implementing the revised NZC in secondary schools. As such, it is set within an interpretive research paradigm and gathered data with a strong focus on qualitative research methods.

The aim is to analyse how middle leaders are implementing the revised NZC in the context of the current environment in secondary schools and whether the change in national curriculum has had an effect on the nature of their roles and their perceptions thereof, thus creating new knowledge in relation to middle leadership. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do middle leaders interpret the revised NZC and does this align with the aims and aspirations of the curriculum?

- What are the issues faced by middle leaders as they implement the revised NZC and how do they respond to these?

- How has the revised NZC affected the curriculum leadership roles of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools?

THESIS ORGANISATION

Chapter One contains the context in which this project is set, as well as outlining the rationale for undertaking the research and the aims and research questions.Chapter Two examines and critiques the major themes from the educational leadership literature base which are relevant to this study. The literature comes from a wide range of sources both in New Zealand and beyond and includes writings from, among others, the educational change, school improvement and middle leadership theory bases.In Chapter Three the research methodology is outlined and justified, with an examination of the research methods employed, the samples chosen for each method and data analysis techniques. In addition the issues of validity and reliability are examined and ethical issues explored in the context of the study of middle leaders and their practice surrounding the implementation of the revised NZC.Chapter Four outlines the findings from the data collection and analysis process according to the research method, online questionnaire and semi-structured interview. In Chapter Five the significant findings emerging from the data are discussed and examined in the context of the themes identified from the existing theory base.Finally, Chapter Six presents the conclusions in relation to the research questions. Recommendations for relevant parties will then be presented along with the limitations of this study and possible areas for further research.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Major, national curriculum change is a difficult task for all those involved and, in particular, middle leaders whose responsibility it is to implement changes at the 'coal-face' (Blandford, 2006). This chapter outlines the literature surrounding the themes of curriculum change and middle leadership which are the major areas of study pertaining to this research in the field of educational leadership. The issues which middle leaders face in their everyday work which may affect their response to the revised NZC is also examined in the context of the literature in these two areas. Issues such as a high workload, a lack of clarity around their role, the need to supervise and monitor colleagues, the development of team cultures, the distribution of leadership and professional development for middle leaders all have the potential to influence and affect how practitioners view and implement the revised NZC.

During the research process and as a result of analysis of the revised NZC document, an emerging theme of the importance of considering pedagogical leadership as an aspect of middle leaders' work which is distinct from leading curriculum arose. This led me to review the literature again specifically looking for 'pedagogical leadership'.However, literature on this topic has been difficult to locate, so a brief discussion has been included on page 13.

MAIN THEMES
CURRICULUM CHANGE
National Curriculum Implementation – The Issues
Since the advent of self-managing schools, a tension has existed between the espoused principles of allowing local communities to run schools in a way which reflects their own, unique needs and an increasing demand for accountability to central government agencies (Gunter, 2002; Helsby, 1999). Boards of Trustees and principals have treaded a fine line between these two, often competing, demands. It

is this tension, alluded to above, that is of greatest concern for leaders. Cowie et al., (2009) in their exploratory study into the progress of curriculum implementation, note the concern of school leaders who were concerned "…whether their understanding of the curriculum, and subsequently theiractions to implement it, would be seen to be "right", for example, when ERO visited" (p.14). At this point there is no evidence of how local interpretations are being judged at an external level and, while ambiguity remains, so will school leaders remain cautious regarding their schools' interpretations of the NZC.

A change in direction of national curriculum must require a significant change in emphasis at a school level. The educational leadership literature on the theme of managing change is extensive due to the need for guidance for those practitioners who are negotiating an environment where change is rapid and constant (Blandford, 2006; Busher, et al., 2000; Fullan, 2003; Helsby, 1999). Much of the literature focuses on school improvement and needs to be examined critically as there can be an unquestioned acceptance of the imperative for change without a thorough examination of what is driving this imperative (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). However, national curriculum change is compulsory and the literature may offer useful guidance for navigating through such change.

Resistance to change is a natural and expected outcome of any major curriculum change (Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Ruding, 2000; Scott, 1999). Overcoming resistance is the challenge that leaders face, particularly when the change is mandated. The starting point for change is the development and articulation of an organisational vision and this process needs to encompass as many stakeholders as possible including, staff, parents, students and other community stakeholders (Fullan, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2007). This inclusion of stakeholders should allow them to feel included and to take ownership of the vision.It is difficult to see, however, how this aspect can easily be applied to a national curriculum document which has been handed down from above with little option but to implement. The change literature which is most commonly used in school improvement does not address this tension, however.

Change always involves a sense of loss for the participants, loss of the treasured and familiar and requires a significant commitment for all involved. Therefore, resistance can only be overcome when there is sufficient imperative for change. When people can see that the benefits, both for themselves and their students, outweigh the personal cost in time and effort they are more likely to make the sacrifices required (Fullan, 2003). The threat of accountability to external monitoring agencies can only go so far in securing the commitment of participants (Cardno, 2006; Scott, 1999). Finally, a thorough review process which can clearly identify the benefits of the change and incorporates the feedback of resistors who are likely to have useful information to offer, should help to secure the commitment of those yet to come on board (Busher, et al., 2000). Overcoming resistance to change is a difficult, yet necessary, aspect of curriculum change. Although tempting, "ignoring resistance is universally inappropriate" (Duke, 2004, p. 192). Despite this imperative, many leaders, when faced with resistance to change, do exactly that.

Sharing leadership is an idea which holds currency in today's educational environment. Much of the curriculum change leadership emphasises the importance of collaboration and the involvement of others in successful change projects (Busher, et al., 2000; Cowie, et al., 2009; Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001). This again causes a tension for leaders, particularly principals, who are being encouraged in the literature to share leadership as much as possible but must, ultimately, be held accountable for decisions that are made within their school. The more leadership is devolved from the centre, the more risk a principal takes (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008). In addition, the idea of distributed leadership and, in particular, its impact on learning is not yet clear. Writers on distributed leadership almost universally acknowledge that more work needs to be done to both define distributed leadership in practice and establish clear links to the educative purpose of schools, teaching and learning (de Lima, 2008; Harris, 2005, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008; Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004; Youngs, 2008). Despite this, there is evidence for the positive impact of some conceptions of distributed leadership on staff morale and motivation. An environment where leadership is distributed is more likely to be conducive for effective curriculum change (Ritchie & Woods, 2007). Therefore, an understanding of distributed leadership is essential to the research topic as it provides the impetus for middle leadership involvement in curriculum change.

Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership has re-emerged from the period of a generic management focus for education in the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, management styles and theories were imported from the business world into educational settings. It was assumed that the job of leaders in education was to "…get on with being good generic managers, through the development of a vision,excellent communication with all stakeholders and wise use of resources", (Robinson, 2006, p. 67). A renewed focus has fallen on school leadership as different from that of business because of its "moral imperative" (Sergiovanni, 1999, p. 30), and focus on learning, not profit. In truth, it never really went away but certainly the balance has tipped back in favour of school leaders being leaders of learning rather than CEOs of schools (Bush, 2008; Robinson, 2006). Initially, this focus was largely directed at principals and senior leaders. However, the recent focus on distributed leadership has highlighted the importance of middle and teacher leaders as curriculum leaders with a direct influence on the quality of teaching and learning at the classroom level. Principal effects on what happens in the classroom are, at best, indirect (Cardno, 2006), and principals' roles are so complex and multi-faceted that often there is little time for focusing on the aspects of their work which are most likely to have a positive effect on teaching and learning, this is particularly pertinent in larger secondary schools(Gunter & Rayner, 2007; Youngs, 2008).

Curriculum leadership, as it is known in New Zealand, or alternatively instructional, professional or educational leadership is now a central facet of a leader's role (Cardno, 2005). In the daily milieu, however, it is often this aspect of the work of leaders that is most neglected. For middle leaders in New Zealand, the document which should most define their role, 'The Professional Standards for Secondary Teachers – Unit Holders' (Ministry of Education, 1999), includes professional leadership as one of its three dimensions. It is this aspect of their role that middle leaders are most tentative and lacking confidence in (Gunter, 2002; Ingvarson, et al., 2005). A number of authors have identified a lack of professional development in curriculum leadership as a significant barrier to good practice in this area (Adey,

2000; de Lima, 2008; Harris, Busher, & Wise, 2000). These issues will be further expanded upon later in this chapter.

Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) in their ground-breaking 'Best Evidence Synthesis' on school leadership found that the leadership dimension most likely to have a direct impact on improving student achievement, with an effect size double that of the next most effective dimension, was that of "promoting and participating in teacher learning and development" (p.39). This has direct implications for school leaders and policy makers in that if the revised NZC is to have an impact on student learning and result in changes to teaching practice, then professional learning and development is at the heart of this. It also presents a challenge for middle leaders in curriculum implementation in that in order to properly implement a radical new curriculum they will need to show curriculum leadership by providing opportunities for their team members to develop and, indeed, improve their own understanding and practice.

Curriculum leadership is an essential factor in effective curriculum change (Cowie, et al., 2009; Duke, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1999). The revised NZC offers an opportunity for both principals and middle leaders to exercise leadership which leads to improved outcomes for students. Most schools involved in the study of early implementation of the NZC (Cowie, et al., 2009) conducted a thorough stocktake of their current curriculum and its efficacy with regard to student learning. This stimulated professional learning conversations and resulted in changes occurring which may not have been initially anticipated by the curriculum leaders. In addition, those who emerged as the curriculum leaders may not have been those that the principals originally anticipated, either (Cowie, et al., 2009). Nonetheless, those with delegated responsibility for curriculum leadership are the best positioned to influence the shape that the curriculum implementation process takes (Blandford, 2006; Busher, et al., 2000).

Curriculum leadership is a critical issue for middle leaders to grapple with in the process of implementing a new national curriculum and is an important aspect of this topic.

Pedagogical Leadership

For the first time the New Zealand Curriculum contains a section on effective pedagogy. National curricula have, in the past, been focused on what students should learn rather than how (Lingard & Rizvi, 2010), the revised NZC has changed this. Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003), advocate the centrality of learning in the roles of leadership. While this is recognised in much of the discussion of curriculum leadership, that concept is also tied up with, and almost subsumed by, the demands of curriculum or what is being taught to the detriment of pedagogy. Additionally, the notion of pedagogical leadership not only involves leading learning for others but that the leader of pedagogy also shows a commitment to being a learner themselves (Stoll, 2009).

In the milieu of curriculum leadership, the importance of pedagogy, as emphasised in the revised NZC by the vision, values, key competencies and effective pedagogies sections of the curriculum, is being lost. It cannot, then, be assumed that pedagogical leadership is automatically a by-product of curriculum leadership.

MIDDLE LEADERSHIP

The Complex Role(s) of Middle Leaders in Secondary Schools

What is clear about middle leadership roles in secondary schools is that, as an area, it is particularly difficult to define (Blandford, 2006; Busher, et al., 2000; Cardno, 2006; Feist, 2007; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Ruding, 2000). The line between senior management and that in the middle is often blurred, as is the line between that of classroom teacher and middle leader. There are even contradictory notions of middle leadership amongst academics. While most of the literature looks at subject leaders as the most common leadership 'in the middle', Cranston (2009), includes deputy and assistant principals as middle leaders. This further muddies the waters of the middle leadership role definition. Generally, in New Zealand secondary schools, senior leaders or managers usually consist of the principal and deputy, assistant and/or associate principals. At the bottom of the hierarchy is the classroom teacher who, although possibly taking on extra responsibility, will not be formally rewarded or assessed for their performance at it. That leaves a huge gulf in the middle which can

loosely be termed as middle leadership or management which is populated by teachers who hold 'management units' or salary increments allocated to those with formal management and leadership roles. The problem is that this group encompasses those who may have responsibility for over twenty staff and others responsible for none. It includes those traditionally known as curriculum or subject leaders and those responsible for pastoral care. In addition to this management units may be held by teachers with the responsibility for areas as diverse as the visual displays in the school or the administration of sport. Despite this wide variation, all unit holders are subject to the same criteria under the secondary teachers' professional standards mentioned earlier (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Because of the difficulty in quantifying the roles of middle leaders, there are a number of issues surrounding role definition which are bound to affect the way middle leaders approach the implementation of a new national curriculum. Firstly, role ambiguity is a significant factor for many middle leaders. They may not have a specific, clearly defined job description which delineates the role (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Ruding, 2000). If they do, in New Zealand, it will commonly be based on the professional standards as previously mentioned which are designed to cover the whole spectrum of middle leadership which exists in schools. Wise and Bennett (2003) suggest that the term middle leader itself is far too general to adequately categorise the plethora of roles which fall into the term, particularly when it comes to designing professional development. This certainly highlights the difficulty that middle leaders face when attempting to make sense of their roles and is likely to contribute to variability in practice both between institutions and, indeed, within schools when it comes to curriculum interpretation and implementation because "…where roles/responsibilities not clearly defined, managers act autonomously and set vague or unrealistic targets" (Ruding, 2000, p. 2). It is also important to note that very little literature exists on the roles of pastoral leadership in schools (Bennett, et al., 2007).

Middle Leaders Make a Difference.
The middle leadership and management literature is unanimous when it comes to one point; middle leaders can make a difference. "Middle leaders…have the institutional knowledge, and usually the experience, to be innovative and to propose, plan and lead change in the school" (Kedian, 2006, p. 19). While this is a rather

sweeping generalisation, it perhaps represents the potential held in middle leadership. The unique position in the middle allows middle leaders to have both a school-wide overview and an understanding of the needs of those on the 'chalk-face' in classrooms and they must play an essential part in the change process in schools (Brown, Rutherford, & Boyle, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2009; Harris, et al., 2000; Kirkham, 2005). Research suggests that heads of department can create strong cultures of learning which may be independent of the school and unaffected by the leadership of the principal, or lack thereof (Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Gunter, 2002). On the converse, they can also contribute to cultures which are quite the opposite or 'toxic' cultures (Ruding, 2000). As a result of this there is evidence, as mentioned above, that there is considerable difference between team or department cultures within schools (Fullan, 2001). This suggests that similar variability may be encountered when examining curriculum implementation in New Zealand secondary schools.

Although middle leadership has been an under-researched area in relation to principal leadership, mainly due to the focus on principals as the nexus of leadership in schools, an increasing focus is being directed towards their effect on teaching and learning. The school improvement literature, in particular, emphasises the role of the middle leader in implementing change (Blandford, 2006; Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; Busher, et al., 2000). However, much of the work in this area focuses on the middle leader as the implementer of the vision of the principal, rather than as sharing in the leadership of the school. This is a limited view of the middle leader role and ignores the vital contribution middle leaders can make to strategy and staff development (Gunter, 2002). This is particularly true as the change literature shows that for effective curriculum change to occur, involvement of the participants in the process and decision-making is essential (Busher, et al., 2000; Cowie, et al., 2009; Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001).

Middle leaders are essentially curriculum leaders, particularly in the secondary school environment. It is impossible for a principal, whose subject and pastoral expertise is likely to be restricted to one or two subject areas, to have anything more than an overview of what is happening in different areas in the school. Therefore, as the expert in their area, middle leaders have the potential to influence the quality of

teaching and learning in that area more than any other individual, "within this middle management role, more than any other, is the real potential of organisational change and improvement" (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 12). Middle leaders are mainly chosen because of their subject or teaching expertise rather than their administrative abilities. They are usually considered by their peers to be expert teachers in their areas and this generally affords an amount of respect amongst the staff for which they are responsible (Kirkham, 2005). This places the middle leader in a key role in curriculum implementation and change and with the potential to motivate the staff in their sphere of influence.

With the leadership potential of those situated in the middle of schools in mind, it is important to examine the barriers and issues that are faced by those at the 'chalk-face' which may inhibit this potential for curriculum leadership.

ISSUES MIDDLE LEADERS FACE

The middle leadership literature outlines a plethora of difficulties faced by practitioners in the course of their work, many of which are preventing the real work of leadership from taking place. Among these are the ever-increasing workload pressures and the time required for managerial tasks; the sandwiching between senior leaders and staff which creates inevitable tensions; the role of the middle leader as monitor of teachers' work; and the difficulties around team cultures which exist in schools.

Workload

It is generally acknowledged in the literature that all teachers and, in particular middle leaders, are facing workload pressures which are negatively affecting the performance of their roles (Fitzgerald, 2009; Gunter, 2002; Helsby, 1999; Wise & Bennett, 2003). Ingvarson, et al. (2005), in their study of the workloads in New Zealand secondary schools, found that Heads of Department enjoyed the leadership aspects of their roles but found the time available "grossly inadequate" (p.9), thus suggesting that, given the opportunity, most middle leaders would like time to be able to pursue leadership activity. In addition to this, 84% of middle leaders surveyed felt that their workload was heavy and 47% felt that it was adversely affecting their health

(Ingvarson, et al., 2005). Much of this increased workload can be attributed to the need for accountability which has arisen from the reforms outlined above and is mirrored in many other western countries which underwent similar reforms (Gunter, 2002). Much of the workload pressure is taken up by tasks which could be considered to be managerial, things which are not likely to relate to the leadership aspects of the role such as improving teaching and learning and have an administrative focus (Fitzgerald, 2009; Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004). Indeed, with these workload pressures as part of the everyday milieu of the middle leader's job, the added stressor of a major curriculum change has the potential to exacerbate the workload issue even further with major implications for the implementation of the revised NZC.

Role Ambiguity and Competing Tensions

A significant tension exists in the roles of middle leaders. The very term, 'middle' suggests that those in these roles are caught between two sides, the school senior management and the classroom teachers. On the one hand, senior managers expect middle leaders to maintain a whole school perspective and implement the school's strategy and goals at department level, while, on the other hand, teachers expect the middle leader to act as an advocate for the specific needs of the department or other area of responsibility (Bennett, et al., 2007; Busher, et al., 2000; Gunter, 2002; Kirkham, 2005). The potential for confusion resulting from this tension is significant. Middle leaders are likely to interpret their place in this confusion as they each see fit creating wide variation in practice both between and within schools. Much of this confusion stems from the policy changes of the 1980s and 1990s which have significantly changed the nature of middle leaders' roles (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Gunter, 2002). Traditionally, the strong subject focus of the middle leader as the leading professional in a department or team placed them firmly as an advocate for the subject. More recently, with the focus moving towards a 'New Public Management' hierarchical structure and a culture of 'performativity', or externally imposed achievement targets (Strain, 2009), the emphasis has shifted towards the middle leader as conduit and monitor for decisions made from above. In recent years, though, with the renewed focus on curriculum leadership, the pendulum appears to have swung back more towards an equal balance of both (Gunter, 2002). With regard to curriculum implementation, this tension can potentially have a

negative impact on the extent to which middle leaders see themselves as having the capacity to act autonomously and to balance both local and whole-school needs.

Supervision and Monitoring

Another change which has resulted from the educational reforms of the past 20 years is the requirement for middle leaders to take on the responsibility for monitoring the work of their colleagues. Again, this has arisen from the desire for accountability which has seen performance management transplanted from the private sector to education (Helsby, 1999). The reality is that in a large secondary school it is impossible for the performance management to be undertaken by principals alone and, in response this task has been largely delegated to middle leaders. It is this aspect of their roles which middle leaders have the most difficulty in undertaking as it runs contrary to professional notions of collegiality (Bennett, et al., 2007; Gunter, 2002; Wise, 2001). Direct classroom observations and the gathering of information about learning outcomes is work which many middle leaders are reluctant to undertake and, as a result of the excessive workloads previously discussed, this work is often overlooked or avoided (Gunter, 2002). In schools where observation of practice had become the norm, Kirkham (2005) observed that it had mainly been introduced under the guise of collegiality and sharing good practice as monitoring ran contrary to teachers' notions of professional autonomy and equality. The question remains whether curriculum change will take place in isolated pockets if there is no willingness to monitor implementation, or will professionalism and collegiality be enough to see consistency in practice.

Team Culture

Strong team cultures are an important feature of effective groups or departments and team leadership is an important factor in the development of such a culture (Ruding, 2000). Team or department cultures can be formed quite independently of organisational culture and often explains variability of performance within schools (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Fullan, 2001). On the reverse side of this, "toxic cultures" (Ruding, 2000, p. 2) can exist which inhibit team learning and undermine efforts to implement change. While leadership is an important variable in establishing an effective team culture, there are other aspects which are often beyond the control

of the leader. This is particularly an issue for new leaders who may have been appointed to take over the leadership of an already established team (de Lima, 2008). Team culture, then has the potential to be an important factor in undertaking curriculum change, particularly as middle leaders in general have very little training in the development of team culture. This issue will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Middle Leaders and the Distribution of Leadership Work

The distribution of leadership within educational organisations is a relatively new conceptualization of leadership and has significant implications for all staff in schools, not just those who hold formal leadership roles. Research on the subject has taken the form of two different approaches. Descriptive studies on the subject seek to understand what distributed leadership is in terms of tasks associated with leadership and their distribution and its effect on the teaching and learning. Normative research, on the other hand, works from the premise that distributed leadership is a desired state and seeks to understand how it works (Robinson, 2008; Timperley, 2005; Youngs, 2009). There exist compelling arguments from both sides and more recent discussion has urged acceptance of aspects of both positions and that the argument is distracting from the real issue which is the impact of distributed leadership on student achievement, surely the key goal of educational leadership (Harris, 2009).

Sergiovanni (1999), believes that the primary role of formal leaders should be to make the need for themselves redundant, that leadership is about fostering leadership amongst others. This has achieved currency, somewhat uncritically, throughout the education sector in recent years. The espousal of theory around distributed leadership is the utilisation of expertise and enthusiasm for the betterment of the school and improving teaching and learning. The reality may be, however, that overworked principals and senior leaders delegate authority and managerial tasks to middle leaders in order to make their own workloads more manageable (de Lima, 2008; Fitzgerald, Gunter, & Eaton, 2006; Ritchie & Woods, 2007; Youngs, 2009). Nonetheless, research has shown that the distribution of leadership is effective in creating a climate which is conducive to change and where staff will feel supported to take risks (Mayrowetz, 2008; Woods, et al., 2004). It also provides middle leaders with the impetus to step forward and take a leading role in curriculum change, as,

logically it is those who hold these formal roles that are in the best position to take up the leadership challenge (de Lima, 2008; Woods, et al., 2004).

Distributed leadership theory, however, does go beyond middle leadership in that leadership has an emergent property which can go beyond the formal assigned roles of the school and appear in sometimes the most unexpected of places. Indeed, it is something which already exists but needs fostering and nurturing to allow it to be developed (Youngs, 2009). Middle leaders, then, in distributed leadership have the potential to act as both recipients of leadership and distributors. With the role intensification discussed above, it makes sense for middle leaders, as well as principals, to look to cast the net more widely and allow leadership from others within their area. Distribution of leadership must not be confused with delegation and must be related to the passions and expertise of staff, allowing them to pursue these with encouragement and resource support. Any attempt to load up already over-worked teachers with unwanted tasks is likely to end in resentment and resistance(Blandford, 2006). This is certainly applicable when considering curriculum implementation, particularly the NZC which affords the freedom to interpret the document in a local school context. It also needs to be acknowledged that there is considerable risk in distributing leadership. The person with the formally appointed role, whether it be a principal or middle leader, is ultimately accountable for what occurs in their school or department/area. Letting go and allowing others to pursue new ideas holds with it the risk of the leader being left carrying the can for failure (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Busher, et al., 2000; Mayrowetz, 2008).

Ultimately, traditional conceptions of leadership which place the authority in the hands of the principal or one leader are not conducive to sustainability. When one person holds all of the expertise and authority, change is unlikely to last long beyond that person's departure (Cowie, et al., 2009; MacBeath, 2005). It is imperative, then, that as many relevant people as possible be involved in the process of change in order for, not only the change to be acceptable to those charged with implementing it, but also for the change to be enduring.

Development Needs of Middle Leaders

When Ken Adey (2000) surveyed middle leaders in the late 1990s to ascertain their professional development needs, he found that over 57% had received no training to prepare themselves for the role. This number could be significantly higher when considering those who failed to respond to that particular question in the survey. Considering the complexity of the role, middle leaders are, on the whole, untrained in the business of leadership, a key element of the role. However, it must be noted that, unlike senior leadership, middle leadership roles are so numerous that to pin down their development needs is an extremely complex task. The needs of a sports co-ordinator are likely to be very different from the head of a large single subject department. Nevertheless, a number of studies have attempted to make sense of these needs.

Robinson (2006), noted that curriculum leadership was what most leaders wanted to do more of but lacked both the expertise and the time to undertake such activity. Instead time was taken up reacting to situations as they arose such as student behaviour and staff crises. Given that middle leaders usually gain their positions due to a perception among other staff that they hold expertise in their particular subject area or other area of responsibility (Gunter, 2002), then the curriculum aspect of their curriculum leadership role is unlikely to be at the higher end of the scale of needs. The leadership dimension, then, is where the needs are greatest.

The monitoring role of middle leadership is an aspect identified as creating the most discomfort. Nonetheless, the appraisal of teachers is mandatory in New Zealand schools and, due to the workload of principals is most often delegated to middle leaders (Cardno, 2005). Notions of collegiality hinder leaders from being actively involved in the performance management of their staff. As Busher and Harris (2000) explain, "monitoring of teaching and learning is an essential aspect of curriculum leadership" (p.67), and therefore cannot afford to be ignored yet the challenging learning conversations required as part of a rigorous appraisal process are often considered by middle leaders as too difficult to address. This holds relevance to the implementation of the revised NZC as middle leaders, in order to show curriculum leadership, need to have the confidence and the expertise to carry out this aspect of their role. The literature suggests that currently this is not the case (Chetty, 2007).

The changing role of middle leadership to one which encompasses a broader understanding of pedagogical and whole-school issues which is required for implementation of the revised NZC highlights a real area of need for development for middle leaders. Bearing in mind the fact that most staff taking up middle leadership positions receive no formal training for their new roles, the change from a narrow, classroom perspective to that of the wider school can be a difficult transition (Harris, Busher, & Wise, 1999). Chetty (2007), and Davies (2007), both suggest, as a result of their research that an in-depth induction process provided by the school or organisation, but supported by external agencies, is required in order to help prepare middle leaders for the varied demands of the position. To date, this has not eventuated and middle leaders have been expected to develop themselves for their roles on an ad-hoc and self-directed basis. Clearly, then, this lack of training and uniformity is likely to have a significant impact on understanding, interpretation and implementation of the NZC in New Zealand secondary schools.

The pace of change being as rapid and as constant as it is in secondary schools also creates a significant issue for the development of middle leaders. Duke (2004) notes the following leadership characteristics required for leading change, "…openness to change, a desire to challenge assumptions, good judgement, the capacity to earn trust, balance and willingness to stay the course" (p.200). This long list of characteristics may occur naturally in a very few middle leaders but for most this represents a need for professional development in how to practically exhibit these characteristics. At present, many middle leaders feel swamped with the amount of change which is imposed on them by both the school and the system (Busher, et al., 2000; Fullan, 2001; Ingvarson, et al., 2005).

At this point in time, the development needs of middle leaders exceed the access to effective training to meet these needs and this has a major potential impact for those involved in the implementation of the revised NZC.

Implications for middle leaders as leaders of curriculum

The revised NZC, then, is a challenge to the very nature of the roles of middle leaders as understood in the literature. The notion of heads of department and other middle leaders as subject specialists and expert teachers in their areas, somewhat

disconnected or compartmentalised away from the 'whole-school' issues that have traditionally been the domain of senior leadership, such as pedagogical practice and emphasis on the whole of education, can no longer be applied to a New Zealand secondary school context. This has implications for the way we have come to view middle leadership and the way in which middle leaders are prepared for the task of leading their areas in this new context.

This research seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities with which the NZC has presented middle leaders during the few years since its inception and examine perceptions of those tasked with the implementation of what is potentially a radical new curriculum.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

*The task of research… becomes to work with, and make sense of, the world,
through the frames and pre-understandings of the researched rather than the
categories of the social sciences (D. Scott & Usher, 2004, p. 25).*

It is impossible to interpret the effect of curriculum change on middle leaders without
attempting to view it through their perspective. It is this view that has motivated my
choice of research methodology and methods. This chapter explains the choice of
an interpretive approach which has led to an emphasis on qualitative research
methods. In reference to the literature, issues such as sampling and method choice
are examined, as is an explanation of the steps taken to ensure the reliability and
validity of the project. Finally, ethical issues relating to this research are discussed
and the ways which these have been addressed, explained.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Early research in the field of social science borrowed heavily from the scientific
approach of the natural sciences which ascribes to the existence of an objective
reality which exists independently of human intervention.   Therefore, it is the
researcher's task to identify and test these laws using scientific methods (Bryman,
2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This scientific understanding of the world
is known as the positivist paradigm and, until the mid-twentieth century, it was
considered by most social scientists to be the only way of finding out about the social
world (Cohen, et al., 2007; de Landsheere, 1997). However, social scientists began
to question this ontological position as inadequate for understanding the social world.
World events such as war and economic collapse made academics question whether
human behaviour could be understood in terms of immutable laws. As a response,
an anti-positivist movement emerged led by theorists such as Kuhn (1970) who

argued that positivism, rather than being a scientific reality, is instead a western cultural construct and is restricting science to the concrete (D. Scott & Usher, 2004).

Emerging from this anti-positivist reaction is the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism "…disputes the powerfully held view that the natural sciences provide both the sole model of rationality and the only way of finding truth" (D. Scott & Usher, 2004, p. 24). However, it does not totally reject the scientific tradition but merely argues for a place for the subjective. Interpretivists try to understand reality through the perspectives of the participants. They seek to understand how individuals interpret the world around them (Cohen, et al., 2007). This new conceptualisation has birthed a new focus within the social sciences of alternative ways of finding the truth by using a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative research methodology involves "…direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings of how people create and understand their social worlds" (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 26). Qualitative research methods include interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis among other tools (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It must be stressed that qualitative research methods are not exclusive to the interpretive paradigm but they are, however, key tools for the interpretive researcher. Nor are the positivist and interpretive paradigms the only paradigms, others such as critical theory and constructionism are recognised as ontological and epistemological standpoints for the conducting of research (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). However, for the purposes of this research, understanding of the two competing paradigms is sufficient.

The topic under discussion lent itself to being viewed through an interpretive lens. This research attempted to understand middle leaders' perceptions of their roles in relation to implementation of the revised New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). It would be impossible to separate the work of curriculum implementation from those doing the work, thus precluding a positivist approach. In addition to this the fact that, outside of this research, I am in the position of a middle leader practitioner and my interest in the research problem stems from my own experiences of the topic, the kind of scientific objectivity demanded by positivists is neither possible, nor desirable. Thus the interpretive paradigm is most applicable to this research.

Qualitative Research Rationale

While the research was conducted according to an interpretive framework, I do not ascribe to the dogmatic view that both quantitative and qualitative research must be mutually exclusive. Recent discussion, particularly with the rise of practitioner research in the 1990s, has been around the pragmatic assertion that the research problem is the most important, rather than the paradigm, and that researchers should select a methodology which is most likely to solve that problem, be it quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method research (Creswell, 2002; de Landsheere, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Niglas, 2001). Pragmatists see both the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods and select according to the demands of the research. Keeves (1997), suggests that this need not compromise the epistemological position of the researcher but may instead strengthen the research. This was certainly the case for this project where research methods have been chosen for their utility in solving the research problem rather than because of a particular research tradition.

Nonetheless, this was a qualitative research project. The reasons for selecting this framework were, for the most part, pragmatic. The small scale of the project made it very difficult to achieve the necessary statistical requirements of quantitative research (Bryman, 2008). Secondly, my employment as a middle leader in a New Zealand secondary school, the same role of the research participants, brings with it an unavoidable subjectivity as I cannot help but bring my own experiences and world view with regard to this role to the research, therefore scientific objectivity was unrealistic in this case.

The topic and the research questions for this research are such that it was essential to capture the individuals' points of view regarding their experiences of the revised NZC. This was best achieved by using qualitative methods and analysis because, "…quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects' perspectives because they have to rely on remote, inferential empirical methods and materials" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). Qualitative research is also likely to provide rich descriptions of the constraints of everyday life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The frustrations and rewards of the curriculum leadership work of middle leaders in their contexts were at the heart of the research problem under investigation.

The methods utilised in this research were an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Both of these methods are consistent with the interpretive inquiry framework with a qualitative focus. The questionnaire, although categorised by Bryman (2008) as a quantitative tool, had a mixture of both open and closed questions, allowing both statistical data and the voices of the participants to be collated and analysed. "…many qualitative researchers in the post-positivist tradition use statistical measures, methods and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population," (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 11). The semi-structured interview allowed the gathering of rich qualitative data with the flexibility to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences around curriculum implementation within the framework of an interview schedule, thus maintaining the focus on the interview questions (Bryman, 2008). It is considered to be, "…an essential tool of the researcher in educational enquiry" (D. Scott & Usher, 2004, p. 108). These methods are discussed later in this chapter.

SAMPLE SELECTION

School Sampling

The limitations of time and the size of the research project led me to making a number of pragmatic decisions regarding the sample size and geographical location of the schools located in the research. The schools chosen for participation were all secondary schools in the Northland region, both state and state-integrated due to their requirement to implement and deliver the revised NZC. This decision was made because of the logistical difficulty of accessing schools beyond the region. In addition, the researcher's position as an educator within this region allows a good knowledge of the schools and population of the regionthough my own school was not included in my sampling frame.

The school selection for the interviews was narrowed down to three Northland secondary schools with differing demographic profiles. These schools have rolls ranging between 500 and 1500 students and hold socio-economic (decile) ratings of between five and seven. Two are also full secondary schools (Years 9-13) and the other Year 7-13. However, one of the schools is co-educational, another single sex

and the other state-integrated. These sites were chosen due to their proximity to the researcher's home, the lack of conflicts of interest between the researcher and these schools, and their willingness to participate in this research. The principals were known to the researcher in a professional capacity and were contacted by phone to garner their participation in the study.

Due to the specialist nature of the knowledge required, it was not appropriate for random sampling to be used in this study. Therefore, purposive sampling was required in order to select participants with the necessary expertise and role to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Middle leaders represent approximately twenty percent of staff in schools and this further narrows the field of potential participants. Participants within this sample were chosen randomly after indicating a willingness to participate, all were asked to complete the questionnaire beforehand.

The sample of schools for the questionnaire cast a much wider net. All state and state-integrated secondary and area schools in the Northland region were approached via email requesting their participation in the online questionnaire. This consisted of a total of 22 schools of which 12 replied in the affirmative. Based on the figure mentioned above, this allows for a possible sample of approximately 120 middle leaders based in roll figures generated in the schools' most recent ERO reports. The schools which indicated a willingness to participate range from, deciles 1-7, and with roll sizes varying from fewer than 100 students, to approximately 1500. A number of these schools were area schools which consist of students in Years 1-13. However, only middle leaders involved in the secondary area were asked to participate in the research. The schools involved are generally representative of Northland schools in size and demographics.

Interview Sampling
The sample size for the interviews was determined by the size of the project and the limitations on time and labour. Considering the time required to transcribe the interviews and analyse the data, a pragmatic decision to limit the number of interviews to seven. The sample was chosen at random from the pool of Heads of Department/subject leaders and Deans who were willing to participate. It was initially

envisaged that one Dean from each school and two subject leaders would be interviewed. However, eventually all of the participants were subject leaders while two also held pastoral responsibilities within their schools, this way their contribution to the research could be maximised.

Sampling for the interviews was done using both a purposive and a convenience sampling method. Purposive in that those chosen were selected according to their formal roles and convenience in the manner that the willingness to participate was ascertained through the school principals' and their representatives (Bryman, 2008). The roles of Head of Department/subject leader and Dean were chosen because of the expertise held by those in these roles which would best enable them to contribute to the discussion on curriculum implementation and middle leadership.

Questionnaire Sampling

The sample for the online questionnaire was chosen purposively with the participants all being middle leaders in secondary and area schools in the Northland region (D. Scott & Usher, 2004). Contact was made with principals of 22 local secondary schools and 12 replies were received. Following on from this, an email was sent to the principals with the survey link and they were asked to forward the details on to their heads of department/subject leaders and Deans. As already stated, the estimated sample size was 120 middle leaders. The survey remained open for five weeks, two of which were school holidays and little data were collected during this time, and a follow-up email was sent in order to boost the response rate (Bryman, 2008; D. Scott & Usher, 2004). In total 57 responses were received, approximately a 48% rate of response. This is a satisfactory response rate as the research is not aiming to be representative of the population of middle leaders, rather the results are intended to be indicative only (Bryman, 2008).

Little is known about the respondents to the questionnaire other than the demographic information included in the survey. No information such as school details or URL addresses was gathered about any of the participants in order to guarantee anonymity. This was done to encourage openness and honesty without fear of being identified (Bryman, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods were chosen in order to best solve the research problem. They were also chosen according to an interpretive framework and a qualitative research methodology. The methods chosen for this project were semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire.

Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview was the primary method of data-gathering chosen for this project. It was chosen as a method due to its, "…exploration of more complex and subtle phenomena," (Denscombe, 2007, p. 174). The interview is required to gather the more in-depth data required to answer the research questions (Hinds, 2000). The benefit of the qualitative interview, besides its achieving depth, is its flexibility as a research tool. It allows the researcher the ability to explore the answers of the participant further to extract meaning which may require probing to extract, but it is these data that are often the most revealing (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007; D. Scott & Usher, 2004).

As Bryman (2008) points out, interviews cannot be easily categorised as structured, semi or unstructured but rather exist on a continuum with highly structured at one end and completely loose at the other. In this case, the method employed would fit somewhere near the middle of that continuum, using an interview guide, but with a willingness to deviate where necessary and pursue interesting observations or delve deeper. This flexibility is particularly important in order to expand on those data already collected from the questionnaires and explore issues identified in the literature. Interviews, then, were the ideal research method for this topic in order to provide the depth required to make sound judgements with regard to middle leaders and their experiences of curriculum implementation and leadership.

Method

The interviews were conducted according to an interview guide (Appendix 1), which was constructed from issues identified in the literature (see fig. 3.1 below). This was then adjusted according to the data collected from the online questionnaire. The

questions were grouped according to the research questions in order to simplify the analytical phase of the research. The interview schedule was then piloted with a colleague who holds a middle leadership position. This process allowed issues such as timing, interviewer inexperience and the possibility of asking leading questions to be alleviated (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007; D. Scott & Usher, 2004).

Figure 3.1: Questionnaire and interview schedule formation
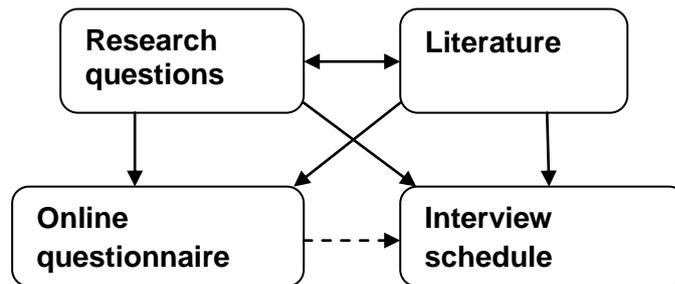
All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in order to allow the participants the freedom and confidentiality to be able to express their opinions completely openly without fear of contradiction and to go into depth not possible with other methods (Denscombe, 2007; Hinds, 2000). Focus groups were considered but discarded because of the potential for participants to feel excluded or restricted in their response. The interviews varied in length from 15 to 55 minutes, although 35 minutes was the average length, and were recorded with audio equipment because, "audio recordings offer a permanent record and one that is fairly complete in terms of the speech that occurs," (Denscombe, 2007, p. 195). The interviews were then transcribed and sent to the participants for 'member checking' which gave them the opportunity to review and withdraw any data that was misunderstood or in error (Hinds, 2000).

Online Questionnaire

The kind of data gathered by questionnaires is "…distinct from that which could be obtained from interviews, observation or documents," (Denscombe, 2007, p. 155). For this reason, the information gathered from the questionnaire is most likely to complement that which is gathered from the interviews. Again, the questionnaire was particularly useful for gathering data from a much wider group of participants from a geographically wider area and from a larger number of respondents (Hinds, 2000).

Method

The online questionnaire was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the convenience for participants of being able to access the questionnaire quickly, efficiently, and in their own time was a major factor in selecting this method. The online questionnaire also meant that the researcher could easily administer the questionnaire without costs such as copying and postage. Finally, the Survey Monkey website includes all of the analysis tools needed for the small scale researcher, without having to resort to specialised quantitative analysis software.

The online, self-completion questionnaire was constructed using mainly closed questions and Likert scales but with some opportunity for participants to expand on their answers through comments (Appendix 2). The qualitative data produced from the open questions complemented the closed questions and added some answers which were not anticipated by the researcher. Six-point, numbered Likert scales were utilised in response to statements designed to avoid leading the participants. This was done in order to determine the attitudes of the respondents to a number of ideas identified from the literature (Bryman, 2008). A six point scale was used in order to avoid neutral responses. The questionnaire contained three pages of questions, the first being demographic information about the participants and their schools, the second page of questions related to the respondents' perceptions of the NZC and their implementation experiences, and questions regarding middle leadership roles made up the final section.

Piloting was conducted with six middle leaders from the same geographical area as the sample. Hinds (2000) advises that, "piloting is particularly important to ensure respondents don't misunderstand the questions you have asked", (p.46). This was certainly the case for this researcher with some important changes made as a result of this process. This process also showed that the survey could be completed in a reasonable time-frame of 10 to 15 minutes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Interview Analysis

The qualitative data gathered and transcribed from the semi-structured interview has been analysed by using a thematic analysis method. This approach has recently become popular in social research and the framework developed by the UK National Centre for Social Research has developed a framework which has been employed as a guide for this research (Bryman, 2008). The attraction for this method is in the fact that the themes, unlike the use of codes in grounded theory, emerge from both the data and the existing theory (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). The only potential problem with this is the fragmentation of the data which has the potential to detract from the whole picture (Bryman, 2008). Nevertheless, as a data analysis method, it fits both research methods discussed, and also the methodological approach of the researcher.

The open-source Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), Weft Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) has been used to analyse the data, and codes or themes derived from the literature and the results of the online questionnaire have been developed. Some of the themes have necessarily emerged from the data themselves through a process of induction where suitable themes did not already exist.

In addition to the thematic data analysis approach, quotations have also been used in order to further add to the story told by the data. This qualitative data gained from the semi-structured interview has allowed for a much deeper and richer insight into the work lives of the participants in relation to their experiences of implementing the revised NZC (Bryman, 2008; Lofland, et al., 2006).

Questionnaire Analysis

The majority of the questionnaire data collected was quantitative. The Survey Monkey website automatically reduced the information as it was received. This took the form of frequency tables and computer generated graphs. This general data allowed for the formation of themes which formed the basis of further analysis. Cross-tabulation of responses then took place between the data gathered from

middle leaders of different levels of experience and number of middle leadership roles in order to identify any correlation between scale responses. The number of responses for each question varied as, rather than offer a 'not applicable' option respondents were requested to leave blank any question which did not relate to their circumstances.

The final question of the survey was an open-ended question designed to gain qualitative feedback on the effect of the revised NZC on the roles of middle leaders. These data, as for the interview, were coded thematically and analysed using the same method as the interview data. The breadth of responses for this question identified a number of issues for further exploration in the interviews. The answers to this question also added an interpretive voice to the otherwise quantitative data (Bryman, 2008).

In order to establish the relationships between rating scale responses within the questionnaire a correlation test was completed in Microsoft Excel using Pearson's *r* method (Bryman, 2008). This determined, statistically, the probability of respondents answering questions in the same way and, more importantly, providing a measure between comparing variances, therefore establishing relationships, or lack thereof, between rating scale responses in questions. For the purposes of this study, questions with a correlation coefficient of higher than 0.7 were considered as having a significant relationship worth exploring further. The statistical accuracy of this test in the Excel programme is unknown and no further statistical tests were carried out in order to provide multi-variate analysis (Bryman, 2008).

RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

Validity and reliability are the important measures by which the integrity of research can be established (Bryman, 2008; Keeves, 1997). In order for this research to be considered useful in adding to body of literature on the subject of middle leaders and national curriculum change, these considerations must first be satisfied.

Limitations

Firstly, it must be noted that the small scale of this research presented a number of limitations to the validity and reliability of the findings. External validity was very difficult to achieve considering the small sample size and the purposive selection of participants (Bryman, 2008). However, while this may make it difficult to generalise the results to the whole population, the specific nature of the roles made the population from which the sample is drawn correspondingly small (Keeves, 1997). Additionally, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that for qualitative research such as this study, validity and reliability mean different things than for the quantitative. The notions of trustworthiness and authenticity are of greater concern for the qualitative researcher (Bryman, 2008).

Time and financial considerations were considerable issues for the lone researcher (Bryman, 2008) and have been both limitations affecting this research project. Considerations such as geographical locations of research sites have had to be considered with choices being made to stay as local as possible. The challenges of transcription and data analysis have also been affected by the above considerations. Therefore, while all possible efforts have been made to mitigate these factors, this is a small-scale research project with the limitations as outlined.

Research Methods Reliability

Internal validity is easier to achieve with a smaller scale research project such as this. One of the methods employed to ensure this is possible in this case is the use of respondent validation or member-checking. This involved checking the findings of the research with the participants to ensure that the findings match with their own experiences in practice (Bryman, 2008; Keeves, 1997). This was appropriate for the interview method because the sample size, and the relationship between the researcher and the participants, allowed for this process to occur easily. The interviewees in this case were happy to review the data and the findings to ensure that they accurately reflected their own experiences, bearing in mind that they all had differing experiences and opinions on the subject of curriculum implementation.

For the purposes of triangulation, an early decision was made to employ two data gathering methods for this study. Keeves (1997) states that "…in triangulation

confirmation is commonly sought through multiple observations and multiple methods of investigation so that the different perspectives provide support for the findings and observed relationships" (p.281). While the interview was the primary source of qualitative data, the findings were strengthened by the employment of the questionnaire as an alternative source of data. Additionally, the use of the questionnaire informed, along with the literature, the approach taken and the data sought from the interviews. The questionnaire data helped the interviews remain focused on finding answers to the research questions rather than going off-track. The questionnaire also offered the ability to replicate some of the findings which may not be possible with the interviews due to their lack of a rigid structure and a concrete interview schedule (Cohen, et al., 2007). The decision to employ a methodological triangulation strategy has resulted in the validity of the findings being strengthened through both added accuracy of the data and a wider net being cast from which to gather the information and the use of the questionnaire enabled the researcher to check the truth of the interviewees data (Denscombe, 2007). While triangulation, in its literal sense, involves using three methods of data collection, for the purposes of this study, the data gathered from the two sources were sufficient to enhance the validity of the findings.

The conducting of the correlation test significantly strengthened the validity of the questionnaire data, allowing relationships between variables to be established with much greater confidence than had the test not been performed. While further testing would have eliminated the possibility of spurious relationships, this was not considered necessary as part of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2008).

The purposive sampling of the interviewees has strengthened the validity of the research. Although six participants is a relatively small number, they were chosen to represent a range of middle leadership roles therefore widening the perspective. This helped give a fuller picture which "…enhances the *completeness* of the findings", (Denscombe, 2007, p. 138). The use of participants from different school sites also helped to give a wider view of the topic.

Finally, in order to strengthen the reliability of the interviews, as much effort as possible was put into the staging of the interviews to eliminate the effect of possible

interviewer bias. The participants chose the venue and time for the interview, enabling them to choose a familiar environment which was least likely to make them feel uncomfortable or intimidated. Also, the interviews were conducted with as little interviewer input as possible and a real focus was placed on the stories of the participants. Every possible attempt to negate the 'interviewer effect' was made (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Bryman (2008), the primary ethical concerns when conducting research are; avoiding harm to participants, gaining their informed consent, protecting participants' privacy, and avoiding deception. The Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has reviewed and approved this study in accordance with the guidelines as set out in, 'Meeting Ethical Principles: Guidelines for Ethics Applications at Unitec' (Unitec Research Ethics Committee, 2009) for the conducting of Masters research.

Any harm resulting from this project is likely to be in the form of emotional or pecuniary harm. In particular, identification of the participants in this study could potentially lead to damage to job status or future career opportunities. All possible care was taken to ensure that access to raw data was limited to the researcher only and any published findings will not identify any of the participants.

The following measures have been taken to ensure the security of all data. Data are stored in a locked cabinet or a password protected computer with access restricted to the researcher only. All transcription and handling of raw data has been conducted strictly by the researcher only. Both the schools and the participants will be protected in the publication of this thesis by the use of pseudonyms and neither will any demographic information be disclosed which may be used to identify either participants or their schools and which is not relevant to the findings of the research.

Participation has been strictly on a voluntary basis and no duress or pressure has been placed on any individual. The questionnaire link has been emailed through

principals with no incentive for the respondents other than making a contribution to the research. This does, however, create other potential problems when the principals or as Bryman (2008) calls them, 'gatekeepers' hold the keys to access people within their institutions. However, I have found that both principals and their delegates very supportive of this research and no such issues have arisen.

All participants in the interview phase of the research were asked to sign consent forms which allow permission to use their data for the purposes of this project. This was accompanied by a detailed information sheet which outlined the research and how their data will be used. It was not logistically possible to reach all questionnaire respondents to complete a consent form so the introductory information explained that progressing with the survey constituted permission to use their data. All participants had the option of withdrawing their data up to three weeks after the completion of the data collection. This opportunity was not taken up by anyone.

In addition to this, while confidentiality was assured for participants in the interviews, it was possible to ensure complete anonymity for the questionnaire respondents. No computer IP addresses were collected in the process of data gathering in order that the surveys could not be traced back to their source. The demographic information collected is insufficient for identification of respondents or their schools.

As some of the participants in the research were Maori, it was appropriate to contact a local kaumatua with experience in education in order to establish an appropriate kaupapa for the research. Advice was given with regard to cultural issues such as eye contact and the ownership of data. At all times the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi have been a consideration for the researcher. In particular, the principles of whakapiki tangata, whakatuia and Mana Maori have been paramount in my consideration (Jahnke & Taiapa, 2003)

Finally, in order to avoid a conflict of interest, it was undertaken not to conduct any research in the school where I am normally employed. However, it was not possible, due to the nature of the area and the profession that participants would be completely unknown before the interviews. Nonetheless, no close acquaintances or friends were participants in either the interviews or the survey.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach which underpins the conduct of this study into middle leaders' experiences of implementation of the revised NZC. With reference to the background literature, the reasons for selecting a qualitative approach have been discussed. The data collection methods of the online self-completion questionnaire and the interview have been justified and examined and the method as to their use in this project explained. The steps taken to ensure that the rigour and integrity of the research have also been outlined as well as the measures taken to show how any ethical concerns have been addressed. With such practical considerations addressed it is now time to detail what it is that middle leaders have to say regarding their experiences of curriculum implementation.

Chapter Four

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The contents of this chapter include a detailed breakdown of the data gathered during this research project. The data are presented according to the method in which they were gathered, an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with middle leaders in Northland schools.

QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

The questionnaire was loosely structured according to the research questions with questions going across three pages (Appendix 1). The first page focused on the demographic information of the participants and the schools in which they work. The second page was related to respondents' perceptions and experiences of the implementation of the revised NZC and the third explored the role of middle leaders in relation to the new curriculum.

Because the questionnaire was carried out online using the data gathering website, Survey Monkey, the data were presented already reduced to means and percentages. This simplified the analysis process by reducing time spent on statistical analysis and allowing more time for interpreting the data. The total number of responses was fifty seven from a potential sample of approximately two hundred middle leaders in Northland. However, as participants were requested not to answer questions which were not applicable to them, the actual number answering some questions is lower than this.

Demographic Information

The demographic information was requested firstly by details of the participants' school and secondly by individual middle leaders' experience and role. The former was to attempt to determine the spread of respondents for the purposes of

determining the reliability and validity of the data. The participants' school information is detailed in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Participant school information

Schooldecile rating	Number of respondents (%)	
1-3	12	(21.8)
4-6	32	(58.2)
7-10	11	(20)
School size (MoE rating)	**Number of respondents (%)**	
U3 101-150	5	(8.8)
U4 151-300	3	(5.3)
U5 301-500	18	(31.6)
U6 501-675	10	(17.5)
U7 676-850	1	(1.8)
U8 851-1025	4	(7)
U9 1026-1200	0	
U10 1201-1400	3	(5.3)
U11 1401-1600	13	(22.8)

The response by school decile rating was roughly in line with the profiles of the schools taking part (four decile 1-3, six decile 4-6 and two decile 7-10), although it should be noted that of the Northland schools which failed to respond to the invitation or declined to participate, the majority were in the decile 1-3 category. Therefore the sample cannot be generalised to the population of Northland secondary schools, at least on a socio-economic basis. As is in line with the schools which responded, the majority of participants were situated in smaller schools although a large number (22.8%) were situated in the one school taking part in the study which has a roll in excess of 1400. Again the schools which declined to participate or did not respond all had rolls below 500. Therefore, the sample is not representative of school size in Northland. It is unclear why principals not wishing to participate were predominantly from smaller, lower decile schools.

The rationale behind collecting data on the relative experience of the questionnaire respondents, as both a teacher and middle leader, was to provide the opportunity to cross-tabulate the responses in order to determine whether experience was a possible factor in understanding curriculum implementation practice in Northland secondary schools. However, the small sample sizes remaining after cross-tabulation mean that the results are an indication only and not statistically reliable.

Table 4.2: Participant role and experience

Years	Teaching (%)	Middle leadership
1-3	9 (15.8)	22 (38.6)
4-10	15 (26.3)	23 (40.4)
11-20	13 (22.8)	9 (15.8)
Over 20	21 (36.8)	3 (5.3)
Management units held	**Number of respondents (%)**	
0	6 (10.7)	
1	17 (30.4)	
2	16 (28.6)	
3	5 (8.9)	
4	8 (14.3)	
5+	4 (7.1)	
Middle leadership roles	**Number of respondents (%)**	
Head of department/learning	29 (50.9)	
Head of faculty	9 (15.8)	
Subject leader (not HoD/HoF)	15 (26.3)	
Dean/pastoral leader	16 (28.1)	
Other middle leader	13 (22.8)	

The majority of middle leaders have well-established experience before taking on middle leadership roles. Also, many middle leaders in the schools surveyed have responsibility for more than one area. This is indicated by the significantly higher number of roles identified (68%) than participants. Those indicating that they held other middle leadership roles identified a plethora of middle leadership positions of

responsibility such as; Arts Co-ordinator, Teacher-in-charge of literacy, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) among many others.   Finally, it should be noted the number of participants (6) who receive no extra remuneration in the form of management units for the middle leadership work which they carry out.   This is significant as, not only do permanent management units provide financial reward for extra work, but they also carry a time allocation of at least one hour per week to carry out the extra duties.   Therefore, not only are these staff being asked to carry out middle leadership without any extra money, they may also be doing so within the time constraints of a fulltime teaching load.

Expertise on Revised New Zealand Curriculum

The next part of the questionnaire focused on middle leaders' perceived understanding of the various aspects of the NZC.   Using a six-point Likert scale ranging from zero, 'no knowledge', to five, 'expert', participants rated their own perceived levels of expertise according to the five major sections of the curriculum document; vision and values, principles, key competencies, learning areas and achievement objectives, and effective pedagogies.   Considering the move from content-specific to a much more generic and values-based curriculum, participants were most comfortable with the learning area or subject-based section of the document (Table 4.3).   However, they were equally as comfortable, in terms of perceived expertise, with the section on effective pedagogies.   Twenty one of the forty eight respondents who completed this question rating themselves at one level below expert on the scale regarding perceived expertise on the key competency aspect of the revised NZC.   No participants selected the 'no knowledge' option of this section of the survey.   Finally, the vision and values and principles sections of the curriculum engendered the least confidence from respondents.   Although the majority of middle leaders indicated that their expertise was in the higher half of the rating scale, significant numbers, nine and seven respectively, showed in the bottom two responses.

Table 4.3 Expertise, and access to expertise in NZC aspects

Curriculum aspect	Expertise	Access to expertise
	Mean response (0-5 scale)	
Vision and values	2.69	2.51
Principles	2.69	2.43
Key competencies	3.17	2.85
Learning areas and achievement objectives	3.29	3.09
Effective pedagogies	3.29	2.94

The relationship between respondents' confidence with the vision and values section of the curriculum document and the principles is strong, with a correlation coefficient of 0.93. By squaring this number and multiplying by 100 I could ascertain a percentage chance of a relationship between the two variables. This means that 87 percent chance of a shared variance between the two aspects, or variables. Similarly strong, although not as significant, relationships were shown between these and other 'front-end' aspects such as key competencies (0.57 and 0.55). These show that the 'front-end' aspects of the curriculum are, on the whole lumped together by the middle leaders who responded to this survey.

Similar strong relationships exist between these aspects when looking at respondents' access to curriculum expertise in these aspects. Again the relationship between the principles and vision and values is particularly significant with a correlation coefficient of 0.96 or 93 percent likelihood of a relationship. However, in this instance, there are significant relationships between many of the aspects, particularly between access to information on the learning areas and effective pedagogies, where a 69 percent chance of a relationship exists.

Again, as for their own expertise, middle leaders had most difficulty in accessing expertise, whether within school or outside, for the principles and vision and values aspects of the curriculum. Out of forty seven respondents to this question, twenty four found expertise relating to the principles, which are; high expectations, Treaty of Waitangi, cultural diversity, inclusion, community engagement, coherence and future

focus, difficult or very difficult to access. These principles which must underpin all school curricula (Ministry of Education, 2007b), appear to be not well understood by middle leaders involved in curriculum implementation. On the other hand, for the learning area statements and achievement objectives, the subject and content based sections expertise is relatively easy to access. Middle leaders in the lowest socio-economic schools, deciles one to three, indicated that they were least likely to be able to access expertise in all aspects of the revised NZC except for the key competencies. For the vision and values and principles aspects, for example, eight of the twelve participants from lower decile schools rated expertise as difficult to access. One middle leader from a lower decile school commented about access to subject area specific information:

Myself and the other teacher have had some professional development on the new revised curriculum in English only because we set it up for ourselves.(BB)

Middle leaders in the highest decile schools were more likely to be able to access curriculum expertise from within their schools. Four of the nine participants in this category noted that they were able to access the expertise needed from within their own school. Correspondingly, they were least likely to be able to access outside help.

The sections of the revised NZC pertaining to some of the more traditional aspects of middle leaders' roles such as subject and curriculum leadership are what respondents found the most expertise in and knowledge easiest to access. It is also indicated that middle leaders participating in this study know where to go to find the information they need in these areas. It is the aspects that are relatively new and necessitate a more whole-school perspective that are shown to be areas where participants more likely to be lacking in expertise and knowledge, and are finding it more difficult to access information with which to develop their understanding.

Barriers to Curriculum Implementation
The two most significant barriers identified by middle leaders to successfully implementing the revised NZC were the related aspects of time and workload. The

difficult circumstances faced by many middle leaders were summarised by one middle leader as:

It has had a huge workload impact. The implementation has taken a lot of time and thought and it has been very difficult. (L)

Thirty out of forty six respondents (65%) identified time as an "extremely relevant" barrier, while thirty one out of forty seven (66%) said the same about workload (Table 4.4). Participants were also asked to respond to a statement relating to this in question four where only seven out of forty seven respondents believed that they had been given enough time to fully implement the revised NZC and twenty two strongly disagreed that this was the case. This is an indication that middle leaders in this sample may be struggling to find the time necessary to implement what is a potentially radical new curriculum. One respondent commented that there has been a;

Huge increase in workload with minimal support and resourcing from the Ministry(A)

Table 4.4: Barriers to curriculum implementation

Barriers	Mean response (0-5 scale)
Time	4.52
Workload	4.57
Resistance to change	2.19
Resources	3.57
Professional development availability	3.70
Management support	3.00
Leadership opportunities	2.59
Expertise	2.91
Team dynamics	2.80

Middle leaders in the higher decile schools, seven to ten, were more likely to feel that they had been given sufficient time to implement the curriculum with four of the nine respondents in this category answering in the positive. This is in stark contrast to the remaining participants of which an overwhelming thirty three out of thirty six participants responded in the negative.

The correlation test also identified a significant relationship between participants' responses to the issues of time and workload. With a correlation coefficient of 0.71, the test showed that just over half of participants related the two issues closely together. From this it can be inferred with some confidence that the workload of middle leaders limits the time which is able to be spent on implementing the revised curriculum.

Other aspects which appeared to have a significant impact on curriculum implementation were the availability of both resources and professional development and a lack of management support. Nine respondents out of forty six did not think that the availability of resources and professional development were barriers, answering in the lower half of the scale. This corresponds with the previous question where most respondents found that accessing information on the revised NZC was not an easy task. Again in question four, thirty eight of the forty seven respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the expertise was available to them from within their school to assist with implementation and twenty six disagreed or strongly disagreed that outside expertise was available to them. The frustration some middle leaders felt with regard to support from external sources is shown here:

There is inadequate resourcing for changes in the junior school and whilst we have come across some best practice models in other schools, there has been little overt movement at Ministry level to support school changes.(T)

With regard to the support of management being a barrier, participants were more evenly split on the continuum but the highest number of responses identified it as an "extremely relevant" barrier. However, the correlation test identified that there exists a relationship between the support of management and the opportunities for leadership. There is a 62 percent match between the variance of respondents'

answers regarding these two areas, or a 0.79 correlation coefficient. This possibly suggests that, in an environment where the middle leaders felt they had the support of management, opportunities for leadership were more readily available.

Leadership opportunities, expertise and team dynamics were rated less of a barrier than the previously mentioned areas. However, for each of these, the majority of respondents still rated them in the top half of the scale, therefore identifying them as barriers to be overcome and in question four, twenty one of the forty seven participants answered that the new curriculum had provided an opportunity to show leadership. Resistance to change rated the least significant barrier. However, some middle leaders indicated in their comments that resistance has been a significant issue for them:

Largely a negative impact. Resistance to change amongst large group of staff, tiredness and confusion with regards to transition to new NZC and confusion within SMT group as to how to implement change has caused me huge frustration and despair.(T)

Changes are always met with resistance and this is a major in secondary schools. A lot of teachers in secondary schools feel that change means more work...and often do not see the big picture...who can blame them? (M)

Implementation in Schools
Various statements regarding the level of implementation in the secondary school settings of the participants indicated that both within and between schools there existed different levels of preparedness and confidence about the implementation process. One middle leader commented:

Discussions with teachers from other schools has revealed that the implementation is not very standard across schools in this area(Q)

It appears that in a significant number of schools the revised New Zealand Curriculum has not taken precedence over other change initiatives. Twenty two of

the forty seven participants indicated that, in their school, other change initiatives have been given equal or greater significance than the NZC. This indicated a possible tension that may exist between the numerous change projects that schools have undertaken in recent times focused on school improvement.

With regard to the level of implementation, a significant number of respondents, twenty nine out of forty seven, indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that their departments or areas of responsibility had fully implemented the revised NZC. This is despite the fact that the Ministry of Education expects that full implementation to have taken place by 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2006), something which, according to the majority of middle leaders participating in this survey, has till not fully occurred.

The survey participants have also strongly suggested that there is a wide variety of practice and levels of implementation within schools. Only seven of the forty five respondents agreed that there was a similar level of implementation throughout their schools. This indicates that within their schools, departments and other teams may have been allowed significant autonomy with the implementation process possibly resulting in some areas being better prepared than others. This has been a source of frustration for some of the middle leaders with the following comments being made:

Outside of my team, there are many who dismiss the revised NZC as "window dressing" and baldly state their intention to do what they have always done. I find this disheartening.(EE)

The variation in knowledge and progress across the school is huge and this also poses additional issues.(A)

This is an indication of the important role of middle leaders in the implementation process and could show the need for curriculum leadership in this area.

Curriculum Leadership and the Revised New Zealand Curriculum

Overall, the survey respondents did not indicate that they had shown, or had the opportunity to show a great deal of curriculum leadership over the period of the implementation process.

To begin with, participants were asked to rate the level to which they perceived that their role was well-defined. While just over half of the participants responded that their role was clearly defined, a significant minority, 20 out of 44 participants, perceived that their role needed more clarity. This could indicate a degree of role ambiguity amongst middle leaders in the sample which could act as a possible barrier to their curriculum leadership.

Table 4.5: Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership statement	Mean response (0-5 scale)
I now see myself as more of a curriculum leader than before the revised NZ Curriculum.	1.52
I have developed positively as a leader through the implementation process.	1.45
I have learned how to lead change through the implementation process.	1.43
I have learned how to lead change through the implementation process.	1.84
I am now more focused on leading learning.	1.73
I want to be more focused on leading learning but am unable to do so.	2.23

Middle leaders participating in the survey indicated that the curriculum leadership aspect of their roles has not changed or developed as a result of the curriculum implementation process. Fewer than a quarter of respondents agreed that they were more focused on curriculum leadership and the leading of learning as a result of the new curriculum while a similar number felt that they had developed or grown as a leader during this period. One middle leader commented:

The revised curriculum has not changed my leadership style, I have always taken leadership responsibility seriously and have always been focused on leading learning. (G)

Fifteen of forty participants agreed that they would like to be more focused on learning but that they were constrained from doing so for various reasons. Some of the reasons are outlined below:

I am still struggling with where to start as there are so many things that need to be done at once and nothing seems to be being finished. (W)

Resistance to change amongst large group of staff, tiredness and confusion with regards to transition to new NZC and confusion within SMT group as to how to implement change has caused me huge frustration and despair.(T)

Time to work with team is biggest difficulty. In a small school many are working across more that 1 dept so keeping it manageable is an issue.(R)

The correlation test indicated that a significant relationship existed between the respondents' view on whether or not they had developed positively as a leader throughout the implementation process and whether or not they have learned how to lead change as a result. A coefficient of 0.73 meant that fifty three percent of variances were aligned. As indicated, the majority of respondents scored lowly on each of these questions.

Cross-tabulating the responses to the curriculum leadership based questions on the middle leadership experience of the participants, without statistical testing, found that there was no noticeable difference between the more experienced respondents in terms of perceptions of curriculum leadership. However, from the participants with more than ten years of middle leadership experience there was a higher positive response to the question regarding their desire to be more involved in leading learning than those with less than ten years experience. Over half (five out of nine) of experienced middle leaders responded positively compared with less than one third (ten out of thirty one) of the less experienced middle leaders. This may suggest that there is more awareness amongst the more experienced middle leaders of the need for curriculum leadership but also more of an understanding of the constraints. The following experienced middle leaders discuss this issue:

I am excited and a firm believer in the direction of the new NZC but implementation of it has been extremely poorly resourced which leaves me in a no-win position within my school. (T)

It appears that less experienced middle leaders, due to a lack of training and development, are unfamiliar with that aspect of their role. The following comments illustrate this:

[I] would really like more training. Am only teacher in my department and feel the need for more outside input. Have had 1 day training on implementing NZC. (CC)

I do not want to be in charge of anything until I feel I have learned to be a good teacher (I have only been fully registered for a year).(I)

This shows the unpreparedness of many middle leaders in the survey for the curriculum leadership aspect of their role, particularly when it involves leading major curriculum change such as the revised NZC.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interview schedule was structured into three sets of questions, each set focusing on one of the research questions (Appendix 2). Therefore, the first set of five questions was aimed at gathering data relating to the roles of the middle leaders participating in the interviews; the next four questions sought the personal responses of the interviewees to the revised NZC and, finally, the last six questions were focused on the experiences of the participants with the implementation of the new curriculum.

It should be noted that, because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the schedule was used only as a guide and participants' responses were explored with further questions not on the schedule. While this strengthened the qualitative aspect of the research by adding further depth to the findings, it makes the replication of the data more difficult to achieve (D. Scott & Usher, 2004).

The following are the major themes emerging from the interview data.

Multiple Roles

The majority of the interviewees held more than one middle leadership role in their schools. Some of these roles were closely related to one another such as Head of Department and Head of Faculty which was the case for four of the seven participants. One of the Heads of Faculty went on to list four different roles, two curriculum related, one pastoral and one administrative. In addition, one of the Heads of Department interviewed also held the pastoral role of Dean. Only two of the seven participants held a single title, and, indeed, one of those later went on to describe a role which was very similar to that described by those with the formal title of Head of Faculty with responsibility for at least two other sub-departments and "picking up a lot of the literacy from the learning support area" (Middle Leader (ML) 5).

In most instances, the interviewees were able to narrow down their role which involved the implementation of the revised NZC to one. When asked which role was most likely to involve curriculum implementation one participant replied:

My Head of [Department] role. Entirely. (ML7)

While another Head of Faculty commented regarding the curriculum responsibilities within the different roles:

Well, yes it is, very diverse and as far as curriculum goes, we look at major things like the new curriculum and, you know, anything that's to do with that, and, as far as the little…each department, they look after their own curriculum things. (ML 6)

With such a multiplicity of roles, a number of interviewees discussed the difference in the nature of these roles. Some roles contained what was described as more of a management focus whereas others were seen as requiring leadership:

As a HoD, I'm a leader, as a Head of Faculty, I tend to be more of a manager(ML 2)

The Head of Faculty role is more of acoordination, dissemination of information, gathering of information(ML 7)

The number of roles held by middle leaders, with many of those roles not requiring a focus on the revised NZC, could potentially have an impact on the implementation of a new national curriculum.

Role Ambiguity

A number of the middle leaders interviewed saw their roles as lacking in clarity and definition. Two of the participants confessed to either not having a job description, or at least not having sighted one:

You know what I never actually got given a job description for that role. I just got it handed down from the previous person.(ML 4)

While the other five all had seen their job descriptions, most described them as being very generic and one interviewee worked under five separate job descriptions. Only one of the middle leaders interviewed had any input into the formulation of a job description whereas the others all applied to a range of people with the same job title:

It's generic. I think the 2iC one was role specific but it wasn't accurate to what they do. (ML 5)

It's a generic one…it's probably up to me to write a job description that's more specific. (ML 7)

In addition, most of the middle leaders interviewed who had a job description reflected on its lack of applicability to what they were actually doing in their roles every day. While they covered many of the more managerial aspects of the roles which are outlined in the Professional Standards for Unit Holders (Ministry of

Education, 1999), participants identified areas which were lacking, particularly regarding the size of their roles:

What I have found…is that the role is far greater, and that's not a complaint, I'm actually relishing it and I didn't think I would, but there's far more to it than I ever imagined. All those little background decisions that you have to make, and all the things that SMT, and more likely, [the principal] require of me.(ML 7)

Nonetheless, the generic nature of the contents of their job descriptions meant that the majority of aspects were covered but without any real detail. When asked whether they thought that their job description accurately reflected their role, one interviewee stated:

No, but that's because the job description itself is very generic.(ML 2)

While another stated:

Funnily enough, yes it does, because the more generic it is the more it does and I have looked at it because basically I am doing everything. (ML 7)

The lack of definition around the roles of middle leaders participating in the interviews may indicate a lack of surety about their roles and lead to variable implementation practice with regard to the revised NZC.

Curriculum Leadership Capacity

The majority of interviewees indicated that they had been affected in various ways by the revised NZC and its implementation. One of these issues was the strain put on the curriculum leadership capacity of themselves and other middle leaders in their schools that they had observed. Firstly, three of the middle leaders interviewed had been in their positions for one year, or less and this presented a number of challenges to them. This has meant, for example, that the curriculum implementation timeline was well advanced when they took on their new roles:

It was sort of being implemented before I came along. The first trainings that the government gave the schools at the end of last year…I missed those because I was on maternity leave so I've sort of come in having missed a little bit of the first bit and then, of course, some schools…did a lot of work last year and they've done minimal work this year.(ML 5)

Retrospectively…he [previous head of department] was very anti the new curriculum because he didn't feel it was any different to the old curriculum and he commented on that a number of times, therefore, generally speaking, the staff here are, they're not anti, they're just rather ambivalent. (ML 7)

Therefore, taking on a new role with departments at varying stages of readiness for full implementation presented a significant leadership challenge to these inexperienced middle leaders. To add to this, none of the three had received any specific middle leadership training or professional development to prepare them for their roles. This has meant that they have had to take time to understand their roles before moving ahead:

I've just started to feel this term that I've now been in the role for a whole year and so I've been through the whole cycle and so I've come to expect what's going to crop up and so I'm just feeling now that yes I can do this and I've now got a handle on it and I would say that that has been a barrier to our department, that we've been feeling our way. (ML 7)

I mean we've got an AP who's sort of part-time there…and quite old school and so he'll be leaving and we don't have any really knowledgeable, experienced senior…[subject] teachers either. So no, it's quite hard.(ML 4)

However, one of the interviewees had, under their own initiative, found suitable professional development to enable them to develop in this area next year:

Elsewhere, I've found a course for HoDs that I will attend, hopefully.(ML 5)

Two of the middle leaders interviewed believed that national curriculum implementation required curriculum leadership and change management skills that they, as well as other middle leaders in their schools, were not equipped with. They felt that this aspect was a significant change from their previous roles and was an area that would require a shift in thinking from present middle leaders:

They've had to look at their schemes and their documents and how they're teaching so…whether their skills match the changes…the change management that's necessary,because, of course, change management is not necessarily what's listed on your job description. So whether they have those skills and then being able to implement complete changes and have to come up with…new courses to meet the new requirements. Within our school, for instance, there are HoDs who are struggling to come up with anything at all because they don't know where to start.(ML 5)

Despite this, two of the other, more experienced, middle leaders stated that the revised NZC's implementation had little impact on their curriculum leadership. These leaders were confident that much of what was contained in the curriculum document required little or no change in what they were already doing:

We feel here that a lot of what's in the NZC we're already doing in the…Faculty it just seems to be an area that lends itself to, you know, what is required in the New Zealand Curriculum.(ML 6)

I think we already do those things, with students…a lot of those things are inherent in the [subject], anyway.(ML 1)

The revised NZC has, then, affected the middle leaders involved in this research's curriculum leadership roles in a variety of ways. Some are challenged by a lack of experience and inadequate preparation for the role and believe that curriculum change requires a set of skills for which many middle leaders are not adequately equipped. Others, however, believe that there has been no significant difference between what they were doing before and what they are required to do now. These

very different perspectives highlight a lack of consistency with regard to the attitudes of the participants towards implementing the revised NZC.

Administration or Praxis?

The middle leaders expressed a range of views about the level of change required to implement the new curriculum with four of the interviewees viewing the change required in terms of administrative requirements such as rewriting unit plans and changing report templates:

The whole of the curriculum had to be rewritten to show the new pattern.(ML 2)

What I've done with the unit plans is put them on the system that they can use them and then added on to specify the level so Level 4, what does the word 'ideas' mean or 'develop' at Level 4 standard…those sorts of things we've had to be more specific.(ML 4)

We haven't actually found them too much of a struggle to implement or integrate into our planning…our units.(ML1)

Each of these participants believed that it was easier for their subject areas or areas of responsibility to integrate the aspects of the new curriculum than it was for others:

I think some areas are better than others because I know that they've had a lot of challenges in Science and in Maths but that's where I think…we're different. It's much easier to put the New Zealand Curriculum into. (ML 6)

I understand it's been…it's been a big issue for Maths to change…to write units that reflect the revised curriculum. Like I say, it hasn't been that significant in [subject area]. (ML 1)

In contrast to this, the three other participants described what they saw as an important shift in teaching practice rather than an administrative change. These middle leaders described a much more exhaustive approach to change which involved changing both their own, and others', teaching practice:

My observations are in schools that are still traditional like this, the teaching approaches aren't necessarily easy to change and that may mean that some teachers don't believe that they need to change, or it may mean that some of the values that this New Zealand Curriculum document underpins are not the same values that that classroom teacher believes in and change has not happened. Who misses out? This is the really important thing. (ML 3)

I see the new curriculum, not so much as a…licence to, perhaps, lift the bar a bit when it comes to what people are teaching and how they're teaching it. (ML 7)

For two of these middle leaders, managing change and the issue of staff resistance to change were challenges which they were continuing to work through. It was their response that change was difficult but necessary and that this is a significant leadership challenge for them to overcome:

I believe change, unfortunately brings, at this school, it just raises barriers automatically because it's going to be a change. (ML 3)

I've got to create an environment in here where other people see it as a positive thing as well and not just a piece of paper.(ML 7)

The differing approaches and perceptions amongst the interviewees in this study of what is required from the revised NZC, and the different circumstances under which they are implementing it, has led to a variation in interpretation between whether administrative change or substantial change to classroom practice is required in order to implement the new national curriculum.

Positive Perceptions

Overall, the middle leaders participating in the interviews were positive about the intent of the revised NZC. Six of the seven involved felt that the direction signalled by the new curriculum was leading secondary education in the right direction. One participant commented that, "the New Zealand revised Curriculum has reinforced what my personal philosophy is" (ML 3). Others stated that:

I'd like to think they're going to be creative and ready to face challenges and wanting to learn, you know, keep on learning as they keep on talking about lifelong learners. I hope that we're encouraging kids to do that and I think the new curriculum really encourages that.(ML 6)

It's more holistic, isn't it?(ML 1)

I can certainly see that there're benefits with what we've picked up with changing our scheme I can see there's some fantastic potential in what we've done. (ML 5)

The one dissenting view was not wholly against the concept but was worried that, with the focus put more on learning skills and competencies, students would be left without the knowledge required to progress in their subjects:

If you do that, what you'll do is two things; a) they will go unprepared for the world that's out there, but b) if you're preparing them for university, they'll arrive at university not knowing the fundamentals of some of the topics. (ML 2)

So while there is optimism amongst the participants about the direction of the revised NZC, there is also apprehension about the practical application of this, particularly the perceived lack of direction and modelling from the Ministry of Education. A number of the interviewees expressed the view that more direction would have been helpful in the implementation process and that they were not always able to access support when needed. One middle leader commented that:

I think people don't know where to start and because we haven't been given any guidance, I know Team Solutions try to put some things together but we're sort of being told, well, there's no model to work to, that all schools are being allowed to do whatever they want.(ML 5)

The areas identified by participants as being difficult for them to come to grips with are those which are relatively new to the national curriculum. Even within this, though, there is considerable variance between the participants. Some felt the key

competencies were difficult to come to grips with while others described them as something that they have always 'done' in their classrooms or subject areas. Others felt that the effective pedagogies section was something that was difficult to come to grips with, while another discussed how it had reinforced a lot of the professional development that their school had been working on over a number of years. Nonetheless, there was agreement that the participants were the most comfortable with the learning area statements and achievement objectives which, although condensed, were the most familiar from the previous curriculum documents:

Not significantly different, no. (ML 1)

I feel quite confident on that. (ML 4)

I think they reflect quite accurately what we need to know, and loosely enough…I'm quite happy with it. (ML 2)

Some of the participants did comment, however, that there was a range of interpretation of some aspects of the revised NZC within their schools. In particular the key competencies were seen as areas where there had been some difference in understanding:

…although it talks about managing self and relating to others, a lot of that just goes with a more rigid structure of teaching. (ML 4)

I think the key competencies is what people are struggling with… (ML 5)

[The principal's] interpretation of managing self, it's how kids use their diary. In this department here we see that there's a hell of a lot more to managing self than that. (ML 7)

The different levels of confidence and competency with different aspects of the revised NZC appear to have led to a variability of interpretation for the interviewees which is may lead to differing practice both between schools and within schools.

Overall, however, the middle leaders interviewed for this topic were happy with the direction which the revised NZC is pointing the New Zealand education system. There are, however, some reservations about the potential loss of some of the most valued aspects of content from subject areas. The view of the participants was best summed up in this comment:

…if we could have kids that could manage themselves and there was a little more intrinsic motivation and kids who could think and work cooperatively and communicate then, in a sense…we've actually done our job. That is far more important than understanding the plot of Hamlet…the way I sell it to these people here is when I get that sort of, 'well that's all just pie in the sky', we've got to try.(ML 7)

Assessment-driven Curricula

It is evident from the interviews that the middle leaders participating in this research are heavily focused on the requirements of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework through the NCEA system. Much of the professional development and department time is dedicated to such activities as moderation and planning for the changes required by the NCEA standards alignment with the NZC. One of the interviewees expressed confusion between the standards alignment and implementation of the NZC. Most view this alignment process as a positive and necessary step. However, this focus on assessment in the senior school means that, on the whole, the revised NZC is seen as something which mainly concerns the junior school up to Year Ten:

I think the main discussion at the moment is the 2011 Level Ones. That's more, I think, what people are concerned about but we are going to go ahead with that new curriculum.(ML 4)

That's in the junior school at the moment, so we're concentrating on [Year] 9 and 10 at the moment and rewriting the whole lot. (ML 2)

I've got staff in my department who've done a lot of work around assessment with the new NZC for our junior curriculum… (ML 5)

The alignment of our standards to the new curriculum at senior level...the realignment has lifted the bar here. I, personally, think that is really good, it's like sort of hallelujah, at last there's a bit of common sense prevailing again but my concern with that is that there's going to need to be a lot of work having to be done looking at alternative classes... (ML 7)

These comments highlight the important role played by the assessment and qualifications framework in the senior school. It is viewed almost as a curriculum in itself rather than purely an assessment system by some of the interviewees. One participant referred to the alignment as the, "2011 curriculum" (ML 4). This has led to a focus on the junior school (Years Nine and Ten in two schools and Years Seven to Ten in the other) as the locus for implementation of the revised NZC. This does not reflect the intention of the curriculum which clearly states, "Each board of trustees, through the principal and staff, is required to develop and implement a curriculum for students in years 1–13" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 44).

Barriers to Implementation

When asked what the most significant barriers to the implementation of the revised NZC were, all except one of the interviewees identified time as an issue which has prevented them from giving the attention that they would have liked towards the new curriculum. This issue manifests itself in two forms in the participants' responses, either a lack of time as a result of a heavy workload, or a lack of time provided by the school and the Ministry of Education for meeting together with colleagues both within the school and inter-school in order to have the kinds of professional discussions needed to do full justice to the implementation of a potentially radical new national curriculum. The first manifestation, that of the workload related lack of time, was definitely the most prevalent amongst the middle leaders interviewed. Some comments relating to this were:

The time to sit down and actually...go through the units I've got, particularly for junior school...I've started rewriting them when we had our PD days but they haven't been finished...and I don't have any time to sit down...and compare what I do now with what I need to be doing and rewriting those units accordingly. (ML 1)

Time, time, always time. To write new curriculum, to write new SLOs… (ML 2)

When you've had a day where you're looking at the junior scheme that's a day when we're not moderating and of course if they're swapping their time then they're having to use their personal time to do something that they wouldn't normally.(ML 5)

Yeah, well, time. It just seems to be another thing you have to think about when there are so many other things now and so much paperwork.(ML 6)

The middle leaders interviewed for this research are significantly hampered from carrying out curriculum implementation due to the workload pressures of their roles. Some commented that any time taken for curriculum implementation was time taken away from other important aspects of their roles such as planning and moderation and also that this, in turn, impinged on their personal time and is a cause of resistance amongst staff:

Every assessment we do, you know, if we're moderating internally properly and that sort of thing, it just takes so much time. So there are people who are resistant because of the time… (ML 7)

I do a lot of work at home so, whatever doesn't get done at school, gets done at home(ML 4)

On the other hand, not having enough time to meet with colleagues within the department, within the school and from other schools is a resourcing issue, one over which the middle leaders interviewed generally felt they had little control. This aspect was discussed in the context of what they believed to be an under-resourced innovation on the part of the Ministry of Education or a lack of commitment on the part of the school to investing in the implementation of the revised NZC:

Perhaps we need to be approaching it more consistently and having, maybe in a meeting cycle, a department meeting in each cycle dedicated solely to implementing the new curriculum would be not a silly idea. (ML 1)

What it [Ministry of Education] needs to do is to give a specific timeline and back it up with the time allowance to get that into practice… (ML 2)

Well I think it's time to get everybody together. Like I think on an individual basis people probably do have time but to just sit down and read a document it's that sharing, having a whole department together or a whole staff together or HoDs together, that's when the time factor comes into it.(ML 5)

I think with every new expectation the government puts on us, they should give us more time to learn these things and I know we got two teacher only days last year, didn't we with the new curriculum, but, if the principal chooses not to use it for that purpose, then you're stuffed.(ML 4)

Two of the interviewees did not believe that this was a major issue but they also stated that very little change was required in terms of the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility:

That's what I mean about the curriculum suiting us because we don't have to change much because we're doing it.(ML 6)

Other barriers emerging from the questionnaire data which were discussed were the availability of resources for implementing the curriculum change. The interviewees from one of the participant schools found this to be a particularly salient issue:

As far as resources are concerned, well, resources are just simply not there.(ML 2)

The resources and the financial thing has made a huge difference and it is outside our control. I sort of thought that implementing a new curriculum would require so much in the way of financial demand.(ML 7)

While this was the case in one school, others found that this was not an issue:

We're pretty well-resourced. (ML 6)

The different experiences around the resourcing shows how different schools, in different situations, with different priorities, can have an important effect on the implementation of the revised NZC, particularly for the schools involved in this project.

For four of the seven interviewees, the location of suitable professional development on the revised NZC itself, as well as on leadership and managing change, was a barrier to implementation. For these participants suitable programmes were either unavailable or difficult and expensive to access locally with one middle leader needing to travel to Auckland to visit other schools to find models of good practice. In each case these interviewees needed to actively seek help with implementation:

we actually went on a fact finding mission and 3 of us went down to Auckland for a day and visited 4 schools that were recommended to us, but that was us seeking information. (ML 5)

There has been PD but it's been on standards realignment, so It's been totally focused on senior and, to me, the senior stuff is really the easy stuff…I mean we're still confined by NZQA requirements so it's really the junior area that I'd like to see PD in, and not just for HoDs but for everybody. (ML 7)

Of the others who indicated that the availability of professional development was not an issue for them, two stated that their advisors from Team Solutions had been readily available to provide development opportunities while the other did not really see a need for further development. Those with access to good support from subject advisors expressed concern at pending cutbacks in this area from 2011:

I know that the down-sizing of Team Solutions means that any other additional information from advisors will be hard to source from here on. (ML 3)

Another frustrating thing is that Team Solutions, a lot of those people, their contracts are finishing and those people have been really helpful as well. (ML 4)

Workload-created time pressures, a lack of time for professional discussions surrounding implementation, resourcing and the availability of professional development have been flagged by the majority of participants in this research as issues which have hindered them in the implementation process. This is added to the resistance to change that some of the leaders had already indicated that they were experiencing from their staff. The majority of these barriers have been beyond their ability to directly influence. However, they have, each in their own ways, endeavoured to overcome them. When asked whether they anticipated overcoming the barriers, one middle leader replied:

My thought process all the time about this is, this will happen in our own time and in our own way this will happen and it's got to be small steps and I'm quite purposely not trying to be more ambitious than that but I tend to think small steps is the way to go, anyway, a) because it's more manageable and, b) because it's less threatening, and I do, I anticipate us overcoming every single one of these things, by fair means, or foul. (ML 7)

Distributed Leadership

While they may not have identified it as such, three of the middle leaders made comments which showed the importance of distributing leadership in their experiences of curriculum implementation. This mainly occurred within the context of a supportive department or area of responsibility and generally involved the devolution of responsibility to those with designated responsibility although one example of emergent leadership was described:

That particular person who I co-opted back in to doing a lot of the think-tank activities has used a lot of their own time, but it's that drive and that passion to want to do that… (ML 3)

I'm lucky that I've got a 2IC (second-in-charge) who thinks very similar to me and that our department can sort of run with this(ML 5)

…they've all got ideas still, lots of fresh approaches, lots of sharing of resources and we openly discuss pretty much everything. It's not, I decide and they do, it's I might suggest and we discuss, and I've got a lot of experience in my department.(ML 5)

Two of the middle leaders who admitted to finding the aspects of the curriculum change difficult did not have people with either the formal roles, or the enthusiasm for change, to whom they could distribute leadership:

…basically I am doing everything, and this year I haven't had an assistant and so I haven't even had the luxury of dividing the role, anyway, but that changes next year.(ML 7)

On the other hand, most of the interviewees did see their own role in curriculum implementation as a significant one. They noted that they had been devolved the responsibility for the implementation of the revised NZC in their own leadership contexts. All participants discussed the various stages of implementation within different areas of responsibility within their school and felt this was because of the autonomy afforded them by their principals and senior managers to implement the NZC as they saw fit. While each discussed some whole school discussion and professional development and one talked of the oversight of a particular senior manager, the progress and extent of change was strongly influenced by the middle leaders to whom the leadership had been distributed:

Various departments at various levels. We have reported at the HoD meetings and so forth but various departments are at various levels. Some are well into it, some are looking at it, some are already converted. (ML 2)

…some departments are further ahead and departments like mine have sort of put it on the backburner because we feel we've got a handle on it and yeah, it's going to loom up very quickly. (ML 1)

When asked how important the middle leader's role was in curriculum implementation, another participant replied:

I actually think it's huge. I think if the HoD doesn't, or hasn't embraced it then it's absolutely not going to happen so I can't…that's that sort of burden that I really feel at the moment. Is that I have to drive it but I am quite positive about it. I do see it as a good excuse to make some changes that I think we've been putting off for quite some time so I'm not reluctant. (ML 7)

This distribution of leadership from the principal to those in the middle has meant that the participants believe that they have a central role in the implementation of the revised NZC. The reasons for this distribution are unclear but it does highlight the significance of their role in curriculum change in their secondary school context.

The following chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the findings identified in this research.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter extracts the key findings from the research for further analysis and these are discussed in the context of the literature reviewed earlier in Chapter Two. The chapter begins with how middle leaders perceive the revised NZC and how this has affected their curriculum implementation practice, showing the variability of interpretations experienced, the prevalence of a technical response, and the supremacy of national qualifications in middle leaders' priorities. This is followed by a discussion of the main issues faced by middle leaders which serve as barriers to curriculum implementation, the shortage of time, a lack of leadership development and a lack of financial resources. Finally the participants' notions of distributed leadership and curriculum leadership and their effects on middle leadership roles are discussed in the context of implementing the revised NZC. This chapter is structured according to the themes which are categorised under the headings of the research questions.

MIDDLE LEADERS' CURRICULUM PERCEPTIONS

Each middle leader interviewed and surveyed perceived the revised NZC in their own way which is coloured by their world view, educational philosophy and practical situation. However, several themes emerged from the data which shed some light on this question.

Variable Interpretation

On the whole, those participating in the research were positive about the intent of the revised NZC. They agreed that the direction that the new curriculum change was leading was a positive one. What was notable, however, was the wide range of interpretations that were evident amongst middle leaders. Many believed that the shift to the 'front end' aspects such as the vision, values, principles, key competencies and effective pedagogies merely reinforced what they had always

done and most subject leaders described how their own subject area already has the advantages of inherently promoting these 'front end' ideals. Little was said about what the practical application of these 'front end' aspects was. Most participants believed that, for example, the key competencies were something that students did in their subject implicitly. This is in conflict with the intent of the curriculum document which states, "Students need to be challenged and supported to develop them [key competencies] in contexts that are increasingly wide-ranging and complex" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 12).

There was some relationship to be found between the experience of the middle leaders in their roles and their interpretation. Those with more experience in their roles were more likely to express the opinion that the new curriculum was something that was not, "…too much of a struggle to implement or integrate into unit plans" (ML 1). In contrast, the participants with less than five years middle leadership experience were more likely to express less confidence in their understanding of the revised NZC. They were more likely to express a desire for further professional development but also they had an awareness of the need to go beyond a technical/rational response to curriculum implementation and make change happen in the teaching and learning at classroom level. This will be explored further in a subsequent section.

What was evident from the data was that there was no discernible difference between the variability experienced between schools as within them. Something that did emerge was that there was more likely to be commonality of interpretation between middle leaders from different schools but within the same subject or faculty area than there was between middle leaders from the same school. This highlights an aspect of the middle leadership literature which discusses the strong affinities which exist between middle leaders in the same or similar subject areas (Blandford, 2006; Busher & Harris, 1999).

A significant reason behind this variability of interpretation of the revised NZC is the deliberate intention of the document to, "…give schools the scope, flexibility, and authority they need to design and shape their curriculum so that teaching and learning is meaningful and beneficial to their particular communities of students"

(Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 37). Left to their own devices to work through the curriculum change without guidance, schools and middle leaders are likely to develop their own varied interpretations. The literature on change management and leadership, although much of it is associated with the uncritical school improvement literature (Gunter, 2002; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003), explains the need for a clear interpretation for those tasked with implementation in order to avoid ambiguity and variability in interpretation (Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Scott, 1999). As Duke (2004) states, "direction is critical if people are to stay the course through implementation and eventual integration of reforms" (p.196).

Technical/Rational Response

The most common responses by participants in this research to questions regarding changes made to implement the revised NZC referred to surface changes or technical responses. The most common response in this regard was to discuss how unit plans had been changed to reflect the requirements of the new curriculum but rarely was there discussion of the desire or need to change teaching and learning at the classroom level. This is contrary to the focus on effective pedagogy in the revised NZC. The section of the curriculum which discusses teaching as an inquiry-based process requires teachers and therefore leaders to reflect on their pedagogical approaches and make changes where necessary (Ministry of Education, 2007b). The whole intent of the revised NZC is that, "curriculum design and review is a continuous, cyclic process" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 37), rather than a one off technical change. This technical approach mirrored what Flett and Wallace (2005) found in their analysis of a major national curriculum change in the United Kingdom:

Although teachers were not specifically told to focus on the structural aspects of the new curriculum at the expense of classroom changes, the time and effort needed to review and realign the school's curriculum to match the CSF [Curriculum and Standards Framework] structure resulted in such a focus" (p.205).

Indeed, those most likely to propose technical solutions to curriculum change were those who believed that the new curriculum was something that they were 'already doing' therefore only a technical/rational approach was needed. These were the same middle leaders who offered a narrow interpretation of the intent of the new curriculum. In their report on the progress of curriculum implementation, Hipkins et al. (2008) explained that, "school leaders and teachers interpret new curricula through the lens of their current practices and beliefs" (p.2). This is true for the participants of this study. However, Hipkins et al.'s (2008) study also concluded that the principal's leadership was the key to implementation. This has not been borne out in this research where considerable variation of interpretations within secondary schools underlines the importance of middle leaders in the actual implementation of a curriculum change such as the revised NZC.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that not all participants in this research espoused a technical response to curriculum implementation although they were significantly in the minority in this study. Those middle leaders who espoused the need for deeper change than a merely technical one were more likely to be cautious about their understanding of the revised NZC. They each realised that the document required further professional development and exploration and was not something that can or should be rushed. This aligns with the findings of Cowie et al. (2009) and Hipkins et al. (2008) in their exploratory studies. Their studies found that schools needed time to really come to grips with the full nature of the curriculum change and this was likely to take place over a period of years. A possible explanation for the finding of a more technical/rational approach to the curriculum change in this study which was not evident in theirs was the progressive nature of the early adopting schools and their collective attitudes to innovation.

Assessment Focus
The importance of the National Qualifications Framework in the form of the NCEA and other qualifications is acknowledged by participants in this study as being one of, if not the primary focus of their middle leadership roles in secondary schools. There was a general belief that the NCEA must be the single most important driver of the curriculum in years 11-13. This contradicts the assertion in the revised NZC that rather than assessment being the focus of the learning, assessment should

rather guide the teacher in improving the learning of students, "the primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching…" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 39). A tension exists in that middle leaders believe that they, and the staff they are responsible for, are accountable for their assessment results and this has meant a necessary focus on students achieving in the NCEA.

The NQF, then, rather than the revised NZC was seen as the basis for the curriculum set by middle leaders in senior secondary schools participating in this study. The implementation of the revised NZC had almost exclusively focused on either years 7-10 or years 9-10 depending on the participating school's make up. It was evident that a significant number of the participants were unaware that the revised NZC was a legal requirement for all students up to, and including, year 13. The concept that "teaching programmes in year 11-13 should be based, in the first instance, on the appropriate national curriculum statements" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 44), was foreign to a number of participants.

The alignment of NCEA standards with the New Zealand Curriculum through NZQA's standards alignment project was intended to raise awareness of the need to bring NCEA into line with the expectations of the revised NZC. There was, however, amongst the participants of this study, some confusion over the relationship between the two. This may be because this process is being implemented by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, whereas the NZC is a Ministry of Education initiative. A lack of a unified approach to both the curriculum implementation and the subsequent standards alignment has left a disconnection between the two initiatives in the eyes of the middle leaders involved in this research.

Secondary school middle leaders participating in this study had a view of their roles that is at odds with the statutory requirements set out in the national curriculum. The Education Review Office highlighted that, "poor understanding of The New Zealand Curriculum" (Education Review Office, 2009, p. 12), was one of the themes found in schools which were not making progress towards implementation. This is evident in most of the contexts in which middle leaders participating in this study were working.

The causes of this misinterpretation of the intentions of the revised NZC were unclear. Certainly many of the participants identified a lack of support and professional development initiated at both the system and school levels as being a difficulty that they have encountered. However, those that expressed that the curriculum was what they were already doing have evidently not engaged with the curriculum document sufficiently. Referring to the change leadership literature, while dealing mainly with change at a school level, it does lay the responsibility for the success of change implementation with those tasked with planning and initiating the change (Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Scott, 1999).

While the data pointed to significant variance in middle leaders' perceptions of the revised NZC, there was far more common ground on the matter of the issues and barriers faced by them in the implementation process.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES FOR MIDDLE LEADERS

The data presented a number of different barriers which have constrained middle leaders in the practice of implementing the revised NZC. These will be presented here along with the responses of the participants to these challenges.

Time-related Issues

The lack of time was the single most significant constraint identified from the data gathered in this research. There was almost universal agreement that there was not enough of it to implement the revised NZC as thoroughly as they would have liked. This issue manifested itself for the participants in two ways; the lack of time due to an excessive workload, and the lack of time allocated both formally and informally to carry out the collegial discussions and professional development activities required to implement a radical, new, national curriculum.

Workload-related time issues

As Ingvarson et al. (2005) discovered in their workload report, middle managers reported spending, on average, 52 hours per week on work-related tasks. This study was undertaken before the additional burden of a new national curriculum. It is in this already time-poor working environment that middle leaders are being asked to

implement the revised NZC. By far the majority of participants in this research identified workload as being a significant barrier to giving the time that they thought was necessary for implementing a change of this magnitude.

All of the middle leaders involved in the research had a significant teaching commitment which took up the majority of their time. Many of the participants also spoke of administrative and managerial tasks which were important for the functioning of their areas of responsibility such as moderation, assessment setting, finding and ordering resources, amongst others which they believed to be essential aspects of their roles. Leadership tasks such as leading and managing change were usually last on the list and often delayed until they became imperative. Hipkins and Hodgen (2004) and Ingvarson et al. (2005), in their respective studies into secondary teacher workload, found that these administrative tasks took up by far the majority of middle leaders' time outside the classroom. Because these tasks often involved tight and immediate deadlines they were more likely to take precedence over a long term project such as the implementation of the revised NZC.

There were, however, a few exceptions that did not rank workload-related time as highly on their list of barriers as the majority, and these were more likely to be among those participants who believed that there was no need to change their practice as a result of the revised NZC. It must be said, though, that even those who advocated a technical response stated the difficulty that they were having in finding the time to complete these tasks such as changing unit plans to reflect the new curriculum requirements. For some it was also evident that their workload was preventing them from exploring the curriculum document as much as they would like, therefore leading to some of the misunderstandings mentioned in the previous section. For others it was this very lack of time, due to workload, that provoked a technical/rational response.

The proliferation of pedagogical change projects in schools such as the introduction of the NCEA and smaller local-level initiatives over the past ten years or more was also seen to be having a negative effect on middle leaders with regard to their perceptions of time and workload. Many of the participants, while having to implement the revised NZC were also having to come to grips with other, major

change projects within their leadership contexts and, because of their key role in the school, were often being asked to facilitate these changes. If the senior leadership of the school placed a greater emphasis on these projects such as literacy or Te Kotahitanga then middle leaders were more likely to commit their energy into these projects than the revised NZC. This is understandable due to the already limited time available for leadership activity. When this is added to a new curriculum and major changes to the assessment system it is easy to understand the frustrations of middle leaders regarding the increase in workload that has accompanied this.

Middle leaders also encountered resistance from staff whenever a change was likely to add to their, already crowded, existing workload even if there was likely to be a tangible benefit to the students. Some middle leaders were determined that the potential benefits of changing classroom practice around the revised NZC was worth persevering with, while others' response was a superficial, technical one. Either way, the lack of time due to a heavy workload constituted a significant barrier to curriculum implementation.

Michael Fullan (2001, 2003) and other change leadership authors discuss the need for school leaders and change proponents at a system level to take into account workload issues and make sure that the environment is clear enough to allow leaders and teachers to make the changes that they are mandating (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Duke, 2004; Scott, 1999). This has apparently not been the case in the experiences of the middle leaders involved in this research.

Time for collegial discussions and professional development
The other significant barrier relating to time was the lack of time that middle leaders had available for debating and discussing issues. The lack of flexibility in the school timetable and calendar meant that middle leaders believe that they do not have enough time together with their teams to plan and implement change. Most of the participants valued time spent talking about the aspects of the curriculum that were new and how they might be transferred into the classroom. Those who were experiencing resistance from staff also discussed how having more time for such discussions was key in helping to overcome the objections of their team members.

Collegiality was identified in the literature as a key aspect of the way middle leaders conduct their leadership roles. There was, however, a lack of consensus over whether this was a benefit or hindrance to managing change for school improvement. A number of authors argued that a collegial environment was essential for providing the conditions for change to take place (Fullan, 2001, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1999). Busher and Harris (2000) believe that, "subject leaders should encourage and plan for teachers to work together. In this way the initiation and implementation of change is more likely to succeed", (p.22). However, the participants in this research believed that planning for time to meet together in this way was largely dictated to by the constraints of school structures and meeting timetables and, as such, was beyond their power to control. Any use of the existing time would be likely to be at the expense of other more pressing managerial and administrative tasks. On the other hand, another group of authors believed that collegiality, particularly in the team environment, could have the opposite effect and act as a barrier to effective change (Brown, Boyle, et al., 2000; Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; Flett & Wallace, 2005). Brown et al. (2000) noted that, "staff in a strongly collegial culture can be highly resistant to externally imposed change" (p.254). Nonetheless, there was an assumption on the part of the participants that more time for collegiality would be beneficial in facilitating the implementation of the revised NZC.

Mention was made of the value of the two days provided by the MOE for curriculum implementation and, in particular the Curriculum Support Days (CSDs) organised by the Post-Primary Teachers Association (PPTA). However, it was generally accepted by the participants that this time was woefully inadequate for the magnitude of the task of implementing a new national curriculum. What was particularly valuable about these days was the chance to meet with teachers and middle leaders from other schools and reflect on the good practice going on elsewhere. The change management literature was unanimous on the need for leaders to build professional learning communities outside of their own schools and for good practice to be shared among a wider group (Cowie, et al., 2009; Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Scott, 1999). While this has happened to a limited extent in this case, the middle leaders involved certainly expressed a need for more time to be allocated for these kinds of professional discussions.

Despite these difficulties, the participants have endeavoured to find ways around this particular obstacle. Middle leaders have negotiated time from their schools' leadership for activities such as; visiting schools in another area which are known to have developed good practice around curriculum implementation, having a day together off timetable to discuss curriculum issues, and bringing in external expertise to department meetings. While this shows the resourcefulness of the participants, these activities vary according to the will of the individual middle leader to negotiate the time. This often comes at a cost of sacrificing other professional development needs of team members for the requirements of an under-resourced national curriculum change.

It is clear that middle leaders expressed frustration at the lack of time resources allocated to the implementation of the revised NZC by, predominantly, the Ministry of Education and, to a lesser extent, school leaders. There was a belief that they were being expected to add the implementation of a major curriculum change to an already overburdened staff with negative consequences for the implementation itself. Some of the participants even expressed a doubt over the political will on the part of the MOE to see through the changes implemented under a previous government and that the National Standards policy has taken centre stage in the political landscape.

Leadership Development

None of the interviewees involved in this research had received any formal training for their middle leadership roles. Each had been left to gain a feel for their roles with little support other than the informal contacts which exist with others in a similar role both within and outside their schools. Some of the more recent appointees to middle leadership roles discussed how they had taken a year or more to understand the scope of their roles and that they were relying mostly on the systems put in place by their predecessors. They did not feel confident to make changes until they were much more confident in the expectations required of them. Those who were more experienced in the role had developed their understanding of middle leadership mostly through experience but this manifested itself as a wide range of interpretations of the nature of the position. The fact that most of the participants had multiple middle leadership roles further muddied the waters.

Only one of the middle leaders had located suitable leadership training and study to further their skills in leadership and this is after the participant has already been six months in the role. In addition, this will involve tertiary study which is self-funded by the middle leader and will add an extra burden to the participant's workload.

In the absence of formal leadership training and development programmes in schools, middle leaders were being asked to implement a new national curriculum and lead change without recognition of the importance of their role in this change. Some of the middle leaders believed that many of their colleagues in similar positions in their schools were ill-equipped for the task of curriculum leadership as traditionally their role had been more that of a curriculum manager. There was a belief that amongst some of those middle leaders, the task of leading such a major curriculum change was daunting and, "they don't know where to start" (ML 5), hence the technical/rational response. The MOE does provide support for secondary school middle leaders in the implementation process in the form of a series of pages on their Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website aimed at discussing developing learning pathways, however none of the participants in this study referred to it at any stage.

The middle management/leadership literature reviewed for this study was clear on both the paucity of, and the need for leadership training and professional development for middle leaders, particularly in the context of leading curriculum change (Blandford, 2006; Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Ruding, 2000; Wise & Bennett, 2003). Adey's (2000) research in the United Kingdom found that the majority of middle leaders had received no training for the role and, from the results of this research, there appears to exist a parallel situation in New Zealand. While the literature does acknowledge the difficulty in preparing middle leaders for the wide variety of middle leadership roles (Harris, et al., 2000; Kirkham, 2005), it is essential for middle leaders charged with the important task of implementing a new national curriculum to be guided as to how this can best be achieved.

Financial Resourcing

Similarly to the allocation of time, the allocation of financial resources was identified from the data as a significant issue for a number of middle leaders. This was particularly the case for those who were seeking to change the teaching and learning practice within their areas of responsibility. Major curriculum change of the type advocated in the revised NZC was likely to require new resources to reflect the intent of the new curriculum. The NZC places an importance, for example, on e-learning as an important facet of effective pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 2007b), yet participants talked of their difficulty accessing bookable computer rooms while others trying to, "enhance the relevance of new learning" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 34), were allocated no money to purchase new text books for the past two years. It is evident that for middle leaders in this research who are forced to operate on diminishing, in real terms, budgets, allocating money for funding curriculum change is a difficult task. One middle leader also made a link between the lack of resources and the resistance of staff, believing that resources were available to ease the implementation burden but, at present, these were simply not affordable.

For those few participants who did not believe that resourcing was a problem they were also those who believed that there was no need to change their own, or their colleagues', teaching and learning practice. For those who believed that they were already doing what was required from the revised NZC, or proposed a technical/rational response, resourcing was not an issue. Interestingly, there was no consistency within schools for the answer to this question. Answers were more likely to be linked to their view and response to the curriculum than to their particular school context thus highlighting the need for the allocation of resourcing for real change to occur. Participants did not believe that this was a school issue but more of a problem at the national system level.

The allocation of resources is a key aspect of leading curriculum change according to the literature reviewed (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001). However, for many middle leaders participating in this research, the resources were tied up in maintaining the status quo and little, if any, was left for curriculum development. The response of the middle leaders who really wished to implement

change along with the revised NZC was to attempt to reshuffle their resources but usually to the detriment of another area.

CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP ROLES AND THE REVISED NZC

Distributed Leadership

It is evident from this research that there has been significant authority for the implementation of the revised NZC distributed and delegated to middle leaders. The participants saw their role as key in the implementation process and in all cases the middle leaders have been allowed to interpret and implement the curriculum autonomously in their areas of responsibility. This has reinforced the importance of the middle leaders in the implementation process in the secondary schools involved in the project.

In each of the cases there was an assumption on the part of the participants that implementing and interpreting the revised NZC for their subject areas was an important part of their role despite curriculum change not being explicitly outlined as such. Neither the participants' job descriptions nor the Professional Standards for Secondary Teachers – Unit Holders (Ministry of Education, 1999), made explicit mention of implementing national curricula. It is not known whether this acceptance of this aspect of their role had always been accepted or whether it has come about because of the increased workload pressures placed on principals and senior leaders which have seen more responsibility distributed to those in the middle of the secondary school hierarchy. It was evident, though, that middle leaders have a normative view of this distribution of autonomy and responsibility for curriculum implementation as they accept that they and their teams are most likely to be in a position to interpret the curriculum for their areas of responsibility. This appears to contrast with the intent of the curriculum which states, "schools should aim to design their curriculum so that learning crosses apparent boundaries" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 38). Rather than cross boundaries, this autonomy serves to encourage variability in curriculum design between subject areas and departments. The participants did not mention any cross-curricular projects or ways that the intent of the curriculum was being met in their secondary school contexts. Instead, the traditional subject boundaries remained firmly entrenched in these schools. More of

a 'front-end' focus on aspects such as the key competency of thinking could potentially lead to a greater emphasis on cross-curricular learning.

It is not clear whether school size is a determining factor in the proliferation of the distribution of leadership to the middle in secondary schools. Of the schools involved in the interview phase of this research there was little discernible difference in the degree of distributed leadership experienced by the participants. It may have been expected that middle leaders in larger schools would have experienced more autonomy than those in smaller schools, however this was not borne out in the data.

Despite the prevalence of distributed leadership from the top to the middle in the secondary schools involved, it was not as commonly expressed for leadership to be distributed from the level of middle leadership to classroom teachers. Fewer than half of participants mentioned distributing leadership to members of their teams. Where distributing leadership was discussed it exclusively involved team members who were assigned formal responsibility for leadership of particular areas within the department or team such as particular year level programmes. As for leadership from the top, distribution of responsibility exclusively went with formal role rather than leadership as an emergent property based on interest and passion. Therefore, those who did not have members of their teams with formal areas of responsibility felt unable to distribute leadership to others in their teams, thus exacerbating their own workloads. As a result of interpreting the data it can be said that the distributed leadership as experienced and practised by the participants in this research is of an official rather than emergent nature, meaning that, rather than leadership emerging from teachers' passions and expertise, it is officially delegated from above to those with delegated authority(Youngs, 2009).

According to the literature reviewed, for distributed leadership to be most effective it should come from a desire to build leadership capacity within a school rather than a need to alleviate the workload of senior managers and principals (de Lima, 2008; Harris, 2008, 2009; MacBeath, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008; Ritchie & Woods, 2007; Robinson, 2008; Spillane, 2007; Woods, et al., 2004; Youngs, 2009). As discussed this was not the experience of the participants in this research. The distributed leadership perspective of the middle leaders involved was a normative one as is the

focus of much of the distributed leadership literature, coming from the assumption that distributing leadership is desirable and beneficial for student outcomes. This, in the more recent distributed leadership literature is being challenged as the dominant view of the paradigm (Spillane, 2007; Youngs, 2008).

The revised NZC has resulted in the distribution of more leadership, although the effectiveness of this distribution is questionable, from the top of the secondary school hierarchy to the middle in the schools involved in this research. However, this has not led to further distribution, except along formal, hierarchical lines, to those at classroom level. Instead it appears that the distribution of responsibility for curriculum implementation has created more responsibility and workload issues for middle leaders, thus further intensifying their roles.

Curriculum Leadership

The subject and department/faculty leaders in this research saw themselves exclusively as leaders of curriculum. This conception of their roles came from the affinity with their subject areas and the close working relationships with those within these curriculum areas. The implementation of the revised NZC has only reinforced this conceptualisation rather than changed it.

In practice, however, much of the activity described by the participants could mostly be explained as curriculum management, whereby middle leaders were mostly managing the status quo in their areas of responsibility. This is in contrast to definitions of curriculum leadership which imply moving staff through change towards a shared goal (Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2001). Therefore, a gap exists between the participants' conception of their role and their practical application of it. Middle leaders involved in the project wanted to lead curriculum but were prevented from doing so from a number of constraints some of which have already been discussed in this chapter. It was the leadership activity which was pushed aside in the everyday milieu of middle leaders' work. Some of the participants were determined to make time for curriculum leadership, particularly with regard to implementing the revised NZC, but this came at a cost in terms of sacrificing precious time and resources.

It was anticipated that the change in focus of the revised NZC to 'front-end' aspects such as vision, values, key competencies and effective pedagogies may have changed the focus of middle leaders from leaders of curriculum to pedagogical leaders. This was not, however, borne out in the data. Only one middle leader referenced changing pedagogical practice rather than curriculum when they said, "The NZC has just suggested we change how we teach that, not so much what we're teaching. So it's an approach to teaching"(ML 5). This awareness of the need to show pedagogical leadership was lacking amongst the other middle leaders involved in this research. There was a general expectation that pedagogical leadership was the responsibility of the principal and senior staff in the school which had more of a whole-school perspective, whereas leadership of curriculum was their leadership domain.

Two pastoral leaders were involved in the interview phase of the research and these both had additional subject or department responsibilities, as well. Of the two, only one considered their pastoral role to involve a curriculum leadership component. This participant acknowledged that the role was changing with the shift in emphasis to values and competencies, areas which were traditionally the domain of pastoral leaders, meaning that a new conceptualisation of pastoral leadership involving curriculum leadership may be emerging. There was certainly an expression of the two traditionally disparate areas needing to work more closely together in the future.

The middle leadership literature almost exclusively focused on the subject leader, head of department/faculty roles in curriculum leadership. Pastoral middle leadership has been largely ignored in the literature reviewed and is an area neglected by researchers (Bennett, et al., 2007). Although not labelled as pedagogical leadership, the middle leadership literature does discuss the importance of subject leaders keeping up with the latest research on teaching and learning along with, but subordinate to, their curriculum leadership roles (Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; de Lima, 2008; Kirkham, 2005; Ruding, 2000). It is possible that the literature has yet to catch up with the implications of a so-called world-leading curriculum (Sewell, 2010), such as the NZC. There is also general acknowledgement amongst authors in this area that middle leaders rarely have the time to carry out the real curriculum leadership work that they would like to. Instead their days are filled with

managerial tasks and reacting to various crises as they arise (Blandford, 2006; Brown, Rutherford, et al., 2000; Cranston, 2009; Wise & Bennett, 2003). This has generally been the experience of the participants in this research.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a discussion of the key findings of this research project in the context of the reviewed literature. This study found that the implementation of the revised NZC has had wide implications for the practice of middle leaders in secondary schools and identified a number of issues which are affecting the implementation process.

The final chapter will summarise the key findings, highlight the limitations of the research and, finally, make recommendations for strengthening curriculum implementation through middle leaders and identifying areas for future research.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions of this research as summarised from the previous chapter according to the following research questions:

- How do middle leaders interpret the revised NZC and does this align with the aims and aspirations of the curriculum?

- What are the issues faced by middle leaders as they implement the revised NZC and how do they respond to these?

- How has the revised NZC affected the curriculum leadership roles of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools?

The answers to these questions then lead to the presentation of a model for utilising middle leadership for effective curriculum implementation. Also presented in this chapter are the limitations of the research and recommendations for government agencies, school and middle leaders, and identified areas for further research.

MIDDLE LEADER PERCEPTIONS AGAINST THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE REVISED NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

Overall, this research suggests that there is a wide range of interpretations amongst middle leaders of the revised NZC. This is not incongruous with the intention of the curriculum document which suggests that, "the design of each school'scurriculum should allow teachers the scope to makeinterpretations in response to the particular needs,interests, and talents of individuals and groups of students in their classes" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 37). However, in some instances, middle leaders clearly did not fully understand the intentions of the document in their interpretations. This created variability in the practical application both between schools and within

them. Often, during the research process, more variability was encountered between different departments in the same school than between similar subject areas in different schools despite those in the same school having access to the same whole-school professional development as other middle leaders in their contexts. This suggests that middle leaders have interpreted the revised NZC according to their own beliefs and experiences rather than with reference to the interpretations of school leaders and national agencies.

The preponderance amongst those involved in the research of a technical/rational response to the curriculum and its implementation comes as a result of a number of identifiable factors. Foremost amongst these is the lack of time that middle leaders have for consideration of leadership issues and debating and discussing the form that the curriculum will take with their teams. This stems from a workload which is barely manageable without the additional stressor of a major curriculum change (Fitzgerald, 2009; Gunter, 2002; Ingvarson, et al., 2005), as well as a failure on the part of the system to plan for middle leaders to be able to work through these issues. Added to this is the lack of preparation and training middle leaders receive for their curriculum leadership roles. In essence, middle leaders are feeling the 'squeeze' due to their unique position in the middle of the school hierarchy, being given the responsibility for curriculum implementation without the means and resources to effectively carry it out. The result is very little change at the classroom level for the majority of those participating in this research. The revised New Zealand Curriculum, in contrast, advocates a response which is responsive to the needs of students and is led by sound pedagogical practice. This research has suggested that a significant gap exists between the two.

MIDDLE LEADERS' RESPONSE TO IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

The middle leadership role in curriculum implementation is a central one (Bennett, et al., 2007; Blandford, 2006; Busher, et al., 2000; Kedian, 2006). This research has identified a number of significant barriers which are preventing some, and hindering others from effective curriculum implementation. The most significant issue for middle leaders is the lack of time afforded them to both; carry out their jobs to the best of their abilities because of a heavy workload, and time to work with their teams

and others both within and beyond their schools. This time shortage means that important strategic matters such as curriculum implementation and other curriculum leadership aspects of the role are neglected in favour of short-term, more immediate tasks which are often of a more managerial and bureaucratic nature.

Added to the 'squeeze' which middle leaders are facing on their time, the participants are implementing the revised NZC with no formal training on managing change or, for most, any aspect of their middle leadership roles. For those less experienced, a one to two year timeframe for merely coming to grips with the requirements of the role is the experience of those involved in this research. Surprisingly, this study has shown these leaders to be more likely to want to pursue changes to teaching and learning in response to the implementation of the revised NZC. Those who have been in the role longer have developed assumptions about curriculum leadership which appear to be hindering them from seeking change at the classroom level. It appears that the qualification for middle leadership of being a knowledgeable practitioner in a subject area is not sufficient for meeting the demands of curriculum change.

The final significant challenge experienced by middle leaders is with regard to resourcing. Curriculum change requires commitment from the system and school level (Duke, 2004), to providing sufficient financial resources for activities such as professional development and providing time off-timetable for collaboration, as well as money for purchasing new classroom materials. This research suggests that this has not been the case with the revised NZC and as a result middle leaders have been left to reshuffle existing resources to implement a system level initiative.

The barriers to implementation of the revised NZC are significant and insurmountable to some. Nonetheless, some middle leaders are determined to overcome these difficulties and are developing models which could prove invaluable to others elsewhere who are struggling to come to terms with the change. Certainly, this research suggests that such models are presently difficult to come by.

CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP ROLES

This project has highlighted a form of distributed leadership that is further adding to the 'squeeze' felt by middle leaders. For those in this study, implementation of the revised NZC has been largely delegated to those in the middle, particularly subject leaders. This is partly because of the diverse nature of secondary schools, but also because of the demands on the modern principal where work is deliberately 'forced' downwards (Youngs, 2009). The normative response to this is that it must benefit teaching and learning. This research suggests, however, that middle leaders are not distributing this extra responsibility further except to those with formal leadership or management responsibilities and, in some cases, bearing the brunt themselves. Their experience of this form of distributed leadership is additional workload and stress and the response a technical/rational one as already outlined. This is unlikely to result in improved outcomes for student learning.

With regard to pastoral leadership there is some evidence in this study which suggests that there may be a changing conceptualisation of the role. In a limited respect, pastoral leaders are beginning to see themselves as leaders of curriculum as the focus shifts to the 'front end' aspects such as values and key competencies which would more traditionally fit into their pastoral role. This research suggests that those fulfilling these positions face the same or similar constraints as subject leaders.

Rather than changing perceptions of curriculum leadership amongst middle leaders, this research suggests that, on the whole, perceptions remain unchanged. The pre-eminence of balkanized curriculum areas still holds sway, despite the intention of the revised NZC to move towards a more integrated curriculum where, "links between learning areas should be explored" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 39). In addition, the increased focus on pedagogy in the curriculum document has yet to translate into the middle leaders participating in this research seeing the need to show pedagogical leadership. Most of their efforts were still focused on leading or managing their curriculum areas because of the traditional conceptualization of their roles.

MODEL FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE THROUGH MIDDLE LEADERS

As a result of the analysis of the findings of this research, a model for leveraging middle leaders to create effective curriculum change has been developed (Figure 6.1). The model shows the 'squeeze' on middle leaders alluded to in this chapter and how middle leadership is an essential conduit for interpreting curriculum change.

Figure 6.1: Model of curriculum implementation for middle leaders
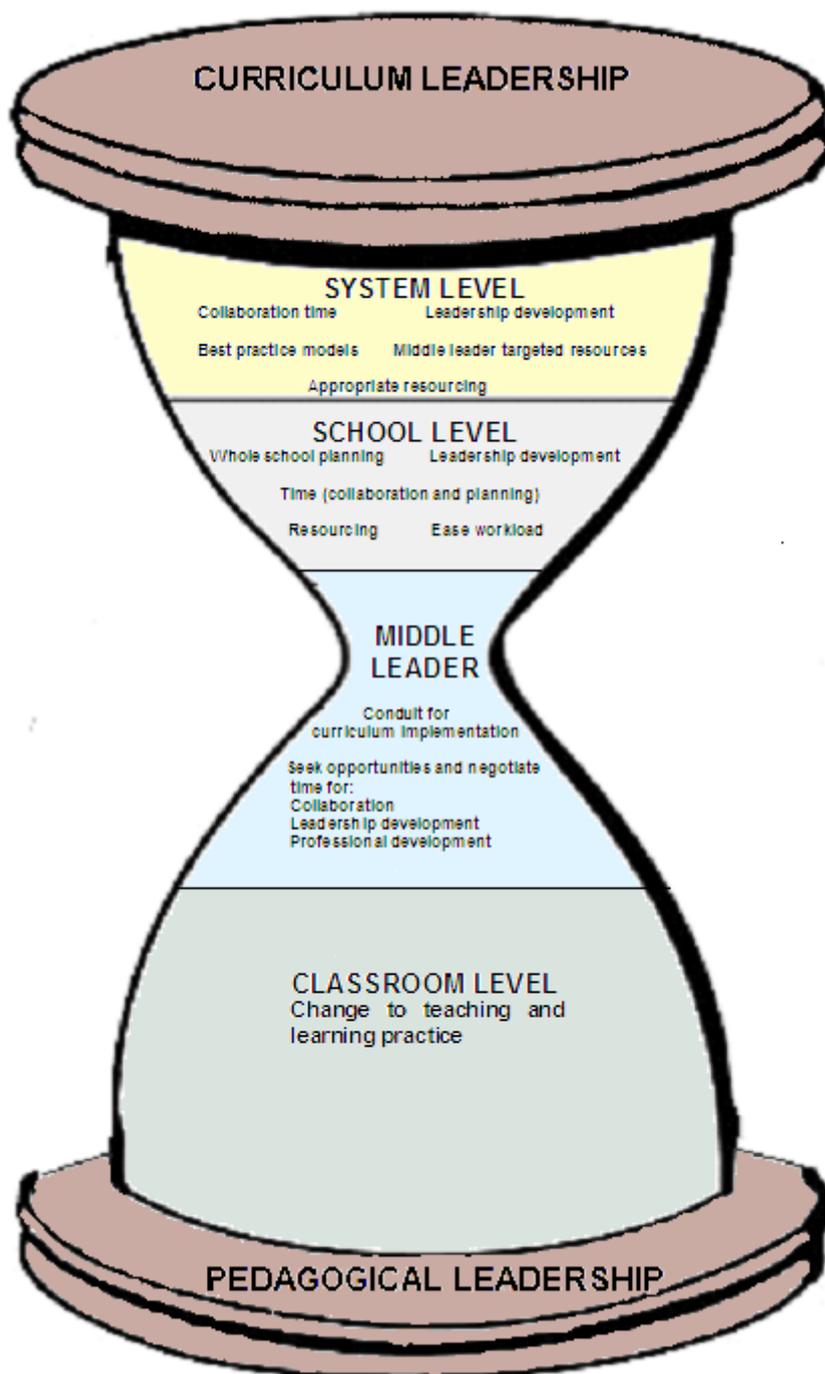
The model presents the four levels of involvement in curriculum implementation with recommendations for each level to create the optimum conditions for change to teaching and learning to occur, the ultimate goal of curriculum change.

The twin pillars of curriculum and pedagogical leadership hold the elements together and are central to a successful implementation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For System Level Agencies

As the model presented in figure 6.1 suggests, a number of improvements can be made to the curriculum implementation process for middle leaders at the system level, in this case the Ministry of Education. The first recommendation is for recognition of the importance of middle leaders in the implementation process. An overwhelming majority of the support material for the revised NZC is focused on principals who can rarely have a direct effect on teaching and learning (Cardno, 2006; Kedian, 2006), agencies need to focus far more resources on supporting middle leaders through the implementation process.

The participants involved in this research believed that they needed more time to collaborate with others in both within and beyond their schools, in particular with those from similar subject areas. Days such as the PPTA run Curriculum Support Day were considered very valuable as middle leaders were given the opportunity to share ideas and resources with others. The two additional days provided by the Ministry were considered useful but some felt that their school leadership had spent the time on non-curriculum related development or whole-school development. Time for discussing and planning in their teams has been limited and has had to be negotiated. Future curriculum implementation processes should factor in mandated time for both inter-school discussion and collaboration, and team planning sessions for middle leaders to work with their teams.

In order for these times to be utilised successfully, middle leaders need to be adequately trained and equipped for the complex task of leading curriculum change. This research and the literature suggest that middle leaders are inadequately

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prepared for their roles (Brown, Boyle, et al., 2000; Harris, et al., 2000; Kirkham, 2005; Wise, 2001; Wise & Bennett, 2003). This is particularly the case when it comes to leading change. It is strongly recommended, then, that a centrally coordinated training programme be made available which is tailored to different middle leadership roles (head of subject, pastoral leader). A particular focus on leading change should be an integral part of such a programme. Additionally, the Ministry of Education should investigate possibilities for easing middle leader workload in secondary schools.

While there are resources available for the revised NZC, particularly on the internet, the middle leaders in this research have found them difficult to access and not necessarily helpful. While some have proactively sought out models in place in other schools, others have not had the time or the inclination to go to these lengths. What this research suggests is that best practice models for specific subject areas need to be developed and made readily available to middle leaders in their contexts. These resources should be tailored to the needs of middle leaders and include guidance for how to lead change.

Finally, major curriculum change needs to be adequately resourced financially. Schools need to have extra money allocated for one off costs such as text books and other resources linked to changing curriculum and teaching and learning. Extra professional development money needs to be available to finance curriculum-related whole-school and departmental development programmes as well as the specific middle leadership already discussed in this chapter.

For School Leaders
As this research has suggested there appears to be considerable variation in curriculum implementation within schools. This may be a concern for school leaders who have largely delegated responsibility for implementation to middle leaders although it is unclear whether this has positively or negatively affected implementation. While all participants mentioned whole-school professional development, none described a coordinated approach which included reporting and monitoring. It is recommended that for future implementation projects that school

leaders take a more planned, proactive approach with middle leaders in order to maintain some consistency of curriculum implementation for their students.

The importance of middle leadership in the implementation process means that more of an investment needs to be made into leadership development for middle leaders. This research suggests that middle leaders are unprepared for the task of curriculum implementation therefore school leaders need to actively encourage and resource development in this area in order to empower middle leaders to promote and implement changes to teaching and learning within their teams.

This research and the literature agree that middle leaders in secondary schools face excessive workload challenges (Fitzgerald, 2009; Hipkins & Hodgen, 2004; Ingvarson, et al., 2005). School leaders should attempt to alleviate these pressures in order for space to be made for leadership activity and curriculum change. In addition to this, time for collaboration with their teams for planning and implementing new curricula is recommended as a way of assisting change to teaching and learning practices where necessary.

While schools are facing significant financial constraints in the current educational and economic environment, it is recommended that school leaders show their commitment to curriculum implementation by allocating additional financial resources to middle leaders for new resources which fit the new curriculum requirements. Also, if curriculum change is to occur beyond a technical/rational response, middle leaders need to be resourced to access quality professional development on the new curriculum requirements and be able to have the opportunity to view and assess best practice models in other school contexts.

As the research shows the pivotal role of the middle leader as a conduit in the curriculum implementation process, it is important for school leaders to recognise this and involve middle leaders in the formulation of school-wide curriculum decisions. This could be done by creating a team of interested staff including middle leaders to plan and implement change projects such as new national curricula.

For Middle Leaders

It is recommended, firstly, that middle leaders recognise the importance of their role in curriculum implementation. This research suggests that there is a limited understanding of how curriculum interpretation and the form it takes in the classroom is directly affected by the middle leader. As well as this, middle leaders need to have an awareness of their skills regarding leading change and seek, where necessary, leadership development where there exists a gap. Most of the participants in this research had had little or no leadership development and this there was a general awareness of a lack of knowledge around curriculum and pedagogical leadership. Pedagogical leadership is a particular area for middle leaders to seek to better understand their roles. The 'front end' aspects of the revised NZC highlight the importance of middle leaders leading learning rather than just a curriculum area. Pedagogical leadership, then, appears to be the missing link between making changes to programmes and fundamental change to teaching and learning at the classroom level.

This research suggests that middle leaders have difficulty in finding the time for collaborating with their teams to plan and implement new curricula. Those involved who have shown a determination to implement changes to teaching and learning have proactively sought from their school leadership opportunities to meet together with their teams. These opportunities for collaboration have aided in overcoming staff resistance to change. Curriculum change and implementation is not a task which can be fit into regular meeting cycles alongside the minutiae of school life and so the recommendation is that large blocks of time be made available solely for discussing curriculum change.

It is also important that middle leaders seek out professional development on unfamiliar aspects of a new curriculum in order for themselves and their team members. This may include bringing in outside expertise or looking at models for curriculum implementation developed in other schools. In addition, middle leaders are encouraged to seek out the resources already available for curriculum implementation on Ministry of Education websites such as 'Te Kete Ipurangi.'

For Further Research

The focus of this research is on the espoused theories of middle leaders in relation to their practice on the implementation of the revised NZC. It would be useful to explore whether the espoused theory lined up with the practice by conducting observational or ethnographic research to analyse the curriculum implementation and leadership actions of middle leaders. Also, while this study has highlighted the various responses to implementation issues for the participants, it is unclear the reasons why different middle leaders have chosen different approaches and this could be a topic for further exploration.

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the small sample and geographical catchment of this study limits its applicability to the wider population of middle leaders. It may be useful to further explore whether the experiences of those in this study are similar to those throughout the rest of the country. Possible variables such as the geographical isolation of some Northland middle leaders may have coloured the responses. By taking a nationwide approach, a better picture of New Zealand middle leaders' responses could be gained.

This research has not included the perspectives of senior leaders, staff or students in the analysis of middle leadership practice in the implementation of the revised NZC. This could be a useful focus of further research in order to ascertain both the gap between espoused theory and praxis and to widen the perspective on some of the implementation issues and middle leader responses.

This research has highlighted the paucity of research on the differences between leading pedagogy and leading curriculum, or how students learn as opposed to what they should learn. This study suggests that the current focus of middle leaders in secondary schools is the former, although the revised NZC invites an increased focus on the latter. It would be useful to expand the literature base on the concept of pedagogical leadership.

Finally, the literature review for this research highlighted a lack of research into the roles of pastoral middle leaders in secondary school. This project has pointed to a possible genesis of a new conceptualisation of the role becoming more closely

aligned with subject leaders who previously have monopolised the term of curriculum leader, although this is far from clear at this stage. The revised NZC appears to support this. It would be useful to explore the roles of these middle level leaders in much more depth in New Zealand secondary schools.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

This research has been limited by the time and resources available to the researcher and, thus only a relatively small sample of middle leaders has been involved, particularly in the interview phase of the project. However, the qualitative nature of the research and the interpretive lens which has been used has strengthened the validity of the findings.

This project only gathered data on the espoused views of the participants. It is possible that observation of the practice of the same may find that a discrepancy exists between the two. Also, classroom teachers' experiences of the curriculum leadership of the middle leaders may paint a different picture of their curriculum implementation practice. The voice of these stakeholders is an important one regarding this topic.

In addition, the localised geographical nature of the sample involved in this research means that the findings are limited to this area. The results of this research can only be generalised to middle leaders in the Northland region which may have unique factors which colour their responses. Should the same research be carried out in another location, the findings may differ.

Finally, only three schools were involved in the interview phase of this research, each of these was a mid to high decile school of medium to large size. Middle leaders' experiences in smaller or very large schools, or low and very high socio-economic schools may differ from those in the schools involved.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This research has added to the body of literature on curriculum change and middle leadership by identifying middle leaders' responses to the revised New Zealand Curriculum and the challenges it brings in Northland secondary schools. The study suggests a number of ways in which the curriculum implementation could be better undertaken at a number of levels in order to utilise middle leaders more effectively during future curriculum changes. Those filling these positions are vital to the successful implementation of any national curriculum.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE

Middle leaders and the revised NZ Curriculum

1. Questionnaire Information

This questionnaire is part of a research topic on middle leadership perspectives on the revised NZ Curriculum, the aim of which is to add the voices of middle leaders to the literature surrounding implementation, something which is currently lacking. As part of this process, the barriers to implementation will be explored and the impact the revised curriculum has had on the roles of middle leaders in secondary schools analysed.

Progressing with this questionnaire will be considered as consent to use your data for the purpose of the above-mentioned research. You may leave this questionnaire and return to it later provided you use the same computer. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes.

Your data is being collected anonymously and access to information will be restricted to the researcher and the research supervisor. Neither yourself, or your school will be identifiable in the research. No IP addresses will be collected by the researcher. A summary of the general data collected will be made available to your school.

Should you wish to withdraw your data from the research after completing the survey, please do so within ten working days, or if you wish to contact the researcher for any other reason, please contact Simon Craggs at simonlisazoe@yahoo.co.nz, or my research supervisor, Howard Youngs at hyoungs@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2010-1092
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 24 June 2010 to 23 June 2011. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

2. General Information

1. What decile is your school?

☐ 1-3
☐ 4-6
☐ 7-10

2. What is your school size?

○ 1-50 U1   ○ 676-850 U7   ○ 1301-2000 U13
○ 51-100 U2   ○ 851-1025 U8   ○ 2001-2200 U14
○ 101-150 U3   ○ 1026-1200 U9   ○ 2201-2400 U15
○ 151-300 U4   ○ 1201-1400 U10   ○ 2401+ U16
○ 301-500 U5   ○ 1401-1600 U11
○ 501-675 U6   ○ 1601-1800 U12

Middle leaders and the revised NZ Curriculum

3. How long have you been teaching?

☐ 1-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-20 years

☐ Over 20 years

*4. What is your middle leadership role? (Choose more than one where applicable)

☐ Head of department/learning

☐ Head of faculty

☐ Subject leader (not HoD or HoF)

☐ Dean/pastoral leader

☐ Other unit holder (please specify)

5. How long have you held a middle leadership role?

☐ 1-3 years

☐ 4-10 years

☐ 11-20 years

☐ Over 20 years

6. How many management units do you hold?

○ 0
○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5+

3. Revised NZ Curriculum

Please do not answer any question which does not apply to you.

Middle leaders and the revised NZ Curriculum

1. Please rate your level of expertise in leading your team at implementing the following aspects of the revised NZC

	No knowledge					Expert
Vision and values	○	○	○	○	○	○
Principles	○	○	○	○	○	○
Key competencies	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learning areas and achievement objectives	○	○	○	○	○	○
Effective pedagogies	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. Please rate your access to knowledge to help you to implement the following aspects of the revised NZC

	Very difficult to access					Very easy to access
Vision and values	○	○	○	○	○	○
Principles	○	○	○	○	○	○
Key competencies	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learning areas and achievement objectives	○	○	○	○	○	○
Effective pedagogies	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. Rate the following barriers to implementing the new curriculum according to their applicability to your role

	Irrelevant					Extremely relevant
Time	○	○	○	○	○	○
Workload	○	○	○	○	○	○
Resistance to change	○	○	○	○	○	○
Resources	○	○	○	○	○	○
Professional development availability	○	○	○	○	○	○
Management support	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership opportunities (chances to lead learning)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Expertise	○	○	○	○	○	○
Team dynamics	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
The revised NZ Curriculum has allowed me opportunities to show leadership.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have been provided with sufficient time to implement the revised NZ Curriculum fully.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can access all of the expertise I need to implementation from within the school.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have access to outside expertise to help with implementation.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The revised NZ Curriculum has taken precedence over other change initiatives.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My department/area of responsibility has fully implemented the revised NZ Curriculum at all year levels.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The implementation of the revised NZ Curriculum is similar in all areas of the school.	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. Middle Leadership Roles

Please do not answer any question which does not apply to you.

1. Please indicate how clearly your middle leadership role is defined

	Poorly defined					Extremely clear
My role	○	○	○	○	○	○

Middle leaders and the revised NZ Curriculum

2. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

Strongly disagree   Strongly agree

Statement	○	○	○	○	○	○
I now see myself as more of a curriculum leader than before the revised N.Z Curriculum.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have developed positively as a leader though the implementation process.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have learned how to lead change though the implementation process.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have successfully overcome obstacles during the implementation process.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am now more focused on leading learning.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to be more focused on leading learning but am unable to do so.	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. Please comment on the impact the revised NZC has had on your role as a middle leader.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Role questions

1) What is your middle leadership role?

2) What is your job description based on?

3) Does your job description accurately reflect your role?

4) Has the revised NZC changed your role? If yes, in what ways?

5) What has caused these changes?

Curriculum questions

6) How do you view the revised NZ Curriculum?

7) Which aspects do you feel the most comfortable with?

8) Which aspects of the curriculum are the most challenging?

9) What are your hopes/fears regarding the new curriculum?

Implementation questions

10) At what stage is your school in the implementation process?

11) At what stage is your department/area of responsibility in the implementation process?

12) What have been the biggest barriers to implementing the curriculum in your area?

    a) Which of these barriers are within your own and your team's ability to influence?

    b) Which are outside your influence?

13)   How have you, or do you anticipate, overcoming these barriers?

14)   What could be done to improve the implementation process?

15)   Is there anything else you would like to add?