

Foreword

Transition of students between primary and secondary schools is an important international educational issue. In many countries there are concerns about the impacts upon students of changing schools and New Zealand is no exception. Nearly 50 years ago the issue was thoroughly discussed in the Currie Commission Report. The report pointed to difficulties caused for students by the two distinctive systems of schooling: primary and secondary. It identified discontinuities caused by two separate teacher associations with different employment conditions, different teacher preparation, different curricula, and different school organisation. Transition was regarded as a time of anxiety and even stress for many students and the report recommended that policy makers take steps to reduce any negative effects of the discontinuities.

Following the Currie Report little was done to remedy the negative affects of transition. It is only in the last 20 or 25 years that positive action has increased. Many schools themselves have taken initiatives to introduce policies and practices to make transition easier and more satisfying for students. Unfortunately, little of these local initiatives has been systematically recorded and published. There are many unanswered questions.

Therefore, the Transition Study is of particular national interest as exploratory research that might uncover the main factors involved in transition, their impacts, and lead to further research on different aspects of transition.

Transition between schools is politically-charged. School personnel are understandably sensitive about criticisms of their practices. Tensions arise over the performance of students; some primary teachers claim that secondary teachers fail to fully capitalise on the skills and academic achievement of students after they leave Year 8. Some secondary teachers claim that primary teachers fail to prepare all students for Year 9 academic work.

This report on the impact of transition on a sample of students' achievement in Years 8 to 10 provides valuable and detailed results of their achievement and attitudes from multiple sources of data. It reveals the complexity of the academic impacts of transition and will open the way for further investigation. The report – even though exploratory – has provided results that have implications for school-based policies and practices.

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