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Getting On, Getting Out, and Going Places: Education, Opportunity, and Social Mobility in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Rural New Zealand

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Abstract: This article does not purport to provide an exhaustive overview of the history of rural high school education in New Zealand. Such information can be readily obtained from a number of existing historical studies in education. Rather, it seeks to identify and analyse the complex ways whereby those associated most closely with these schools, the students, teachers, and parents, steadfastly and successfully resisted the determined and repeated efforts of the Department of Education, its Directors, and successive Ministers of Education to introduce and popularise a highly 'practical', non-academic, agriculturally oriented curriculum in New Zealand's rural (district) high schools on the grounds of education and social efficiency. What becomes abundantly clear is that the educational demands and expectations of rural communities were markedly different from the official discourse. Rural communities expected, and sought access to, the same high status knowledge and highly prized public school examinations that offered ambitious urban youth the opportunity to gain enhanced economic, geographical, social, and vocational mobility. Consequently, the elevated status of traditional academic subjects meant that preparation for examinations came to dominate, and quickly overshadow, the curriculum offerings of the district high schools and this persisted for more than a century.

Introduction

The history of rural high school provision in New Zealand demonstrates clearly that ambitious rural parents have long sought access to the same school curriculum that was offered to urban youth. In short, 'equality of educational opportunity' for rural parents and their children meant that equality, uniformity of education provision, and greater central authority intervention and regulation became synonymous. For decades, rural communities repeatedly insisted that education officials provide near identical educational opportunities for rural and urban students, much to the annoyance of many senior Department of Education administrators and school inspectors who strenuously opposed any suggestion of introducing an urban-based, urban-oriented, school curriculum and examination system in rural New Zealand high schools. The tension between the demand

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for practical, non-academic, courses designed to prepare rural youth for agricultural and pastoral work in their local communities, ostensibly to strengthen the economic and social base of rural communities, and academic courses that led to recognised examination qualifications was a central and always controversial feature of the district high schools from the time they were established in the 1850s until at least the 1970s.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when central education administrators boldly claimed that because they best understood the 'needs' of rural communities they should have the authority to introduce an agricultural applied/practical curriculum bias to secure greater economic and education efficiencies in rural schooling, rural parents repeatedly insisted that their children were in fact being 'fobbed off' with a markedly inferior education compared with that available to urban youth. Rural parents and their communities did not acquiesce in what was a concerted attempt by central education administrators to wrestle power and control away from local rural laypeople. Instead they declared that what ambitious rural youth needed most was the opportunity to enjoy the considerable economic, social, and vocational benefits made possible by access to an academic curriculum at a local school.

The early years: before the 1877 Education Act

Following the passage of the Constitution Act of 1852, New Zealand adopted a federal system of government wherein the colony was divided into six separate provinces, each with its own locally elected provincial council that had wide ranging legislative powers, including specific responsibility for education. However, because the provinces differed markedly in their philosophies, practices, natural resources, and in the value of their education and land endowments, educational provision throughout the colony was very uneven from the outset. By the late 1860s, glaring and growing disparities were evident between the North and South Islands, owing to the economic boom being enjoyed in the south (Butchers, 1932; Campbell, 1941; Mackey, 1967). Notwithstanding the autonomy enjoyed by individual provincial councils and the relative economic differences between the two islands, by the mid 1850s most provincial councils had established primary schools in the larger population centres, funded principally by public subscription and school fees.

The South Island Otago province illustrates the growth of education provision during the provincial period (1853–76). Beginning with five schools established under the Otago Education Ordinance (Act) in 1856, a further 168 were opened over the next twenty years. During that time the number of students attending schools in Otago increased from 236 to 11210, and the number of teachers employed rose from seven to 329 (McKenzie, 1973: 3). With its strong Scottish Presbyterian origins and flourishing economy as a result of the discovery of gold in the early 1860s, Otago school authorities were able to recruit experienced primary school teachers from overseas, many of whom had been trained in, and certificated by, Scottish Normal Schools (McKenzie, 1973). Spurred on by the Scottish enthusiasm for access to education, local community leaders sought permission and funding from the Otago Education Board immediately to establish schools, modelled unashamedly on the Scottish parish system. The staff in these schools would provide instruction in most secondary school subjects on payment of a very modest fee (Thom,

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1950). The first school opened in Tokomairiro (Milton) in April 1856 and after an inauspicious start, with the school closing briefly in 1861 owing to a paucity of students, Tokomairiro District High School's future became more certain in 1869 when the Otago Grammar Schools Ordinance was passed that reconstituted the school, along with three others, in Lawrence, Oamaru, and Port Chalmers, as a grammar school (Thom, 1950: 13, 133). Together these four schools offered a very select group of ambitious scholars the opportunity to undertake advanced secondary school studies in English (including reading, recitation, and grammar), Latin, Greek, French, Euclidian geometry, Algebra, British history, and World Geography (Devaliant, 1964; Thom, 1950).

Prior to the introduction of universal free, compulsory and secular primary schooling throughout New Zealand in 1878, Otago's four district high school authorities could boast that they provided low cost post-primary schooling opportunities to children of educationally and socially ambitious parents. Experienced teachers such as John Stenhouse, the long-serving Rector (Principal) at Lawrence District High School, knew only too well what their local communities expected of them when employment opportunities were scarce in small towns with stagnant economies and/or declining populations. Accordingly, Stenhouse decided to prepare ambitious rural youth for future employment opportunities in the towns and cities, typically in the highly sought after government and commercial sectors, rather than provide instruction for a life on the land. Decades later, Thom (1950: 8) praised rural school teachers such as Stenhouse for being carefully attuned to the overarching need for ambitious youth to 'get out [of rural areas] and to get on'. He declared: 'For the able country boy education was often a way out—an escape from the rigours and limitations of the life of the farm labourer'.

The 1877 Education Act

Rural school authorities, for their part, could no longer ignore the demands of their local communities (Millar, 1956). With the public expectation of equality of curriculum between town and country, formal legislative provision was necessary to protect the existing academic curriculum in the secondary departments ('tops') of the district high schools. The 1877 Education Act gave this assurance to rural New Zealanders, partly by granting statutory recognition to district high schools nationally. Each regional education board, upon receipt of a written application from a school committee and with prior approval of the Minister of Education, could designate any public primary school a district high school (The Education Act, 1877, Sections 54, 73). In addition, it prescribed an academic course of instruction that was familiar already to many district high school teachers, students, and rural residents in Otago. To this end the legislation stated:

> [Students were to study] all the branches of a liberal education comprising Latin and Greek classics, French and other modern languages, mathematics and such other branches of science as the advancement of the colony and the increase in the population may from time to time require. (The Education Act, 1877, Section 56)

The 1877 Education Reserves Act permitted endowed secondary schools in the towns and cities to provide a curriculum identical to that specified in the 1877 Education Act.

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This meant that rural high school authorities could now claim that they provided the same opportunity to access the same traditional academic curriculum and examination qualifications offered by the exclusive, fee charging, urban secondary schools. While many rural New Zealanders were delighted with this outcome, by the late nineteenth century some prominent educational administrators began to criticise this rural-urban 'curriculum overlap' and to argue instead that rural school authorities should prioritise agricultural instruction over academic education.

The district high schools after 1877

In the years immediately following the passage of the 1877 Education Act, few education boards were willing to establish district high schools. During the period 1878 to 1899, for example, the number of district high schools that opened increased from five (all in Otago) to fourteen (twelve in the South Island, and only two in the North Island) with a total of 313 students enrolled in the secondary departments (Thom, 1950: 9, 13). For the time being, the future of the district high schools appeared precarious owing to three interrelated factors. First, there was a funding shortfall. The cost per pupil was much higher than for primary education owing to the higher salaries paid to teachers in the secondary departments, yet these schools were cross subsidised from the ordinary (lower) primary school capitation grant. Secondly, the arrival of the major worldwide economic depression that lasted throughout the 1880s and 1890s resulted in decreased educational expenditure being available nationally. Finally, there was a lack of any consensus regarding the 'proper' roles of rural and urban high schools. Urban secondary school authorities, for their part, regarded the rural high schools as interlopers who heightened competition in an already exclusive segment of the post-primary school market (i.e., secondary, district high, and technical high schools). Nevertheless such competition was understandable, and impossible to avoid, given the hegemonic status of the traditional academic curriculum, public school examinations, and the opportunity for enhanced economic, social, and vocational mobility.

Education efficiency: a rural curriculum for rural high schools

By 1900, all the nation's fourteen district high schools had embraced the academic curriculum to such an extent that their authorities and staff viewed any attempt by officials to modify their programmes along more practical lines as a deliberate move to deny country children the opportunity to compete alongside city children for marketable examination qualifications (Lee and Lee, 1992). However, this practice was not without its critics, several of whom argued that the time was now ripe to introduce a more practical, agricultural, bias into the district high school curriculum. No less a person than the Premier and Minister of Education, Sir Robert Stout, as early as 1885, had claimed that because most rural males were likely to take up farming work upon leaving school, the rural high schools should have a 'special bias' towards agricultural instruction (Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives [*AJHR*], I-14B, 1904: 25; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* [*NZPD*], 1885, Vol. 52: 115). Many school

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inspectors nationally agreed with Stout. Indeed, the overwhelming consensus of opinion amongst those delegates who attended the national Conference of Inspectors and Rectors of District High Schools in 1901 was that the district high school curriculum had become overly academic at the expense of providing 'a good education bearing directly upon the practical work of rural life' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1902: 94–5). The district high school principals, however, were in an unenviable position. The more successful they were in satisfying the curriculum expectations of their rural communities, the greater was the wrath from those education administrators who wanted a more practical curriculum orientation in these schools.

The Hogben years, 1899 to 1915

George Hogben, the newly appointed Inspector-General of Schools (1899–1915) for New Zealand, deplored the need and tendency for the district high schools to imitate the fully staffed and better resourced urban secondary schools by modelling their curriculum offerings on the erroneous assumption that the majority of district high students would proceed to university (*AJHR*, E-1c, 1901: 3). Accordingly, Hogben declared that students' general education did not always have to be grounded upon academic instruction. Rather, it could and indeed should always be based upon practical, manual, and vocationally relevant subjects (*AJHR*, E-1c, 1901; *AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 44, 57, 711). Somewhat defiantly, Hogben tried to alter the dominant market perception of what counted as the most appropriate type of post-primary curriculum by asserting that enrolling rural youth in academic courses was both educationally unsound and economically undesirable. However, for the time being, practical subjects, particularly non-examinable ones, continued to occupy a subordinate status in the rural high school curriculum (*AJHR*, E-1B, 1908: 38).

Hogben's efforts to embed agriculture as a core subject in the district high school curriculum were frustrated further by the Seddon (Liberal) Government's decision to introduce 'free place' post-primary schooling, for the district high schools in January 1901 and then for the secondary schools in December 1902, for all students who had passed the primary school senior level Standard 6 Proficiency Examination. Having seriously underestimated the public enthusiasm for the free place system, Hogben then failed to grasp the reality that the free place legislation would consolidate the status of academic instruction in the district high schools further (McLaren, 1987: 80–1).

Hogben devised a broader curriculum than that prescribed in the 1877 Education Act for pupils in the secondary departments of district high schools in 1901: pupils had to study English and arithmetic, and at least three other subjects chosen from a list comprising Latin, French, mathematics (euclid, algebra, trigonometry), elementary mechanics, physics, chemistry, botany, mechanical drawing, book-keeping, shorthand, agricultural chemistry, and physiology (*AJHR*, E-1, 1901: 109, Clause 5). He had hoped that this would encourage the bulk of district high school students to opt for the manual, technical, and agricultural science subjects now available (*AJHR*, E-1c, 1901: 3). But this did not happen. Deeply disappointed at the conservative reaction from district high school authorities (*AJHR*, E-5, 1904: 7), Hogben wrote in his report for 1901 that:

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> There is too much tendency at present . . . to give the pupils a little Latin or French and a little elementary algebra or Euclid, and to avoid science and commercial and manual training. The aim in view in establishing district high schools will probably be gained if these schools give the pupils . . . a suitable course of manual work or of commercial work where local conditions demand it . . . . There is no reason why any of our district high schools . . . should take as their model the lower forms of an old English grammar school. (*AJHR*, E-1c, 1901: 3)

It was a message that he reiterated at a branch meeting of the Farmers' Union in Hawke's Bay (North Island) three years later.

Hogben's Farmers' Union speech, 1904

Hogben began his keynote address with a stinging attack on the academic orientation of the curriculum of the district high schools. Having argued that 'agriculture and rural pursuits engaged the efforts of far more people than did any other single trade, business or manufacture', Hogben proceeded to extol the virtues of delivering 'properly organised instruction in the principles of agriculture' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1902: xvi; I-14B, 1904: 24–6) in securing New Zealand's future economic prosperity. Hogben then expressed genuine surprise that the district high school authorities were keen to offer instruction in subjects such as shorthand and typewriting in preference to agriculture, dairy work, and cottage gardening (*AJHR*, E-1, 1902: xvi; I-14B, 1904: 24), but stopped short of legislative intervention to make agricultural education *compulsory* in country high schools, a stance echoed by George Fowlds, Minister of Education in the Ward Government (1906–12). Instead of compulsion, Hogben argued that the Department of Education, by way of its general regulatory powers and with the special funds available to education boards, provided sufficient encouragement for school teachers to offer 'such instruction as is most suited to the district' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1902: xvi; I-14B, 1904: 26).

The Tate Report on post-primary education in New Zealand, 1904

Having denounced the district high schools' academic curriculum and the fact that their staff provided instruction in commercial subjects, Hogben failed to identify the strong market demand for courses of instruction leading to recognised examination qualifications that significantly enhanced employment opportunities for rural youth. However, he was not alone: at the same time as advocating agricultural education in rural high schools, Frank Tate, the highly respected Director of Education for Victoria, Australia, was preparing a special report on the state of New Zealand's education system (*AJHR*, E-14, 1904). Echoing Hogben's own position, Tate concluded that New Zealand district high schools 'devoted too much attention to what are usually called high school subjects' and gave scant recognition to rural studies in general and agricultural training in particular (*AJHR*, E-14, 1904: 12).

Although Hogben and Tate had not understood the link between the rural-urban population shift and the decline in popularity of school based agricultural education programmes, Edmund Isaac and Montague Browne, as Inspectors of Manual and Technical Instruction, did. This awareness led them to document the dangers involved when

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attempting to popularise any form of instruction that was viewed so unenthusiastically by a particular community (*New Zealand Schoolmaster*, 1907: 186). Contemplating the undesirable consequence of attempting to intervene in an established academic market, Isaac and Browne declared that:

> If too great a prominence be given to courses of instruction which, while good in themselves, may ultimately make the pursuits common to rural life distasteful to those who are naturally fitted to become the colony's future farmers and pastoralists, the results may be quite disastrous. (*AJHR*, E-5, 1907: 15).

Support for, and criticism of, the hegemonic status of the academic curriculum

The full significance of these observations was largely lost on Hogben, Tate, and successive Directors and Ministers of Education. While Hogben remained optimistic that public demand and expectations could be modified by sound educational arguments and by appeals to common sense, the more market conscious education authorities perceived the matter very differently.

By 1905 most inspectors' annual reports noted that the district high schools had joined the credential race, alongside their urban counterparts (McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996). The Westland Inspector, Albert Morton, for example, observed that the majority of children who attended the local district high school did so with the express intention of passing the Form 4 (Year 10) Junior Civil Service Examination (JCSE) in order to gain appointments in government departments, in offices, banks, and as pupil-teachers (*AJHR*, E-1B, 1906: 45). That same year, Henry Hill, the long-serving Hawkes's Bay Inspector, noted that because the wide range of subjects available in the JCSE made it 'easily adaptable to the varying wants of each district', it was an ideal qualification to which all rural high school students should aspire (*AJHR*, E-1B, 1906: 23). Hill made no secret of his personal view that preparing students for important national examinations was a legitimate role for district high school staff when he opined that:

> It appears to me that the time has arrived for all district high school pupils to be tested through the channel of the public examination . . . The Junior Civil Service and Matriculation Examinations should be the objective of every pupil. These examinations would supply a suitable leaving certificate, besides insuring in the schools systematic training and preparation. (*AJHR*, E-1B, 1906: 23)

The precarious state and status of the agricultural curriculum

Perhaps the most vociferous critic of Hogben's proposals to 'bring about a more intimate relation between the course of instruction at district high schools and rural pursuits' (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd July 1909) was Peter Goyen, Chief Inspector of Primary Schools in Otago, who viewed Hogben's efforts to convince rural communities to reject academic instruction as 'doomed to fail' (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd July 1909). Declaring that Hogben's rural curricular vision 'would not provide what parents regard as the needs of their children' (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd July 1909), Goyen revealed a more

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sophisticated understanding of market forces and of what rural communities wanted from their schools. In a very carefully worded memorandum to the Otago Education Board, Goyen observed that:

> It is right that, as far as practicable, country children should share with town children in the provision made by the State for education for public office and professional careers, and no scheme of work should be imposed upon rural schools that would deprive or tend to deprive country children of their share in this provision. (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd July 1909)

Goyen concluded that support for Hogben's rural curriculum was virtually non-existent, because 'at present the chief aim of [New Zealand] district high schools is to prepare their pupils for public examinations' (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd July 1909). The extent to which this was occurring in Otago was striking: at least seventy-five per cent of all district high school students were being prepared for the Form 4 (Year 10) Junior Civil Service or the Form 5 (Year 11) University of New Zealand Matriculation Examination (*Evening Star*, 11th July 1910).

Seemingly still oblivious to the reality that rural students and parents regarded agricultural instruction as nothing more than an unwarranted intrusion into the academic work of the district high schools (Bean, 1910), Hogben continued to insist that the academic course was irrelevant to the life and labour needs of rural communities and therefore that rural youth needed to follow a practical curriculum with a distinctive agricultural bias (*AJHR*, E-1B, 1906: 23, 45; E-10, 1910: 7, 18, 28, 38). In an attempt to bolster the popularity of agricultural courses, Hogben offered each education board a special annual capitation grant of five pounds ten shillings ($11) for every district high school student who took an approved agricultural education course from 1909 (*AJHR*, E-6, 1911: 12; Thom, 1950: 28). Although Hogben's financial incentive met with some initial success, particularly in the North Island, the post-primary schools nevertheless experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff able to teach agricultural subjects (Thom, 1950: 41–5).

Educational efficiency and curriculum differentiation

The debates regarding district high school curricula highlighted the tension encountered when staff within an institution, by virtue of the latter's geographical location, were expected to accommodate both academic and practical functions. For the time being Hogben and George Fowlds, Minister of Education, agreed that the best course of action was not only to acknowledge 'the difficult position' that district high school staff found themselves in (*AJHR*, E-10, 1910: 18, 38) but also to advocate for curriculum differentiation whereby the vocational aspirations of students, their intellectual and practical abilities, and their intended length of stay at a post-primary school would determine their particular course of study. Accordingly, short stay students would pursue a curriculum with a definite practical/applied emphasis whereas longer stay students would enrol on the higher status academic, examination oriented, course (*AJHR*, E-10, 1910: 28).

Having complained earlier that 'everything in the district high schools is subordinated to securing high marks in competitive examinations' (*AJHR*, E-6, 1909: 9; E-6, 1910: 12) Fowlds assumed that market preferences, even deeply entrenched ones, could be

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decided simply by Ministerial decree (*AJHR*, E-1, 1911: 35). Consequently, Fowlds and Hogben took their educational efficiency theory one step further when they declared that 'some sort of distinct natural sifting of pupils' ought to occur so that only those students who genuinely intended proceeding to university study would be permitted to enrol in the Matriculation (university entrance) examination course (*AJHR*, E-10, 1910: 24). However, what Hogben and Fowlds both forgot was that neither the Department of Education's Free Place Regulations nor the University of New Zealand's Matriculation Examination requirements imposed such a restriction upon students' choices. Furthermore, because the post-primary schools operated in a voluntary market, since students were not compelled by law to attend, administrators were powerless to challenge the hegemonic view that access to the academic curriculum for ambitious examination-conscious youth had to be safeguarded (*AJHR*, E-10, 1910: 3, 16–25; E-6, 1911: 12)

The Education Commission, 1912

In his opening speech to the Education Commission on 31st May 1912, Hogben argued that while rural schools must offer courses that had 'some bearing upon the future lives of the pupils' (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 37), the New Zealand public's 'craze for examinations' had made it impossible for a strong agricultural bias to be incorporated in the district high school curriculum (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 44). Hogben's observations were echoed by those senior inspectors called upon to give evidence to the Commission, who reported subsequently that 'vocational training in the agricultural and pastoral occupations' (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 521) had been a spectacular failure because local communities regarded it as the 'poor relation' to the prestigious academic, examination oriented, course (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 37, 44, 57–8, 487). Precisely the same point was made by the Headmaster of Hokitika District High School, Leonard de Berry, who put the issue in its economic and social context when he argued that rural courses were not immune from the law of supply and demand. The great majority of rural parents, he concluded, rejected 'special local training' and instead wanted their children to 'pass the Junior Civil Service and Matriculation Examinations and get off the [West] Coast as soon as possible' (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 370). Other school principals agreed with de Berry that rural communities were highly pragmatic and 'knew what their school is doing and what it wants that school to do' (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 725).

In all likelihood, the fate of the agricultural course was all but confirmed when four leading school principals, James Tibbs, Rector of Auckland Grammar; John Caughley, Headmaster of West Christchurch District High School; Charles Bevan-Brown, Rector of Christchurch Boys' High School; and Thomas Pearce, Rector of Southland Boys' High School, told the Commissioners that 'the only education worth striving for' was one that offered access to high-status academic knowledge leading directly to recognised public examinations (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 44, 320, 388, 417, 711). Despite the protestations of the President of the South Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute that 'it is just as respectable an occupation to be driving a plough as to be driving a quill [pen]' (*New Zealand Journal of Education*, 1912: 210), the portability, marketability, and status of traditional academic courses provided an all important foothold on the

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social mobility ladder that the terminal, agriculturally oriented, courses were powerless to match. Ignoring this reality, the Commissioners warned that:

> One of the main, if not the chief, defects of the present system of education is its tendency to make the public examinations the objective, the result being that the ranks of clerks (in the case of men) and of typists (in the case of young women) are unduly extended. The growth of the cities at the expense of the rural and country districts, as disclosed by the latest [1911] Census, is disquieting. If the suggested modifications of the syllabus result in a bias being given to the primal industries of the Dominion . . . and to the increased productiveness of the soil, the Commission is convinced that the material prosperity of the people of the Dominion will be greatly enhanced. (*AJHR*, E-12, 1912: 15–6)

Although the Commissioners recommended allocating higher marks to elevate the status of agricultural subjects in both the Junior Civil Service and Matriculation Examinations, they were unable to suggest any effective alternative means to curb the public's insatiable appetite for access to traditional academic subjects and academic examinations. The fact that barely ten per cent of all senior free place (Form 5 and 6) students opted for the full agricultural course as late as 1925 (*AJHR*, E-5, 1926: 6) attested to the hegemonic and hierarchical status of academic over agricultural subjects. As this article will explain, during the next forty years the Department of Education and successive Directors and Ministers of Education gradually came to understand why the public refused to contemplate any sudden easing of the examination treadmill and why their repeated attempts to broaden the district high school curricula had failed.

The 1917 free place regulations and compulsory agricultural science

Shortly after Hogben retired in 1915, Josiah Hanan was reappointed as Minister of Education. Citing 'national [wartime] requirements' and the necessity to plan for post-war reconstruction (*AJHR*, E-1A, 1916: 1, 11; E-1, 1917: 42, 49; E-6, 1917: 4), Hanan immediately set about reviewing existing education practices, insisting that the post-primary curriculum should now more 'closely reflect the democratic ideals of the country' and the needs of the community than ever before (*AJHR*, E-1A, 1916: 1). Like Hogben, Hanan also was an enthusiastic advocate for agricultural education, believing that it was 'in the interests of the country' for the status of agricultural labour to be raised and for the worrying rural-urban population shift to be reversed (*AJHR*, E-6, 1916: 19; E-6, 1917: 13, 18; E-6, 1918: 15–6). With educational efficiency principles uppermost in his mind, Hanan sought to direct students towards one of four courses: University preparation; General; Continuation; and Country Life (*AJHR*, E-1A, 1916: 4–6). However, unlike Hogben who had allowed schools to initiate localised curricular reform with support from the Department of Education, Hanan, a former lawyer, resorted to educational legislation to enforce nationwide changes (*New Zealand Gazette*, 1917: 2769–73; *NZPD*, 1916: 115; 1917: 526–7).

The Free Place Regulations, introduced in July 1917, compelled all junior free place (Form 3 and 4) students attending a post-primary school to receive instruction in History and Civics (for boys and girls) and Home Science (girls). In addition, from 1918 Agricultural Science (Practical Agriculture and Dairy Science) was made a compulsory subject for all junior free place boys attending district high schools, owing to its perceived economic

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and vocational value (*New Zealand Gazette*, 1917: 2770). At the same time as making these subjects compulsory, Hanan also sought to reassure the public that a broadened post-primary school curriculum would not undermine the existing examination system (*New Zealand Gazette*, 1917: 2447–8; *NZPD*, 1917: 532–3). Reaction to compulsory Agricultural Science was, however, swift and scathing. Many students, teachers, parents, and some education board officials were incensed that they had had no input into the decision. They argued that agriculture was a narrow school subject associated with low status and low paid employment; that agriculture would not enhance the vocational mobility of country youth; and that agriculture was both a nuisance and a low status subject, despite its inclusion in Department of Education and University (Matriculation) examination syllabuses (*AJHR*, E-1A, 1916: 1–11; 1917, E-1: 3–4, 9, 42–4, 49; 1917, E-6: 4; *New Zealand Gazette*, 1917: 2769–73, 3029–34; *NZPD*, 1916: 115; 1917: 526–7).

More damning still was the criticism that agricultural instruction was 'terminal', because it was neither linked with the professions nor associated with the traditional syllabuses for high status national examinations. The Wellington inspectors, for example, reported that parents of children who were unlikely to remain in rural communities felt especially aggrieved that their children's chance of success in the academic course was being jeopardised by the newly introduced compulsory agricultural training requirement (*AJHR*, E-6, 1919: 16). Although some inspectors agreed that district high school courses should be different from those offered in the town secondary and technical high schools so as to eliminate inefficient and undesirable curricular overlap, the blunt reality was that this overlap occurred precisely because school authorities were endeavouring to meet the demands of their local communities (Lee, 1991; McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996; Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993).

The Tate Report on Post-Primary Education, 1925

For the time being successive governments and Ministers of Education insisted doggedly that agricultural education was a vital part of the rural school curriculum because New Zealand's economy, labour market, and social stability depended upon educating the bulk of adolescent students along practical lines (Thom, 1950: 22–36; Wild, 1953: 9–11; Wild, 1958). James Parr, Minister of Education (1920–26) in the Massey Government, and Frank Tate, Director of Education in Victoria, Australia, were two influential people who subscribed to, and vigorously promoted, this view. Invited by the New Zealand government in 1925 to visit New Zealand to report on the state of post-primary education therein, Tate acknowledged the extent to which deeply rooted conservative educational practices and market forces had dictated curricular choices in rural communities (Tate, 1925: 11). Although he declared that 'social esteem vitally affects [rural] schools and school customs' and that farmers advised their children typically to avoid taking rural courses, Tate nevertheless concluded his report with the observation that because New Zealand's present and future prosperity depended so heavily upon agriculture, then compulsory Agricultural Science instruction in the district high schools was justified (Tate, 1925: 1, 11, 40, 50).

That Tate should have endorsed agricultural instruction so enthusiastically in 1925 is all the more surprising, given that from 1921 New Zealand was experiencing a significant downturn in international demand for its agricultural exports as a result of the worsening

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worldwide economic depression (*AJHR*, E-6, 1931: 4; Morrell and Hall, 1957: 239–53). Although some politicians and commentators knew how difficult it was to persuade large numbers of rural youth to remain in their communities to farm the land (*AJHR*, E-2, 1923: xix; E-5, 1925: 6; E-6, 1926: 3), the Massey Government (1919–25) and its successors continued to assert that there were tangible economic and social benefits accruing from school based agricultural instruction (*AJHR*, E-1, 1924: 7; E-1, 1928: 2; E-2, 1928: 27–8; E-1, 1929: 3).

Other commentators, however, insisted that compulsory Agricultural Science instruction in fact disadvantaged rural youth because it not only narrowed their subject choices but also limited their prospects for geographical and vocational mobility. The Chief Inspector of Schools for New Zealand, Theo B. Strong (later, New Zealand's Director of Education from 1927–33), agreed, having conceded that students who took the full agricultural course could not satisfy the requirements of the Public Service Entrance and Matriculation Examinations. Parents, he concluded, were gravely concerned that their sons would finish their courses 'without any certificates to mark their progress at school' (*New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1st July 1925: 108).

The Syllabus Revision Committee (1928)

With the declining popularity of the full agricultural course now a persistent feature of the rural education landscape, Robert Wright, Minister of Education in the Coates Government (1925–28), appointed the Syllabus Revision (Lawson) Committee specifically to evaluate the school curriculum and to suggest how that curriculum could be 'remodelled' to ensure 'better articulation' between the primary and post-primary schools (Lawson, 1928: 6). Echoing the findings of the Tate Report three years earlier, the Syllabus Revision Committee also ignored rural communities' aspirations when it declared that 'equality of opportunity for the rural girl and boy' would be realised only when there was 'more effective educational guidance with a distinct bias to rural life and more liberal provision for the practical instruction of rural children' (Lawson, 1928: 60). In promoting such a view the Committee had greatly overestimated the public's regard for practical subjects and had underestimated the strength of the demand for academic subjects.

Wright's successor, Harry Atmore (1928–31), was equally optimistic about the benefits arising from providing agricultural courses. In announcing that practical agriculture would effectively 'counteract the undoubtedly dangerous drift of population from the country to the towns' and would provide rural youth with 'an opportunity to make a comfortable living on the land' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1929: 3), Atmore left the public in no doubt that he would override the educational and subject preferences of individual students in order to prioritise those subjects that he believed would contribute directly to the growth of New Zealand's economy.

The Parliamentary Recess Education Committee (1930)

The Parliamentary Recess Education (Bodkin) Committee, appointed by Atmore in November 1929 to 'consider all matters relating to education and public instruction

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generally' (*AJHR*, I-8A, 1930: i), also included agricultural education in its deliberations. The Committee conceded that whilst seventy-six per cent of all male district high school students were receiving instruction in Agricultural Science by 1929, the compulsory status assigned to that subject since 1918 had done nothing to elevate the popularity and/or status of other agricultural and rural-oriented courses (*AJHR*, I-8A, 1930: 29–39; E-6, 1930, Table L2). In summarising their views on the contemporary status of agricultural education, the Committtee concluded that 'the teaching of agriculture in our schools may be said so far to have been not very successful', because academic and commercial subjects would continue to appeal to ambitious rural youth for as long as agriculture 'lacks that pride of place, that emphasis, or that practical application which it ought to have' (*AJHR*, I-8A, 1930: 32).

Following the publication of the Bodkin Committee Report in August 1930, James Strachan, Principal of Rangiora High School, took issue with Atmore's bold assertion that 'unemployment in New Zealand was generally due to the fact that academic considerations had dominated New Zealand's education system' (*AJHR*, I-8A, 1930: 31). Strachan warned his education colleagues that whilst 'agricultural education was being put forward [by politicians] as a remedy, or at least a palliative, for some of the economic ills that afflict us' (*New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1930: 40), rural students would continue to be disadvantaged when competing for positions in the workforce alongside urban youth. Consequently, Strachan predicted confidently that rural principals, parents, and communities would strenuously resist any attempt, perceived or real, to steer rural students towards what they regarded as being a demonstrably inferior curriculum (*NZPD*, 1930: 389).

The difficulties associated with introducing rural courses of instruction were not unique to New Zealand. In fact precisely the same trends in rural education had emerged elsewhere as Louise E. Matthaei, Chief of the Agricultural Service for the International Labour Office of the League of Nations, explained unambiguously in her report on international trends in agricultual education:

> Giving up the country children to the towns is a sign of economic progress, for more people are released from producing food and raw materials and so can produce other goods and services. Rural bias, if it means keeping the population on the land, is really a sentimental end pursued in defiance of a fundamental law in economics. Countryside children should never be such that the town and country children can be said to have been differently educated. Rural bias would be an injustice to the rural population by putting them at a disadvantage on seeking employment . . . . The boys and girls in the country must have the privilege of the same education as those in the towns. (*National Education*, 1930: 425)

Ignoring both Matthaei's detailed knowledge of the international scene and the nation's inspectorate who questioned the wisdom of forcing low status agricultural instruction upon a sceptical public (*AJHR*, E-6, 1929: 3–4; 1932, E-2: 5–6; 1933, E-2: 6; 1935, E-2: 2; 1936, E-2: 10, 16), Atmore and his successor, Robert Masters (1931–34), continued to endorse compulsory agriculture unconditionally on the grounds that national exigencies must override individual preferences.

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The changing post-primary education scene: the first Labour government (1935–49)

Following the landslide election of New Zealand's first Labour Government in November 1935 a new education ideology emerged which sought to reconceptualise the purpose of education in general and in post-primary education in particular. Peter Fraser, the newly appointed Minister of Education (1935–40), was keen to promote a non selective education policy, with equality of educational opportunity as the centrepiece (Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993). However, Fraser was careful to point out that although the government would endeavour 'to give the country child the same educational advantages as are enjoyed by those who reside in the cities' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1936: 3) and to provide the country child with 'access to the facilities from which he has always tended to be barred by mere accident of location' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1939: 2–3), he could not guarantee that 'every country child would receive exactly the same [education] in every detail' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1939: 6). Consequently, 'curriculum adaptation' was destined to feature prominently in Labour's education policy, in light of the abolition of the Standard 6/Form 2/Year 8 post-primary school entrance (Proficiency) examination in 1937 and on account of Fraser's commitment to raising the school leaving age from fourteen to fifteen years in the near future (Lee and Lee, 2010; Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993).

Fraser's successor, Rex Mason (1940–7), was well aware of the public's low regard for agricultural instruction and of the high status assigned to academic, examination-oriented, courses. Accordingly, he sought to reassure rural communities that he would not treat them as 'second-class citizens' by employing legislative means to interfere with their educational aspirations (*AJHR*, E-1, 1941–2: 2). Mason's strategy was entirely consistent with the emerging debate, both nationally and internationally, regarding the merits of introducing a general (i.e., non-vocational) curriculum into the nation's post-primary schools (*AJHR*, E-2, 1941: 7; Lee, 1991: 498–669; Lee and Lee, 2010; Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993: 162–76, New Zealand Department of Education, 1944). Mason was fully satisfied that a general education curriculum had the potential to minimise, if not eliminate, existing curricular biases and would allow students to choose those subjects that were aligned more closely with their likely future vocational destinations (*AJHR*, E-1, 1943: 1–2).

Towards a compulsory common core curriculum: the Thomas Committee (1942–3)

In 1942 the Labour Government gave effect to its grand and subsequently widely quoted policy statement on education that conceived of a state education system that offered:

> Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country . . . a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers (*AJHR*, E-1, 1939: 2).

That same statement also recognised the importance of equality of educational opportunity for males and females by declaring that 'the country child must be given acess to the facilities from which he [or she] has always tended to be barred by mere accident of

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location' (*AJHR*, E-1, 1939: 3). The way forward, Mason announced, lay in appointing a broadly representative Consultative Committee on Post-Primary Education (the Thomas Committee) in November 1942, chaired by William Thomas, former Rector of Timaru Boys' High School, that would recommend ways for all post-primary students, 'irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying occupational ambitions, [to] receive a generous and well-balanced education' (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 5). Such an education, the Committee concluded, should aim 'firstly at the full development of the adolescent as a person; and, second, at preparing him [or her] for an active place in our New Zealand society as a worker, neighbour, homemaker and citizen' (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 5). Given that the Committee was convened during wartime, it is not surprising that their report emphasised the virtues of living in modern democratic societies and the importance of providing citizenship education for all adolescents (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 6).

Mason assigned the Thomas Committee the Herculean task of not only implementing a 'core curriculum of studies and activities' that was to be compulsory for all future post-primary school students but also persuading parents, students, and employers not to view the university Matriculation Examination as being the only measure of a worthwhile education (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: v, 12–13). Fortunately for the Committee, in 1939 the University of New Zealand Senate had signalled its commitment to abandoning the fifth form (Year 11) Matriculation Examination in favour of a new four-year 'specialised' University Entrance Examination, to be 'taken only for the special purpose of entering upon university studies' (Beeby, 1942: 1; McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996: 174).

By the time the Committee met, there was overwhelming agreement among teachers, principals, inspectors, and senior departmental officials that the Department of Education's fifth form School Certificate Examination, introduced in 1934, but widely regarded as a 'pale shadow' of Matriculation, needed rejuvenating to make it a worthwhile qualification in its own right, completely independent from both the Matriculation and University Entrance examinations (Beeby, 1942: 1; Lee and Lee, 2010; McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996: 160–79; Mason, 1945: 41–3).

The Thomas Committee's recommendations and reception

Significantly, in seeking to consolidate the status of general, non-vocational, subjects, the Committee recommended abolishing compulsory agricultural instruction in the district high schools, secure in the knowledge that 'earlier attempts to persuade rural parents to enter their children for courses specifically fitting them for life on the land . . . had not been successful' (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 10, 12–7, 55, 60–1). In arriving at this recommendation the Committee had grasped the logic of school credentialling because they recognised the historical reality that the type of education a pupil receives 'has frequently been determined less by what his teachers have believed he actually requires, even for vocational purposes, than by the demand for attainments that can readily be marketed' (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 5).

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One year after being established, the Committee released their report to the Minister outlining recommendations for both a compulsory common core curriculum and for a 'new' School Certificate Examination, the achievement of which would denote 'the general measure of a completed post-primary course' (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 3). In order to cater for the 'widely differing abilities and interests' of students (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 7), School Certificate candidates now were required to study English and at least three other subjects selected from a list of thirty-two options that included a wide variety of agricultural, domestic, commercial, scientific, and industrial subjects (New Zealand Department of Education, 1944: 14).

After consideration by Rex Mason, the Thomas Committee's recommendations were formalised in the Education (Post-Primary Instruction) Regulations gazetted on 26th September 1945, that set out not only the content and scope of the new compulsory common core curriculum for state and private post-primary schools but also the requirements for the new School Certificate Examination. Alongside these regulations were the Education (School Age) Regulations that raised the school leaving age to fifteen years, effective from February 1944, thereafter making compulsory post-primary schooling a reality for all New Zealander adolescents (*New Zealand Education Gazette*, 1944: 39, 76). The combined effect of these regulations was an immediate, and at times seemingly unmanageable, increase in post-primary school enrolments. In fact, the total school rolls more than doubled between 1946 and 1960 (*AJHR*, E-1, 1947–61, Tables E.1 and 1.2; *Commission on Education*, 1962: 326, Table 15). However, this rapid growth was spread unevenly across town and country high schools. During the period 1946 to 1960 the town and city secondary and technical high schools' rolls increased by 223 and sixty-four per cent respectively, whereas the rural high school rolls grew by a mere eight per cent (*AJHR*, E-1, 1947–61, Tables E.1 and 1.2).

The Thomas Committee's compulsory common core curriculum recommendations were greeted with near unanimous acclaim from district high school teachers and principals, who announced that rural schools would no longer be regarded as 'the poor relation to the other secondary schools' (*National Education*, 1944: 213). For his part, the New Zealand Director of Education (1940–60), Clarence Beeby, also welcomed the Committee's report and its rejection of compulsory agricultural instruction (Beeby, 1992). Unlike some politicians, conservative and liberal, who insisted that a rural curriculum would solve every economic problem in New Zealand automatically (*National Education*, 1944: 357–61; *NZPD*, 1944: 201; *NZPD*, 1945: 213), Beeby was adamant that compulsory agricultural instruction could never offer a solution to the rural-urban population shift dilemma because 'the remedy lay not within the educational system as much as [in] the social system' (*Otago Daily Times*, 23rd April 1945).

The presence and status of academic subject offerings in rural high schools, other commentators now argued, were important in countering any criticism that these schools were little more than 'the wart on the nose of the [post-primary] education system' when compared with the traditional academic secondary schools located in the towns and cities (*National Education*, 1944: 71, 287; *National Education*, 1945: 79, 214–5, 242; *NZPD*, 1945: 322). Furthermore, although very few rural students embarked upon university

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study (*AJHR*, E-2, 1935–45), politicians and educators knew that no government that relied upon rural electoral support would dare restrict access to academic courses because what was at stake here was the opportunity for entry to higher status, better remunerated, white-collar occupations in the urban centres (Thom, 1950).

The New Zealand district high schools in decline: falling enrolments and resource constraints after the Second World War

One consequence of the rapid growth in post-primary school enrolments after the Second World War, principally in urban population centres, was that having now gained entry to the secondary and technical high schools, more students decided to remain longer at these schools. This, in turn, resulted in overcrowded classrooms and serious shortages of equipment, classroom resources, and of qualified teachers, all of which stretched the Department of Education's resources to breaking point (Beeby, 1992; Lee and Lee, 2010; McLaren, 1974; Whitehead, 1974). With a permanent staff of only two or three teachers, the district high schools struggled to deliver the new core curriculum, particularly in art, music, and social studies, and were unable to offer students a broad range of subject options for the School Certificate Examination (Lee and Lee, 2010; McKenzie, Lee and Lee, 1996; Thom, 1950). The Departmental staff acknowledged that the situation was worse for rural students who had passed the School Certificate and who wanted to prepare for the University Entrance examination. These students were forced to relocate to the larger secondary schools in the towns and cities where they could access a much wider range of University Entrance subjects, taught by appropriately qualified staff. Recognising the need to provide some financial assistance to these students, Department of Education officials introduced boarding bursaries in 1944 (*AJHR*, E-1, 1945: 3).

A marginal status further confirmed

The anomalous position and status of the rural high schools was reinforced further in 1943 when the University of New Zealand announced details of its University Entrance accrediting scheme, accompanied by a list of high schools authorised to award University Entrance to students based on their performance in internal assessment tests and in examinations in lieu of an external examination. Upon learning that rural high schools had been excluded from the University's list, the Canterbury and Otago Education Boards promptly complained that unless rural parents were reassured that their children were given the same opportunities and privileges under the accrediting system, then it was inevitable that more students would 'drift to the town secondary schools', thus further undermining the academic standing of the rural high schools (*Otago Daily Times*, 18th November 1943, 17th February 1944).

Department of Education personnel steadfastly refuted this criticism, arguing instead that because University Entrance was intended to be taken 'only by those going to the University', students wanting this qualification would have to travel to the main centres in order to study at one of the four university colleges (Lee and Lee, 2010; Openshaw, Lee and Lee, 1993; *Otago Daily Times*, 17th February 1944). The district high schools,

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the Department concluded, would not be expected to provide specialist instruction in the sixth form year and, accordingly, could then 'do full justice to the work of their pupils up to the [fifth form] School Certificate stage' (*Otago Daily Times*, 17th February 1944). Notwithstanding repeated requests from the teachers' union between 1944 and 1946 for more district high school principals to be eligible to accredit for University Entrance, only six of the nation's ninety-seven district high schools were included on the University of New Zealand accrediting list (*National Education*, 1944: 72, 104, 374; *National Education*, 1945: 73, 79–80; *National Education*, 1946: 100).

The impact of urbanisation

Despite the Labour Government's deliberate policy since 1939 of giving country children 'access to the facilities from which [they] have always tended to be barred by the mere accident of location' (AJHR, E-1, 1939: 7), these politicians were powerless to alter the fact that by the mid 1940s the rapid pace and impact of urbanisation were increasingly being felt in rural communities. Although agriculture was included in the School Certificate subject schedule, only seventeen district high schools taught agriculture as late as 1958 (New Zealand Consultative Committee on Agricultural Education, 1958). The Wild Consultative Committee on Agricultural Education (1958) concluded that the declining popularity of agriculture was the result of two interrelated factors: parental preferences, with most parents wanting their children to take the 'general course' at school, and the overwhelming lack of employer support and recognition for school based agricultural courses, unlike other courses that prepared school leavers for trades' apprenticeships.

The Commission on Education, 1962

By February 1960 the New Zealand Government had become so concerned about the state of post war education in general that it appointed an independent Commission on Education, chaired by George Currie (Vice-Chancellor of the University of New Zealand), to 'take stock of the educational situation' by 'considering the publicly-controlled system of primary, post-primary, and technical education in relation to the present and future needs of the country' (*Commission on Education*, 1962: 1–3). Instructed to inquire into 'the aims and purposes of the curricula', the 'organisation and scope of the school system', and the 'urgent problem of post-primary staffing and recruitment' (*Commission on Education*, 1962: 1), the Commission submitted its interim report to the Minister of Education, Philip Skoglund, in July 1960. Two years later the Commission produced its wide ranging and comprehensive (902-page) final report, that included 346 recommendations. Many of these recommendations were incorporated subsequently into the Education Act of 1964.

Having pinpointed rural education as one of six 'areas of concern', the Commission deliberated at length on the district high schools' problematic place in the overall education system. Members noted that they lacked both 'sufficient staff to give a wide range of specialised teaching' and 'enough pupils to provide economically a wide range of courses'

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(*Commission on Education*, 1962: 161, 444). Declaring that the secondary departments of the district high schools 'do not go near enough to the ideal of providing full educational equality for country children', the Commission recommended that separate 'consolidated' Form One to Six (later, Form One to Seven) schools be established when the number of students exceeded 180 (*Commission on Education*, 1962: 444–6). These stand alone rural post-primary schools, the Commission concluded, would allow for an increased number and diversity of staff, for the provision of a wider range of courses, and for additional equipment and rooms for specialist instruction (*Commission on Education*, 1962: 445, 456). The Commission specifically recommended against agriculture becoming a University Entrance examination subject on the grounds that such practical training was imparted best at home, on the farm. To this end the Commission's proposals on rural post-primary education were framed so as to reassure parents that they should no longer regard their children's education as 'a major preoccupation and even a source of worry' (*Commission on Education*, 1962: 438).

From recommendation to reality: the rise of Form One to Six schools and Area Schools

Within four months of the publication of the Commission's report, the first rural Form One to Six school was opened. Over the next eight years, a further twenty-three schools of this type were established in rural communities throughout New Zealand. In those districts where it was not possible to combine existing post-primary schools to create larger units, area schools were established, formed by adding the two senior classes from all primary schools in an area to the secondary department of an existing district high school. The first such school, Maniototo Area School, opened at Ranfurly in 1969, with a secondary roll of eighty-one students (Dakin, 1973: 69; McLaren, 1974: 68).

Over the next decade, the number of area schools increased markedly as a direct result of the introduction of a unified pay scale for area school teachers and the provision of a higher level of funding per capita than for urban secondary schools. By 1970 the district high schools had all but vanished from the rural education landscape, replaced by either Form One to Six schools or by area schools (Nash, 1981; New Zealand Department of Education, 1971). While these reorganised schools offered rural communities a higher quality of secondary education provision than before, they still experienced difficulties in attracting and retaining staff in specialist curriculum areas such as mathematics, science, and technology.

Conclusion

Looking back at the century long history of rural district high schooling in New Zealand, it is clear that successive Directors and Ministers of Education, politicians, and overseas experts typified these schools' curricular offerings as dysfunctional, irrelevant to rural life, and at times even as 'radical', because instead of concentrating on low status, practical/applied, and non-examinable subjects these schools chose to focus on high status, academic, examinable ones. However, what these administrators failed to grasp was

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that an 'academic' education provided both the opportunity and the route for ambitious students to escape what they viewed as being the rigours, routines, and restrictions of life in rural New Zealand. Moreover, although education administrators decide policy, it is parents, students, and teachers who effectively respond to, often challenge, and shape that policy subsequently. Reflecting on his twenty years experience as Director of Education in New Zealand (1940–60), Beeby (1982) reminds us that 'reformers' who seek to introduce education changes without adequate and genuine community consultation invariably learn an important and often painful lessson:

> Whatever purposes politicians and administrators might have had for education, their plans could be deflected when ambitious parents, acting individually but in unspoken accord, decided they wanted the schools to do something different for their children . . . . There is always some tension between the controllers and the consumers of education and, in the long run, the consumers' purposes usually prevail. (Beeby, 1982: v–vi)

We suggest that Beeby's message is one that contemporary policy makers, administrators, and politicians should never forget.

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