MIDDLE SCHOOLING PROGRAM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF CANBERRA AUSTRALIA
(AN EXPLORATION OF PRACTICE IN THE LIGHT OF THEORY)

By

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ABSTRACT

Middle schooling, although a contested phenomenon, has established its position on the huge landscape of secondary education. The philosophy of middle schooling claims that middle school has the best organisational structure for meeting the (educational, emotional, social and psychological) needs of adolescents\(^1\). This study is an attempt to see how successful schools of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) are in implementing the middle schooling program with respect to the General Design for a Whole School Approach to School Improvement (Hill & Crévola, 1997), which is used as theoretical framework for the evaluation. The three schools selected through purposive sampling for this study are considered exemplary for their implementation of programming consistent with the essential elements of middle schooling.

The literature has recognised that, during last two decades, policy makers, educators, innovative reformers, and private foundations have manifested enormous commitment and interest in favour of the middle schooling program. The findings of this study indicate that, with certain adaptations, each of the three sample schools are implementing the salient features and characteristics of effective middle schools identified in the General Design and discussed widely in the literature. Each sample school is making its best efforts to improve the teaching and learning environment better to meet the needs of adolescents and is implementing middle school philosophy in accordance with the design. It is unlikely that any school can achieve “perfection” in all of the areas identified in the selected design (Hill & Crévola, 1997), and the possibilities for improvement are always there. Certain significant issues related to students’ security and connectedness are identified as requiring some attention by the school organisation.

The main question of this study—how responsive middle school reforms are in the enrichment of the physical, social and emotional growth of adolescents—has largely been answered positively in this study. Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that the middle schooling program is not a wasted effort on the landscape of secondary education in Australia. The results of this study have certain implications for policy makers, educators and researchers. These

\(^1\) This term comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to grow up or to grow to maturity”.

include recognition of the need for teacher training programs to provide teacher training with a
greater understanding of the teaching and learning needs of adolescents and the need for
educators to make extra efforts in making the school environments safe, secure and inviting for
adolescents. Longitudinal studies will be required to determine the long-term outcomes of the
middle schooling program, as claimed by the proponents of the middle schooling movement.
DEDICATION

To my mother, Rabia Yousaf, who instilled in me the value and power of education and consistently encouraged all her children to pursue their dreams. Her confidence is a beacon for us each step of the way. I wish her a healthy and a long life.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The context of this study is middle schooling reform in Australia in the 1990s. A number of secondary schools in Australia have implemented a variety of initiatives in Years 7–10 with the intention of meeting the developmental needs of adolescents (Jackson, 1999). Much innovation and research is currently being conducted into middle schooling reform both internationally (Alt & Choy, 2000; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Brazee, 2002; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Dole, 2003; George & Alexander, 2003; Juvenen, Nhuan Le, Kaganoff, Augustine & Constant, 2004; Lounsbury, 2002; Lounsbury, Hutchens & Loveland, 2005; Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000; Swaim, 2004) and nationally (Braggitt, Morris & Day, 1999; Chadbourne, 2001; Chadbourne & Harslett, 1998; Cormack, 1996; Cottrill, 2001; Cumming, 1998; Dwyer, Stokes, Tyler & Holdsworth, 1998; Eyers, Cormack & Barratt, 1992; Fuller, 2001; Groome & Hamilton, 1994; Hill, 2001a; Hill & Crévala, 1997; Hill & Crévala, 1999; Hill & Rowe, 1998; Jackson, 1999; Keamy, Bottrell & Fildes, 2003; Russell, 2000).

This study seeks to determine the implementation level of middle schooling reforms and its possible effects on the total development of young adolescents (personal, emotional, cognitive and social) in schools that have implemented the middle schooling program and structures in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Australia.

1.1 THE BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

While the concepts of middle schooling and middle schools are complex ones, discussed in detail in Section 2.2.5, and widely discussed in educational circles today, the overall idea is not new. It was evident at least a century ago. The idea of middle schooling or ‘school for young adolescents’, and its underlying rationales are similar across the United Kingdom, United States of America, and Australia. In Britain “the National Society about 1838 was interested itself in the

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2 I have adopted the standard term ‘Years’ to refer to the terms ‘years’ and ‘grades which are used synonymously in different countries and at different times.
question of establishing middle schools designed to offer the middle classes at moderate fees a useful education—little different from that provided by the primary school—the society observed that many of the ordinary private day schools were inferior in terms of discipline, teaching and religious instruction—it accordingly began to graft superior schools on its already existing normal schools—thus a middle school was founded at York, attached to the Training College” (Great Britain Board of Education, 1927, pp. 5-6).

In the United States of America, Briggs (1920, p. 327) introduced junior high schools to meet the needs of young adolescents by stating that “in its essence the junior high school is a device of democracy whereby nurture may cooperate with nature to secure the best results possible for each individual adolescent as well as for society at large”. In support of his argument, Briggs (1920, pp. 4-20) identified the following criticisms against the 8–4 (elementary-high) school organizational structure:

1. The 8–4 organization is not justified by psychology, comparative education, historical development, or results.
2. Isolated and small grammar schools are uneconomical, if equipped with special rooms (shops, laboratories, auditorium, gymnasium, and library), are not fully used; special teachers and supervisors in going from building to building lose much time.
3. The buildings and equipment of the high school are unnecessary for the adequate training of ninth-grade pupils.
4. The work of the elementary school does not prepare pupils for life activities.
5. The work of the elementary school does not satisfactorily prepare pupils for higher schools.
6. Elementary or childish methods of teaching are too long continued and too suddenly changed.
7. The 8–4 organization makes inadequate provision for the varying needs of pupils due to individual differences of ability and aptitude, of sex, of probable career (educational or vocational).
8. The 8–4 organization causes an unnecessary and unjustifiable elimination, because the break between the lower and the upper schools is too sharp; and it comes at the wrong time.
9. There is inadequate provision for personal guidance or direction—social, educational, and vocational—either in the elementary or in the high school.
Gruhn and Douglass (1956, p. 12) have summarized the concept of an optimal educational program for early adolescents by identifying the following functions of a junior high school in the USA:

- integration of skills, interests, and attitudes that result in “wholesome pupil behavior”
- exploration of interests and abilities;
- differentiation of educational opportunities based on student background, interests and aptitudes;
- socialization experiences that promote adjustment, guidance in decision-making; and
- articulation that assists youths in making the transition from an educational program designed for preadolescents to a program designed for adolescents.

George, Stevenson, Thomason and Beane (1992, pp. 5-6) have noted that:

By the middle of the 20th century—junior high schools reached the height of their popularity in terms of numbers—At the same time, programmatically, many junior high schools steadily came to resemble little high schools in virtually every way—teachers were organized in academic departments rather than in the interdisciplinary core curriculum groups that the literature of junior high school recommended—students were promoted or retained on a subject-by-subject basis. Rigid grouping patterns based on perceived ability or prior achievement became characteristic of junior high schools—the teachers who had prepared for high school teaching often ended up in the junior high school—the inadequacies of many junior high schools became more and more obvious—hence reform became increasingly urgent.

According to Eichhorn (1980) (cited in Moore & Stefanich, 1990, p. 5) “the movement erupted as a protest against the program, not against the concept, of junior high school”. Rice (1964, p. 30), arguing the state of junior high school education, noted:

The pattern of the junior high school closely parallels the senior high school, but with so little evidence to justify it. It apes the senior high school in athletics, social events, class scheduling, and departmentalization. Its curriculum is pushed down from the grades above it, so that in all too many instances it really is a prep school for the senior high school.

Toepfer (1992) has contended that early junior high schools failed to recognize the individual learning differences between children in the middle grades (grades 7 and 8) and the high school grades (grade 9) for which they were intended. These schools were more heavily influenced by administrative considerations. The effectiveness of junior high schools was questioned as not serving the educational purpose for which they were intended. The incompetently prepared teachers and an overall program that did not meet the distinctive intellectual, physical, and social
needs of young adolescents became a justification for the introduction of middle schooling for adolescents (Krouscas, 2001; Moore & Stefanich, 1990).

Professor Roy Singleton (1997, p. 1) stated that “the father of the middle school movement, Dr. William Alexander, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Florida, was leading a group of thinkers, scholars, and school people in developing a new school for the children ‘in the middle’ in the early to mid sixties when this idea began to emerge”. Lounsbury (1996, p. 1) has also stated that “in the 1960s, under the leadership of William Alexander, a middle grades 5–8 or grades 6–8 was advanced as an alternative to 7–9 junior high school, which had shown itself to be rather intransigent, dominated by the senior high school and not what Koss and Briggs envisioned—Attracting immediate interest, the middle school idea became the focus of a reform movement, especially among those who earlier sought to reform the junior high school”.

Within the Australian context, the interest in specifically meeting the educational needs of adolescents is obvious through reports and documents since 1984. This interest in education associated with provision for students in early adolescence was renewed and recognized at the national level through several reports and inquiries. The Queensland Board of Teacher Registration’s report of the Seminar (1984) on the Education of Adolescents started discussions on the implications for schooling and teaching of young adolescents. In 1990 the Schools Council in Australia established a climate of collaborative exploration into middle schooling philosophy and practice by circulating a major discussion paper (Schools Council, 1992) which was followed by two more reports (Schools Council, 1993a; , 1993b). This effort was further supported by the South Australian Report Junior Secondary Review (Eyers, Cormack & Barratt, 1992).

At the national level, a Commonwealth funded project in relation to middle schooling was initiated in 1996. A series of forums was conducted in all States and Territories in order to draw a common understanding of the needs of young adolescents; strategies were discussed to ensure improved outcomes for young adolescents, and future directions for middle schooling (Barratt, 1998). A common view to emerge from the National Forum was that the middle years are of critical importance and require increased levels of commitment, development and resourcing over the next five years (Barratt, 1998). The Australian Curriculum Studies Association’s National Middle Schooling Project in 1997 produced a collaboratively developed national statement on middle schooling. The principles and directions it embodies provide a framework for addressing
the challenges currently encountered in the middle years (Department of Education Employment and Training Victoria (DEET), 1999). From this point, the concept of middle schooling gained momentum in Australia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Middle school is a crucial turning point in the education of a student. According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), for many 10–15 year-old youths, early adolescence offers the opportunity to choose a path toward a productive and fulfilling life. For many others, it represents their last best chance to avoid a diminished future. The Carnegie Council (1989) has further argued that school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. However, when the needs directly affect learning, the school must meet the challenge. Educators and researchers also believe that the intellectual, social, physical and emotional needs of young adolescents should determine educational programs for them (Beane, 1999; Bottoms, Cooney & Carpenter, 2003; Braggett, Morris & Day, 1999; Epstein, 1987; Erwin, 2003; Rigby & Thomas, 2003; Wiles & Bondi, 1993; World Health Organization, 2003). This implies that the concept of middle schooling emerged to meet the intellectual, social, emotional, moral and physical developmental needs of young adolescents (McLean, 2001).

Creating effective schools in which an increasingly diverse student body learns and achieves at a high level has the focus of education reform efforts since the early 20th century. Part of the attention has been focussed on improving the quality of education for 10–14 year-olds, the period of ‘transescence’ (Eichhorn, 1966, p. 3). There has been considerable debate over the need for effective implementation of middle schooling. A growing and maturing body of knowledge over this time has supported the need for developmentally responsive schools for adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Keamy, Bottrell & Fildes, 2003; Kronley & Handley, 2003; Queensland Board of Teacher Education, 1984).

There is a strong emphasis in the literature that the middle years of schooling are more effective when they are based on shared philosophy, values and beliefs. Accordingly, middle schooling should be founded on a commitment to advancing the learning capacities of all adolescents. Opportunities should be provided for all young adolescents to learn and grow in ways that acknowledge and respect this unique and special phase of their development (Barratt, 1998). The
focus of reform on the middle years has clearly identified that the early adolescent years are
crucial in determining the future success or failure of millions of youths. Consequently, all
sectors of society must work towards building a consensus to make the transformation of middle

This research study investigates how successful the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) education
system has been in transforming three sample schools into effective middle schools. It explores
how well this implementation matches a shared vision of middle schooling in Australia. Middle
schooling is generally accepted as “an overall style of teaching and learning based on well
founded beliefs about adolescents and their development” (Jackson, 1999, p. 6). There is
considerable debate in the literature with respect to how successful the implementation of middle
schooling has been. How successful a school community is at reaching specific goals is
sometimes not well defined. Hill, Mackay, Russell and Zbar (2001, p. 1) have argued that “until
recently middle schooling has not been a high priority of education systems—The attention of
policy makers has tended to focus on the early years (particularly on literacy and numeracy) and
senior years (particularly the reform of post compulsory assessments)”. In fact, “less attention
had been paid to early adolescence than to either of two developmental periods: the ‘ready to
learn’ years from birth to school age and ‘ready to earn’ years from late adolescence to
adulthood” (Michigan League for Human Services, 1997, p. 4).

This research study examines how the middle schooling program has articulated the discursive
field of developmental needs of adolescents. The focus of this study is to investigate the effective
growth and development of ‘middle schooling’ in the schools of the ACT. The aim was to
compare middle school structures and practice with middle schooling philosophy. Specifically,
what the schools are doing in practice will be compared with what the philosophy of middle
schooling suggests they should be doing.

1.3 PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The first purpose of this study was to determine how far the concept and program of middle
schooling had been accepted and implemented in the schools of the ACT, Australia. Specifically,
the study evaluates the implementation level of the elements of middle schooling, as
recommended in the literature reviewed. The evaluation focuses on the perception of stakeholders
in the selected schools of the ACT. The second purpose of the study was to determine the effects of middle schooling on the total development of young adolescents (personal, emotional, cognitive and social).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The research, framed within the mixed-method paradigm, was designed to determine how far the concept and program of middle schooling has been accepted and implemented in three schools of the ACT, Australia. The perspective of this study is based on constructivism as a ‘general theory of perception’ defined by Fox (1997, p. 10) which endeavours to help people explain and make sense of their experiences (Schwandt, 1994). The theoretical framework for this study is highly influenced by the ‘General Design for a Whole School Approach to School Improvement’\(^3\) (Figure 1.1) proposed by Hill and Crévola (1997). This design provided the basis in this study for driving criteria for analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the programs.

\(^3\) Subsequently referred to in this thesis as the General Design.
The Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) (1999, p. 17), in discussing the significance of the model in the field of middle years of schooling, has affirmed that “the General Design provides a useful framework for redesigning the middle years of schooling” that have been developed and piloted in USA. “This design, with its nine highly interconnected and interdependent elements, has also been trialed [sic] through the Middle Years Research and Development (MYRAD) Project in Australia” (Hill, 2001a, p. 21). The model’s emphasis on a comprehensive, consistent and whole school approach is highly pertinent to the redesigning of schooling for Years 5–9 (DEET, 1999, p. 17).

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

Felner et al. (1997, p. 532) have argued that any adequate evaluation of an educational program or policy reform needs to contain “the assessment of the context, evaluation of the process and assessments of outcomes impact”. Based on the assumption this research was guided by two basic questions:
1. To what extent is middle schooling being implemented in accordance with the General Design for Whole School Approach to School Improvement (Hill & Crévola, 1997) in the schools of ACT, Australia?

Here I was interested in determining whether middle schooling, as supported by many national and international research studies, is being accepted and implemented effectively in these sample schools of ACT, Australia in accordance with the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997). This question focuses on the perceptions of stakeholders to determine the implementation of the program, not as an idealized version of what its advocates think it should look like.

2. What are the effects of introducing a vision of middle schooling on the personal, emotional, cognitive and social development of the students?

Though the question of how well the concept of middle schooling has been implemented or adopted in practice by middle grade schools is important, even more important is whether introducing a vision of middle schooling produces positive results in terms of enhanced total development of the students. This question changes the focus to ‘can middle school reforms, when implemented, have an effect on students’ growth including personal development, social behaviour and school connectedness?’

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

An ample body of research (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2003b; Lewis, 2004) has affirmed the improvement in academic outcomes that come from transforming secondary schools into ‘middle schools’. There is, however, a paucity of research available assessing the effects of reform on other areas, specifically social and other non-cognitive outcomes such as students’ connectedness to the schools, their relationship with their teachers peers and parents or their sense of security and enjoyment in the schools. Research into middle schooling (Gray & Feldman, 2004; Swaim, 2004) has suggested that considering ‘effective’ with respect to one set of outcomes (academic performance) and generally ignoring social and other non-cognitive outcomes (including adolescents’ attitudes to school, their levels of involvement, truancy and attendance, citizenship issues and use of alcohol and drugs) will move us back to the very practices that made the junior
high school a failure (Lounsbury, 2000). This argument is further supported by Slee and Weiner (1998, p. 111).

Effective schooling and the school improvement movement is blind to a searching interrogation of outcomes. Test scores become end—explicit discussions of values and types of society to which schools articulate/ adhere are ignored.

Erb (2000b, p. 194) has argued that middle schooling reforms involve the presence of a “black box” between the implementation of innovations on the one side and student outcomes on the other. Just changing school structures by putting in block schedules, common planning time for teams, and advisory periods does not lead directly to improved student performance. To understand the impact of reformed middle schools on student social behaviour, Brown, Anfara and Roney (2004, p. 431) have reinforced this notion by stating “Indeed, the landscape of this corpus of research is painted utilizing many different brushes and diverse styles with the resulting product being very confusing”. Hence Erb (2000b, p. 194) has insisted that researchers “try to unravel what happens in the black box”.

In this study, I have sought to find out what is happening in the ‘black box’. The present study adds to the growing body of knowledge of middle schooling by examining the implementation level of the elements of the middle schooling program and the impact of the reform on the personal, emotional, cognitive and social development of the students. It is hoped that the results of the study will provide an insight to policy makers, administrators, and teachers to review their policy for low implementation areas of the program, specifically in social and other non-cognitive outcomes.

Russell (1997, p. 168) has stated that “according to middle-level theory, if the middle level philosophy is implemented, the outcomes of enhanced personal development, group citizenship, and achievement will be attained”. Research into effective schooling (Chrispeels, 2002; Hill, Rowe, Holmes-Smith & Russell, 1996; March & Peters, 2002; O’Taylor, 2002; Scheerens, 2000; Wrigley, 2003) has identified four key areas for redesigning schools for adolescents. These four areas are (1) academic focus, (2) developmental responsiveness, (3) social equity and (4) organizational structure and resources. This research is significant in that it has sought to determine the implementation level of the reform and its impact on the total development of the students.
This study will contribute to the body of literature as the most extensive use of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) as a criterion for measuring social and other non-cognitive outcomes of the middle schooling vision in Australia. These include adolescents’ attitudes towards learning, student-teacher relationships and teacher-parent relationships, children’s sense of security and happiness at school, and mutual interaction and preparation for future. This study will enhance our understanding of the essential elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) as I have studied and discussed the degree to which the vision of middle schooling has been implemented in the schools of the ACT Australia with specific reference to these elements.

MacIver and Epstein (1993, p. 508) have noted that “few middle grades schools have implemented many of the practices recommended for the education of early adolescents, and even fewer have implemented them well”. Mizzelle (1999) has argued that middle school reforms centred on the characteristics of effective middle schools had not been implemented, had been implemented incompletely, or had been modified so much as to fade out the intended impact on improved student outcomes. On the other hand Barratt (1998), while supporting the movement, has stated that a significant number of schools around Australia are attempting to better address the needs of young adolescents by implementing the principles of middle schooling as part of everyday practice. In contrast Elliot (2000, p. 1) in South Australia argues “we have messed around in South Australia for too long in terms of addressing middle schooling. Some schools have what are called middle schools, but that is really just a structural arrangement in which years 8, 9 and 10 have been separated from years 11 and 12, and one school is now admitting year 7 students”.

Hill and Russell (1999, p. 173), in discussing the situation of middle schooling reforms in Australia, have documented that they are:

Piecemeal, localised, short-lived, with most time and energy directed towards implementing single, specific strategies, typically through ‘add-on’ projects. Most attempts have been undocumented, with no evaluation of their impact and with little evidence that they succeeded in bringing about institutional change. There are few well documented models that adopt a whole-school approach to the middle years and little is known about their efficacy.

Chadbourne (2001) has further argued that numerous small case studies on middle schooling have been completed in Australia, include appraisals of middle schooling, but these tend to make
formative rather than summative evaluations. They tend to focus on process rather than product. They tend to rely on qualitative research, soft data, single cases, anecdotal and self-report type evidence. Slavin (1997, p. 25) has noted, “For 20 years, various versions of ‘middle school models’ have been advocated, implemented and debated, but rarely evaluated”. In order to examine the effectiveness of middle schooling, valid, reliable, and appropriate evaluation is necessary to determine the program’s impact on students’ total development and the quality of each student’s life. This study sought to fill in the discussed gaps.

This study provides vital data on the implementation level of numerous characteristics of middle schooling identified in the literature. This is evaluative research primarily based on quantitative research. This study will aid those interested in the middle schooling movement to make better decisions about teaching adolescents. Cumming (1998, p. 6) has argued that:

> There is a need to produce fundamental improvement—as distinct from superficial change-in the middle years. Teachers—are very much aware of the potential for embracing the rhetoric of middle schooling without changing their every-day practice—they make frequent reference to the danger of simply repackaging existing arrangements-a form of window-dressing—that might simply result in the re-emergence of familiar routines under different names.

The Schools Council (1993b, p. 13) also realised that generally there was “a perceived need for fundamental reform within secondary schooling”. This study will be important to the schools under study. It will be beneficial for the schools to ascertain teachers’, students’, and parents’ views on the middle schooling structures and practices that are in place. It would be in the schools’ interests to consider evident differences of opinion and perception between students’ and teachers’ views on identical issues. This evaluation will provide feedback to the stakeholders about needed modification and improvements. The results of this study will have implications for researchers, educational practitioners and policy makers who recognize the need for middle schooling in today’s educational and societal climates.

1.7 DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS

This study has used several terms repeatedly. These terms are fully developed in the review of literature but in an attempt to clarify the way they should be understood, some of these are redefined below.
Within the Australian context, the terms “middle years,” “middle schooling” and “middle schools” have become a common part of discussions around schooling over the past decade. There is no agreed understanding of the terms (Chadbourne, 2001, p. ii). However, a distinctive definition has been given by Jackson (1999, p. 9) as:

“Middle school” is a discrete organisational structure designed for the education of young adolescents, including students from both the upper primary and the lower secondary years.

“Middle schooling” (as distinct from ‘middle school’) refers to educational processes rather than organisational structures. These processes are based on beliefs and understandings about the development and behaviour of contemporary adolescents. Middle schooling is an overall style of teaching and learning based on well-founded beliefs and understandings about adolescents and their development. So what is ‘middle school’? While the definitions tend to vary, there is general agreement for making a distinction between the terms ‘middle years’, ‘middle school’ and ‘middle schooling’.

**Middle Years**

The term ‘middle years’ applies to early adolescence—generally referring to students between the ages of 10–15 (Barratt, 1998). It refers to a stage of schooling that includes the immediate pre-adolescent years, together with the early years of adolescence (Braggett, Morris & Day, 1999, p. 20). The organisation of middle years as a discrete unit (e.g. Years 6–8, 7–8, 7–9 or 6–9) has been implemented in some schools around Australia (Schools Council, 1992). Within these schools, with different variations the ‘middle years’ covers Years 5–9, as per the shaded areas in the given Figure 1.2. It should be noted that the ACT already operates three-tiered system with separate secondary colleges catering for Years 11–12. This has implications for how a middle school tier may be implemented within the ACT.
Middle School

Chadbourne (2001, p. 2) has noted that “The term ‘middle school’ refers to an organisational unit, separate from primary and secondary school, which provides education for students in the middle years. This education may or may not be based on the principles of middle schooling and may be no different from traditional practice”. Chadbourne (2001, p. 2) has also argued that “Establishing a separate institution for students in the middle years and naming it a middle school does not guarantee that the education provided will be consistent with the philosophy, curriculum and pedagogy of middle schooling”.

Middle Schooling

Based on the above definition it is argued that the term ‘middle schooling’ refers to formal education that is responsive and appropriate to the developmental needs of young adolescents. According to Chadbourne (2001), this education is characterized by a philosophy, curriculum and pedagogy based on constructivism. It lies academically between elementary school and senior high school, and offers at least three/four years of schooling. There is general agreement among educators that the middle schooling program is designed around the unique developmental needs of pre-adolescents (10–14). Since the physical, psychosocial, and intellectual needs of this age group are different from either elementary or high school students, an individual-based educational program is their raison d’etre. Throughout this study, I have used the term ‘middle schooling’ to mean ‘education responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents’.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to public schools in the ACT, Australia, whose teachers and principals have introduced the middle schooling reforms for at least the last five years. This selective sample may
decrease the generality of its findings and it might not be possible to generalise the results of this study to the middle schooling program throughout Australia. However, it may at least be generalised for the public schools of ACT. More than one State sample would have required significant resources and time, which were beyond the control of the researcher.

The study is limited to the findings based on the elements of effective middle schools as identified in the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997). The purpose of this study is to determine the implementation level of the elements of this design.

Freedom of voluntary participation in the study out of the selected sample would have affected the sampling procedures of the study, as many participants especially parents, declined to participate even on repeated requests made by the schools administration of the sample schools. This situation also made the data collection process cumbersome.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the background of the study and provides a statement of the problem as well as questions selected purposes, significance and methodology of the study. Chapter 1 also clarifies the terms related to middle schooling and delimitations of the study.

The Chapter 2 provides a review of literature describing the conceptual overview and the emergence of the middle schooling program. This chapter also encompasses the international and historical concern of the program along with the overview of middle schooling in Australia. The concept of the middle schooling program as defined in the literature is discussed in depth. The rationale for establishing middle schools and the driving forces behind the reform are also discussed.

Chapter 3 encompasses the review of literature on the essential elements of middle schooling as identified in General Design. Seven elements out of nine have been discussed in the light of the existing literature and research. The important characteristics of each element have been identified. These characteristics have become the bases of the study.
Chapter 4 describes the research methodology used in this study with the theoretical framework adopted. It provides an in-depth description of each methodological process. This chapter includes a description of the evaluation methods, the population studied, an explanation of the method used for obtaining and contacting the population and the procedures used to conduct the study. Instruments are discussed with regard to their preparation, including the data collection process, validity, reliability, scoring, and the methods of analysis.

Chapter 5 presents data collected for the study in numerous tables. Each table is interpreted individually. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the findings of the study in comparison with the review of literature. Chapter 7 discusses the summation, conclusions, implications for further research and recommendations.

1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The focus of this study is to evaluate the level of implementation of the middle schooling program in the ACT, Australia with an emphasis on determining its impact on the teaching and learning environment of adolescents and their social and emotional development. This study is significant in that it provides vital quantitative data on the implementation level of numerous characteristics of middle schooling. Social and other non-cognitive outcomes including adolescents’ attitudes towards learning, student-teacher relationships and teacher-parent relationships, children’s sense of security and happiness at school and mutual interaction have also been studied.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE SCHOOLING

INTRODUCTION

The review of literature and research studies on middle schooling has produced a strong framework for the proposed study. Reviews of both international research and significant Australian research and reports have been included in these chapters. In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the topics associated with middle schooling, this review has been divided into two chapters. The first part in Chapter 2, maps out the emergence of middle schools with a discussion of the meaning of middle schooling as interpreted in research and the literature. The second part, in Chapter 2, traces the driving forces behind the reform of middle schooling, identified as the need for developmentally responsive schools for adolescents and need for planned smooth transitions. Chapter 3 presents the essential elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997).

2.2 EMERGENCE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

2.2.1 Background

The last twenty years have seen substantial changes in education throughout the world. During the early eighties and late nineties, there was an underlying concern that we were not getting education right. A number of studies have highlighted problems in educational provision for young adolescents. The problem includes a decline in student enjoyment of school during the middle years, and the associated lessening of their engagement in learning. Concerns from different corners were referred to in a series of reports and articles in the USA (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), in Britain (Badcock & Daniels, 1972; Brown, 1987), and in Australia (Brennan, 2000; Jackson, 1999; Queensland Board of Teacher Education, 1984; Rigby, 1990; Schools Council, 1993a; , 1993b; Smith, Brennan, McFadden & Mitchell, 2001). All these reports reflected government and
public anxiety about secondary school education and created a climate for reform of middle schooling.

2.2.2 Rationale for establishing middle schools

Although an ample body of research supports the establishment of middle schools, responsive to the needs of adolescents there is, nevertheless, a general level of apprehension: “Why do we need to establish a middle school now? We went through the traditional high school and it educated us” (Combs, 2001, p. 1). Has the world changed to such a degree that the methods we used to teach ten, twenty, and thirty years ago are now less appropriate and effective? How has the information revolution affected our children and their attitudes to learning, the relevance of our curriculum, and the way we teach? In response to these arguments, Combs (2001) has stated that people forget that society is always in a state of flux, and it is somewhat easy to see why people think schools should not change; and in fact, schools are still functioning on sometimes-industrial models. Achilles 1990 (cited in Combs, 2001) has noted that schools are the miniature of society. During the agricultural age, schools were like barns buildings where all the pupils were taught in one room. Such schools still exist in the underdeveloped world. As industry became more important, schools needed to be changed.

The most important purpose of schooling identified in the literature is to teach an individual to become a productive and contributing member of the society. Simmons and Blyth (1995) have further elaborated this concept by suggesting that the overall purpose of schooling in our society is to help students become good citizens, lifelong learners and healthy, caring, ethical and intellectually reflective people. Eventually, in a rapidly changing world, we need to prepare people entering the workforce at all levels. We need to equip youth with the skills and abilities to not only learn what they need to know but also to continuously develop themselves, to invest in their own futures and to constantly update their skills. Precisely as the world changes, as society changes, teachers and educational systems must also change and not only keep up, but also keep ahead. The focus on middle level education in recent years arises because many middle level schools have fallen “far short of meeting the critical educational, health, and social needs of millions of young adolescents” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989, p. 36).
CHAPTER TWO

Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996, p. 159), in emphasising the crucial need of educational reforms for youth, have specifically said that “If we want a better deal for the teenagers of today and a better future for the world they will inherit tomorrow, there is no doubt that our schools need to change in fundamental and far reaching ways”. According to McKenzie (1995), in the compulsory years of schooling the major emphasis should be on fostering individual development and general socialization. Hargreaves et al. (1996, p. 5), criticising the lack of response of secondary schools in meeting the needs of young adolescents, have argued that schooling should “help make education a continuous process, addressing the personal, social, physical and intellectual needs of young people at each particular stage in their development”. Black (2004) has called for comprehensive changes, not piecemeal tinkering for improving high schools.

The proponents of middle schooling reforms have their own contentions in favour of suggesting the change. For example the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, pp. 8-9) has noted that:

Middle grade schools—junior high, intermediate, and middle schools—are potentially society’s most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence. Yet all too often these schools exacerbate the problems of young adolescents. A volatile mismatch exists between the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents.

In response to the dissatisfaction felt in secondary schools, the proponents of middle schooling theory have claimed that early adolescents’ academic, social and emotional needs are better served by an educationist experienced in middle schooling. This type of education may not be found in elementary or high school environments (Finch & Mooney, 1997). The goal of middle schooling is not very different from the goal of secondary school education. Middle schooling, grounded in diverse characteristics and needs of young adolescents, helps them to acquire skills, knowledge, and personal competence that may enable them to achieve broader economic and social goals at the upper-secondary and tertiary levels.

The rationale for introducing a middle schooling program was that developmental psychologists, learning theorists, educational psychologists, educators and scholars have been convinced that the intellectual, social, physical and emotional needs of young adolescents should determine
In summary, a gradually expanding body of literature, discussing and endorsing the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of adolescents with their entire complex, entangled behaviour and characteristics, has paved the way for justifying the concept of middle schooling as a means of meeting the needs of the 21st century. Numerous social and academic benefits of middle schooling are considered worthy, not just, because they have achieved good results, but because the middle schooling program, if implemented in its true essence, encompasses all the emerging needs of early adolescents.

2.2.3 International and historical concern about middle schooling

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, compulsory education was becoming a national institution and, as the industrial revolution was changing the nature of work, economists were finding a correlation between higher earnings and prolonged schooling. “Nineteenth-century school administrators wanted an ‘8–4’ plan (that is, eight years of elementary school followed by four years of high school), which would accommodate the many students who dropped out after the eighth grade” (Kellough & Kellough, 1996, p. 5).

In 1924, the Board of Education in the United Kingdom established a consultative committee on ‘The Education of the Adolescent’. The committee proposed that all children should be transferred, at the age of eleven or twelve, from junior or primary school to secondary schools (Great Britain Board of Education, 1927, p. xix). The argument given by the committee for transfer at the age of eleven was:

> There is a tide, which begins in the veins of youth at the age of 11 or 12. It is called by the name of adolescence. If that tide can be taken at the flood, and the new voyage begun on the strength and along the flow of its current, we think that it will move on to fortune (Great Britain Board of Education, 1927, p. xix)

In the United State of America (USA), the desire to meet the educational needs of middle years can be traced back more than a century to 1872, when Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard College, initiated an investigation of ways to improve and reduce the total program of elementary
and secondary education. In 1893, the committee recommended that the secondary school program should begin two grades earlier, with six years of elementary and six years of secondary education (George, Stevenson, Thomason & Beane, 1992). As a result of the work of the committee, school districts all over the country reacted to the issue of “the correct balance between elementary and secondary styles of education” (George et al., 1992, p.3). This was the first call for junior high schools for middle level students.

In the USA, the notion of middle schools as an alternative to junior high schools emerged in the 1960s when educators noted that junior high schools were not serving the educational purpose for which they were intended (Moore & Stefanich, 1990). George and Shewey (1994, p. 3) have described the middle schooling reforms as “the largest and most comprehensive effort at organisational and curricular changes in the history of America”. Lounsbury (2000, p. 194) has noted that one authority called it the “longest running, most extensive education reform efforts of the century”. According to Eichhorn in 1980 (cited in Moore & Stefanich, 1990, p.5) “the movement erupted as a protest against the program, not against the concept, of junior high school”. The concept of middle schooling, based on a century of research and on a wealth of current studies in USA, is now an established institution for meeting the educational needs of adolescents. Bedard and Do (2005) have stated that simple accounting of school configurations over time suggests that middle schooling advocates have won the battle4.

2.2.4 Overview of middle schooling in Australia

There is a need for a middle years philosophy based on the principle that every young Australian should have the support necessary for them to successfully move from schooling into the workplace or further education and training and to gain their independence by moving successfully from adolescence to adulthood (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training & University of Queensland (CDEST & UQ) 2003, p. 10).

The concept of middle schooling has gained momentum in Australia during the last decade. The Schools Council in the ACT established a climate of collaborative exploration into middle schooling philosophy and practice by circulating a major discussion paper, *The Middle Years of Schooling* (Schools Council, 1992), which was followed by two Schools Council reports *Five to

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4 For details see Figure 1 in (Bedard & Do, 2005)
This effort was supported by the South Australian Report of the Junior Secondary Review (Eyers, Cormack & Barratt, 1992).

In addition to the above official inquiries, a great number of agencies at all levels have been busy producing middle schooling resources and materials for teachers, parents and educationists. This interest is evident from inquiries and reports on the education of young adolescents (Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), 1996; 1998a; 1998b; Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2003; Cormack, 1996; Cumming, 1998; Jackson, 1999) and the latest report (Keamy, Bottrell & Fildes, 2003) as well as a research project commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training & University of Queensland (CDEST & UQ) 2003). The relevant literature reveals that, during the last decade in Australia, the concept of middle schooling, though relatively recent, gained momentum and has now become a high priority for education systems throughout Australia.

2.2.5 Definitions of middle schooling

The concept of middle schooling and its underlying rationales are similar across the USA, UK and Australia. Usually it is loosely defined in terms of schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents (Beane, 1999). If we were to survey a group of educationists and ask them what middle schooling means, we would probably get as many different answers as people surveyed. There is ample literature available. Many definitions have been put forward clarifying the concept of middle schooling. A few selected definitions are given below to provide a better understanding of the concept.

Grooms (1967) has identified middle schooling as an administrative unit following the elementary and preceding the secondary school as a system of education developed for the 10–14 year old age group. Emphasis is directed primarily neither toward the acquisition of basic skills, as in the elementary school, nor toward the ultimate specialization of the high school. Rather, its emphasis is upon support of the students in the learning situation as they ascertain their capabilities for learning and for orientation to their environment in the light of their developing physical, social, intellectual, and psychological attributes.

Romano, Georgiady and Heald (1973) have provided a descriptive picture of middle schooling. They argue that the middle schooling concept of school organisation for pre-adolescents is
designed to meet the challenge by presenting the learners with schooling experiences that are relevant to their needs, interests and maturity, and that are structurally different from the organisation of the junior high school. Middle schooling, in its conception, seeks to serve more effectively the intellectual, emotional, social and physical needs of the 10–14 years old child of today.

For Cawelti, 1998 (cited in George, Stevenson, Thomason & Beane, 1992, p. 11):

The middle school organisation of grades 6-8 is most likely to provide the key characteristics or program features commonly advocated as most appropriate to the needs of students aged 10–14—and middle schools are much more likely to use a teacher-advisor program, provide transition and articulation activities, use interdisciplinary teaching and block schedules, and provide staff development activities that extend the range of teaching strategies appropriate to their students.

Alexander et al. (1969) have defined the middle school as:

Providing a program planned for a range of older children, preadolescents, and early adolescents that builds upon the elementary school’s program for earlier childhood and in turn is built upon by the high school’s program for adolescence. Specifically, it focuses on the educational needs of what we have termed the ‘in-betweenager’ (Alexander et al., 1969, p. 3)

Alexander and George (1981, p. 3) have defined a middle school as “a school of some three to five years between the elementary and high school focused on the educational needs of students in these in-between years and designed to promote continuous educational progress for all concerned”.

Middle schooling is an educational response to the needs and characteristics of early adolescents and, as such, deals with the full range of their intellectual and developmental needs (NMSA 1992, cited in Taylor, 2000). Brazee (2002) has argued that middle school philosophy is a general set of beliefs about learning, teaching, and organizing middle level schools for young adolescents that are translated into practices and programs.

According to Chiera (cited in Edwards, 2001, p. 3) “Middle schooling is based on constructivism, making meaning rather than taking meaning and is based on humanism. The idea is to create a culture of care, respect, trust and support; a climate of openness, honesty and high morale; with shared power, influence, status and prestige. Teachers work collaboratively and students’ learn
cooperatively in small learning communities”. Cumming (1998) has described middle schooling as a phase of schooling that bridges the conventional primary/secondary divide with a view to responding more effectively to the specific developmental needs of young adolescents.

On reviewing the above definitions presented in the literature, I argue that middle schooling is not a building, staffing pattern, innovative curriculum, or special time schedule, but a philosophy of teaching and learning encompassing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of learning behaviour. It is a place where there is a sensitive educational community in which pre-adolescents and adults promote and exemplify respect, social and intellectual growth and an awareness of self in an ever-changing world. It is a child-centred learning environment. An effective middle school can be the bridge between the elementary and high schools, between childhood and adulthood and, also, between parents and child. Middle schooling policy advocates a three-tiered approach that envisages high performing schools with middle grades that are academically rigorous, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable (Norton & Lewis, 2000). It is schooling responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents in transition.

2.3 THE DRIVING FORCES BEHIND THE REFORM

Any reform movement inherently has some driving forces recommended by the reformers. These forces accelerate the process and allow change to occur. Accordingly, proponents of the middle schooling movement advocate developmentally responsive schools, which meet the needs of adolescents and which facilitate smooth transitions from childhood to adulthood, from primary to secondary school and from family to society. Kindred, Wolotkiewicz and Mickelson (1976) have interpreted the growth of the middle schooling movement as a function of six interrelated areas: dissatisfaction with the junior high school, changes in young peoples’ maturity patterns, new educational ideals, developments in learning theory, innovations in educational methods and materials, and changes in society. Carrington et al. (2002) on the other hand, have accounted for the persistence of middle schooling reform, by suggesting that the underlying philosophy of the reform revolves around the provision of a seamless transition from primary schooling (which is traditionally student centred) to secondary schooling (which is traditionally subject or discipline centred) leading to more effective student learning, positive experiences in adolescence, and a desire and capacity for lifelong learning.
Hill and Russell (1999, p. 4) call middle schooling reform an outcome of a “concerted attempt–to
develop forms of schooling which are responsive to the characteristics and needs of young
adolescents and which sustain their involvement and participation in learning”. Cross (1993),
suggesting the need for education specifically providing for students in early adolescence,
maintained that adolescents of today are maturing much earlier due to improved health and
various social influences leading to more rapid maturation.

Eichhorn (1966, p. viii) has presented four main reasons to account for the relatively rapid
acceptance of the middle school as a valid educational organization:

1. Recognition and reaffirmation of the belief that youngsters aged 10–14 are in a unique
   stage of development in which they share similar physical, mental, social, and emotional
   characteristics.

2. New medical evidence suggests that youngsters attain puberty at an earlier age than before.

3. Forces such as new technology, racial integration, and the knowledge explosion that are
   affecting society.

4. The junior high school organization was perceived as, and in many instances had become,
   an institution patterned after the senior high school.

Eyers et al. (1992, pp. 15-16), in their report The Report of the Junior Secondary Review, which
is considered a landmark in the history of middle schooling in Australia, have provided a list of
rationalizations for the reform. A few of them have been summarised below:

1. There is an agreement amongst educators that the nature and needs of young adolescents
   who occupy the middle of the K-12 span have been overlooked and now need a proper
   share of attention.

2. The present primary/secondary schooling system was designed a long time ago, for a
   society of another age and does not meet the present day needs of young adolescents.

3. The students between 10–15 years make up a definite developmental group where rapid
   physical, social, emotional and intellectual changes occur.

4. A three-tiered approach envisages high performing schools for adolescents that are
   academically rigorous, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable.

The preceding review of literature indicates that there are two main driving forces working
synergistically behind middle schooling reform, the need for developmentally responsive schools
to meet the needs of young adolescents, and the need for planned smooth transitions from primary to high schools, from childhood to adolescence, and from family to community.

2.3.1 Need for developmentally responsive schools for adolescents

You don’t have to be a poet. Adolescence is enough suffering for anyone (Ciardi, cited in Atwell, 1987, p. 24).

The developmental needs of young adolescents have been investigated, researched, and brought forwarded for discussions in many different ways by social scientists, behavioural scientists and educationists. According to many sources (Adams, Gullotta & Adams, 1994; Atwell, 1987; Brainerd, 1978; Cobb, 1995; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Conway & Associates, 1998; Eccles, 1999b; Epstein, 1997; Galotti, Kozberg & Farmer, 1991; McLean, 2001; Ogena, 2004) the areas of concern are the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and moral developmental needs of adolescents, which are interdependent with the characteristics of adolescents.

Investigations during the early 20th Century were characterised by a consideration of physical changes during adolescence and their psychological correlates. Later, emphasis switched to social themes, with a focus on relationships formed by adolescents and the impact upon them of society’s expectations (Lindsay, 1983). Hill and Fortenberry (cited in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997) have argued that today much of this attention reflects a generally negative perception of adolescents. They are viewed as major players in multiple problems confronting society, including substance abuse, unmarried parenthood, crime, and violence. Although these problems are often presented as causal explanations for the failure of some youths to become productive and successful members of adult society, they do not exist in a vacuum. Substance abuse, unmarried parenthood, crime, and violence result from complex interactions between individuals and their physical and social environment.

According to the Carnegie Council (1989, p.8) “early adolescence is characterized by significant growth and change. For most, the period is initiated by puberty, a period of development more rapid than in any other phase of life except infancy”. Cognitive growth is equally dramatic for many young people, bringing a new capacity to think in more abstract and complex ways than they could as children. An increased sense of self and enhanced capacity for intimate relationships can also emerge in early adolescence. “The conditions of adolescence have changed
dramatically from previous generations—In these changed times, when young people face unprecedented choices and pressures, all too often the guidance they needed as children and need no less as adults is withdrawn” (The Carnegie Council, 1989, p.8).

Adolescence has been the subject of many studies, but these have varied in their main focus. Many of the developmental theories of youth base their analysis on the concept of adolescence as “a period of inherent biological and psychological processes” (Smith, Brennan, McFadden & Mitchell, 2001, p. 57). Adolescence as a separate and discrete phase of human development began with the work of G. Stanley Hall⁵, who was heavily influenced by Charles Darwin and believed that all human development is controlled by inherited factors. As a result, he strongly emphasized instinct, evolution, and physical growth (Atwater, 1996). Hall’s most important work came in 1904 when he helped to shape America’s conception of adolescence with his two-volume work (Karier, 1983). Hall describes a growing child between the ages of 10 and 14 in the following way.

At dawning adolescence—this child is driven from his paradise and must enter upon a long viaticum of ascent, must conquer a higher kingdom of man for himself, break out a new sphere, and evolve a more modern story to his psycho physical nature (Hall, 1904, p. 71)

According to Muus, (cited in Conger & Galambos, 1997, p. 10), Hall developed a theory of ‘recapitulation,’ in that the individual repeats the major stages of evolution in the course of his or her development, “from early animal-like primitivism, through a period of savagery [i.e., later childhood and pre-pubescence], to the more recent civilized ways of life which characterize maturity”. Hall (1916) also believed that development was controlled by genetically determined physiological factors, with the environment playing a role whereby heredity interacted with environmental influences to determine an individual’s development. Adams, Higgins-Trenk and Svoboda (1975, cited in Adams, Gullotta & Adams, 1994, p. 31) have summarized Hall’s theory:

Thus, at adolescence the progression of recapitulating instincts gave way to the primacy of cultural influences. Hall believed firmly that if human civilization was to be advanced, effective changes could be induced only by supplying the appropriate educational experiences for the generation of adolescents; childhood was too early, and adulthood was too late.

⁵ for further information go to http://www.psy.pdx.edu/PsiCafe/KeyTheorists/Hall.htm
Consequently, Hall (1904, p. 509) provided a rationale for the specific educational needs of the age group by stating:

The pupil in the age of spontaneous variation which at no period of life is so great—suffers from mental ennui and dyspepsia, and this is why so many and an increasing number refuse some of the best prepared courses.

According to Dusek (1996, pp. 4-5), this phase is also known as *pubescence* referring to “the approximately two-year period that precedes puberty; it is the period when the physiological changes that cause development of both the primary and secondary sex characteristics that make the individual a biologically mature adult begin”. Other theorists, greatly enchanted by the biopsychological approach to the study of adolescence have been Freud, Anna Freud, Erikson and Piaget. Freud (1856-1939) introduced the psychosexual theory relating adolescence and development to biological changes. He suggested that conflict resulting from biological changes of adolescence was the precursor of mature adult sexuality. This change was viewed by Anna Freud (cited in Rigby, 1990, pp. 26-27) as a “necessary phase of adolescent development, without which there would be no growth toward maturity”. Anna Freud (1969 cited in Atwater, 1996) has contended that adolescence is the most turbulent time mostly because of the sexual conflicts brought on by sexual maturation. In the pre-adolescent years, the intensified sex drive brings about a quantitative increase in all impulse activity that has characterized childhood development. Accordingly, adolescents tend to become hungrier, more aggressive and cruel, more inquisitive and more egocentric. These increased impulses, in turn, weaken the childhood defences erected against them, thereby reactivating the psychosexual conflicts of childhood.

According to Cobb (1995, p. 77), Erikson built on Freud’s theory of psychosexual development by formulating a psychosocial theory of development. According to his theory, people move from one stage to the next in response to social demands. Erikson (1968) has described adolescence as the time of identity formation. He has stressed that although the formation of identity is deeply personal it occurs only in the context of social contact. Erikson further argued that identity develops as adolescents assume commitments to future occupation, adult sex roles, and personal belief systems. It is no accident that identity assumes importance as individuals step from childhood into adulthood and with this, into their culture. Erikson maintained that the adolescent’s chances of establishing a stable identity and finding meaning in life depended on the ethical soundness, credibility, and rational consistency of his or her social environment as well as
his or her psychological assets and liabilities. Thus, adolescence poses an identity task, whose accomplishment plays an important role in the successful transition into adulthood (Finkenauer, Engels, Meeus & Oosterwegel, 2002).

It would seem that adolescence is not one thing, but a process of physical, emotional and psychological changes that we all go through. It is a time of enormous change “when patterns of thinking and behaviour are established for both the short and long term—a time of competing demands that can confuse—the influence of drugs, violence and the media and high levels of youth unemployment can have a significant impact on young adolescents at the very time when they are endeavouring to establish their own identity and place in the world” (DEET, 1999, p. 11). Cumming and Fleming (1993), emphasising the needs of adolescents, have noted that no matter how we define or describe this stage of human development, there is no doubt that the most momentous changes in the physical, and hence emotional, and psychological aspects of human experience occur in the middle years of schooling. Consequently, the adolescent years can be very difficult for a prolonged period of time for the student, teachers and parents. They further added that adolescence is a burden if there are no choices; the world seems to be one of the barriers. Realizing the nature of needs associated with adolescents, the eminent theorist, Gisela Konopka (cited in Sprinthall & Mosher, 1979) has insisted that adult society should develop effective educational programs for teenagers. She noted that the extent to which adolescents participate responsibly in society determines and maximizes their human development.

2.3.2 Adolescents’ development and emerging needs

All developmental phases of life span have particular characteristics, which might seem to demand the label of unique, but no other phase has so clear and valid a claim to the designation of unique as does the period of transition between childhood and mature adolescence. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p. 21) has defined early adolescence as the onset of puberty, a period of growth and development more rapid than any other phase of life except infancy. Cormack (1992, p. 5) has argued that, “rather than being a way-station between childhood and adulthood, adolescence has its own characteristic elements and challenges”. Piaget
viewed early adolescence as a most “exhilarating and productive” stage of life. It is a time when one plans for the future and fixes the goals for one’s life; it is a time of altruism and acute awareness of injustice; it is a time of great hopes and a time when simple answers are just not good enough (Brainerd, 1978).

Yang (2002, p. 1) has gone a little further by suggesting that adolescence is not a disease but that, “Teenage students are such an amazing package. They can be so brilliant, so intelligent, so profound, and so insightful, yet at the same time so foolish, so silly, so ridiculous, so crazy, and so immature that we often wonder, ‘Is this same person?’” Eichhorn (1966, p. 3) introduced the term ‘transescence’ for children between the ages of 10 and 15 years and described this as:

The stage of development, which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes in body chemistry that appear prior to the puberty cycle to the time in which the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex pubescent changes.

He has further argued that several forces, both internal and external, shape the lives of transescents. Internal forces caused by internal body changes affected the child’s ability to process the surrounding environment. Conversely, external forces generated by the environment impinged upon the individual. Eichhorn (1966) framed these forces into an interconnected socio-psychological model to be used in the development of an educational structure and program designed to meet the needs of transescents.

Accordingly it has generally been accepted that the intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of adolescents should determine educational programs for adolescents (Wiles & Bondi, 1993). Since adolescence is a period of development more rapid than any other phase of life except infancy (Hargreaves & Earl, 1990, p. 19), certain needs emerge through the reciprocal and dynamic interactions that take place between the individual (physical, social, emotional, intellectual and moral) developmental characteristics. The manner in which adolescents navigate these needs and challenges is largely a function of interactions, both positive and negative, with families, communities, and the school environment. As all these characteristics and needs are crucial for determining educational programs for young adolescents, they need to be embraced with clarifications and explanations. The next sections will discuss some details of these
characteristics (physical, emotional, cognitive and social) and needs emerging from each characteristic.

2.3.2.1 Physical development of adolescents

An overwhelming body of literature has argued that rapid and erratic physical growth creates significant problems for adolescents. During the transition from adolescence to adulthood, they go through a range of hormonal and physiological changes. The following aspects of rapid physical development have implications for educators.

Irregular growth spurt

Young adolescents do not just get bigger; distinctively different bodies emerge from these growing years. More extensive physical and personal changes now occur than at any other time of life. During adolescence physical changes are the most obvious, as there is a significant growth spurt. The average young person grows 12 inches in height and gains 10–15 kilograms (Lounsbury, 2005) but different parts of the body grow and develop at different rates. Typically, the hands and feet are faster growing than the arms and legs (Zima, 2001). Changes in body contour occur, such as poor posture and oddly, shaped nose or ears, and these make adolescents feel awkward or embarrassed about their appearance. Boys may be especially conscious of their changing voices. Fluctuations in metabolism may cause adolescents to be extremely restless at times, and exhausted at others. They may not like to admit that they are tired. Metabolic fluctuations may also cause these growing adolescents to have big appetites, or at times a lack of appetite. Thus, adolescents need proper guidance and good information about health issues and balanced diet (Eliot, 2004).

Variation in maturing rate

These dramatic physical changes do not occur at the same time or at the same rate. It is virtually impossible for young adolescents to keep their chronological age in conformity with their social age, physical age, intellectual age, and/or social/sexual age (Lounsbury, 2002). This can lead to feelings of awkwardness and self-consciousness as they try to cope with their rapidly and at times irregularly changing bodies. It has been suggested that grouping young adolescents by size, rather than by age, can diminish feelings of inadequacy in classes such as physical education (Manning, 1993).
**Variation in male/female physical maturity**

Girls begin their growth spurt a year and a half to two years earlier than boys. George and Alexander (2003) have contended that when students are learning to relate to one another in school situations, the developmental lag between boys and girls can be awkward and embarrassing for those involved. As a result, a seventh grade class is likely to include men, women, and children (Lounsbury, 2002). Since females mature faster than males, there can also be friction between the sexes that can polarize inter group relations (Tanner, 1978). Since the girls usually begin their growth spurt two years earlier than boys, boys of the same age are usually not interested in girls unless the boys are early maturing. The early maturing girls are often attracted to older boys having more sexual knowledge and drive (George & Alexander, 2003).

**Feelings of anxiety and fatigue**

Secretion of hormones that initiate growth in irregular quantities during adolescence also directly affects adolescent behaviours. For instance, fluctuations in basal metabolism can affect youths’ ability to concentrate and can cause sudden spell of fatigue and restlessness that render them indifferent or lethargic. In rare cases, hormonal changes may also cause unpredictable mood swings that may lead youths to behave in aggressive or inappropriate ways. These mood swings can affect their attention, motivation and capacity to focus on school related activities (Manning, 1993).

**Sexual maturity**

With respect to physical development, puberty occurs when reproductive hormones stimulate the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics (Metcalfe, 2004). Sexual maturity involves enlargement, change and maturation of the primary sex organs. These biological changes in adolescence evoke mixed emotions of guilt and amazement. Considerable increases in the production of sexual hormones occur during adolescence not only resulting in changes to the body but also triggering an increase in sexual arousal, desire and urge in both males and females. On puberty, males can ejaculate semen or females begin to ovulate, and the fact that pregnancy is a possible outcome of sexual activity changes the nature and meaning of sexual behaviour markedly—for the adolescent and for others (Steinberg, 1999). As adolescents begin to develop their sexual identity, the gender and sexual roles and rules begin to take new shapes (Roditti,
Sexually transmitted diseases are another great threat to the young adolescents who without prior knowledge indulge in such activities.

**Implications for the school**

No other age level is of more importance to the future of individuals, and, literally, to that of society; because these are the years when youngsters crystallize their beliefs about themselves and firm up their self-concepts, their philosophies of life and their values - the things that are the ultimate determinants of their behaviours (Lounsbury, 2005, p. 2).

Rapid spurts in growth accompanied by the dramatic bodily changes of puberty, shaking earlier confidence in the body, have certain implications for teachers and adults who deal with the growing adolescent. Adolescents need to know that this is normal—it is one of the things that make each person special and unique (Zima, 2001). They need time to stretch, wriggle and exercise their rapidly growing bodies. They also need time to just relax (Conway & Associates, 1998). Teachers need to be aware of the impact of the physical development of the student of the middle grade level. The priorities of young adolescents tend to be focused on their social and physical development, a fact many teachers unwisely ignore (Lounsbury, 2000). They must realize that adolescents are always comparing themselves to the norm in development. They are likely to think something is wrong with them—unless adults in their lives, including educators, reassure them that they are normal and that adolescents grow and mature at different times. It is important to convey to them that in a couple of years things even out (McLeod, 2001). Specially trained teachers, understanding the developmental needs of young adolescents in middle school settings, help the students to come out of this personality crisis smoothly.

Middle schools need to provide a curriculum that emphasizes self-understanding about body changes. Guidance counsellors and other resources in developmentally responsive, effective middle schools help adolescents understand the changes that are occurring within their bodies. Hormones are secreted in irregular quantities during adolescence, producing great surges in energy. Hence, middle school students need ways to move about and burn up some of this energy or discipline/classroom management problems will occur. Their bodies and minds need breaks—possibly achieved through activities such as physical education classes, group work, lunch periods, passing periods, and the arts. Bodily (kinaesthetic) activities are also important for these students. Middle school educators need to realize that many of their students do not know the
facts about sexual development. Adolescents face traumatic times when things happen to them that no one has told them to expect (McLeod, 2001). Sex education as a part of the curriculum should be made logical and understandable to adolescents.

Middle school programs involve parents and families in education regarding the physical changes that their adolescents are experiencing. The literature recommends certain activities as essential in the schools.

1. Adaptive physical education classes should be scheduled for students lacking optimal coordination.

2. Equipment should be designed for students having varied muscular sizes; intense competition within sports activities should be avoided, instead stressing cooperative intramural activities.

3. Topics of sex, dating, and relationships should not be avoided in the classroom discussion; rather students should be given chances to ask questions and voice concerns to those who are well-informed

4. Regular physical examination is recommended for all middle school students, and

5. Involvement of parents and families in education regarding physical changes that their adolescents are experiencing can reinforce at home to their teens that varied developmental rates are normal and to be expected.

2.3.2.2 Psychological development of adolescent

During pubescence, biological changes have significant effects on the emotions, feelings and attitudes of adolescents. The change of the body contour experienced by adolescents also changes the identity of self from childhood to the identity of young growing women or men (Finkenauer, Engels, Meeus & Oosterwegel, 2002). Numerous psychological characteristics have been studied and researched by psychologists, sociologists, physiologists, educators, psychiatrists, and others (Braggett, 1997; Erikson, 1968; Geldard & Geldard, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Roeser & Eccles, 2000) to identify the best ways of understanding the developmental process of this crucial phase of human life and to find out ways of helping adolescents to pass through this process smoothly without any turmoil. The following psychological characteristics, regarded in the literature as areas of great concern, have been discussed here in the light of the implications for schools.
CHAPTER TWO

Mood swings

As adolescents progress they are continually making adjustments in response to their biological, cognitive and psychological changes. Geldard and Geldard (2004) have noted that this process is both stressful and anxiety provoking for them. Consequently, adolescents demonstrate a decreased level of tolerance, and are usually emotionally reactive. Emotionally, young adolescents are labile and unpredictable (Earl, 2000). Anna Freud (cited in Adams, Gullotta & Adams, 1994, p. 53) refers to ‘adolescence’ as internal disharmony. According to National Middle School Association (1995) chemical and hormonal imbalances often trigger emotions that are difficult to understand even by the transescents. Blos (1962) has argued that young adolescents develop a way of projecting guilt feelings on group members, individuals or abstract collectives.

Erratic and inconsistent behaviour is so obvious among adolescents that Blos (1962), in support of Sigmund and Anna Freud, has argued that the pre-adolescent period marks an apparent turn-about in instinctual control. The onset of pubescence leads to increases in instinctual sexual derives, diminishing self-control. Blos (1962) has further argued that almost any fantasy, thought, or movement is potentially erotic. Adolescents become easily distracted and quickly stimulated and they maintain a high erotic sensitivity. To avoid the discomfort and anxiety associated with a highly erotic body, the ego learns to ‘socialize’ guilt experiences.

Self-conscious with inflated self-esteem

Storey (1991) has argued that during this time the pubescent makes many discoveries about self, parents, friends, sexual relationships, and the world as a whole and may experience ambivalence. The child is torn between the responsibilities of an adult and the security of being a child. It is during this period that an adolescent is easily frustrated by limits on his or her controls and may become angry and hostile in response to preconceived threats to his or her state of independence (Storey, 1991). They do not like to be criticized and may over-react to certain situations that they find offensive. They may become unhappy and take their frustration out on others (Knowles & Brown, 2000). Adolescents frequently experience feelings of ridicule, humiliation and embarrassment, and feel disgusted and ashamed of themselves (Geldard & Geldard, 2004).
**Identity formation**

Conger and Galambos (1997) believe that young adolescents may also go through a prolonged period of identity confusion. Lewis (1991) has suggested that it is the fifth stage of Erickson’s theory. Erikson (1968) described adolescence as the time of identity formation and individual development within a social context. In his view ‘in no other stage of the life cycle are the promise of finding oneself and the threat of losing oneself so closely allied’. Adolescents begin to consider their futures and start planning their future career. During this stage, they face the conflict of identity versus role confusion. If adolescents are helped to put together a satisfying plan for their future, then the outcome is positive and establishment of identity is achieved. Adolescents who do not develop this sense of identity may develop “role confusion” and aimlessly move through life without any plan of action or sense of security about their future. Erikson (1968) has postulated that during the elementary school years, children begin to win recognition by becoming productive persons in the school environment. Through this recognition, they develop a sense of industry and competency. This fosters the development of a stable identity during adolescence and the perception of the self as a potentially productive.

**Implications for the school**

At this stage teachers need to relate to students who are at once full of self-assurance and doubt, of enthusiasm and depression, who are responsible and irresponsible, and completely unpredictable (Atwell, 1987). Activities should be designed to help students play out their emotions. Shy students should be given opportunities to speak out, and loud students should be channelled into calming activities. Self-evaluation activities should be developed, where students are able to discern the consequences of their various actions. Adults should not pressure students into explaining emotions such as crying. This will cause embarrassment and unnecessary pressure for adolescents, who may not understand their reactions themselves. Teachers should be available to listen and empathize with adolescents who question their own emotional swings. School programs should provide outlets for emotional energies and stress release. They should educate students appropriate ways of dealing with frustrations and problems. Parents and other resources can also be useful here.

Power (1984) believed that the basic educational, social, and personal needs of young adolescents are no different from those of other human beings. All members of a society must acquire
knowledge, skills and beliefs necessary to maintain production and order, and to enable them to live with dignity and purpose in a democratic, technological society. Schools should meet the unique needs emerging out of bio-psychological changes in the early stages of adolescence.

Stanley Hall, in formulating the concept of Storm and Stress (Sturm und Drang) (cited in Conger & Galambos, 1997, p. 10) has suggested that biological forces are especially affected by one’s environment. Hall held that teenagers need enriched environments for their development. He believed that much of the storm and stress is caused by the abrupt and rapid rate of physical growth, but part of it is caused by the conflict between instinctual drives and the demand that adolescents grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Lawrence et al. (cited in Alderman, Rieder & Cohen, 2003, p. 2) have argued that “adolescent rebellion” was normal adolescent behaviour and that confusion and misunderstanding of normal adolescent development could lead to the poor medical care of teenagers.

Dorman and Lipsitz (cited in Irvin, 1996) have suggested that adults should distinguish between behaviour that is distressing (annoying to others) and behaviour that is disturbed (harmful for young persons exhibiting the behaviour). Dorman and Lipsitz have pointed out that when adults expect and reinforce irresponsible behaviour they may indeed intensify the occurrence. Teachers should not insist that students explain their emotions. Adolescents should be educated to deal with their frustrations and stress in appropriate ways. Pollak (1995) suggests that adolescents’ sense of self and the world (with all the paradoxes involved) needs to be responded to in the classroom.

Erickson (cited in Lewis, 1991, p. 9) maintained that in the middle years the child is faced with the “conflict of industry versus inferiority”. If the child masters skills then he or she develops a sense of industry and a positive view of achievement becomes obvious. Drama activities or case studies can be effective activities for helping students visualize themselves as others may see them. Scenarios that depict real-life situations that adolescents experience are the most effective dramas in helping them sort out their identities. They will begin to realize that their problems are not unique or unbearable.

**2.3.2.3 Cognitive development of adolescents**
In the early part of the twentieth century, the focus of brain-related research was on understanding the early years of brain development or the diseased brain. During the last two decades and currently developments in brain research and imaging technology are rapidly advancing the understanding of the human brain as researchers are able to examine normal brains and brains of people throughout their lives (Eliez, Blasey, Freund, Hastie & Reiss, 2001; Epstein, 2001a; Giedd et al., 1996; Spinks, 2005; Wolfe, 2001).

Pattern of brain growth in the adolescence

It was commonly understood that adolescents respond differently to the world because of hormones, or attitude, or because they simply need independence. But when adolescents’ brains are studied through magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) it is found that they actually work differently than do adult brains (Spinks, 2005). Present research studies now suggest that the brain undergoes two major developmental spurts, one in the womb and the second from childhood through the teen years (Norvell, 2005; Wallis, 2004). In a baby, the brain over-produces brain cells (neurons) and connections between brain cells (synapses) and then starts pruning them back around the age of three. The process is much like the pruning of a tree (Spinks, 2005).

Giedd, at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, and colleagues at McGill University in Montreal (Inside the Teenage Brain) have noted, “The second wave of synapse formation—showed a spurt of growth in the frontal cortex just before puberty (age 11 in girls, 12 in boys) and then a pruning back in adolescence”. The period of pruning, in which the brain actually loses grey matter, is as important for brain development as is the period of growth. For instance, even though the brain of a teenager between 13 and 18 is maturing they are losing 1 percent of grey matter every year (Spinks, 2005). This exuberant growth during the pre-puberty years gives the brain enormous potential. The capacity to be skilled in many different areas is building up during those times. Giedd, in an interview with the producer of the ABC news program, Frontline, hypothesized that the growth in grey matter followed by the pruning of connections is a particularly important stage of brain development in which what teens experience and do can affect them for the rest of their lives (Spinks, 2005; Wallis, 2004).
Giedd and his colleagues (cited in Spinks, 2005, p. 1) found that “in an area of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, famously known as CEO\textsuperscript{6}, of the brain appeared to be growing again just before puberty”. The prefrontal cortex is particularly interesting to scientists because it acts as the CEO of the brain. As the prefrontal cortex matures, teenagers can reason better, develop more control over impulses and make better judgments.

In another study of growth patterns of the developing brain, Paul Thompson of the University of California at Los Angeles, along with Jay Giedd and colleagues from McGill University (cited in Spinks, 2005, p. 2) found that during adolescence, the ‘corpus callosum’, the bundle of nerve fibres which connects left and right hemispheres of the brain, thicken and process information more and more efficiently, influencing language learning and associative thinking. The cerebellum is another part of the brain that changes well into adolescence. It is the only part of the brain that continues growing well into the early 20’s (Wallis, 2004). Giedd (cited in Spinks, 2005, p. 3) described the workings of the cerebellum in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
It’s like a math co-processor. It is not essential for any activity–but it makes any activity better. Anything we can think of as higher thought, mathematics, music, philosophy, decision-making, social skill, draws upon the cerebellum—to navigate the complicated social life of the teen and to get through these things instead of lurching seems to be a function of the cerebellum.
\end{quote}

As teens grow older, the centre of activity shifts more toward the frontal cortex and away from the cruder response of the amygdala. This is the emotional centre of the brain, home of primary feelings of fear and rage. In processing emotional information adolescents tend to rely more heavily on the “amygdala than adults who depend more on the rational prefrontal cortex, a part of the brain that is still under the process of development in adolescents” (Wallis, 2004, p. 50) . Yurgelun-Todd, director of Neuro-psychology and cognitive Neuro-imaging at McLean Hospital (cited in Spinks, 2005, p. 3) have rationalised that “this is why the teenage years seem so emotionally turbulent”. The teens seemed not only to be misreading the feelings expressed on adult’s face, but also they reacted strongly from an area deep inside the brain. The frontal cortex helped the adults distinguish fear from shock or surprise. For adolescents this area is not operational. Reactions, rather than rational thought, come more from the amygdala, deep in the

\textsuperscript{6} Cognitive Efficiency Organizer.
brain rather than from the frontal cortex, suggesting that an immature brain leads to impulsivity, or “risk-taking behaviour”. Giedd and his colleagues have provided a new insight into the understanding of how the pre-adolescent brain develops and functions. This new understanding can be of great help to the psychologists, sociologists, physiologists, educators, and psychiatrists in planning developmental and educational programs for adolescents. The above discussion has mostly been adapted from *Frontline*.

**Cognitive development in the adolescence**

Driscoll (1994) defines cognitive development as the transformation of the child’s undifferentiated, unspecialized cognitive abilities into the adult’s conceptual competence and problem-solving skill. As children enter adolescence, their cognitive abilities lie somewhere between Piaget’s third stage of cognitive development—the period of concrete operational—and the fourth or last stage—formal operational. During the concrete operational stage, children begin to understand the concept of conservation. For Piaget, conservation means that children realize that quantities remain the same, even if they are placed in containers of different shapes and sizes (Lewis, 1991).

**Abstract thinking**

According to Inhelder and Piaget (1958) adaptation to one’s environment involves equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation. Piaget’s work was based on the biological theory that all children make the transition through various stages of cognitive development. The adolescent is able to become passionately interested in abstract concepts and notions and is able to discern what is real from what is ideal. Piaget (cited in Santrock, 1993) also believed that we go through four stages in understanding the world around us. Each of these stages is age related and consists of distinct ways of thinking and represents a qualitative leap forward in the child’s ability to solve problems and reason logically. As adolescents develop quickly, yielding intensely curious young adults, this curiosity must be responded to with positive and meaningful school experiences (Compton, 1973).

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7 http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/ This website provides extensive details on the research “Inside the Teenage Brain” with all audio, video discussions with the researchers involved in the research.
Meta-cognition

Another noteworthy gain in cognitive ability during adolescence involves thinking about thinking itself, a process referred to as meta-cognition. This higher order of thinking involves monitoring one’s own cognitive activity during the process of thinking (Steinberg, 1996). This process involves planning, evaluating and monitoring problem-solving activities. Steinberg maintains that meta-cognition becomes more apparent during adolescence in increased introspection, self-consciousness, and actualisation. The adolescent also becomes capable of reasoning deductively, performing simple operations with physical objects, and applying logic to arrive at conclusions. Lewis (1991) has argued that even though adolescents at the latter part of this stage display some cognitive maturity, they are still incapable of thinking abstractly. During this stage, things are understood concretely and literally.

Problem solving

Conger et al. (1997) have noted that, cognitively, adolescents are only beginning to become skilled problem-solvers. The impressive gains in physical and physiological development that are made during adolescence are accompanied by equally impressive gains in intellectual and cognitive development. They show increasing flexibility in their thinking, and they create and test new theories of how their world works. Creative adolescents enjoy risks that come with uncertainty, even when it involves a certain amount of disorder. They welcome people and ideas that are different from their own, do not assume that roles exist, and that, if they do, should not interfere with creative thinking. They are reflectively spontaneous, analytically intuitive, and good at association. In order to facilitate creative thinking they need to be persistently encouraged, and allowed to challenge assumptions and their independent decision making (Cobb, 1995).

Critical thinking

During adolescence, young people undergo advances in reasoning ability. They are more able to think about things abstractly and logically. Adolescents become interested in concepts such as justice, fairness, and rights (Galotti, Kozberg & Farmer, 1991). This change in thinking allows teenagers to question their parents’ authority and rules. During this time, they develop their own identity and form their own opinions, separate from their parents. In addition, teenagers begin to realize that their parents are not always right. This is called “de-idealization” of their parents and
is a normal process for adolescents (Tubman, 1994, p. 1). Brainerd (1978) has noted that these cognitive changes occurring within the brain at puberty require that the child needs guidance to reconcile differences, to restructure beliefs into personal ideology and to make independent decisions for the future. An effective middle school helps students test their limits in a safe, protected environment. Advisory programs provided in the school help to bridge the gap created between the child and the parent.

**Egocentrism**

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between Piaget’s formal operations and adolescent egocentrism along with many other reasons for adolescents being egocentric (Bell, 2003; Elkind, 1967; Frankenberger, 2000; , 2004; Rycek, 1998). Elkind (1967) has contended that adolescents construct an “imaginary audience,” giving rise to inflated self-consciousness. Adolescents assume that people around them, especially peers, are watching them, thinking about them, and are interested in all their thoughts and actions. Elkind (1967) has argued that the transition into the formal operational stage inclines adolescents to think about their own thinking and that of others. It is this belief that others are preoccupied with their appearance and behaviour that constitutes the egocentrism of adolescents (Elkind, 1967). Adolescent egocentrism actually represents a flaw in thinking that is characteristic of early formal operations. For this reason adolescent egocentrism should not be portrayed as undesirable or pathological, but as a by-product of normal, natural developmental processes (O'Connor, 1995).

**Implications for the school**

An adolescent needs an environment in which he can experience spontaneous research. Piagetian principles in the classroom include equilibration, maturation, active experience and social interaction. The classroom should be filled with authentic opportunities for challenging students. They should be given the freedom to understand and construct meaning at their own pace through personal experiences as they develop through individual developmental processes. Learning is an active process in which errors will be made and solutions will found. These are important for assimilation and accommodation to achieve equilibrium. Learning is a social process that should take place among collaborative groups with peer interaction in as natural as possible settings (Piaget, 1950).
According to Chiera (cited in Edwards, 2001, p. 3), “middle schooling is based on constructivism”. Constructivist theory views the student as one who acts on objects and events within his or her environment and thereby gains some understanding of the features held by the objects and events. In the middle school, teachers work collaboratively and students learn to interact cooperatively in small learning communities. Here, the teacher needs to realize that not all students are capable of learning the content in the same way at the same time. In a middle school setting, students are helped to explore concepts and develop reasoning abilities, and are encouraged to cultivate their natural and intellectual interests (McLeod, 2001).

Jerome (cited in Phillips, 1979, p. 206) has argued that discovery or self learning, which arises from natural curiosity, is developmentally of more value than the type of learning that is dominated by the teacher standing at the front of the classroom. Traditional schools just drill out the curiosity and natural wish or desire to learn with the assumption that children are empty and passive vessels into which knowledge has to be poured. The result, he claims, is boredom, indifference, and an underlying rebelliousness and resentment at school. Although all children follow a similar path through cognitive development, not all of them attain the levels at the same rate and times as others. Elkind and Adelson (cited in Toepfer, 1992) has concluded, in their work, that transescents did not develop the characteristics of formal operations rapidly at the beginning of the stage. Self-expression should be encouraged in all subjects. Opportunities should be provided for enjoyable studies in the arts and drama activities can be useful in fostering self-expression.

2.3.2.4 Social development of adolescents

In the literature (Bell, 2003; Bosacki, 2003; Roeser & Eccles, 2000), social development is increasingly assumed to be important in the adolescent’s life. Adolescents’ physical growth, emotional adjustment, and intellectual power is only possible within a social setting. McLeod (2001) has described the social development of the adolescent as a complex process that affects all other areas of the middle school student’s life. Damon (1983) has contended that social development is a life process built upon a paradox. The paradox is that we are both social and individual beings at the same time, connected with others in a multitude of ways, as well as
ultimately alone in the world. This connectedness and separateness begins at the moment of birth and remains with us all through life.

**Peer pressure**

Eichhorn (1966) has noted that peer pressure and influence reach their peak between the ages of 11–17 years of age. Group actions demonstrate the level of dependency on peer approval. Transescent children are caught in a moral dilemma between adult standards and expectations and the desire to conform to the peer group in order to gain acceptance. Based on this, Eichhorn has argued that adolescence is a shift away from a state of dependence on parents and the home for personal security, interests, and values, to independence and an increased reliance upon the peer group. Finkenauer et al. (2002) have suggested that early adolescence is a period of social turmoil. Social recognition and approval by others become a major concern for young adolescents. Socially, adolescents gradually try to explore the world outside their family limits. They need opportunities to explore their widening world and to reflect upon the meaning of new experiences so they can begin to consider themselves not just as observers, but also as participants in society. They need to find a friend and share a secret, or to have a good talk with an adult (Conway & Associates, 1998).

**Autonomy**

Another major issue confronting early adolescents is to become more autonomous. Autonomy involves independence and being responsible for one’s own action. Adolescents press for greater inclusion in decision making; they ask to be treated as more adult (Cobb, 1995). The findings of an extensive study undertaken by Choo (2000) on adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ child-rearing behaviours and the relationship to adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment confirmed the results of a large body of research suggesting that adolescents could interpret negatively any parental attempt to limit their autonomy. Parental support of autonomy is associated with enhanced personal esteem and social efficacy and with the development of autonomy in adolescents.

Pardeck and Pardeck (cited in Cobb, 1995) have argued that most adolescents, having newly-granted independence, desire to test limits but often lack decision-making skills. This may lead them to take risks that can have harmful or even deadly consequences. For many parents it is hard to navigate their growing child and they can either facilitate or hinder the growth of autonomy.
Sense of social identity

O’Connor (1995) has argued that during adolescence many individuals become self-conscious, self-centred, idealistic, faddish, and may experience heightened feelings of uniqueness and personal agency. They become self-conscious in social situations because of their own personal concern with who they are, and because they assume that, others will be surveying them closely for signs of individuality. The self-concerns and social demands of the identity development process may lead adolescents to confuse their own concerns with the concerns of others. Their feelings of uniqueness may stem from the fact that having an identity, or having the opportunity to find an identity, is so new to them. Never before have they dealt with the pleasures, difficulties, and responsibilities that come with making choices and defining oneself to others. Coping with this series of changing characteristics, young adolescents are also faced with the modern social demands of media, technology, substance abuse and consumerism (McKnight, 2001).

Simmons and Blyth (1995) have documented that in the process of self-definition some may be rebellious towards parents, but are still strongly dependent on parental values; they want to make their own choices but the authority of the family is still a critical factor in ultimate decisions. Peterson (1990, p.66) has maintained that “adolescence is the time when conflict with parents escalates”. Socrates (cited in Peterson, 1990) described the behaviour of Athenian teenagers in the following terms:

They show disrespect for their elders—they contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, and tyrannize their teachers.

While Aristotle (cited in Peterson, 1990) described them as:

Passionate, irascible, and to be carried away by their impulses—They regard themselves omniscient and are positive in their assertions; this is, in fact, the reason of their carrying everything too far.

Implications for the school

Brown and Gilligan (1992) have argued that in preparation for adulthood, early adolescents need positive social interaction with their peers in order to establish trust, self-esteem, and self-confidence. It is possible that gender-specific forms of interaction are required for this age. Middle school programs help parents realize that peer pressure is a normal part of the maturing
Constant love and support is the need of the time and the school should guide the parents in continuing to provide this to their rapidly growing children. Adolescents’ relationships with adults, especially parents, are changing and the importance of peers is increasing (Scales, 1991). And yet, positive social interactions with both these groups are still extremely important and can be facilitated by adviser-advisee relationships, staff participation in activities, and informal contact outside of the classroom. In the middle school setting, the counsellor, through family case studies, can ease the parental difference. The involvement of parents makes it possible to create in the child a feeling of belongingness and connectedness with the family and parents.

Simmons and Blyth (1987) have asserted that a child moving from the elementary to the middle level would likely experience a loss of self-esteem and a feeling of victimization and anonymity. In school, adolescents need to be involved in a democratic way to set the boundaries for regulating themselves with the help of the teachers. The teaming and interdisciplinary units in middle schools provide a sense of security and belongingness for students.

### 2.3.3 Need for planned smooth transition

Literature on adolescents’ growth and development (Carlson et al., 1999; Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996; Johnstone, 2002; Seidman, Lambert, Allen & Aber, 2003; Yates, 1999) has suggested that at a bare minimum young adolescents have to pass through triple transitions at a time of turmoil, when many physical changes occur to the human body. They go through puberty, they move from family to peers, and transfer from one school to another where they begin to take personal and educational decisions. Patton et al. (2000) have argued that transitions in education are among the most significant events in the lives of younger adolescents. Legters and Kerr (2001) have noted that the pressure of making a school transition is amplified by the developmental struggles faced by adolescents. Many researchers have studied the reasons for the adverse impact of transitions on adolescents. This may lead to a greater chance for negative outcomes. In other words, as students move into middle school, they are confronted by both external contextual changes and internal pubertal changes.

The need to help young adolescents in making successful transitions is not a new concern for middle level educators. Many research studies (Akos, 2004; Eccles, 1999a; Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 1996; Fenzel, 2000; Hardy, Bukowski & Sippola, 2002; Rudolph, Lambert, Clark &
Kurlakowsky, 2001; Sally & Rae, 2004) have established the indices of problems associated with transitions. These problems are outlined as underachievement, students’ disengagement from learning, feelings of alienation, lack of motivation and many more. These identified problems have implications for education systems, schools and parents alike.

**Underachievement**

The transition from elementary to secondary school is built into the structure of education systems throughout the world. A large body of research has shown that transition between schools associated with a number of other transitions adversely affect student academic progress. Hill and Russell (1999, p. 169), discussing the findings of Victorian Quality Schools Project (VQSP), have noted that “the mapping of student learning progress across the compulsory years of schooling revealed that there was virtually no growth during the middle years in reading, writing, speaking and listening”.

As early as the 1960s, researchers were exploring the impact of transition to junior high school on academic performance. Finger and Silverman (1966), in a study on young adolescents during the transition to middle level schools, found a decline in achievement for the majority of students. Another research study conducted by Petersen and Crockett in 1985 (cited in Mullins & Irvin, 2000) also showed a decline in academic performance upon entering high school. Other researchers, Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman and Midgley (1991 cited in Mullins & Irvin, 2000, p. 2) have reported that “young adolescents’ liking of mathematics and sports activities declined for the entire first year of junior high school. Liking of English also declined early in the transition year but rebounded somewhat by the end of the year”.

Alspaugh (1998, p. 2) has established that “there is a consistent student achievement loss associated with the transition from self-contained elementary schools to intermediate-level schools”. The achievement loss in reading, mathematics, science and social studies occurred when the transition was at grade 5, 6, 7, or 8. Their report identifies that the size and organization of the school is related to the transition loss. Fenzel (cited in Mullins & Irvin, 2000, p. 2) has reported similar findings with the addition that “relatively young students were more vulnerable to declines in grade point average (GPA) than their older classmates”. Most at risk of problems at transition were relatively young girls of lower socioeconomic status.
In education, what is taught, how it is taught, and how long it is taught is called alignment. The literature on middle schooling reforms argues that the secondary education system is out of alignment. Eccles and her colleagues (1993) have conducted a longitudinal study of the transition from elementary to middle school. These researchers have concluded that typical middle school instructional practices represent a mismatch with the characteristics of young adolescents and actually hinder the positive development of this age group. For example, at this age, students’ abilities to reason, integrate, and evaluate information burgeon, yet many school tasks are repetitive and rote, requiring only low-level cognitive processes. At the same time, middle grades students are developing a greater desire for autonomy and independence, yet many instructional practices are tightly teacher controlled. Moreover, social relationships with peers take on a new importance, yet many teachers, lacking the knowledge of how to promote effective collaboration, continue to enforce rules involving working in quiet isolation.

Worthy and McKool (cited in Ivey & Broaddus, 2001) have noted that the student-instruction mismatch also extends beyond the struggling students. Even avid, proficient young adolescents express dissatisfaction with assigned reading and writing that does not match their interests or purposes (Ivey, 1999). Moreover, there is often a mismatch between what students want to learn and the content requirements of schools. Students in the middle grades and beyond are not only still developing as readers and writers, but also beginning to explore possible identities and a range of personal interests about the world. George et al. (1992) have argued that, despite the concerns and curiosities of young adolescent students and suggestions for curriculum that is more relevant to their thinking and their lives, subject-area loyalties and content-driven teaching persist in middle school classrooms. O’Brien et al. (cited in Ivey & Broaddus, 2001) have agreed, stating that student-controlled learning does not fit with traditional school structures and practices and may be difficult for both students and teachers to accept. Although secondary teachers vary in their beliefs and practices they typically resort to more teacher-centred instruction, especially when they perceive it to be necessary to cover specified content.

Midgley and Feldlaufer (1987) have argued that students, as they get older, want an increasing input into the functioning and structure of their classes. Older students also want more opportunities for self-management in higher grades. These desires are consistent with the developmental needs of young adolescents as they begin the search for their own identity.
Increased school size, departmentalization, ability grouping, increased use of competition as a motivator, increased rigour in grading, and focus on relative ability with a decreased opportunity for student autonomy are a part of many middle grades school environments (Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

**Student disengagement from learning, and feelings of alienation**

In the literature, poor educational performance is identified as an outcome of a process of disengagement (Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder, 2001; Libbey, 2004; Radziwon, 2003; Willms, 2003). Tegarden, 1979; Collins and Huges, 1982 (cited in Queensland Board of Teacher Education, 1984, p. 4) have noted that the “learning environment typically found in either the primary or secondary school does not provide for the unique needs and characteristics of students at the adolescent stage of their development”. The organizational failure in school today is that the basic developmental needs of youth growing towards adulthood cannot be met in the present system. No matter the quality of educational opportunities, if students are not engaged with schoolwork the likelihood of academic success is low.

Rossi et al. (1994) have argued that students who do not identify, participate, and succeed in school activities become increasingly at risk of academic failure and dropout. Disengagement often employs sociological concepts (e.g. alienation) to explain student behaviour and to analyse student performance in the context of school interactions rather than as symptoms of social maladies. Johnson et al. (2001) have discussed the psychological component while emphasizing the students’ sense of belonging or attachment to school, which has to do with feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers, and by others at their school.

In Australia, it was found that “substantial minorities of young people were uninterested in school or what it has to offer. They get the message that they are unsuited and leave early or passively endure their ‘sentence’” (Queensland Board of Teacher Education, 1984, p. 4). It is also noted that young people dislike, disengage from, or leave school for a variety of reasons, with different attitudes towards education and different prospects for future careers (Dwyer, 1996). However, lack of interest, boredom and negative experiences with teachers are found to be the most common reasons for leaving school. Wyn and Holden (1994) and, Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1996 cited in The Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA),
2001, p. 2) have also noted that “young people are much more likely to leave because of a negative experience of school rather than a positive sense of what exists outside school”.

Seeman (cited in LaCourse, Villeneuve & Claes, 2003) undertook the first study to clarify the traditionally sociological concept of alienation by examining its multidimensionality. He identified five dimensions: self-estrangement, powerlessness, social isolation, meaninglessness, and normlessness. Subsequently, he added a sixth, cultural estrangement. Self-estrangement manifests itself in adolescents who have low self-esteem and feel bored with life, in which they perceive no purpose. Powerlessness reflects fatalism, pessimism, and a perception of losing control over one’s own life. Social isolation is salient to adolescents who perceive a lack of intimate relationships, such as with friends, thus leading to a feeling of loneliness. Normlessness can be defined as a belief that socially disapproved behaviours may be used to achieve culturally defined goals. For example, adolescents who strive for good grades in school but perceive that they are not provided with the means to achieve them may cheat during exams. Meaninglessness is an important dimension to explore within an educational context.

Phelan (cited in Brady, 2004, p. 354) has noted that “on any given day adolescents in this society move from one social context to another. Families, peer groups, classrooms, and schools are primary arenas in which young people negotiate and construct their realities”. Brady (2004, p. 354) further argues that “their relationships at school have a potential impact on their attitudes as well as their academic achievement; and engagement with the institution they attend in the process of formal education”. LaCourse et al. (2003) have noted that within the school context, adolescent alienation is often exhibited in behaviours such as self-isolation, failure, violence, absenteeism, truancy, and dropping out. Kimber and Deighton (2002) have argued that in a period of extreme physical and emotional upheaval, engagement in schooling inevitably decreases.

Rigby (1990, p. 26), discussing adolescents and their attitude towards institutional authorities, has argued that, at a time in life when young people need greater freedom from external controls in order to develop their own independent identity, many high schools emphasize authority and academic competition within an impersonal environment. Most schools expect students to fit in with them and do not take expectations into account. While this is acceptable (if not ideal) to the majority of students, it is alienating to a quarter of young people in Australia, who leave school
early each year. It is also said that students who are alienated from schooling often have a relationship of active resistance to school. Negative relationships with teachers along with irrelevant and uninteresting curriculum alienate adolescents from schooling. Baumrind (cited in Rigby, 1990, p. 29) has argued that “The major challenge today is not that the young have no respect for authority, but they have little reason to respect the authority”.

Implications for the school

A student’s personal, home, community and school characteristics should not be studied in isolation—all these variables contribute to student performance and they are strongly interactive. In order to provide a quality education, schools must foster intellectual development and encourage student interest and involvement in the classroom. Intellectual development includes, but is not limited to, learning language or maths skills: ideally, intellectual development enhances understanding of the self and the environment and adds to a young person’s academic proficiencies (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994, p. 47).

Most theories of engagement focus on the incentives for student involvement. The attraction of interesting and relevant assignments, the satisfaction of personal accomplishment, the pleasure of group participation, the desire to acquire skills necessary for a lucrative career, and other rewards may encourage student achievement and persistence. Incentives to do well academically must be greater than the incentives to engage in competing activities. In order to improve student achievement and persistence Rossi and Montgomery (1994, p. 44) have suggested that “the school climate must foster “investment” behaviour—schools must encourage student involvement in academic and extracurricular activities by stimulating their interest, increasing their personal resources (e.g. re-mediating skill deficiencies), and rewarding their efforts”.

Lack of Motivation

Considerable research has identified a decline in motivation and performance for many children as they move from elementary school into middle school (Brewster & Fager, 2000; Hidi & Ainley, 2002; Mansfield, 2001; Wiest, Wong, Cervantes, Craik & Kreil, 2001). Often it has been assumed that this decline is caused largely by physiological and psychological changes associated with puberty and is thus inevitable. This assumption has been challenged by research that demonstrates that the nature of motivational change on entry to middle school depends on the
characteristics of the learning environment in which students find themselves (Midgley, 1993 cited in Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Eccles and Midgley 1989 (cited in Eccles, 1999a) have attributed the negative changes in academic motivation to the fact that the traditional junior high school does not provide developmentally appropriate educational environments for early adolescents. They argued that there are developmentally inappropriate changes at the junior high or middle school in a cluster of classroom organizational, instructional, and climate variables, including task structure, task complexity, grouping practices, evaluation techniques, motivational strategies, locus of responsibility for learning, and quality of teacher-student and student-student relationships. They have suggested that different types of educational environments might be needed for different age groups in order to meet individual developmental needs and foster continued developmental growth. Exposure to a developmentally appropriate environment would facilitate both motivation and continued growth. In contrast, exposure to developmentally regressive environments creates poor person-environment fit, leading to a decline in motivation as well as detachment from the goals of the institution.

2.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This review has examined a range of literature, research reports and articles relevant to the emergence of middle schooling, international and historical concerns about middle schooling, an overview of middle schooling in Australia and the concept of middle schooling defined by the proponents of the reform. After discussing all background details of the program this chapter also discusses the driving forces behind the reform such as the need for developmentally responsive schools for adolescents and adolescents’ needs in terms of their characteristics and need for smooth transitions as. It is quite clear that the issue of middle schooling is heating up in Australia. The proponents of the program have entered the new millennium with the imperative of affirming that middle school programs, if implemented, make a real difference to educators and young adolescents.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

ELEMENTS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOLING PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

My purpose in presenting such a comprehensive review of the literature is to utilise the recommendations made in the literature as qualitative data to provide the reader, and me, with a better understanding of the concepts and elements of the middle schooling program as argued in the literature in Australia and internationally. I have synthesised the arguments and recommendations of the literature into seven ‘Logic Models’ (see Figures 4.2–4.8). Each logic model is based on one element of the General Design (Hill and Crévola, 1997), and organises each element into its characteristics, anticipated activities related to that element, and short term and intermediate outcomes as identified in the literature. These logic models gave me an insight into how to plan for the evaluation of the program and also provided me with an approach for proceeding systematically in my evaluation of middle schooling practices in schools of the ACT and their alignment with the philosophy as identified in the literature.

I have also used the review of literature in preparation of four purpose specific instruments for the collection of quantitative data. Based on anticipated practices and expected short term and intermediate outcomes of the middle schooling program identified in the literature, I designed 395 items for data collection through questionnaire. In Chapter 6, I use the qualitative information (from the literature review) to support my discussion and to compare the quantitative data with the recommendations made in the literature and in drawing some conclusions.

Elements for appropriate schooling in the middle years have been proposed by many (Braggett, 1997; Braggett, Morris & Day, 1999; Brainbridge, Burkholder, Lahr, Sundre & Stephens, 2001; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Chadbourne, 2003; Druian & Butler, 1997; Edmonds, 1979; Felner et al., 1997; George & Alexander, 2003; Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996; Hill & Crévola, 1997; Hill, Mackay, Russell & Zbar, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lezotte, 1991; Lipsitz, 1995; Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992; Scheerens, 2000; Schools Council, 1992;
Simmons & Blyth, 1995) and especially in Australia by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (Barratt, 1998).

The Department of Education Employment and Training (DEET) (1999, p. 17) has noted that in the field of middle years of schooling, the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) provides a useful framework for redesigning the middle years of schooling. The design’s emphasis on a comprehensive, consistent and whole-school approach is highly pertinent to the redesigning of Years 5–9. For this reason, I have selected this design as criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the middle schooling program in the ACT, Australia.

Commonly identified elements of school effectiveness in the literature8 (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991; Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992; Scheerens, 2000; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Taylor, 2002a) are mostly directly related to or complemented by those elements identified by Hill and Crévola (1997) in their design and have been supported by many (Department of Education Employment and Training Victoria (DEET), 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Lounsbury, 1996).

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8 See Table 3.1: Common theme between middle schooling and effective schools.
### Table 3.1a: Common themes between middle schools and effective schools

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<th>AND</th>
<th>EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS</th>
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3.1 BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS (vision and mission statements)

“Where there is no vision, the people perish”. 10

Introduction

Hill and Crévola (1997) have put Beliefs and Understanding at the centre of the General Design as a core element of the model arguing that it is very important for all the stakeholders to share common beliefs and have common understanding for reaching certain goals set for the students. Hill and Crévola (1999, p. 7), discussing the vision for middle schooling, have argued that “all students can achieve high standards given sufficient time and support—all teachers can teach to high standards given the right conditions and assistance”. Herman and Kaufman (1991) have suggested that a school must first identify its ideals, its beliefs and values and develop a mission statement as a written document based on these beliefs and values, answering the questions, “where are we going, and how will we know when we have arrived?”

Similarly, Sergiovanni (1992) has noted that in successful schools, consensus should run deep. It is not enough to have worked out what people stand for and what should be accomplished; a binding and solemn agreement must emerge, one that represents a value system for living together and forming the basis of decisions and actions. Barth (1993, p. 6) has stated that “a school with a vigorous, soaring vision of what it might become is more likely to become that; without a vision a school is unlikely to improve”. Barth (2001, p. 204) has also insisted that:

There is no more important work than helping to create and then employing an inspiring, useful vision. Every school must have a vision—a vision is a kind of moral imagination that gives school people, individually and collectively, the ability to see their school not only as it is but also as they would like it to become.

Wohlstetter and Griffin (1997, p. 5) have noted that “The school mission is a touchstone for participants’ passion and commitment to the school and when the mission is clear and specific, the school is better able to translate the mission into practice”.

Conley (1996) believes that vision exists in an organisation when people share commonly identified beliefs, values, purposes and goals to guide their behaviour. Effective educational

10 (Proverbs 29, p. 18)
leaders help their schools to develop visions that embody the best thinking about teaching and learning (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003). Extending their work, Whitaker and Moses (1994, pp. 63) declare vision as “an inspiring declaration of a compelling dream, accompanied by a clear scenario of how it will be accomplished”. A good vision not only has worthy goals, but also challenges and stretches everyone in the school. Nanus (1992) defines vision simply as an articulation of a realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization, it is an articulation of a destination toward which the organisation should aim.

It is argued by the National Middle School Association (1995, p. 14) that a shared vision highlights the importance of educators possessing a vision that is “idealistic and uplifting” and reflects “the very best we can imagine about all the elements of schooling, including student achievement, student-teacher relationships, and community participation”. A mission statement is a powerful tool for school improvement. Properly constructed, it empowers everyone in the school to assume responsibility for the school’s ultimate direction. It is at once a commitment, a promise, a guide for decisions, and a set of criteria by which to measure the school’s progress toward its defined purposes (State Education Department, 1996). Strike (2004) has added that a shared vision must be expressed in activities through which people cooperate in realising aims that are rooted in the shared vision.

Although “vision” and “mission” are often used interchangeably and often viewed as the same, they are not synonymous terms. A vision describes an end, a perfect future, and an idealized state. A mission describes a process or means for achieving a vision. A well-written mission statement for a middle-level school describes both a vision (an educational ideal) and a mission (the means to achieve the vision) (State Education Department, 1996). A vision represents clearly articulated statements of goals, principles, and expectations for the entire learning community. A common unifying vision is achieved when the administration, teachers, support staff, students, families, and demographically representative community members are able to communicate that vision clearly through the daily operation of the school. A vision becomes a guiding force when all educational decisions are based on its framework and goals (Department of Public Instruction, 2001).
The New York State Education Department (1989, p. 3) has suggested that the philosophy and mission of middle-level education should:

- acknowledge the importance of the school in assisting the student in his or her transition from childhood to adolescence;
- affirm the school’s responsibility to assist the student in his or her transition from the self-contained classroom of the elementary school to the departmentalized structure of the high school;
- reflect an ethos of respect, caring, and support for the student;
- recognize the importance of the individual;
- stress the development of the whole child, including his or her self-esteem and sense of personal identity;
- emphasise the balance between academic and personal/social growth;
- affirm the importance of school and home connections and school and community connections in the education of middle-level students; and
- promote in emerging adolescents a feeling of personal efficacy and a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.

The National Middle Schooling Project funded by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and managed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association in its position paper (Barratt, 1998, pp. 34-35) has identified the following goals for middle years education. These goals have been commonly accepted as criteria for introducing middle schooling reforms in Australia.

**Engaged, focused and achieving adolescents.**

Middle schools should develop an approach to learning that recognises, acknowledges and responds effectively to the needs of all young adolescents. Specific objectives include:

- focusing on the whole student (e.g. personal, intellectual, social, physical, emotional needs);
- supporting students with special needs (e.g. Indigenous, gifted and talented, rural and isolated, students in poverty, students with disabilities);
- acknowledging the broader contemporary context (e.g. changing economics, gender identity, technologies, societies, cultures); and
- enabling students to assume greater responsibility (e.g. contribute to educational processes such as curriculum, assessment, reporting).
Effective curriculum, teaching and organisational practices

Middle schools should create a stimulating and challenging environment that will enable all students to experience success and to achieve significant learning outcomes. Specific objectives include:

- clarifying and making explicit what all young adolescents need to know and be able to do (e.g. essential understandings, skills and competencies);
- developing a broader range of approaches to learning and teaching (e.g. community-based, blended theory and practice, links to education, training and work);
- creating more flexible structures (e.g. staffing, timetable, resources); and
- ensuring continuity and cohesion (e.g. seamless transitions between the early, middle and post compulsory years).

Genuine partnerships and long-term support

Middle schools should strengthen the links between those with key roles regarding the education and development of young adolescents with a view to generating and sustaining high quality middle schooling practice. Specific objectives include:

- raising the status of the middle years (e.g. dissemination of good practice, advocacy in policy contexts, 'top-down' and 'bottom-tip' influences);
- enhancing teacher professionalism in the middle years (e.g. initial training, professional development career structures, leadership, networks, and incentives);
- extending productive partnerships (e.g. teachers and parents, schools and community agencies, education and other sectors); and
- generating additional resourcing for the middle years (e.g. information technology, professional development, research and development, evaluation).

The State Education Department (2000, p. 3) in USA has emphasised that “philosophy and mission must reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents. Its basic aims are to educate and nurture. It has a culture of collective and shared responsibility. To be successful, it must attend to both the intellectual development and the personal needs of young adolescents. The philosophy and mission of a standards-focused middle-level school or program must reflect a set of shared beliefs”. It is further stated that school and staff within the school must be committed to the following:

- developing the whole child, intellectually and academically, personally and socially, and physically and emotionally;
• working together to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and develop as individuals;
• accepting individually and collectively responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student;
• connecting each young adolescent in positive ways with the school and with caring adults within the school;
• providing each student with a variety of learning experiences in order for each of them to make informed life decisions (both educational and personal); and
• establishing partnerships with the home and the community.

The Education Development Center (2003) expressing its concern about the effectiveness of middle grades education, has laid out the following parts of vision of high quality for its middle-level schools.

3.1.1 Academically excellent schools

All schools inherently believe in the academic excellence of their students and make an effort in their own way to achieve the best possible results. Williamson, Johnston and Kanthak (1995, p. 6) have also insisted that “Student achievement must be given the highest priority in the mission of the middle level school”. Middle schools must challenge students to meet high rigorous academic standards; the curriculum should emphasise deep understandings of important concepts, develop essential skills, and provide students opportunities to apply their knowledge to real-world problems and make interdisciplinary connections. Collins (1975) has argued that the philosophy of the school should be to encourage the students academically, to provide a happy challenging gratifying and self-fulfilling environment, to help in the development of social skills for self exploration and to provide a comprehensive program which is commensurate with the individual potential of the students.

3.1.2 Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents

The philosophy of middle schooling is based on the research finding suggesting that there is a mismatch between the learning needs of adolescents and what schools offer to them (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Earl, 1999). An abundant body of literature strongly suggests that schools should be responsive to the emerging learning needs of adolescents (Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), 1996; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson...
& Davis, 2000). Braggett et al. (1999) have identified certain cognitive characteristics of young adolescents, such as abstract thought, critical reasoning, meta-cognition, egocentrism, and different learning styles. The literature on middle schooling (Knowles & Brown, 2000; Stevenson, 2002) has insisted that staff involved in the teaching and learning of adolescents, in addition to the knowledge of other characteristics of adolescents, must have a knowledge of adolescents’ cognitive characteristics in order to shape their educational needs corresponding with their intellectual needs.

3.1.3 Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents

Middle schools must be sensitive to the unique developmental changes of middle grades students, creating personalized environments that support each student’s development—environments in which all students voice their feelings, make choices, plan their futures, and explore the rich variety of topics and interests that will help them develop their identities and discover their abilities.

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) (1995, p. 13) discussing the vision of an ideal middle-level program, has stated that “Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents, they understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach”. It is further elaborated that—“a developmentally responsive middle level school is guided by a vision or a written mission statement supported by all stakeholders—students, teachers, administrators, families, board of education members, and others in the community” (NMSA, 1995, p. 14).

Hall (1916) believed that development was controlled by genetically determined physiological factors with the environment playing a role whereby heredity interacts with environmental influences to determine an individual’s development. Investigations in early 20th century were characterised by a consideration of physical changes during adolescence and their psychological correlates. Later emphasis switched to social themes, with a focus on relationships formed by adolescents and the impact upon them of society’s expectation (Lindsay, 1983). Lounsbury (2005) has noted that no other age level is of more importance to the future of individuals or, literally, to that of society because these are the years when youngsters crystallize their beliefs.
about themselves and firm up their self-concepts, their philosophies of life and their values—the things that are the ultimate determinants of their behaviours.

3.1.4 Schools socially equitable

Schools for adolescents must be socially equitable, democratic, and fair in providing every student access to high-quality teachers, resources, learning opportunities, and supports. They must recognise the value of the school and nation’s cultural diversity and create connections and partnerships with all families, encouraging them to participate actively in school activities and decision-making. Bennett and Harris (1999) have suggested that achievements within an organisation are the results of interaction between its members. This organisational relationship is influenced by three factors, which they referred to as ‘structure’, ‘culture’ and the ‘distribution of power’. Hence, they suggest that researchers in the field of school effectiveness and school improvement should consider all three of these dimensions within their research ventures.

The Queensland Board of Teacher Education (1984, p. 28) has suggested that change in organisational arrangements must go hand in hand with the formulation of a comprehensive school policy for the education of young adolescents, and for evoking a sense of belonging to, and being needed by, the school, conveying a message that it cares about its students. Felner, Jackson and Kasak (1997) have strongly supported the idea that high-quality middle grades schooling, well implemented, can make profound contributions to the achievement, mental health, and socio-behavioural functioning of young adolescents who are often left behind and for whom there is often a sense that school cannot make a difference in their lives. Simmons and Blyth (1987) have asserted that a child moving from the elementary to the middle level would likely experience a loss of self-esteem and a feeling of victimization and anonymity. In school, adolescents need to be involved in a democratic way in setting the boundaries for regulating themselves with the help of the teachers. Midgley and Anderman (1998, p. 2), in discussing self determination theory, have suggested that “students have three categories of needs: of a sense of competence, of relatedness to others, and of autonomy”. Students at this stage want to be included in decision-making and to have some sense of control over their activities.
3.1.5 Schools responsive to community participation

Scales (1991) has emphasised the need for positive social interaction with adults and peers in the middle school setting. Because of their changing relationships with adults, especially parents, and the increasing importance of peers, positive social interactions with these groups are extremely important to young adolescents. Similarly, Sergiovanni (1992) has noted that in successful schools consensus runs deep. It is not enough to have worked out what people stand for and what is to be accomplished; a binding and solemn agreement must emerge, one that represents a value system for living together and forms the basis of decisions and actions.

Summary of the section

The mission statement (beliefs and understandings) provides a blue print of a school’s ongoing activities. It defines the overall purpose, incorporating its aims, values and goals, and gives a sense of direction to all in the school. All schools need to set a criterion for the smooth running of the school, and the middle schools are no exception. The literature shows that effective middle schools are seen to be academically excellent, developmentally responsive, socially equitable and responsive to community participation.

3.2 SCHOOL AND CLASS ORGANISATION

The sum of human knowledge and the complexity of human problems are perpetually increasing; therefore, every generation must overhaul its educational methods if time is to be found for what is new. (Russell, 1926, p. 23)

Introduction

School and class organisation is considered to be a crucial element of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) because the way in which schools and classrooms are organised has an immediate impact on students’ educational experience. Ross, Alberg and Wang (2001) have noted that most school reform models are designed to impact classrooms indirectly by changing the school culture within which the classrooms are located with the assumption that changes in the school culture will “trickle down” to the classrooms within the school.

It is emphasised in the literature (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Brown, Roney & Anfara, 2003; Roach & Kratochwill, 2004; Vanderstraeten, 2002) that benefits to students in the middle years of schooling depend mainly on three factors: organisational structure, scope and
sequence of curricula, and methods of instruction. Jackson and Davis (2000) have suggested that the organisation and structure must support both academic excellence and personal development. They further argue that standards-focused schools with middle-level grades are organised to promote academic excellence and to establish within staff and students a feeling of belonging and a sense of personal identification with the school and its purposes. In recognition of the need for and importance of school organisation in the whole educational process this section addresses the attributes involved in restructuring the school organisation for early adolescents. The need for class organisation has been merged for discussion in Section 3.3 ‘Classroom teaching strategies’.

3.2.1 ATTRIBUTES OF SCHOOL AND CLASS ORGANISATION

An ample body of literature (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), 2001; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 1998; Marsh, 1999; Miles, 1998; Newman & Wehlage, 1998) has focused on the organisation of schools. Danielson (2002) has suggested that school organisation refers to how schools arrange the resources of time, space, and personnel for maximum effect on student learning. The school’s organisational plan addresses those issues that affect the school as a whole, such as the master schedule, the location of staff in different rooms, and the assignment of aides to teachers or teams.

The theoretical framework for the organisational climate of middle schools was based on the work of Halpin (1996), Hoy and Clover (1986), Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991) and Hoy and Miskel (1991) (all cited in Hoy, Hoffman, Sabo & Bliss, 1996). Sweetland and Hoy (2000) explain school climate as a stable set of organisational characteristics that capture the distinctive tone or atmosphere of a school having a set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one organisation from another and influence the behaviour of organisational members.

A number of problems assumed to be associated with young adolescents (lack of motivation, anger and resentment towards education, revulsion for teachers in the school and class, gang behaviour, substance abuse, failure to complete assignments, low self esteem) lead to a decline in academic achievement, disengagement, alienation, withdrawal, truancy, habitual lateness, suspension, expulsion, and dropping out with the end results of early school leaving.

Tegarden, 1979; Collins and Hughes (1982 cited in Queensland Board of Teacher Education, 1984, p. 4) have argued that the organisational failure in schools today is that the basic
developmental needs of youth growing towards adulthood cannot be met in the present system. Hixson and Tinzmann (1990) have also identified systemic and structural barriers in the functioning of contemporary school such as inflexible schedules, narrow curricula, a priority focus on basic/lower-order skills, inappropriate, limited, and rigid instructional strategies, inappropriate texts and other instructional materials, over-reliance on standardized tests to make instructional and curricular decisions, tracking, isolated pull-out programs, and teacher and administrators’ beliefs and attitudes toward both students and their parents. In the words of Hargreaves (1994, pp. 43-44) “schools are still modelled on a curious mix of the factory, the asylum and the prison”. Hood (1998) has argued that there has been little substantive change in the way schools go about their business for some time. Gerstner, Semerad and Doyle (1994, p. 3) have noted “that one most vital area of our national life—public education—has not undergone the process of revitalising change”. In our economic and social life, we expect change, but in public schools, we have clung tenaciously to the ideas and techniques of earlier decades and even previous centuries.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, pp. 8-9) noted that “middle school grades-junior high, intermediate, and middle schools—are potentially society’s most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence. Yet all too often, these schools exacerbate the problems of young adolescents. A volatile mismatch exists between the organisation and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents”. The Queensland Board of Teacher Education (1984, p. 4) found that “substantial minorities of young people are uninterested in school or what it has to offer. They get the message that they are unsuited and leave early or passively endure their ‘sentence’”. Realising the problems associated with school structure, Marsh (1999) has suggested that schools are in need of dramatic revision with a variety of prescriptions suited varyingly to individual groups.

In Chapter 2 of this study the driving forces and rationale for restructuring education for adolescents has been discussed at length. Just like junior high schools, the middle schools came into existence for reasons of administrative practicality. The practical reasons laid down by the advocates of middle schools were alleviation of overcrowding in the elementary schools, de facto segregation, and consolidation because of declining secondary enrolments. Personal reasons
noted were low self esteem, social isolation, peer conflict, decline in student enjoyment of school during the middle-years and the associated lessening of their engagement in learning (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Beane, 1999; Bradley & Manzo, 2000; George & Alexander, 2003; Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996; Hill & Rowe, 1996; Hill, Rowe, Holmes-Smith & Russell, 1996; Ready, Lee & Welner, 2004; Welsh, 2000; , 2003).

MacIver (1989) has contended that the main reason given by educators and policy makers for the declining academic achievement among adolescents was the mismatch between the developmental needs of these students and the educational environment. To address this, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) has suggested a redefinition of middle grade education for preparing all youth for the demands of the 21st century. The Queensland Board of Teacher Education (1984) has provided an insight that the organisational structure of schools is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success. The Board further suggested that change in organisational arrangements must go hand in hand with the formulation of a comprehensive school policy for the education of young adolescents, and for evoking a sense of belonging to, and being needed by the school, conveying a message that it cares about its students. Felner, Jackson and Kasak (1997, p. 1) have supported the idea by stating that “high-quality middle schooling, well implemented, can make profound contributions to the achievement, mental health, and socio-behavioural functioning of young adolescents who are often left behind and for whom there is often a sense that school cannot make a difference in their lives”.

The New York State Education Department (2003) has insisted that the organisation and structure of the school should connect youngsters to adults and to other students in the school and community and provide opportunities for increasingly independent learning experiences and responsibilities within a safe and structured environment. It is reiterated that young adolescents learn and develop best in a school that is organised and structured in order to promote both academic achievement and personal development. In their policy, it is argued that organisational effectiveness and school success are not dependent upon a particular grade or school configuration. What is critical is that a school is organised and structured to help young adolescents make the transition from elementary to high school grades, from childhood to adolescence and from family to society.
Many techniques and strategies for school restructuring that meet the needs of young adolescents have been suggested and practiced in Australia. Barratt (1998, p. 29) has suggested the following needs that must be addressed in middle schools:

**Identity**
Exploring how individual and group identities are shaped by social and cultural groups.

**Relationships**
Developing productive and affirming relationships with adults and peers in an environment that respects difference and diversity.

**Purpose**
Having opportunities to negotiate learning that is useful now, as well as in the future.

**Empowerment**
Viewing the world critically and acting independently, cooperatively and responsibly.

**Success**
Having multiple opportunities to learn valued knowledge and skills as well as the opportunity to use talents and expertise that students bring to the learning environment.

**Rigour**
Taking on realistic challenges in an environment characterised by high expectations, constructive and honest feedback.

**Safety**
Safe, caring and stimulating environment for learning that addresses issues of discrimination and harassment.

Based on the recommendation of the Australian Middle Schooling Forums Barratt (1998, p. 30) has identified the following principles as essential components of middle schooling.

**Learner-centred**
Coherent curriculum is focused on the identified needs, interests and concerns of students and with an emphasis on self-directed and co-constructed learning.
**Collaborative**
Powerful pedagogy is employed by teams of teachers who organised know and understand their students’ very well, and who challenge and extend them in supportive environments.

**Outcome-based**
Progress and achievement are recorded continuously in relation to explicit statements of what each student is expected to know and be able to do.

**Flexibly constructed**
Arrangements are responsive to local needs and circumstances, and reflect creative uses of time, space and other resources.

**Ethically aware**
Justice, care, respect and a concern for the needs of others are reflected in the every-day practice of students, teachers and administrators.

**Community-oriented**
Parents, together with representatives from a diverse range of groups, institutions and organisations beyond the school are involved in productive partnerships.

**Adequately resourced**
Experienced teachers and support staff, supported by high quality facilities, technology, equipment and materials, constitute essential requirements.

**Strategically linked**
A discrete phase of schooling is implemented as a stage within a K-12 continuum and connected to the early and later years.

Research on school restructuring (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Hoy, Smith & Sweetland, 2003; Norton & Lewis, 2000; Ross, Alberg & Wang, 2001; Wyn et al., 2000) suggests that the organisation and structure should help make all students, staff, parents and families feel secure, valued, and respected as significant contributors to the school community. It is also suggested that peer affiliation, rule clarity, classroom and school organisation, instructional innovation, and student participation in decision-making has a great impact on students’ success. Hoy et al. (2003) have enumerated environmental press, collegial leadership, professional teacher behaviour and achievement press as dimensions for measuring the climate of
a school. Serpell (1999) has proposed that the school environment is comprised of the physical ecology, or the school’s building and material aspects; culture, or that set of beliefs, values, and sense of meaning embodied within the school; social system or climate, as manifested by the dynamic relationships among school stakeholders; milieu, or the particular characteristics of groups within the school.

Within the context of this study, school organisation is also taken to include school climate along the lines of the analogy proposed by Halpin (1966). For him, climate is to organisation as personality is to individual. Positive school climate has become part of the effective school discussion and is supported by educational practitioners and reformers (Brock & Groth, 2003; Uline, Miller & Tschannen-Moran, 1998) as a definite means of fostering positive student outcomes. Hernández and Seem (2004) have argued that the school climate consists of the related factors of attitude, feeling, and behaviour of individuals within the school system. Citing Dorsey (2000), the authors suggested that school climate involves four key relationships: the relationship of a student to him or herself; a student to his or her peers; a student to his or her parents and community; and a student to his or her school workers, including teachers, administrators, and all staff.

To synthesise the above review of literature, I have developed a framework encompassing six overlapping spheres of influences of school organisation—safe and orderly environment, attractive physical appearance, supportive staff and administration, sense of belonging to the school, positive peer norms and relationships and smooth transition (Figure 3.1). The expected outcomes of these attributes are integrity, responsibility, friendliness, respect, commitment, care, tolerance and fairness. A few of the recommendations suggested in the literature have not been included in the construction of the framework since these are being discussed separately as the elements of General Design. These include effective classroom teaching practices, strong leadership, and positive home-school cooperation. Attributes identified in the framework have been discussed in the light of the review of literature. Further, these attributes have formed the basis of data collection and discussion for this study.
3.2.2.1 Safe, caring and orderly environment

Research into school organisation highlights the importance of providing a secure, caring and orderly environment. Danielson (2002) has suggested that all classrooms, restrooms, libraries, canteens and playgrounds should be physically safe, where each student feels secure when alone. Students’ sense of safety in school may impact on their academic, behavioural, socio-emotional, and physical well-being (National Research Council, 1993) as well as on their more general experience of the school as a supportive and welcoming place (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985). A safe school has a positive climate where people are trusted, respected, and involved. They work cooperatively; intolerance does not exist, nor are students harassed or threatened. Students feel that adults care for them as a group and as individuals (Bucher & Manning, 2003). Marsden (August 27, 2004), the well-known author of young adult literature, in an interview with
Margaret Throsby has suggested that “One of the most important things about schools is that they be safe”.

Jackson and Davis (2000), discussing the need for provision of safe and caring environment for adolescents in schools, have recommended that schools should:

- organise relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose;
- govern democratically through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best; and
- provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.

The philosophy of middle schooling has categorically insisted on addressing the need for caring relationships between students and teachers. The need for a personalised relationship by a caring adult has largely been documented in the literature of effective teaching and learning (Alder, 2002; Glasgow & Cathy, 2003; Goldstein & Freedman, 2003; Stevenson, 2002). Caring is an umbrella term which implies a relationship; a combination of honesty and patience, trust and respect, empathy, altruism, humility and courage, experience of others, encouragement, and devotion (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995; Deiro, 2003; Noddings, 1992; Webb, Wilson, Corbett & Mordecal, 1993). Charon (1979) has argued that, as people interpret interactions with others, they construct meanings on which they base subsequent actions. The ability to care naturally for and about one another increases self-esteem, augments a sense of belonging, creates a sense of service to others, and cannot be maintained without employing intellectual inquiry and flexibility (Deiro, 2003; Noddings, 1992).

The Schools Council (1992), in Australia, suggested that teaching should embody intellectual challenges for all young adolescents, empowering them to pursue appropriate pathways to further education, training and work in the future. Teachers should be working as much as resource persons, coaches, leaders and guides as experts and authorities, by generating a broad range of stimulating and contextualized learning environments. According to Noddings (1992, p. 66) “schools, like families, are multipurpose institutions”. Although academics are the focus of schools, “students need—adults to care” about their personal interests (p. 69). To meet this need, the principal can be accessible to students; reward them; be an advocate for them; and provide
them with a safe, secure learning environment. Edwards and Mullis (2003) have suggested that a climate of collaboration through classroom meetings helps in conflict resolution among peers.

Research has overwhelmingly emphasised the impact of secure, caring and orderly environments on learning outcomes (Finnan, Schnepel & Anderson, 2003; Hernández & Seem, 2004; Wallace, Anderson, Bartholomay & Hupp, 2002). The World Health Organisation (2003) has suggested that a positive social environment at school can influence the behaviour of students and enhance social and emotional well-being and learning when it:

- is warm, friendly and rewards learning;
- promotes cooperation rather than competition;
- facilitates supportive, open communications;
- views the provision of creative opportunities as important;
- prevents physical punishment, bullying, harassment and violence, by encouraging the development of procedures and policies that do not support physical punishment and that promote non-violent interaction on the playground, in class and among staff and students; and
- promotes the rights of boys and girls through equal opportunities and democratic procedures.

### 3.2.2.2 Supportive staff and administration

Research on middle school reforms (Erb, 2000a; Midgley & Edelin, 1998; Roeser & Eccles, 1998) has indicated that students should have a feeling of security in the presence of adults at school. They should be confident that adults care for them as a group and as an individual. Eby and Wallender (2003) have contended that students’ needs must be taken care of by sensitive school staffs and by responsive administration through the implementation of a comprehensive crisis plan. Battistich, Solomon and Watson (1997) have advocated that a school’s community can be enhanced for both students and teachers by emphasising the importance of building and maintaining supportive, caring relationships between teachers and students. Noddings (1988) noted that children work harder and do things, even odd things like adding fractions, for people they love and trust.

Purkey (1999) has identified four basic principals of respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality for making schools a more exciting, satisfying, and enriching experience for everyone. Purkey
and Aspy (2003) have argued that these four elements provide a consistent “stance” for creating an effectively healthy human environment. Two of these principles have been further elaborated by other authors. Tschannen-Moran (2001) has argued that trust contributes to organisational effectiveness; it reduces uncertainty, and maintains order (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Regarding mutual respect, Deiro (2003) explains that treating children with dignity means honouring their position and their abilities, and seeing them as worthy of esteem. Deiro reiterated that treating children with respect means showing regard for their basic human right to expression and believing in their growing abilities to manage their own lives successfully.

Pittman and Irby (1999), discussing the qualities of a “Healthy School” has recommended that:

- Administrators have to find ways to protect and promote the non-academic instruction offered during and after the school day.
- Administrators must find ways to ensure that their staffs have the capacity and motivation to play central roles in the lives of their students.
- Teachers and administrators have to help students build and use diverse social and strategic networks.

3.2.2.3 Attractive physical appearance

An overwhelming body of research (Agron, 2001; Chan, 1980; Chan & Morgan, 1996; Earthman, 2002; Earthman & Lemaster, 1996; Jarman, Webb & Chan, 2004; Rydeen, 2003; Schneider, 2002) has examined the relationship between school facilities and their effect on students’ behaviour, learning and achievements. Rutter, Maughan and Mortimore (1979) found that the school environment, which includes good working conditions, responsiveness to pupil needs, and good care and decoration of buildings, is associated with better outcomes for students. In a US study, Earthman and Lemaster (1996) found that students in positive learning environments scored up to 5 percentage points higher on the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) compared to those who did not. Parker (2002) has described how a school’s layout and other constructs affect the interactions of its students and teachers and suggested that architecture that encourages interaction also promotes togetherness.

Jarman et al. (2004) and Agron (2001) have argued that an inspiring and beautiful school building reflects the importance of education to those inside as well as conveying the message to parents and the community that the school system is concerned and cares about the education of
their children. Hansen and Childs (1998) have suggested that the school environment should not be dull or lifeless. There need to be places for students to sit, relax, and enjoy the school. Open spaces with casual furniture can make the school more comfortable for the students to spend their time. Jarman et al. (2004), insisting that a beautiful school building also helps to create a caring environment for student learning, have suggested that a caring school environment that supports student learning by:

- highlighting the mission of the school;
- stimulating student creativity;
- fostering a sense of belonging;
- showcasing student achievement; and
- promoting community support for school.

Garbarino and Asp (1981) have suggested that, as school is the first social system other than the family that children encounter and know well, it must be attentive to its structure and behaviour as a context for socialization. Rydeen (2003) has suggested that since students must feel a sense of place—they are in a school and are there to learn—and school’s physical environment must incorporate human factors in its design to respond to students’ needs and personalize their environment. The human factors in building design help to establish a sense of place, ownership, community, presence, comfort, security, aesthetics, performance and privacy.

### 3.2.2.4 Sense of belonging to the school

Many researchers have identified sense of belonging or attachment to school as contributing to student self-esteem, motivation, effort, behaviour and academic achievement (Libbey, 2004; Maxin, 2003; Mouton, Hawkins, McPherson & Copley, 1996). Radziwon (2003) has argued that the concept of belonging in school entails not only acceptance of school by the student, but also the student’s perception that educators and peers in that school care about making schooling beneficial to him or her. That is, students who identify with school believe that they are accepted at school, value what is being taught, and feel that what they are learning will help them in the future. In Australia and the United Kingdom, factors such as relationships between teachers and students in classrooms, opportunities for student participation and responsibility, and support structures for teachers, have been shown to be associated with student progress (Patton et al., 2000). Providing support to this understanding, Solomon, Victor and Dong-il (1997, p. 236) have
noted that a school with a greater sense of community is one in which “members know, care about, and support one another, have common goals and sense of shared purpose, and to which they actively contribute and feel personally committed”.

Halle and Allen (1994) have argued that middle school teachers differ from their high school counterparts in at least five significant ways. They are focused on children’s needs, eager to encourage intellectual curiosity, and are understanding and empathetic. They are also cooperative and unafraid to take risks and, hence, the best middle schools are places where children belong rather than merely attend, places where they are connected. All school programs (classes, clubs, or teams) are organised to require emotional involvement from students. The teachers, attractive nuisances of sorts, demand (subtly or otherwise) that their students engage in school. Passivity, disaffection, and indifference are not viable (Parker, 2002).

Erwin (2003, p. 21) has provided the following guidelines for teachers to create appropriate conditions for students to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance to the school:

- Learn each student’s name as soon as possible, and engage students in activities that help them learn one another’s names:
- Greet all students as they enter your classroom.
- Let students get to know you personally; your outside interests, what you stand for, and who you are.
- Regularly engage students in teambuilding activities.
- Teach students how to work cooperatively, and give them regular opportunities to learn in structured cooperative activities.
- Conduct class meetings on a regular basis for class-building, problem-solving, and content-related discussions.

### 3.2.2.5 Positive peer norms and relationships

Various studies (Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge & Bates, 2003; Larson & Richards, 1991; Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck & Duckett, 1996) have recognized the fact that as children step into their adolescence they prefer to spend more time with their peers than the family. Due to this increased interaction, they influence each other more frequently than in their early years (Nathanson, 2001). This influence has been seen as having both positive and negative impacts on
the learning outcomes and growth of the adolescent (Kobus, 2003; Risi, Gerhardstein & Kistner, 2003; Tanti, 2003; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

Numerous studies (Hartup, 1996; Iervolino et al., 2002) have examined the developmental outlook of friendship in adolescent students. Friendships during adolescence may heighten their social status and amplify their feelings of social acceptance and their self-esteem (Stiles & Thomas, 2004), social identity (Nesdale & Flessner, 2001) and prevention against loneliness (Osterman, 2003; Xinyin et al., 2004). Adolescent students are inclined to develop better understanding of the other’s needs, and have greater consideration in regard to the society in which they live (Cleary, Ray, LoBello & Zachar, 2002). Positive peer relationships bring mutual trust, excitement and fun. It provides adherence (Webb, 1987) during times of depression, anxiety, stress and flux of transition (Matos, Barrett, Dadds & Shortt, 2003). Barry and Wigfield (2002) have argued that social competence, such as making friends and being accepted by peers, are associated with conflict resolution skills, positive affect, high cognitive abilities, and low aggression. Dunn and McGuire (1992) noted that having friends in class contributes to students feeling accepted by their classmates, and it also means that the students have someone to share thoughts and experiences with, something that is especially important for adolescents.

Wentzel and Watkins (2002) have suggested that collaborative learning can enhance positive peer interactions in the classroom. An abundance of research (Dishion, McCord & Poulin, 1999; Olds & Thombs, 2001; Tilton-Weaver & Galambos, 2003) has suggested that peers normally replace the family as the centre of an adolescents’ life and routine activities. Dekovic and Meeus (1997) have suggested that warm, supportive parenting contributes to satisfactory peer relations. It is suggested that peer relationships if supervised and combined with encouragements, persuasion and initiation by some adults, can contribute infinite constructive eventualities in the life of adolescents (Engels, Dekovic & Meeus, 2002). At this stage, some adults, preferably parents, should intervene when adolescents spend increased amounts of time with peers than ever before. This time of transformation in social relationship in the life of adolescents is a most crucial phase and it may be difficult for the family to manage the peer relationships.

Pettit, Bates and Dodge (1999) describe unsupervised after school hours of adolescents as a high risk factor and have suggested that parents should monitor where adolescents go and with whom they spend time in after school hours. Parents’ influence, however, may be seen in a different
context by adolescents who usually start exerting emotional independence from their parents (Ardelt & Day, 2002) and expect autonomy. Several major research approaches, parenting styles and practices (Mounts, 2004; Pettit, Bates, Dodge & Meece, 1999; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001) have insisted on peer behaviour management. Parents are advised (Ladd & LeSieur, 1995; Mounts, 2002; Tiffany, Miguel & Christopher, 2002) to become mediators, supervisors, consultants and even friends of peers to influence or monitor them. Some studies (Field, Diego & Sanders, 2002; Mounts, 2002) have noted that parents’ lack of flexibility, strictness or lack of affection may lead to deviant behaviour, whereas expressed approval and friendly behaviour may boost the self esteem of adolescents and encourage them to take independent constructive decisions for future growth.

A considerable body of research and literature has identified the negative influence of adolescents’ peer interactions (Clark & Winters, 2002; Coyl, Jones & Dick, 2004; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Kikuchi & Wada, 2003; Lai, Ho & Lam, 2004; Moore, Raymond, Mittelstaedt & Tanner, 2002). Brand et al. (2003) Kobus, (2003) and Tubman, Gil and Wanger (2004) have argued that the middle-school years are ones in which many students initiate smoking, drinking, or drug use and that such early initiation of substance use has been found to be associated with a wide array of negative academic and developmental outcomes during adolescence and beyond. Similarly, Moore et al. (2002) have asserted that adolescents trust friends more than parents for information pertaining to consumption, smoking and substance abuse. The authors (p.40) argued that there may be passive pressure, “peer social modelling”, such as observing friends; but that a more serious nature of influence may be active social pressure, “peer vocal pressure”, derived from the peers’ intentional attempts to exert pressure to engage in risky behaviour and open discussions that is intended to sway behaviour or exposure to those who tend to speak of criminal activity in positive terms. Lotz and Lee (1999) and White, Rubin and Graczyk (2002) found that most delinquents are peer-oriented and extroverted if their attachment and commitment to school are weak—lack of close supervision may also lead to deviant behaviour. Since adolescents spend a greater period of their daytime in or around school they are, therefore, more vulnerable to violence if alienated from education or school. Flores (2004) has described a range of vandalism in schools such as students kicking through walls, stomping on toilets and purposefully breaking furniture. The most common act of carelessness is excessive littering around campus and has
reached a peak in recent years. Horowitz and Tobaly (2003) have argued that vandalism is increased in schools where students did not have a sense of belonging.

A large body of research in the US has examined the violence associated with weapons among school-aged children, particularly adolescents. This has also emerged as a substantial concern for educational practitioners and policy makers. Many research studies (Brown & Benedict, 2004; DuRant, Kahn, Beckford & Woods, 1997; DuRant, Krowchuk, Kreiter, Sinal & Woods, 1999; Forrest, Zychowski, Stuhldreher & Ryan, 2000; Page & Hammermeister, 1997) have focused on the reasons for carrying weapons onto school property. The common reasons identified are for defensive or offensive purposes. Brown (2004) has noted that being threatened at school and being fearful of victimization at school is correlated with an increased likelihood of carrying weapons at school. The author further argued that juveniles who are engaged in delinquency are likely to find themselves in situations where weapon-associated victimization is a threat and thus consider it necessary to carry weapons for offensive as well as defensive reasons.

A range of studies (Land, 2003; Luster, Small & Lower, 2002; Rigby & Thomas, 2003) suggest that in a school environment where crime, violence, and negative peer behaviour are widespread, a substantial number of adolescents are victimised by a diverse range of aggressive and antisocial behaviour or maltreatment at school. It can be seen in schools as ranging from quiet violence, conveyed through facial expressions, body expressions to gradually increasing as poking, labelling and to a range of bullying behaviours. Bullying incorporates a wide range of behaviours: name calling, extortion, physical violence, slander, exclusion from the group, damage to others property, and verbal intimidation (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Bullying has been recognised as a major issue for school reformers and policy makers since the nineteenth century when Thomas Hughes wrote one of the classic texts Tom Brown’s School Days, which contains tales of bullying (see Hughes, 1857). The literature has identified far reaching effects of bullying and peer victimisation on adolescents in their mental health, academic achievement, and overall socialisation and behaviour (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Land, 2003; Rigby, 2004; Slee, 1995; Smith & Shu, 2000; Wong, 2004).

In Australia much has been said and written about bullying at national and regional levels (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003; , 2004; Education Queensland, 1998;
All these reports suggest ways of rectifying the school system in order to alleviate the problem of peer victimisation or bullying. Nevertheless, these piecemeal efforts have not left any tangible effects on school systems and an escalation of school violence has been documented.

Bowen and Bowen (1999) examined the effects of danger in adolescents’ school and neighbourhood environments on their school attendance, behaviour, and grades, and argued that exposure to and perceptions of danger in schools and neighbourhoods are likely to threaten the ability of youths to fulfil their potential in the school setting. Rigby (1995) has reported that 1 in 6 students in Australian schools reported being bullied at least once a week; 1 in 10 reported being an active bully, and many of the 1 in 10 students admitted to-even boasted about-bullying others.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (1999, p. 1) has noted that “Bullying devalues, isolates and frightens people so that they no longer believe in the ability to achieve. It has long-term effects for those doing the bullying, their targets and the onlookers. Every student has the right to expect that he or she will spend the day-both in and out of the classroom-free from bullying and intimidation”. The literature (Bullock, 2002; Harris & Petrie, 2004; Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003; Lumsden, 2002-2003; Smorti, Menesini & Smith, 2003; Zirkel, 2003) suggests that bullying represents an international epidemic from which no country or school is quarantined or truly exempted. In particular, it is an insidious problem at the middle school level and needs to be addressed with special attention.

3.2.2.6 Planned smooth transitions

At a time when an adolescent’s life is changing rapidly there is a need for stability and a feeling of continuity in other sectors of life whereas school transition has also been associated in research studies (Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 1996) with a lowering in self-esteem and self-efficacy, psychological distress and decreases in academic achievement. Research on students’ apprehension about moving into high school has revealed that middle grade students are both excited and anxious about going to high school (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Williamson & Shoffner, 2001). They start fantasising about freedom and preferential treatment from their elders. They look forward to more opportunities to participate in a variety of
extracurricular activities, and the opportunity to expand their circle of friendships. Nevertheless, as they enter high school they are lost as they find their way around a strange building. One of their greatest fears is getting lost, followed by difficulties in finding and opening lockers, and bringing the right materials to the right class at the right time. Proponents of the middle schooling program recommend some intervention at this stage for smooth transition (Elias, 2001b).

Akos (2002) has argued that pubertal changes occur at different times and at different rates for students in the same grade. This means that, as students move into middle school, they confront both external contextual changes and internal pubertal changes. Hargreaves et al. (1996) have noted that transition from primary school to secondary school brings a loss of continuity in relationships (teachers and friends), changes in curriculum and teaching styles as well as adaptation to a different secondary school culture. Rice (2001) has noted the following three types of discontinuity characterize the transition from middle to high school:

- discontinuity in school climate;
- discontinuity in educational practices; and
- discontinuity in social structures.

The National Middle School Association in the US (1985; , 1996) has noted that most contemporary high schools are not structured to meet the developmental needs of adolescents at the time of transition which brings several changes in educational expectations and practices. Mullins and Irvin (2000) have noted the mismatch between young adolescents’ developmental needs and the school environment. Catterall (1998) has suggested that school responsiveness to student needs stands out as a predictor of greater student success. Carlson et al. (1999) have insisted that adaptation in adolescence negotiating the social, emotional, and cognitive demands of completing high school. Elias (2001a) has recommended that, while making the transition to middle school, adolescents need a combination of skill training and social-emotional learning. They not only need explicit proactive, preventive instruction and support in addressing the stresses of transition, they also need opportunities to grow as people.

**Summary of the section**

In the preceding review of literature, it is generally accepted that a positive school environment has a direct impact on students’ sense of belonging, self-esteem, level of satisfaction and
connectedness that leads to enhanced students outcome. School culture, if not conducive for adolescents, may lead to alienation. Schools for adolescents should have safe, caring and orderly environments with supportive staff and administration. Since the brain learns better in a well-designed school environment, the school should have an attractive physical appearance with a sense of comfort and joy. The school organised in accordance with the needs and desires of its inhabitants develops a sense of belonging with positive norms observed by all. Finally, planned, smooth transition is crucial for adolescents moving to the middle school.

3.3 CLASSROOM TEACHING STRATEGIES

The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards (France, 1932, p. 238).

Introduction

Effective classroom teaching is one of the essential correlates of whole school reform of the middle years of schooling. Research in Australia and overseas (Arnold, 2001; Barell, 2003; Callahan, Clark & Kellough, 1992; Department of Education and Training, 2003b; Dougherty, 1997; Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2001; Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003; Hattie, 2002; Killen, 2003; Schools Council, 1990; , 1992; Shulman, 1986; , 1987) recommend a powerful impact of complex and multifaceted teaching strategies on learning outcomes. In this section research and literature is reviewed to identify different effective teaching strategies required for secondary school students in general and for middle school students in particular.

3.3.1 Importance of effective teaching strategies

Wenglinsky (2002) found marked effects of classroom practices and other teacher characteristics on student academic and social achievements. Jackson and Davis (2000) have noted improved student performance in response to substantial changes in teacher practices and classroom instruction. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p. 42) has recommended that every child in the middle grades should learn to think critically through mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge. In such a situation, the teachers’ job is not simply to teach, but to create powerful environments for learning. Knowles and Brown (2000, p. 2) have commented that teaching middle schoolers is not “an easy trip, but the ride is exhilarating”. Otero (1999) points out that the environment where young adolescents spend most of their time in school is the
classroom, which must compete with television, movies, video machines, computers and a host of other alluring learning environments.

Hattie (2002), in emphasising the quality of teachers as the most important indicator of successful learning outcomes for students, presented six variables that influence student achievement given (Figure 3.2). Based on the synthesis of voluminous studies Hattie has concluded the following:

- Students accounted for approximately 50% of the variance of achievement.
- Teachers accounted for approximately 30% of a student’s achievement.
- Home accounted for 5–10% of the variance.
- Peer effects account for a further 5–10%.
- Schools account for 5–10% of the variance.
- Principals account for 5–10%.

Figure: 3.2 Importance of effective teaching strategies

Over the last several years, there has emerged a body of literature describing research into the nature of classroom restructuring and its effects on teaching and learning. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) reported that many teachers of young adolescents dislike their work stemming from inadequate training in teaching young adolescents who are in dire need of caring, well-versed teachers. Hence, Noddings (1992, p. 12) has argued that “classrooms should be places in which students can legitimately act on a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, and in which students and teachers live together and grow”.

(Hattie, 2002, p. 3)
Callahan et al. (1992) go a little further by suggesting that learning is largely a function of the brain. Thus, teaching should be compatible with the way brain works. They also suggest that learning requires an active and stimulating environment because the brain is an aggressive problem solver: the richer the environments, the better the chances the learner will have of developing clear concepts, skills and problem solutions. Students’ learning improves when they are engaged in higher order thinking, when learning focuses on the deep knowledge of the subject, when pedagogy focuses on producing deep understanding and when students are engaged in substantive communication about the things they are learning (Killen, 2003).

The Schools Council (1990) in Australia described teaching as an intensely human activity. The way in which individuals teach is very much dependent on their nature, capacity, enthusiasms, beliefs and the needs of individual students. The individuality of students in the classroom is impossible to ignore. Carrington et al. (2002) have suggested that classroom pedagogy must match the diverse needs and abilities of middle year students and must be flexible, reflecting creative uses of time, space and other resources as well as group and individual needs. It must also be learner-centred with an emphasis on self-directed and co-constructed learning. Symes and Preston (1997, p. 276) have argued that the role of the teacher in the middle year setting is to “empower students to become their own teachers, by revealing to them the questions and problems which beg interpretation in their own experience and to engage in critical dialogue between self and society”.

Overall, research indicates the need and importance of good teaching and learning environments for all students in general and specifically for adolescents. The next section describes the types of learning environments and the principles and charters enumerated by different authors. This discussion will help identify the characteristics required for middle school classrooms with respect to effective teaching and learning by identifying the major attributes of the effective classroom teaching.

### 3.3.2 Major attributes of effective classroom teaching

In 1986, Lee Shulman proposed a new framework for the field of teaching and learning referred to as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK); “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible to others” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). PCK is “that special
amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). The epistemological concept of PCK offers the potential for linking the traditionally separated knowledge bases of content and pedagogy (Veal & MaKinster, 1999).

Cochran, DeRuiter and King (1993) noted that the transformation of subject matter for teaching occurs as a teacher critically reflects on and interprets the subject matter. They try to find multiple ways to represent the information as analogies, metaphors, examples, problems, demonstrations, and classroom activities. They also adapt the material to students’ abilities, prior knowledge, and preconceptions and, finally, adapt the material to those specific students to whom the information will be taught. Shulman (1987) described the “knowledge bases of teaching” in terms of seven components rather than viewing teaching as a skill of transferring certain ideas to students. The seven categories of the knowledge bases described are enumerated below:

1. content knowledge;
2. general pedagogical knowledge;
3. curriculum knowledge;
4. pedagogical content knowledge;
5. knowledge of learners;
6. knowledge of educational contexts; and
7. knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds.

Based on the PCK model, the Schools Council (1990, pp. 60-61) in Australia recommended that “teachers need to have a deep understanding of the content and a strong sense of commitment to their discipline”. The Council demanded that teachers should adopt a model that explicates the values and attitudes, approaches to content, methods of teaching and outcomes of the program being taught. The charter for teachers in terms of improvement of teaching and learning in the context of values and goals of education system has been elaborated by Schools Council11. The

11 For details see Schools Council (1990, pp. 60-61)
principles of teaching and learning for effective middle schooling suggested by the Schools Council (1993b, p. 43) in Australia have been reproduced below.

**Purposeful**

Learning activities should have well-defined purposes and goals that are related directly to intended outcomes. Adolescents should be encouraged to articulate the nature and extent of the activities in which they are involved, the reason for their participation and the results that they hope to achieve as a result of their learning experience. They should be able to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in productive and rewarding ways.

**Self-directed**

The active involvement of adolescents in the planning and development of their own learning is necessary to develop their self-reliance and independence. As the focal point for all learning and teaching practice, adolescents should be able to determine, in consultation with their teachers, their current learning requirements and methods by which these can be met most effectively.

**Cooperative**

Working with others and in teams is now commonly recognized as a key component. Adolescents should be experiencing a range of activities designed to develop further their capacity to learn from, and contribute to, each other’s learning and development.

**Rigorous**

Teaching should embody intellectual challenges for all young adolescents that will empower them to pursue appropriate pathways to further education, training and work in the future. Teachers should be working as much as resource persons, coaches, leaders and guides as experts and authorities, by generating a broad range of stimulating and contextualized learning environments.

**Holistic**

Connections between areas of knowledge and ways of knowing should be developed through a unified approach to teaching and learning. Teachers should be collaborating with each other in the planning, delivery and evaluation of programs and activities to help avoid the fragmentation, duplication and overlap.
Adaptive

Sufficient flexibility in teaching should be generated and maintained so that new learning opportunities, technologies and resources can be exploited when they appear. Teachers should be drawing on a wide range of strategies and practices to cater for diversity associated with adolescent abilities and interests.

The Middle Years Pedagogy Research and Development (MYPRAD) project in Australia worked with nine schools to refine a strategy for middle years’ pedagogy (Department of Education and Training, 2003b). Based on the local, national and international literature, the project team identified five components of effective middle years teaching and learning. These components were used in the trial, providing an explicit picture of middle years teaching and learning:

- students are challenged to develop deeper levels of understanding;
- the learning environment is supportive and productive;
- teaching strategies cater for individuals’ interests and learning needs;
- assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning; and
- teaching practice meets the specific needs of adolescent learners.

The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (1999), commissioned by Education Queensland and undertaken by James Ladwig and Bob Lingard from the University of Queensland, focused on pedagogy and what was actually happening in schools. For this study the research team observed seventy four middle years lessons. This study extended the work of Newmann (1996) on authentic pedagogy, which focused on the prevalence of following elements of classroom teaching and learning:

- higher order thinking;
- depth of knowledge and understanding;
- substantive conversation; and
- connectedness of the lesson to the real world.

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12 For detail see (Department of Education and Training, 2003b, p. 3).
Hattie (2002, p. 5) has drawn a distinction between expert and experienced teachers and has recommended the following five major dimensions of expert teachers which lead to 16 prototypic attributes.

**Expert teachers:**

- identify essential representations of their subject;
- guide learning through classroom interactions;
- monitor learning and provide feedback;
- attend to affective attributes; and
- influence student outcomes.

Earl (1999) has noted that the teachers have the task of creating conditions for students to live in ambiguity and to examine their own beliefs in the light of new knowledge. The author suggested that aspiring to learning for understanding involves many components, which need to be intricately interconnected. Earl (1999) articulates the following components of effective teaching practice required by teachers of middle schools:

- recognition of different forms of knowledge, intelligences and ways of learning;
- understanding of students’ prior knowledge;
- a focus on higher-order learning and thinking;
- attention to the social and emotional nature of learning;
- tying learning to real-life; and
- providing a genuine role for students in their own learning.

Four philosophical approaches outlined by Dougherty (1997), which cover most of the characteristics discussed above, formed the basis of data collection for this study regarding classroom teaching strategies in the middle schools studied. These are described in Table 3.3.3.

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13 for details see Hattie, 2002
Table 3.3.3: The framework for teaching in the middle schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major constructs</th>
<th>Sub-constructs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitational Education</td>
<td>Supportive and productive learning environment</td>
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<td>Focus on relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Embedded pastoral care</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student empowerment</td>
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<td>Cooperative learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher as a coach and mentor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning community</td>
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<td>Democracy in Education</td>
<td>Collaborative teaching and learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Team work</td>
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<td>Student responsibility</td>
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<td>Negotiated curriculum</td>
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<td>Students as co-workers</td>
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<td>Constructivist Teaching</td>
<td>Integrated teaching and learning</td>
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<td>Student centred</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teachers as coach and mentor</td>
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<td>Problem and challenged based</td>
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<td>Reflective Teaching</td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
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<td>Action research</td>
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<td>Ongoing professional Development</td>
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<td>Pedagogy for the Middle year</td>
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</table>

(Dougherty, 1997)

3.3.2.1 Invitational education

Invitational education is a framework of teaching and learning designed to create a total school environment in general, and classroom environment in particular, where people are valued, feel responsible, and are treated accordingly, with respect and care. Research into the middle years of schooling highlights the need for developmentally responsive education to help young adolescents negotiate the transition from childhood to emerging adulthood. Pedagogy for middle school demands invitational education that is thoughtful and allows adolescents to reconstruct images of the adult world through self exploration. An invitational approach works from a common language that expresses care and is reflected through modelling dialogue, practice and confirmation (Dougherty, 1997).

Wong and Wong (1998, p. 84) have referred “classroom management to all of the things that a teacher does to organise students, space, time, and materials so that instruction in content and student learning can take place”. Researchers and practitioners (Brandt, 1988; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Ellerby, 2004; Katch, 2003; Verkuyten, 2002) have suggested that students
cannot learn in a chaotic, poorly managed classroom. Norris (2003) emphasises the importance of effective classroom management and argues that the classroom climate teachers establish for themselves and their students greatly affects the learning process. A supportive classroom environment is based on a clear and well-organised management plan, which in turn, is based on appropriate parameters for the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual environments of the classroom. Classrooms where students feel safe to take risks, acquire new knowledge, and know they are valued members of a community are classrooms where learning is optimized.

Wolk (2003) has argued that classroom management and student discipline work together, not in a traditional paradigm of control and punishment, but as central to the curriculum and classroom experience. Student-centred teachers educate the whole child, helping to mould students’ moral identities and fostering democratic behaviours and values. Verkuyten (2002) has attributed disruptive behaviour to teachers’ inability to establish order or as a lack of professionalism. Within the classroom, the teacher has direct power as the constituted authority. However, this position of authority is often not maintained in an appropriate way, becomes problematic for teachers, and leads to punishment. Hall and Hall (2003) have argued that punishment may temporarily control behaviour, but it does nothing to teach the student an appropriate response. Verkuyten (2002) has argued that disruptive behaviour can be a personal or unfounded opinion reflecting the teacher’s bias instead of the student’s actual behaviour. McCarthy and Benally (2003) have observed that some students participated and performed well in the classrooms of some teachers but not in others or that students who had been suspended because of behaviour problems in one class presented no behavioural problems in another. Many of these disruptive behaviours could be linked to unrealistic teacher expectations about how long students are able to stay focused on independent seatwork and culturally mismatched instructional activities. McCarthy and Benally (2003) found a lack of knowledge about specific managerial strategies among teachers facing disruptive behaviours and suggested that teachers should receive individual mentoring on request. To improve teachers’ practices, Crowley (1993) has recommended that for students with behavioural problems it may be wise to examine the students’ side of the teacher-student interaction.

Norris (2003) discusses the need for social and emotional learning (SEL) skills required for teachers to help reduce negative interactions and to create the kind of community where everyone
feels safe, valued and affirmed. SEL skills are designed to create attitudes, behaviours, and cognitions that promote healthy social relationships, personal well-being, and academic achievement. Bain (2004, p. 1) insists that teachers should create a ‘natural critical’ learning environment. He further argues that it should be ‘natural’ because what matters most is for students to tackle questions and tasks that they naturally find of interest, make decisions, defending their choices and sometimes, when they come up short, receive feedback on their efforts, and try again. ‘Critical’, because by thinking critically, students learn to reason from evidence and to examine the quality of their reasoning, to make improvements while thinking, and to ask probing and insightful questions.

The centrepiece of the middle schooling vision is empowering adolescent students. Johnson and Johnson (1999) insist that classroom pedagogy that focuses on empowering students and the creation of learning has a positive effect on students. Dialogue, decision-making and supportive community emerge as a theme in power sharing. It is the opportunity a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choices and authority. Kurtz (1997) described empowerment as a multilevel construct that involves people assuming control and mastery over their lives toward a sense of purpose. Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, and Van den Auweele (2002) refer to empowerment as gaining control over one’s life and assuming responsibility for changes that lead to a healthy, active lifestyle and positive mental health. With respect to empowerment, Kashtan (2002) suggests that non-violent communication (NVC) can help us to understand, engage with and transform student/teacher relationships. NVC provides specific tools to empower teachers and students to live more in line with their values and deeper needs. Kashtan has further argued that teachers need to learn to empower the students to say NO to them. Only then can teachers experience the magical beauty of hearing a YES that comes from true choices.

Clearing House (2003) has discussed the struggles between parents and children over homework, noting that they are far from constructive, causing children to view studying as an undesirable chore, and only leading to anger and frustration for parents and children. Kralovec and Buell (2000) found that homework often disrupts family life, interferes with what parents want to teach their children and recommend the end of homework practice altogether. Kralovec and Buell (2001) have also suggested that when a child goes home, it is family time. Assigning homework does not necessarily improve the quality of their education. Van-Voorhis (2003) found that
teachers want more communication with the parents and need encouragement to develop high quality homework. Gavel (2000) has suggested that homework should be useful, aligned with the curriculum, and kids should be able to do it alone.

A number of studies (Blasingame, Gamboa, Martinez, Jung & Harris, 2004; Edgington, 1998; Pottle, 1996; Seney, 2002; Stix & George, 1999) have highlighted problems in the provision of text books and reading material to adolescents. Katims and Harmon (2000) have observed that textbooks have been found to be inadequate in design and very difficult to understand for students. These textbooks have been found to be poorly written, dull, lacking in creativity, and uninspiring, and fail to stimulate. Using textbooks that do not appeal to students and tend to produce boredom has a negative affect on the percentage of assignments the student is likely to turn in. Textbooks also lack the ability to appeal to a variety of students because they are written for a mass audience and do not take into account the different reading levels of the students (Edgington, 1998).

Cooperative learning (CL) is another instructional strategy used in invitational education for small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning (Buchs, 2004; Smith & MacGregor, 1992; Stearns, 1999). CL derives support not only from theory, but from research as well. Slavin (1999) calls CL one of the greatest success stories in the history of educational innovations. George and Alexander (2003) have suggested that cooperative learning is an important tool for middle school educators interested in moving toward differentiating instruction for the students they teach. They argue that cooperative learning is designed for the characteristics of young adolescent students. Jacobs and Ward (2000) defined cooperative learning as “principles and strategies for enhancing the value of student to student interaction”. CL does not mean that students must do everything in groups. While group activities play a significant role in learning, whole class instruction and individual work continue to have an important place in education.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1987) there are following three basic types of learning that goes on in a classroom:

- Individualistic learning is the more traditional structure of learning that has each student working independently on a project. Student accomplishment toward a specified goal relies little, if any, on other students’ performance.
Competitive learning is a structure that has students vying against each other in order to accomplish a particular goal. Students find themselves in Win-Lose situations—in order for me to win, you must lose.

Cooperative learning is a structure that utilizes small groups to encourage students to work together to optimize their own and their peers’ learning.

Ames (1992) and Slavin (1987) have insisted that an important goal for teachers is “to establish an environment where individual differences are accepted and all students develop a feeling of from ‘I classrooms,’ to ‘We classrooms’”. This objective is best achieved through varied grouping arrangements that provide opportunities for peer cooperation. Cooperative learning activities, where students work together on joint assignments or projects, promote interest in learning by minimizing individual fears of failure and competition among students. The teacher’s role shifts from learning disseminator to learning facilitator. As a classroom structure, cooperative learning allows students to work together in small, mixed-ability groups.

Leonard and McElroy (2000) have contended that cooperative learning provides a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children—different ideas to different children—as they are caught up in intellectual problems. Many studies have shown that, when correctly implemented, cooperative learning improves information acquisition and retention, higher-level thinking skills, interpersonal and communication skills, and self-confidence (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998). Johnson and Johnson (1999) found that cooperative learning groups could teach children how to establish and develop friendships with peers to the extent of being actively engaged in peers’ successes. Effective cooperative-learning groups have also been shown to significantly reduce absenteeism and destructive behaviour in behaviourally disruptive group members (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Tomlinson, Moon and Callahan (1997) identify additional benefits of using cooperative learning as improved cognition, time on task, long-term retention, self-esteem, peer acceptance, and positive relationships between students and teachers.

### 3.3.2.2 Democracy in education

A large body of literature (Certo, Cauley & Chafin, 2003; Green, 1999; Hancock, 2004; Holm & Horn, 2003; Renwick, 2004; Tinzmann et al., 1990) on effective schooling has suggested that teachers who understand the need to establish a classroom community that embraces the key principles of a democratic society will be better equipped to prepare their students to take on the
role of responsible citizenship. Research strongly suggests that educators need to create a school culture that welcomes all students, helps them learn to work together, engages students in real world projects and convinces them of their ability and responsibility to make the world a safe place to live in (Applebaum, 2003; Bahmeuller, 1998; Berman, 2003; Garrison, 2003; Goodlad, 2003; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). Gray and Feldman (2004) have recommended free age mixing between adolescents and younger children in a democratic school through team teaching. The authors have insisted that such interaction is crucial for physical, intellectual and social/moral education of the children and adolescents. Children grow into the intellectual life around them and that intellectual life is social. The social relationships within which they learn are a part of their learning (Jonston, 2004).

The middle school construct of democracy is consistent with the school effectiveness and improvement constructs of pupil rights and responsibilities, home-school partnership, high expectations and professional leadership. A democratic approach creates a learning environment where schools make a commitment to conditions and processes that encourage mutual respect and continuous dialogue among all participants (Dougherty, 1997). Hannam (cited in Holdsworth, 2004, p. 24) writes that “learning about democracy and citizenship when he was at school, was a bit like reading holiday brochures in prison” and Holdsworth (2004), commenting on Hannam’s writing, has recommended that we do not treat children according to what we teach them about democracy and citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne (2003) have suggested that schools must develop their mission through dialogue involving teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders, that they must make time for democracy, and that schools must be governed thoughtfully, conscientiously, and transparently. In middle schooling democracy should acknowledge the role of all members of the school community in decision-making, including shared governance and parental consultation (Dixion, 1999).

Torney-Purta (2002) has argued that teachers have many opportunities to foster students’ civic participation, knowledge of political institutions, and positive attitudes about law. Teachers who foster an open climate for discussion and explicitly promote civic knowledge and engagement by emphasising the importance of voting have a positive impact on students’ civic achievement and engagement (Torney-Purta, Lehmann & Amadeo, 2001). Active participation in a democratic
community is the best way to foster tolerance, respect, dialogue, civic engagement, and moral responsibilities among adolescents (Berman, 2003).

Apple and Beane (1999, p. 7) have proposed the following characteristics of democratic schools:

1. The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible.
2. Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.
3. The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems, and policies.
4. Concern for the welfare of others and “the common good”.
5. Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
6. An understanding that democracy is not so much an “ideal” to be pursued as an “idealized” set of values that we must live and that must guide our life as a people.
7. The organisation of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life.

deCharms (1968) has noted that the experience of having little control over learning leads to a sense of alienation. He has suggested that teachers should utilize autonomy-supportive strategies in the classroom, allowing students to set their own goals or choose their own projects. Beane (1993a) suggests that the curriculum ought to be democratically conceived through collaborative planning with involvement of early adolescents; classrooms should be open to critical analysis, adolescents ought to be invited to construct their own meanings as active participants. John Arnold (cited in Stevenson, 2002) conceives a middle school curriculum based on a ‘positive view of young adolescents giving them considerable control over their own learning, engaging them in meaningful tasks’ and Wagner (2000) has insisted that schooling organisation should be student centred rather than management centred.

Dougherty (1997) proposes that the main constructs of democratic education are collaborative teaching, team work, students’ responsibility, negotiated curriculum, students as co-workers, and community partnership. Classrooms and schools are perceived as a “culture of power” (Applebaum, 2003). Dewey (cited in Schutz, 2001) hoped that democratic schools could teach students how they might transform their society. In democratic education, students’ curiosity and desire to understand their situation are inculcated to generate the confidence that, with collective efforts, something can be changed.
John Dewey’s (1916) clear and concise principles on democratic sharing and interaction are:

- respecting and paying attention to one another;
- thinking creatively;
- arriving at creative solutions to mutual problems; and
- working to implement those solutions.

### Collaborative learning

The concept of collaborative learning, the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal, has been widely researched and advocated throughout the professional literature (Couture, Delong & Wideman, 1999; Enerson, Johnson, Milner & Plank, 1997; Legters, 1999). The term “collaborative learning” refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another’s learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful. Smith (2000b), on collaborative learning, claims that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking. Johnson (1999) specifies that the term ‘learning community’ in education cultures is often used to describe a group of people from multiple areas and multiple levels working together collaboratively and continually. Collaborative learning is the interaction of two or more learners engaged in a purposive activity with a desire to solve a problem, create, or discover something within a given situation (Digenti, 1999).

Hardman, McDonnell and Welch (1998) have noted that the word ‘collaboration’ is derived from the Latin, “co-laborare” which means to co-labour or work together. In order for prospective education teachers to learn and develop collaboration skills, higher education must focus more of its efforts on teaching problem solving, interpersonal communication, and shared decision-making strategies. Kimber (1994) has stated that collaborative learning was first established in Greek and Roman schools and coincided with the philosophy of Socratic learning where discussion in the classroom amongst students was emphasised. It became famous in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Europe and England. Dewey in the early 20th century continued to promote co-operative learning. Tinzmann et al. (1990) argued that collaboration happens in both small and large groups, whereas cooperation refers to small groups of students working together. Many teachers and whole schools are adopting cooperation as the
primary structure for classroom learning. Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) specify a collaborative culture where teachers are more united than divided and routinely display help, support, trust and openness.

Smith and MacGregor (1991) regard collaborative learning as an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. In most collaborative learning situations, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Gokhale (1995) states that teachers who use collaborative learning approaches tend to think of themselves less as expert transmitters of knowledge to students, and more as expert designers of intellectual experiences for students-as coaches of a more emergent learning process. Palincsar and Herrenkohl (2002) contend that the essence of collaboration is the construction of shared meanings for conversations, concepts, and experiences. The conditions necessary for promoting collaboration is that the thinking is distributed among the members of the group. All members of the group work on the same aspect of the problem at the same time, sharing cognitive responsibility for the task. Furthermore, group members are encouraged to share their thinking as they work together. Precisely, collaborative learning is the interaction of two or more learners engaged in a purposive activity with a desire to solve a problem, create, or discover something within a given situation.

Stahl (1994) suggested that collaborative learning takes on a variety of forms and is practiced by teachers of different disciplinary backgrounds and teaching traditions. The field is tied together by a number of important assumptions about learners and the learning process including:

- learning is an active, constructive process;
- learning depends on rich contexts;
- learners are diverse; and
- learning is inherently social.

**Interdisciplinary team organisation (Team work)**

The literature on middle level teachers’ education advocates an interdisciplinary perspective to curriculum design and teaching/learning. Experts envisage teacher teams or “teaming” as a cornerstone of middle-grades reform (Barab & Landa, 1997; Boyer & Bishop, 2004; Clark, 1997;

Emphasising the need and importance of interdisciplinary team organisation, Lounsbury (1992, p. 1) has noted that “probably no single word has been more frequently cited in relationship to the middle school than the word ‘interdisciplinary’. And the team continues as the major means advanced to connect the curriculum”. Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson and Austin (1997) have argued that structural reorganisation of schools into small communities of learning helps to create personal associations among teachers and students and fosters a school climate supportive of students’ developmental and academic growth. Hill and Russell (1999) have also insisted that the middle years specialist must be prepared to teach in teams to a core of 70–80 students, must have in-depth knowledge of at least two specialist areas with an ability to integrate curriculum and must have an understanding of literacy/numeracy across Key Learning Areas.

Kruse and Louis (1997) have argued that teaming reduces teachers’ isolation and promotes student-centred activities within the team. However, they caution that teams should not become autonomous groups within the overall structure of the school and suggest cross-team activities (such as ad hoc committees, study groups, or professional development opportunities) to connect teams to one another and to the administration. Flowers, Mertens and Mulhall (2000) have noted that improvements in team practices (such as curriculum coordination, coordination of student assignments, parent contact) “occur relatively quickly after schools implement teaming, especially with high levels of common planning time”. Russell et al. (1997), after a five-year study on interdisciplinary teaming in middle schools, contended that teachers’ teams increasingly valued their common planning time over the period of the study.

Legters (1999, p. 7) has suggested that “Interdisciplinary teaming is the education equivalent to efforts in industry and government to replace the isolated, alienated worker with responsive, problem-solving teams. As such, interdisciplinary teams are specifically designed to promote greater and deeper levels of collegiality and collaboration among teachers. Ideally, a teacher team works together to coordinate instruction across subjects, organise activities, and collectively
address problems for the students they share in common”. Murata (2002, p. 68) has perceived teaming as empowering and collegial—an effective and exciting way to improve practice through collaboration and curriculum through integration.

Crow and Pounder (2000) have noted that there are several types of groups or teams that may appear in schools, such as cross disciplinary teaching (Dennis, Smith & Smith, 2004), multi-age teams (Hoffman, 2002; Kommer, 1999; Unrath, Robertson & Velentine, 2004), ability grouping (Chau-Kiu & Rudowicz, 2003), looping (Gaustad, 1998), de-tracking (Ascher, 1992; Marsh & Raywid, 1994), non graded grouping (Petrie, Lindauer, Dotson & Tountasakis, 2001) and parents teams (Miller, 1998).

Walker (1994) argued that whether a team is effective or not depends on the culture within which it operates. He suggests that the success of a team is based on the fundamental values of openness, trust and participation. Schmoker (2004) explains that carefully structured and facilitated teaching teams improve instruction because they give teachers the opportunity to engage in tangible, detailed, and goal-oriented discussions about their practice on an ongoing basis. Interdisciplinary teams have been prevalent at the middle school level for more than 30 years but the use of such teams became much more popular after the recommendation of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (Reiser, 2000).

Murata (2002) defines “interdisciplinary team teaching as an instructional practice in which two or more teachers combine their abilities, energies, interests, enthusiasm and knowledge of pupils to teach the core academic disciplines to a group of students with a constant, unvarying membership”. Shaplin and Olds (cited in George & Alexander, 2003, p. 304) defines team teaching as a “type of instructional organisation, involving teaching personnel and the students assigned to them, in which two or more teachers are given responsibility, working together, for all or significant part of the instruction of the same group of students”. George and Alexander (2003, p. 305) argue that team teaching envisioned in the 1960s was a hierarchical gradation of faculty members whereas team organisation focuses on the structural requirements of the team. However, interdisciplinary team organisation is defined as “a way of organizing the faculty so that a group of teachers share (1) the same group of students; (2) the responsibility for planning, teaching, and evaluating curriculum and instruction in more than one academic area; (3) the same schedule; and (4) the same area of building”.

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Characteristics of highly effective teams as discussed by George and Alexander (2003) are:

- student-centred;
- strong commitment to academic achievement;
- collaborative policies and accountability systems;
- strong sense of team community;
- regular communication with parents;
- a proactive approach; and
- teachers who work professionally and collaboratively.

Husband and Short (1994) and Clark (1997) added empowerment and autonomy as another advantage of using interdisciplinary team organisation as teachers have autonomy to make choices about class time, the size of instructional groups, curriculum integration and teaching strategies.

### 3.3.2.3 Constructivist teaching

The consistent notion that students in the middle grades can perform deeper, more complex forms of reasoning than younger students is supported by the work of developmental psychologists (Case, 1985; Piaget, 1950; , 1954; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Many other researchers (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Bonnie & Moore, 2002; Hand & Vance, 1995; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Henson, 2004; Howard, McGee, Schwartz & Purcell, 2000; Tice, 1995a; , 1995b) also support this viewpoint.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is considered the most dominant developmental psychologist of the twentieth century. Piaget (1950) suggested that there were four major periods of development in the evolution of human mind: (I) the sensorimotor period, (ii) the pre operational period, (iii) the concrete-operational period, and (iv) the formal operational. As children enter adolescence, their cognitive abilities lie somewhere between Piaget’s third stage of cognitive development—the period of concrete operational—and the fourth, or last stage—formal operational. During the concrete operational stage, children begin to understand the concept of conservation (Lewis, 1991, p. 8).

An adolescent needs an environment in which he or she can experience spontaneous research. Piagetian principles in the classroom are equilibration, maturation, active experience and social
interaction. The classroom should be filled with authentic opportunities to challenge the students. The students should be given the freedom to understand and construct meaning at their own pace through personal experiences as they develop through individual developmental processes. Learning is an active process in which errors will be made and solutions will be found. These are important to assimilation and accommodation to achieve equilibrium. Learning is a social process that should take place among collaborative groups with peer interaction in as natural as possible settings (Piaget, 1950).

According to Herrington and Standen (2000) the current imperative for teachers to adopt constructivist approaches to teaching and learning has a long pedigree. Theories of learning began with John Locke, who regarded the mind of a human being as a tabula rasa, or blank slate; the idea of developmental stages with Rousseau; viewing the child in a holistic way with Johann Pestalozzi; early constructivist ideas with Piaget’s ideas on discovery learning. All of these supported a curricular architecture based on ‘hands on learning’ in the classroom (Fogarty, 1999). The concept of constructivism developed further with Dewey’s emphasis on a child-centred approach, Vygotsky’s problem-based and scaffolded learning, and Gardner’s conception of multiple intelligences, culminating in Glaserfeld’s (1987) definition of constructivism as a set of beliefs about knowing and learning that emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own knowledge. From the teacher’s perspective (Roth & Roychoudhury, 1994) they should view themselves as gardeners, tour guides, learning counsellors, or facilitators rather than as dispensers of information or judges of right or wrong answers. This has implications for how teachers are trained. Gordinier, Moberly and Conway (2004) emphasized the use of scaffolding of reflective thinking in a logical way in university classrooms for the development of skills and disposition in pre-service teachers.

Jones and Brader-Araje (2002) have argued that social constructivism and educational constructivism have had the greatest impact on instruction and curriculum design because they seem to be the most conducive to integration into current educational approaches. Knowledge in content-area reading reveals that prior knowledge needs to be discussed and made explicit in order to detect prior misconceptions or unsophisticated knowledge (Dole, 2000). The quality of readers’ prior knowledge and beliefs influence the extent to which readers learn from text. Prior knowledge that is inconsistent with information in a passage can interfere with learning. When
prior knowledge consists of misconceptions or naive knowledge, many readers hold on to their misconceptions and naiveté “despite reading contradictory information in text” (Dole, 2000, p. 101).

Constructivism is derived from the field of cognitive psychology. “Constructivism is not a theory about teaching—it is a theory about knowledge and learning… the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective” (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. vii; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001, p. 3). The constructivist paradigm is based on the work of Piaget (1953) who, in defining knowledge, has clearly indicated how it is built and develops on prior knowledge. He explains:

- knowledge is an interaction between subject and object—(p.6);
- knowledge is a perpetual construction made by exchanges between—thought and its object—(p. 19); and
- knowledge isn’t a copy of reality—it’s a reconstitution of reality by the concepts of the subject, who, progressively and with all kinds of experimental probes, approaches the object without ever attaining it in itself (pp. 64, 110).

Von Glasersfeld (1995, p. 4) has argued that constructivism does not claim to have made earth-shaking inventions in the area of education; it merely claims to provide a solid conceptual basis for some of the things that, until now, inspired teachers had to do without theoretical foundation. “From the constructivist perspective, learning is not a stimulus-response phenomenon; it requires self-regulation and the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction” (p.14). Holloway (1999) has suggested that constructivist teaching practice helps learners internalize, or transform, new information. In constructivist learning theory, students learn actively by making sense of new knowledge, making meaning from it, and mapping it into their existing knowledge map or schema (Cripps & McGilchrist, 1999, p. 47). Von Glassersfeld (1990) cited in Crowther (1990 cited in Crowther, 1997) has suggested that “knowledge is not a commodity which can be communicated”.

The literature (Bain, 2004; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 2000; Gruber & Boreen, 2003; Gur-Ze'Ev, 1998; Kerka, 1992; Paul, Willsen & Binker, 1993) has suggested that a constructivist teaching approach with its focus on meeting students where they are, helps them to move to a higher order of thinking and understanding. This approach also emphasises the knowledge of
learning through the application of specific techniques, methods and teaching critical thinking. Constructivist teaching acknowledges the concepts of authentic pedagogy, active construction of knowledge and disciplined inquiry (Newmann & Associates, 1996; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). A huge body of research literature supports the learner centred approach as a hallmark of the education of young adolescents. It is suggested that social, emotional, and physical, as well as academic outcomes for young adolescents are enhanced by classroom contexts that are learner-centred (Daniels & Perry, 2003; King, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Meece, 2003; Pierce & Kalkman, 2003; Weinberger & McCombs, 2003).

For nearly twenty years there has been an upsurge of support for integrated constructivist curriculum and authentic learning environments in schools for adolescents (Beane, 1993a; , 1993b; , 1999; Beane, 1995; Brady, 1996; Brazee, 2002; Clark & Clark, 1994; Czerniak, Weber, Sandmann & Ahern, 1999; Dentith & McCarr, 2003; Jewett, 2001; Karen & Steve, 1996; Venville, Wallace, Rennie & Malone, 2000; Zellermayer, 1997). Dictionary definitions of ‘integrate’ include “to blend, harmonize, synthesize, arrange, incorporate, unify, coordinate, and orchestrate” and “to join as to form a larger, more comprehensive entity”.

The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (1999) has strongly recommended authentic learning, making meaning, relevance and connectedness of education with the real world. The Ministerial Council on Education (1999) in the Adelaide declaration has also suggested that students should leave school with the ability to exercise judgment and responsibility and a capacity to make sense of their world as active and informed citizens. Gordon (1998) has insisted that enthusiasm for real world learning needs to be planned into the reality of real-world classrooms. Researchers discussing authentic learning experiences (Jobling & Moni, 2004) have suggested that middle school teachers should make learning contexts real and purposeful, motivational, and practical finding solutions that change actions, attitudes and beliefs in the classroom environment in which the learning takes place (Renzulli, Gentry & Reis, 2004).

Barratt (1998) and Cumming (1998) have insisted that the particular needs of young adolescents needing to be addressed in the middle years of schooling are identity, relationships, purpose, empowerment, success, rigour and safety. Thereupon the curriculum for the middle years should be learner centred, collaboratively organised, outcomes-based, flexibly constructed, ethically
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aware, community-oriented, adequately resourced and strategically linked. The National Middle School Association (NMSA) (1995, pp. 20-24) has emphasised that “curriculum [should be] … challenging, integrative, and exploratory”. NMSA (2002) reaffirmed the crucial need to redefine the middle level curriculum into forms that are academically challenging and exploratory.

Bailey (2003) has also suggested that at the middle school level, curriculum should be integrative and exploratory. Integrating curriculum can help early adolescents establish connections among various content areas, making learning more meaningful. Thinking and problem-solving skills are developed using this approach, and teachers often focus on a particular theme. To integrate concepts across the subject areas, classroom teachers attempt to create an environment where students feel secure as risk-takers in embracing new learning opportunities. Beane (1993a) has insisted on an integrated approach in middle schools based on personal and social concerns that interest adolescents.

George and Alexander (2003) call for the introduction of a needs-based curriculum for youth who experience it. The ‘Learner-Centred Psychological Principles’ (LCPs) (American Psychological Association Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997) have become known as the basis for improving teacher practices that should enhance student learning and motivation using the most current knowledge in the field. LCPs are consistent with middle school reform efforts (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) for improving the academic engagement and learning of middle school students.

Constructivist teaching also acknowledges the power of high expectations to bring about change and improvement (Abbott & Ryan, 1999). This approach seeks the empowerment and engagement of students throughout the learning process. These approaches are learner centred (Daniels & Perry, 2003; King, 2003; Manning, 2000; Meece, 2003; Weinberger & McCombs, 2003) and expect students to be active and involved in their learning and the construction and application of knowledge (Brockbank & McGill, 2004; Henson, 2004). Students must be challenged through problem-based learning strategies (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Keppel, Kan, Messer & Heather, 2002; Oon Seng, 2000; Trop & Sage, 1998) to use their minds and enhance their skills and abilities in order to make meaning of the knowledge they acquire through higher order thinking and the understanding, application and reflection of knowledge - with a negotiated
curriculum (Brew & Barrie, 1999; Huber, Murphy & Clandinin, 2003; Livingston, 1997).
Mentoring and coaching adolescents and having a supportive relationship is also a key element of constructivist teaching (Carol, 1988; George & Alexander, 2003; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Hawk & Hill, 2003).

3.3.2.4 Reflective teaching

Reflection, reflective thinking, reflective action, reflective teaching, reflective process and reflective practitioners have become slogans for effective teaching and learning throughout the world. There has been an explosion of diverse and extensive literature on the reflective practitioner, and reflective teaching in the field of effective schooling specifically in the middle school (Daniels, 2002; Holm & Horn, 2003; Ivey, 1999; Leader & Middleton, 2004; McGill & Brockbank, 2004; Moallem, 1997).

Dougherty (1997), discussing pedagogy for the middle years, has suggested ‘an ongoing professional development and action research’ as main ingredients of reflective teaching practice in the middle schools. Reflective teaching engages teachers in a continuous process in which they think about their pedagogy. Holm and Horn (2003) have insisted that today’s teachers must be skilled in the art of reflective practice and must understand the critical role it plays in advancing student achievement.

Rougle (1999) has stated that the lifelong middle school teacher never stops learning. The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) (2003) report suggests that every middle school teacher should also be a student, as every student and parent has a right to know that teachers believe learning is a lifelong process and believe in continually updating their skills. Creswell (1998) has noted that knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings. Holm and Horn (2003), in support of their argument, have cited an old Indian proverb “One who learns from one who is learning, drinks from a running stream,” and insist that teachers must be skilled in the art of reflective practice and must understand the critical role it plays in advancing student achievement. Reflection, as a deliberate process, must be an integral part of each teacher’s professional repertoire.

Dewey has substituted the word “inquiry” for “reflective thinking” in his book Logic: The theory of inquiry (1938). Inquiry, according to Dewey (1933, p. 9) is the “active, persistent, and careful
consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion which it tends”. Dewey (1933) identified three attributes of reflective individuals: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Open-mindedness is a desire to listen to more than one side of an issue, to give attention to alternative views, and to recognize that even firmest beliefs may be questioned. Responsibility implies the desire to actively search for truth and apply information gained to problem situations. Wholeheartedness implies that one can overcome fears and uncertainties to make meaningful change and can critically evaluate children, schools, society, and ourselves. Dewey (1938, p. 89) believed that teachers must be aware of the “possibilities inherent in ordinary experience”. He insisted, “every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes which help to decide the quality of further experiences” (p. 37). He suggested that the “business of the educator [is] to see in what direction an experience is heading” (p. 38).

Henderson (1992) has noted that reflective teachers are expert teachers who know their subject matter and are able to teach it well. They are experts in time management, discipline, psychology, instructional methods, interpersonal communication, and learning theory. Reflective teachers are willing to embrace their decision-making responsibilities. They regularly reflect on the consequences of their actions. They are receptive to new knowledge and regularly learn from their reflective experience.

Some researchers (Martini, Wall & Shore, 2004; Zimmerman, 2002) strongly emphasise the importance of students’ use of self-regulatory processes. Effective teaching practice demands that teachers prepare students to learn on their own and assist them to develop meta-cognition, creating awareness and knowledge about their own thinking and learning as well as strategy selection. Teachers need to provide students opportunities to self evaluate their work or estimate their competence on new tasks. Teachers help to assess students’ beliefs about learning such as self-efficacy perception or casual attribution. Dewey (1933, p. 9) has argued that the main goal of education is not to transmit previously defined knowledge and skills but rather to develop an individual’s capacity for critical thinking and learning. Critical thinking is described as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends”. 
The literature on classroom pedagogy has suggested that teaching strategies must match the needs and abilities of the middle year students. Burbaud, Camus, Guehl, Bioulac and Caille (2000 cited in Rose & Meyer, 2002) have noted that recent brain imaging experiments provide a unique illustration of individual differences in strategy. When two people are confronted with the same problem but solve it using different cognitive strategies, the brain images reveal two very different patterns of activity. Following this, Marshall (1991) has argued that if students do not learn the way we teach them, then we must teach them the way they learn. The National Middle School Association (1995) in USA has emphasised the need for educators to be knowledgeable of young adolescents, to provide a curriculum that is balanced and responsive to their needs, to use a variety of instructional strategies, to help students make continuous progress, and to foster a positive school climate.

Summary of the section

Research on education for adolescents suggests that students at middle school develop a more mature intellectual reasoning and increased ability to see and understand cause and affect relationships. Young adolescents strive to have experiences that are holistic, challenging and connected. They need a vibrant classroom environment that helps them to determine the deep learning attitudes and social behaviours, where the students are challenged and supported by care and concern of teachers who are, knowledgeable of young adolescents. Educators should be well prepared to provide a curriculum that is balanced and responsive to students’ needs, uses a variety of instructional strategies, helps students make continuous progress, and fosters a positive school climate. Middle school teachers should be focused on children’s needs, eager to encourage intellectual curiosity, understanding and empathetic. They are seen to be cooperating with and helping adolescents to increase their cognitive abilities and to be autonomous in making their own decisions about learning. The assertions and demands suggested by a large body of research are huge and diverse so it is suggested that educators concentrate on ensuring that adolescents’ basic human needs are met to help them to grow up into decent, caring, informed citizens with the end result of a successful life long learner. In the words of Nelson (2003), a ‘good quality teacher’ includes the following: a teacher who knows his or her subject area, is passionate and excited about teaching it, and who is also capable of helping students realise the connections between what they are learning and how this can be translated into real-life situations.
3.4 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC)

The development of a professional community of educators is itself a major cultural change that will spawn many others (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

INTRODUCTION

The concept of ‘professional learning communities’ is considered a vital component of whole school reform for the middle years of schooling. Researchers and practitioners both agree on the essential need for creating a cadre of teachers grounded in the philosophy of middle school education, who are knowledgeable about the psychological, social, and intellectual developmental needs of early adolescents and who possess the practical skills to work with early adolescents. This section discusses the case for professional learning communities highlighting the kinds of expertise, interests and needs they bring together, the ways they contribute to improved pedagogy and outcomes for middle schools, and different ingredients /characteristics of professional learning communities, which have positive impacts on the learning of adolescents.

3.4.1 THE CASE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Researchers (Andrews & Lewis, 2002; Belzer, 2003; Elmore, 2002; Guskey, 2002; Killen, 2003) believe that a professional learning community (PLC) is a school with shared mission, vision, values and goals with collaborative teams having on-going discussion about current reality and best practices and making commitment to continuous improvement to produce improved outcomes. Sparks (1999, p. 53) defines professional learning communities as “places in which teachers pursue clear, shared purposes for student learning, engage in collaborative activities to achieve their purposes, and take collective responsibility for students’ learning”. Louis and Marks (1996) have suggested several criteria for a professional community, namely, clear, shared goals for student learning; collaboration and collective responsibility among staff members; de-privatization of practice; and reflective professional inquiry by staff members.

Bredeson (2000) sees professional learning communities as the dynamic creations of the people who work in them. These groups of people take an active, reflective, collaborative, learning oriented and growth promoting approach towards teaching and learning.

The process of creating and sustaining a professional learning community is a complex and challenging endeavour. It requires time, trust, and commitment from all participants, especially
school leaders. Research on school improvement suggests that the presence of a professional learning community in a school has a positive impact on student achievement and is an essential component of effective teaching and learning (Hord, 1997; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Epstein and Salinas (2004) argued that a professional learning community emphasises the teamwork of principals, teachers, and staff to identify school goals, improve curriculum and instruction, reduce teachers’ isolation, assess student progress, and increase the effectiveness of school programs. In contrast, a school learning community includes educators, students, parents, and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students’ learning opportunities. Middle schools should consist of a professional learning community and be a community of learners where everyone is found teaching and learning simultaneously.

### 3.4.2 PLC IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The development of professional learning communities is seen in the literature as a critical ingredient of middle school reform (Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson & Austin, 1997; Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996; Louis, Kruse & Raywid, 1996; Useem, 2001). Within the paradigm of educational reforms, discussion of professional development (on job training as distinct form of “pre-service” education) has become increasingly needed over the last decade (Elmore, 2002).

Oakes, Vasudeva and Jones (1996, p. 33) have suggested that:

> School reform movements such as ‘Turning Points’ should include in their change some attention to the steps schools can take to develop a new culture and political environment, alongside a vision of new practices—And professional development activities around reform should pay considerable attention to these aspects of reform, as well as to new organisational and pedagogical techniques.

Lipsitz et al. (1997) believe that professional development of staff is an essential element of school reform. Placing the teachers at the centre of middle-grades educational reforms, the author insisted on high quality and on-going staff development to deepen teachers’ knowledge through study groups, peers observation, expert demonstration and teacher-to-teacher reflections. Morrissey (2000) argues that professional learning communities offer an infrastructure which concentrates on the issues of collegiality and provide opportunities for professional staff to look
deeply into the teaching and learning process and to learn how to become more effective in their work with students.

Chadbourne (2000), in a study conducted for the State School Teachers Union of West Australia (SSTUWA), found that middle school teachers, while working in inter-disciplinary teams, get more professional development from their colleagues than in conventional settings where teachers work on their own. Echoing the benefits of professional learning communities Newmann and Wehlage (1995) in their discussion of improving the organisational capacity of schools, specifically identify professional learning communities as a means to that end.

3.4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PLC

Harnett (1991), discussing different model programs for middle school teacher preparation, insists that pre-service teacher education programs should be designed in such a way that they may develop an understanding of early adolescents’ unique needs. DuFour and Eaker (1998) enumerate the characteristics of professional communities as:

- developing shared mission, vision, and values;
- conducting collective inquiry;
- working as collaborative teams;
- oriented to action and experimentation;
- focused on continuous improvement; and
- results-driven.

Ailwood and Follers (2002) have suggested following six aspects that characterise teacher professional learning communities:

- shared norms and values;
- de-privatisation of practice;
- reflective dialogue;
- collaboration;
- focus on student learning; and
- teachers’ collective responsibility for student learning.

The NMSA (2004) in a position statement enumerates following essential elements of middle years of schooling teacher preparation program:
• collaboration in teacher preparation with school-based faculty;
• knowledge of young adolescent development and needs;
• knowledge of middle level philosophy and organisation;
• study of middle level curriculum incorporating young adolescent interests and needs;
• knowledge of at least two or more teaching fields;
• systematic study of planning, teaching and assessment;
• continuing field experiences in middle schools; and
• collaborative role of middle level teachers.

The Queensland Board of Teacher Registration [QBTR] (1996) has recommended specific in-service education programs for teachers working with young adolescents.

• Curriculum organisation, curriculum planning, effective learning and teaching (including, for example, skills in behaviour management, collaborative learning, literacy teaching, recognition of learning difficulties and disabilities), school culture, leadership, interpersonal skills (e.g. skills in negotiation and mediation, counselling, and in dealing with issues such as bullying and harassment), human relationships education, working with families and the community, working with other professionals and service agencies, vocational/career awareness.

• Specific in service programs should be available for teachers who are interested in changing to working with young adolescents and who are judged based on their personal qualities to be suitable for such work.

• Cooperative professional development opportunities should be available involving teaching staff and professionals from other agencies working with young adolescents and their families.

• Research and support networks should be provided for teachers and others working with young adolescents; these networks should link teachers with university researchers and other professionals.

• Training should be available for supervisors who work with teachers of young adolescents or with pre service students preparing for teaching young adolescents.

According to Abdal-Haqq (1996) effective professional development is an ongoing process that includes the following characteristics:

• is school-based and embedded in teacher work;
• is collaborative, providing opportunities for teachers to interact with peers;
• focuses on student learning, which should, in part, guide assessment of its effectiveness;
• encourages and supports school-based and teacher initiatives;
• has its roots in the knowledge base for teaching;
• incorporates constructivist approaches to teaching and learning;
• recognizes teachers as professionals and adult learners;
• provides adequate time and follow-up support; and
• is accessible and inclusive.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) has suggested the following key elements for professional development of middle school teachers:

• Build on the knowledge and experience teachers bring. (Help them identify and assess these strengths as well as gaps that need to be addressed).
• Form collaborative teams that can create inquiry and discourse, as well as support one another through the challenges of change.
• Use current research in content knowledge and best practice to identify new areas of professional learning and instructional focus.
• Use benchmarks and standards of professional practice to identify specific changes in practice as goals.
• Use data-based inquiry, and looking at student and teacher work, to reflect on student learning, identify strengths and challenges, and set instructional goals.
• Focus on setting goals (by team and school) for thinking and learning that cross disciplines.

In addition to the above dimensions, Louis (2000, p. 10) has added ‘reflective practice’ as an important ingredient of middle school professional development. According to the author, reflective practice entails self-awareness, both self-critical and institutional-critical, about what one practices in teaching and learning. Louis further believes that the teacher-as-researcher is an extension of reflective practice, where teachers are trained in formal research methods, and use them in assessing their pedagogical content knowledge. Grimmett (cited in Louis, Kruse & Marks, 1996) states that action research as a professional development tool has been accepted as a comprehensive model for improving education though not always eagerly accepted by the teachers.

There is no step-by-step process that schools can implement as they strive to establish a learning community (Adajian, 1996). However, from the extensive literature on the subject, a number of school characteristics associated with professional learning and collaboration can be identified. Nearly all studies have enumerated similar dimensions of professional learning communities.
although giving them different wordings. To provide a comprehensive understanding five of them are discussed below in depth.

### 3.4.3.1 Supportive and shared leadership

Huffman (2003) has suggested that declaring a vision and imposing it on staff members does not develop the vigour and commitment needed by PLC to make substantive change. The leader is expected to share and combine the personal visions of faculty members into a collective vision moulded and embraced by all. The creation of a school vision, as an integral component of the change process, emerges over time and is based on common values and beliefs.

Moore, George and Halpin (2002) have insisted that strong leaders ensure that vision is not restricted to ‘internalization of dominant official discourse’. It should be shared by all and mutually developed with a constructivist perception. Supportive leaders in PLC encourage, cooperate and help all to develop the vision for their own guidance. In the case of imposed line of direction, stakeholders lose interest because they do not understand the spirit of the goals. Power sharing in creating a future vision is vital. Involving the staff in the development of future vision provides an opportunity for staff to express ideas and form commitments, which requires motivational leaders with a strong sense of self and ability to welcome change and uncertainty. Jackson and Tasker (2000) have argued that all staff in professional learning communities should be involved in a process of developing shared values and collective aspirations to turn a school into a distinctive and effective place for teaching and learning. Martel (1993, p. 24) concisely defines the vision of the professional learning community as a focus on “the quality of life, quality of work, quality of learning and in short a total quality focus”.

Supportive leaders help the group to develop shared understandings about the organisation and its activities and goals that can create a sense of purpose or vision (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Setting direction is considered a critical aspect of strong leadership. Supportive leadership has its roots in goal based theories of human motivation\(^\text{14}\) (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Maslow, 1943). According to these theories, people desire self-esteem, self-respect, reputation, and the need for participation, recognition and appreciation. People are motivated by goals they set for themselves

\(^{14}\) For detail see Eccles, and Wigfield, 2002; Maslow, 1943
or they find personally compelling and challenging. Participation in goal setting confers on them a sense of direction, confidence and sense of identity with their work. Strong leaders are active in setting the directions by identifying opportunities for developing and articulating a vision to inspire all involved in the pursuit of common goals (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003). A value laden vision lead to unconditional commitment and continual professional growth (Hallinger & Heck, 2002).

### 3.4.3.2 Building a culture of collective learning

Ellyard (1998) has suggested that the development of a culture of learning is necessary for success in the twenty-first century. In support of his argument, he has elaborated that learning is the key to success; if our society makes a conscious attempt to maximise learning with every step into the future, the chance of future success will be greatly enhanced. Peck (cited in Sparks, 1999, p. 56) perceives true community as a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, delight each other, and to make others’ conditions our own. DuFour and Eaker (1998) have suggested that professional learning communities should encourage schools to reflect on their collective capacity to address the learning needs of their students. The authors conclude that ongoing improvement efforts can succeed only when a community of colleagues supports each other through the inevitable difficulties associated with school reform. Senge (2000), acknowledging the importance of learning communities in schools, advocated the creation of learning organisations. Senge maintains that schools are the meeting ground for learning—dedicated to the idea that all those involved with it, individually and together, will be continually enhancing and expanding their awareness and capabilities.

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century in 1996 presented the *Delors Report*, (Delors, 1996) which has proposed a framework of education throughout life based on the four pillars:

- learning to know;
- learning to do;
- learning to live together; and
- learning to be.
Delors (1996, p. 17) has provided an insight by stating that “education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realise our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of personal aims”.

Louis et al. (1996) have noted that a productive learning community involves a willingness to accept feedback and work toward improvement with the attributes of respect and trust among colleagues at the school. Rosenholtz (1989) found that teachers who were supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice were more committed and effective than those who did not receive such confirmation. Support by means of teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles increased teacher efficacy in meeting students’ needs. Further, Rosenholtz found that teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy were more likely to adopt new classroom behaviours and also more likely to stay in the profession. DuFour and Eaker (1998) have also noted that professional learning communities encourage schools to reflect on their collective capacity to address the learning needs of their students. The authors conclude that ongoing improvement efforts can succeed only when a community of colleagues supports each other through the inevitable difficulties associated with school reform.

The literature on school improvement and effective professional development also suggests that learning communities are equally important for teachers. A sense of community helps to create a dynamic and congenial workplace and establishes relationships that encourage continuous inquiry and improvement (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe & Gagnon, 1998; Lieberman & Miller, 1999). In addition, teachers take on roles as scholars, showing their students that learning is exciting and worthwhile.

### 3.4.3.3 Working as a collaborative team

A professional learning community has been defined as “an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they [educators] work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii). Barth (1990, p. 162) has suggested that all learners in a learning community enter into a collaborative relationship and create an “ecology of reflection, growth and refinement practice”. Goddard, Hoy and Hoy (2000), discussing the impact of collective efficacy on students’ achievements, emphasised that collective
The National Middle Schools Association (2004) has strongly supported the specialised professional preparation of middle level teachers. It is suggested that middle school teachers must be experts in the development and needs of young adolescents. Prospective middle level teachers attain this expertise through formal study of young adolescent development and opportunities to work directly with young adolescent students and to apply this knowledge, all the while reflecting upon the implications of developmental realities. Without a solid grounding in knowledge and experience of young adolescent development, the success of the individual middle school teacher and middle schools as a whole is limited. Lipsitz et al. (1997), in their discussions, have always placed teachers at the centre of middle-grades educational reform. They emphasise the need for high-quality staff development to deepen teachers’ knowledge through study groups, peer observation, expert demonstration, and teacher-to-teacher reflections, and critique professional development that aims merely to create new school structures. Above all, prospective middle grade teachers need to understand adolescent development through courses and direct experience in middle grade schools (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

Little (1993) viewed teaching as a process of continual, reflective inquiry and an exchange of ideas with other professionals to develop a shared knowledge base and leading to collegiality. In support of this view, Wald and Castleberry (2000) have argued that learning collaboratively is a process that requires learners to understand themselves, their motives, and their thoughts and beliefs, as well as the motives, thoughts, and beliefs of others. It also requires merging of individual interests into a collective aspiration. Moreover, it requires a group “work ethic” or way of behaving that creates a bond of trust, belonging, and purposefulness among group members.

Senge (2000) states that team learning is vital for professional learning communities. He argues that teams are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations, where teams are learning they are producing extraordinary results. In middle schools, time for team meetings is meant for professional learning and collaborative work where teachers share information about the students
in their care and manage to integrate the curriculum. Taylor (2002b) has suggested that while collaborating on student learning in authentic ways teachers must trust their principal and one another. Collaborative teamwork is too risky without a culture of trust.

A large number of researchers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Jablin, 1979; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2000; , 2002; Krovetz & Cohick, 1993; Nias, 1998) have consistently identified the need for collegiality in the work place. “Collegiality refers to the existence of high levels of collaboration of teachers and is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning” (Sergiovanni, 1990, pp. 117-118). Little (1987, p. 502) has identified three benefits of collegiality at the school level:

1. Collegial interactions allow teachers and students (and, by extension, parents and the community) to gain confidence about their knowledge. Their confidence allows them to better “support one another’s strengths and accommodate weaknesses”.

2. Schools that promote collegial learning and sharing are “adaptable and self-reliant in the face of new demands; they have the necessary organisation to attempt school or classroom innovations that would exhaust the energy, skill, or resources of an individual teacher”.

3. Schools that foster learning and sharing are “plausibly organised to ease the strain of staff turnover, both by providing systematic assistance to beginning teachers and by explicitly socializing all newcomers to staff values, traditions, and resources”.

Wanger (2001) has argued that both students and teachers learn more and do more when they feel a part of something important that is larger than themselves and that they have helped to create. The good learning community is one where everyone’s voice is valued, responsibility is shared and inquiry is collaborative for both adults and students. Smylie and Hart (1999, p. 421) have noted that student learning is increasingly tied to teachers learning and collaboration. Emphasising the importance of teachers as learners Smylie and Hart have stated that “it has become increasingly clear that if we want to improve schools for student learning, we must also improve schools for the adults who work within them—We have only recently come to understand that student learning also depends on the extent to which schools support the ongoing development and productive exercise of teachers’ knowledge and skills”.

3.4.3.4 Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation
Haeusler (2003) has suggested that teachers’ ‘action research’ brings innovation and changes to the classroom. Such initiatives involve the students in enhancing their learning and critical thinking, and motivate teachers to develop their own innovative practices. It is mostly accepted in the literature that Kurt Lewin (1947) brought action research forward by introducing it as proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action. Lewin (1947) further suggested that it is an activity engaged in by groups or committees with the aim of changing their circumstances in ways that are consistent with a shared conception of human values.

Jackson and Davis (2000) suggest that in their course work teachers should look at curriculum, standards, a variety of assessment methods, and at diverse instructional strategies that work in heterogeneous classrooms. Precisely, they must have command of pedagogical content knowledge in order to lead students toward knowing and developing quality work. Barth (1990, p. 163) noted that a “good school is a place where everyone is teaching and every one is learning simultaneously, under the same roof”.

There is debate over the role, value, and desired length of exploratory programs. The NMSA (1996) argues that exploratory programs capitalize on the innate curiosity of young adolescents, exposing them to a range of academic, vocational, and recreational subjects for career options, community service, enrichment, and enjoyment. Harnett (1991) suggests a wide range of exploratory courses designed to develop student interests, and an emphasis on intramural athletics which encourages participation by all students. Swaim (2003b) also insists on engaging every student in a relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory curriculum, to create an environment that fosters respectful and supportive relationships among students, faculty, families, and the community.
3.4.3.5 Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) has proposed the use of data-based inquiry for looking at student and teacher work, to reflect on student learning, to identify strengths and challenges, and in setting instructional goals. In support, Firestone and Pennell (1997) suggest that staff development through teacher networks can deepen and sustain professional knowledge; and that such networks enhance teacher learning, motivation, and empowerment, building their overall capacity for school improvement.

Stoll et al. (2003, p. 11) believe that “An effective professional learning community has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of teachers and support staff, governors and parents in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning”. Gusso, Schroeder, Speirs, Zwaschka and Pearce (2002) found that teachers who felt supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice were more devoted and efficient than those who did not work in a supportive environment. His research demonstrated that support through teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles increased teacher effectiveness in meeting student needs. Corcoran (1995) has also suggested similar approaches, such as teacher networks, professional development schools, and national board certification of teachers to promote school environments.

A proliferation of approaches to professional development emerged in conjunction with the systemic reform paradigm. Corcoran (1995), for example, identified a number of promising approaches, based on preliminary research evidence, such as teacher networks, school-university collaborations, professional development schools, and national board certification of teachers. These strategies, which have, in common, a focus on providing stimulation from outside the school for teacher learning, continue to be explored in the research literature.

Thiessen and Anderson (1999) also encourage collaboration, integration, and inquiry in schools, as well as continuous engagement in actions to challenge the conditions, the relationships, the responsibility and control, and the teaching and learning that shape a school. The authors believe that through such ongoing inquiry, schools become stronger, more productive places where teaching has improved and increases in learning are evidenced by all students. The National Research Centre on English Learning and Achievement (2002) claims that successful
professional development encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners in their professional communities, where teachers rely on the collective expertise and mutual support of colleagues to inform their day-to-day judgments.

Bryk and Schneider (1996) emphasise the importance of collaborative decision making in schools, noting that teachers feel distanced from new initiatives if they are not involved in planning them. Tam and Cheng (1996) defined staff development as different types of programs and activity which aim to empower teachers and administrators to develop positive attitudes and beliefs about education and management, become more effective individuals and teams, be competent in teaching students and managing the school process, as well as helping the school adapt to its changing environment.

**Summary of the section**

PLC, a powerful staff development strategy, is well designed to meet the learning needs of students. The principal, teachers, staff and parents join hands to create a climate that focuses on attentive practice, collegiality and an ongoing professional development.

### 3.5 INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

**Introduction**

The concept of providing a school environment that facilitates the development of intellectual and social skills, and fosters emotional stability is not new. Baker (1992, p. 2) noted that helping students understand their learning environments first appeared in the school curriculum in 1907 as a subject called “Guidance which had the goal of helping high school students better understand their own character, follow good role models and develop into socially responsible workers”. Baker and Gerler (2001, p. 300) have interpreted the goal of developmental guidance as promoting “emotional, social, and cognitive growth while preventing problems in the lives of young people”. Baker (1992) has also noted that additional influences, such as vocational guidance, were later integrated into the structure of these subjects. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, a series of events including the psychometric movement, mental health

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15 For details see (Sink, 2002)
movement, school guidance profession, and the creation of the American School Counselor Association accelerated the idea of regular counselling in schools.

In the literature relating to school effectiveness (Reynolds, 1985), systems of welfare and assistance for students are referred to as ‘pastoral care’. Hamblin (cited in Reynolds, 1985, p. 76) has defined pastoral care as an:

Element of teaching process which centers around the personality of the pupil and the forces in his environment which either facilitate or impede the development of intellectual and social skills, and foster or retard emotional stability—[it] is also concerned with the modification of the learning environment, adapting it to meet the needs of individual pupil, so that every pupil has the maximum chance of success whatever his background or general ability.

Current literature still insists on the importance of helping “all students develop their educational, social, career, and personal strengths and become responsible and productive citizens” (Crendell & Sheldon, 1997). In Australia, Hill (2001b) has insisted that ‘head teachers need to have the knowledge of effective intervention programs’. Hill and Jane (2001), discussing the design element ‘intervention and special assistance’, have argued that even with the best teaching experience, many students need extra time and support if they are to reach minimum standards. Thus, provision of intervention programs and special assistance to those students who begin to fall behind their peers or who find difficulty in maintaining an adequate pace of learning is essential.

Stressing the need for guidance and counselling as well as other elements of middle school social support, George and Alexander (2003) have argued that guidance activities have grown out of three central standards of effective school counselling programs identified by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2003); academic development, career development and social/personal development.

The Idaho State Board of Education (2000), presenting the school counselling program model, has also identified similar standards for school counselling. These include guidance curriculum, individual planning, personal and social development, academic/technical development, career development, responsive services and system support (see Figure 3.3).
Based on the relevant literature on guidance and counselling in middle schools (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Baruth & Manning, 2000; Beale, 2004; Gerler, 1991; Hughey, 2002), I have identified the following characteristics of intervention and special assistance for the purpose of data collection, analysis and discussion:

- Academic support
- Counselling and advisory services
- Health and physical education
- Technology and resources
- Career development

### 3.5.1 Academic support

Campbell and Dahir (cited in Hughey, 2002, p. 1) have contended that “the primary goal of the school counselling program is to promote and enhance student learning”. Consequently an abundant literature has alleged that school counselling programs should be an integral part of students’ daily educational environment, and school counsellors should be partners in student achievement (Clark & Amatea, 2004; Lee, 2005; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Pro Principal periodical (2004) has cited the policy paper of the Institute on Education and the Economy,
Columbia University, which has noted that academic counseling has shown excellent potential for helping middle-school students excel, and have recommended that a greater investment in those areas could boost academic outcomes. Stevenson (2002) has also noted that adolescents who are high achievers in academic and other school activities demonstrate some notable specific behavioural attributes worthy of advisory teachers’ incorporation.

Hill and Russell (1999), discussing the “Intervention and special assistance” as an element of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997), have realised the need for classroom intervention programs. In their discussion, they have argued that regular classroom teaching should match the cognitive needs and learning styles of young adolescents. Braggett (1997) believes that Australian educators are aware of the need for allowing students in the middle years of schooling to explore their emerging abilities and their own personal development (socially, psychologically and physically) and to develop positive attitudes and values in life.

Sears (cited in Hughey, 2002, p. 1) has argued that “school counselors are in the best position to assess the school for barriers to academic success for all students”. Hughey (2002, p. 1) believed that “school counselors working collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and parents have the expertise to determine barriers that negatively impact student learning and to develop and implement strategies that will address these challenges”. The author further argues that “working to reduce barriers has the potential to result in enhanced learning and more effectively prepare students for the future”.

Adelman and Taylor (2002, p. 237) have suggested interventions for all students in a school, to those in specified grades, to those identified as “at risk” and/or to those in need of compensatory education. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms and may be geared to an entire class, groups, or individuals; or they may be designed as “pull out” programs for designated students. The literature has alleged that schools must empower students to enhance their academic achievement and become motivated, lifelong learners (Lapan, Kardash & Turner, 2002; VanZile-Tamsen, 2002). Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert and Sobel (2004) have suggested the following strategies for the academic development of adolescents:

- attention to individual students;
- extending the school day;
• structured academic support programs;
• after-school programs;
• expanding academic opportunities; and
• helping students transition.

3.5.2 Counselling and advisory program

Proponents of middle schooling have recommended that schooling for adolescents should be embedded in a guidance philosophy (Stevenson, 2002) which should be based on a counselling and advisory program. Manning and Saddlemire (1998) has noted that the counsellor plays a crucial role in the advisory program by providing services to individual students and small groups and by assisting advisors as needed. The authors have pointed out that the advisory program neither negates nor underestimates the work of counselling professionals. Instead, educators and counsellors work collaboratively to improve the educational experiences and overall well-being of the students (Manning & Saddlemire, 1998). The school counsellor’s role is defined in the literature (Shepherd, 2000, p. 33) as “being part of an integrative, comprehensive program that has as its overarching mission the facilitation of student learning and development”.

Counselling

Recently a growing body of literature has recommended intervention and special assistance in the name of school counselling at all levels in the school, especially in the middle school (Britzman, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Lee, 2005; Rayle & Myers, 2004). Baruth and Manning (2000) have alleged that, for counsellors to be equipped to meet the counselling needs of young adolescents, they must have sufficient knowledge of young adolescents’ cultural and other differences (e.g. gender, social class, and sexual orientation) and their potential effects on academic achievement, school behaviour, and the counselling process.

The Department of Urban Services in Canberra (2005) claims that every student and their family in the ACT government school system (K-12) has access to the services of a school counsellor at their local school. These school counsellors have a psychology degree, post graduate qualifications in counselling, and are also qualified and experienced teachers. Counsellors in the schools have a range of skills enabling them to assist students, parents and teachers with issues that can affect students’ educational progress and adjustment including, for example:
• learning difficulties;
• behaviour management;
• special education services;
• social skills;
• family relationships;
• grief and loss;
• personal development;
• study skills;
• protective behaviours;
• transition across sectors;
• secondary subject choice and career choice;
• tertiary course options;
• conflict resolution; and
• gifted and talented students (Canberra Connect, 2005, p. 1).16

Advisory program

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p. 40) has recommended that “every student should be well known by at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help fashion a promising vision of the future”. Miller (1999, p. 1) has argued that the key belief underpinning middle school advisory programs is that early adolescents need an adult at their school to serve as a mentor, guide, and advocate—someone who knows them well and works with them closely, in a non judgmental way, as they fumble and stumble through the middle school years.

Stevenson (2002, p. 315) has alleged that youngsters’ need for trusted adult advocacy is evident to anyone who understands the crucial developmental task of early adolescents. He further argues that alienated youth are distrustful of adults in schools and therefore, suffer from a lack of trusted

adult guidance in virtually in everything from learning to life threats. Students recognize when teachers are listening to them authentically, looking for ways to help them have a better time being a student. And the fact that the effort is being made is persuasive in itself, whether or not that student has things exactly as he or she might want them (Stevenson, 2002).

The New York State Education Department (2003) has also insisted on the organization and structure of schools connecting youngsters to adults and to other students in the school and community and providing opportunities for increasingly independent learning experiences and responsibilities within a safe and structured environment. Consequently, through advisory programs, trust, respect, mutual obligation, and concern for others’ welfare can have powerful effects on educators’ and learners’ interpersonal relationships as well as on learners’ academic achievement and overall school progress (Manning & Saddlemire, 1996).

Strong advisory programs are not just a way of getting students organized at the start of the day, nor do they cover only those topics that teachers consider important. To be effective, a program needs to be genuinely student-centred and flexible enough that each group of students can set their own goals and direction (Miller, 1999). Galassi, Gulledge and Cox (1997, p. 321) in support have argued that “advisory programs are a type of primary prevention effort, and meta-analytic investigations have shown that primary prevention and affective education efforts in schools have been generally effective”. “AA [advisor-advisee] programs are intended to enhance this ethos of caring by helping students and teachers see themselves as part of a common team pursuing common objectives” (Galassi, Gulledge & Cox, 1997, pp. 302-303).

Forte and Schurr (1993, p. 117) have described the ‘Advisor/Advisee Program’ as

an affective educational program designed to focus on the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, and ethical development of students; a program providing a structured time during which special activities are designed and implemented to help adolescents find ways to fulfill their identified needs; intended to provide consistent, caring, and continuous adult guidance at school through the organization of a supportive and stable peer group that meets regularly under the guidance of a teacher serving as advisor.

Dickinson, McEwin and Jenkins (1998, p. 3) emphasised the need for advisory programs in middle schools, insisting that they provide “an opportunity for closer relationships between advisor and student, to build interpersonal and social skills and integrate them into real-life
situations, to develop a sense of belonging using a small group setting and allowing the adviser to be actively involved in the total development of their students; socially, emotionally, as well as academically”.

Stevenson (2002) has noted that personal resilience can be taught and learned by young people. Teachers in their advisory program may consider the strengths that foster resiliency in youth such as insight, independence, relationship, initiatives, creativity, humor and morality.

A large body of literature (Crean, 2004; Howard & Johnson, 2000; Nettles, 2000; Waaktaar, Christie, Helmen-borge & Torgersen, 2004) has suggested several intervention approaches to foster resilience and has argued that schools that are safe, positive and achievement-oriented help adolescents develop a sense of purpose and autonomy and promote connectedness. By teaching valuable life skills, such as social problem-solving as well as social competence, schools can ensure that every student develops the foundational academic competencies needed for further learning and the development of positive self-esteem. Resilience can also be fostered by promoting academic competence and attending to the social and emotional needs of students.

3.5.3 Health and physical education

A growing body of literature (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Lounsbury, 2005; McLean, 2001; Roditti, 2002) relating to adolescents’ developmental needs has emphasised the need to address these for their successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Adolescents make significant choices about their health and develop attitudes and health practices that affect their current safety and well-being as well as influence their risk for future serious chronic disease. Adolescence represents an opportunity for encouraging healthy choices and pro-social behaviours that will continue into adulthood (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

Jackson and Davis (2000) have argued that good health does not guarantee that students will be interested in learning and able to learn, but the absence of good health makes learning difficult. Burgmaier (2000) has argued that simply providing adolescents with health insurance is not enough to ensure that they receive the services they need. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004) has noted that improving adolescent health and safety is a complex venture that requires the collaborative efforts of a wide range of societal sectors and institutions including parents and families, adolescents themselves, schools and community as a whole.
Resnick et al. (1997) have argued that schools, beyond their institutional functions, provide adult role models and are a source of peer influences, which have powerful effects on adolescent health, development, and well-being and also protects against a variety of health risk behaviours. Thus, the literature (Grooms, 1967; Price, 1996) has suggested that schools should make their best efforts to provide comprehensive, age-appropriate health education to young people on a range of health issues. Dryfoos (1994) has further identified the need for certain specialised indoor and outdoor facilities to accommodate health and physical education programs. The facilities identified that schools can offer are dental services, education and treatment about substance abuse, information about sexually transmitted diseases and mental health services. It must be noted that dental services were removed from ACT schools during the early 1990’s.

Elster, Panzarine and Holt (cited in US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, p. 8) have identified the following key issues for school health programs:

- Schools must make health education, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and prevention of risk behaviors high priorities. Policy-makers need to be educated about the importance of comprehensive health promotion in schools and the link between health and the ability to learn.

- The health education curriculum should be comprehensive, providing a wide range of information related to adolescent health and health related behaviors. It should also help students develop their skills in risk assessment, decision-making, and communication.

- In addition to offering a health education curriculum, schools promote healthy behaviors by operating a nutritious food service, maintaining clean and safe buildings, offering physical exercise through sports and physical education classes, and providing preventive health services.

- Schools should be sensitive to diversity in experiences and environments with respect to students’ cultural backgrounds, family structure and composition, socio-economic status, and social settings.

- School personnel should receive in-service training regarding health promotion and social interactions with adolescents and their families.

Toumbourou et al. (2000) has described evidence that well-conducted health education programs can reduce alcohol and drug use, smoking, sexual risk taking and anti-social behaviour. Wyn et al. (2000), discussing the national mental health promotion program in Australia ‘Mind Matters’

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17 MindMatters Program was piloted in 24 secondary schools, drawn from all educational systems and each State and Territory in Australia.
have considered the promotion of mental health and wellbeing of all young people in the school to be vital to the core business of teachers in that it promotes a school environment that is conducive to learning.

The NSW Health Department (cited in NSW Board of Studies, 2001, p. 28) has identified seven key areas for health promotion targeting young people. These areas are determinants for the preventable health problems facing young people today. The targeted areas include nutrition and physical activity, alcohol, illicit drugs, tobacco, mental health, injury and sexual health.

I argue that, to minimise health risks, and to help adolescents make healthy choices, health and physical education specifically targeting the above-identified areas should be a part of middle school curriculum. It is also emphasised in the literature that the school has a direct obligation to provide an environment which is not only conducive to good health and safety but which promotes the development of desired health concepts and practices (Hansen & Hearn, 1971).

3.5.4 Technology and resources

George and Alexander (2003) have stated that they envisaged the use of the latest technology before the end of the decade of the ‘90’s as a part of school experience of young adolescents. Use of technology in classrooms is not a recent or innovative idea but few would argue that schools have tended to lag behind other areas of society in the use of technology. The problematic incorporation of computers in schools is a case in point. For example the first “personal calculator”—the abacus used as a mathematic model for early electronic computer was developed in China about 3000 BC (Great Idea Finder, 2005). Its inventor is unknown, but the abacus is often referred to as the “first computer” (No Author, 2005). Russel and Sorge (1994) have argued that in the process of innovation and change different types or forms of technology have always been a part of education—pencils, paper, books, chalkboards, copy machines and other innovations and have suggested that technology should not be used with the notion of just using technology rather it should be used as a tool to enhance what goes on in the classroom. Selecting the appropriate type of technology for instruction requires knowledge of the full variety of available technology and its uses and limitations. Teachers of middle schools should be professionally trained, not only to use the technology, but should also be equipped to teach through technology.
Technological advances in society have had a significant impact in the field of education. It serves as both impetus for change and as a tool for bringing continuity and consistency in the change. To ensure that adolescents become successful adults they must feel acquainted with and have confidence in the use of technology. The goal of technology infusion in schools is to advantage the students and teachers in a society and workplace that is increasingly dominated by technology and to improve student achievement. Consequently, Schoolis (1999) has insisted that change is best accomplished at the school site by having a focus on technology as a priority in the budget and in the action plan. Elliot (1999) has contended that educational leaders must set the example in technology usage. They must demonstrate to students and staff that technology tools can benefit them in their everyday lives.

The California Planning Commission for Educational Technology (1992) has suggested five essential components for integrating technology into the school-site curriculum such as; personal development; infrastructure, hardware, technical support and software; funding and budget; and monitoring and evaluation. Whereas, DEETYA (1997, p. 50) has identified three reasons for introducing technology into the classrooms: learning technology (i.e., how to use it); learning through technology and learning about technology. Thus an overwhelming literature (Lemke, 2005; Mauch, 2001; Prestridge & Watson, 2002) has noted that technology helps students to develop planning, organizational, and communication skills that will enhance their opportunities in future careers in business. Community organizations have also utilized this equipment for long distance communications. Technology infusion has allowed for curriculum integration of web-based lessons. Web-based lessons are designed by a team of teachers work in the classroom with students to demonstrate how to integrate the technology with instructional lessons. Students can, for example, participate in video conferences with authors, museums, or even visit a shuttle at NASA.

Middle school technology advocates (Atkins & Vasu, 2000; Hill, 1993) stress the importance of instilling in students a sense of excitement about technology and engaging families in adolescents’ education. It is argued that technology is important to students’ learning success, as the use of technology lets students make choices; a feeling of mastery is developed among the students. Means and Olson (1997) have noted that the use of technology can contribute to students’ sense of authenticity and to “real life” quality of the task at hand.
3.5.5 Career development

A review of literature reveals that, at the beginning of the 21st century, the workplace provides a very different environment than that of 20th century (Jarvis & Keeley, 2003; Kerka, 1992; Whiston, 2002). The need for career education in middle schools has been widely debated in the literature. Cohen, Blanc, Christman, Brown and Sims (1996) argue that it may be difficult for adolescents to handle the knowledge of career development who are already struggling to cope with their challenges of physiological, psychological, social and cognitive changes associated with puberty, but Jarvis and Keeley (2003) suggest that career building skills need to be mastered by students of all ages at all stages of their education. Jackson and Davis (2000) have argued that, in a rapidly changing society, young adolescents are entering into a sophisticated, technology-driven work place about which they may not be familiar. Hence, middle grades students need to know what the demands of the work place will be in order to guide their choices in school. Maddy-Bernstein (2000) has contended that career guidance is a component of the guidance program designed to assist students in their career development, and career counselling is the portion of the guidance program involving counselling students concerning their career development.

Saskatchewan Education (1995), in Canada, has noted that the main purpose of middle level career guidance should be to empower all students to reach their fullest potential. In the report, it is further argued that, according to the concept of life career development, it is unlikely to prepare young people for their life of work without occupational discovery. Thus the students should be exposed to a range of occupational opportunities, and acquire more information about the knowledge, skills and values required in the world of work. Consequently, the career development of adolescents should be a planned process in which educators, parents, government agencies, and community work together to provide students with hope for the future and to empower them to believe in themselves.

Schwartz (1994, p. 2) has recommended that schools should take the following steps to combine general middle school education strategies with vocational education:

- Explore with students how they can successfully live and work in a culturally diverse world.
- Help students recognize their interests, aptitudes, and abilities, and understand adult roles.
• Help students understand the broad scope of work and career possibilities available currently and in the future.
• Help students broaden their aspirations beyond the stereotypes of gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.
• Integrate vocational and academic education to promote intellectual development, and the acquisition of higher level think and problem-solving skills.
• Assist with students’ development of social skills, personal values, and self-esteem.
• Work with families to support their children’s career aspirations.

Summary of the section
In the literature guidance and counselling for all education systems and intervention and special assistance in particular in the middle schooling program is considered crucial for enhanced educational, psychological, social emotional and career development of the adolescents.

Literature has emphasised that academic support; counselling and advisory services; health and physical education; technologically resourced and career development program should be a part of the routine curriculum of a school.

3.6 HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Much like partners in business, partners in education must work hard to clarify their mutual interests in the children they share (Epstein, 1995).

3.6.1 Introduction
For the purpose of this study, conceptual, empirical, and strategic literature on the influence of collaborative home, school and community partnerships has been explored. This review of literature not only reflects partnerships discourse but also partnerships ideology. It focuses in particular on the historical and philosophical perspective of partnership, theoretical support for school, family and community partnerships, the framework of family, school and community partnerships, the nature of and reason for partnerships, research on the advantages of partnerships on the stakeholders and the importance of partnerships for middle schools.

The role of the family and community in children’s learning is as important today as it was considered paramount in the past. A synthesis of many research studies, which examine the relationship between home school and community partnerships, reveals the simultaneous effect of home, school and community on children’s growth and development. Research supports the
commonsensical notions that positive connection through school, family and community partnerships create a healthier school environment, greater spread of leadership in the school, strengthened parenting skills, better community service, and improved academic skills (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Reed, Jones, Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; Salinas, Epstein, Sanders, Davis & Douglas, 1999; Tett, 2001; Thomson, 2002; Wolfendale, 1999).

3.6.2 Historical and philosophical perspective of partnerships

While formalized schooling for most children is relatively recent, it has been a feature of many cultures and civilizations for certain selected children. In most cases, the family held prime responsibility for the education of most children. In Middle Kingdom Egypt schooling was restricted to the education of royal children, and a few non-royals picked by the king (Ibrahim, 1995), while in sixth century Greek society children were seen as the future of civilization and school governance was regulated along with parents’ responsibilities. With the decline of the Roman Empire, the church took responsibility of formal education, but basic skills were still taught by the family, as they had been throughout previous ages (Berger, 1991).

While it has been long recognized that a child begins to learn from birth in response to experiences at home (Locke, 1964; Rousseau, 1979) the relationship between parents and schools in modern times has been a variable one. According to Lankard (1995), schools and community have been involved with each other since the 1800’s, but their relationship was not formalized into a partnership until the 1970’s in Australia. This contrasts with the founding of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in the US in 1897 (National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 2003). Gamage (1996) provides a brief historical account of the development of school/community partnerships in Australia and discusses the effect of a tradition of centralized, bureaucratic control on the capacity of schools to develop effective partnerships. The gradual devolution of educational administration during the second half of the 20th century saw the introduction, throughout Australia, of governing bodies (School Councils, School Boards, and School Committees) which directly involved parents and members of the broader community in school governance.
An un-official document known as the Currie report (Currie, 1967) is considered a landmark of school community partnership. In 1973, Philips Huges in his official capacity supported the recommendation of the Currie Report, which led to the Karmel Report 1973. This report authorized parental participation in the school. Following the Karmel Report, the Australian Schools Commission (ASC) gave a sweeping assertion that ‘when teachers and community are involved together in making real decisions about educational alternatives [then] a true mutual responsibility will grow’ (Australian Schools Commission, 1975, p. 9).

Having passed through different developmental phases the concept of community participation in Australian school systems is now acknowledged as an accepted phenomenon and most schools have programs in place. Barratt (1998) has noted, “Community oriented parents, together with representatives from a diverse range of groups, institutions and organisations beyond the school are involved in productive partnerships”. Realising the need and importance of parental involvement in education, the University of Canberra is running a program called ‘Parents as Tutors’, a literacy intervention program.

Today the role of parents and the community is widely accepted as an essential part of successful schooling. Recent major legislation, the Educate America Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), has made parents’ involvement in their children’s education a national priority in the US (Baker & Soden, 1998, p. 1). On a global level the OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation conducted a study that showed that a wide range of countries recognize the important role of both families and schools in the education of young people (Kelley-Laine, 1998).

Street (1998) discusses the findings of the Successful Schools Project in the UK that has achieved its objective of promoting home-school partnership in secondary education and found parental involvement of great importance in adolescents’ education. Filp (1998), writing about changing school-family relationships in Chile, states that ‘family-school collaboration is one of the central contributors to children’s successful development and learning’. Kohler (1998), seeing the parents as partners in Germany, illustrates that ‘home-school cooperation is not an exotic garden, but rather it is the potato field we need to cultivate in order to keep us alive’. Home-school
partnerships should be cultivated, to improve students’ everyday lives and their education, for the benefit of tomorrow.

Ravn (1998), referring to the Basic School Act of 1993, highlights the continued emphasis on links between schools and their surrounding communities on decentralized decision-making and home-school cooperation in the Danish education system. Kelley-Laine (1998) in a broader perspective concludes that parents and other family members are children’s first and enduring teachers, responsible for their early socialization, and for setting a mental and emotional foundation upon which the school and community will build.

3.6.3 Conceptions of education partnerships

In recent years there has been a shift in inquiries about educational partnership practices, from an emphasis on whether partnership efforts have an effect on education to how, when and which parts of partnership practices are improving education. Lieberman and Miller (2000) argue that this shift in research and practice is in part a result of the changing context of teaching and learning. Marti (2000) defines the home-school partnership as a student-centred, dynamic framework that endorses collegial, interdependent, and co-equal styles of interaction between families and educators who work jointly together to achieve common goals. For Sanders (2001, p. 20) it is connections between schools and community individuals, organisation, and businesses that are bound to promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Franklin and Streeter (1995) view partnerships as the point in time when school, families, and communities have agreed to work together with a formal plan to develop initiatives that will improve education. The Connecticut State Board of Education (1997) defines school-family-community partnerships as the continuous planning, support and participation of school personnel, families and community organisations in coordinated activities and efforts at home, in the school and in the community that directly and positively affect the success of all children’s learning. Each partner is viewed as an equally contributing member, maintaining certain independence while acknowledging shared responsibility.

Vickers, Minke and Anderson (2001) believe that true collaboration occurs when key ingredients like connection, optimism, respect and empowerment are present. Fullan (1997, pp. 42-43) believes that “nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and
families/community working together in partnership—These forms of (parent) involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation”. They happen by explicit strategic intervention. To promote comprehensive partnerships, schools must provide a variety of opportunities for schools, families, and communities to work together (Rutherford, Anderson & Billig, 1995). These programs must be based upon mutual respect and interdependence of home, school, and community (McAfee, 1987).

Baker (1997) defines parental involvement as “any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child’s development or direct parent participation with a child’s school in the interest of the child”. Goddard et al. (2001) conclude that the extent to which teacher-student and teacher-parent interactions are productive is affected by the trust that holds these relationships together.

3.6.4 Theoretical perspective on educational partnerships

Sanders and Epstein (1998b) have argued that, in the last decade, developments in social theory have provided greater insight into how strong connections between schools, families, and communities enhance children’s learning and social and emotional growth and well-being. Epstein’s (1995) theory of overlapping spheres on school school-family-community partnerships alters earlier understandings of the influence that each of these institutions has on children. It was commonly thought that there was a sequential influence of family, school, and community on the growth and development of a child. The family was viewed as primarily responsible for nurturing the child and laying the foundation for his or her entry into school. The school was seen as the socializing agent that prepared the child for his or her role in the larger community (Sanders & Epstein, 1998b). The authors also attempted to clarify how children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influence and insisted that these three spheres must form partnerships to best meet the needs of students. The main principle of this theory is that certain goals, such as student achievements, motivation and learning are of interest of each of these institutions and can be best achieved though their interaction, cooperation and support.

Sanders and Epstein (1998a) maintain that home, school and community connections around the world are becoming more formal and purposeful to ensure that all students receive the support necessary for academic and personal success. A program ‘Teachers Involve Parents in
Schoolwork’ (TIPS) developed by Epstein (1992b) recognizes that when students reach the middle school levels, parents often find it hard to help children in their homework, because it is getting more difficult. The TIPS program suggests that the educator should design interactive homework (Epstein, 2001b) that enables the students to share their work with a family member and allow families to comment and request other information from teachers. Likewise, all families can be involved, not just those who require parents to learn skills with particular subject matter.

The reasons for increasing educational partnerships identified by the policy makers of OECD countries (Kelley-Laine, 1998) are democracy, accountability, consumer choice, and level for raising standards, tackling disadvantages and improving equity, addressing social problems, and resources. Parents have their own reasons for educational partnerships, such as students’ achievement, parental education, communication, influence, support for schools, and support from schools, while the business community wants to have students better prepared for a knowledge-based economy.

Phelps (1999), citing Boyer (1995, p.49), has emphasised that “It’s not the school that’s failed; it’s the partnership that’s failed”. Indeed, every teacher entering the profession today must consider how to form partnerships that are more meaningful with parents to better facilitate student learning. The teacher must realise that school community partnership is a connection between schools and community individuals, organisations, and businesses that are forged to promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Sanders, 2001).

Home-school partnership is no longer a luxury. There is an urgent need for schools to find ways to support the success of all children. When our focus is on improving the achievement of children at academic risk, partnership with families is not just useful – it is crucial (Swap, 1993 cited in Quality Educational Programs, 2005).

3.6.5 Importance of partnerships at middle schools

The literature has overwhelmingly emphasised the home environment effects on the academic achievement of children (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Baharudin & Luster, 1998; Featherstone & Cundick, 1992; Gerris & Dekovic, 1997; Harris & Gibbon, 1996; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Epstein (1997) has emphasised that helping students succeed in school is an ongoing process, requiring attention every year—from preschool through high school—from teachers, families,
and the students themselves. In support of Epstein, Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) have argued that a great deal of research has focused on the importance of parental involvement in the early years of schooling but that parental involvement is equally important for older students. Similarly, Beyer, Patrikakou and Weissberg (2003) believe that school-family partnerships are especially important for adolescents who are entering a developmental period filled with physical, cognitive, social changes and emotional turmoil. Parent-teacher collaboration can help adolescents fulfil their changing developmental need. Rioux and Berla (1993), discussing the needs of parents and family involvements at the middle school level suggested that parent involvement is no less important at the middle school level than at elementary level. Rapid physical growth, emotional turmoil, and a need to plan for high school and beyond all require continued involvement by parents. Sanders and Epstein (2000) found that, although adolescents need more independence than younger children, the need for guidance and support of caring adults in the home, school, and community during this time in their lives is very important.

Johnston and Williamson (1998) believe that true school reform means working with communities to identify their concerns and then trying to make changes to benefit students and their families. To do that, schools must begin by listening—quietly and sincerely—so they hear what their clients (parents) are saying about needed reforms in middle level education.

Patrikakou (1997) and Trusty (1999) have argued that although parental involvement is important, there is little research investigating issues of parental involvement for students around the middle and high school age. Despite the fact, that problems are more likely to occur during the transitional years, such as moving from elementary to middle school, or middle school to high school (Robertson, 1997), the literature on parent involvement in child and adolescent education has decisively identified that parental involvement declines as students make the transition from elementary to the middle grades (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Hollifield, 1994). Similarly, Useem (1992) found that parents of children in the middle grades received less information and guidance precisely at a time when they needed more in order to understand the larger and more complex schools, subjects, and schedules.
Home, school and community are the places where middle grade students learn and are actively involved. Students express a desire for independence and want more control over the decisions that they make. Furthermore, this is the time when parents’ attention may be diverted to younger children in the family, leaving less time for adolescents. Young adolescents may not feel comfortable with the presence of their parents in the school, or teachers may not encourage the active involvement of parents. The reasons could be many, but Rutherford et al. (1995) found that during the middle grades, the relationship of adolescents with their parents, their teachers, other young people and their communities changes. The authors emphasised that adolescence is a time when responsibilities and decision-making change, not only for middle grade students, but also for school personnel, parents and families, and the community at large. Epstein (2001a) has discussed the two main reasons of why families do not participate during the middle years.

1. Middle grade educators do not seek volunteers assuming that students do not want their parents at school.

2. Parents report that they do not volunteer in their children’s middle school, in part, because many are working during the school day and in part, because they are not invited.

Ellis and Hughes (2002) put it in a different way, “educators want family and community members to be involved in ways that add to student achievement, but do not detract from their teaching nor add additional duties to their overwhelming workload”. At the same time, “stressed out and overloaded” parents, “juggling jobs, household responsibilities, and their children’s activities,” want to be involved in ways that “help their children to succeed in education and life without adding irrelevant activities to their already busy schedules”. For many, the stakes are high, time is short, and every activity has to count. If we are to reverse this trend then educators, families, and community members must be willing to identify causes for the low interaction rates.

Research (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Sanders & Epstein, 1998b) reveals countless reasons for developing collaborative educational partnerships at the middle grade level. For example, successful partnerships can enable middle grade students to build a sense of belonging in their school community, become motivated about education, improve skill in communicating with adults, and generate an awareness of options for future education and employment. A successful partnership at this level can also help school personnel and community members gain a stronger understanding of unique needs of adolescent growth and development.
and an increased appreciation for the many skills, talents, and contributions of adults within the larger community.

When middle schools develop comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships, they can involve the families of early adolescents in many ways that are developmentally appropriate and responsive (Sanders & Epstein, 1998b). Research also shows that there are ways middle schools can overcome such impediments. Keeping a ‘parent room in the building, and sponsoring parent-to-parent communication and events are key parts of an effective parent-involvement program in the middle grades (Berla, Henderson & Kerewsky, 1989). Sanders and Epstein (1998a) in a summary of international research, has highlighted five main themes showing that the needs of communities around the world were extremely similar.

1. All parents care about their children, hence their role is crucial for their child’s success in school.
2. The existence and efficacy of community partnerships determine who becomes involved and to what extent.
3. The goal is to successfully and efficiently implement partnerships through further training for teachers and administrators.
4. The focus is on increasing partnerships through local, state, and national policy development.
5. Continued multi-national research is necessary to understand and meet the ongoing needs of all communities. Therefore, Epstein states that if these five themes are incorporated into the development of community partnerships, success will follow.

### 3.6.6 Framework for home, school and community partnerships

The framework for understanding the range of activities involved in parents-school partnerships has been developed by many (e.g. Epstein, Salinas & Jackson, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Limerick, 1995; National Parent and Teachers Association (PTA), 1997; Sanders & Epstein, 1998a; Soliman, 1995). Epstein (1995) identified six types of family, school, and community involvements for comprehensive partnerships which have been frequently documented in the literature and have been adopted by many practitioners. Most notable is the Department of Education Youth and Family Services Policy (2001) developed by the Community Partnerships and School Development Section in ACT Australia which was based on Epstein’s
framework and which provides an approach to be implemented toward improved partnership. It has the following six dimensions.

**Parenting**

Parenting is defined as schools imparting training, and awareness among the parents to help families providing healthy and safe environment for their children, and ‘maintain a home environment that encourages learning and good behaviour in school’. It is expected that parents will provide a peaceful and secure environment for their children. Parents should have a high expectation of the child’s educational attainments. Parents should have a certain amount of control over the time for the child going out with friends, appropriate monitoring of television viewing (Clark, 1993; Finn, 1998), and supervision of academic/behavioural activities (doing homework, doing household chores, and maintaining a certain academic achievements).

The literature suggests that adolescents should be involved in household chores. Fuligni (2002) insisted that everyone has to contribute to household responsibilities and adolescents are no exception. Contributions can be a positive way of reframing the notion of chores, which help them feel good about what they are doing and about their self-concepts. Contributions to household responsibilities are a way of giving and of showing love. Without opportunities to contribute to the family, adolescents are being denied chances to grow both in generosity and in learning responsibility.

Shumow and Lomax (2001) and Xu (2003) in further extending this view suggest that a supportive home environment includes the supervision and structure that parents give children outside of school to support their education, such as limiting television viewing time and providing structured time for homework and learning. Effective middle schools are expected to assist families with parenting and child rearing skills. Similarly, planned workshops and training programs based on research should help the school staff in understanding the families of their students. Herman, Dornbusch and Herron (1997) suggest boundaries to control the deviance such as substance abuse and delinquency in youth. These boundaries include parental monitoring, household organisation, routines, and decision-making.
CHAPTER FOUR

**Communicating**

Communicating defined as a method used for the purpose of ‘designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about children’s behaviour, their academic performance, and communication regarding the school’s academic program and student placements. Many studies (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Goodman & Sutton, 1995; Helling, 1996; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999) consider home-school communication to be among the most important factors in developing strong relationships between teachers and families. Information from school is the primary means parents have to understand their children’s level of success or failure in school. Cameron and Lee (1997) believe that parents can assist their children more effectively if they have complete information regarding the school activities their children are engaged in. Simultaneously, teachers who possess more complete information regarding a child’s home experience can better understand and more effectively instruct the child.

Baker, Kessler, Piotrkowski and Parker (1999) maintain that though communication often implies interaction and reciprocity much family-school communication is characterized primarily as one-way communicating to, rather than with, parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002) have identified certain barriers, which are mostly of psychological in nature, experienced by parents as well as by teachers. The literature suggests two primary sources of barriers. One involves factors that are beyond the control of schools such as poverty, parents’ education level and health. The other can be addressed by the schools and can be recognised as parents feeling of intimidation or exclusion or teachers’ misconceptions due to language or cultural differences. Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002, p. 14) further suggest that schools may make themselves more welcoming, prepare to support strong family-school communication and family involvement in students’ education. The Department of Education Youth and Family Services, ACT (2001) has issued a policy suggesting many ways for involving parents emphasising two-way communication.

**Volunteering**

Volunteering defined as a process designed ‘to recruit and organise parent help and support’. Schools find ways for parents’ involvement in school programs and plan effective methods of parent recruitment. This type of involvement is characterized by family and community members...
in the form of mentors, teaching assistants, special event organisers and so on. Volunteering enables families to give their time and talents to support schools, teachers, and children. At times parents volunteer themselves for classroom, school activities and fund raising and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs. The Carnegie report (1989), *Turning points*, emphasises the importance of increasing the school community connection particularly for young adolescents. This report urged greater opportunities for community placement in volunteer service organisation and in job setting. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders and Simon\(^\text{18}\) (1997) have enumerated a set of sample activities for schools to implement volunteering.

**Learning at home**

Learning at home defined as strategies used ‘to provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions, and planning’. Cooper (1994; , 2001) has argued that parent involvement with homework can have both positive effects (e.g. a mechanism for praising student achievement) and negative effects (e.g. confusing children with methods that differ from those of the teacher). Research suggests that school should organise a program for parents for homework help, including school-developed homework that encourages parent-child interaction as well as more general strategies that schools and families use to support effective homework. It is also suggested that school-developed training for parents in strategies, tools, and resources to support learning in specific school subjects (Clark, 1993; Cooper, 2001; Cooper, Lindsay, Nye & Greathouse, 1998; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999; Van-Voorhis, 2003).

Epstein et al. (1995) insisted that educators design interactive homework that enables all youngsters to conduct guided conversations with parents. Epstein and Dauber (1991) also emphasised that regardless of parent education, family size, student ability, or school level (elementary or middle school), parents are more likely to become partners in their children’s education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school, at home on homework, and at home on reading activities.

\(^{18}\) For details see Epstein et al. (1997a)
This type of involvement requires a commitment from families to engage in multiple methods of supervision and assistance with their child is work and other activities and a helping hand from the schools for parents to enhance their child’s learning opportunities through private lessons, and discussion of how often parents talk to their child about school related experiences and plans. Marchant, Sharon and Rothlisberg (2001, p. 516) stated that students’ perceptions of a positive school environment would enhance their motivations to achieve, but it is the more personal messages delivered by individual relationships with parents and teachers that enhance students’ sense of being academically capable.

Finn (1998), discussing the importance of parents’ engagement in children’s schooling, argues that children whose parents converse regularly with them about school experiences perform better, academically, than children who rarely discuss school with their parents. Finn (1998), citing (Clark, 1983; Lamborn et al. 1992; & Steinberg, 1996), found that other researchers also identify parent-child discussions as of prime importance by suggesting that parents should encourage their children to discuss their difficulties, as well as successes, and play an advisory and persistently supportive role, especially when children find themselves in a critical situation.

**Decision-making**

Decision-making defined as a process designed ‘to include parents in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives’ (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997). This type of involvement requires that school must restructure the role and responsibilities of all adults who are involved in the schooling of children. This power sharing is the essence of the concept of partnership (Moore & Lasky, 2001). It is suggested that, if all parents are consulted by their school, and some are involved in making decisions, then there is more likely to be a better ‘fit’ of services and community and parent need. He suggests that other outcomes such as elimination of duplication of services and better use of resources in the community are also possible (Neilsen, 1995).

Rutherford et al. (1995) have argued that adolescence is the time during which relationships change between children and parents, and between students and teachers. This is the time when responsibilities and decision-making change, not only for middle grade students, but also for school personnel, parents and families and communities at large. Home school and community are the places where middle grade students learn and are actively involved. Students want more
control over the decisions that they make. Rutherford et al. (1995) found that a constant challenge to middle grade school/family and community partnerships is coordinating information and efforts around all stakeholders to create a whole picture of the student. These partnerships can help to construct an environment where the views of each player is given due credence and decisions are taken collectively.

**Collaborating with community**

Collaborating with community defined as opportunities ‘to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen schools programs and student learning and development (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997). Jackson and Davis (2000, p. 26) have provided concluding remarks that “Families do not succeed without community support, and communities do not succeed without support from families”. This type of involvement includes both service to the community by students, families and school personnel and service to the school by community groups, businesses, human service professionals and neighbourhood officials.

Schools are expected to guide parents to support their children to participate in community organisations and activities, such as encouraging them to visits museums and participation in scouting and sports. Community members and business leaders often view the middle grades as a more “visible” time for adolescents. During the middle grades, parents and families begin to allow children to go to public places, such as shopping centres or malls, either alone or in small groups. The middle grades are also a time when the community begins to see the adolescent population as consumers, with the ability to make independent decisions about purchasing goods and services. Community and business leaders expressed a desire to be involved in partnerships with schools that allow students to experience the “real world of work” and the responsibilities of participating in community life (Rutherford, Anderson & Billig, 1995).

The National Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) (1997) in USA has identified one hundred ways for involving parents in school decision making and advocacy in their child’s education, and has also suggested six standards, which are predominantly very close to Epstein’s (1992b) typology.
Summary of the section

A large body of research and policy strongly suggests that the level of participation by their parents in their education and school directly influences the attitude of adolescents towards their learning, attendance, motivation, self-concept and their outlook towards life. It is evident from the research and literature that parents and families play a pivotal role in children’s learning. This relationship is mutually beneficial between educators, parents and community that enhance the learning of students. Though the conceptions of partnership vary, there is a consensus in the literature that, to succeed, the partnership must be flexible and based upon mutual trust and respect where all partners share values, objectives and human, material or financial resources, for the attainment of commonly agreed goals, which is mainly the provision of education based on the developmental needs of adolescents.

3.7 LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Learning doesn’t happen without leadership (Institute of Leadership, 2001)

Introduction

This section will discuss the issues of leadership in the middle school. What does leadership mean? What difference does a principal makes in reforming the school environment? In what ways are middle school principals different from a secondary or elementary school counterparts? What role is expected of an effective principal?

There is a voluminous and continually growing body of research focussing on elementary and secondary school leadership and emphasising the importance of strong and effective school leadership and its link to educational excellence (see, e.g. Bartholomay, Wallace & Mason, 2001; Bywaters, 2003; Clark & Clark, 2000; D’Arbon, 2003; Davies, 2005; King, 2002; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Mednick, 2003; Meece, 2003; Olson, 2000; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond & Gundlach, 2003; Resnick & Glennan, 2002). In 1978, Burns put forward a comprehensive definition of leadership, which was broad in nature and could be well suited to all circumstances.

Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to realise goals mutually held by both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978, pp. 18-19).
According to Scheerens and Bosker (2000, p. 106) “educational leadership can be seen as a phenomenon that needs to strike a balance between several extremes: direction versus giving leeway to autonomous professionals, monitoring versus counselling and using structure and procedures versus creating a shared (achievement oriented) culture”. Similarly, Edmonds (1979) has contended that “Strong leadership from the principal is the single most important factor in schools that work”. Keller (1998, p. 25) in his support added that twenty years of research strongly suggest that they (principals) make a big difference in shaping the education that goes on in a school. If a school is going to succeed academically, it needs someone whose potential cannot be summed up on a scoreboard.

Based on a review of several research studies during the period of 1993 to 1998, Caldwell (1998) has provided a conclusive statement that the principals play an important role in linking the structural aspects of reform in learning and teaching. Similarly Dufour (2001) believes that an effective principal concentrates on a foundation of programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits which makes them a successful leader. Lashway (2003) maintains that determining the principal’s role is not just an abstract exercise. Researchers and authors have also added credence by providing rich descriptions of leadership attributes and behaviour. The professional literature has emphasised the critical role of the principal in improving schools and increasing students’ achievement. Hallinger and Anast (1992, p. 410) have suggested that “the image of forceful principal leadership in curriculum and instruction became embedded in the mind of policy makers as a critical element of school reforms”.

3.7.1 Attributes of middle school leaders

Leadership in effective middle schools is seen as a collaborative process attracting numerous stakeholders including teachers, parents, students and community at large. The literature provides convincing evidence that, unlike the principals of elementary and secondary schools, the role and responsibilities of middle school principals are more challenging. This role demands considerable attributes specific to meeting the emotional, social, physical, biological and academic needs of young adolescents. The middle level principal is identified as a transformational leader, who shares a vision and works to promote a collaborative development of either that vision or a collective vision of the school. The middle school principal is the primary change agent in the school. The principal is seen as an expert in teaching and learning who facilitates professional
development processes within the school and ensures that teachers have the opportunity to get the learning they need so they can make the changes in instruction and assessment of curriculum that will affect student learning (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

A recent study conducted by Valentine, Clark and Hackman (2002) has also supported the need for specialized knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to middle-level leadership. The middle school principal is at the heart of every school. His or her knowledge, insight, commitment, and leadership will determine to a great extent how well equipped the school is at addressing its challenges and how balanced it is in seizing its opportunities (Petzko et al., 2002).

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) has recommended that for collaborative leadership and decision making, middle school principals need to seek more involvement from students, parents and staff. The report pointed out that because of the various developmental needs of early adolescents, the middle school principal’s role has to be flexible on nearly all decisions relating to curriculum, behaviour and social activities. It is further reported that the “principal is open-minded and willing to listen; he or she creates an environment in which each house can be a truly creative enterprise” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989, pp. 55-56).

In middle school principal, while addressing the numerous needs of pre-adolescents’ also embraces the middle school teachers’ needs. These teachers need to be trained, informed and guided to instruct adolescents. Middle school principal leadership behaviour must address and facilitate professional development opportunities in basic staff meetings that focus on middle school teaching and learning issues, teacher empowerment strategies, knowledge of middle school concepts and specific teaching and learning facilities required for adolescents. The middle school principal is responsible for improving learning in all of the decisions made by the leadership team in classrooms, and in team meetings (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

The literature provides rich descriptions of leadership attributes and behaviour. Most of the attributes identified pertain to effective middle school principalship. Valentine (2002) believes that middle school leadership and educational leadership in general really have more in common than they have differences. They are both based on the best ways to create schools that fit the developmental needs of students—effective schools are student-centred.
Krug (1992) and Parker and Day (1997) have enumerated the following five key attributes of instructional leadership:

1. Defining mission
2. Managing curriculum and instruction
3. Supervising teaching
4. Monitoring student progress
5. Promoting instructional climate

For the purposes of this research, following five attributes associated with the effective middle school principal have been identified to investigate and discuss the leadership in the sample schools of the ACT.

### 3.7.1.2 Principals’ concerns for the vision and mission statement

Effectiveness is measured by the extent to which a “compelling vision” empowers others to excel; the extent to which meanings are found in one’s work; and the extent to which individual and organisation are bound together by common commitment in a mutually rewarding symbiotic relationship (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984, p. 71).

Vision, purposes and beliefs are key parts of effective leadership (Bennis, 1984). A vision has the capacity to unite a school community (Barth, 1990) through widespread engagement of everyone in the community, but it is the principal’s role to articulate this vision, to secure widespread engagement with it and to promote its successful fulfilment (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Lemahieu, Roy & Foss, 1997).

The National Middle School Association [NMSA] in 1995 updated its vision of a model middle-level program, by stating that effective middle school practitioners make a conscious effort to work with young adolescents. They understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach (NMSA 1995).

In contrast to the above findings and discussions, Fullan (1992, p. 19) has suggested that undue emphasis on vision in leadership can be misleading. Vision can blind leaders in a number of ways—the high-powered, charismatic principal who “radically transforms the school” in four or
five years can be blinding and misleading as a role model”. He believes that in most cases such schools decline after the leader leaves. He reiterates that principals are blinded by their own vision when they feel they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it. In response to this, Anoh (2002, p. 1) has argued that great leaders develop sustainable structures so that “the library does not burn” in their absence. Developing these structures implies building and maintaining a collaborative relationship between schools and stakeholders recognising that schools do not operate in a vacuum. The persistent theme emerging out of the above review of literature is that effective leaders communicate a strong vision that includes the school’s beliefs about the preferred goals, which creates a community of mind that establishes behavioural norms.

3.7.1.2 Instructional management

Developing a professional learning community through management of curriculum and instruction is another important dimension of strong leadership identified in the literature. Lashway (2003) has argued that instructional leaders set high academic expectations, reviewed lesson plans, supervised classroom instruction, and monitored curriculum. Bossert, Dwyer and Rowan (1982), examining the role of principal as instructional leader, stated that principals are perceived to be strong programmatic leaders who know the learning problems in their classrooms and allocate resources effectively. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) found that leadership of the school takes as its primary mission the reinforcement of the improved learning and instructional opportunities as well as the administrative offices involvements.

Killion (1999) suggested that middle school principals must help to create a community-wide consensus regarding persuasive vision that embodies high expectation for student learning, teaching, and staff development. It is under the control of the principals as school leaders that the professional learning community should be developed in the school for the achievement of improved student learning. Blasé and Blasé (1998) found that the successful leader of a school keeps the teachers informed of the current trends and issues in order to foster innovative teaching (methods, materials and technology). The principal often distributes current educational reports and journal articles. The effects of sharing professional and research literature with the teachers were found to be fruitful in increasing the teachers’ motivation and their reflection on teaching and learning. Blasé and Blasé (1998) also found that good principals kept teachers informed about current literature of classroom teaching practice and innovative curriculum trends. The
teachers are encouraged by the principal to attend workshops, seminars and conferences related to instruction. The value of professional development sessions is enhanced through the active participation of the principal.

Payne and Wolfson (2000) have argued that, since professional development is critical for the success of school improvement initiatives and student achievement, the principal must place a high priority on the continual professional development of the staff in the school. Payne and Wolfson have further suggested that the principal serves as a role model for continual learning and for inspiring professionals to pursue learning for the enhancement of their knowledge. The middle school principal as leader of the professional learning team sets high standards and expectations of lifelong learning for all. By participating in professional growth activities and sharing learning and skill development with others, the principal demonstrates a commitment to continual learning and serves as role model.

More precisely, the literature suggests strongly that the effective middle school principal shares reports, articles and books and other information relevant to educational innovations, research and development. The middle school principal encourages teachers to make presentations at conferences and conventions to share knowledge and practice with their counterparts and serves as facilitator for the development of professional learning communities.

3.7.1.3 Supervising teaching

The third dimension of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997) was that of supervising teaching. For the principal as instructional leader, this means that one must be aware of the current instructional approaches being used for educating adolescents in the middle school. On a daily basis, teachers are the ones who enact the mission through engaging in activities with students. Instructional leadership therefore includes supervising or reflecting on teaching as one of the five dimensions. This concept includes working with the teachers over time and across different situations regarding teaching skills. Many principals develop opportunities that allow teachers to reflect on recent experiences and share those with others. Sparks (2002, p. 1-1) has asserted that “If quality teaching is to occur in every classroom, all the teachers must be supported in turn by skilful principals who work systems that support their sustained development as instructional leaders”.

Blasé and Blasé (1998, p. 11) having the understanding that there is scarcity of knowledge in the literature about the role of leaders as effective instructional, conducted a study of more than 800 teachers of elementary, middle and high schools in the United States. Teachers were requested to write a detailed description of principals’ positive and negative characteristics and exactly how such characteristics affected them and their performance in the classroom (p. 5). They found three aspects of effective instructional leadership behaviour to be imperative, talking with teachers (conferencing), fostering teacher reflection and promoting teachers’ professional growth.

Talking with the teachers (conferencing) is considered as lying at the ‘heart of instructional supervision’ (Blasé & Blasé, 1998, p. 19) and is described as involving knowledge and skill in the following areas:

- classroom observation and data-gathering methods;
- teaching methods, skills and repertoires;
- understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning;
- knowing how to make the conference reflective and non-threatening;
- communication skills (e.g. acknowledging, paraphrasing, summarising, clarifying and elaborating on information); and
- awareness of the stage of development, career state, levels of abstraction and commitment, learning style, concerns about innovation and background of the teacher (p. 20).

Reflection, according to Blase´ and Blase´ (1998, p. 156) is promoted by classroom observation, dialogue, suggestion and praise, and was associated with collegial enquiry, critical thinking and expanding teacher repertoires. The literature has identified certain behaviours of effective leaders within this area. These include:

1. Spending time in the classroom and listening to teachers (Keller, 1998);
2. Using coaching skills, encouraging risk taking (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995);
3. Encouraging teacher leadership and initiatives (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995).

As noted by Keller (1998) important instructional leadership behaviour involved spending time in the classroom and listening to teachers. It is argued that guided supervision, as an alternative mode of nurturing professional development is a key to empowerment and instructional improvement wherein teachers develop inquiry skills, self-reflection skills and insight through
internal dialogue. Middle school principals should empower teachers as members of a team, “within the developmentally appropriate programs of study” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989, p. 59).

Bossert et al. (1982) have suggested that an effective principal provides coherence to their schools, instructional programs, conceptualize instructional goals, sets high academic standards, stays informed of policies and teachers problems, makes frequent classroom visits, creates incentive for learning and maintains student discipline.

Acheson and Gall (1992, p. 11) have insisted that supervision of teachers should move away from the role of an inspector towards the role of a friendly critic or collegial observer, followed by productive feed back, letting the teachers set the goals. They further suggest that “clinical supervision” improves instructions through systematic planning, observation, and intensive intellectual analysis of actual teaching performance. Instructional leadership deserves major attention by principals as most of the school hours and activities concern teaching and learning. A balance between complete autonomy in pedagogy, guidance for skill development and supervision of teachers’ behaviour, norms and values is considered to be optimal (Eden, 2001).

3.7.1.4 Promotion of instructional climate

The literature has identified certain characteristics of an effective leader within this area. These are:

1. Communicating success; promoting positive teaching and learning environment; maintaining high faculty morale (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; Whitaker, 1997);

2. Promoting professional empowerment collaborative decision-making and sharing powers (Boglera & Somechb, 2004; Cranston, 2001; Harris, 2004; Keller, 1998; Lemahieu, Roy & Foss, 1997; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995);

3. Being people-oriented and interactional; having visible presence; being accessible, open-minded and willing to listen (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Niece, 1993; Whitaker & Moses, 1994);

4. Promoting a safe, supportive atmosphere of trust and sharing (Fullan, 2002; Harris & Willower, 1998; Keller, 1998) and

5. Maintaining a high expectation for staff (Niece, 1993).
Middle school teachers need to be given the direction and academic freedom necessary to empower them to do their job effectively and produce optimal student achievement outcomes (Beane, 1991; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p. 54) has made significant suggestions for empowering middle school teachers. It is suggested that teachers must have greater authority to make key decisions that affect the daily instructional program. “Dramatically improving outcomes for young adolescents requires individualized, responsive, and creative approach to teaching that will occur only when teachers are able to use their intimate knowledge of students to design instructional program”. It is further suggested that students must be provided a chance to witness teachers making decisions as they serve as role models for young adolescents. Increasingly students who want responsibility, independence, and self-direction can be involved in decision-making. More precisely, teachers and students in the school should feel that they are part of a responsive educational system in which they have clear rights and responsibilities.

It is expected that the principal should have a charismatic personality, whose personal authority and influence is so magnetic that it attracts people to them and creates followers (MacBeath, 1998). Research on effective management stresses the value of an “open-door” policy, where stakeholders feel free to drop in and speak freely what is in their minds (Leithwood, Jantzi & Dart, 1993).

Murphy (1994) found that teachers appear substantially more willing to participate in all areas of decision-making if they perceive that their relationships with their principals are more open, collaborative, facilitative and supportive. They are much less willing to participate if they characterize their relationships with principals as closed, exclusionary, and controlling. Distributing leadership in this way goes beyond merely delegating responsibilities for tasks; it provides regular opportunities for everyone in the school community to share what they are learning about their own practice (King, 2002).

Lober (1991, p. 24) emphasised that when people are involved in the decision-making process, and decisions are reached through shared decision-making and consensus, the participants feel a sense of ‘ownership’ in the decisions. Elmore (2000) presents another view of leadership in the context of standards-based reform. To achieve large-scale improvement in student learning, he
writes, the concept of leadership needs to be “de-romanticized”. Because most of the improvement must come from the people who are directly responsible for instruction, not from the management of instruction, leadership needs to be distributed throughout a school organisation based on individual predispositions, interests, knowledge, skills, and roles. Distributed leadership means “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture” (Elmore, 2000, p.15).

It is consistently argued that leadership resides within the whole school community rather than solely with those who hold formal positions of authority. It is the responsibility of the principal to share leadership among educators, community partners, and residents; maintaining close relations with parents and others; and advocating school capacity building (Goldring, 1995).

### 3.7.1.5 Organisational management

Organisational management is identified as including ongoing collaborative processes, a willingness to engage in professional learning and growth and reflecting on and experimenting with ongoing practices, as well as an ability to align activities with the school’s mission, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, leadership, and feedback and accountability (Mulford, 2003). It is further interpreted by Hallinger and Anast (1992, p. 418) that the principal is “a leader of instruction as well as an efficient manager; a team player with strengthened communication and leadership skills, a role model of personal and professional improvement; and a key change agent in the improvement of school environment, curriculum and instruction”. Hess (2003) argues that leadership is both an art and a skill. It entails both the ordinary skills of managing routine processes and the dynamic task of leading individuals through technological, organisational, and cultural change. Emphasising the changing roles of principal the US Department of Education (1999, p. 6) has argued, today’s leaders must shift their focus from the B’s (budgets, books, buses, bonds, and buildings), to the C’s (communication, collaboration, and community building)”. Whitaker (1999, p. 352) has made a significant contribution by adding that current and aspiring principals need to understand the changing and demanding role of principal.
CHAPTER FOUR

Summary of the section

The middle school principal is expected to be proficient in realising the middle schooling philosophy by monitoring and improving the outcomes of instructional practices of middle school teachers, meeting parents of middle school students, and facilitating middle school professional development opportunities. The principal must be able to speak with authority, confidence, and conviction about social and emotional, psychological and intellectual needs that are specific to the middle grade students.

The strong middle school principal must address not only the numerous pre-adolescent needs but also the needs of the middle school teachers. These teachers must be guided, informed and trained to instruct in accordance with the adolescents’ needs. Middle school principals must address and facilitate professional development opportunities that focus on middle school teaching and learning. As the managerial and instructional leader, the middle school principal is accountable for implementing learning and teaching styles unique to young adolescents, student advisory programs, and exploratory classes.

The role of leadership required in middle schools demands that principals have certain traits: communicate a strong vision, be good listeners, encourage risk-taking, inspire others to do their best, be politically skilful, have commitment, show mutual respect, have confidence, and be sensitive. They must respond well to organisational conflict, lead with an emphasis on culture, be highly visible, be imaginative and creative, and be highly student-centred.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 3 has reviewed the literature and research related to the correlates of effective schools and the elements of the General Design. The review of effective schools research has revealed that correlates of effective schools are directly related to or are complemented the essential elements of middle schooling. One evident difference between these two models is that the former gives emphasis to a learner-centred approach, the latter commits this to young adolescents (see Table 3.1a, p. 56). This review of each element of the General Design has been used to inform the development of the questionnaire through the construction of a series of logic models, described in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. The different sections provide an in-depth description of each methodological process. I have selected the ‘General Design for Whole School Approach to School Improvement’ (Hill & Crévola, 1997) as the theoretical framework for this study to identify and develop criteria for analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the middle schooling program. This chapter also includes a description of the evaluation process of the study, which is based on seven logic models that I prepared before the onset of the evaluation of the middle schooling program. Each logic model contains characteristics, anticipated activities, short term, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the middle schooling program as identified in the literature. The chapter includes a description of the population studied, an explanation of the methods used for obtaining and contacting the sample population. The procedures used to conduct the study are also discussed in this chapter. Instruments are discussed with regard to their preparation, including the data collection process, reliability and validity and scoring. Methods of analysis are also explained.

4.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study utilises a constructivist perspective. This perspective is understood through the works of Schwandt (1994), Crotty (1998), and others (Charmaz, 2000; Delia, 1974; , 1977a; Delia, 1977b; Delia & O'Keefe, 1982; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; , 1994; Jackson & Nexon, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Schwandt, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994) have argued that the constructivist mode of inquiry offers researchers an opportunity to examine in detail the complex human experience as people live and interact within their own social worlds. It aims to understand the variety of constructions that people possess, trying to achieve some consensus of meaning, but always being alert to new explanations with the benefit of experience and increased information. In this study, all the stakeholders of the sample schools (principals, teachers, students and parents) were active participants of the study as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994). With the passage of time both participants’ and
researchers’ constructions mature and become more insightful. A social constructivist theory recognizes that the researcher creates the data and the ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 523).

Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 143) have argued that “constructivists assume that there are many possible interpretations of the same data, all of which are potentially meaningful”. Constructions are therefore not separate from those who make them; they are not part of some ‘objective’ world that exists apart from their constructors. Similarly constructivist theorists believe that reality is not ‘out there’ but in the minds of people; reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors, as is based on the definition people attach to it (Sarantakos, 1998). The participants of constructivist research are conscious, purposive actors who have ideas about their world, can interpret and attach meaning to what is going on around them (Robson, 2002, p. 24). Hence, this research falls in the category of constructivist approach.

Fox (1997, p. 10) defines constructivism as a ‘general theory of perception’ in which “our perception of the world is not seen as a passive ‘taking in’ of stimulation but as an active process of interpretation, making use of our knowledge and expectations in making perceptual sense of the world”. Based on the analogy that constructivist researchers believe that people give meaning to reality, events and phenomena through sustained and ‘complex processes of social interaction’ (Schwandt, 1994), the data collected for this study were comprised of the perceptions, ideas and beliefs of four specific groups of stakeholders (principals, teachers, students and parents). While adopting the constructivist approach my attention was to sensitize multiple realities and the multiple viewpoints within the participants through triangulation as proposed by Charmaz (2000, p. 520). To ensure triangulation, certain similar questions were asked of two or more stakeholders. Hence, this research falls in the category of a constructivist approach.

4.1.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study was strongly influenced by the General Design (Hill & Crevola, 1997). This design was used to develop criteria for analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the program (Figure: 4.1). The Department of Education Employment and Training (DEET) (1999, p. 17), discussing the significance of the model in the field of middle
CHAPTER FOUR

schooling, contended that “the General Design for a Whole School Approach to School Improvement (Hill & Crévola, 1997) provides a useful framework for redesigning the middle years of schooling. The model’s emphasis on a comprehensive, consistent and whole school approach is highly pertinent to the redesigning of Years 5–9”.

Hill (2001a, p. 20) has noted that, after examining the major school-wide reform models that have been developed and piloted in USA, the General Design for a Whole School Approach to School Improvement was developed by Hill and Crévola for improving learning outcomes. According to Hill (2001a, p. 21) “this model, and its nine highly interconnected and interdependent elements, is also being trialed [sic] through Middle Years Research and Development (MYRAD) Project” in Australia. Deakin University (2001, p. 98) has also noted that the General Design was used by the MYRAD project as the starting point for advice to schools on literacy education in the middle years of schooling.

**Figure: 4.1 General Design for Whole School Approach to School Improvement**

(Hill & Crevola, 1997)

In this study, the implementation level of middle schooling design and operation was compared with middle school philosophy; that is, what the school does in practice was compared with what
it should be doing in theory. Using the information derived from the review of literature, elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) have formed the basis of this study. This study aimed to examine the extent to which seven out of nine elements of the General Design are being implemented in secondary schools of the Australian Capital Territory.

4.1.2 Evaluation process

This study also involves educational evaluative research (Beyer, 1995; Fitz-Gibbon, Taylor & Morris, 1987; Jacobs, 2000; McNamara, O’Hara & Ní Aingléis, 2002; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004; Wolf, 1990) into the effectiveness of middle schooling. The National Middle School Association (NMSA) (1997, p. 2) argued that effectiveness is determined by the degree of match between the goals and outcomes. NMSA has enumerated the following outcomes for measuring the effectiveness of the middle schooling program:

- student outcomes (total student achievement, student satisfaction, productivity, self-efficacy, proportion of students completing the school year, percent of students receiving disciplinary referrals, percent of students passing all courses);
- teacher outcomes (satisfaction, perceptions of autonomy and participation, teacher climate); and
- climate variables (difficulty related to change, administration teams, school goals).

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the implementation level of the middle schooling program as perceived by the stakeholders and to shed light on possible effects of the program on the total development of young adolescents. Citing Baugher, The NMSA (1997, p. 2) has suggested that a variety of measures assures an evaluation reflecting the viewpoints of most stakeholders. Accordingly, in this study, the effectiveness of the program was evaluated on the basis of the perception of stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents and students) from three schools of the Australian Capital Territory that have introduced the middle schooling program.

The evaluative process of the study is based on the logic model program. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1998, p. 35) has elaborated the concept of the logic model by suggesting that “A logic model is a picture of how your program works—the theory and assumptions underlying the program. This model provides a roadmap of your program, highlighting how it is expected to work, what activities need to come before others, and how desired outcomes are achieved”.

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Before starting the research process I developed seven logic models (see Figures 4.2–4.8) based on seven out of nine elements of the General Design (see Figure 4.1) (Hill & Crévola, 1997) for the evaluation of implementation of the middle schooling program. Each logic model provides a basic description of the program, the intended inputs, and the intended outcomes with respect to each element. It articulates what is hoped to be achieved and how. It is based on a series of ordered actions that are logically linked. The ‘logic model’ begins with a clear arrangement of the situation, describing how the program works to achieve benefits for stakeholders. It helps to identify appropriate questions for evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 2001). Cicchinelli and Barley (1999, p. 18) have argued that the ‘logic model’ clarifies connections and underlying assumptions of the reform and specific and intermediate outcomes. Kumpfer, Shur and Ross (1993) have argued that in processing evaluation, the logic model is used to identify expectations about how the program should work—an “ideal type”.

Each logic model prepared for the evaluation was based on the extensive review of the literature relating to each element described in Chapter 3, and contains the following aspects of the evaluation process:

**Contextual issue:** contextual issue of this study is the need for effective middle schooling,

**Inputs:** are the characteristics of the elements of the General Design identified and synthesised from the literature,

**Assumptions:** are anticipated activities that should take place in a school in implementing the characteristics of the middle schooling program,

**Short-term outcomes:** are anticipated short-term outcomes expected from the implementation of the characteristics of elements of the General Design,

**Intermediate outcomes:** are anticipated intermediate outcomes, following on from short term outcomes,

**Long-term outcomes:** are anticipated long-term outcomes following on from intermediate outcomes.
Figure: 4.2 Logic model for the evaluation of beliefs and understandings

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING

Contextual Issues

Inputs

Element of General Design

Assumption

Long term outcomes

BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS
• Academically excellent schools
• Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents
• Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents
• Schools socially equitable
• Schools responsive to community participation.

School has:
• Shared vision
• High expectations
• Ethos of respect, care and support
• Balance between academic, personal & social needs
• Strong home school partnerships

Outcomes-Imacts

Short-term outcomes

Intermediate outcomes

Adolescents' developmental needs are met
• Feeling of responsibility among the students
• Enhanced professionalism among the staff

Engaged, focused and achieving adolescents
• Shared decision-making
• Genuine partnership between school, parents and community

RESPONSIVELY EXCELLENT, DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE AND SOCIALLY EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS
Figure: 4.3 Logic model for the evaluation of school organisation

**NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING**

- Safe, caring and orderly environment
- Supportive staff and administration
- Attractive physical features
- Sense of belonging to the school
- Positive peer norms and relationships
- Planned smooth transition

**SCHOOL ORGANISATION**

- Integrity, Respect & Fairness
- Tolerance & Responsibility
- Friendliness & Commitment
- Purpose
- Rigour
- Safety

**Element of General Design**

- Short term outcomes
- Long term outcomes
- Intermediate outcomes

**Assumption**

- School is:
  - Outcome-based
  - Flexibly-constructed
  - Ethically-aware
  - Community-oriented
  - Adequately resourced
  - Strategically &
  - Collaboratively linked

**Outputs-Impacts**

- Sense of Security
- Mutual respect & trust
- Collegiality & Empowerment
- Self-discipline & Responsibility
- Sense of pride & Ownership

**Outputs-Impacts**

- Needs for Change
Figure: 4.4 Logic model for the evaluation of classroom teaching strategies

Contextual Issues → Inputs

Element of General Design Model

Assumption

Long term outcomes

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING

CLASSROOM TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Invitational Education
- Democracy
- Constructivist teaching
- Reflective teaching

Teaching is:
- Purposeful
- Self-directed
- Cooperative
- Adaptive & relevant
- Holistic & rigorous
- Challenging
- Participatory

Short term outcomes

Critical thinking
Reflective thinking
Respect, trust & optimism
Intentionality
Connectedness
Self recognition
Citizenship

Intermediate outcomes

Critical learning
Flexible learning
Authentic learning
Exploratory learning
Cooperative learning
Initiative learning
Civic participation

ADAMICALLY EXCELLENT, DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE AND SOCIOEQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS
Figure: 4.5  Logic model for the evaluation of professional learning communities

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES
- Supportive and shared leadership
- Building a culture of collective learning
- Working as collaborative teams
- Classroom-based research
- Use of data-based inquiry
- Results driven

Staff is engaged in:
- Sharing common vision
- Reflective dialogue
- Collective inquiry
- Capacity building
- Social efficacy
- Use of technology
- Understanding the adolescents' needs

Enhanced collegiality
Skill development based on common purpose
Sense of belonging
Collaboration
Will to change
Collective aspirations

Need based teaching and learning
Contextual learning
Transformative learning
Collective learning
Collective responsibility for students' learning
Smooth flow of communication

RESPONSIVELY EXCELLENT, DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE AND SOCIALY EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Academically Excellent, Developmentally Responsive and Socially Equitable Education for Young Adolescents

Contextual Issues

Inputs

Element of General Design Model

Assumption — IF —

Long term outcomes

Intermediate outcomes

Outcomes - Impacts — THEN —

Short term outcomes
Figure: 4.6 Logic model for the evaluation of intervention and special assistance

**Contextual Issues** → **Inputs** (Element of General Design Model) → **Assumption** → **Outputs** (Long term outcomes)

**NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING**

**INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**
- Academic support
- Counselling and advisory services
- Health and physical education
- Technology and resources
- Career development

**School has:**
- Attention to individual students
- Structured academic support programs
- Advisory programs
- Health education programs
- Career development programs

**RESPONSIVE AND SOICALLY EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS**

**Short term outcomes**
- Enhanced educational development of students.
- Enhanced psychological, social and emotional development of students
- Enhanced opportunities for career development of students
- Enhanced health and physical fitness of students

**Intermediate outcomes**
- Technologically resourced
- Smooth transition of students
- Supportive peer groups
- Relationship of trust between students and adults
- Positive self esteem
- Overall healthy environment.

**Long term outcomes**
- Supportive peer groups
- Relationship of trust between students and adults
- Positive self esteem
- Overall healthy environment.
Figure: 4.7 Logic model for the evaluation of home, school and community partnerships

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLING

ACADEMICALLY EXCELLENT, DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE AND SOCIALLY EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Contextual Issues → Inputs → Elements of General Design Model → Assumption → Long-term outcomes

Home school and community partnership
- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at Home
- Decision Making
- Collaboration with wider Community

Parents are involved in:
- Development of vision
- Power sharing
- Planning
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Addressing social problems
- Volunteering
- Homework

Short-term outcomes → Outcomes - Impacts - THEN - Intermediate outcomes

Parents as partner
- Parents' talent development
- Sense of comfort with the school
- Accountability
- Community empowerment

Reciprocal communication
- Parent-teacher collaboration
- School community connections
- Improved equity
- Positive parents-children relationship
- Improved students' behaviour and self-image

Accountability Community empowerment

Academic achievement

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Figure: 4.8 Logic model for the evaluation of leadership and coordination

Need for Effective Middle Schooling

Contextual Issues

Inputs

Elements of General Design Model

Assumption

Long-term outcomes

Short-term outcomes

Outcomes-Impacts

Intermediate outcomes

Leadership and Coordination
- Principals' concerns for the vision and mission statement
- Instructional managing
- Supervising teaching
- Promotion of instructional climate
- Organisational management

All are involved in:
- Development of vision
- Power sharing
- Planning
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Addressing social problems
- Volunteering

Visionary leadership
Resourceful leadership
Instructional leadership
Collaborative leadership
Transformational leader
Principal change agent

Effective communication among all
Well-equipped school
Well-resourced staff
Sense of empowerment among all
Sense of comfort with the leadership
Power sharing
An atmosphere of trust and sharing

Responsive and Socially Equitable Education for Young Adolescents

Academically Excellent, Developmentally Responsive and Socially Equitable Education for Young Adolescents

Academically Excellent, Developmentally Responsive and Socially Equitable Education for Young Adolescents
4.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The remainder of this chapter is organised into the following sections: research approach, ethical considerations, research strategies and techniques, sample of population, research procedures strategies and techniques for data collection, the instrumentation, and treatment of data and explanation of limitations and delimitations of the research.

4.2.1 Research Approach

More recently, some evaluators have pointed out the value of using qualitative as well as quantitative information in conducting educational evaluations (Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttmann & Hanson, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxwell & Loomis, 2003; Petter & Gallivan, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The research approach selected for this study was a mixed-method investigation. Five major purposes for mixed-method evaluation as identified in the literature, namely triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion were taken into consideration in selecting a mixed method approach for this study (Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been used for this study to provide a more economical and discerning interpretation of learning environments (Aldridge & Fraser, 2000; Tobin & Fraser, 1998).

Greene et al. (1989, p. 256) have stated that “mixed method designs are those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words)”.

The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires based on 5-point Likert scales to explore stakeholders’ perceptions of a wide range of school practices. Rao and Woolcock (2002) have argued that the quantitative approaches to program evaluation have an important strength as generalizations can be made about large populations on the basis of smaller representative samples. Quantitative evaluation methods are used to answer a number of questions about how much change occurred as a result of the intervention (Francisco, Butterfoss & Capwell, 2001), whereas use of qualitative methods facilitate cross checking of the data where the study is heavily influenced by quantitative data. Different qualitative methods, such as formal meetings with the
principals of the sample schools, data collected from stakeholders through open-ended questions and review of written material (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) not prepared for the purposes of this study (existing literature) provided an insight into other measures of success of middle schooling in the sample schools. Qualitative data allowed the researcher to gain a deeper, more intimate and accurate understanding of the perceptions of the sample population (Hammell & Carpenter, 2004).

Creswell (1994) has described qualitative research as a process of understanding a social human problem, based on the building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative research is embedded in the real world context as the open ended way in which data are elicited in qualitative evaluations can illuminate expected and unexpected perceptions of the participants (Anastas, 2004). According to the fundamental principle of mixed method research (Johnson & Turner, 2003) multiple data collection techniques and different strategies and approaches are used in such a way that the combined methods provided complementary strengths and not overlapping weaknesses.

4.2.2 Ethical considerations and formal approvals

Bibby (1997) has insisted that, under the code of ethics for research in education (Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), 1998), all research studies conducted in all Australian universities involving human participants must be reviewed and approved by the Committee for Ethics in Human Research. Accordingly, before approaching the participants of the study the proposal along with the application form was submitted for approval by the chair of the Committee for Ethics in Human Research of the University of Canberra. Approval was granted with the stipulations that:

1. participation be voluntary for all the participants,
2. anonymity of all participants be preserved in reporting the results,
3. identity or identifiable characteristics of the schools not be revealed,
4. adherence to all school district policies and regulations be assured,
5. data collected is stored securely.
The researcher complied with all the stipulations under the protocol of the Committee for Ethics in Human Research. Participants were informed of data collection procedures and their permission was secured for the collection of data. It was important to maintain the anonymity of the schools and participants in this study. Each school and participant was given a code prior to data collection. The codes were secured in the computer of the researcher and will be purged after a five-year time along with the instruments.

Conducting research in public schools of the ACT requires approval from the Department of Education Youth and Family Services. The proposal, including an introduction, background information, research design and methodology, data collection procedures, the research timeline and methods of reporting results, was submitted to the Strategic Planning Section of the Department. Approval was granted with the condition that final approval for conducting the research rested with the individual school principals. Accordingly, appointments were fixed for formal meetings with the principals before starting the data collection.

4.2.3 Instrumentation

Four purpose-specific instruments (self-administered questionnaires) were designed for the principals, teachers, students and parents of the sample schools. These were based on 5-point Likert scales. McGill and Brockbank (2004) have argued that the use of questionnaires can enable the presenter to struggle with the issue under consideration, challenging embedded paradigms and encouraging consideration of possibilities, without providing a ready made solution. The main purpose for using self administered questionnaires was to ensure the anonymity of the stakeholders; even the researcher does not know who completed each returned questionnaire (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). It was also an endeavour to achieve optimum objectivity and an attempt to eliminate as much as possible the influence of the researcher on the study (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

These instruments comprised three hundred and ninety five (395) items as per details given below:

- Principals: ninety seven (97) items
- Teachers: one hundred and two (102) items
- Parents: ninety two (92) items
- Students: one hundred and fourteen (104) items
The items identified were drawn from the characteristics of seven out of the nine elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997). To ensure triangulation certain similar items were asked of two or more stakeholders. Items for data collection were framed in language that guaranteed effective communication between the researcher and the stakeholders. These items were based on the characteristics of the middle schooling program as identified in the literature and described in Chapter 3. The characteristics were outlined in the seven out of nine elements of the General Design (Hill and Crévola, 1997). For the collection of qualitative data, open-ended questions in different sections of the instruments were added. Instruments used for the study are provided at Appendixes X-XIII.

**Pre-testing**

All research designs need to be piloted or pre-tested (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 102). Pre-testing was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, instruments were examined by the experts in the field for positive feedback and criticisms. The criticisms were discussed and recommendations were included by rephrasing the items. Because of these responses, modifications were made by eliminating inferior items and adding others to provide coverage of all necessary and appropriate domains. In the second phase, the instruments were pre-tested with the population of one of the participant schools. A few items that were not easily understood by the respondents were deleted and a few items identified as crucial by the teachers and principals of the sample schools were added.

**4.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND POPULATION**

Within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a representative sample was taken. At the time of this study there were four public schools in the ACT, whose principals and teachers support and have introduced middle schooling reforms. All of these schools were approached and one declined to participate in the study. Although the schools selected for this study were diverse in nature and widely distributed geographically within the ACT, Australia, they were nevertheless alike in certain respects. Being public schools, there was some degree of control over the policy environment. Most importantly, the schools selected for the study had incorporated middle schooling within their agenda for at least the preceding five years. Each of the schools selected had adopted a Year 6–8 or 7–8 configuration.
All three schools were selected through purposive sampling as recommended by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993, p. 33) as a procedure which is “governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposively seeks both the typical and the divergent data these insights suggest”. Two of the schools were previously high schools, catering for Years 7 to 10, while one was purpose built as a middle school, with adjoining campuses catering for K-10. All three schools have very similar characteristics in terms of socio-economic background of students, teaching staff and surrounding infrastructure. The ACT, overall, tends to exhibit a flat socio-economic structure (PHIDU, 2005). Purposive sampling strategy discovers the variety of constructions that can exist and helps to illuminate the phenomena under study. The object of purposive sampling is to identify “information-rich cases” for in-depth examination (Patton, 1990p. 169). Patton (1990) has also suggested that the researcher seeks what he or she wants to know, what will be useful and credible, and what can be accomplished within the constraints of time and resources.

The population of the three schools was selected through various methods of non-probability sampling. Within the selected schools, three principals were already selected through purposive sampling, whereas the other stakeholders, namely teachers, students and parents were selected through nonproportional quota sampling (Trochim, 2000). This method is the non-probabilistic analogue of stratified random sampling ensuring that all smaller groups are adequately represented. Stratified random sampling offers accurate results and a high degree of representativeness (Sarantakos, 1998).

The method of selecting the teachers and students was discussed with the principals. The teachers were generally secondary trained, but that in the purpose built school there was a relatively even combination of primary and secondary trained teachers. All teachers who participated in the study were from the middle schooling part of the school. The stakeholders were invited to participate through a covering letter, described as crucial by Afifi and Azen (1979). At the same time, anonymity was assured by providing questionnaires in envelopes to be sealed by stakeholders on return. Teachers were at liberty to complete the instrument individually or could use their own time outside the school. All respondents were guaranteed confidentiality, and were assured that data would not be used for school accountability or teacher evaluation purposes.
4.3.1 Response rate

Within the selected schools, 168 stakeholders (3 principals, 51 teachers, 57 students, and 57 parents) participated in the study. The details are given in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1a: Details of response rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Total number of population</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
<th>Total number of returns</th>
<th>% of returns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Data collection procedure

Data was collected through multiple sources. Denzin (1978) has identified that multiple methods of data collection reveal different aspects of empirical reality. To ensure triangulation, a variety of data collection techniques were used including self-administered questionnaires having closed and open-ended questions for the principals, teachers, parents and students. Different qualitative methods including a formal meeting with the principals of the sample schools and written external and internal records were also utilised to gather more information about the sample schools. The data collected for this study from many sources enabled cross-checking to ensure construct validity (Sarantakos, 1998; Yin, 1984).

The data was collected in three phases. The first phase was the collection of data from the principals. Appointments were fixed with the principals to request their participation in the study and seek formal approval from them for allowing their students, teachers and parents to participate in the study. Meetings were held with all three principals. In the second phase of data collection, questionnaires were sent to the parents and teachers along with the covering letter and consent form. Parents were requested to participate in the study and also allow their children to participate. The return rate was very low and the procedure had to be repeated several times to achieve an adequate sample size (Witte & Witte, 1997). When sufficient numbers of
questionnaires for meaningful statistical analysis were received back from the parents, the third phase of data collection from the students was started. A time was fixed in each school for the third phase. In each sample school, the students, whose parents had given consent for their participation and had completed questionnaires themselves, were gathered in a room on a fixed date and time to fill in the questionnaires. The students were already aware of this research study but the process of data collection was explained to them again, assuring them that their anonymity would be strictly maintained.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the concurrent activities of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Rather than having a relationship, these activities inform each other and the analysis of each leads the researcher to further refinement and understanding of the research setting (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Accordingly, the following steps were taken during data analysis.

Data Screening

Sarantakos (1998, p. 331) has noted, that before starting, data analysis data needs to be prepared which involves coding, editing and checking. After the return of all administered questionnaires, each questionnaire was given code numbers. Pre-coding had already been assigned to the response categories during the construction of the questionnaires (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 332). Before elaborated analysis was performed, all the data collected was carefully screened and edited so that accuracy and anonymity could be maintained (Babbie, 1990). Data was categorised through a process whereby the units of raw data was labelled using specific codes, as suggested by Miles et al. (1994, p. 56) “codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study”.

Missing value

Some respondents failed to answer some items on the questionnaires, so the frequencies varied throughout the analysis. Accordingly, missing values (5 no opinion, 8 not replied, 9 not applicable) were given codes to distinguish between where there was no response from the respondent, no opinion or a ‘not applicable’ response (Langdridge, 2002, p. 397). This method of coding ensured that statistical significance was not affected by missing values.
**Statistical analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Abrami, Cholmsky & Gordon, 2001) was used to aggregate the responses of individual parents, principals, teachers and students of the sample schools for analysis of data. This program is sophisticated and comprehensive, and is capable of processing large amount of data and generating both very basic and the most highly advanced descriptive and analytical statistics and graphics (Agresti & Finlay, 1997).

**Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are the first line of defence against spurious and incorrect conclusions. If the instruments fail then everything fails (Salkind, 1997, p. 117). To determine the internal reliability of the scales in the instruments, alpha coefficients were used. Correlation coefficients are the numbers that represent the direction and strength of relationship between two or more variables (Burn, 2000, p. 232; McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). The alpha coefficient is the essence of generalisability theory, which is probably the most widely accepted formulation of reliability (Cortina, 1993). It ranges in value from zero to 1: the higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale. Nunnaly (1978) has indicated that 0.7 should be regarded as an acceptable reliability coefficient. For this study, data collected for individual sections of the instruments were tested independently. Some items were deleted from the instruments in an attempt to raise the alpha coefficient. The value of all sections was found to be highly positive, indicating that the instruments could be interpreted as reliable. Alpha coefficient values for each scale computed are given in Appendix IX.

This study has strong face validity according to the definition of Sarantakos (1998, p. 79) in that it is clear, in the questionnaire, what is being measured. The questionnaires were strongly based on theoretically accepted standards and principles.

**Chi Square**

The implementation level of the elements of General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) was evaluated through analysis of data by employing the Chi-square test of independence for categorical variables to determine associations and to measure the linkage between two or more variables (Robson, 2002, p. 418). Chi-square analysis on two-variable cross tabulation was used to test the significance of the relationship between concern levels and other variables (Burn,
2000, p. 213). The value of significance in these tests was $p \leq 0.05$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).
As a result of this screening process, significance was verified $p \leq 0.05$ (Babbie, 1990). The Fisher exact test using the ‘Monte Carlo’ procedure was used (Burn, 2000, p. 228) to ensure that low frequencies would not invalidate the test.

Frequencies and percentages of responses were calculated for each item and category. Percentages of responses were displayed in the chapter of analysis in various tables to show where consistencies and inconsistencies lay in relation to middle school philosophy. For analysis and discussion purposes, categorical responses from 5-point scale items were consistently collapsed into fewer categories to consider it as a positive or negative response, as certain frequencies were too low to perform this type of comparative analysis without collapsing these categories due to the small sample.

**Qualitative data analysis**

Data collected for this study through different qualitative methods provided an insight to examine the other measures of success of the middle schooling based on the responses collected from stakeholders through open-ended questions. Three core steps identified by Tesch (cited in Miller & Crabtree, 1998, p. 302)—developing an organising system, segmenting the data, and making connections—were taken for qualitative data analysis. Consulting relevant external and internal documents and records helped the researcher to understand the schools’ resources, values, processes, priorities and concerns (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997). In Chapter 6, quantitative data are compared with the qualitative information obtained from the literature.

### 4.5 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The study is limited to a maximum number of three public schools of the ACT Australia whose teachers and principals support and have introduced the middle schooling reforms at least for last five years. This sample may decrease the generality of the study’s findings and might not be reflective of all middle schools of the ACT or Australia. More than one state sample would have required significant amount of resources and time, which was beyond the control of the researcher.
The study is limited to the findings based on the elements of effective middle schools as identified in the General Design (Hill, & Crévola, 1997). The purpose of this study was to determine the level of implementation of elements of this design.

The data collection process was an exhaustive and time-consuming exercise. It was found that all public schools approached in the ACT were confronted with pressure on the staff and parents due to multiple researches being conducted at the time in schools. One school initially identified as implementing middle schooling reforms, by the Department of Youth Family and Community Services declined to participate. Hence, three schools were used in the study.

### 4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 4 has explained the methodology of this study. The theoretical framework of this study was the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997). A mixed method research approach was used for data collection for which four instruments were developed. Reliability and validity of the instruments was tested through Alpha Coefficient. SPSS was used for data analysis. A Chi-square test was employed to determine associations between the responses from different stakeholders.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the quantitative results of the questionnaires completed by the four principal stakeholder groups in the three schools studied: principals, teachers, students and parents. The results are arranged according to the elements and characteristics of effective middle schooling discussed in Chapter 3. Within each section, a summary table shows the overall results of the responses of all stakeholders in the three schools for each questionnaire item, grouped by characteristic.

Seven elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) have formed the basis of this study and provided the criteria for analysing the effectiveness of the program implementation. In this chapter, the key questions outlined in Chapter 1 are addressed to examine the extent to which these elements are being implemented in three secondary schools of the Australian Capital Territory, as perceived by the stakeholders.

To ensure triangulation certain similar items were asked from two or more stakeholders. The items identified have been drawn from the characteristics of the following seven elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997):

- Beliefs and understandings (Vision and mission statement)
- School and class organisation
- Classroom teaching programs
- Professional learning communities
- Intervention and special assistance
- Home, school and community partnerships
- Leadership and coordination

One hundred and sixty eight instruments returned from the schools by different stakeholders are analysed in this chapter, providing an evaluation of the implementation level of middle schooling in the sample schools, as perceived by all stakeholders. Comparisons of responses from different
stakeholders and between the three schools are also reported in separate tables where a significant difference was evident.

5.1 BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS (Vision and mission statements)

Introduction

Hill and Crévola (1997) (cited in Department of Education and Training, 2002) have kept “beliefs and understandings” at the centre of the General Design as a core element of the model and have argued that it is significantly important that “teachers understand the importance of positive student-teacher relationships to support learning, and they believe that all students can enhance their learning through the development of thinking skills”. Barratt (1998, p. 42) has insisted that the middle schooling program is more effective if based on the shared philosophy of fundamental values and beliefs. Based on the relevant literature the following five criteria were selected for the purpose of data collection, analysis and discussion.

1. Academically excellent schools
2. Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents
3. Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents
4. Socially equitable schools
5. Schools responsive to community participation

Based on a review of the relevant literature, twenty-four components of beliefs and understandings of the middle schooling program was constructed for the purpose of data collection have been analysed in the given tables.
5.1.1 Academically excellent Schools

Table 1.1: Academically excellent schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students’ academic excellence is the major purpose of the school.</td>
<td>(45) 41.7%</td>
<td>(47) 43.5%</td>
<td>(14) 13.0%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The goals are reviewed annually focusing on improving students’ performance.</td>
<td>(34) 34.0%</td>
<td>(43) 43.0%</td>
<td>(18) 18.0%</td>
<td>(05) 05.0%</td>
<td>(100) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers hold high expectations for students.</td>
<td>(34) 30.9%</td>
<td>(61) 55.5%</td>
<td>(12) 10.9%</td>
<td>(03) 02.7%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school recognizes excellence in achievement.</td>
<td>(58) 52.3%</td>
<td>(38) 34.2%</td>
<td>(14) 12.6%</td>
<td>(01) 00.9%</td>
<td>(111) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers praise all students.</td>
<td>(38) 36.5%</td>
<td>(44) 42.3%</td>
<td>(17) 16.3%</td>
<td>(05) 04.8%</td>
<td>(104) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My teachers require me to think to the best of my abilities.</td>
<td>(32) 56.1%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-5 are Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 6 is Students

It is apparent from Table 1.1 that a great majority of the stakeholders felt that well-articulated goals were in place in all the sample schools. For example, students’ academic excellence was reported positively as the major purpose of the school. Similarly, a large number of stakeholders responded positively that the schools’ goals were reviewed annually for improving students’ performance. It was felt that teachers held high expectations of students and praised them widely. The students’ responses also reflected positive views about their teachers as a great majority of the student believed that their teachers involved them in critical thinking to the best of their abilities.

Table 1.2: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of respondents</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The goals are reviewed annually for improving students’ performance.</td>
<td>Parents (24) 48.0%</td>
<td>(18) 36.0%</td>
<td>(06) 12.0%</td>
<td>(02) 04.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers (10) 21.3%</td>
<td>(23) 48.9%</td>
<td>(11) 23.4%</td>
<td>(03) 06.4%</td>
<td>(47) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (34) 35.1%</td>
<td>(41) 42.3%</td>
<td>(17) 17.5%</td>
<td>(05) 05.2%</td>
<td>(97) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers hold high expectations for students.</td>
<td>Parents (24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers (10) 20.0%</td>
<td>(31) 62.0%</td>
<td>(08) 16.0%</td>
<td>(01) 02.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (34) 31.8%</td>
<td>(59) 55.1%</td>
<td>(11) 10.3%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school recognizes excellence in achievements.</td>
<td>Parents (38) 66.7%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers (19) 37.3%</td>
<td>(23) 45.1%</td>
<td>(09) 17.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (57) 52.8%</td>
<td>(36) 33.3%</td>
<td>(14) 13.0%</td>
<td>(01) 00.9%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 shows the significant differences between the responses of parents and teachers. Overall, the responses of parents, on three items, were more positive than the responses of staff.
For example, the parents held a strong belief that ‘goals are reviewed annually’ in contrast to the response from teachers.

### 5.1.2 Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents

Table 1.3: Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School is responsive to the learning needs of adolescents.</td>
<td>(43) 38.7% (56) 50.5% (09) 08.1% (03) 02.7% (111) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff is responsive to the diverse learning experiences of adolescents.</td>
<td>(26) 36.6% (64) 58.2% (16) 14.5% (04) 03.6% (110) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff is responsive to adolescents' needs for self exploration.</td>
<td>(28) 25.5% (60) 54.5% (16) 14.5% (06) 05.5% (110) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending school.</td>
<td>(49) 44.1% (50) 45.0% (11) 09.9% (01) 00.9% (111) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students have adequate learning opportunities.</td>
<td>(35) 32.4% (56) 51.9% (15) 13.9% (02) 01.9% (108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My teachers expect me to learn as much as I can.</td>
<td>(37) 64.9% (16) 28.1% (04) 07.0% (00) 00.0% (57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-5 = Principals, teachers and parents  
Item No. 6 = Students

The results of items reported in Table 1.3 reflect a generally positive perception on the part of all stakeholders towards the schools’ learning environment, but there was considerable doubt about their responsiveness to the specific learning needs of adolescents. All three sample schools were positive in their responses, overall, on items relating to the learning needs of adolescents and there was agreement between the schools.

Table 1.4: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of respondents</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending the school.</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>(32) 56.1% (01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4% (01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5% (01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0% (03) 100%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>(26) 51.0% (08) 15.7%</td>
<td>(01) 02.0% (05) 100%</td>
<td>(01) 00.0% (111)100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(16) 31.4% (49) 44.1%</td>
<td>(26) 51.0% (08) 15.7%</td>
<td>(01) 02.0% (05) 100%</td>
<td>(01) 00.0% (111)100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(49) 44.1%</td>
<td>(50) 45.0%</td>
<td>(11) 09.9%</td>
<td>(01) 00.9%</td>
<td>(111) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 shows a comparison of the responses from the three stakeholders. Generally, there was wide agreement among all stakeholders, except that while parents strongly believed that learning was the most important reason for attending school, staff clearly felt that there were other significant reasons at play. In all other items, there was no statistical difference between the responses of different stakeholders.
5.1.3 Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents

Table 1.5: Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School is responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents.</td>
<td>(37) 35.6%</td>
<td>(57) 54.8%</td>
<td>(10) 09.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(104) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is responsive to adolescents’ needs for health and physical education.</td>
<td>(37) 34.3%</td>
<td>(60) 55.6%</td>
<td>(08) 07.4%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 Teachers and parents

The results of items reported in Table 1.5 reflect a generally positive perception on the part of all stakeholders believing that all sample schools were responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents. Indeed, on open ended responses, a number of teachers identified a lack of training in dealing with early adolescence as an area of concern in the successful implementation of the middle schooling program (see Sections: 6.4.3 & 6.4.4).

5.1.4 Socially equitable schools

Table 1.6: Socially equitable schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school’s goals are communicated to the parents.</td>
<td>(22) 39.3%</td>
<td>(18) 32.1%</td>
<td>(12) 21.4%</td>
<td>(04) 07.1%</td>
<td>(56) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree with the overall purpose of this school.</td>
<td>(27) 50.9%</td>
<td>(23) 43.4%</td>
<td>(02) 03.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All stakeholders share the same vision.</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(41) 71.9%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All work together to improve the school.</td>
<td>(08) 14.0%</td>
<td>(33) 57.9%</td>
<td>(14) 24.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school gives students recognition.</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel that everyone is working towards the common goals.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are involved in decision-making.</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(08) 17.0%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2= Parents
   Item No. 3-7= Students

Table 1.6 shows that, in general, there was agreement between the stakeholders believing that schools were socially equitable, democratic and fair. More than 95% of the parents, for example, agreed with the overall purpose of the schools and a great majority of the parents reported that the goals of the schools were communicated to them. The perceptions of the students on these items, however, were less positive, reflecting that they felt less involved in this area of the schools’ operations.
5.1.5 Schools responsive to community participation

Table 1.7: Schools responsive to community participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff is responsive to adolescents’ needs for social interaction.</td>
<td>(32) 29.1%</td>
<td>(61) 55.5%</td>
<td>(15) 13.6%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff is responsive to adolescents’ needs for community participation.</td>
<td>(25) 22.9%</td>
<td>(65) 59.6%</td>
<td>(17) 15.6%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school has a clearly articulated mission, which is shared by all.</td>
<td>(33) 31.1%</td>
<td>(49) 46.2%</td>
<td>(19) 17.9%</td>
<td>(05) 04.7%</td>
<td>(106) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-3 = Principals, teachers and parents

There was no statistical difference between the three-sample schools on rating the schools’ responsiveness to community participation (Table 1.7). Less than one third of the stakeholders were very positive that staffs were responsive to adolescents’ needs for social interaction and community participation.

Table 1.8 shows the responses of the teachers in the three schools to open-ended questions relating to this element.

Table 1.8: Responses of Stakeholders on open-ended questions regarding Beliefs and understandings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Please read the statement below and explain how far you and other teachers in your school are successful in adapting teaching and learning, in order to meet the needs of young adolescents? &quot;Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents. They understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach&quot; (This We Believe, 1995:13)</td>
<td>I have chosen to work in the Middle school after many years of working in the primary system. What is most important to me is that adolescents need positive guidance from trusted and respected adults and a dynamic curriculum which is both broad in experience and deep in learning. That is what middle schooling means to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - A</td>
<td>I believe this is to be very true as I spend as much time on students as I do about my subject matter at times I am more focused on the students. Success, as with any schooling model, is very dependent on the individual skills, personality of the teachers. The whole range exists here. Yes, we know about our students but don’t have a special understanding of young adolescents. In the role of home group teacher we take a more personal role in students’ welfare as well as teaching. The above statement is true in most of the staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Please read the statement below and explain how far you and other teachers in your school are successful in adapting teaching and learning, in order to meet the needs of young adolescents? &quot;Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents. They understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach&quot; (This We Believe, 1995:13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - B</td>
<td>I have chosen to work in the Middle school after many years of working in the primary system. What is most important to me is that adolescents need positive guidance from trusted and respected adults and a dynamic curriculum which is both broad in experience and deep in learning. That is what middle schooling means to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Summary of the section

The data related to ‘beliefs and understandings’ indicates that, overall, in all three sample schools, the middle schooling program was based on the beliefs and philosophy that were shared by all stakeholders. With slight variations, all sample schools held strong beliefs about the importance of academic excellence for their students. There was a general trend of less positive responses from staff on a range of items related specifically to the schools’ responsiveness to the learning, developmental and social needs of adolescents. This is of some concern given the importance of dealing specifically with adolescent needs within middle schooling and that this is the only area, which differentiates effective schooling from the middle schooling philosophy\(^{19}\). It should be noted that in some areas parents felt more positive about these characteristics than school staff, and that students were less positive on items relating to social equity within the schools.

---

\(^{19}\) Table 3.1: Common theme between middle schooling and effective schools.
5.2 SCHOOL AND CLASS ORGANISATION

Introduction

The literature on effective schooling has suggested that a healthy school climate contributes to effective teaching and learning (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Edmonds, 1979; Freiberg, 1998). Based on the characteristics identified in the literature for organising successful schools for adolescents, a framework encompassing six dimensions has been developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The outcomes predicted for these dimensions are integrity, responsibility, friendliness, respect, commitment, care, tolerance and fairness. For the purpose of data collection, fifty-seven items were constructed based on the dimensions of the effective school organisation. Data organised according to dimensions is presented in the following tables.

1. Safe, caring and orderly environment
2. Supportive staff and administration
3. Attractive physical appearance
4. Sense of belonging to the schools
5. Positive peer norms and relationships
6. Smooth transitions

5.2.2 Safe, caring and orderly environment

Table 2.1: Safe, caring and orderly environment of the sample schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.</td>
<td>(34) 30.9%</td>
<td>(63) 57.3%</td>
<td>(09) 08.2%</td>
<td>(04) 03.6%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Their vitality and high interest are observable in everyday routines.</td>
<td>(27) 26.2%</td>
<td>(58) 56.3%</td>
<td>(15) 14.6%</td>
<td>(03) 02.9%</td>
<td>(103) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders.</td>
<td>(50) 46.7%</td>
<td>(39) 36.4%</td>
<td>(16) 15.0%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.</td>
<td>(41) 44.1%</td>
<td>(39) 41.9%</td>
<td>(12) 12.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.1%</td>
<td>(93) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. School routines promote personalized relationship.</td>
<td>(41) 38.7%</td>
<td>(51) 48.1%</td>
<td>(12) 11.3%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(106) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Out of school expulsion or suspensions are minimal.</td>
<td>(47) 51.1%</td>
<td>(36) 39.1%</td>
<td>(07) 07.6%</td>
<td>(02) 02.2%</td>
<td>(92) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-6 = Principals, teachers and parents

20 See Figure 3.1
Staff and parents generally responded positively on items relating to the general environment of the school (Table 2.1). They reported that their working relationships at school were cordial and that open channels of communication existed. In spite of this, Table 2.1 suggests that item 2 is less positive than item 1. Out of school expulsion or suspensions were reported to be minimal in all the schools.

Table 2.2: Safe, caring and orderly environment of the sample schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All staff in my school would take care of me.</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The staff supervise the students during class change, break or when the groups of students are together.</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(39) 68.4%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Safety concerns reported are handled timely.</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(36) 63.2%</td>
<td>(08) 14.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school safety rules are enforced.</td>
<td>(22) 38.6%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school safety rules are obeyed.</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(30) 52.6%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel secure while riding a school bus.</td>
<td>(12) 36.4%</td>
<td>(17) 51.5%</td>
<td>(04) 12.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(33) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel secure while at the bus stop.</td>
<td>(16) 48.5%</td>
<td>(12) 36.4%</td>
<td>(04) 12.1%</td>
<td>(01) 03.0%</td>
<td>(33) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel secure while in the canteen.</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel secure while in the hallways during class change.</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(08) 14.0%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel secure while in the toilet.</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel secure while outside the building.</td>
<td>(22) 38.6%</td>
<td>(30) 52.6%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel secure while participating in activities.</td>
<td>(22) 38.6%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I feel secure while attending the school events.</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-13= Students

Table 2.2 shows the responses of students, who were generally less positive except on items 1, 12 and 13, where a majority of the students were positive in responding that staff of the school was caring and that they had a feeling of security while attending the schools events. There was some inconsistency in students’ responses with respect to school safety rules, where 90% of students reported that rules were enforced but 40% reported that they were not obeyed. The responses were generally negative in some areas relating to overall security at the schools.
Table 2.3: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel secure while riding a school bus.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel secure while at the bus stop.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel secure while in the canteen.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel secure while in the hallways during class change.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel secure while in the toilet.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I feel secure while participating in activities</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The school safety rules are obeyed.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-7 = Students  
Item No. 8 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 2.3 presents a comparison between the schools regarding the perception of stakeholders on safe, caring and orderly environment in the sample schools. On all these items, a significant statistical difference was evident. Students in school ‘A’ reported a strong feeling of security on most of the items as compared with school ‘B’, where the responses of students ranged from ‘very true’ to ‘not very true’. In school ‘C’, a great majority of students reported a feeling of insecurity on nearly all the items. There were some variations between schools in terms of which physical areas of the schools students felt insecure with toilets, school buses, canteens, and school functions in general all being identified at one school or another as providing poor feelings of security.
### 5.2.2 Supportive staff and administration

#### Table 2.4: Students’ teachers’ relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat true (%)</th>
<th>Not very true (%)</th>
<th>Not at all true (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers and students respect and trust each other.</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(33) 57.9%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers respect all students at our school.</td>
<td>(22) 38.6%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers do not refer to students by labels.</td>
<td>(21) 38.9%</td>
<td>(28) 51.9%</td>
<td>(04) 07.4%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students treat teachers and each other with respect.</td>
<td>(17) 15.7%</td>
<td>(65) 60.2%</td>
<td>(21) 19.4%</td>
<td>(05) 04.6%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.</td>
<td>(36) 34.3%</td>
<td>(51) 48.6%</td>
<td>(16) 15.2%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(105) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A written code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour.</td>
<td>(36) 34.3%</td>
<td>(51) 48.6%</td>
<td>(16) 15.2%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(105) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The code of conduct has been publicized.</td>
<td>(42) 41.6%</td>
<td>(35) 34.7%</td>
<td>(15) 14.9%</td>
<td>(09) 08.9%</td>
<td>(101) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.</td>
<td>(55) 50.5%</td>
<td>(41) 37.6%</td>
<td>(08) 07.3%</td>
<td>(05) 04.6%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Discipline is administered in a neutral manner focusing on the students’ correction.</td>
<td>(50) 49.5%</td>
<td>(40) 39.6%</td>
<td>(10) 09.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.0%</td>
<td>(101) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1, 2 = Students  
Item No. 3= Principals and teachers  
Item No. 4-9 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 2.4 shows the responses on items related to student/teacher relationships. The responses overall, from all stakeholders are quite positive. A picture emerges, however, that while teachers respected students there was some doubt about the extent to which teachers were respected by the students. For example, the students responded positively (39% ‘very true’) that ‘teachers respect all students’ but only 12% responded that teachers and students respected each other. This response was also reflected in the teachers’ responses on item 4.

#### Table 2.5: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat true (%)</th>
<th>Not very true (%)</th>
<th>Not at all true (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students treat teachers and each other with respect.</td>
<td>A (15) 25.0%</td>
<td>(35) 58.3%</td>
<td>(09) 15.0%</td>
<td>(01) 01.7%</td>
<td>(60) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (02) 07.1%</td>
<td>(18) 64.3%</td>
<td>(07) 25.3%</td>
<td>(01) 03.6%</td>
<td>(28) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(12) 60.0%</td>
<td>(05) 25.0%</td>
<td>(03) 15.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> (17) 15.7%</td>
<td>(65) 60.2%</td>
<td>(21) 19.4%</td>
<td>(05) 04.6%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.</td>
<td>A (36) 59.0%</td>
<td>(23) 37.7%</td>
<td>(02) 03.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(61) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (15) 50.0%</td>
<td>(10) 33.3%</td>
<td>(02) 06.7%</td>
<td>(03) 10.0%</td>
<td>(30) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (04) 22.2%</td>
<td>(08) 44.4%</td>
<td>(04) 22.2%</td>
<td>(02) 11.1%</td>
<td>(18) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> (55) 50.5%</td>
<td>(41) 37.6%</td>
<td>(08) 07.3%</td>
<td>(05) 04.6%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1-2 = Principals, teachers and parents

**P-Value:** (Fishers Exact Test) 0.016 0.003
Table 2.5 presents responses where there was a significant difference between schools. The perception of stakeholders in the three schools varied considerably. At school ‘A’ one quarter of the stakeholders responded ‘very true’ that students treated teachers and each other with respect as compared to school ‘B’ and school ‘C’, where very few and none of the respondents, respectively, expressed a comparatively positive perception.

5.2.3 Attractive physical appearance

Table 2.6: Schools’ physical appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.</td>
<td>(37) 34.3%</td>
<td>(44) 40.7%</td>
<td>(19) 17.6%</td>
<td>(08) 07.4%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school building is clean and most things work.</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.</td>
<td>(41) 38.0%</td>
<td>(53) 49.1%</td>
<td>(11) 10.2%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school environment is inviting, caring and encouraging.</td>
<td>(46) 42.2%</td>
<td>(48) 44.0%</td>
<td>(13) 11.9%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school environment is safe and free from violence.</td>
<td>(16) 14.4%</td>
<td>(62) 55.9%</td>
<td>(26) 23.4%</td>
<td>(07) 06.3%</td>
<td>(111) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1, 3-5 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 2 = Students

Table 2.6 shows the responses for items relating to the physical appearance of the schools. While stakeholders seem quite happy with the overall environments, students noted the lack of cleanliness and general state of repair, and staff noted some problems in terms of safety and violence within the schools.

Table 2.7: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.</td>
<td>A (29) 48.3%</td>
<td>(21) 35.0%</td>
<td>(08) 13.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.3%</td>
<td>(60) 100%</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (06) 21.4%</td>
<td>(14) 50.0%</td>
<td>(05) 17.9%</td>
<td>(03) 10.7%</td>
<td>(28) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (02) 10.0%</td>
<td>(09) 45.0%</td>
<td>(06) 30.0%</td>
<td>(03) 15.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (37) 34.3%</td>
<td>(44) 40.7%</td>
<td>(19) 17.6%</td>
<td>(08) 07.4%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.</td>
<td>A (31) 51.7%</td>
<td>(25) 41.7%</td>
<td>(04) 06.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(60) 100%</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (06) 21.4%</td>
<td>(16) 57.1%</td>
<td>(05) 17.9%</td>
<td>(01) 03.6%</td>
<td>(28) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (04) 20.0%</td>
<td>(12) 60.0%</td>
<td>(02) 10.0%</td>
<td>(02) 10.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (41) 38.0%</td>
<td>(53) 49.1%</td>
<td>(11) 10.2%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school environment is inviting, caring and encouraging.</td>
<td>A (37) 61.7%</td>
<td>(18) 30.0%</td>
<td>(05) 08.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(60) 100%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (04) 13.8%</td>
<td>(21) 72.4%</td>
<td>(04) 13.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(29) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (05) 25.0%</td>
<td>(09) 45.0%</td>
<td>(04) 20.0%</td>
<td>(02) 10.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (46) 42.2%</td>
<td>(48) 44.0%</td>
<td>(13) 11.9%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1- 3 = Principals, teachers and parents
Table 2.7 shows a significant difference between the schools. In general, one school received much more positive responses in these items, suggesting that there were significant differences in the quality of the physical environment provided at different schools implementing the middle schooling program.

5.2.4 Sense of belonging to the schools

Table 2.8: Students’ sense of belonging to the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I love to attend school regularly.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(36) 63.2%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students remain absent from school very often.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am proud of the way my school looks.</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(32) 56.1%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I would rather go to any other public school.</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(08) 14.0%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(32) 56.1%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would rather go to a private school.</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(44) 77.2%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Every one at the school takes good care of the school.</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers and students exhibit a sense of pride in the school.</td>
<td>(11) 20.4%</td>
<td>(37) 68.5%</td>
<td>(06) 11.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-6 = Students
Item No. 7 = Principals and teachers

Table 2.8 shows the responses of staff and students on items relating to the students’ sense of belonging to the school. Despite the fact that responses were not particularly positive, as very few students reported that they love to come to school or that they were proud of their school, their responses on items 4 and 5 reflected a strong sense of commitment to their own school and to the government school sector in particular. This is quite pertinent in the ACT where a large proportion of students attend non-government schools. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003, p. 86) 61.5% students attend government schools within the ACT. There were no significant differences between the schools on these items.

Table 2.9: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Every one at the school takes good care of the school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(01) 03.1%</td>
<td>(13) 40.6%</td>
<td>(14) 43.8%</td>
<td>(04) 12.5%</td>
<td>(32) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(03) 17.6%</td>
<td>(05) 29.4%</td>
<td>(09) 52.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(05) 62.5%</td>
<td>(03) 37.5%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Students

Table 2.9 shows a significant difference between the schools. No student in school ‘C’ had positive perception for the item.
5.2.5 Positive peer norms and relationships

Table 2.10: Peer norms and relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vandalism to the school property.</td>
<td>(05) 03.0% (38) 22.6% (79) 47.0% (43) 25.6% (03) 01.8%</td>
<td>(168) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Robbery or theft.</td>
<td>(05) 03.0% (55) 32.9% (85) 50.9% (20) 12.0% (02) 01.2%</td>
<td>(167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Physical conflicts among students.</td>
<td>(03) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.3% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8%</td>
<td>(167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of alcohol on school campus.</td>
<td>(51) 30.7% (94) 56.6% (17) 10.2% (04) 02.4% (00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(166) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Use of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>(50) 30.5% (85) 51.8% (21) 12.8% (06) 03.7% (02) 01.2%</td>
<td>(164) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sale of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>(80) 49.4% (66) 40.7% (12) 07.4% (03) 01.9% (01) 00.6%</td>
<td>(162) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Presence of weapons on school campus.</td>
<td>(77) 47.0% (77) 47.0% (07) 04.3% (03) 01.8% (00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(164) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Arguments or fights between students of different races or cultures.</td>
<td>(34) 20.6% (87) 52.7% (37) 22.4% (05) 03.0% (02) 01.2%</td>
<td>(165) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Verbal abuse of the teachers by the students.</td>
<td>(19) 11.5% (59) 35.8% (53) 32.1% (26) 15.8% (08) 04.8%</td>
<td>(165) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-9 = Principals, teachers, parents and students

Table 2.10 shows the responses related to peer norms and students’ relationships. All the stakeholders expressed a strong positive perception that, in general, the students observed positive norms. There appears to be little concern among stakeholders on issues relating to drugs, including alcohol, at school. Issues relating to physical conflicts, security of property, and verbal abuse of teachers, however, were clearly identified as areas of concern to all stakeholders. There were no significant differences between the responses of different stakeholders on these items.
Table 2.11: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Vandalism to the school property.</td>
<td>A (02) 02.2% (30) 32.3% (45) 48.4% (16) 17.2% (00) 00.0% (93) 100%</td>
<td>B (03) 06.4% (07) 14.9% (26) 55.3% (10) 21.3% (01) 02.1% (47) 100%</td>
<td>C (00) 00.0% (01) 03.6% (08) 28.6% (17) 60.7% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 05 (03) 03.0% (38) 22.6% (79) 47.0% (43) 25.6% (03) 01.8% (168) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Physical conflicts among students.</td>
<td>A (00) 00.0% (03) 06.4% (07) 14.9% (26) 55.3% (10) 21.3% (01) 02.1%</td>
<td>B (02) 04.3% (09) 19.6% (26) 55.3% (08) 17.4% (01) 02.2% (46) 100%</td>
<td>C (01) 03.6% (03) 10.7% (13) 46.4% (09) 32.1% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 03 (01) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.0% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8% (167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use of alcohol on school campus.</td>
<td>A (36) 39.1% (52) 56.5% (03) 03.3% (01) 01.1% (00) 00.0%</td>
<td>B (10) 21.7% (28) 60.9% (08) 17.4% (00) 00.0% (46) 100%</td>
<td>C (17) 17.9% (14) 50.0% (09) 32.1% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 03 (01) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.0% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8% (167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Use of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>A (34) 37.4% (47) 51.6% (03) 03.3% (01) 01.1% (00) 00.0%</td>
<td>B (11) 24.4% (25) 55.6% (08) 17.4% (00) 00.0% (45) 100%</td>
<td>C (05) 17.9% (13) 46.4% (09) 32.1% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 03 (01) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.0% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8% (167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sale of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>A (52) 57.1% (33) 36.3% (03) 03.0% (02) 02.2% (01) 01.1% (91) 100%</td>
<td>B (21) 48.8% (20) 46.5% (02) 04.7% (00) 00.0% (43) 100%</td>
<td>C (07) 25.0% (13) 46.4% (09) 32.1% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 03 (01) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.0% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8% (167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Arguments or fights between students of different races and cultures.</td>
<td>A (21) 22.8% (53) 57.6% (15) 16.3% (03) 03.3% (00) 00.0% (92) 100%</td>
<td>B (11) 24.4% (19) 42.2% (13) 28.9% (02) 04.4% (00) 00.0% (45) 100%</td>
<td>C (07) 25.0% (13) 46.4% (09) 32.1% (02) 07.1% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 03 (01) 01.8% (57) 34.1% (79) 47.0% (25) 15.0% (03) 01.8% (167) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Verbal abuse of the teachers.</td>
<td>A (13) 14.1% (42) 45.7% (32) 34.8% (04) 04.3% (01) 01.1% (92) 100%</td>
<td>B (05) 11.1% (14) 31.1% (12) 26.7% (12) 26.7% (02) 04.4% (45) 100%</td>
<td>C (01) 03.6% (03) 10.7% (09) 32.1% (10) 35.7% (05) 17.9% (28) 100%</td>
<td>Total 19 (10) 11.5% (59) 35.8% (53) 32.1% (26) 15.8% (08) 04.8% (165) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1-7 = Principals, teachers, parents and students

There were significant differences between schools on nearly all items relating to positive peer norms and relationships, with school C, in particular, producing consistently negative responses. It would appear that at least one school is grappling with significant problems in this area.

Table 2.12: Peer norms and relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have never been bullied.</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have never seen a student being bullied.</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is easy to make friends at this school.</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(21) 36.1%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1-3 = Students
The results shown in Table 2.12 indicate that bullying was clearly identified as a common occurrence at all the schools studied. Very few students reported that they had ‘never been bullied’ or that they had ‘never seen a student being bullied’. Students did not agree with the statement that ‘it is easy to make friends’ at this school’.

5.2.6 Smooth transitions

Table 2.13: Planned smooth transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom atmosphere in this school is conducive to learning.</td>
<td>(11) 20.4%</td>
<td>(35) 64.8%</td>
<td>(08) 14.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The secure feeling students found in elementary school is maintained in higher classes.</td>
<td>(14) 26.4%</td>
<td>(33) 62.3%</td>
<td>(06) 11.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers’ professional behaviour reflects care and concern.</td>
<td>(20) 37.0%</td>
<td>(32) 59.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers take extra steps to learn more about students.</td>
<td>(22) 41.5%</td>
<td>(27) 50.9%</td>
<td>(04) 07.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers treat students fairly, consistently with respect.</td>
<td>(27) 50.0%</td>
<td>(25) 46.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-5 = Principals and teachers

Smooth transition is one of the characteristics identified under the umbrella of school organisation. Certain characteristics have been identified in the literature for school environments that are conducive to a smooth transition. These are reflected in the items presented in Table 2.13. Teachers were positive in their responses concerning their care and concern for students, but less positive about the overall atmosphere of the school being ‘conducive to learning’ or maintaining the secure feeling found in elementary school. On the last item, the responses were strongly positive reporting that teachers felt they treated students fairly and with respect.

Table 2.14: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom atmosphere in this school is conducive to learning.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(10) 34.5%</td>
<td>(16) 55.2%</td>
<td>(03) 10.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(29) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(01) 07.7%</td>
<td>(11) 84.6%</td>
<td>(01) 07.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(13) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(08) 66.7%</td>
<td>(04) 33.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(12) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(11) 20.4%</td>
<td>(35) 64.8%</td>
<td>(08) 14.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The secure feeling students found in elementary school is maintained in higher classes.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(10) 35.7%</td>
<td>(16) 57.1%</td>
<td>(02) 07.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(28) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(04) 30.8%</td>
<td>(09) 69.2%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(13) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(08) 66.7%</td>
<td>(04) 33.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(12) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(14) 26.4%</td>
<td>(33) 62.3%</td>
<td>(06) 11.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Principals and teachers
On these items, the responses from school ‘A’ were significantly more positive than from the other two schools (Table 2.14). In school ‘C’, none of the respondents was positive on the items related to classroom atmosphere.

Table 2.15 shows the responses of teachers and students to open-ended questions relating to this element.

### Table 2.15: Responses of Students on open-ended questions regarding School and class organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Do you remember any event when you didn’t feel safe in the school? If yes what was that?</td>
<td>Girls threatened my friends when they caught them smoking in the toilets. Yes: We (friends and I) caught some year 10 girls smoking, they then pinned us up on the wall because we saw them. The bullying has not stopped since. When people smoke in the toilets. A tour of the Indonesian Embassy I was going in a car going really fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - A</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Being in the toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Please indicate anything which disturb you most.</td>
<td>When people smoke marijuana or normal cigarette in the toilets. When year 10’s smoke in the toilets during school. Mostly year 9-10 students smoke in the toilets. When people smoke in the toilets. The smoking in the year 6-7 toilets. Year 9-10. Picking on younger children even though they have done nothing. Some of year 10 that pick on me and some of my friends. The rubbish everywhere What disturb me the most in my school would be the older kids. The rubbish every where and the swear words. Kids being bullied by year 10 mostly The vandalism in the toilets The amount of vandalism, and back chatting of students to teachers. It is often really rude. When we have to pick up duty after lunch. Bullying, excluding people The fight between students Older kids bullying, fights between students. and teachers holding grudges with students Seeing hard workers being disturbed or bullied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Students | People smoking especially in the bathrooms  
The state of hygiene in the bat rooms  
Bullying of other students  
Smoking  
Smoking, state of bathrooms, people spiting everywhere  
The untidiness in the toilets also lack of hygiene  
Teasing of people because they look different or dress differently  
Cheating, cutting if lines  
Senior students in the school who frequently harass and bully. |
| --- | --- |
| School - B | because they always do there work  
People bullying me.  
Smoking in the toilets. |
| Teachers | The majority of teachers make much effort to develop understanding of students.  
Teacher in my school usually make an effort to get to really know the students they teach. In this way, the teaching learning process id enhanced. |
| School - B | Please explain how far you and other teachers in your school are successful in adapting teaching and learning, in order to meet the needs of young adolescents? |
| Students | The year 10 because they always smoke.  
How people can get away with breaking the schools rules.  
People pushing in the canteen line.  
When people pushing in the canteen line. |
| School - C | |

### 5.2.7 Summary of the section

In general, the responses present a balanced picture of school organisations conducive to teaching and learning. A few exceptions included a feeling of insecurity among the students, which was reported persistently. Bullying was widely reported in all schools. Use of drugs, sale of drugs, and presence of weapons was reported to a minimum degree. Although the responses of the students were less positive, even so there was a strong sense of belonging for the schools expressed by the students in all the schools. Teachers’ attitudes reflected care and concern for their students. Strong collegiality and cordial relationships amongst the staff was also reported in all the schools. All schools were conscious of the need for smooth transition to a certain extent.

### 5.3 CLASSROOM TEACHING STRATEGIES

#### Introduction

Effective classroom teaching has been posed in the literature as one of the essential correlates of the middle years of schooling. Research in the field of education has identified a powerful impact...
of teaching strategies on students’ learning outcomes. A range of authors and researchers, with few exceptions, identify similar components or characteristics of effective teaching and learning. In this section, data related to classroom teaching strategies implemented in the schools has been analysed. Forty-five items were constructed within the four sub-constructs of selected (Dougherty, 1997) \(^{21}\) philosophical approaches to reveal the perceptions of stakeholders of the ongoing teaching practices in the sample schools.

### 5.3.1 Invitational education

#### Table 3.1: Invitational education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My teachers are helpful, when students are confused.</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(34) 59.6%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teachers are friendly with the students.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(37) 64.9%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My teachers care about me as a person.</td>
<td>(16) 28.1%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My teachers listen to my questions and concerns.</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(16) 28.1%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most of my classes are boring.</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(26) 45.6%</td>
<td>(05) 08.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My attention is focused on my studies without any interruption.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(30) 52.6%</td>
<td>(16) 28.1%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My textbooks and/or workbooks are interesting.</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Class time is lost because of disruptive students’ behaviour.</td>
<td>(06) 12.8%</td>
<td>(19) 40.4%</td>
<td>(14) 29.8%</td>
<td>(08) 17.0%</td>
<td>(47) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The teachers’ teaching time is free from interruptions.</td>
<td>(04) 08.7%</td>
<td>(22) 47.8%</td>
<td>(09) 19.6%</td>
<td>(11) 23.9%</td>
<td>(46) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teachers assign meaningful homework to the students.</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1-7 = Students  
Item No. 8-10 = Parents

Table 3.1 presents the responses related to invitational education practiced in the sample schools. In general, the responses from the students towards their teachers were not very positive. None of the students reported that they stayed focused on their studies without any interruption. Students expressed negative perceptions of their textbooks and workbooks. On the positive side, classroom discipline was reported positively both by students and parents. A great majority of the parents

\(^{21}\) See Table: 3.3.3 (Chapter 3) of this study.
felt that the homework assigned to their children by the teachers was meaningful. On seven items, there was agreement between the stakeholders from three schools.
Table 3.2: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My teachers are friendly with the students.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(08) 25.0%</td>
<td>(23) 71.9%</td>
<td>(01) 03.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(32) 100%</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(04) 23.5%</td>
<td>(09) 52.9%</td>
<td>(04) 23.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(05) 62.5%</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(37) 64.9%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teachers care about me as a person.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(13) 40.6%</td>
<td>(08) 25.0%</td>
<td>(11) 34.4%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(32) 100%</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(03) 17.6%</td>
<td>(09) 52.9%</td>
<td>(04) 23.5%</td>
<td>(01) 05.9%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(06) 75.0%</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(16) 28.1%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My textbooks and/or workbooks are interesting.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(04) 12.5%</td>
<td>(17) 53.1%</td>
<td>(11) 34.4%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(32) 100%</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(01) 05.9%</td>
<td>(09) 52.9%</td>
<td>(07) 41.2%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(03) 37.5%</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(03) 37.5%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-3 = Students

A difference in perceptions was evident among the stakeholders from three schools (Table 3.2). Students from school ‘C’ had a strongly negative perception of their teachers and textbooks. It must be noted that overall, very few students, had a positive perception of their textbooks.

5.3.2 Democracy in education

Table 3.3: Democracy in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curriculum content is current and relevant to meet the worldly needs.</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(38) 66.7%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In the classroom students are encouraged to volunteer their opinions.</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In the classroom students discuss one another’s ideas.</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(34) 59.6%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In my class, students work in small groups.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(14) 24.6%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I often work with other students on academic projects.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(33) 57.9%</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I help classmates in their learning.</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(36) 63.2%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I actively participate in the class.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(38) 66.7%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-7= Students

Table 3.3 presents the results of the responses from the students related to the democratic atmosphere of the classroom. Generally, most of the students expressed a negative perception on these items. Very few of the students were positive that the curriculum content was current and relevant to meet the worldly needs. This contrasts with the comparatively positive views expressed by the teachers on a similar item (Table 3.5). None of the students reported positively
that they worked in small groups, worked with other students on academic projects, or had a positive perception that they participated actively in the class. However, students were generally positive about being encouraged to volunteer their opinions in the classroom, and to discuss one another’s ideas. There was no statistical difference between the responses of students from different schools.

Table 3.4: Democracy in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opportunities for inter-disciplinary team teaching and learning built into curriculum are:</td>
<td>(11) 21.6%</td>
<td>(28) 54.9%</td>
<td>(10) 19.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intellectually stimulating program in multiple areas is:</td>
<td>(11) 21.2%</td>
<td>(29) 55.8%</td>
<td>(11) 21.2%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, hands on activities etc. are:</td>
<td>(30) 55.6%</td>
<td>(15) 27.8%</td>
<td>(09) 16.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-3 = Principals and teachers

Table 3.4 presents the principals and teachers’ perceptions of their classroom teaching practices. The school staff expressed quite negative perceptions of opportunities for interdisciplinary team teaching and implementation of intellectually stimulating program such as sequential growth in multiple areas. However, a variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, and hands-on activities were well practiced in the schools, in the eyes of the school staff.

5.3.3 Constructivist teaching

Table 3.5: Constructivist teaching practices in the classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curriculum integration has widely been used by the teachers.</td>
<td>(31) 60%</td>
<td>(14) 27%</td>
<td>(07) 13%</td>
<td>(00) 00%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In curriculum planning, attention is focused on continuity across grade levels and courses.</td>
<td>(08) 15%</td>
<td>(32) 59%</td>
<td>(14) 26%</td>
<td>(00) 00%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school curriculum broadens students’ learning to meet the worldly needs.</td>
<td>(17) 32%</td>
<td>(33) 61%</td>
<td>(04) 07%</td>
<td>(00) 00%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers structure new content knowledge, based on the prior knowledge of the learners.</td>
<td>(27) 50%</td>
<td>(23) 42%</td>
<td>(03) 06%</td>
<td>(01) 02%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A variety of courses is available, other than the basic subjects.</td>
<td>(28) 50%</td>
<td>(22) 39%</td>
<td>(04) 07%</td>
<td>(02) 04%</td>
<td>(56) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My child gets extra help by the teachers when needed.</td>
<td>(23) 43%</td>
<td>(22) 41%</td>
<td>(06) 11%</td>
<td>(03) 06%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-3 = Principals and teachers
Item No. 4-6 = Parents
Table 3.5 shows the perceptions of principals, teachers and parents on the level of constructivist teaching practices in the sample schools. Most of the responses by the stakeholders were highly positive except in the case of item two, where very few respondents reported positively that in curriculum planning attention was focused on continuity across grade levels and courses. There was no statistical difference between the schools.

Table 3.6: Constructivist teaching practices in the classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The courses I study are increasing my interest in learning more.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(33) 57.9%</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I learn to think more clearly about the subjects I study.</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(46) 80.7%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am interested in the courses I am taught.</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(45) 78.9%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. At school I am learning what I like to learn.</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(32) 56.1%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My teachers set complex and meaningful assignments.</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In the classroom students feel free to disagree with the teacher.</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I generally feel encouraged in the class to ask questions/ contribute or comments.</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. My intellectual curiosity is being stimulated in the class.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(30) 52.6%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I try to relate course material to my life experience out of the classroom.</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(41) 71.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My mind wanders a good deal during class.</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(26) 45.6%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-10 = Students

Table 3.6 is an analysis of students’ perceptions of opportunities for empowerment and autonomy within constructivist teaching and learning strategies. Students’ responses did not reflect a very positive perception of the courses they were taught. They indicated that the courses they were taught were not increasing their interest in learning and that they did not learn what they wanted to learn. None of the students reported that their intellectual curiosity was being stimulated in class or that they try to relate the course material to their life experience out of the classroom. The perception of the students of their teachers was more positive. On item 3 one third of the students were very positive that in the classroom students felt free to disagree with the teachers on certain issues and that they were generally encouraged to ask the questions / contribute or comments in the class. Despite the fact that students failed to indicate that their learning environment was based on constructivist strategies, a majority of the students appear to be connected with their learning environment as very few of them reported that their minds wandered a good deal in the classroom. There was no statistically significant difference between the responses of students from different schools.
5.3.4 Reflective teaching

Table 3.7: Reflective teaching practices in the classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The use of teaching strategies sensitive to the individual’s level of intellectual maturity are:</td>
<td>(15) 28.3%</td>
<td>(32) 60.4%</td>
<td>(03) 05.7%</td>
<td>(03) 05.7%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Instructional arrangements for special and gifted students are:</td>
<td>(08) 16.3%</td>
<td>(25) 51.0%</td>
<td>(12) 24.5%</td>
<td>(04) 08.2%</td>
<td>(49) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The teaching strategies meeting students’ varying developmental needs are:</td>
<td>(17) 31.5%</td>
<td>(32) 59.3%</td>
<td>(03) 05.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.7%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teaching strategies meeting academic, physical and emotional experiences to early adolescents are:</td>
<td>(22) 40.7%</td>
<td>(29) 53.7%</td>
<td>(02) 03.7%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The teaching strategies focusing the characteristics of adolescent learners are:</td>
<td>(10) 18.5%</td>
<td>(37) 68.5%</td>
<td>(04) 07.4%</td>
<td>(03) 05.6%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The teaching strategies demonstrating the relationship of content to real life situations are:</td>
<td>(17) 31.5%</td>
<td>(36) 66.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-6= Principals and teachers

Table 3.7 presents the perception of principals and teachers of reflective teaching strategies used by the teachers in the classroom in the sample schools. A mixed picture has emerged from these responses as on items 2 and 5 very few of the staff members were positive that instructional arrangements for special and gifted students or that teaching strategies focusing on the characteristics of adolescent learners were fully implemented. However, nearly half of them strongly believed that teaching strategies providing academic, physical and emotional experiences to early adolescents were fully implemented.

Table 3.8: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of respondents</th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The teaching strategies demonstrating the relationship of content to real life situations are:</td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(16) 31.4%</td>
<td>(35) 68.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(17) 31.5%</td>
<td>(36) 66.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching strategies meeting academic, physical and emotional experiences to early adolescents are:</td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>(02) 66.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(20) 39.2%</td>
<td>(29) 56.9%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(22) 40.7%</td>
<td>(29) 53.7%</td>
<td>(02) 03.7%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8 shows that there was a significant difference of opinion between the principals and the teachers.
Table 3.9: Reflective teaching practices in the classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curriculum addresses issues and skills relevant to early adolescents.</td>
<td>(15) 27.8%</td>
<td>(36) 66.7%</td>
<td>(03) 05.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teachers are enthusiastic.</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students have the opportunity to consider their own work habits through structured self-reflection.</td>
<td>(25) 50.0%</td>
<td>(20) 40.0%</td>
<td>(03) 06.0%</td>
<td>(02) 04.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals and teachers  
Item No. 2 = Students  
Item No. 3 = Parents

Table 3.9 presents the responses of stakeholders on items related to reflective teaching. In general, principals and teachers were positive that the curriculum addressed issues and skills that are relevant to early adolescent learners although students’ responses on a similar item ‘curriculum content is current and relevant to meet the worldly needs’ were not at all positive (Table 3.4). One third of the students expressed strongly positive views of their teachers and a great majority of the parents held strong positive views that students were provided opportunities to consider their own work habits through structured self-reflection. There were no significant differences between the schools on these items.

Table 3.10 and 3.11 show the responses of the teachers in the three schools to open-ended questions relating to this element.
Table 3.10: Responses of Teachers on open-ended question regarding *Classroom teaching strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher School - A</td>
<td>How you think that multiple intelligence approaches are evident in your classroom teaching?</td>
<td>Strategies that I use for multiple intelligence include-variety of presentation for project, cooperative learning, negotiated curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers School - B</td>
<td></td>
<td>I provide many different types of lessons so that students can use different forms of multiple intelligence. They are not just sitting at a desk but other have to move around the class and do the practical activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I use a range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide choices to cater for multiple intelligence in assignments/ class activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited--- Mostly special numerical abstract thought social and verbal intelligence may be evoked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers School - C</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have used diagnostic testing on all students to assess their M.I.S in the light of the results; I have to develop more kinaesthetic methods with this particular cohort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allowing student centred. Develop work line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By the results of each students. You see what works for other or some. Try to connect education to students’ learning needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I use such a range of activities and assessment tasks that I consciously cater for multiple intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By assignment set out to cater for that. Also teaching strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some staff members have and do employ strategies that cater for multiple intelligence. Other staff members do not know how to approach this in the class room.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.11: Responses of Teachers on open-ended question regarding *Classroom teaching strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>How does the school curriculum serve the broad goals for the students’ learning and development that the public generally expects education to achieve (e.g. personal and intellectual growth, citizenship and preparation for work and higher education)?</td>
<td>This school has many good supports for those students in year 7-10 who are failing in a traditional system through the G-tech program. Introducing a band for year 6-9 with this introduction term ¾ 2003 and is begin to establish itself within the developing community in a new area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Our school curriculum has focused more on the students’ relationships rather on their academic rigor although there are students who achieve both. Curriculum is flexible to be changed to meet needs, focuses on integration and aims to reflect significant learning. Yes, we know about our students but do not have a special understanding of young adolescents. In the role of home group teachers we take a more personal role in students’ welfare as well as teaching. The above statement is true in most of the staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>How does the school curriculum serve the broad goals for the students’ learning and development that the public generally expects education to achieve (e.g. personal and intellectual growth, citizenship and preparation for work and higher education)?</td>
<td>I think this school covers the curriculum very broadly and offers a wide range to cater for students with variety of learning needs. The curriculum prepares students for higher education in ensuring they have opportunities for a solid grounding in all KLA’s especially English, Mathematics, health and PE skills with their understanding of their playgroup. Citizenship is emphasised in SOSE subjects and is included in extra curriculum activities such as fundraising for various charities, literacy and numeracy key competencies, ICT’s are address in KLA’s to assist in the preparation for work. In addition to main subjects special courses e.g. citizenship education, health education are part of whole courses. Recognition of community services and personal development via extra curriculum are also ensured. Acknowledge recognition via newsletters. Don’t just have the basic subjects, but there are arts, health, vocational education, citizenship type subjects to look at the whole person.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the section

With respect to ‘classroom teaching strategies’ there appears to be a strong agreement between principals, parents and teachers. In general, the responses of the students were not very positive in relation to their teachers and teaching practices in the schools. For example, students expressed a very negative perception of the courses they were taught and none of the students reported positively that they worked in small groups. Although teachers felt that teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching and hands-on activities were well practiced in the schools, they felt that they were not trained for meeting the needs of adolescents. In general, there was an agreement between the responses of the schools on all items.

5.4 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC)

Introduction

‘Professional learning communities’ [PLC] is a vital component of the General Design for whole-school approach to school improvement. In this section, data related to professional learning communities in middle year programs has been analysed. The literature has suggested a number of school characteristics associated with professional learning and collaboration. Nearly all studies have identified similar dimensions of this element, although sometimes in different ways. For this study the following five characteristics of PLC, which have been widely discussed in the literature, constitute the basis of data collection and discussion for this study:

1. Supportive and shared leadership
2. Building a culture of collective learning
3. Working as collaborative teams
4. Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation
5. Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

Twenty-one items were constructed based on the above characteristics of PLC to explore the perceptions of stakeholders of the implementation level of these characteristics, which are indicators of the nature of professional learning communities available in the sample schools.

5.4.1 Supportive and shared leadership
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Table 4.1: Supportive and shared leadership in the sample schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat true (%)</th>
<th>Not very true (%)</th>
<th>Not at all true (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All are involved in the development of shared mission statement.</td>
<td>(22) 22.4%</td>
<td>(54) 55.1%</td>
<td>(17) 17.3%</td>
<td>(05) 05.1%</td>
<td>(98) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most of the staff shares the value, vision and the central mission of the middle schooling.</td>
<td>(31) 30.1%</td>
<td>(59) 57.3%</td>
<td>(10) 09.7%</td>
<td>(03) 02.9%</td>
<td>(103) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leaders provide resources for ongoing professional development.</td>
<td>(19) 45.2%</td>
<td>(20) 47.6%</td>
<td>(02) 04.8%</td>
<td>(01) 02.4%</td>
<td>(42) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Principals, teachers and parents  
Item No. 3 = Parents

Table 4.1 shows the responses with respect to professional learning communities having shared values and vision with supportive leadership in the sample schools. In general, the responses of the stakeholders were quite positive. One third of the respondents on item 2 expressed a strong belief that staff shared the vision and mission of the middle schooling. A similar level of responses (31%) was indicated in Table 1.7 on the similar item “the school has a clearly articulated mission which is shared by all”. A great majority of the parents expressed a strong belief that all necessary resources were provided by the principal. Statistically, there was no significant difference between the schools or between different stakeholders on two items. However, on the third item the difference of opinion between the schools was significant.

Table 4.2: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat true (%)</th>
<th>Not very true (%)</th>
<th>Not at all true (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>P-Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leaders provide resources for ongoing professional development.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(10) 38.5%</td>
<td>(15) 57.7%</td>
<td>(01) 03.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(26) 100%</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(07) 87.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(05) 62.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(19) 45.2%</td>
<td>(20) 47.6%</td>
<td>(02) 04.8%</td>
<td>(01) 02.4%</td>
<td>(42) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Parents

Table 4.2 shows the responses with a significant difference between the schools on the item related to supportive and shared leadership in the schools. In school ‘B’, the great majority of the parents (87%) reported that the leader of the school provided resources for ongoing professional development, considerably more than in the other two schools.
5.4.2 Building a culture of collective learning

Table 4.3: Culture of collective learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers are engaged in professional and collegial learning activities.</td>
<td>(16) 40.0%</td>
<td>(20) 50.0%</td>
<td>(03) 07.5%</td>
<td>(01) 02.5%</td>
<td>(40) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff members routinely share ideas and work together, to improve the instructional programs.</td>
<td>(15) 38.5%</td>
<td>(17) 43.6%</td>
<td>(06) 15.4%</td>
<td>(01) 02.6%</td>
<td>(39) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Parents

Table 4.3 indicates that parents had a positive impression of professional collegial learning activities and sharing of ideas for the improvement of instructional program within the schools. There was a statistical difference between the schools on item one (Table 4.4) where parents from school ‘C’ responded less positively than parents at school ‘A’ or ‘B’.

Table 4.4: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers are engaged in professional and collegial learning activities.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(11) 45.8%</td>
<td>(12) 50.0%</td>
<td>(01) 04.2%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(24) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(05) 62.5%</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(06) 75.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff members routinely share ideas and work together, to improve the instructional programs.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(16) 40.0%</td>
<td>(20) 50.0%</td>
<td>(03) 07.5%</td>
<td>(01) 02.5%</td>
<td>(40) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Parents

5.4.3 Working as a collaborative teams

Table 4.5: In-service staff development programs in the sample schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Continuous staff development based on adolescents’ needs is:</td>
<td>(10) 18.9%</td>
<td>(34) 64.2%</td>
<td>(06) 11.3%</td>
<td>(03) 05.7%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In-service training focusing on students’ achievements is:</td>
<td>(09) 17.0%</td>
<td>(28) 52.8%</td>
<td>(09) 17.0%</td>
<td>(07) 13.2%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Professional development focusing on students’ learning interest is:</td>
<td>(08) 15.4%</td>
<td>(28) 53.8%</td>
<td>(10) 19.2%</td>
<td>(05) 11.5%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-3 = Principals and teachers

Table 4.5 shows the responses relating to professional learning communities working as collaborative teams in the sample schools with respect to staff development through in-service. The responses generally were not very positive in areas of staff development including training based on adolescent needs, in-service training focusing on students’ achievements, and professional development focusing on students’ learning interest. There was no significant statistical difference between the schools.
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Table 4.6: Staff working as collaborative teams in the sample schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The emphasis of skill development is based on common purpose.</td>
<td>(31) 58.5%</td>
<td>(15) 28.3%</td>
<td>(06) 11.3%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Real sense of belonging and collaboration is seen within the teachers and staff.</td>
<td>(26) 51.0%</td>
<td>(08) 15.7%</td>
<td>(14) 27.5%</td>
<td>(03) 05.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Time for teachers’ collective learning and collaboration is built into the school’s schedules.</td>
<td>(19) 37.3%</td>
<td>(03) 05.9%</td>
<td>(12) 23.5%</td>
<td>(17) 33.3%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers work in teams and share information about students’ learning.</td>
<td>(32) 59.3%</td>
<td>(08) 14.8%</td>
<td>(14) 25.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-4 = Principals and teachers

Table 4.6 presents the responses of items relating to the staff working as collaborative teams. On three items, a bimodal distribution was noted in the responses. It would seem that there is some difference in opinion with some teachers believing quite strongly that there is effective collaboration in teams but with a significant proportion believing just as strongly that there is not. There was no significant statistical difference between the schools on these items. Principals and teachers had a very positive belief that the emphasis of teachers’ skill development was based on common purpose, which was students’ learning and achievements (see Table 1.1). There was a strong sense of belonging and collaboration within the teachers and staff and teachers were working in teams, sharing information about the students’ learning.

5.4.4 Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation

Table 4.7: Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers are specially trained to understand developmental uniqueness of early adolescents.</td>
<td>(10) 18.9%</td>
<td>(23) 43.4%</td>
<td>(16) 30.2%</td>
<td>(04) 07.5%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most of my teachers know the content knowledge of the subjects they teach.</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The teachers seem knowledgeable in teaching and experimentation.</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(27) 47.4%</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers use exploratory programs.</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(33) 57.9%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers are trained to use varied instructional strategies to plan class activities.</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(25) 43.9%</td>
<td>(14) 24.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teachers introduce new concepts so fast that students find it hard to grasp.</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(28) 49.1%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers are willing to help the students with personal problems.</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals and teachers
Item No. 2-7 = Students
Table 4.7 shows the perception of principals, teachers and students in sample schools regarding teachers’ classroom based teaching and learning activities being oriented to research and experimentation. On item number one, a small number of principals and teachers (18.9%) responded ‘very true’ that the teachers were specially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents while 30% responded ‘not very true’. This situation has already been indicated on various items where teachers reported that they were not specially trained for understanding the needs of adolescents. Students were confident that their teachers knew the content knowledge of the subjects and in teaching and experimentation. However, students were equally divided at item number six in their perception that teacher kept pace with their learning capacities. Regarding teachers’ willingness in helping the students with personal problems, the students’ perceptions were less positive. There was no statistical difference between schools on these items.

5.4.5 Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

Table 4.8: Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional development tied with use of new technology materials and data-based inquiry is:</td>
<td>(09) 17.0%</td>
<td>(32) 60.4%</td>
<td>(05) 09.4%</td>
<td>(07) 13.2%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1= Principals and teachers

Table 4.8 shows the results of use of new technology and data-based inquiry for the professional development of the PLC in the sample schools. Only 17% of principals and teachers responded that new technology and use of database inquiry was fully implemented for professional development, whereas a large number responded that it was being implemented partially. The statistical difference between the sample schools was not significant.

Table 4.9: Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff development is based on the latest research findings.</td>
<td>(17) 32.7%</td>
<td>(28) 53.8%</td>
<td>(06) 11.5%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1= Principals and teachers

Table 4.9 shows the responses of the stakeholders relating to the use of latest research for staff development. One third of the principals and teachers had strong positive views. The statistical difference between the sample schools was not significant.
### Table 4.10: Responses of Stakeholders on open-ended question regarding PLC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher School - A</td>
<td>Any thing you are not doing that you would like to do to reinforce learning?</td>
<td>No Response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers School - B</td>
<td></td>
<td>More time for lesson preparation and developing individual needs based resources. A teacher knows when the students should be challenged. Increase or alter curriculum content, to meet the needs of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers School - C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve culture of school body that learning is the main reason to be at the school. Student Pathways’ is about to commence in this school (Pilot Project). This will be a real test for changing students to produce a tangible outcome. Will cover the purpose of school life and Beyond. One is always assessing and evaluating your practice. This change with the needs of each class. Continual professional development for all staff members to assist in as improving and maintaining quality teaching staff. Student evaluations for each unit –I am starting to do this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.11: Responses of Stakeholders on open-ended question regarding PLC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher School - A</td>
<td>Please add any other factor that you believe provide support or pose a barrier to the implementation of the middle school program in your school.</td>
<td>Tired teaching staff who are losing enthusiasm for introducing new ideas because there is a constant barrage of ideas; not enough time for one change to be fully integrated into school before the next program confront them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers School - B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of teachers’ expertise prevents the programs from being of high intellectual quality. Yes, we know about our students but don’t have a special understanding of young adolescents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle school teachers need to be properly trained. All times teachers are expected to teach in an area that is not their area of expertise. Some middle school teachers are teaching specialist subjects that they have no knowledge in. I use a range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of students.

Summary of the section

Overall, the responses in this section indicate that most of the necessary ingredients of professional learning communities were practiced in the sample schools, with slight variations and differences of opinion were noted in a few cases between the schools or among the stakeholders. According to the majority of the stakeholders, teachers were engaged in professional working relationships, sharing ideas and developing appropriate instructional programs for students. Staff, however, did not feel that their development was inclusive of the various adolescents’ needs. Otherwise, staff felt that they were working as collaborative teams and had a strong sense of belonging and collaboration among themselves. Students had a strong conviction that their teachers had strong knowledge of the content they teach and control over their teaching practices. Regarding teachers’ willingness in helping the students with personal problems, the students’ perceptions were less positive.

5.5 INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Introduction

Intervention and special assistance, as an element of ‘General Design’ (Hill & Crévola, 1997), generally referred to as ‘guidance and counselling’ in the literature of effective schooling, has a significant place in school restructuring for young adolescents. On the basis of the following characteristics of intervention and special assistance identified in the relevant literature (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Baruth & Manning, 2000; Hill & Jane, 2001; Hughey, 2002) fourteen items related to the element were constructed for the purpose of data collection, analysis and discussion.

1. Academic support
2. Counselling and advisory services
CHAPTER FIVE

3. Health and physical education
4. Technology and resources
5. Career development

5.5.1 Academic support

Table 5.1: Academic support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.</td>
<td>(24) 22.9%</td>
<td>(38) 36.2%</td>
<td>(30) 28.6%</td>
<td>(13) 12.4%</td>
<td>(105) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All extracurricular activities are available to all students.</td>
<td>(40) 75.5%</td>
<td>(10) 18.9%</td>
<td>(03) 05.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1= Principals, teachers and Parents  
Item No. 2 = Parents

Table 5.1 presents the perception of the three adult stakeholders about the extra support provided to students for their academic development. It is evident that less than a quarter of the stakeholders from the sample schools had strong positive views that extra time and support was built into every school day for students who were in need of assistance. A large number (41%) of them had negative perception. However, parents were more positive in their response on the next item, believing that all extracurricular activities were available to all students.

Table 5.2: Comparison between the stakeholders on the academic support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.</td>
<td>(17) 32.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(07) 14.0%</td>
<td>(24) 22.9%</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20) 38.5%</td>
<td>(02) 66.7%</td>
<td>(16) 32.0%</td>
<td>(38) 36.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(09) 17.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(21) 42.0%</td>
<td>(30) 28.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(06) 11.5%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(06) 12.0%</td>
<td>(13) 12.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
<td>(105) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 shows that there was a significant difference of opinion between the parents, principals and the teachers. Parents were more positive than the teachers and principals.
5.5.2 Counselling and advisory services

Table 5.3: Counselling and advisory services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A faculty member is available for each student who knows him/her personally and helps when needed.</td>
<td>(61) 56.5%</td>
<td>(35) 32.4%</td>
<td>(06) 05.6%</td>
<td>(06) 05.6%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This school offers good counselling facility.</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(26) 45.6%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Counsellors coordinate support services.</td>
<td>(18) 34.0%</td>
<td>(19) 35.8%</td>
<td>(14) 26.4%</td>
<td>(02) 03.8%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I believe I can talk with my counsellor.</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 2 & 4 = Students
Item No. 3 = Principals, teachers

Table 5.3 presents a mixed picture of the perceptions of stakeholders on different items. It is evident from the first item that advisory services were believed to have been provided to all the students largely. More than half (57%) of the principals, teachers and parents had strong positive views that a faculty member was available for each student who knew him/her personally and help when needed. On the other hand, very few students (21%) had strong positive perception about the good counselling facilities offered to them. Similarly, students were not very positive in their belief that they could talk with their counsellor. However, principals and teachers had positive perception that the counsellors coordinated support services.

Table 5.4: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(13) 46.4%</td>
<td>(11) 39.3%</td>
<td>(03) 10.7%</td>
<td>(01) 03.6%</td>
<td>(28) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(01) 07.7%</td>
<td>(05) 38.5%</td>
<td>(07) 53.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(13) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(04) 33.3%</td>
<td>(03) 25.0%</td>
<td>(04) 33.0%</td>
<td>(01) 08.3%</td>
<td>(12) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(18) 34.0%</td>
<td>(19) 35.8%</td>
<td>(14) 26.4%</td>
<td>(02) 03.8%</td>
<td>(53) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-Value Fishers Exact Test: 0.029

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals and teachers

Table 5.4 shows a significant difference of opinion between the stakeholders from three schools. The responses from schools ‘A’ and ‘C’ were more positive than from school ‘B’ where very few (8%) of the respondents had strong positive perception that support services were coordinated by the counsellors. It would seem that the perception of counselling services within schools could be quite idiosyncratic to particular settings.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.5.3 Health and physical education

Table 5.5: Health and physical education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health education programs are personalised for personal hygiene and physical fitness.</td>
<td>(34) 32.1%</td>
<td>(41) 38.7%</td>
<td>(21) 19.8%</td>
<td>(10) 09.4%</td>
<td>(106) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Health programs are customised to adolescents’ needs.</td>
<td>(38) 36.5%</td>
<td>(49) 47.1%</td>
<td>(09) 08.7%</td>
<td>(08) 07.7%</td>
<td>(104) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 5.5 presents the responses with respect to the health and physical education programs in the sample schools. Nearly one third of the principals, teachers and parents had strong positive perception that health education programs were personalised for personal hygiene and physical fitness and more than one third had less positive views. Similar trend is noted on the next item of the Table where more than one third of the respondents had strong positive beliefs that the health programs were customised to adolescents’ needs. There was agreement between the respondents from three schools.

5.5.4 Technology and resources

Table 5.6: Technology and resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.</td>
<td>(30) 30.6%</td>
<td>(52) 53.1%</td>
<td>(13) 13.3%</td>
<td>(03) 03.1%</td>
<td>(98) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My school has the equipment and books I need.</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(26) 45.6%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I use computer regularly in the school.</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I spend time in the library.</td>
<td>(07) 12.3%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 2-4 = Students

Table 5.6 presents a reasonably positive picture about equipment and resources available in the schools for the students. Students felt that the schools had equipment and books for them. However, a majority of the students reported negatively about the computer facilities available in the schools and the opportunities available for the students to spend time in the library.

Table 5.7: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of respondents</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>(21) 47.7%</td>
<td>(15) 34.1%</td>
<td>(05) 11.4%</td>
<td>(03) 06.8%</td>
<td>(44) 100%</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(01) 33.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(08) 15.7%</td>
<td>(36) 70.6%</td>
<td>(07) 13.7%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(30) 30.6%</td>
<td>(52) 53.1%</td>
<td>(13) 13.3%</td>
<td>(03) 03.1%</td>
<td>(98) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.7 indicates a significant difference of opinion between the stakeholders regarding the use of technology and resources available in the schools. Parents were seen more positive as compared to the principals and the teachers.

Table 5.8: Comparison between the schools on use of technology and resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I use computer regularly in the school</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(10) 31.3%</td>
<td>(12) 37.5%</td>
<td>(08) 25.0%</td>
<td>(02) 06.3%</td>
<td>(32) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(11) 64.7%</td>
<td>(06) 35.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(01) 12.5%</td>
<td>(05) 62.5%</td>
<td>(02) 25.0%</td>
<td>(08) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1 = Students

Table 5.8 indicates a significant difference of opinion between the students from different schools. Nearly one third of the students from school ‘A’ had reported strongly positive that they used computer regularly in the school, whereas none of the student from other two school had strong positive perception on the item.

5.5.5 Career development

Table 5.9: Career development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe that my education will prepare me for higher education.</td>
<td>(27) 48.2%</td>
<td>(25) 44.6%</td>
<td>(04) 07.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(56) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.</td>
<td>(39) 37.1%</td>
<td>(50) 47.6%</td>
<td>(10) 09.5%</td>
<td>(06) 05.7%</td>
<td>(105) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1 = Students
Item No. 2 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 5.9 indicates the positive perceptions of the stakeholders as an overwhelming majority of the students believed that that their education would prepare them for their higher education. The majority of the adult stakeholders also had positive views on the item suggesting that opportunities for students were available in the schools to explore the careers. There was an agreement between all stakeholders from different schools.

Summary of the section

Overall, the responses in this section present a mixed picture that most of the necessary characteristics of intervention and special assistance were practiced in the sample schools, but with some areas of concern. A majority of the stakeholders expressed less positive or negative views about the extra academic support available for students who were in need. However, parents were more positive, believing that all extracurricular activities were available to all students. Advisory services were largely provided to all the students with a faculty member who
knew the students well and was available for all student in need. Students had a strong negative perception about the lack of counselling facilities available to them. However, staff expressed a positive perception that the counsellors coordinated support services, that health education programs were personalised for personal hygiene and physical fitness and that health programs were customised to adolescents’ needs. The schools were reasonably equipped and had the required resources and books for the students. However, students reported a lack of computer facilities. Students were hopeful that their education would prepare them for higher education and career development.

5.6 HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

This section analyses the responses on items related to home, school and community partnerships. In the literature, Epstein’s typology (1995) and terminology of parent involvement have been extensively discussed throughout middle level research and has been adopted as a framework for analysing the findings with respect to home, school and community partnerships of the sample middle schools. One hundred ways for parents to be involved in their child’s education (National Parent and Teachers Association (PTA), 1997) was also consulted as a line of approach in constructing the items for the instruments. Twenty-nine items were prepared and the stakeholders from the sample schools were asked for their perceptions on five-point Likert scales about the Epstein’s typology (1995), which includes six categories of home school partnerships:

1. Parenting and child rearing
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision-making
6. Collaborating with community
5.6.1 Parenting and child rearing

Table 6.1: Parenting and child rearing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents are informed about the latest research on students’ learning needs.</td>
<td>(25) 24.5%</td>
<td>(40) 39.2%</td>
<td>(31) 30.4%</td>
<td>(06) 05.9%</td>
<td>(102) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents expect the child to do chores.</td>
<td>(61) 53.5%</td>
<td>(33) 28.9%</td>
<td>(12) 10.5%</td>
<td>(08) 07.0%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents limit the time the child spends on watching television or using internet.</td>
<td>(44) 38.6%</td>
<td>(39) 34.2%</td>
<td>(19) 16.7%</td>
<td>(12) 10.5%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents limit the amount of time the child goes out with friends.</td>
<td>(23) 20.2%</td>
<td>(46) 40.4%</td>
<td>(30) 26.3%</td>
<td>(15) 13.2%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 2-4 = Parents and students

Table 6.1 presents the responses on items relating to parenting and child rearing. The stakeholders generally had less positive perceptions about the schools’ contribution in preparing parents for the provision of a supportive and safe environment for their children’s education. At home, monitoring television watching was seen as being more important that monitoring time spent with friends. The statistical difference between the sample schools and between the respondents was not significant.

5.6.2 Communication between parents and school

Table 6.2: Communication between parents and schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents are provided information and support by the staff to help their children in learning.</td>
<td>(19) 17.8%</td>
<td>(46) 43.0%</td>
<td>(30) 28.0%</td>
<td>(12) 11.2%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parent-teacher conferences focus on students’ achievements.</td>
<td>(59) 55.1%</td>
<td>(38) 35.5%</td>
<td>(08) 07.5%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students’ progress.</td>
<td>(47) 42.7%</td>
<td>(43) 39.1%</td>
<td>(15) 13.6%</td>
<td>(05) 04.5%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A two-way connection between the school, home and community is encouraged.</td>
<td>(40) 36.7%</td>
<td>(47) 43.1%</td>
<td>(17) 15.6%</td>
<td>(05) 04.6%</td>
<td>(109) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents attend school meetings regularly.</td>
<td>(58) 50.9%</td>
<td>(45) 39.5%</td>
<td>(09) 07.9%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents phone or speak to the teacher or counsellor.</td>
<td>(43) 37.7%</td>
<td>(57) 50.0%</td>
<td>(11) 09.6%</td>
<td>(03) 02.6%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-4 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 5-6 = Parents and students

The stakeholders generally responded positively on items relating to ongoing two-way communications between schools and parents about school programs and children’s progress. They reported that the parent-teacher conferences focused on students’ achievement, and teachers were reported as frequently communicating with parents on students’ progress. A great majority of the students also expressed positive views on parents attending school meetings regularly or calling to their teachers or counsellor. However, on item 1, very few reported that the staff
provided information and support to the parents for helping their children learning. There were no significant statistical differences between the schools on these items except one item, which is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Comparison between the schools for parents and school communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parent-teacher conferences focus on students’ achievements.</td>
<td>A (33) 56.9%</td>
<td>(21) 36.2%</td>
<td>(03) 05.2%</td>
<td>(01) 01.7%</td>
<td>(58) 100%</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (21) 72.4%</td>
<td>(05) 17.2%</td>
<td>(02) 06.9%</td>
<td>(01) 03.4%</td>
<td>(29) 100%</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (05) 25.0%</td>
<td>(12) 60.0%</td>
<td>(03) 15.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (59) 55.1%</td>
<td>(38) 35.5%</td>
<td>(08) 07.5%</td>
<td>(02) 01.9%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Principals, teachers and parents

Table 6.3 shows the responses where respondents of different schools did not agree. In school ‘C’, fewer parents had positive response as compare to schools ‘A’ and ‘B’.

Table 6.4: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students’ progress.</td>
<td>Parents (19) 33.3%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals (03) 100%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(03) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers (25) 50.0%</td>
<td>(23) 46.0%</td>
<td>(02) 04.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (47) 42.7%</td>
<td>(43) 39.1%</td>
<td>(15) 13.6%</td>
<td>(05) 04.5%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1= Principals, teachers and parents

Table 6.4 shows a comparison of the responses from the three stakeholders. There was a significant variation in the responses of the different stakeholders. While all three principals and teachers felt that communication with parents about students’ progress was well established, parents responded less positively on this item.

Table 6.5: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents attend school meetings.</td>
<td>Parents (24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(04) 07.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (34) 59.6%</td>
<td>(16) 28.1%</td>
<td>(05) 03.9%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (58) 50.9%</td>
<td>(45) 39.5%</td>
<td>(09) 07.9%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(114)100%</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents phone or speak to the teacher or counsellor.</td>
<td>Parents (14) 24.6%</td>
<td>(37) 64.9%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (29) 50.9%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (43) 37.7%</td>
<td>(57) 50.0%</td>
<td>(11) 09.6%</td>
<td>(03) 02.6%</td>
<td>(114)100%</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Parents and students

Table 6.5 shows a comparison of the responses between parents and their children, where students’ responses reflected a more positive impression of parent/school interactions than the parents’ responses.
5.6.3 Volunteering or parents support to the schools

Table 6.6: Parental involvement as volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true (n)</th>
<th>Somewhat true (n)</th>
<th>Not very true (n)</th>
<th>Not at all true (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents attend school events in which their child participates.</td>
<td>46 (40.4%)</td>
<td>55 (48.2%)</td>
<td>11 (9.6%)</td>
<td>2 (1.8%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents act as a volunteer in the school.</td>
<td>88 (77.9%)</td>
<td>20 (15.8%)</td>
<td>4 (3.5%)</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
<td>113 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in the school activities.</td>
<td>28 (26.7%)</td>
<td>58 (55.2%)</td>
<td>15 (14.3%)</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Parents and students  
Item No. 3 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 6.6 presents the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the role of parents as volunteers and opportunities for parental participation in school activities. Parents and students expressed strong positive responses on the first two items relating to specific roles in the school but were less positive about opportunities being available for parents to watch and participate in school activities. There was a strong agreement between the stakeholders and between the schools on these items.

5.6.4 Learning activities at home

Table 6.7: Parental involvement in learning activities at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.</td>
<td>30 (27.3%)</td>
<td>51 (46.4%)</td>
<td>23 (20.9%)</td>
<td>6 (5.5%)</td>
<td>110 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents help the child with homework.</td>
<td>61 (54.0%)</td>
<td>37 (32.7%)</td>
<td>13 (11.5%)</td>
<td>2 (1.8%)</td>
<td>113 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents check whether the child has done homework.</td>
<td>86 (75.4%)</td>
<td>18 (15.8%)</td>
<td>7 (6.1%)</td>
<td>3 (2.6%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents give special privileges to the child on good performance.</td>
<td>31 (27.4%)</td>
<td>50 (44.2%)</td>
<td>23 (20.4%)</td>
<td>9 (8.0%)</td>
<td>113 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents discuss with the child about the selection of courses or projects.</td>
<td>47 (41.2%)</td>
<td>39 (34.2%)</td>
<td>18 (15.8%)</td>
<td>10 (8.8%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents discuss with the child about school activities.</td>
<td>62 (54.4%)</td>
<td>32 (28.1%)</td>
<td>15 (13.2%)</td>
<td>5 (4.4%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents discuss with the child grades or progress.</td>
<td>77 (67.5%)</td>
<td>23 (20.2%)</td>
<td>10 (8.8%)</td>
<td>4 (3.5%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents discuss with the child national and world events.</td>
<td>54 (47.4%)</td>
<td>39 (34.2%)</td>
<td>18 (15.8%)</td>
<td>3 (2.6%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents  
Item No. 2-8 = Parents and students

It can be seen that parents and students were strongly positive regarding the role the parents played in helping their children in enhancing their learning (Table 6.7). School staff and parents were less positive about cooperation between school and home in monitoring homework.
Table 6.8: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.</td>
<td>A (20) 33.3%</td>
<td>(28) 46.7%</td>
<td>(09) 15.0%</td>
<td>(03) 05.0%</td>
<td>(60) 100%</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (09) 30.0%</td>
<td>(15) 50.0%</td>
<td>(06) 20.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(30) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (01) 05.0%</td>
<td>(08) 40.0%</td>
<td>(08) 40.0%</td>
<td>(03) 15.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (30) 27.3%</td>
<td>(51) 46.4%</td>
<td>(23) 20.9%</td>
<td>(06) 05.5%</td>
<td>(110) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents help the child with homework.</td>
<td>A (35) 55.6%</td>
<td>(25) 39.7%</td>
<td>(03) 04.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(63) 100%</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (17) 50.0%</td>
<td>(09) 26.5%</td>
<td>(07) 20.6%</td>
<td>(01) 02.9%</td>
<td>(34) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (09) 56.3%</td>
<td>(03) 18.8%</td>
<td>(08) 40.0%</td>
<td>(03) 18.8%</td>
<td>(16) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (61) 54.0%</td>
<td>(32) 28.1%</td>
<td>(13) 11.5%</td>
<td>(02) 01.8%</td>
<td>(113) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents discuss with the child about school activities.</td>
<td>A (36) 56.3%</td>
<td>(19) 29.7%</td>
<td>(09) 14.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(64) 100%</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (17) 50.0%</td>
<td>(11) 32.4%</td>
<td>(05) 14.7%</td>
<td>(01) 02.9%</td>
<td>(34) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (09) 56.3%</td>
<td>(02) 12.5%</td>
<td>(01) 06.3%</td>
<td>(04) 25.0%</td>
<td>(16) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (62) 54.4%</td>
<td>(32) 28.1%</td>
<td>(15) 13.2%</td>
<td>(05) 04.4%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents discuss with the child grades or progress.</td>
<td>A (47) 73.4%</td>
<td>(12) 18.8%</td>
<td>(05) 07.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(64) 100%</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (22) 64.7%</td>
<td>(05) 14.7%</td>
<td>(05) 14.7%</td>
<td>(02) 05.9%</td>
<td>(34) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C (08) 50.0%</td>
<td>(06) 37.5%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(02) 12.5%</td>
<td>(16) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (77) 67.5%</td>
<td>(23) 20.2%</td>
<td>(10) 08.8%</td>
<td>(04) 03.5%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents  Item No. 2-4= Parents and students

Table 6.8 shows the strong statistical difference between the schools on these items. Especially on item 1, the responses from school ‘C’ were more negative than from the other two schools.

Table 6.9: Comparison between the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents check whether the child has done homework.</td>
<td>Parents (55) 96.7%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(17) 29.8%</td>
<td>(06) 10.5%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (86) 75.4%</td>
<td>(25) 15.8%</td>
<td>(07) 06.1%</td>
<td>(03) 02.6%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents limit privileges because of poor grades.</td>
<td>Parents (03) 05.6%</td>
<td>(15) 27.8%</td>
<td>(11) 20.4%</td>
<td>(25) 46.3%</td>
<td>(54) 100%</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (15) 13.5%</td>
<td>(38) 34.2%</td>
<td>(24) 21.5%</td>
<td>(34) 30.6%</td>
<td>(111) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents discuss with the child about school activities.</td>
<td>Parents (41) 71.9%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(12) 21.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (62) 54.4%</td>
<td>(32) 28.1%</td>
<td>(15) 13.2%</td>
<td>(05) 04.4%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents discuss with the child grades or progress.</td>
<td>Parents (45) 78.9%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.8%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (32) 56.1%</td>
<td>(14) 24.6%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(02) 03.5%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (77) 67.5%</td>
<td>(23) 20.2%</td>
<td>(10) 08.8%</td>
<td>(04) 03.5%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents discuss with the child national and world events.</td>
<td>Parents (31) 54.4%</td>
<td>(21) 36.8%</td>
<td>(05) 08.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students (23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(18) 31.6%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(03) 05.0%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (54) 47.4%</td>
<td>(39) 34.2%</td>
<td>(18) 15.8%</td>
<td>(03) 02.6%</td>
<td>(114) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-5= Parents and students

Table 6.9 shows the significant difference between the responses of parents and students regarding learning activities at home. There was a strong statistical difference between the stakeholders on these items. Parents felt that they checked homework but did not limit privileges.
because of poor grades to a significant extent, contrary to the responses of their children who reported less checking of homework but more sanctions for poor performance. Overall, the responses of parents on all the items were more positive than the response of the students. It is important to note that in three items the statistical difference is very high.

5.6.5 Decision-making

Table 6.10: Parental involvement for decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parents understand and promote the school’s instructional program.</td>
<td>(23) 23.2%</td>
<td>(56) 56.6%</td>
<td>(16) 16.2%</td>
<td>(04) 04.0%</td>
<td>(99) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents have opportunities to observe educational programs.</td>
<td>(36) 33.6%</td>
<td>(50) 46.7%</td>
<td>(17) 15.9%</td>
<td>(04) 03.7%</td>
<td>(107) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents are involved in decision making through advisory committees.</td>
<td>(32) 32.0%</td>
<td>(55) 55.0%</td>
<td>(12) 12.0%</td>
<td>(01) 01.0%</td>
<td>(100) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents provide support to the school on discipline.</td>
<td>(27) 28.4%</td>
<td>(45) 47.4%</td>
<td>(19) 20.0%</td>
<td>(04) 04.2%</td>
<td>(95) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The staff brings parents into a co-active role in achieving the goals.</td>
<td>(15) 30.0%</td>
<td>(26) 52.0%</td>
<td>(09) 18.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-4 = Principals, teachers and parents
Item No. 5 = Principals and parents

Table 6.10 shows considerably positive views relating to the involvement of parents for decision-making or parents support to the schools on nearly all items.

5.6.6 Collaborating with community

Table 6.11: Comparison between the schools for collaborating with community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Community, businesses, and industries and are encouraged to extend support to schools’ programs.</td>
<td>(13) 29.5%</td>
<td>(20) 45.5%</td>
<td>(09) 20.5%</td>
<td>(02) 04.5%</td>
<td>(44) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school seeks partnerships with business, social service and other organisation.</td>
<td>(12) 29.3%</td>
<td>(23) 56.1%</td>
<td>(05) 12.2%</td>
<td>(01) 02.4%</td>
<td>(41) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Parents

Table 6.11 shows the relationships of the schools with their communities. Nearly one third of the respondents had strongly positive responses that community, business and industries were encouraged to extend support to the schools’ programs or that schools seek partnerships with the business community.
Summary of the section

There appears to be a strong agreement between principals, parents, teachers and students of the schools on this element. The general trend noted was that parents were more positive than their children on most items. There was also some tendency for teachers to feel less positive than other stakeholders. The data also suggested that sustainable partnerships existed to a certain degree between schools, agencies and businesses of the community.

5.7 LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Introduction

In this section, I was interested in identifying how far the attributes of effective middle school principalship are being practiced in the sample schools. The data was collected based on five key attributes of instructional leadership as identified in the literature. Kouzes and Posner’s (1990) Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer (LPI) was used as a guide in preparing the instrument. In a set of nineteen items, the stakeholders of the sample schools were asked to rate their opinions of the principals on five-point Likert scales with respect to the following characteristics of the leadership:

1. Concerns for the vision and mission statement
2. Instructional managing
3. Supervising teaching
4. Promotion of an instructional climate
5. Organisational management.

5.7.1 Principals’ concerns for the vision and mission statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal has a clear understanding of the school’s mission.</td>
<td>(69) 67.0%</td>
<td>(29) 28.2%</td>
<td>(04) 03.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.0%</td>
<td>(103) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.</td>
<td>(60) 58.8%</td>
<td>(30) 29.4%</td>
<td>(10) 09.8%</td>
<td>(02) 02.0%</td>
<td>(102) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The principal shows respect and has high expectations for staff.</td>
<td>(30) 58.8%</td>
<td>(20) 39.2%</td>
<td>(01) 02.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The principal communicates warmth and caring to all students.</td>
<td>(26) 52.0%</td>
<td>(13) 26.0%</td>
<td>(07) 14.0%</td>
<td>(04) 08.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = Teachers and parents  Item No. 3 = Teachers  Item No. 4 = Parents
Table 7.1 presents the extremely positive views of stakeholders about the leadership of the schools in this area. All three stakeholders expressed a strong positive view of their principals, believing that they had a clear understanding of the schools’ mission. A majority of the stakeholders reported that principals had the skill of communicating frankly with staff, students and parents. The overall perception of stakeholders relating to the principals showing respect for and having high expectations of staff was reported very positively. There was, however, a significant difference in the responses from different schools.

Table 7.2: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal has a clear understanding of the school’s mission.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(48) 81.4%</td>
<td>(11) 18.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(59) 100%</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(10) 38.5%</td>
<td>(12) 46.2%</td>
<td>(03) 11.5%</td>
<td>(01) 03.8%</td>
<td>(26) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(11) 61.1%</td>
<td>(06) 33.3%</td>
<td>(01) 05.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(18) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(69) 67.0%</td>
<td>(29) 28.2%</td>
<td>(04) 03.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.0%</td>
<td>(103)100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(39) 66.1%</td>
<td>(14) 23.7%</td>
<td>(05) 08.5%</td>
<td>(01) 01.7%</td>
<td>(59) 100%</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(08) 32.0%</td>
<td>(13) 52.0%</td>
<td>(03) 12.0%</td>
<td>(01) 04.0%</td>
<td>(25) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(13) 72.2%</td>
<td>(03) 16.7%</td>
<td>(02) 11.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(18) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(66) 58.8%</td>
<td>(30) 29.4%</td>
<td>(10) 09.8%</td>
<td>(02) 02.0%</td>
<td>(102)100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The principal communicates warmth and caring to all students.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(19) 63.3%</td>
<td>(09) 30.0%</td>
<td>(01) 03.8%</td>
<td>(01) 03.8%</td>
<td>(30) 100%</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(03) 23.1%</td>
<td>(02) 15.4%</td>
<td>(10) 19.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(13) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(04) 57.1%</td>
<td>(02) 28.6%</td>
<td>(01) 14.3%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(07) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(26) 52.0%</td>
<td>(13) 26.0%</td>
<td>(07) 14.0%</td>
<td>(04) 08.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1- 2 =Teachers and parents
Item No. 3 =Parents

Table 7.2 shows the significant difference between the responses of different schools. On three items, the responses from school ‘B’ were less positive than from the other two schools.

Table 7.3: Comparison between parents and teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal has a clear understanding of the school’s mission.</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>(40) 76.9%</td>
<td>(09) 17.3%</td>
<td>(02) 03.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.9%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(29) 56.9%</td>
<td>(20) 39.2%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(69) 67.0%</td>
<td>(29) 28.2%</td>
<td>(04) 03.9%</td>
<td>(01) 01.0%</td>
<td>(103)100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>(34) 66.7%</td>
<td>(15) 29.4%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(26) 51.0%</td>
<td>(15) 29.4%</td>
<td>(10) 19.6%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(60) 58.8%</td>
<td>(30) 29.4%</td>
<td>(10) 09.8%</td>
<td>(02) 02.0%</td>
<td>(102)100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3 shows, again, the less positive responses from teachers compared with the responses of parents.
5.7.2 Instructional management

Table 7.4: Principals’ role in instructional management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in the light of the new research and understandings.</td>
<td>(45) 45.5%</td>
<td>(39) 39.4%</td>
<td>(12) 12.1%</td>
<td>(03) 03.0%</td>
<td>(99) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1 = Principals, teachers and parents

Table 7.4 presents the positive response of the stakeholders that principals demonstrated a commitment and were ready to change in the light of new understandings. There was no significant difference between the schools or the respondents for this item.

5.7.3 Supervising teaching

Table 7.5: Principal having skills for supervising teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal visits classrooms to observe and give productive feedback.</td>
<td>(10) 20.0%</td>
<td>(17) 34.0%</td>
<td>(15) 30.0%</td>
<td>(08) 16.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal ensures that staff is involved in decision-making.</td>
<td>(25) 49.0%</td>
<td>(08) 15.7%</td>
<td>(16) 31.4%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers work under the principal’s guidance.</td>
<td>(17) 33.3%</td>
<td>(22) 43.1%</td>
<td>(09) 17.6%</td>
<td>(03) 05.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents:** Item No. 1-3 = Teachers

Table 7.5 indicates the perception of teachers of their principals having skills for supervising teaching. The data reflects a mixed picture, suggesting that less than one quarter of the teachers had a strongly positive view that principals visited the classrooms, whereas nearly half expressed strong positive responses that principals ensured that all staff was involved in decision making. It must be noted, however, that one third of teachers expressed the view that the principal did not involve them in decision-making. One third of the teachers reported that they had opportunities to work under the guidance of the principals. There was general agreement between the schools in all areas of supervising teaching.
5.7.4 Promotion of instructional climate

Table 7.6: Principal having skills for the promotion of instructional climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal distributes leadership among the staff.</td>
<td>(25) 49.0%</td>
<td>(15) 29.4%</td>
<td>(09) 17.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal takes teachers’ opinions into consideration.</td>
<td>(27) 54.0%</td>
<td>(14) 28.0%</td>
<td>(07) 14.0%</td>
<td>(02) 04.0%</td>
<td>(50) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.</td>
<td>(60) 37.3%</td>
<td>(53) 32.9%</td>
<td>(33) 20.5%</td>
<td>(15) 09.3%</td>
<td>(161) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The principal knows each student personally.</td>
<td>(08) 14.0%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(23) 40.4%</td>
<td>(13) 22.8%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students believe that the principal will listen to their concerns if any.</td>
<td>(10) 17.5%</td>
<td>(24) 42.1%</td>
<td>(20) 35.1%</td>
<td>(03) 05.3%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.</td>
<td>(37) 71.2%</td>
<td>(15) 28.8%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(52) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel comfortable talking with the principal if I have a concern or question.</td>
<td>(39) 36.8%</td>
<td>(33) 31.1%</td>
<td>(25) 23.6%</td>
<td>(09) 08.5%</td>
<td>(106) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 & 6 = Teachers
Item No. 3 = Parents, teachers and students
Item No. 4-5 = Students
Item No. 7 = Parents and students

Table 7.6, in a set of seven items, summarizes the results of the ‘promotion of instructional climate’, an important attribute of leadership. The data presents the mixed views of stakeholders about the principals’ skills associated with the promotion of instructional climate. Teachers were more positive than the parents and the students. A majority of the teachers expressed strong positive views that leadership was distributed among the staff by the principals. More than half of the teachers reported that the principal considered their opinions and an overwhelming majority (71%) of the teachers responded that principals of the school set a respectful tone while interacting with the parents and the students. Students did not hold a positive perception about their interactions with the principals.

Table 7.7: Comparison between parents and students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel comfortable talking with the principal if I have a concern or question.</td>
<td>(28) 57.1%</td>
<td>(11) 19.3%</td>
<td>(39) 36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18) 36.7%</td>
<td>(15) 26.3%</td>
<td>(33) 31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(03) 06.1%</td>
<td>(22) 38.6%</td>
<td>(25) 23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(09) 15.8%</td>
<td>(09) 08.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(49) 100%</td>
<td>(57) 100%</td>
<td>(106) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.7 presents significant difference between responses of parents and students on their degree of comfort in talking with the principal.
Table 7.8:  Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value</th>
<th>Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(39) 42.9%</td>
<td>(34) 37.4%</td>
<td>(11) 12.1%</td>
<td>(07) 07.7%</td>
<td>(91) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(06) 13.6%</td>
<td>(14) 31.8%</td>
<td>(18) 40.9%</td>
<td>(06) 13.6%</td>
<td>(44) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(15) 57.7%</td>
<td>(05) 19.2%</td>
<td>(04) 15.4%</td>
<td>(02) 07.7%</td>
<td>(26) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(60) 37.3%</td>
<td>(53) 32.9%</td>
<td>(33) 20.5%</td>
<td>(15) 09.3%</td>
<td>(161) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(26) 83.9%</td>
<td>(05) 16.1%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(31) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(07) 50.0%</td>
<td>(07) 50.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(14) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(04) 57.1%</td>
<td>(03) 42.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(07) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(04) 57.1%</td>
<td>(37) 71.2%</td>
<td>(03) 42.9%</td>
<td>(15) 28.8%</td>
<td>(07) 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1= Parents, teachers and Students  
Item No. 2= teachers

Table 7.8 presents responses where there was a significant difference between the schools. In school ‘B’ very, few respondents expressed a positive view that the principal of the school was highly visible. In school ‘A’ an overwhelming majority (84%), in contrast to the other two schools, reported that the principal sets a respectful tone for interacting with parents and students.

5.7.5 Organisational management

Table 7.9:  Principals having organisational management skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.</td>
<td>(44) 40.7%</td>
<td>(41) 38.0%</td>
<td>(20) 18.5%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.</td>
<td>(52) 54.2%</td>
<td>(28) 29.2%</td>
<td>(13) 13.5%</td>
<td>(03) 03.1%</td>
<td>(96) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The principal listens to our concerns and responds appropriately.</td>
<td>(28) 58.3%</td>
<td>(17) 35.4%</td>
<td>(02) 04.2%</td>
<td>(01) 02.1%</td>
<td>(48) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.</td>
<td>(40) 78.4%</td>
<td>(09) 17.6%</td>
<td>(02) 03.9%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(51) 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Item No. 1-2 = parents and students  
Item No. 3-4 = parents

Parents and students responded very positively on all items relating to the principals having organisational management skills (Table 7.9). In general, the majority of parents and students were pleased with the leadership provided by the schools’ principals, and principals were regarded as having foresight and being fair and firm in making decisions. The majority of the parents held strong views that principals were available to listen to their concerns and responded appropriately. Nearly all parents were of the view that principals interacted respectfully with the students.
Table 7.10: Comparison between the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P- Value Fishers Exact Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(32) 51.6%</td>
<td>(20) 32.3%</td>
<td>(09) 14.5%</td>
<td>(01) 01.6%</td>
<td>(62) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(05) 16.7%</td>
<td>(16) 53.3%</td>
<td>(07) 23.3%</td>
<td>(02) 06.7%</td>
<td>(30) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(07) 43.8%</td>
<td>(05) 31.3%</td>
<td>(04) 25.0%</td>
<td>(00) 00.0%</td>
<td>(16) 100%</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(44) 40.7%</td>
<td>(41) 38.0%</td>
<td>(20) 18.5%</td>
<td>(03) 02.8%</td>
<td>(108) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(35) 59.3%</td>
<td>(19) 32.2%</td>
<td>(04) 06.8%</td>
<td>(01) 01.7%</td>
<td>(59) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(07) 35.0%</td>
<td>(04) 20.0%</td>
<td>(08) 40.0%</td>
<td>(01) 05.0%</td>
<td>(20) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(10) 58.8%</td>
<td>(05) 29.4%</td>
<td>(01) 05.9%</td>
<td>(01) 05.9%</td>
<td>(17) 100%</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(52) 54.2%</td>
<td>(28) 29.2%</td>
<td>(13) 13.5%</td>
<td>(03) 03.1%</td>
<td>(96) 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.10 presents responses where there was a significant difference between the schools. In school ‘B’ very few respondents held positive views about the leadership provided by the schools’ principals and, in particular, were quite negative about the principal’s level of foresight and fairness and firmness in making decisions.

Table 7.11 shows the responses of the teachers in the three schools to open-ended questions relating to this element.

Table 7.11: Responses of Stakeholders on open-ended question regarding Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Regarding the leadership of your school, what type of professional qualities do you believe are lacking and adversely affecting middle schooling philosophy?</td>
<td>No response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Time spent on finding students appropriate learning programs.</td>
<td>Time spent on focussing on students with special needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - B</td>
<td>Working with other teachers across the school that teach the same classes.</td>
<td>Being respectful of the diverse range of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being willing to adapt to meet student needs.</td>
<td>Ability to lead a cohesive team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear set standards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Achieving curriculum goals too bogged down in behaviour management.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School - C</td>
<td>To cater for the development both socially and intellectually, students and teachers need to have a learning centre to help some middle school students adjust to the demand of high school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The leadership of this school support this philosophy however, as yet there is not funding to implement this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The leadership qualities that the principal have, is openness and honesty, recognising and acting upon the needs of staff and students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the section

Overall, the perceptions of a majority of the stakeholders were very positive and a very positive picture of the leadership of the schools has emerged from the data. Nearly all the leaders exhibited the necessary attributes of effective middle school leaders as identified in the literature. Almost all principals were more popular with the parents and teachers than with the students, who seemed less positive about their relationship with the principals. There were generally negative perceptions of the principals’ level of engagement with the day-to-day running of the school and directly with the maintenance of the instructional climate within the school. Students seemed particularly negative about their level of engagement with the principal.

5.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter has presented data collected from three public schools in the Australian Capital Territory of Australia. The chapter was divided into seven sections comprising of the elements of the General Design. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to aggregate the responses of individual parents, principals, teachers and students of the sample schools for analysis of data. Chi-square analysis was performed to determine the level of significance of differences between the variables.

The data presented in Chapter 5 indicated that, in all three-sample schools, all seven elements investigated were being implemented in good spirit but that there were significant variations in the perceived level of implementation in different schools. In all sample schools, middle schooling program was based on the beliefs and philosophy that were shared by all stakeholders. With slight variations, all sample schools held strong beliefs about the importance of academic excellence of the students. Schools had caring environments but with some worrying security concerns reported by the students. Although responses from the students were generally less positive, there was still a strong sense of belonging to the schools reported by the students in all schools. Teachers’ attitudes reflected a care and concern for their students. Strong collegiality and cordial relationships amongst the staff was reported in all the schools. Although teachers felt that teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching and hands-on activities were well practiced in the schools, they also felt that they were not trained for meeting the specific needs of adolescents; the students’ responses in general were not very positive with respect to their
teachers and teaching practices in the schools. Although teachers had strong knowledge of the content they teach and control over their teaching practices, they did not feel that staff development was conscious of the various aspects of adolescents’ needs. The data also suggested that sustainable partnerships existed, to a certain extent, between schools, agencies and businesses of the community in order to improve the well-being of the students and their families. All the stakeholders reported very positive views of the leadership of the schools, although, again, students were less positive and did not seem to have much contact, overall, with the principal. On some items, a significant difference was noted between the responses of the stakeholders and between the schools.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will draw together the themes, processes, and concepts that emerged in this study. It discusses the findings in the light of the research questions. For the purposes of the overall discussion, the views of the stakeholders, given in the 5-point Likert scale in some instances, have been collapsed into two scales to provide an overall picture of positive or negative responses.

The theme of this study was the investigation of the perception of middle school stakeholders with respect to the implementation level of the middle schooling program in the sample secondary schools of the Australian Capital Territory, Australia. This study was designed to address two main questions: (1) To what extent is middle schooling being implemented in accordance with the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) in the schools of ACT, Australia? (2) What are the effects of introducing a vision of middle schooling on the personal, emotional, cognitive and social development of the students? These two questions are answered during the discussion.

Elements of the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) formed the basis of this study and were used to provide criteria for analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the program implementations. The evaluation focused on the views and perceptions of stakeholders in three secondary schools of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), whose principals and teachers support and have introduced middle schooling reforms. The findings of this study are discussed in seven sections based on seven out of nine elements of the General Design (see Figure 1.1).

6.1 Beliefs and understandings (Vision and mission statements)

Introduction

Literature (Anfara & Lipka, 2003; Brandt, 1991; Campanella, Ash & Frith, 2003) discussing the correlation between effective schools and mission statements has insisted that “successful schools have an unusually clear sense of purpose—a sense of mission”. Delors (1996) in Learning the
treasure within has argued that “it is essential that all people with a sense of responsibility turn their attention to both the aims and means of education (p. 14)”—“the mission of education is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talent to the full and to realize creative potential, including responsibilities (p. 19)”.

Similarly, *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, released in 1999, provides a general set of directions for the achievements of high quality schooling, with an emphasis on fully developing the talents and capacities of all students, through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in a context of social justice (Department of Education Employment and Training Victoria (DEET), 1999, p. 13).

Correspondingly, proponents of the middle schooling program have set criteria by stating that effective middle schools are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, socially equitable and responsive to community participation (Education Development Center, 2003). The National Middle School Association (1995, p. 13) has also argued that “Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents, they understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach”.

Based on the recommendations made in the literature the following five criteria, identified as goals of middle schooling, formed the basis of data collection and discussion of the findings of the study for ‘beliefs and understandings’, considered to be a vital element of the General Design:

1. Academically excellent schools
2. Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents
3. Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents
4. Schools socially equitable
5. Schools responsive to community participation

### 6.1.1 Academically excellent schools

The concern for linking effective schools to heightened academic outcome is not new. All schools inherently believe in the academic excellence of their students and make an effort in their own way to achieve the best possible results. Williamson, Johnston and Kanthak (1995, p. 6)
have also insisted that “Student achievement must be given the highest priority in the mission of the middle level school”. In this study an overwhelming majority of the principals, teachers and parents (very true; 42%, somewhat true; 44%) believed that students’ academic excellence was the major purpose of the school and the teachers held a high expectation of the students as reported by a considerable number (very true; 31%, somewhat true; 56%) of the principals, teachers and parents. Leithwood and Reihl (2003) have argued that people are motivated by goals they set for themselves or they find personally compelling and challenging. A large number of principals, teachers and parents reported positively that the goals were reviewed annually for improving students’ performance.

The literature has emphasised the positive use of instructional reinforcement (Brophy, 1981; Cotton, 1988). Feldman (2003) suggests that praise is most effective when teachers use it on student progress and accomplishment. A great majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 42%) of the principals, teachers and parents believed that the teachers praised all the students. Dewey (1933, p. 9) has argued that the main goal of education is not to transmit previously defined knowledge and skills but rather to develop an individual’s capacity for critical thinking and learning. In this study students were very positive (very true; 56%, somewhat true; 33%) that their teachers require them to think to the best of their abilities. On all items, the statistical difference between the schools was non-significant. The findings of this section suggest that all sample schools felt that they were successfully implementing the accepted characteristics of ‘academically excellent schools’.

6.1.2 Schools responsive to the learning needs of adolescents

An abundant body of literature strongly suggests that schools should be responsive to the emerging learning needs of adolescents (Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), 1996; The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). The philosophy of middle schooling is based on the research suggesting that there is a mismatch between the learning needs of adolescents and what schools offer to them (Earl, 1999; The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). Adolescents display a wide range of skills and abilities unique to their developmental patterns. They vary in mental development from the pre-operational stage to the
concrete operational stage\textsuperscript{22}. With their changing developmental needs adolescents require intellectually stimulating environments, which cannot be found in elementary schools. The findings of this study are convergent with suggestions made in the literature as a great majority of (very true; 39\%, somewhat true; 51\%) of the principals, teachers and parents held a positive perception that schools were responsive to the learning needs of adolescents.

The literature on middle schooling (Knowles & Brown, 2000; Stevenson, 2002) has insisted that staff involved in the teaching and learning of adolescents, in addition to the knowledge of other characteristics of adolescents, must have a knowledge of adolescents’ cognitive characteristics in order to shape their educational needs corresponding with their intellectual needs. In this study a great majority of (very true; 37\%, somewhat true; 58\%) of the principals, teachers and parents believed that staff was responsive to the diverse learning experiences of adolescents. This is illustrated by the following teacher response:

Teacher [sic] in my school usually makes an effort to get to really know the students they teach. In this way, the teaching learning process is enhanced. (Table 1.8)

Darling-Hammond (1993) suggests that the mission for education is to be one whereby instructional services are delivered with the assurance that students learn at high levels. In this study an overwhelming majority (very true; 44\%, somewhat true; 45\%) of the principals, teachers and parents reported that learning was seen as most important reason for attending the school. Students were also very positive (very true; 65\%, somewhat true; 28\%) believing that their teachers expected them to learn as much as they could. On all items, the statistical difference between the schools was non-significant.

The responses of the stakeholders of this study regarding specific learning needs such as ‘self exploration’ were not very strong, as only one quarter of them had a positive perception that staff was responsive to adolescents’ need for self exploration. However, a great majority (very true; 32\%, somewhat true; 52\%) of the principals, teachers and parents believed that students had adequate learning opportunities. The findings of this section suggest that in all the sample schools teachers were conscious of most of the emerging learning needs of adolescents. However, there

\textsuperscript{22} For details see Inhelder and Piaget (1958)
was some indication that schools were not totally responsive to adolescents’ needs for self exploration but this probably does not reflect seriously upon the schools’ achievement of the ultimate goal of providing an encouraging, happy, challenging, and self fulfilling learning environment for adolescents.

6.1.3 Schools responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents

Cumming and Fleming (1993), emphasising the needs of adolescents, have noted that no matter how we define or describe this stage of human development there is no doubt that the most momentous changes in the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of human experience, occur in the middle years of schooling. The adolescent years can be very difficult for a prolonged period of time for students, teachers and parents, so schools must be responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents. Schools should provide a curriculum that emphasizes self-understanding about body changes. Health and science classes should provide experiences that depict physical growth and health changes. Guidance counsellors and other resources can help adolescents understand the changes that are occurring within their bodies. The findings of this study suggest that, in general, stakeholders believed that all sample schools were responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents; however, one teacher reported a lack of specific training for dealing with young adolescents in the following terms:

Yes, we know about our students but do not have a special understanding of young adolescents. (Table 1.8)

6.1.4 Schools socially equitable

In discussing the findings of this study I have drawn on the recommendations of Sergiovanni (1992, p. 114), who states that “rules should be viewed and understood as a constitution, which comes complete with a rationale shared with students and other members of the school community”. The findings of this research study support these suggestions to some extent as more than half (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 32%) of the parents reported that goals were communicated to them. Herman (1988) has noted that a mission statement in place should accepted by all stakeholders. The overwhelming majority (very true; 51%, somewhat true; 43%) of parents agreed with the overall purpose of the schools.
Geijssel, Sleegers, van den Berg and Kelchtermans (2001) have argued that visionary statements that are too general and far removed from practice do not attract the stakeholders. Students of the sample schools in this study were not very positive (very true; 17%, somewhat true; 57%) in their beliefs that all stakeholders shared the same vision.

Leithwood and Reihl (2003) have argued that participation in goal setting confers on the stakeholders a sense of direction, confidence and a sense of identity with their work. In an effective school all work together for the improvement of school and are involved in the pursuit of common goals. The findings of this study suggest that here, again, very few students were positive (very true; 14%, somewhat true; 58%) in their views that everyone in the school was working together for the improvement of their schools and few students (very true; 21%, somewhat true; 54%) felt strongly that everyone was working towards common goals.

Midgley and Anderman (1998), in discussing self determination theory, have suggested that students have three categories of needs: of a sense of competence, of relatedness to others, and of autonomy. Students at this stage want to be included in decision-making and to have some sense of control over their activities. The findings of this study revealed that students were quite positive (very true; 32%, somewhat true; 44%) that they were involved in decision-making. In this section, the responses from the parents and staff of the sample schools were far more positive than the students. This pattern of responses will be seen in other parts of this Chapter.

### 6.1.5 Schools responsive to community participation

The literature has recommended that positive social interactions between adults and students can be facilitated by adviser-advisee relationships, staff participation in activities and informal contact outside of the classroom. In the sample schools the principal, teachers and parents (very true; 29%, somewhat true; 55%) were less positive in their perception that staff was responsive to adolescents needs for social interaction. The literature (Bohnenberger & Terry, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1993) has also suggested that school reform directs schools to develop their own capacity to be responsible for student and community needs, interests and concerns. In this study less than one quarter of the respondents were very positive that schools were responsive to adolescents’ needs for community participation.
The literature (Sergiovanni, 1992; State Education Department, 1996) suggests that schools should have a mission statement with a set of beliefs that derive their daily behaviour. It is suggested by the State Education Department in USA (1996) that the middle-level school’s mission statement should be clear, commonly understood, pertinent to individuals, widely endorsed, constantly pursued and periodically reaffirmed. In this study a large number (very true; 31%, somewhat true; 46%) of principals, teachers and parents had a positive perception that their schools had a clearly articulated mission that was shared by all.

Summary of the section

Literature has suggested that to achieve the goals of middle schooling, schools should be academically excellent, responsive to the learning needs of adolescents, responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents, socially equitable and responsive to the need of community participation. Russell (1997, p. 170) has contended that “according to middle level theory, if middle level philosophy is implemented, the outcomes of enhanced personal development, group citizenship, and achievement will be attained”.

Certain characteristics, anticipated activities, and short term, intermediate and long term outcomes related to this element identified in the literature, were incorporated in the logic model (Figure 4.2, p. 162), developed for the evaluation. I sought to investigate how far identified characteristics relating to beliefs and understandings (vision and mission statements) were in place in the sample schools and the extent to which these were leading towards the short-term outcomes of the middle schooling program. I have noted in this study that all schools were implementing the characteristics identified in the logic model of the relevant element. The majority of the stakeholders recognised that academic excellence was a high priority and believed that staff in the schools were responsive to the learning and developmental needs of adolescents. However, teachers expressed their concern about a lack of specific training for dealing with adolescents. Schools were reported as socially equitable to some extent. The above findings clearly answer the first question of the study indicating that the first element of the General Design has been implemented in the sample schools with few exceptions. There are certain characteristics identified in the logic models as intermediate and long-term outcomes relating to the second question of the study, which was to examine the effects of the middle schooling program. The majority of the students expressed positive views that they were involved in
decision-making and parents seemed happy with the overall purpose of the schools. Students however, were not very positive that all stakeholders shared the same vision or that all were working together for the improvement of their schools or were working towards common goals. The staff were less responsive to adolescents’ needs for social interaction and community participation. With respect to the assumed activities indicated in the logic model of this element, parents expressed positive views that schools had a clearly articulated vision and mission that was shared by all. I also found through open ended responses (Table 1.8) that in the sample schools teachers believe they are making their best efforts to understand the individual needs of the students and hold high expectation for students and expect them to learn as much as they can.

6.2 SCHOOL AND CLASS ORGANISATION

Introduction

The literature on effective middle schooling (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Barratt, 1998; Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000) has recommended the restructuring of school and class organisations in order to meet the rapidly changing developmental, physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs of young adolescents.

In this section, the findings of the study have been critically examined to answer the two questions of the study with reference to the schools structure and their organisations. To this end, I prepared a framework for the purpose of data collection encompassing the following six dimensions:

1. Safe, caring and orderly environment
2. Supportive staff and administration
3. Attractive physical appearance
4. Sense of belonging and ownership
5. Positive peer norms and relationship
6. Smooth transitions

Fifty-seven items and a few open-ended questions were constructed and used for data collection. In the following sections, the perceptions of stakeholders have been considered as a measure to
evaluate how far the sample schools have been successful in implementing ‘school and class organisation’ the second element of the General Design. The data was analysed and discussed in the light of the recommendations given in the literature, to answer the study questions.

6.2.1 Safe, caring and orderly environment

The literature on school organisation for adolescents (Hansen & Childs, 1998; Purkey, 1999; Schaps, 2003) has suggested that school should be a place where all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment while interacting with caring adults they trust. The findings of this study suggest that students and staff enjoy being at school to a certain degree as a significant number of principals, teachers and parents expressed positive views (very true; 31%, somewhat true; 57%), and only a few expressed negative perceptions. The recommendation of Hansen et al. (1998) ‘that joy, a sense of thrill and satisfaction should accompany work’ were also seen in these schools to a certain extent as principals, teachers and parents believed (very true; 26%, somewhat true; 56%) that vitality and high interest were observable in students in everyday routines. Few of them responded negatively.

Researchers in organisational communication and school reorganisation have identified the importance of an open flow of communication between stakeholders. Apple and Beane (1999) have argued that an open flow of ideas enables people to be as fully informed as possible. The findings of this study compares favourably with the recommendations of the literature as a great majority of the principals, teachers and parents expressed positive views (very true; 47%, somewhat true; 36%) that open channels of communication existed among all stakeholders.

The literature on school organisation (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2000; , 2002; Krovetz & Cohick, 1993; Nias, 1998), in discussing the need for collegiality in the workplace, has argued that positive norms and conditions help staff to be more focused and create better communication and rapport within them. If faculty members do not talk to one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little positive change will occur. The findings of this study are in accordance with the recommendations made in the literature as an overwhelming majority of the principals, teachers and parents held positive views (very true; 44%, somewhat true; 42%) of the collegial working relationship among all professional staff.
The underlying philosophy of middle schooling is based on the provision of a warm and caring environment for young adolescents, who experience great change in their physical, emotional, and intellectual development (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Stevenson, 2002). Elias et al. (1997, p. 6) have argued that caring happens when children sense that the adults in their lives think they are important and when they understand that they will be accepted and respected, regardless of any particular talents they have. In the sample schools a large number of the principals, teachers and parents (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 48%) had positive perceptions that ‘school routine promotes personalised relationships’. Thuen and Bru (2000) have argued that teachers’ care and approval of students are the cornerstones for developing positive relations between teachers and students. The findings of this study suggest that a great majority of students held a positive view (very true; 49%, somewhat true; 37%) that staff in the school would take care of them.

Jackson and Davis (2000) have argued that every middle grades student has an absolute right to guaranteed physical safety at every moment while in school. The findings of this study have revealed the mixed feelings of the stakeholders regarding issues related to security of adolescents in these schools, as less than one quarter reported ‘very true’, with 63% of the students reporting ‘somewhat true’, that security concerns, if reported, were handled in a timely way. Adam (2000) has argued that students lose respect for authority figures when they are excluded from school. They may be alienated from the educational experience and see compulsory education as a massive detention camp. Several reports and studies (Centre for Evaluation Development and Research, 1998; Ministry of Education British Columbia, 1999; Pappas, 1995; Rosen, 1997) have argued that suspension and expulsion are not appropriate ways of disciplining inappropriate behaviour of school children and have suggested the adoption of alternate measures to reduce the rate of expulsion or suspension in schools. The findings of this study are in agreement with the literature since an overwhelming majority of principals, teachers and parents (very true; 51%, somewhat true; 39%) expressed the view that out of school expulsion or suspension was minimal. Jackson and Davis (2000) have suggested that clearly articulated and consistently enforced school wide discipline policies are crucial to the development of an orderly and safe climate for learning. A large number of students (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 51%) had a positive perception that school safety rules were enforced. It is significant to note that while the majority of the students had appreciated that safety rules in the schools are enforced very few (very true;
07%, somewhat true; 53%) students were certain that safety rules were obeyed. A great number (40%) expressed negative views on this item. There were few significant differences noted between the sample schools in this area.

A large body of evidence (Caulfield, 2000; Horsch, Chen Jie-Qi & Wagner, 2002; Shaw, 2001; Welsh, Stokes & Greene, 2000) accentuates the crucial need for creating peaceful, violence free and safe environment in school buildings or on school property for all students, and specifically for young adolescents. Danielson (2002) has suggested that all classrooms, restrooms, library, canteens and playgrounds should be physically safe, where each student feels secure to go alone. In this study, students were asked to express their feeling about security on a set of eight items. On all items, their views were divided between ‘very true’ and ‘somewhat true’. In general, the majority of the students reported insecure feelings on different occasions. Very few (very true; 23%, somewhat true; 26%) of the students felt secure going to the toilets. Feelings of insecurity in the toilets were reported by a majority of the students in response to the open-ended question: ‘do you remember any event when you did not feel safe in the school?’ An example of a written comment received is:

Yes: We (friends and I) caught some year 10 girls smoking in the toilets, they then pinned us up on the wall because we saw them. The bullying has not stopped since. (Table 2.15)

Other students also expressed their insecurity by stating:

“Being in the toilet, “When people smoke in the toilets,” “Girls threatened my friends when they caught them smoking in the toilets,” and “When people smoke marijuana or normal cigarette in the toilets”. (Table 2.15)

There was a significant difference between schools in the level of security felt by the students. No student in school ‘C’ was very positive about their feeling of security in different situations in the school and a large number of students in school ‘A’ were more positive in their feelings about security at school compared with school ‘B’. From the overall findings of the sample schools regarding safe, caring and orderly environment it was evident that students, in particular, had a strong feeling of insecurity outside the classroom. In the sample schools of this study the views of the students (very true; 16%, somewhat true; 68%) were not strongly positive in reporting that they were supervised during class change, break or when groups of students are together. The difference between schools was not significant.
6.2.2 Supportive staff and administration

The literature on effective schooling (Barlow, 2001; Deiro, 2003) has insisted that learning is enhanced when students and teachers work together. Trust and respect are fundamental to this process. Students are more likely to respect their own potential if they feel that someone else believes in and respects them, and are more likely to engage in learning effort if there is a climate of trust and respect for the teacher. In contrast to the recommendations in the literature, the findings of this study suggest that very few students (very true; 12%, somewhat true; 58%) were definite that teachers and students respect and trust each other. More than a quarter of them expressed negative views. A range of literature (Bosworth, 1995; Horsch, Chen Jie-Qi & Nelson, 1999; Horsch, Chen Jie-Qi & Wagner, 2002; Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez & Robertson, 2003) on effective schooling has argued that treating children with dignity means honouring their position and their abilities that fulfil their emotional needs. The findings of this study suggest that a considerable number (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 44%) of the students had a positive perception that ‘teachers respect all students at the school no matter who they are’.

Very few students had negative views. Lewis, Schaps and Watson (1996, p. 18) have argued that students work harder, achieve more and attribute more importance to school work in classes in which they feel liked, accepted, and respected by the teacher and fellow students. In this study, students’ attitudes towards teachers and with each other as viewed by the principals, teachers and parents were examined. Very few of them (very true; 16%, somewhat true; 60%) strongly believed that students treat teachers and each other with respect. Nearly one quarter of them expressed negative views regarding students’ behaviour towards their teachers and other students.

Labelling of students at school has largely been documented in research and literature (Martin-Kniep, 2000; McDermitt, 1993; Stahl, 1991; Ulmer, 1994; Walther-Thomas & Brownell, 1999; Wang & Reynolds, 1995) relating to school organisation. The findings of this research study suggest that a large majority (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 52%) of the principals and teachers believed that teachers do not refer to students by labels. Deroma, Lassiter and Davis (2004) have suggested that adolescents’ involvement in discipline ensure them autonomy, something they strive for. The findings of this study suggest that a considerable number (very true; 34%, somewhat true; 49%) of principals, teachers and parents held a positive perception, that their
schools had clear rules which were framed in consultation with all stakeholders. Very few of them expressed negative views in this area.

Schimmel (1997) has suggested that a code of conduct should balance rights and responsibilities with civic values. Schimmel (2003) found that codes of conduct that are authoritarian, ambiguous, unexplained, legalistic, and poorly taught lead to several negative consequences. The findings of this study suggest that a great majority (very true; 51%, somewhat true; 30%) of principals, teachers, and parents had strong views that the code of conduct specified acceptable students’ behaviours. Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001) have argued that clear rules about student behaviour are important, along with communication of these rules to all concerned parties. The majority (76%) of the stakeholders were positive that a code of conduct was publicised, although nearly one quarter (24%) expressed negative views. McCluskey, Bynum, and Patchin (2004) have asserted that schools that have consistent enforcement of attendance policies, have high expectations for student achievement, and have higher attendance rates. The findings of this study converge with the literature in that a large majority (very true; 50%, somewhat true; 38%) of principals, teachers, and parents were positive that follow-up of absenteeism and tardiness occurred in an orderly manner.

Research and literature on school organisation (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001; McKee, 2001; Slate & Jones, 2003; Stager, 2001; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003) has asserted that the core purpose of discipline should be to bring harmony to the environment. Discipline is meant to achieve some type of linear training and preparation to attain a desired goal (effect) or mastery of a desirable end. Discipline is both an antecedent and an expected outcome or predictable behaviour (Welsh, Stokes & Greene, 2000). In this study an overwhelming majority (very true; 49%, somewhat true; 40%) of principals, teachers, and parents expressed positive responses that discipline in school was administered in a neutral manner and focussed on students’ correction. On all items, except one, the statistical difference was found non-significant between the schools.

### 6.2.3 Attractive physical appearance

Home, Annesley, and Cottam (2002) have argued that the success of schools in general, students’ learning, effective teaching, teacher morale, and community confidence can be linked to the school’s physical environment. Berry (2002) has argued that cleanliness and maintenance of
schools is of critical importance and is often underemphasised and underperformed. Clean schools not only lower the threat of the spread of illness, but also convey a caring message to the students and teachers. Students feel better going to clean classes and using clean furniture and surroundings. The findings of this study suggest that a great majority (very true; 34%, somewhat true; 47%) of the principals, teachers and parents held reasonably positive views that the physical facilities were kept clean and reasonably attractive.

The literature suggests that well-maintained facilities in a school lead to a lower threat of vandalism. Jarman et al. (2004) have noted that a beautiful school building also helps to create a caring environment for student learning. In contrast to the recommendations made in the literature and to the perceptions of principals, teachers and parents regarding cleanliness and maintenance of the schools buildings, very few students (very true; 12%, somewhat true; 49%) in the study reported that school buildings were kept clean and that most things were in operative condition. A significant number (39%) expressed negative views. Thuen and Bru (2000) have contended that teachers’ care and approval of students is the cornerstone for the development of positive relations between teachers and students. The findings of this study suggest that a large number (very true; 38%, somewhat true; 49%) of principals, teachers and parents reported that the school environment was positive and promoted a sense of community.

An emerging body of research (Applebaum, 2003; Berman, 2003; Garrison, 2003; Goodlad, 2003; Kahne & Westheimer, 2003) has insisted that educators need to create a school culture that welcomes all students, helps them learn to work together, engages students in real world projects and convinces them of their ability and responsibility to make the world a safe place to live in. Berryhill and Prinz (2003) have also proposed the creation of caring communities within a school. Again, in this study, an overwhelming majority (very true; 42%, somewhat true; 44%) of principals, teachers and parents were optimistic in believing that their school’s environment was inviting, caring and encouraging. Hyman and Snook (2000) have noted that some schools have unnecessarily harsh and punitive disciplinary practices that create a climate conducive to school violence. Despite the fact that, on the last items, all three stakeholders reported positive views, that the school environment was positive and promoted a sense of community and was inviting, caring and encouraging, they were not very positive (very true; 14%, somewhat true; 56%) about the school environment in terms of safety and freedom from violence. More than one quarter
expressed negative feelings. On some of these items, there was a statistically significant difference between the schools.

6.2.4 Sense of belonging to the school

‘Sense of belonging’ is an umbrella term, which encompasses many aspects of students’ relationships to their school (Libbey, 2004) such as school attachment, ownership and identification with school. If an adolescent coming home from the school is asked, “How was school today?” the prompt reply is likely to be somewhat boring, tedious, worthless, the worst, or too general. In this study very few students (very true; 21%, somewhat true; 63%) had strong positive perceptions that they love to attend the school regularly and a significant number (very true; 21%, somewhat true; 44%) of students strongly believed that some students remained absent from the school very often. Regarding the ownership of schools Radziwon (2003) has contended that students who feel they belong to a school will use school as a part of their self-concept and have a high sense of ownership of their schools. This study, contrary to the ideal expressed in the literature, found that very few students (very true; 11%, somewhat true; 56%) were definite in terms of pride in their schools. Despite the fact that very few students reported that they love to come to school or that they were proud of their school, only four students intended to go to any other public school and only one student reported ‘very true’ that he or she would like to go to a private school. A great majority (56%) and (77%) of the students responded ‘not at all true’ that they would go to any other public school or a private school respectively. There was no significant difference between the schools in this area.

Payne, Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2003) found that students with a high sense of school community appear to be more bonded to the school. They have a greater attachment to the teachers, more commitment to the school, and have internalized the norms of the school to a greater degree. This study found that very few (very true; 07%, somewhat true; 31%) students were positive that everyone at school really took care of the school. A great majority (61%) reported negative views. The statistical difference between schools on this item was significant. No student in school ‘C’ had a positive perception that school property was respected. Parker (2002) has suggested that the best middle schools are happy places because they are havens for children, places where children and adults celebrate success together. In contrast to the above recommendation the views of the principals and teachers were less positive about whether
teachers and students exhibited a sense of pride in the schools (very true; 20%, somewhat true; 69%).

6.2.5 Positive peer norms and relationships

Peer influence during adolescence has been seen as having both positive and negative impacts on the learning outcomes and growth of the adolescent. If it is negative then certain antisocial behaviours are exhibited by adolescents including vandalism, theft, violence, bullying, smoking, and the use of drugs. On a set of nine items, all the stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents and students) were asked to give their views about peer norms (frequency of incidents of various antisocial behaviours) and relationships at the school. The literature has described vandalism as any deliberate damage or defacement of school building, grounds, equipment, books or supplies, or of any property belonging to a member of the school community (Flores, 2004; Horowitz & Tobaly, 2003; LaGrange, 1999). In the sample schools vandalism was evident at an alarming rate as more than one quarter (26%) of the stakeholders described it as a frequent feature of the sample schools, nearly half (47%) of the stakeholders believed that it happened occasionally. Only a small number (23%) believed that it happened rarely. The statistical difference between the schools was highly significant. At school ‘C’ this was rated as a frequent feature by more than half (61%) of the stakeholders.

Christopher, Schreck and Miller (2003) have described theft as the most common form of victimisation in the school yard. In this study an insignificant number of stakeholders (3%) in the sample schools perceived that robbery and theft at the school never took place whereas more than half (51%) of the stakeholders rated it as an occasional event. The rest of the stakeholders expressed mixed feelings. An abundant body of literature (Bratt, 2004; Irwin, 2004; Yoon, Barton & Taiariol, 2004) has noted that the rate of youth violence has exploded over the last two decades. Field et al. (2002) have stated that student-to-student physical confrontations have become a serious issue for the administration of schools. The findings of this study suggest that nearly half (47%) of the stakeholders believed that physical conflicts among the students happens occasionally. Another significant group (15%) rated physical conflict among the students as a frequent feature of the school. The statistical difference between the schools was highly significant. The highest rate was recorded at school ‘C’ (occasionally; 46%, frequently; 32%).
The National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], (1997) has noted that drug and alcohol use among adolescents has been increasing since 1991. Research and literature (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger & Dumas, 2003; Clark & Winters, 2002; Halverson, 2004; Mason, Kosterman, Hawkins, Haggerty & Spoth, 2003; White, Tice, Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2002) on adolescents suggests that, at the middle-grade level, students have frequent experiences with substance abuse, which may lead to delinquent attitudes and behaviour. In the findings of this study stakeholders reported mixed views on the use of drugs on school property as more than half (52%) of the stakeholders reported that drugs were ‘rarely’ used and another 30% reported that they had never used drugs. Another half of the stakeholders (49%) reported that drugs had never been sold on the schools campus.

Ingersoll and LeBoeuf (1997) and Small and Tetrick (2001) have argued that the presence of weapons at school can create an intimidating and threatening atmosphere, making teaching and learning difficult and disruptive to the learning environment. Nearly half (47%) of the stakeholders of this study believed that weapons had never been found on the schools campus another similar number (47%) stated that they had ‘rarely been found’. The statistical difference between schools was non-significant. Literature on the social organisation of schools (Graham & Jaana, 2002; Holloway, 2003b; Lewis, 2003; Stearns, 2004) has noted that ethnic or race based intimidation, face to face confrontation, verbal abuse including physical harm are common experiences in secondary schools of today and have suggested that schools should take effective measures to bridge the gap between ethnic and racial differences. The findings of this study were quite positive. A significant number of stakeholders (21%) reported that students of different races and culture have never indulged in arguments or fights. More than half (53%) of the stakeholders reported instances as ‘rare’ and nearly one quarter (22%) reported ‘occasional’ instances.

DeVoe, Peter and Kaufman (2003) have found that teachers are also the victims of threats, verbal abuse or physical attack at the hands of students. The findings of this study suggest that a considerable number of the stakeholders believed that teachers had rarely been abused (never; 12%, rarely; 36%, occasionally; 32%).
Various studies (Bowker, 2004; Dittmann, 2004; Flannagan & Bradley, 1999; McCoy, Brody & Stoneman, 2002; Meurling, Nils, Glen & LoBello, 1999; Wiener, 2004) have examined the developmental outlook of friendship in adolescent students and found that friendships ease middle school adjustment. Bowker (2004) Meurling et al. (1999) and Wentzel, Barry and Caldwell (2004) have suggested that friendships, as central social relationships, not only contribute to cognitive growth but also provide a chance for the acquisition of social skills, serve as information sources for knowledge of self and others. The findings of this study suggest that very few (very true; 2%, somewhat true; 11%) students strongly believed that it was easy to make friends in the school. A large number (87%) expressed negative perceptions in this area. The statistical difference between schools was non-significant.

Lumsden (2002-2003) has argued that school should be a place where students feel safe and secure and where they can count on being treated with respect. To determine the situation in the sample schools, students were asked to rate their experience of bullying in the schools. Very few (very true; 12%, somewhat true; 22%) of the students reported that they had never been bullied. Many students (65%) expressed negative views. On another item, only one student reported ‘very true’ that he had never seen a student being bullied. Another very small number (very true; 2%, somewhat true; 7%) expressed a strong belief that that they had never seen students being bullied by others. Most of the students (91%) responded ‘not very true’ or ‘not at all true’ that they had never seen students being bullied by others. On both items, the statistical difference between the schools was non-significant. The negative responses from the students on the frequent incidents of bullying were further reported in written comments, such as:

“Kids being bullied by year 10 mostly”, “Bullying, excluding people”, “Older kids bullying”, “People bullying me” and “Bullying of other students”.

(6.2.6 Smooth transitions)

The literature has noted that most contemporary high schools are not structured to meet the developmental needs of adolescents at the time of transition, which brings several changes in educational expectations and practices. Literature advocating the need for middle schools for adolescents has recommended increased stability and sense of continuity, especially at the time of puberty, for smooth transition. Certain characteristics have been identified in the literature in
terms of school environments that are conducive to smooth transitions. The findings of this study suggest that only 20% of the teachers and principals had strong positive views, believing that the classroom atmosphere was conducive to learning although 65% of them expressed reasonably positive views. This situation indicates that even the teachers and principals of the sample schools were not very convinced about the teaching environment of their schools. Barber and Olsen (2004) have noted that adolescents in contemporary high schools encounter many teachers who are less personal compared with their experience in primary schools, which is contrary to the psycho-social needs of adolescents. They find themselves lost in a large school building, which is more controlling. Contrary to the literature, in this study a great majority (very true; 26%, somewhat true; 62%) of principals and teachers were considerably positive in reporting that secure feeling students found in elementary classes was maintained. While making a comparison between the schools, for both above items, the statistical difference between schools was found significant. Horsch et al. (2002) have recommended that a responsive classroom approach be used by the teacher. The findings of this study, in accordance with the literature, has noted that a great majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 59%) of the principals and teachers strongly believed that teachers’ professional behaviour reflects care and concern. Knowles and Brown (2000) have argued that teachers are responsible for creating the kind of interpersonal relationships with the students that can improve the quality of learning. The findings of this study are in accordance with the criteria for personal interaction and the recommendations made in the literature as reveal that a large number (very true; 42%, somewhat true; 51%) of the principals and teachers had strong perceptions that teachers made extra efforts to learn more about students. Positive responses by the principals and the teachers of the schools were supported by written comments of the teachers:

The majority of teachers make much effort to develop understanding of students.

Teacher in my school usually makes an effort to get to really know the students they teach. In this way, the teaching learning process is enhanced. (Table 2.15)

Knowles and Brown (2000) have also insisted on the development of caring relationships based on trust and mutual respect between teachers and students. The findings of this study suggest that an overwhelming majority (very true; 50%, somewhat true; 46%) of the principals and teachers had positive views that teachers treated students fairly, consistently, and with respect. On all three items, the statistical difference was non-significant.
Summary of this section

According to the logic model ((Figure 4.3, p. 163) prepared for the evaluation of ‘School organisation’ schools should be experiencing certain characteristics, anticipated activities, and short-term and intermediate outcomes identified in the literature. Analysis and interpretations of the findings of the study answering the first question suggest that in general, all three-sample schools were making efforts to implement the identified characteristics of this element with few variations. However in terms of impacts of the program the results were somewhat negative in many areas of school organisation as students reported a lack of pride in their schools. Open-ended responses (Table 2.15) clearly indicated the students’ feeling of insecurity in the schools specifically in the toilets. Bullying was also widely been noted in all schools through the open-ended responses.

My findings in this study suggest that the element of mutual respect prevalent in the schools was limited to staff or teachers giving respect to the students but adult stakeholders expressed negative views about the behaviour of students towards their teachers and for each other. Two-way communication among the stakeholders was very strong with a healthy collegial working relationship among all professional staff. All stakeholders were enjoying personalised relationships with a strong sense of trust and confidence among the students that staff in the school would take care of them if needed. However, students’ feelings of insecurity were widely reported in many school activities. More specifically, very few students felt secure in the toilets. Despite this, adult stakeholders reported positive views that the school environment was positive, promoted a sense of community, and was inviting caring and encouraging. They were not very positive about the school environment in terms of safety and freedom from violence. This finding provides support for the students’ feelings of insecurity in the schools. Students believed that schools were fulfilling their responsibility in enforcing the safety rules but at the same time believed that these rules were not being obeyed. Rules were flexible to minimize unnecessary expulsions or suspensions. Important outcomes of the program, tolerance and responsibility, were evident as a great majority of stakeholders expressed positive views that discipline was administered focusing on the students’ correction. Similarly, follow-up of absenteeism and tardiness occurred in an orderly manner. Adults in the schools believed that school buildings
were attractive and kept clean, whereas students expressed negative views about the physical environment of their schools.

A sense of pride and ownership was noted among the adult stakeholders as rules were framed in consultation with them. However, students reported a lack of pride in their schools. Despite the fact that students had a negative feeling about their environment, they still expressed a strong sense of belonging with their schools and a loyalty to the government school sector in general. The sample schools were experiencing a minimal level of problems with use of drugs, presence of weapons or sale of drugs. Similarly, arguments and fights between the students were reported to be infrequent. Classrooms atmosphere was reported as reasonably conducive to learning having teachers who cared for the adolescents. All schools were conscious of the need of smooth transition where teachers were making extra efforts to know about their students’ needs.

6.3 CLASSROOM TEACHING STRATEGIES

Introduction

In this section, I have explored the nature and level of classroom teaching strategies adopted and implemented in the middle schools of ACT Australia. A growing number of researchers and practitioners (Burke & Burke-Samie, 2004; Chiodo, 2004; Norris, 2003; Scherer, 2003) have taken the position that the classroom plays an enormous role in influencing the students’ social and emotional growth. It is suggested that the classroom climate teachers establish for themselves and their students greatly affects the learning process. The classroom provides children with an important opportunity to develop and test the social skills that elicit caring and support from others. Abundant literature discussing the teaching strategies required in the classroom is available.

For the purposes of this study four philosophical approaches outlined by Dougherty (1997), were selected as the basis of data collection analysis and discussion. For data collection, forty-five items were developed within the sub-constructs of Dougherty’s (1997)23 philosophical approaches

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23 See Table: 3.3.3 of this study.
to explore the perceptions of stakeholders about the teaching strategies implemented in the sample schools:

1. Invitational education
2. Democracy in education
3. Constructivist teaching
4. Reflective teaching

This study sought to discover whether the teaching strategies adopted in the classrooms of the sample schools were compatible with adolescents’ learning needs. In order to determine the implementation level of the middle schooling program and its impact on the psycho-social development of the adolescents, data was collected and analysed in accordance with the above four philosophical approaches and has been discussed in the light of the recommendation given in the literature.

6.3.1 Invitational education

The literature (Keddie & Churchill, 2003; Lewis, Schaps & Watson, 1996; Wolk, 2003) has suggested that invitational education is crucial for developing a positive teaching-learning environment, where people are valued, feel responsible, and are treated accordingly with respect and care. In this study the majority (very true; 26%, somewhat true; 60%) of students in the sample schools had reasonably positive perceptions that their teachers were helpful, especially when they (students) were confused. Lewis et al. (1996) found that warm, friendly, supportive relationships are an important characteristic of caring classrooms. Here again, the views of an overall majority (very true; 21%, somewhat true; 65%) of the students were found reasonably positive about whether they believed that their teachers were friendly with the students. Martin (1995) has insisted that establishing values of caring and trust is vital for building a classroom community. The findings of this study suggest that a significant proportion (32%) of the students did not believe that the teachers cared about them as a person. There was a statistically significant difference between the sample schools. More students (41%) in school ‘A’ reported positively as compared to school ‘C’, where no students responded ‘very true’ that their teachers care about them as a person.
In the literature, caring is widely seen as central facet of teaching. Phelan, Davidson and Cao (1992) found that students’ feelings depend on their perception of how they are treated. There is a deep desire in students to be recognised as an individual. Students enjoy teachers who take an interest in their learning. The findings of this study suggest that nearly one third (very true; 30%, somewhat true; 40%) of students in this study had a strong positive perception about whether their teachers listened to their questions or concerns. More than one third expressed a less positive perception. A significant number of students (30%) expressed strongly negative views.

There is a continuous debate in the literature on the nature and usefulness of homework given to children (Kravolec & Buell, 2000; , 2001; Van-Voorhis, 2003). Gavel (2000) has suggested that homework should be useful, aligned with the curriculum, and that students should be able to do it alone. In recognizing that homework is a controversial issue between parents and teachers, this study asked the parents to give their comments on the type of homework assigned by the teachers for their children. An overwhelming majority (very true; 44%, somewhat true; 35%) of the parents who participated in the study believed that meaningful homework was assigned by the teachers to the students. Less than a quarter of them expressed negative views.

A number of studies (Blasingame, Gamboa, Martinez, Jung & Harris, 2004; Edgington, 1998; Pottle, 1996; Seney, 2002; Stix & George, 1999) have highlighted problems associated with the text books and reading material provided to adolescents. Ivey (1999) has observed that those proficient, enthusiastic, young adolescents, who excel in school reading, express dissatisfaction with assigned reading and writing that does not match their interests or purposes. In this study very few students (very true; 9%, somewhat true; 51%) had a strong positive perception that their textbooks and workbooks were interesting, while a large number of them expressed a negative view.

Lack of interest, boredom and negative experiences with teachers are the most common reasons identified in the literature for early school leaving (Strong, Silver, Perini & Tuculescu, 2003). Goodlad (1984, p. 9) found that the typical classroom possessed “flat neutral emotional ambiance where boredom is a disease of epidemic proportion”. The findings of this study, however, suggests that relatively few students (very true; 9%, somewhat true; 37%) in the sample schools had a strong feeling of alienation in reporting that their classes were boring.
The literature on effective schooling has suggested that teaching and learning time should be free from internal or external interruption. It is argued in the literature that within the classroom the teachers’ authority if not maintained appropriately, becomes problematic, and leads to disruptive behaviours. This could be linked to unrealistic teacher expectations about how long students are able to stay focused on independent seat and work instructional activities. The findings of this study indicate an alarming situation where no student (very true; 0%, somewhat true; 19.3%) in the sample schools strongly believed that his or her attention was focused on study without any interruption. An overwhelming majority of the students (81%) expressed a negative perception. Although very few parents (very true; 13%, somewhat true; 40%) strongly believed that, in the classroom, teaching time was lost because of students’ disruptive behaviour, very few parents (very true; 9%, somewhat true; 48%) held a strong belief that teachers’ teaching time was free from interruption within the classroom and students also reported that class time was lost due to disruptive behaviour. This indicates that teachers in the sample schools were facing a time management crisis. The statistical difference between schools on all the items was non-significant.

6.3.2 Democracy in education

There is compelling evidence for the educational value of connecting the curriculum across disciplines (Jaeger & Davenport, 1996; Letterman & Dugan, 2004; Oitzinger & Kallgren, 2004; Wieseman & Moscovici, 2003), negotiating curriculum (Jaeger & Lauritzen, 1995), common planning time (Flowers, Mertens & Mulhall, 1999) and experiential learning (Naidoo & Searle, 1997; Ndoye, 2003; Wilson & Beard, 2003) for middle school classrooms. In this study it was found that less than a quarter (22%) of the principals and teachers believed that interdisciplinary team teaching was fully implemented in their schools while more than half (54%) of them reported that it was ‘partially implemented’. In response to the items relating to the implementation of intellectually stimulating programs in multiple areas, such as experiential learning, or what John Dewey (1938) calls ‘learning through direct experience, by action and reflection,’ the stakeholders were less positive as nearly one quarter (22%) of the principals and teachers reporting that these practices were ‘fully implemented’ while more than half (56%) perceived that they were partially implemented.
The literature on education for adolescents has overwhelmingly emphasised a focus on real world experience for learning content. Bissex (1980) has noted that the logic by which the teacher teaches is not always the logic by which children learn. Atwell (1998) and Erickson and Shultz (1992) have insisted that the curriculum should connect to students’ lives. Wolk (1998) (cited in Wolk, 2003) has specified that it is also the important responsibility of a teacher to show students the relevance of what they are learning to contexts that are meaningful. The findings of this study were not consistent with these recommendations as very few students (very true; 16%, somewhat true; 67%) had strong positive views that the curriculum content was current and relevant to meet the worldly needs. Few students (17%) expressed negative perceptions. Here again, one teacher was positive in her comments that:

I think this school covers the curriculum very broadly and offers a wide range to cater for students with variety of learning needs. (Table 3.11)

Another teacher wrote that:

The curriculum prepares students for higher education in ensuring they have opportunities for a solid grounding in all 24 KLAs especially English, Mathematics, Health and PE skills with their understanding of their playgroup. Citizenship is emphasised in SOSE25 subjects and is included in extra curriculum activities such as fundraising for various charities, literacy and numeracy key competencies, ICTs are addressed in KLAs to assist in the preparation for work. (Table 3.11)

The terms ‘democracy’ and ‘empowerment’ have persistently been used in educational literature (Apple & Beane, 1999; Beane, 1993a; deCharms, 1968; Stevenson, 2002), recommending the provision of opportunities for adolescents to be autonomous in the classroom. The findings of this study suggest that one third (very true; 33%, somewhat true; 44%) of the students had strong positive views that they were encouraged to volunteer their opinions in the classroom. Nearly one quarter (23%) of the students expressed negative feelings about this statement. The literature on classroom interaction and its effects on learning supports the assumption that a student’s level of classroom participation is related to intellectual skill development and student learning (Colbeck, Campbell & Bjorklund, 2000; Fassinger, 1995; , 1997). Lipman (1998) has described classroom discussion as distributed thinking or shared cognition which may lead to higher-order thinking as

24 Key Learning Areas
25 Studies of Society and the Environment one of the nationally recognised KLAs
new information is internalized, synthesized and then shared with the group. This study found that students had strong positive views (very true; 35%, somewhat true; 60%) that they discussed one another’s ideas in the classroom.

Certo et al. (2003) have noted that students want variety in the classroom in terms of teachers’ instructional strategies. They suggested the use of lecturing, role-playing, visual aids, group work, games, hands-on activities, and humour while teaching. They have further noted that students said that even if they had a favourite type of activity, it would “get old” if teachers did it too often. The findings of this study suggest that in all the schools an overwhelming majority (very true; 56%, somewhat true; 28%) of the principals and teachers believed that variety of strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching and hand on activities were being fully implemented in the classrooms. The written comments of the teachers also support the above findings where teachers reported that:

Strategies that I use for multiple intelligence include variety of presentation for project, cooperative learning, negotiated curriculum.

Habits of mind and critical thinking skills are embedded in my planning and teaching learning—Negotiated curriculum; multiple-intelligence is frequently used in year 8+ for students to examine their learning style.

Use of visual, audio, kinaesthetic, spatial as well as I provide many different types of lessons so that students can use different forms of multiple intelligence.

A considerable body of literature (Couture, Delong & Wideman, 1999; Enerson, Johnson, Milner & Plank, 1997; Legters, 1999) has focused on the need for collaborative learning environments in the classrooms of young adolescents. Taylor and Larson (1999) have insisted that middle school teachers must provide instructional opportunities for students to work in groups, helping early adolescents to meet their developmental needs. Colbeck et al. (2000) have suggested that peer interactions also help to shape the classroom climate, especially in courses that involve group collaboration. To probe the level of group interactions in the classrooms of sample schools, students were asked to record their views on four different items. More than half of the students believed that they did not work in small groups (not very true; 54%) and a quarter of students (25%) responded ‘not at all true’. Less than a quarter (21%) responded ‘somewhat true’ on this item. There was a highly significant statistical difference between the sample schools. In school ‘A’, a large proportion (72%) of students rated the item as ‘not very true’ compared to the
students from schools ‘B’ and ‘C’, whereas teachers of the schools were confident that emphasis was given to personal relationships by stating that:

Our school curriculum has focused more on the students’ relationships rather than on their academic rigour although there are students who achieve both.

(Table 3.11)

Cohen, Lotan and Scarloss (1999) have suggested that when students work in small groups, they talk and work together and serve as resources for one another. In this study, again, more than half (58%) of the students responded ‘not very true’ that they often worked with other students on academic projects. Out of 57 students who participated in the study, just one student believed that he helped the classmates in their learning and the great majority (63%) of the students responded ‘not very true’. It was found that a large number (very true; 0%, not at all true; 67%) of students reported that they did not actively participate in class. Another quarter (26%) responded ‘not very true’ on this item.

In this part of the discussion, it is noted that principal and teachers of the sample schools were confident that students were enjoying a democratic environment. Such findings were inconsistent with the views of the students as in most of the areas of democracy, the students reported negatively. This situation indicates significant discrepancy in this area of ‘democracy in education’.

6.3.3 Constructivist teaching

The literature has suggested that according to constructivist learning theory, students learn actively by making sense of new knowledge, making meaning from it, and mapping it into their existing knowledge map or schema (Cripps & McGilchrist, 1999; Fox, 2001). Curriculum integration approaches to learning for adolescents have been under discussion off and on for the last two decades or so; Lauritzen, and Jaeger (1996) and, more recently, Bailey (2003) have suggested that at the middle school level, the curriculum should be integrative. Integrating the curriculum can help early adolescents establish connections among various content areas, making learning more meaningful. The findings of this study suggest that a great majority (very true; 60%, somewhat true; 27%) of the principals and teachers reported that curriculum integration had been widely used by the teachers.
Noddings (1992) has suggested that classrooms should be places in which students can act on a rich variety of purposes, in which wonder and curiosity are alive, in which students and teachers live together and grow. Students’ responses, however, did not reflect a very positive perception of the courses they were taught. They indicated that the courses they were taught were not increasing their interest in learning and that they did not learn what they wanted to learn. None of the students (somewhat true; 16%, not very true; 53%) responded very positively ‘that ‘their intellectual curiosity was stimulated in the classroom’.

Jewett (2001) has argued that collaborative curriculum planning and decision-making demands that educators focus on building continuity across grade levels and courses. In this study very few (very true; 15%, somewhat true; 59 %) principals and teachers of the sample schools expressed a strong belief that in curriculum planning, attention was focused on continuity across grade levels and courses. One quarter of them responded ‘not very true’ on this item.

For nearly two decades there has been an ongoing discussion of constructivist curricula and authentic learning environments in schools for adolescents (Gordon, 1998; Jobling & Moni, 2004; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 1999; Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS), 1999; Renzulli, Gentry & Reis, 2004). Researchers discussing authentic learning experiences have suggested that middle school students want learning contexts to be real, purposeful, motivational and practical. The findings of this study demonstrate that a great majority (very true; 32%, somewhat true; 61%) of the principals and teachers had positive views that the school curriculum broadens students’ learning to meet worldly needs. Very few of them expressed a negative perception. Nearly three quarters (74%) of the students, however, expressed strong negative views (very true; 0%, somewhat true; 26%) on the item that ‘I try to relate course material to my real life experiences’.

Theories of learning (Renzulli, Gentry & Reis, 2004; Van Merriënboer, Kirschner & Kester, 2003) have argued that the construction of knowledge transpires as students build understanding in the light of experiences occurring in the world. Jones and Moreland (2004) have suggested that students learn more effectively when the teacher structures new information, relating it to prior knowledge of the learner, monitoring the learning and providing effective feedback. The findings of this study confirms the recommendations made in the literature as an overwhelming majority (very true; 50%, somewhat true; 43%) of the principals and teachers expressed a positive
perception that teachers structured new content knowledge based on the prior knowledge of the learners. Very few of them had negative views on the use of this constructivist approach in their classrooms. Similarly an overwhelmingly majority (very true; 50%, somewhat true; 39%) of the parents had positive views that a variety of courses was available other than the basic subjects. A small number of them reported negatively.

The teachers in their written comments supported the views of the parents that:

In addition to main subjects special courses e.g. citizenship education, health education are part of whole courses. Recognition of community services and personal development via extra curriculum are also ensured.

Don’t just have the basic subjects, but there are arts, health, vocational education, citizenship type subjects to look at the whole person.  
(Table 3.11)

Generally, researchers have specified that teachers need to learn how to empower the students (Metzger, 2002; Schneider, 1996). The notion of empowerment or empowering students has its roots in the work of Dewey (1916), who advocated providing an opportunity for autonomy, responsibility, choice and authority in the classroom. DeVries and Zan (2003) have recommended minimizing unnecessary external control over students. The findings of this study suggest that two third of the students (very true; 33%, somewhat true; 33%) expressed positive views that they felt free to disagree with the teachers on certain issues but one third of them expressed negative views. Also a great majority (very true; 33%, somewhat true; 42%) of the students responded positively, that they believed they were generally encouraged to ask questions/contribute or comments in the class but again one quarter of the students had negative views.

Developmental psychologists (Case, 1985; Piaget, 1954; 1971) have argued that students in the middle grades can perform deeper and more complex forms of reasoning than younger students. The process of questioning is promoted as the cornerstone of inquiry. Barber (1999), in discussing the problems associated with the middle years of schooling insisted in his address to Middle Years of Schooling Conference that the ‘Middle years should be so busy, so demanding, so active, so adventurous, so spectacular that young adolescents barely have time for brooding introspection or watching Australian soap operas’. In this study most of the students felt that they were reasonably engaged in learning activities as very few (5%) responded ‘very true’ that their
mind wanders a good deal during the class. Another 42% responded ‘somewhat true’ and a similar number (46%) responded ‘not very true’. These findings are very much consistent with the literature (Elkjaer, 2003; Gordon, 2003; Kuhn, Black, Keselman & Kaplan, 2000; Richetti & Sheerin, 1999) as it indicates that teaching skills used in the classrooms enabled students to participate successfully in the inquiry process and had involved them in thinking critically to become more effective thinkers.

Newman (2002) has suggested that, in classrooms, teachers need to share with children their time and energy, and help students to be attentive, effortful, self-expressive, and interested in learning. Caring teachers tend to listen, ask questions, inquire if students need help, make sure students understand difficult material, and provide help in a non-threatening way. When students experience this type of communication, they learn that teachers are trustworthy helpers. This study suggests that the majority (very true; 43%, somewhat true; 41%) of the parents believed that their children were provided extra help by the teachers when it was needed. On all items related to this characteristic, the statistical difference between schools was non-significant.

The literature has argued that the tension between adolescents’ growing need for autonomy and actual opportunities for students in the classroom leads to alienation and disengagement (Certo, Cauley & Chafin, 2003; Erwin, 2003; Muir, 2001). To avoid this they have suggested that teachers should provide reasonable autonomy over their learning to all students in general and adolescents in particular (Battistich, Solomon, Watson & Schaps, 1997; Boomer, 1982; Burkill, 1997; Wade, 1995). In this study, students were asked to rate their perception of the autonomy they enjoy over their learning. A general trend was noted here as a great majority of students believed it was ‘somewhat true’ that the courses they study were increasing their interest in learning, that they learnt to think more clearly, were interested in the courses they were taught at school, and that they were learning what they like to learn.

Early adolescents are intensely curious about their world (Knowles & Brown, 2000). Their curriculum should, therefore, embrace wonder, curiosity, exploration, problem solving, challenges and action (Beane, 1993a). Several empirical studies and researchers (Crowley, 1993; Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Webb, Farivar & Mastergeorge, 2002) have insisted on problem-based learning, elaborated help, and use of problem solving skills by teachers in the classrooms of adolescents to help them solve their problems by themselves. Swaak, de Jong and van Joolingen
(2004) have promoted the use of discovery learning in the classroom. The findings of this study demonstrate that a large majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 44%) of the students believed that their teachers set complex and meaningful assignments. Very few of them reported negative perceptions.
6.3.4 Reflective teaching

A huge body of research and literature (Daniels & Perry, 2003; King, 2003; McCombs, 2003; Meece, 2003; Pierce & Kalkman, 2003) has promoted a learner-centred approach as a hallmark of the education of young adolescents. It is suggested that social, emotional, and physical, as well as academic outcomes for young adolescents are enhanced by classroom contexts that are learner-centred. The findings of this study were not consistent with the literature as less than a third (28%) of the principals and teachers believed that teaching strategies sensitive to the individual’s level of intellectual maturity were ‘fully implemented’ compared to those who believed they were ‘partially implemented’ (60%). There was an agreement between the responses of the principals and teachers.

Research on the gifted and talent development process (Dougherty, 1998; Holloway, 2003a; Juntune, 1999; Milgram, 2000; Panov, 2002; Renzulli, Gentry & Reis, 2004; Swiatek & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2003) has suggested that each school must decide on the best arrangements for its high-ability students on the basis of its own student population, organisational structure, staff expertise, and school culture. Gifted students need to have content and instruction that is challenging—that forces them to reach beyond their current level of functioning. A great variety of methods are suggested in the literature for identifying giftedness, from simple pedagogical observation to specially developed, standardized, and validated test assignments (Olszewski-Kubilius & Limburg-Weber, 1999). In this study, the principals and teachers did not express strong positive views that instructional arrangements for special and gifted students were made in their schools (fully implemented; 16%, partially implemented; 51%).

The whole philosophy of creating middle schools for adolescents is based on the use of teaching strategies that meet the students’ varying developmental needs. The Schools Council (1990) in Australia has suggested that, in dealing with students, teachers need an understanding of how students develop and how they learn. Teachers also need to recognize and respond to individual differences in their students. The findings of this study have suggested that the overwhelming majority of the principals and teachers in the sample schools had positive views (fully implemented; 32%, partially implemented; 59%) that teaching strategies meeting students’ varying developmental needs had been implemented. On a similar item again most of the
principals and teachers (fully implemented; 41%, partially implemented; 54%) had positive views that teaching strategies providing academic, physical and emotional experiences to early adolescents were in practice. However, with respect to ‘teaching strategies focusing primarily on the characteristics of the learners’ the responses of the principals and teachers were less positive (fully implemented; 19%, partially implemented; 69%). This may be due to a lack of training and professional development among the teachers in this area.

Literature on classroom pedagogy suggests that the construction of knowledge occurs as students build understanding in the light of experiences occurring in the world. Gordon (1998) has argued that enthusiasm for real-world learning needs to be balanced with the realities of real-world classrooms. Delors (1996) has insisted on the need to improve the relevance of the content of secondary education with regard to curriculum and teaching methods to accommodate the changing needs of society, individuals and groups to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The findings of this study suggest that in the sample schools principals and teachers believed that teaching strategies demonstrating the relationship of content to real life situation were being implemented (fully implemented; 32%, partially implemented; 67%), but students responded less positively on a related item (Table 3.4).

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) has specified that adolescents must find ways of earning respect, establishing a sense of belonging in a valued group, and building a sense of personal worth based on mastery of useful skills, including social skills. Beane (1993a, p. 21) has insisted that the middle school curriculum should enhance knowledge and skills for all young people. The findings of this study are consistent with the literature as a huge majority (very true; 28%, somewhat true; 67%) of the principals and teachers expressed considerably positive views that the curriculum addressed issues and skills that were relevant to early adolescent learners. However, students had strong negative views on related item (Table 3.6). Pendergast (2002) has suggested that middle school teachers should be enthusiastic, innovative, caring and organised. Again the findings of this study accord with the suggestions made in the literature as a great majority (very true; 32%, somewhat true; 49%) of the students had positive views suggesting that their teachers were enthusiastic.
The literature (Martini, Wall & Shore, 2004; Zimmerman, 2002) has strongly supported the importance of students’ use of self-regulatory processes by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills. Self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are oriented to attaining goals. In the study the overwhelming majority (very true; 50%, somewhat true; 40%) of the parents had positive views, believing that students had opportunities to consider their own work habits through structured self-reflection. Very few of them responded negatively.

**Summary of this section**

Certain characteristics identified in the literature are presented in the logic model (Figure 4.4, p. 164), developed for the evaluation of classroom teaching strategies. In combination with the assumed activities, short and long-terms outcomes of this element have also been reflected in the logic model. I have related the recommendations of the literature with practices in the schools to assess how far schools were successful in implementing these recommendations in improving their teaching practices for meeting the needs of adolescents.

Certain teaching activities assumed crucial in the logic model based on the literature for creating a democratic environment were being practiced in the sample schools with some variations. A great majority of the adult stakeholders reported that a variety of teaching strategies such as co-operative learning, team teaching and hands on activities were fully implemented in the classroom. Use of such teaching strategies had provided a chance for students to share their ideas in the classroom. Interdisciplinary team teaching was in place to some extent. Similarly, intellectually stimulating programs such as experiential learning had also been implemented to some extent. The above findings suggest that this element was being implemented largely in accordance with the General Design. Open-ended responses (Table 3.10) confirm the variety of teaching strategies used by the teachers in their teaching process. However, very few students believed that the curriculum was relevant to meet their worldly needs that opportunities were provided in the classroom to work in small groups or to actively participate in the class, students also expressed negative views about the teaching practices in the schools relating to constructivist teaching. Whereas, teaching skills used in the classrooms were helping students to participate successfully in the inquiry process and to think critically to reflect upon their learning process.
again signifying that the relevant element has been implemented very successfully in the sample schools.

However, the answer to the second question of the study carries some negative tone as not a single student in the sample schools believed they were focused in the classroom, and a majority of them reported that class time was lost due to students’ disruptive behaviour. These findings were supported by the views of the parents as most of them also believe that teachers teaching time was not free from interruption. However, students reported that teachers were reasonably helpful and friendly with them and were ready to listen their questions or concerns. Despite this, students reflected negative views in many areas and a feeling of alienation among the students was reported at a minimal level.

The overall findings suggest that the implementation level of this element was very high as the majority of the adult stakeholders were very positive and strong agreement was noted between them. However, the second question, which relates to the impact of the program, was not reported very positively, as an overwhelming majority of the students expressed a negative perception that their attention was focused on study without any interruption, none of the students believed very positively that their intellectual curiosity was stimulated in the classroom or that they could relate course material to their real life experiences. A majority of the students reported that courses they were taught did not increase their interest in learning and that they did not learn what they wanted to learn.

6.4 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TEAMS)

Introduction

In this section the nature of professional learning communities [PLC] in the middle schools of the ACT Australia are explored to determine the kind of expertise, interest and needs that are being practiced in these schools. Middle schooling for adolescents envisages schools as professional learning communities, where stakeholders collaborate to ensure improved educational outcomes and positive student achievements. Hill and Russell (1999) have argued that professional learning is most powerful when teachers in a middle school work as members of teams in pursuit of commonly identified purpose. The review of literature has suggested a number of characteristics associated with professional learning communities. For the purposes of this study, data was
collected and analysed to determine the implementation levels of PLC. The following five characteristics have been widely discussed in the literature:

1. Shared value and vision with supportive leadership
2. Building a culture of collective learning
3. Working as collaborative teams
4. Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation
5. Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

To answer the research questions twenty-one items were drawn out of these characteristics of PLC to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders on the implementation level of these characteristics and their impact as an anticipated outcome.

6.4.1 Supportive and shared leadership

Herman and Kaufman (1991) have insisted that a school must first identify its ideals, beliefs and values. Barth (1993, p. 6) insists that ‘without a vision a school is unlikely to improve’. Senge (1992) has suggested that a true-shared vision is never imposed. It is developed within the group of people who truly care about one another and their work. Their collective vision encompasses their personal vision. The findings of this study suggest that a considerable number (very true; 22%, somewhat true; 55%) of the principals, teachers and parents from the sample schools believed that stakeholders were involved in the development of a vision, which was shared by all. However, it must be noted that one quarter of them (25%) responded negatively.

The generally-accepted vision of middle schooling in the literature (George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000) involves the provision of developmentally appropriate education for all adolescents in a safe and orderly environment, which is shared by all. The findings of this study are again in conformity with the guiding philosophy of middle schooling as a considerable majority (very true; 30%, somewhat true; 57%) of the principals, teachers and parents reported that staff members shared a value and vision about the central mission of the middle school.

Moore, George and Halpin (2002) have suggested that supportive leaders in PLC encourage, cooperate and help all to develop the vision for their own guidance. The findings of this study indicate that the overwhelming majority (very true; 45%, somewhat true; 48%) of the principals,
teachers and parents believed that their principals were supportive in the provision of resources for ongoing professional development. It is important to note that the views of stakeholders in different sample schools were not consistent, as a great majority (87%) of stakeholders in school ‘B’ responded ‘very true’, that leaders provide resources for ongoing professional development, as compared with schools ‘A’ and ‘C’, where few stakeholders responded ‘very true’ and most responded ‘somewhat true’.

6.4.2 Building a culture of collective learning

Senge (1990) was the first to refer to a school as ‘a learning organisation’. Barth (1990) has argued that a school is ‘a community of learners’ which should be a place where everyone is actively involved in learning. He further added that, in effective schools, teachers value the norms of collegiality and continuous growth and improvement. The findings of this study strongly support the literature as most (very true; 40%, somewhat true; 50%) of the parents thought that teachers were engaged in professional and collegial learning activities. It is important to note that a highly significant statistical difference was found between the sample schools. In school ‘C’ none of the respondents rated this statement as ‘very true’ with a great majority (75%) responding ‘somewhat true’. In schools ‘A’ and ‘B’, however, most (46% and 63% respectively) of them responded ‘very true’ that ‘teachers are engaged in professional and collegial learning activities’.

Dewey (1916) has described a community as a process of people living, working, and especially learning together, asking questions, listening to other viewpoints, comparing ideas, and imagining alternatives. In the sample schools a large number (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 44%) of the parents believed that staff members routinely shared ideas and worked together to improve the instructional programs.

6.4.3 Working as a collaborative teams

The literature has strongly supported the specialised professional preparation of middle level teachers. It is suggested that middle school teachers must be experts in understanding the developmental needs of young adolescents. The need for high-quality staff development to deepen teachers’ knowledge through study groups, peer observation, expert demonstration and teacher-to-teacher reflections has been emphasised (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Lipsitz, Jackson & Austin, 1997; National Middle School Association,
The findings of this study suggest that less than a quarter (fully implemented; 19%, partially implemented; 64%) of the principals and teachers from the sample schools were positive that the ongoing staff development based on adolescents’ needs was fully implemented.

In an open-ended question when teachers were asked if there was ‘anything you were not doing that you would like to do to reinforce learning’, the one teacher suggested the following, indicating a lack of continual professional development in the school:

Continual professional development for all staff members to assist in improving and maintaining quality teaching. (Table 4.10)

Hord (1997) has asserted that ‘a core characteristic of the professional learning community is an undeviating focus on the student learning and achievement’. Again the findings of this study suggests that a majority (fully implemented; 17%, partially implemented; 53%) of the principals and teachers believed that in service staff development training focusing on students’ achievements was partially implemented. Harnett (1991) has suggested that it is essential to develop a cadre of teachers with the philosophy of middle school education; knowledgeable about the psychological, social, and intellectual development of early adolescents; and possessing the practical skills to work with early adolescents through an understanding of their interests. The findings of this study suggest that the majority (fully implemented; 15%, partially implemented; 54%) of the principals and teachers from the sample schools believed that professional development of teachers focusing on students’ learning interest was being practiced to a certain extent in the schools. The overall responses relating to PLC in the sample schools, however, were less positive.

A comparison was made between the perception of principals and teachers on in-service staff development. The findings of the study suggest that main components of staff development in the sample schools such as staff development based on adolescents’ needs, in-service training focussing on students’ achievements and professional development focusing on students learning needs were partially implemented. At one point, consensus was seen in the views of all principals, where all three believed that in service staff development training focusing on students’ achievements was partially implemented. The teachers’ views, however, were less positive as few teachers (18%) believed that in-service staff development training focusing on students’ achievements was ‘fully implemented’ and 50% believed that it was ‘partially
implemented’. Another 18% believed that it was ‘at the active discussion stage’ and 14% perceived that it was ‘at the initial discussion stage’.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1995) have stated that a learning organisation is a group of people pursuing common purposes, with collective commitments and regularly weighing the value of those purposes. A great majority (very true; 59%, somewhat true; 28%) of the principals and teachers in the sample schools strongly agreed that skill development of teachers was based on a common purpose, which was students’ learning and achievements. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) found professional learning communities to be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers’ communities of practice rather than on individual teachers. In this study more than half (very true; 59%, somewhat true; 16%) of the principals and teachers strongly believed that sense of belonging and collaboration was seen within the teachers and staff.

Bird and Little (1986) have argued that more time for collaborative learning activities should be made in the normal school day, either by addition or by the elimination of activities that are less important. In support, Raywid (1993) has enumerated three broad approaches to finding time for teachers to collaborate: (1) adding time by extending the school day or year, (2) extracting time from the existing schedule, and (3) altering staff utilization patterns. This study found that less than half (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 6%) of the principals and teachers believed that teachers’ collective learning and collaboration was built into the schools’ schedule. More than half of them expressed negative views. The negative feeling of the teachers about time constraints was evident in the qualitative data:

Tired teaching staff who are losing enthusiasm for introducing new ideas because there is a constant barrage of ideas; not enough time for one change to be fully integrated into school before the next program confront them.

Table 4.11

Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson and Austin (1997) have suggested that structural reorganisation of schools into small communities of learners helps to create personal associations among teachers and students and fosters a school climate supportive of students’ developmental and academic growth. Recently Hollingsworth (2004) has categorically insisted that team work in schools needs to be fully supported and promoted because it demonstrates a commitment to shared leadership and collaboration. It is encouraging to see that the findings of this study were
consistent with the literature as a great majority (very true; 59%, somewhat true; 15%) of the principals and teachers revealed that teachers work in teams and share information about the students’ learning. On all items, the principals’ perceptions were in accordance with the perception of teachers as the statistical difference was not significant.

6.4.4 Classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation

The value of classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation is widely recognized in the literature. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) and Jackson and Davis (2000) have recommended that ‘teachers for the middle grades be specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and be recognised distinctively for this accomplishment’. The findings of this study are not consistent with the recommendations made in the literature as very few (very true; 19%, somewhat true; 43%) of the principals and teachers strongly believed that teachers were specially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents. Lack of specific teacher training to understand the needs of adolescents was also confirmed in statements made by the teachers, such as:

Lack of teachers’ expertise prevents the programs from being of high intellectual quality.

Yes, we know about our students but don’t have a special understanding of young adolescents.

Middle school teachers need to be properly trained. (Table 4.11)

In the literature, teachers’ expertise is identified as the most important factor in determining middle years student achievement. The Department of Public Instruction (2003) states that professional development ensures that school staffs have the content, process, knowledge, skills, dispositions and accountability to help all students achieve high standards. The National Staff Development Council in USA (1997) calls for content specific staff development programs aiming at extending teachers’ content knowledge and content-specific pedagogic approaches. The findings of this study suggest that an overwhelming majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 54%) of the students believed that teachers of the sample schools knew the content knowledge of the subject they taught. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) have suggested that teachers need to integrate theory with classroom practice, which must be participant driven and grounded in inquiry, reflection and experimentation. In the sample schools, a great majority (very true;
40%, somewhat true; 47%) of the students expressed positive views that teachers were knowledgeable in teaching and experimentation. The National Middle School Association (1996) has noted that exploratory programs capitalise on the innate curiosity of young adolescents, exposing them to a range of academic, vocational, and recreational subjects for career options, community service, enrichment, and enjoyment. In this study a great majority (very true; 32%, somewhat true; 58%) of the students indicated that the use of exploratory programs by teachers was prevalent. A few teachers, in their statements, supported students’ perceptions that:

A teacher knows when the students should be challenged. Increase or alter curriculum content, to meet the needs of the class.

I use a range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of students  (Table 4.11).

A gap was also noted between the positive perceptions of students and the negative statements of the teachers, such as:

All times teachers are expected to teach in an area that is not their area of expertise.

Some middle school teachers are teaching specialist subjects that they have no knowledge in. (Table 4.11)

Keamy et al. (2003) have noted that teacher effectiveness, as demonstrated by their skills, methodologies and educational philosophies, is a crucial aspect of middle schooling, especially in the current climate of reform in this area. Swaim (2003a) has suggested that students at middle level schools need and deserve teachers who are knowledgeable about the content of the subjects they teach and who have the skills and dispositions to teach those subjects effectively. A majority of students responded positively that varied instructional strategies were used by the teachers to plan class activities (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 44%).

Students were also asked about their personal experiences on the very important issue related to their classroom learning. It is important to note that over half (very true; 7%, somewhat true; 49%) of the students believed that teachers introduce new concepts so fast that students found it hard to grasp. Regarding teachers’ willingness to help the students with personal problems, over half of the students’ perceptions were less positive (very true; 23%, somewhat true; 33%). One of the few areas where students’ gave positive responses was ‘classroom-based research oriented to action and experimentation’. However, they were less positive about their teachers helping
students with their personal problems. The statistical difference on all items between the sample schools was non-significant.

6.4.5 Use of data-based inquiry (Research and support networks)

Little (1993, p. 138) has suggested that professional development should support ‘meaningful intellectual, social, and emotional engagement with ideas, with materials and with colleagues both in and out of teaching’. Thorn (2000) has suggested that transformation of data to knowledge is an important knowledge management approach at all levels of the educational system. Thorn (2002) has also pointed out that knowledge management strategies add value to data, and when data is transformed into knowledge, educational systems are better able to manage complex information, use data for decision-making, and improve systemic reform efforts. Very few (17%) of the teachers believed that professional development in the sample middle schools, tied to the use of new technology material and data bases, was ‘fully implemented’, although many (60%) felt that it was ‘partially implemented’. The statistical difference between the sample schools was not significant but the views of three principals were not consistent. A large number of principals and teachers, on the other hand, expressed positive views that the latest research was used for staff development. All three principals strongly believed that the latest research was being used in the schools for staff development.

Summary of this section

For the purpose of answering the research questions the practice of PLC in the sample schools was investigated in the light of the recommendations made in the literature. In the logic model of the related element (Figure 4.5, p. 165), I have incorporated necessary ingredients of professional learning communities with assumed activities leading towards different outcomes, as identified in the literature. Certain findings of the relevant section of the study answer the first research question positively, with few exceptions. For example, it was noted that the central mission of the middle schooling program was widely developed and shared by all under supportive leadership. The majority of the stakeholders believed that their principals were supportive in the provision of resources and for in-service professional development and teachers were also engaged in professional and collegial learning activities, routinely sharing ideas and working together to improve instructional programs. For continuous staff development, latest research was being
used, but in this, adolescents’ needs were not strongly recognised by the schools. A lack of specific training in understanding the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents was obvious in the findings. However, a great majority of stakeholders were positive that main the purpose of skill development of teachers was students’ learning and achievement. The majority of the students expressed positive views that teachers were rich in content knowledge of the subject they taught and also, in planning class activities, varied instructional strategies were used by them. The second question of the study is also answered positively as a strong sense of belonging and collaboration within the teachers and staff was highly prevalent. It was concluded that in the sample schools all necessary ingredients of PLC were being implemented with some variation, leading towards the achievement of outcomes as identified in the relevant logic model.

6.5 INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Introduction

For the purposes of answering the study questions about the implementation of intervention and special assistance in the sample schools, data was collected, analysed and has been discussed under the following headings identified in the literature as important components of the relevant element of the General Design:

1. Academic support
2. Counselling and advisory services
3. Health and physical education
4. Technology and resources
5. Career development

6.5.1 Academic support

Stevenson (1992) has argued that, even with the best teaching, many students need extra time and support and has suggested the use of individual learning plans for students needing ongoing support. The New York State Education Department (2003) has insisted that the organization and structure of the school, provide time during the school day that is necessary, to ensure opportunities for additional instruction and personal support are available for students who need extra help to meet the standards. The findings of this study indicate that a large number (41%) of
the principals, teachers and parents had negative perception that extra time and support was built into every school day for the students who fell behind. Just less than one quarter expressed a strong positive perception. However, on another item (Table 3.5) parents were extremely positive that their children were provided extra help by teachers when needed, indicating that teachers were conscious of the need for extra coaching although such help was not built into everyday routine. This may be due to time constraints on the teachers.

Roberts (2005) has noted that, according to an American survey, students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 49% more likely to use drugs, 37% more likely to become teenage parents, 35% more likely to smoke and 27% more likely to be arrested than those engaged in extracurricular activities. Hence, the literature (Markstrom, Xiaoming, Blackshire & Wilfong, 2005) has promoted engaging adolescents in extra curricular activities. In this study an overwhelming majority (very true; 75%, somewhat true; 19%) of the parents reported that all extracurricular activities were available to all students.

6.5.2 Counselling and advisory services

The Carnegie Council’s (1989, p. 40) recommendation that “every student should be well known by at least one adult” has been endorsed in subsequent literature. Jackson and Davis (2000) contended that when students make a lasting connection with at least one caring adult who provides students with support and direction during difficult times academic and personal outcomes improve. The State Education Department (2003) has also insisted that each student needs a caring adult advocate in the school who knows that student personally as well as student has trust and confidence on that adult. In this study more than half (very true; 57%, somewhat true; 32%) of the principals, teachers and parents had a strong positive perception that in the school a faculty member was available for each student who knew him/her personally and helped when needed.

The need for school counselling programs at all levels, especially in middle schools to help adolescents who face various emotional and psychological challenges has been accepted in the education system. Realising the importance of school counselling, Department of Education and Training (DEET) ACT has announced that every student and their family in the ACT Government school system (K-12) has access to the services of a school counsellors at their local
schools (Canberra Connect, 2005). Contrary to the above statement by the DEET, ACT very few students (21%) held strongly positive views that their school offered good facility of counselling. Similarly, another less than a quarter of the students believed that they could talk with their counsellor if needed. This finding is again in contrary to the recommendations of the literature as it is suggested in the literature that the counsellor should be easily accessible to all students.

Students should have a clear understanding of the role of the school counsellors and why it is important to talk to them when they are in need (Borders, 2002). Manning and Saddlemire (1998) have noted that educators and counsellors should work collaboratively to improve the educational experiences and overall well-being of the students. The responses of staff of the sample schools were positive with respect to the counselling services provided in the schools, as (very true; 34%, somewhat true; 36%) a large number of principals and teachers expressed a positive belief that counsellors coordinate support services. There was a significant difference of opinion between the stakeholders from three schools. Stakeholders from schools ‘A’ and ‘C’ had strongly positive views compared to school ‘B’, where very few respondents had strong positive perception that support services were coordinated by the counsellors. This suggests that despite the well developed policy of DEET (2005) for guidance and counselling there is considerable variation in the level of satisfaction of stakeholders in general, and students in particular, with the quality and availability of these services.

6.5.3 Health and physical education

The Director General of the World Health Organization (2002) has insisted that “An effective school health programme can be one of the most cost effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health”. Similarly, the NSW Board of Studies (2001) has recommended that “effective health education programs can reduce adolescent risk behaviours by facilitating the development of student’s knowledge and skills that will improve their ability to negotiate the social contexts in which these behaviours commonly occur. A range of studies (Toumbourou et al., 2000; Valois, Zulling, Huebner & Drane, 2004) have also recommended the need of physical education programs and has noted that they help students understand the relationship among physical, social, emotional, and mental aspects of life through physical fitness. The findings of this study are not in accordance with the recommendations of the literature. Less than one third (very true; 32%, somewhat true; 39%) of principals, teachers and
parents strongly believed that health education programs were personalised for personal hygiene and physical fitness. More than one third expressed mixed responses (somewhat true) and another nearly one third (31%) of the stakeholders expressed a negative perception on this item.

Literature (Akos & Levitt, 2002; Harris & Meredith, 2005) has argued that adolescents need proper guidance to understand themselves in the light of the rapid changes that occur in their lives due to puberty. Lack of understanding of self may lead to risk factors. Academic failure and school dropout are associated with anti-social behaviour, which may lead to health issues (Toombourou et al., 2000). Adolescence is the most vulnerable period in life when young people are at the height of risk taking behaviours and may be involved in a variety of health-related issues such as sexuality and reproductive issues, drugs and alcohol, self-esteem/mental health and peer pressures. At this turning point in life health education is critical in assisting students in developing necessary life skills for health including decision-making, communication, stress management, and goal setting. In the light of the recommendations made in the literature, stakeholders were asked to report on how far health educations programs were customised to adolescents’ needs. A great majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 47%) of principals, teachers and parents expressed a positive perception. This indicates that the sample schools were conscious of the need to customise the health education program to the adolescents’ needs. The respondents from all three schools were in agreement regarding the health and physical education facilities provided by the schools.

6.5.4 Technology and resources

The literature on middle schooling suggests that our classrooms should be infused with technology. All teachers and students should understand the latest technology and its use in day-to-day teaching and learning. Couch (1993) has argued that the use of multimedia involves multiple technologies and multiple modes of sensation, but the computer is at the heart of this revolution, which increases learning, develops higher-level skills, and enhances student motivation and self-concept. Contrary to these recommendations, this study indicates that very few students (very true; 18%, somewhat true; 42%) believed that they use computers regularly at school. Brooks (2004) has insisted on rich and well-resourced classrooms for making learning meaningful. A considerable number of principals, teachers and parents (very true; 31%, somewhat true; 53%) believed that resources required in the classroom were available for all. A
similar number (very true; 35%, somewhat true; 46%) of students also held positive views that their schools had the equipment and books they needed. Grooms (1967) has argued that libraries in schools serve as repositories and insisted that they should be a place where students have opportunities to review learning materials such as documentaries and recorded material with the assistance of an experienced librarian. Contrary to the literature’s recommendations very few students (very true; 12%, somewhat true; 33%), reported that they spent time in the library. There was a significant difference of opinion between the adult stakeholders as parents were more positive about the availability of resources in the school as compared to the teachers.

6.5.5 Career development

Jarvis and Keeley (2003) and Smith (2000a) have argued that high quality, current, and comprehensive information about the opportunities available for career development is a part of helping students make sound academic and educational choices and that they also need direction to learn which workplace options can provide fulfilment and satisfaction so they can seek ways to qualify for opportunities. The findings of this study suggest that an overwhelming majority of students (very true; 48%, somewhat true; 45%) were very positive in their beliefs that their education will prepare them for higher education. Jarvis and Keeley (2003, p. 7) have also noted that “students need skills to use the information effectively while tying self-knowledge to exploration—they need to develop self-reliance and focus on work activities that are important to them—finally, they need adaptability, the skill of making the best of ever-present change”. In this study, I have noted that all stakeholders had strong positive views that opportunities were available in the schools for students to explore careers.

Summary of this section

Throughout this study, certain characteristics identified in the literature are presented in the logic models relating to different elements of the General Design. Similarly, for the purpose of answering the research question, a logic model was prepared (Figure 4.6, p. 166) for this element. Certain characteristics leading to the assumed activities and to different outcomes have been reflected in the logic model. It is evident from the data collected for this element that staff believe that special courses, such as Citizenship Education and Health Education contribute to a
recognition of community services and personal development through a range of extra curricula activities. The achievements of staff and students are recognised through newsletters.

A similar fashion of responses by the stakeholders is noted in the relevant element. The implementation level of the majority of the characteristics was perceived to be positive but with a few exceptions. For example, extra time and support was not built into every school day for the students who fell behind. However, students were provided extra help by teachers when needed indicating that teachers were conscious of the need for extra coaching. All extracurricular activities were available to all students as reported by an overwhelming majority of the parents. However, availability of counsellors in these sample schools was contrary to the statement made by the Department of Education and Training (DEET) ACT (Canberra Connect, 2005) that every student and their family in the ACT Government school system (K-12) has access to the services of a school counsellors at their local schools. In this study, very few students held strongly positive views about the availability and accessibility of the counsellors when needed. Unlike students’ perceptions here, again staff had a positive belief that counsellors coordinate support services. In addition, the majority of the adult stakeholders reported a lack of effective health education programs personalised for hygiene and physical fitness. However, similar stakeholders believed that health educations programs were customised to adolescents’ needs. An agreement was noted between the views of the adult stakeholders and the students believing that resources required in the classroom were available for all. But very few teachers reported positively (see Table 5.7). All the above findings of the study answer the first question positively, in that all sample schools were aware of the need for implementing the relevant element of the Design. However, some variations reported in implementation might be due to the variation in resources available to the schools. The second question of the study, which relates to the impact of the program, was answered positively. The majority of the students were confident that their education would prepare them for higher education or employment as the opportunities were available for the students to explore their careers.

In brief, activities essential for the successful implementation of the characteristics in the logic model were generally in practice. The findings of this study suggest that psychological, social and emotional development of the students through health education customised to the adolescents’ needs as an impact (second question) of the program was largely answered.
Similarly, a relationship of trust between students and teachers through advisory programs in the schools is a clear indication that the program has a positive impact in this area.

### 6.6 HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Introduction**

This section discusses the extent to which indices of parental involvement identified by Epstein (1992a, 1995) for effective middle schools, are being practiced in sample schools. For the purposes of this study, data was collected and analysed to determine the implementation level of following six different types of parent involvement identified by Epstein (1992, 1995).

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision-making
6. Collaborating with community

**6.6.1 Parenting and child rearing**

Parenting has been defined by Epstein, Simon and Salinas (1997, p. 8) as an intervention put in place “to help all families establish home environments to support children as students”. Research studies have also suggested that effective middle schools should assist families with parenting and child rearing skills, and that parents should assist schools in understanding their families (Shumow & Lomax, 2001; Xu & Corno, 2003). The findings associated with parenting and child rearing are not very consistent with the recommendations of the literature. Only one quarter (very true; 25%) of the principals, teachers and parents expressed very positive views that parents were informed about the latest research on the students’ learning, which helped parents to provide supportive and safe environment to their children’s education, it must be noted that 36% expressed negative views on this item. Fuligni (2002) has suggested that asking adolescents to contribute to household responsibilities is a way of giving and of showing love. Without opportunities to contribute to the family, adolescents are being denied chances to grow both in
generosity and in learning responsibility. The findings of this study are in accordance with the literature as a great majority (very true; 54%, somewhat true; 29%) of the parents and students in three sample schools believed that parents expected their children to do chores around the home. Bahr, Hawks and Wang (1993) have found that parents have powerful influence on adolescents in their choice of friends and their monitoring of peer selection processes. Clark (1993) and Finn (1998) have also noted that parents should have a certain amount of control over a child’s timings for going out with friends, and should appropriately monitor television viewing. The results of this study are in agreement with the literature as a large majority (very true; 39%, somewhat true; 34%) of the parents and students believed that parents exerted control over the time the child spent watching television or using the internet. Parents’ controls over the amount of time the child spend out with the friends was not strongly consistent with the literature, as a small number (very true; 20%, somewhat true; 40%) of the parents and students had very positive views. On all items, parents’ responses were significantly more positive than the students’ responses.

6.6.2 Communication between parents and school

Communication is the second type of parent school and community partnerships as suggested by Epstein (1995). All schools try to communicate with parents in different ways. The effectiveness of such communication depends on the approaches adopted and the ability of parents to understand such communication. Literature on the home school partnerships suggests that information from school is the primary means parents have of understanding their children’s level of success or failure at school (Helling, 1996). Parents are much more likely to become involved when teachers encourage and assist parents to help their children with school work (Henderson & Berla, 1994). The findings of this study suggest that a small number (very true; 18%, somewhat true; 43%) of principals, teachers and parents had strong positive views that parents were provided information and support by the staff to help their children’s learning, whereas, a considerable number (39%) of them expressed negative views. The literature has suggested that schools should adopt multiple approaches for two-way communication, such as parent-teacher conferences (Goodman & Sutton, 1995). The findings of this study are in agreement with the literature suggesting that most (very true; 55%, somewhat true; 36%) of the principals, teachers and parents had positive views that parent-teacher conferences focused on students’ achievements. There was a highly significant difference between the schools. A great majority of
the stakeholders schools ‘A’ (57%) and ‘B’ (72%) responded ‘very true’ whereas a greater number (60%) of stakeholders from school ‘C’ responded ‘somewhat true’ that parent teacher conferences focused on students’ achievements.

Helling (1996) found that parents who receive more consistent information about their children’s school performance have a higher degree of commitment. The findings of this study, in accordance with the literature, suggest that a great majority (very true; 43%, somewhat true; 39%) of the principals, teachers and parents have positive views, believing that teachers frequently communicated with the parents on students’ progress. Marti (2000) has emphasised the importance of developing regular and reliable two-way home school communication systems for effective home school partnerships. Hudley and Barnes (1993), in their study, found that parents made repeated mention of this, saying that teachers need to listen, not just tell parents what to do. The findings of this study suggest that the majority (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 43%) of the principals, teachers and parents strongly believed that two way connections between the school, home and community were encouraged by the schools. Most of parents and students (very true; 51%, somewhat true; 40%) were of the view that parents attended school meetings regularly. Elman (1999) and Epstein (1995) have insisted on the importance of conversations between parents and teachers during drop-off and pick-up or phone calls at or from home or phone calls on the job (Gutman, 2000). The findings of this study suggest that more than one third (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 50%) of the parents and students had strong views that parents made phone calls or spoke to the teachers or counsellors. There was no significant difference between the schools and few differences reported between the different stakeholders. There were some interesting differences in responses between parents and students (Table 6.4).

6.6.3 Volunteering or parents support to the schools

The importance of volunteering, or parental support to school, is widely recognised in the literature. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) has recommend numerous volunteer activities. Starting with the involvement of parents and others who come to the school to support and watch student performances, sports and other events to club leaders, tutors, community liaisons, counsellors/mentors, library aides, translators, computer instruction and many more with an emphasis on increasing school community connections, particularly for young adolescents. It has been suggested that schools should provide job descriptions, training
and recognition for the encouragement of volunteers. The findings of this study suggest that opportunities were available for parents in the schools to perform effectively as volunteers. An overwhelming majority (very true; 40%, somewhat true; 48%) of the parents and students reported that parents attend the events in which their children participated. Many of them (very true; 78%, somewhat true; 16%) confirmed that parents act as volunteers in the school. Regarding the availability of opportunities for parents to watch and participate in school activities, a little more than one quarter (very true; 27%, somewhat true; 55%) of the principals, teachers and parents expressed strong positive views. There were no significant differences observed either between the different schools or between different stakeholders.

6.6.4 Home learning

Another important type of education partnership identified by Epstein (1995) is ‘home learning’. Finn (1998) has suggested that helping with homework is a concrete way in which parents demonstrate the commitment they have to education. Research suggests that schools should organise programs for parents to prepare them for homework help (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). It is further suggested that schools should develop homework that encourages parent-child interaction (Balli, Demo & Wedman, 1998; Muhlenbruck, Cooper, Nye & Lindsay, 2000). In this study, it was found that all the stakeholders of the sample schools were practicing activities related to home learning. An overwhelming majority (very true; 54%, somewhat true; 33%) of the parents and students confirmed that parents help the children with their homework. Another overwhelming majority (very true; 75%, somewhat true; 16%) of the parents and students strongly believed that parents made sure that the child had done the homework. Wang and Wildman (1995) have found positive correlations with student achievement and parents rewarding good grades and purchasing games and books. However, parents and students were less positive that parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework (very true; 27%, somewhat true; 46%). Another similar number (very true; 27%, somewhat true; 44%) of the parents and students reported that parents gave special privileges on good performance.

Research has promoted joint parent-student decision-making whenever needed, such as when choosing what project to undertake or, in later years, what courses to take (Lamborn, Brown, Mounts & Steinberg, 1992; Taylor, 1996). The findings of this study suggest that a majority of the parents and students believed that parents discussed with their children the selection of
courses or projects (very true; 41%, somewhat true; 34%) and that parents discussed school activities with their children (very true; 54%, somewhat true; 28%). An overwhelming majority (very true; 68%, somewhat true; 20%) of the parents and students confirmed that parents discuss grades and progress with their children. It was also evident that parents discuss national and world events with their children. In comparing the responses between the schools, out of eight items, four had highly significant statistical differences.

Paul and Eileen (1995) found that parent-child communication about school had a positive effect on parental participation in school related activities. Wallis and Coles (1998) have also insisted on the importance of praise, encouragement and involvement of parents for their children. In comparing the responses between parents and children regarding learning activities at home it was confirmed that parents communicate with their children about school related activities, their progress and other national and world events. It is important to note that on most of the items the statistical difference is very high. Findings of this study suggest that parents’ opinions were generally more positive in their responses than their children.

### 6.6.5 Decision making

Decision making has been defined by Epstein et al. (1997) as a process designed to include parents in school decision making, and develop parent leaders and representatives. The literature (Baker, 1997; Coleman, 1991; Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2001; Epstein & Dauber, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999) has strongly promoted parent participation in decision making and other activities at school, such as parents and citizens’ associations, periodical meetings and school advisory committees. It empowers parents and allows them to become partners in the schools of their children. The findings of this study compare favourably with the literature to some extent, as nearly one quarter (very true; 23%, somewhat true; 57%) of the principals, teachers and parents expressed strong positive perceptions that parents understood and promoted the schools’ instructional program. On whether parents provided support to the schools on discipline a similar number of respondents believed that parents were involved in decision making through advisory committees and that staff involved parents in a co-active role in achieving their goals. On comparing the responses of different stakeholders regarding parental involvement in decision-making, it was found that, except for item one; there was no difference of opinion. In this study the partnership model presented by
Swap (1993), suggesting that family members work alongside teachers on a common mission of helping all children to learn is evident to some extent.

### 6.6.6 Collaborating with the community

This type of partnership refers to cooperation, collaboration and involvement of any community organisations or institutions that are ready to share the responsibility for children’s education and development through two-way connections. Sanders (1996) has suggested that, within the community, there are many resources: human, economic, material and social. All these resources should be mobilized to help schools, families and students. In exploring how effectively the sample schools work with parents, agencies and businesses, this study revealed that nearly one third of the parents strongly believed that community, business and industries are encouraged to extend support to schools’ programs. A similar number of parents also expressed positive views in believing that the schools sought partnerships with business, social services and other organisations. There were no differences noted between the responses from the different schools. The findings of this study suggest that a sustainable partnership exists between schools, agencies and businesses of the community that contribute to the wellbeing of students and their families to a certain degree.

### Summary of the section

With few exceptions the characteristics, assumed activities and expected outcomes of this element reflected in the relevant logic model (Figure 4.7, p. 167) were aligned with the perception of stakeholders of the sample schools. The role of the family and community in children’s learning has been recommended as crucial throughout the literature. Recently it has been expected that schools should help parents in parenting and child rearing. In this study, I have noted that the sample schools were not playing an active role in preparation of parents to cope with the present day demands of parenting and child rearing. Very few adult stakeholders expressed a positive view that parents were prepared by the schools to help their children in learning. However, a great majority of stakeholders were positive that the focus of discussion in parent-teacher conferences was students’ achievements. Despite the lack of support by the schools in preparation of parents for helping their children the parents and students reported a harmony in the relationships between the parents and children. A majority of stakeholders
confirmed strongly positive communication between parents and schools. A great majority of parents and students had strong views that parents made phone calls or spoke to the teachers or counsellors. Volunteering or parents support to the schools carried out for power sharing and problem solving was prevalent in the sample schools, as an overwhelming majority of the parents and students reported that parents attended events and also that they were involved as volunteers in the schools. A great majority of parents were engaged with their students in home learning activities by helping and making sure that their children had done the homework. A large number of parents discuss with their children school activities, academic projects and progress, or national and world events. A great majority of adult stakeholders believed that parents understood and promoted the schools’ instructional program and helped the schools in maintenance of disciplines. To ensure collaborating with the community schools were making efforts to encourage community, business and industries to extend support to schools’ programs. The general trend noted that parents were more positive in their responses indicates the level of satisfaction on their part towards the schools’ outcomes.

These results provide a positive answer to the both questions of this study. The positive communications between the stakeholders, parents active participation in the school activities and their active role as volunteers and schools’ efforts to collaborate with the community and business and industries are clear indications that first question has been answered positively. With respect to the second question, the evidence of harmony in the relationship between parents and children, parental interest in their children’s academic activities suggest positive outcomes of the effective implementation of this element.

6.7 LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Introduction

In this section, findings are discussed to determine how far the attributes of effective middle school principalship are being practiced in the sample schools. Leadership in effective middle schools is seen as a collaborative process involving numerous stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, and others. For the purpose of data collection, in a set of nineteen items, the stakeholders of the sample schools were asked to indicate their perceptions on 5-point Likert scales with respect to the principals in the following areas.
1. Principals’ concerns for the mission of their schools
2. Instructional management
3. Supervision of teaching
4. Promotion of instructional climate, and
5. Organisational management

6.7.1 Principals’ concerns for the vision and mission statement

A number of activities associated with leaders’ effective communication of mission of school have been identified in the literature. These include (a) promoting a vision that teaching and learning are the main purpose of the school, and that student learning is of primary importance (Keller, 1998; Lashway, 1997a; , 2003; Méndez-Morse, 1999); (b) providing a vision and direction for the school (Fullan, 1992; Lashway, 1997b); (c) maintaining the vision during the process of the working school (Herman & Stringfield, 1997); (d) communicating the school mission to all stakeholders (Méndez-Morse, 1999; Pechman & Fiester, 1994); (e) bonding the school community through shared values (Lezotte, 1994); (f) adapting the unique characteristics and demands of the community (Niece, 1993); and (g) helping their school to develop visions that embody the best thinking about teaching and learning (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003). The findings of this study conformed to the literature in most areas as an overwhelming majority (very true; 67%, somewhat true; 28%) of the parents and teachers expressed strong positive views that the principals of the sample schools had a clear understanding of the mission statement. There was, however, a significant difference between the schools. A large number of stakeholders (81%) of school ‘A’ expressed strong positive views compared with school ‘B’, where less than half (39%) of the stakeholders had strong positive views.

The literature has suggested that an effective school principal must be a skilled communicator and listener, someone who can articulate a vision and communicate that shared vision to all in the school community (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Méndez-Morse, 1999). In this study a great majority (very true; 59%, somewhat true; 29%) of the parents and teachers expressed positive views that the principals of the sample schools communicated openly and frankly with staff, students and parents. It was found that the perception of stakeholders in the three sample schools again varied
largely. In comparing the responses of parents with teachers, the difference of opinion was also significant, parents being more positive than the teachers in their views.

Heck and Marcoulides (1993) have suggested that one of the expected roles of instructional leadership is the ability to set high expectations for performance. The findings of this study have confirmed that an overwhelming majority (very true; 59%, somewhat true; 39%) of the teachers strongly believed that principals showed respect and had high expectations for staff. In comparing the schools, the difference was non-significant. A great majority (very true; 52%, somewhat true; 26%) of the parents expressed positive views that principals communicate warmth and caring to all students, although there was a highly significant difference between the schools. In school ‘B’ fewer parents (23%) expressed strong positive views compared with the parents from school ‘A’ (63%).

6.7.2 Instructional management

The literature on effective leadership has suggested that, as a part of their role in arranging for a supportive instructional environment, principals need to provide alternative instructional frameworks to help teachers develop other perspectives (Keller, 1998; Lashway, 2003; Parker & Day, 1997; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Reitzug and Burrello (1995) have argued that this can be accomplished through creative staff development activities, sharing of current research on professional practices, and through suggestions that identify other instructional strategies. Payne and Wolfson (2000) have noted that the principal demonstrates a commitment to continual learning and serves as role model. The finding of this study have confirmed that principals in the sample schools demonstrated a commitment to continual learning and agreed to change in the light of new understandings as a great majority (very true; 46%, somewhat true; 39%) of the principals, teachers and parents expressed positive views.

6.7.3 Supervising teaching

The third attribute of instructional leadership identified in the literature (Parker & Day, 1997) is supervision of teaching which expects certain behaviours of effective leaders within this area. These include spending time in the classroom and listening to the teachers (Keller, 1998; King, 2002); using coaching skills, encouraging risk taking (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Southworth, 2002); encouraging teacher leadership and initiatives (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Keller (1998)
has noted that important instructional leadership behaviour involved spending time in the classroom and listening to teachers. It is questioned in the literature whether principals can discuss teachers’ instruction with them without being in the classrooms and watching their performance. The findings of this study suggest that principals did not regularly visiting classrooms or provide productive feedback (very true; 20%, somewhat true; 34%).

The literature has also insisted that, for teachers’ development, principals should share the decision-making by encouraging them to make more decisions for themselves (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; Tarter & Hoy, 1998). The findings of this study suggest that more than half (very true; 49%, somewhat true; 15%) of the teachers had positive views believing that the principals ensured that the staff were involved in decision-making. A significant number of teachers, however, (35%) expressed negative views. The statistical difference between schools was non-significant. Massell (2000) has highlighted the creation of new professional development strategies through the alignment of curricula and instruction with guided supervision. The findings of this study suggest that a majority (very true; 33% somewhat true; 43%) of the teachers have reasonably positive views, believing that teachers work under the guidance of the principal.

6.7.4 Promotion of instructional climate

As identified by Parker and Day (1997) promoting instructional climate is another important dimension of instructional leader. The literature has identified certain characteristics of effective leaders within this area: promoting professional empowerment, collaborative decision-making and power sharing (Cranston, 2001; Keller, 1998; Lemahieu, Roy & Foss, 1997; Petzko et al., 2002); being people oriented and interactional, having visible presence, being accessible, (Crawford, 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Niece, 1993; Whitaker, 1997); maintaining high expectations of staff (Massell, 2000; Niece, 1993); and helping the school become a professional learning community (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003).

Promoting professional empowerment and power sharing is seen as an important characteristic of an effective principal in the literature (Keller, 1998; Lemahieu, Roy & Foss, 1997; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Kouzes and Posner (1995) have emphasized that when people have more discretion, more authority, and more information, they are much more likely to use their energies
to produce extraordinary results. Hord (1992) has defined real ownership as sharing influence and authority. To explore whether the principals of sample schools possess skills in promoting instructional climate, stakeholders were asked to respond to a set of seven items. Nearly half (very true; 49%, somewhat true; 29%) of the teachers strongly believed that the principals distributed leadership among the staff but a considerable number of teachers (21%) had negative perception. The statistical difference between schools was non-significant.

Sergiovanni (1994) has noted that leadership authority results from a process of sharing ideas, not as a result of positional power. The findings of this study again suggest that a large majority (very true; 54%, somewhat true; 28%) of the teachers had strong positive views, believing that the principals considered their opinions. In making a comparison between the schools, the statistical difference was non-significant. MacBeath (1998) expects that the principal should have a charismatic personality, with a personal authority and influence that is so magnetic that it attracts people to them and creates followers. Niece (1993) and Whitaker (1997) found that an effective principal is people-oriented and interactional, has a visible presence in the school, and is accessible to all stakeholders. The findings of this study are in partial agreement with the literature as more than one third (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 33%) of the teachers, parents and students strongly believed that the principal was highly visible. There was a highly significant difference between the schools. A large number of stakeholders (58%) from school ‘C’ had strongly positive views compared with school ‘B’ where few (14%) stakeholders had strongly positive views that the principal was highly visible throughout the school.

Massell and Goertz (1999) have stressed that administrators have traditionally acted as gatekeepers for reform policies. Research on effective management stresses the value of an “open-door” policy, where stakeholders feel free to drop in and speak freely what is in their minds (Leithwood, Jantzi & Dart, 1993). The findings of this study suggest that very few (very true; 18%, somewhat true; 42%) students, across all the schools, felt strongly that principals listened to their concerns. Despite the fact that very few students reported that the principal would listen to their concerns, or that they felt comfortable while speaking to the principal, all teachers (very true; 71%, somewhat true; 29%) who participated in the study believed that principals maintained a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students. The difference of opinion between the sample schools was significant. In school ‘A’ (84%) of the teachers
responded ‘very true’ that the principal interacted respectfully with parents and students as compared to school ‘B’ where half (50%) of the teachers responded ‘very true’. At another school nearly one third (very true; 37%, somewhat true; 31%) of the parents and students strongly believed that they feel comfortable while talking with the principal if they had any question or concern. The difference in responses between parents and students was highly significant with the parents having a much more positive perception than their children.

6.7.5 Organisational management

The literature has identified certain behaviours of effective instructional leaders within this area. These include: (a) having effective communication, collaboration and consensus-building skills (Leech, Smith, Green & Fulton, 2003); and (b) emphasising accountability and effective problem solving (Lemahieu, Roy & Foss, 1997). Encouraging the heart is one out of five practices identified by Kouzes and Posner. They argue that, ‘Titles are granted but it’s your behaviour that wins you respect’ (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 12). The findings of this study suggest that an overall majority (very true; 41%, somewhat true; 38%) of the parents and students were happy with the leadership provided by their school principals. The difference in responses between the schools was significant. Fewer stakeholders from school ‘B’ (17%) were extremely happy compared with school ‘A’ (52%) and school ‘C’ (44%). It has also been noted earlier (Table 7.8) that fewer stakeholders from school ‘B’ were positive that the principal was highly visible and had respectful tone for interaction with parents and students as compare to school ‘A’ and ‘C’.

Whitaker (1999) believes that principals need to understand the changing and demanding role of the principal. The findings of this study suggest that a great majority (very true; 54%, somewhat true; 29%) of parents and teachers expressed strong positive views, believing that the principals had foresight, and were fair and firm in making decisions. The difference in responses between the schools was significant. The literature (Fullan, 2002; Harris & Willower, 1998; Mulford & Silins, 2001; Niece, 1993) on the changing role of leadership has stated that principals should be open-minded and willing to listen (promoting a safe, supportive atmosphere of trust and sharing). The findings of this study have confirmed that principals listened to the parents’ concerns and responded appropriately as an overwhelming majority (very true; 58%, somewhat true; 35%) of the parents had positive views. Most of the parents (very true; 79%, somewhat true; 18%) expressed strong positive views that the principals maintained a respectful tone for interaction.
with students. The difference was non-significant. Students had negative views regarding the leadership provided in the schools as very few students believed that the principal knew each student personally or that the principal would listen their concerns.

**Summary of the section**

Most of the characteristics and assumed activities reflected in the logic model developed for this element (Figure 4.8, p. 169) were evident from the findings and were leading towards producing outcomes anticipated in the logic model. The stakeholders’ perceptions regarding the principals as strong leaders in the sample schools were clearly in harmony with the literature. An overwhelming majority of the parents and teachers expressed strong positive views that the principals of the sample schools had a clear understanding of the mission statement. Overall, the perception of stakeholders on strong leadership emerged as being very positive with some exceptions. For example, principals were seen to be providing clear vision and directions for the school and communicating warmth and respect to all.

A great majority of the stakeholders believed that principals were committed to continual learning and made efforts to bring improvements in the light of latest research and understandings. In this study, it was noted that principals were not making regular visits to classrooms to provide feedback. However, a significant number of teachers expressed positive views that teachers work under the guidance of the principal, were involved in decision-making and that the principal distributes leadership among them. A reasonable number of stakeholders saw the principal as highly visible. However, there was a great variation between the responses from different schools. In this study, very few students, across all the schools, felt strongly those principals listened to their concerns or that they felt comfortable while speaking to the principal. In general, parents and students were satisfied and happy with the leadership provided in the sample schools. A general, trend was noted that parents were more positive than the teachers in most of their responses and students were seen to be negative in some areas.

The findings of this section of the study suggest that both questions of the study are answered positively with few exceptions. For example all the principals of the sample schools were seen to have a strong vision and were reportedly committed to the continual learning of students, providing guidance to the teachers and having respectful relationship with the parents and
teachers. The presence of such qualities in the principals provides a clear answer to the first question, that the element of effective leadership was implemented in the schools. The second question was also answered positively. For example a large number of stakeholders were happy with the leadership provided in the school. However students provided less positive responses in many areas relating to this element. The data collected through open-ended responses (Table 7.11) also confirms that the principals had leadership qualities such as openness and honesty, recognising and acting upon the needs of staff and students.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the whole study. The research questions are examined in the light of the findings. The conclusions are followed by implications and the chapter concludes with recommendations for education practitioners and policy makers.

7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine how far the concept and program of middle schooling has been accepted and implemented in schools of the ACT, Australia. At the commencement of this study four public schools in the ACT, whose principals and teachers support and have introduced middle schooling reforms, were selected in a purposive manner for data collection. One of these schools declined to participate in the study. Data was collected through the administration of purpose-built questionnaires. A mixed-method investigation was employed to gain an accurate insight into the perceptions of stakeholders. The research population selected for the study consisted of the principals and teachers of three middle schools with a Year 6–8 or 7–8 configuration, along with students of year seven with their parents. All four groups of stakeholders were asked to indicate the degree of their perceptions on 5-point Likert scales on a series of 395 items grouped into seven sets based on the seven out of nine elements of the General Design (Hill & Crevola, 1997).

Both quantitative and qualitative data was extracted from the questionnaires and analysed. The qualitative data has provided a valuable window into the true spirit of the stakeholders’ responses. There were many commonalities, and a few variations, in the perception of stakeholders regarding the implementation level, practices, and outcomes and impacts of the program.
The quantitative data and its analysis were presented in Chapter 5 along with their interpretations. The findings of the study were discussed in Chapter 6. A summary of the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations are further presented in this Chapter.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The data was collected, analysed, interpreted and discussed under the headings given to the elements of the design selected for the study, the findings have also been summarised separately under the headings of each element of the design.

7.2.1 Beliefs and understandings (Vision and mission statements)

The literature (National Middle School Association (NMSA), 1995, p. 13) discussing the vision of a middle-level program has emphasised that “Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents, they understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach”. It is further elaborated that “A developmentally responsive middle level school is guided by a vision or a written mission statement supported by all stakeholders-students, teachers, administrators, families, board of education members, and others” (NSMA 1995, p. 14).

It was evident that in all three schools the middle schooling program was based on beliefs and philosophy that were shared by all stakeholders. Students’ academic excellence was seen as the major purpose of the schools, and teachers held high expectations of students and praised them without discrimination. The schools’ responsiveness to the learning needs of adolescents was evident from the findings, but staff was less responsive to adolescents’ needs for self-exploration. All three-sample schools were responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents to some extent but a lack of specific training in dealing with early adolescence was noted as an area of concern in the sample schools. This is of particular importance since catering specifically for the needs of early adolescents is one of the key areas where the characteristics of a ‘middle schooling’ are different to the characteristics of an ‘effective school’ (Table 3.1a). In general, there was agreement between the stakeholders about the overall purpose of the schools. Well-articulated goals were in place in all the sample schools and the stakeholders were aware of the goals of the schools, which were reviewed annually. Students, however, felt that they were less
involved in this area of the schools’ operations. The need for social interaction and community participation was realised by the staff to some extent.

To conclude this section, it was evident that all schools were responsive to the learning, developmental, and social needs of adolescents with a certain degree of realisation of the importance of community participation for adolescents. In some areas, parents were more positive in their responses than school staff while students were generally less positive in their responses than the other stakeholders on many items.

7.2.2 School and class organisation

In the literature, schools have been portrayed as “total entities” (Goodlad, 1984, p. 17). Bennett and Harris (1999, p.537) have suggested that “achievements within an organisation are the results of interaction between its members”. This organisational relationship is influenced by three factors, which they referred to as ‘structure’, ‘culture’ and the ‘distribution of power’. Hence, they suggest that researchers in the field of school effectiveness and school improvement should consider all three of these dimensions within their research ventures. Based on these recommendations, I was inspired to focus on these factors of the organisation of schools with particular reference to the structure required for middle schooling. Accordingly, I developed a framework for school and class organisations appropriate for adolescents for data collection, analysis, interpretation and discussion of this study (Figure: 3.1).

In this study, each sample school in its own way was making efforts to reorganise the school in order to meet the needs of adolescents by providing a safe caring and purposeful environment. However, the level of their success varied from school to school. Student and staff enjoyment was reported at the schools and collegial working relationships was seen among the staff in all the schools with open flow of communication among the stakeholders. School routines seemed to be successful in terms of promoting personalized relationships, and expulsions and suspensions were reported to be minimal in all the schools. It was evident from the findings that students’ safety at school presented a major challenge for these schools. Although students felt that they were taken care of by the staff, at the same time they had a feeling that security concerns, if reported, were not handled in a timely way and that adults did not closely watch them during class changes or breaks when groups of students were together. Students’ security feelings were
uncertain, as on different occasions, particularly in the toilets, a majority of the students did not feel secure. School safety rules were enforced with enthusiasm, as reported by staff, but were not widely obeyed in the eyes of the students. All the stakeholders were confident that staff and administration supported and were respectful of all students without discrimination, but students did not report a high level of respect for their teachers or each other. There were some specific differences between schools in this area. To maintain discipline the sample schools had clear rules and codes of conduct that were clearly communicated to all but not, as indicated above, widely obeyed as perceived by the students. It was evident that physical facilities were kept clean and attractive in the eyes of parents and staff but students expressed quite negative feelings about the maintenance and cleanliness of the schools. A significant difference of opinion was noted between the schools. Despite the fact that very few students reported that they loved to come to school or that they were proud of their schools, their responses reflected a strong sense of commitment to their own schools and to the government school sector in general. This suggests that public schools are working to the satisfaction of students. It was evident that in general the students observed positive norms, as very few incidences of use of drugs, including alcohol or presence of weapons at schools were reported. Issues relating to physical conflicts, security of property, and verbal abuse of teachers were clearly identified as areas of concern in one school in particular.

Bullying was highly reported in the sample schools. Almost all students reported having been bullied at some stage in all the schools. In all schools, principals and teachers were conscious of the need for a planned, smooth transition from primary (elementary) school. Teachers exhibited care and concern for students and students were treated fairly and with respect. Nevertheless, they were less positive about the overall atmosphere of the schools in terms of being ‘conducive to learning’ or maintaining the secure feeling usually found in the students of elementary school.

In summary, a balanced picture of the school organisation, conducive to teaching and learning in general, was evident from the sample schools. Adults in all three schools believed that buildings were well maintained, clean, neat and attractive but students were not satisfied with the level of cleanliness and maintenance in the schools. Staff felt a strong collegial working relationship and had respect for their students. In general, few incidences of use of drugs, alcohol or presence of weapons at schools were reported. However, students appeared unhappy and insecure in the
schools. They exhibited some lack of respect for their teachers and each other. Bullying was widely reported in all the schools. All schools were conscious of the need for a smooth transition to a certain extent.

### 7.2.3 Classroom teaching strategies

The literature suggests that classroom practices and other teacher characteristics have marked effects on student academic and social achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Wenglinsky, 2002). All teaching reform efforts focus on students’ engagement and motivation towards learning. At heart, such reform efforts are aimed at producing better outcomes, shaping the students as productive members of society throughout life, both for themselves and for the community at large. This is the main philosophy of middle schooling. Four philosophical approaches (Table 3.3.3) outlined by Dougherty (1997) in a framework for teaching in the middle schooling have formed the basis of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and for discussion in this study regarding classroom-teaching strategies in the sample middle schools.

Most of the students in all three schools expressed negative perceptions of invitational education and were not very happy with the attitudes of their teachers. Only one quarter of them reported that their teachers were helpful, friendly and caring. The classroom environment did not keep the students focused on their studies and they did not like their textbooks or workbooks. None of the students from school ‘C’, for example, had a positive perception of their teachers and textbooks. Very few students from any of the three schools appreciated their textbooks and they had a very negative perception of the courses they were taught. Generally, most of the students had a negative perception of the democratic atmosphere of the schools. Very few of the students had a positive perception that the curriculum content was current and relevant to meet their worldly needs. Students did not believe that opportunities were provided for them to work in small groups on academic projects and they did not have a positive perception that they participated actively in the class. However, they were being encouraged to volunteer their opinions in the classroom, and to discuss one another’s ideas.

Opportunities for interdisciplinary team teaching and implementation of intellectually stimulating program such as sequential growth in multiple areas were lagging. However, a variety of teaching strategies were well practiced in the schools. Even though students did not perceive that their
learning environment was based on constructivist strategies, the majority of them were positive that their teachers encourage them to ask questions and contribute in class. They seemed connected with their learning environment and classroom discipline was reported as being healthy.

Parents, teachers and principals, on the other hand, were highly positive in all the schools with respect to the implementation level of constructivist teaching practices in the sample schools. As reported by them, a variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, and hands-on activities were well practiced in three schools, although they felt that practices of interdisciplinary team teaching were only partially implemented in the sample schools. This is evidence of a lack of training for teachers, specifically in middle schooling within the sample schools.

Reflective teaching strategies used by the teachers in the classrooms of the sample schools were evident in the findings. Even the students expressed positive views that opportunities to consider their own work habits through structured self-reflection were provided. Despite the fact that teachers felt that they were not specially trained in middle schooling, they still felt that teaching strategies providing academic, physical and emotional experiences relevant to early adolescents were fully implemented. However, most of the staff members were not positive that instructional arrangements for special and gifted students were fully implemented. In general, there was agreement between the responses of the schools.

To conclude, it was evident that parents, teachers and principals were highly positive in all the schools that a variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, and hands-on activities were well practiced in three schools. Teaching strategies providing academic, physical and emotional experiences for early adolescents were fully implemented. Many students, however, held a negative perception of the invitational and democratic atmosphere of the schools. They were not very happy with the attitude of their teachers and did not like their textbooks or the courses they were taught.
7.2.4 Professional learning communities (PLC)

Researchers and practitioners agree on the essential need for creating a cadre of teachers who are grounded in the philosophy of middle school education, who are knowledgeable about the psychological, social, and intellectual developmental needs of early adolescents and who possess the practical skills to work with early adolescents (Andrews & Lewis, 2002; Belzer, 2003; Elmore, 2002).

In professional discourse, “professional development” is distinguished from “pre-service” education by the fact that it occurs after teachers and administrators are employed, during the routine course of their work (Elmore, 2002). The literature has identified a set of common dimensions of professional learning communities. For the purposes of this study five main characteristics of PLC, which have been widely discussed in the literature, constituted the foundation of data collection, analysis, interpretation and discussion.

In general, all the necessary ingredients of successful professional learning communities [PLC] were being implemented in the sample schools to a considerable extent. Supportive and shared leadership was considerably evident through shared vision and mission and the provision of resources for ongoing professional development. There were some distinct differences between the schools in this area. In school ‘B’ a great majority of the parents (87%) reported positively that the leaders of the school provided resources as compared to school ‘C’, where only one quarter of the parents had positive perception. A culture of collective learning was strongly reported in schools ‘A’ and ‘B’ as compared to school ‘C’, where none of the parents had positive perception about the collegiality and continuous growth and improvement of the teachers.

In-service staff development based on the needs of adolescent, in-service training focusing on students’ achievements and professional development focusing on students’ learning interests were not fully implemented in all the schools although teachers’ skill development based on students’ learning and achievements was evident. A strong sense of belonging and collaboration among the teachers and staff was evident in the schools, but teachers did not feel that they were specially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents. Staff felt that classroom-based teaching and learning activities oriented to research and experimentation were in
place. Use of new technology and data-based inquiry and decision-making for the professional
development of the professional learning communities in the sample schools were ‘partially
implemented’.

To conclude, professional learning communities were evident in the sample schools, with slight
variations. Although staff development was not fully cognisant of the various adolescents’ needs,
staff members were working as collaborative teams with a strong sense of belonging and
collaboration among themselves. Students were confident that their teachers had a strong
knowledge of the content and control over their teaching practices.

7.2.5 Intervention and special assistance

The need for guidance and counselling facilities for secondary schools in general and specifically
for middle schools has been emphasised in the literature (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Baruth &
Manning, 2000; Beale, 2004; Hughey, 2002). In the sample schools, identified characteristics of
intervention and special assistance were being implemented to different extents. Schools were
aware of the need for extra help for students in need but this was not widely provided to the
students. However, a variety of extra-curricular activities was available in all the sample schools.
Very few students had strong positive views that counsellor facilities were provided by the school
or that they could speak freely with the counsellor if in need. One of these schools, for example,
only has a counsellor available three days out of five. A lack of health education programs was
reported in the schools but, at the same time, stakeholders believed that these programs were
responsive to the adolescents’ needs. In general, students held less positive views on all aspects
of intervention and special assistance. Very few students believed that computer facilities were
excessively available in the schools or that they had sufficient library facilities. However, a great
majority of stakeholders including students believed that required resources were available in the
classrooms. Here teachers were less positive in their responses. Career development programs
were available as reported by an overwhelming majority of stakeholders.

7.2.6 Home, school and community partnerships

Research and literature has identified various reasons for developing collaborative educational
partnerships as an ongoing process, requiring attention in every year from preschool, through
middle grade levels, to high school (Allison & Schultz, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Sanders
& Epstein, 1998b). From the voluminous literature available on home, school and community partnerships Epstein’s typology (1995) and terminology of parent involvement have been extensively discussed throughout middle level research. Epstein’s typology was adopted as a framework for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and discussion to explore the implementation level of home school and community partnerships of sample schools.

A strong partnership was evident between parents and the schools in certain areas. Some parents expressed strong positive views on the information provided by the schools on parenting and child rearing, and frequent and smooth two-way communication between the school staff and the parents was noted. Parents were seen to be attending meetings, conferences and making phone calls to discuss their children’s progress. Parents were ready to volunteer to support school activities and, in turn, were helped by the schools in home learning of their children. They were involved in decision-making through advisory committees and were empowered to take important decisions. Sustainable partnerships between schools, agencies, and businesses of the community were also evident to some extent. It can be seen that parents and students were strongly positive regarding the role the parents played in helping their children in enhancing their learning, although the parents were much more positive on this issue than the students.

It is concluded that the sample schools were aware of the need for partnerships between parents and schools, implementation of which was evident from the findings. However, a few variations were noted between the stakeholders and between the responses from different schools. As noted earlier, not all schools are able to implement these reforms in the same one style, and replicated outcomes cannot be expected. Consequently, some variations in the responses could be expected from the different schools.

### 7.2.7 Leadership and coordination

There is a voluminous body of research and literature emphasising the importance of strong and effective school leadership and its link to educational excellence (Bywaters, 2003; King, 2002; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Mednick, 2003; Meece, 2003; Olson, 2000; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond & Gundlach, 2003). Leadership and coordination also has a very important place in the General Design. The literature emphasising the potentials of the principals as leaders has argued that if a school is going to succeed academically, it needs someone whose potential cannot
be summed up on a scoreboard (Keller, 1998). To limit the boundaries of the study for this element the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) proposed by Kouzes and Posner (1990) was used as the basis for data collection.

All three groups of stakeholders expressed a strong positive view of the principals of the sample schools. They felt that principals had a clear understanding of the schools’ mission and were effective communicators, communicating warmth and care to all. A difference in responses was noted between the different stakeholders. In school ‘B’, stakeholders were less positive about the principal as an effective communicator compared with the other schools. A difference of opinion was also noted between the stakeholders, as parents were seen to be more positive than the teachers. Principals were also seen as instructional leaders in all three schools. Staff felt that they were involved in decision-making, but the principals were not seen to be supervising teaching in the classrooms. All the principals were regarded positively by the teachers and parents for their promotion of the instructional climate of the sample schools but were less admired by the students, who seemed to have little contact with the principals overall. Principals also exhibited the quality of organisational management as reported by the parents and students, although students were, again, less positive than the parents.

To conclude, the principals of all three schools had all necessary attributes required of effective middle schooling leaders. With few exceptions, they were seen as effective communicators, having respect for all stakeholders and being skilful in promoting a healthy instructional environment. Here, again, students were less positive about the leadership of their schools than other stakeholders and they were not confident that principals would listen to their concerns. They were also not very comfortable while talking to their principal. Variations between the schools were also noted, as in school ‘B’ only a few stakeholders were happy with the leadership of the school, as compared to school ‘A’. Moreover, a large number of stakeholders in school ‘B’ had a strong negative perception of the principals’ visibility in the schools.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

One of the key findings of the Australian National Middle Schooling Project was that there is no “one best model” of middle schooling, but that there are certain principles that can guide local practices and strategies (Barratt, 1998, p. 41). It is unlikely that any school can achieve
“perfection” in all of the areas identified in the design of Hill and Crévola (1997). The possibilities for improvement are always there even if schools are implementing middle school philosophy in accordance with the selected design. It is evident from the findings of the study that all three schools investigated are making their best efforts to improve the teaching and learning environment to better meet the needs of their adolescent students. However, variations were noted between the schools in their implementation of certain aspects of the middle schooling reforms and in their short-term and intermediate outcomes.

Examining the research questions

This study was designed to address two basic questions:

1. To what extent is middle schooling being implemented in accordance with the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) in the sample schools of the ACT, Australia?
2. What are the effects of middle schooling on the personal, emotional, cognitive and social development of the students?

Seven logic models based on the elements of the General Design were designed to provide a framework within which these two questions could be answered. The extent of implementation of the middle schooling program was assessed in the light of assumptions and short-term outcomes identified in the logic model of each element. The second question of the study was answered through evaluation of the intermediate outcomes of the program as identified in the logic models.

The study overall suggests that, in all three schools, the middle schooling program was implemented in accordance with the General Design. It was evident that the middle schooling program was based on beliefs and philosophy that were shared by all stakeholders and the schools were responsive to the learning needs of adolescents. Parents and staff reported that the school environments overall were caring, positive and promoted a sense of community.

With respect to the second question there are certain areas of concern noted in the findings of this study. Students had a strong feeling of insecurity in relation to their peer group and bullying was widely reported. The level of insecurity in the toilets reported by the students was alarming. On many instances, students had conveyed very negative perceptions of their schools’ environment as created by the students. This situation clearly indicates that in implementing middle schooling reforms, intermediate outcomes such as sense of security, mutual respect and trust had not been
achieved in the sample schools. However, other intermediate outcomes, such as collegiality, empowerment, self-discipline, responsibility, sense of pride and ownership had been achieved.

The staff believed that teachers were implementing effective teaching strategies such as collaborative teaching and learning, constructivist teaching and reflective teaching in the classrooms. On the other hand, according to the students, the short-term outcome of effective classroom teaching strategies—reflective thinking, care, respect, and trust—or intermediate outcomes—flexible learning, authentic learning, exploratory learning, and cooperative learning had not been achieved in the classrooms. However, critical thinking learning and initiative learning were practiced in the classrooms. It is concluded that specifically trained teachers are needed to achieve the expected outcomes of middle schooling as advocated by the proponents of these reforms.

Implementation of all the necessary ingredients of professional learning communities [PLC] discussed in the literature had been achieved in the sample schools. Collegial learning activities and sharing of ideas for the improvement of instructional programs were implemented, with slight variations between schools. Staff development, however, based on the needs of adolescents, in-service training focusing on students’ achievements and professional development focusing on students’ learning interests were not fully implemented in all the schools. Nevertheless, all necessary resources were provided by the principals. Teachers’ skill development based on students’ learning and achievements was evident in the findings. Short term outcomes of PLC, such as a strong sense of belonging and collaboration within the teachers and staff had evidently been achieved in the schools. Although teachers were not specially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents, classroom-based teaching and learning activities oriented to research and experimentation were in place. Use of new technology and data-based inquiry and decision making for the professional development of the staff in the sample, schools had being partially implemented and was leading towards the expected intermediate outcomes of the reforms: collective learning, collective responsibility for students’ learning, and smooth flow of communication. Evidence suggests that all the necessary ingredients of PLC were implemented in the sample schools.

The study also revealed that, in realising the need of home school and community partnerships, all three schools were implementing the important characteristics of this element by involving
parents in the development of vision, power sharing, planning and decision making. Parents were encouraged to volunteer themselves in school activities. Short-term outcomes, such as parents’ talent development programs, a sense of comfort with the school and community empowerment had been achieved. Intermediate outcomes, such as reciprocal communication, parent-teacher collaboration, school community connections, positive parent-child relationships and improved students’ behaviour and self image had also been achieved.

It is concluded that leadership and coordination, an important element of the selected design, was also being implemented in the sample schools with some variations. The principals’ understanding of the vision and mission statement of the schools, through the creation and maintenance of a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning, was evident. Each principal exhibited fairly good qualities of effective leadership, such as quick decision-making, quality control of teaching, facilitating and promoting professionalism in the schools and effective communication. Nevertheless, principals were not found to be supervising teaching as recommended in the literature and did not seem to be very visible to the students. The short-term outcomes of effective leadership such as visionary leaders, resourceful leaders, instructional leaders, collaborative leaders, transformational leaders, or leaders as change agent were being achieved in the sample schools. These were leading towards the desired intermediate outcomes, such as involvement of all in vision development, effective communication among all, well-equipped schools, well-resourced staff, sense of empowerment among all, sense of comfort with the leadership and an atmosphere of trust and sharing, but with the significant exception of many students who reported negatively on these characteristics.

This study as an assertion based on the perceptions of stakeholders has concluded that, for the most part, the middle schooling program has been implemented favourably in the sample schools.
7.4 IMPLICATIONS

This section discusses the contributions of this study to various areas and its implications for future studies.

Research and development

Middle schooling is one of the main concerns in the field of education. An emerging body of research and literature has debated and supported the need for introducing middle schooling to replace conventional schools for early adolescents. Many research studies have contributed to or increased our knowledge in this field. This research study offers a distinctive perspective on middle schooling, starting from the statement of the problem, discussing the driving forces behind the middle schooling program and ending with an analysis of the implementation level and outcomes of the program in the sample schools. The contributions of this thesis are not confined to a narrow understanding of the need for and importance of middle schooling program. It has tried to identify all the needs (excluding learning outcomes) of early adolescents, which should be met in an educational setting. The main contribution of this thesis is the critical analysis of the different elements of effective middle schooling program with an emphasis on their implementation level in particular schools of the ACT, Australia. The outcomes and impact of the program have also been evaluated. Additionally, a compilation and review of more than one thousand books, research studies and reports on the subject, together with the interpretation of its quantitative data and discussion should be of interest to academics and practitioners.

Policy implications

When students do not find themselves secure at school or they perceive that their learning is non-productive, they become alienated. From the findings of this study, it is evident that a great majority of students are not feeling secure in their schools. Widespread bullying is another reason for students having a feeling of insecurity at school. While the principals and teachers are confident that the curriculum addresses the issues and skills relevant to early adolescent learners, the responses of the students on similar items were not very positive. Such findings have implications for policy makers by highlighting the need to reconsider school organisations, rules for enforcing disciplines and recruitment policies for teachers. Teachers having specific training and motivation for teaching early adolescents should be encouraged to join the education system.
These teachers should be able to develop curriculum in accordance with the interest of adolescents.

**Implications for capacity building**

1. There is a need to focus on teacher training programs in the area of middle schooling.

2. In-service teachers training program should also be tied to an understanding of the needs of adolescents.

3. Full incorporation of interdisciplinary team teaching, which is lagging behind in its implementation, needs special attention.

4. There is a need to take into account the factors that are decreasing the enthusiasm of middle schooling among the teachers.

5. It would be in the sample schools’ interests to consider evident differences of opinion between students’, teachers’, and parents’ perceptions on identical issues when planning for program improvement.

**Teaching and learning**

1. The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that most of the students held a negative perception of the teaching and learning environment provided in the schools. To determine the reasons why most of the students held these negative perceptions further investigation could be conducted in the sample schools. Students’ desires, expectations and opinions need to be explored to ensure the provision of educational facilities that will reasonably meet the expectations of adolescents.

2. There is a need to commission longitudinal experimental studies in the area to compare the outcomes of ‘effective secondary schooling’ and ‘effective middle schooling’.

3. A study recognising the need of teacher training for middle schooling could be conducted to understand the lack of specific training for teachers in the area.

4. The literature on school effectiveness has recommended direct contact of the principal with the classroom teaching and learning environment arguing that principals cannot discuss teachers’ instruction with them without being in the classrooms and watching their performance. The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that visiting the classrooms was not a common practice of the principals of sample schools. There is a need to reconcile the gap between the recommendations of the literature and actual practices in the schools in this area.

**7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions a few recommendations are drawn for improvement in the schools and within the education system for middle schooling.
• Despite the fact that the literature has suggested that close supervision of adolescents is needed to control violence or bullying, this study suggests that the students are not closely watched or supervised during times outside the classroom. More effective and specific training courses on non-violence intervention for all the stakeholders in the schools are recommended to ensure that adolescents feel more secure at school. Close supervision of the students is recommended during class change and during other breaks. This will help to counter the bullying. Surveillance by adults in the toilets is also recommended to control the issues evident from the findings, such as violence, smoking, and use of drugs in the toilets.

• It is also recommended that these schools may look at the examples of the schools where the issue of bullying has been overcome. One recent example in the ACT was highlighted on the front page of the Sunday Times (Gibson, 2005, March 27, p. 1), describing the success story of Charnwood Primary School in countering bullying by narrating the feelings of the students. “Two years ago, going to school was like being engulfed in a civil war - fighting, bullying….even relief teachers ran the other way”. After two years of the efforts of the principal and the staff students believed that, “today the fighting has disappeared” the principal wants people to look at the example his establishment setting, and the children are smiling”. How had it all happened? The principal believed that “following the implementation of a democratic and participatory process known as restorative justice, the school has experienced a complete turn around in the attitudes and behaviours of its students” (Gibson, 2005, March 27, p. 4).

• To control violence and bullying in the schools, students should be actively involved in decision-making about ways of countering bullying, violence, and the use of drugs and smoking. They should be empowered to discuss and plan rules for themselves that they honour. This will inform the adults of the schools about the remote needs and aspirations of adolescents in their care.

7.6 THE GENERAL DESIGN AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION.

For evaluating an educational program, a yardstick was required to measure the implementation level of the program. A variety of whole school models used by researchers in different studies to
evaluate the effectiveness of the educational program was reviewed before the start of this study. Most of these models, such as magnet schools, talent development models, charter schools, school to work models and many more were developed and piloted in USA. For this study a model was required which was developed and piloted in Australia and also is consistent with the present educational system of the country. Hence, the General Design (Hill & Crévola, 1997) selected for this study was found to be very comprehensive and met all the criteria of this study.

In analysing the literature relating to middle schooling, it was possible to map onto the elements of the General Design in most areas. To provide sufficient focus for the development of the questionnaires it was essential to identify characteristics within each element but the elements, themselves provided an excellent framework on which to do this.

There were two elements where it was sometimes difficult to draw distinctions. For example, between the elements of ‘school and class organisation’ and ‘classroom teaching strategies’ there were some overlap between the specific characteristics identified in the literature, and it was also difficult to design questionnaire items that could clearly be identified within one of these elements. It may be possible to separate classroom organisation from ‘school and classroom organisation’ and merge it into ‘teaching strategies’ so that a clear distinction can be made between the two. Accordingly, for the purposes of this study I have separated the classroom organisation from its original element and have dealt with it separately in ‘teaching strategies’. Overall, the General Design has provided me with a clear line of direction for the evaluation of this study and I found it very comprehensive and useful for my research.

7.7 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The provision of a happy and productive school experience for early adolescents is one of the great challenges facing any education system. The three schools evaluated have gone a long way towards achieving this but there are still areas where the actual experiences of students falls short of the ideal. The solutions lie in the development of a more coordinated and focussed approach to preparing new teachers and educating experienced teachers to work within the middle school environment.
REFERENCES


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26 EndNote 9 with APA Style 5, with slight adaptations, has been used for citations and the list of references in this study


REFERENCES


REFERENCES


REFERENCES


REFERENCES


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REFERENCES


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REFERENCES


APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I: APPROVAL FROM THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
COMMITTEE FOR ETHICS IN HUMAN RESEARCH

Document for people who are participants in a research project.

CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the Committee for Ethics in Human Research:

Project title: ...Effective middle schools (Perception of middle schools stakeholders) ACT, Australia

Project number: 02/49 Principal researcher: Mrs Mah-I-qa Raﬁq

1. As a participant or potential participant in research, you will have received written information about the research project. If you have questions or problems which are not answered in the information you have been given, you should consult the researcher or (if the researcher is a student) the research supervisor. For this project, the appropriate person is

   Name: Dr Jim Woolnough

   Contact details: School of Teacher Education, Division of Communication & Education,
                  University of Canberra
                  Phone: 02) 6201 2259 Fax: 02) 6201 5360
                  e-mail: Jim.Woolnough@canberra.edu.au

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person a complaint relating to
   • conduct of the project, or
   • your rights as a participant, or
   • University policy on research involving human participants,
     you should contact the Secretary of the University Research Committee
     Telephone (02) 6201 2466 Room 1D85, Secretariat, University of Canberra, ACT 2601.

Providing research participants with this information is a requirement of the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, which applies to all research with human participants conducted in Australia. Further information on University of Canberra research policy is available in University of Canberra Guidelines for Responsible Practice in Research and Dealing with Problems of Research Misconduct and the Committee for Ethics in Human Research Human Ethics Manual. These documents are available from the Research Office at the above address or on the University’s web site at http://wasp.canberra.edu.au:80/secretariat/respprac.html (Research Guidelines) http://wasp.canberra.edu.au:80/secretariat/ethics/human_ethics/manual-1.html (Human Ethics Manual)
APPENDIX II: APPROVAL FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Letter omitted due to privacy legislation.
APPENDIX III:  LETTER FOR THE PRINCIPALS OF THE SAMPLE SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ACT AUSTRALIA

Dear

I am a doctoral student in the Division of Education and Communication at the University of Canberra. My Primary Supervisor is Dr. Jim Woolnough, Lecturer in School of Education and Community Studies. As a part of my doctoral dissertation research at the University of Canberra, I am conducting a study entitled ‘Middle schooling in public schools of ACT Australia (An exploration of practice in the light of theory)’.

The focus of this study will be to investigate the effective growth and development of ‘middle schooling’ in the ACT. The aim is to compare middle school structures and practice with effective schooling practices and philosophy. Specifically, what the school does in practice will be compared with what the philosophy of effective schooling suggests it should be doing. The study will determine particularly the effects of effective schooling on curriculum, teaching strategies and school environment.

Your school has been selected to participate in the study. The Department of Education Youth Affairs and Community Services has given the written permission to conduct the study. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canberra Ethics Committee.

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation and the participation of your teachers, students and parents/guardian in the study by completing the attached survey instrument. The survey form for students and parents/guardian will take about fifteen minutes and for the teachers and Principal will take thirty minutes or less to complete. If you agree to volunteer for my study,
then please sign the attached consent form and allow me to start the study by requesting other stakeholders to give their consent by signing the consent form. After receiving the consent form I will distribute instrument to the participants.

Participation in the study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. No personal or demographic information is requested about you or your school. To ensure anonymity I am not asking your school’s name, your name or the name of the students and teachers as participants on the survey. Information will be reported in the dissertation, anonymously, not by individual or school.

Participation in the study will increase the demand on your already full schedule, but I believe this study will provide information important for the ACT education system and for the nation.

A copy of the summary of the report will be mailed to you on completion of the study. The professional courtesy you have extended by participating is appreciated and acknowledged with sincere thanks. I will be happy to answer any question about the research study. You can call me at 02 6201 2252 or send e-mail to m.rafiq@student.canberra.edu.au

Professionally,

Mah-i-Laqa Rafiq
Research Student
University of Canberra
APPENDIX IV: LETTER FOR THE TEACHERS
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ACT AUSTRALIA

Dear

I am a doctoral student in the Division of Education & Communication at the University of Canberra. My Primary Supervisor is Dr. Jim Woolnough, Lecturer in School of Education and Community Studies. As a part of my doctoral dissertation research at the University of Canberra, I am conducting a study entitled ‘Middle schooling in public schools of ACT Australia (An exploration of practice in the light of theory)’.

The focus of this study will be to investigate the effective growth and development of ‘middle schooling’ in ACT Australia. The aim is to compare middle school structures and practice with effective schooling practices and philosophy. Specifically what the school does in practice will be compared with what the philosophy of effective schooling suggests it should be doing.

Your school has been selected to participate in the study. The Department of Education Youth Affairs and Community Services has given the written permission to conduct the study. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canberra Ethics Committee.

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in the study by completing the questionnaire. This will take 30 minutes or less to complete. If you agree to volunteer for my study, then please sign the attached consent form.
Participation in the study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. No personal or demographic information is requested about you or your school. To assure anonymity I am not asking your school’s name or your name as participants on the questionnaire. Information will be reported in the dissertation, anonymously, not by individual or school.

Participation in the study will increase the demand on your already full schedule, but I believe this study will provide information important for ACT education system and nation. A copy of the summary will be mailed to you on completion of the study upon request. The professional courtesy you have extended by participating is appreciated and acknowledged with sincere thanks. I will be happy to answer any question about the survey or research study. You can call me at 02 6201 2252 send e-mail to m.rafiq@student.canberra.edu.au

Professionally,

Mah-i-Laqa Rafiq
Research Student
University of Canberra
Dear Parents/ Guardians,

I am a doctoral student in the Division of Education & Communication at the University of Canberra. As a part of my doctoral dissertation research at the University of Canberra, I am conducting a study entitled ‘Middle schooling in public schools of ACT Australia (An exploration of practice in the light of theory)’.

The focus of this study will be to investigate the effective growth and development of ‘middle schooling’ in ACT Australia. The aim is to compare middle school structures and practice with effective schooling philosophy. Specifically what the school does in practice will be compared with what the philosophy of effective schooling suggests it should be doing.

The school of your child has been selected to participate in the study. The Department of Education Youth Affairs and Community Services has given the written permission to conduct the study in your school. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canberra Ethics Committee.

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation and the participation of your child, in the study by completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire will take 15 minutes or less to complete. If you agree to volunteer for my study, then please sign the attached consent form.
Participation in the study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. No personal information is requested about you or your child. To assure anonymity I am not asking your name, your child’s name or the name of the teachers on the questionnaire.

Participation in the study will increase the demand on your already full schedule, but I believe this study will provide information important for the ACT education system and nation. A copy of the summary will be mailed to you on completion of the study upon request.

The professional courtesy you have extended by participating is appreciated and acknowledged with sincere thanks. I will be happy to answer any question about the survey or research study. You can call me at 02 6201 2252 or send e-mail to m.rafiq@student.canberra.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Mah-i-Laqa Rafiq
Research Student
University of Canberra
APPENDIX VI: LETTER FOR THE STUDENTS
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ACT AUSTRALIA

Dear Student,

I am a doctoral student in the Division of Education & Communication at the University of Canberra. As a part of my doctoral dissertation research at the University of Canberra, I am conducting a study entitled ‘Middle schooling in public schools of ACT Australia (An exploration of practice in the light of theory)’.

The focus of this study will be to investigate the effective growth and development of ‘middle schooling’ in ACT Australia. The aim is to compare middle school structures and practice with effective schooling philosophy. The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in the study by completing the survey instruments. The survey form for students will take 15 minutes or less to complete.

Participation in the study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. No personal or demographic information is requested about you or your school. To assure anonymity I am not asking your school’s name, your name or the name of your parents and teachers as participants on the survey. Information will be used anonymously.

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your response will remain anonymous and confidential. Kindly return filled in survey questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Mah-i-Laqa Rafiq
Research Student
CONSENT FORM

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ACT AUSTRALIA

I…………………………………… (the student) have read and understood the information provided in the covering letter. Any question I have asked has been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the interview, realising that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty.

SIGNATURE: …………………………………………… DATE: …………………

I Mr./Mrs./Ms. -------------------------------------------------------------parent/guardian of above student hereby agree to participate and allow my child to participate in the subject study, realising that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN: ………………………………………

DATE:……………………
APPENDIX VIII: CONSENT FORM FOR THE PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS
UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

CONSENT FORM

MIDDLE SCHOOLING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ACT AUSTRALIA

I ………………………………………….. (the participant) have read and understood the information provided in the covering letter. Any question I have asked has been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the research study, realising that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without any penalty.

SIGNATURE: ……………………………………… DATE: ………………………
**APPENDIX IX: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS SCALE (ALPHA COEFFICIENT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Reliability Coefficient (Alpha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1- Beliefs and Understandings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ITEMS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>School is responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School is responsive to the learning needs of adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Staff is responsive to the diverse learning experiences of the adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Staff is responsive to the adolescents' needs for self-exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3C</td>
<td>Staff is responsive to the adolescents' needs for community participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D</td>
<td>Staff is responsive to the adolescents' needs for social interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3E</td>
<td>Staff is responsive to the adolescents' needs for health and physical education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The school has a clearly articulated mission which is shared by all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The goals are reviewed annually focussing on improving students’ performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Student academic excellence is the major purpose of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I agree with the overall purpose of this school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The school’s goals are communicated to the parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teachers hold high expectation for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The school recognizes excellence in achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teachers praise all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students have adequate learning opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>0.8372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>School is responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School is responsive to the learning needs of adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Staff is responsive to the diverse learning experiences of the adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students have adequate learning opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>0.8186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>All stakeholders share the same vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The school gives students the recognition they deserve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Students feel that every one is working towards the common goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Students are involved in decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>All work together to improve the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>My teachers require me to think to the best of my abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>My teachers expect me to learn as much as I can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The school gives students recognition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2- School and Class Organization

Parents

1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.
2. Their vitality and high interest are observable everyday routine.
3. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.
4. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.
5. The school environment is inviting caring and encouraging.
6. The school environment is safe and free from violence.
7. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders.
8. School routines promote personalized relationship.
9. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.
10. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.
11. A code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour.
12. The code of conduct has been publicized.
13. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.
14. Discipline is administered in a neutral manner focusing on the Students’ correction.
15. Out-of-school expulsion or suspensions are minimal.
16. Students treat teachers and each other with respect.

Parents

25A. Vandalism of the school property.
25B. Robbery or theft.
25C. Physical conflicts among students.
25D. Use of alcohol on school campus.
25E. Use of drugs on school campus.
25F. Sale of drugs on school campus.
25G. Presence of weapons on school campus.
25H. Arguments or fight between students of different races/cultures.
25I. Verbal abuse of teachers.

Teachers

1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.
2. Their vitality and high interest are observable everyday routine.
3. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.
4. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.
5. The school environment is inviting caring and encouraging.
6. The school environment is safe and free of violence.
7. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders.
8. School routines promote personalized relationships.
9. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.
10. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.
11. A code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour.
12. The code of conduct has been publicized.
The code of conduct has been publicized.

Students are treated in ways, which emphasize success rather than failure.

Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.

Discipline is administered in a neutral manner focusing on the Students’ correction.

Out-of-school expulsion or suspensions are minimal.

Students treat teachers and each other with respect.

Classroom atmosphere in this school is conducive to learning.

The secure feeling students found in elementary school is maintained.

Teachers' professional behaviour reflects concern.

Teachers do not refer to students by label.

Teachers take extra steps to learn more about students.

Teachers treat students fairly, consistently with respect.

Teachers and students exhibit a sense of pride in the school.

Vandalism of the school property.

Robbery or theft.

Physical conflicts among students.

Use of alcohol on school campus.

Use of drugs on school campus.

Sale of drugs on school campus.

Presence of weapons on school campus.

Arguments between students of different races and groups

Verbal abuse of teachers.

Students

I love to attend school regularly.

Students are absent from school very often.

I am proud of the way my school looks.

I would rather go to any other public school.

I would rather go to a private school.

The school building is clean and most things work.

Everyone at school takes good care of the school.

It is easy to make good friends at this school.
34 Teachers and students respect and trust each other.
35 Teachers respect all students at our school.
36 The school safety rules are enforced.
37 The school safety rules are obeyed.
38 Students and teachers are rewarded on their good performance.
39 Staff in my school would take care of me.
40 The staff in my school supervise the students when they are in groups out of the class.
41 I have never been bullied.
42 I have never seen a student being bullied.
43 Safety concerns reported are handled timely manners.
44 I feel secure while riding a school bus.
45 I feel secure while at the bus stop.
46 I feel secure while in the canteen.
47 I feel secure while in the hallways during class change.
48 I feel secure while in the toilet.
49 I feel secure while outside the building.
50 I feel secure while participating in school activities.
51 I feel secure while attending the school.

3- Classroom Teaching Programs

Parents 0.7435
11 Variety of courses is available.
12 Teachers structure new content knowledge, based on the prior knowledge of the learners.
13 Students have opportunities to consider their own work habits.
14 Class time is lost because of disruptive students' behaviour.
15 Teaching time is free from interruption.
16 Teachers assign meaningful homework.
17 My child gets extra help by the teachers.

Teachers 0.8771
1 Teaching strategies focus on the characteristics of the learner.
2 Teaching strategies are sensitive to the individual level.
3 Teaching strategies relate to real life situation.
4 Teaching strategies meet students' developmental needs.
5 Arrangements are available for special and gifted children.
6 Opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction are built into the curriculum.
7 Intellectually stimulating program in multiple areas is being implemented.
8 A variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning etc are being implemented.
9 Teaching strategies provide experience to the learner.
10I In curriculum planning, attention is focused on continuity.
10II Curriculum integration has widely been used by the teachers.
10III Curriculum addresses issues and skills.
10IV The curriculum broadens students learning.

1Cont'd
Students

18. I am interested in the courses I am taught.
19. Most of my classes are boring.
20. I learn to think more clearly about the courses I study.
21. At school I am learning what I like.
22. The courses I study are increasing my interest.
23. Curriculum content is current and relevant to meet the worldly needs.
24. My textbooks and workbooks are interesting.
25. After school activities help me to become a better person.

Students

26. My attention is focused on my studies without any interruption.
27. I actively participate in the class.
28. My intellectual curiosity is being stimulated in the class.
29. My mind wanders a good deal during class.
30. I try to relate course material to my experience out of classroom.
31. I often work with other students on academic projects.
32. I help classmates in their learning.
33. In my class, students work in small groups.

Students

35. My teachers are helpful.
36. My teachers are friendly.
37. My teachers are enthusiastic.
38. My teachers set complex and meaningful assignments.
40. My teachers expect students to follow the rules.
41. My teachers care about me as a person.
42. My teachers listen to my questions and concerns.
43. In the classroom students are encouraged to volunteer their opinions.
44. In the classroom students discuss one another’s ideas.
45. In the classroom students feel free to disagree with the teacher.
46. I generally feel encouraged to ask questions/ contribute or comments in class.

4- Professional Learning Communities (Teams)

Parents

5. Most of the staff share the value, vision and the central mission of the middle schooling.
11. I understand leaders provide resources for ongoing professional development.
12. Teachers are engaged in professional and collegial learning activities.
13. Staff members share ideas and work together to improve the instructional program.
14. All are involved in the development of shared mission statement

Cont'd
APPENDIXES

Teachers

1. Continuous staff development is based on adolescents' needs.
2. In-service training focuses on students’ achievements.
3. Professional development focusing on students’ learning interest is implemented.
4. Professional development is tied with use of new technology and database.
5. Teachers are specially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of adolescents.
6. The Staff is specially trained to help early adolescents.
7. The emphasis of skill development is based on common purpose.
8. Staff development is based on the latest research findings.
9. Real sense of belonging and collaboration is seen within the teachers and staff.
10. Time for teachers’ collective learning and collaboration is built into the school’s schedules.
11. All are involved in the development of shared mission statement.
12. Teachers work in team and share the information about students’ learning.

Students

14. Most of my teachers really have the content knowledge of the subjects.
15. The teachers seem knowledgeable in teaching and experimentations.
16. Teachers use exploratory programs.
17. Teachers use varied instructional strategies to plan class activities.
18. Teachers introduce new concepts fast.
19. Teachers are willing to help with personal problems.

5- Intervention and special assistance

Parents

2. A faculty member is available for each student who knows him personally and helps.
3. Health education programs are personalized for personal hygiene and physical fitness.
4. Health programs are customized to adolescents’ needs.
5. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.
6. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.
7. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.
8. All extracurricular activities are available to all students.

Teachers

1. Counsellors coordinate support services.
2. A faculty member is available for each student who knows him personally and helps.
3. Health education programs are personalized for personal hygiene and physical fitness.
4. Health programs are customized to adolescents’ needs.
5. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.
6. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.
7. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.

Cont'd
**Students**  
0.7494

9 My education will prepare me for college.
10 I believe I can talk with my counsellor.
11 This school offers good counselling facilities.
12 My school has the equipments and books I need.
13 I use computer regularly in the school.
14 I spend time in the library/Media Center.

**6- Home, school and community partnerships**

**Parents**  
0.8578

1 All are involved in the development of shared mission statement.
2 Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in the school activities.
3 Parents are informed about the latest research on students’ learning needs.
4 Staff members provide parents with information for helping students learning.
5 Parent-teacher conferences focus on students' achievements.
6 Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students’ progress.
7 A two-way connection between the school, home and community is encouraged. *
8 Parents understand and promote the school's instructional program.
9 Parents have opportunities to observe educational programs.
10 Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.
11 Parents are involved decision making through advisory committees.
12 Parents provide support to the school on discipline.
13 The Staff brings parents into a co-active role in achieving the goals.
14 Community, businesses, and industry are encouraged to contribute.
15 The school seeks partnerships with business, social service and other organization.
16A Check whether your child has done homework.
16B Help your child with homework.
16C Give special privileges to your child.
16D Limit privileges because of poor grades.
16E Require your child to do chores.
16F Limit the time your child spends on watching TV.*
16G Limit the amount of time your child goes out.
16H Discussed with your child the selection of courses.
16I Discussed with your child school activities.
16H Discussed with your child grades.
16K Discussed with your child National and world events.
17A Attend a school meeting.
17B Phone or speak to the teacher or counselor.
17C Attend a school event in which your child participate.
17D Act as a volunteer in the school.
APPENDIXES

Teachers

1 All are involved in the development of shared mission statement.
2 Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in the school activities.
3 Parents are informed about the latest research on students’ learning needs.
4 Staff members provide parents with information for helping students learning.
5 Parent-teacher conferences focus on students’ achievements.
6 Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students’ progress.
7 A two-way connection between the school, home and community is encouraged.
8 Parents understand and promote the school’s instructional program.
9 Parents have opportunities to observe educational programs and provide productive feedback.
10 Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.
11 Parents are involved decision making through advisory committees.
12 Parents provide support to the school on discipline.

Students

18A Check whether you have done your homework.
18B Help you with your homework.
18C Give you special privileges because of good grades.
18D Limit privileges because of poor grades.
18E Require you to do work around the home.
18F Limit the time you can spend watching TV.
18G Limit the amount of time you go out with your friends.
18H Discuss the courses or programs with you.
18I Discussed the school activities or event.
18J Discussed your grades or report card.
18K Discussed the national and world events.
19A Attend a school meeting.
19B Phone or speak to the teacher or counselor.
19C Attend a school event in which you participate.
19D Act as a volunteer in your school.

7- Leadership and Coordination

Parents

1 The principal has a clear understanding of the school’s mission.
2 The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.
3 The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.
4 The principal is "highly visible" throughout the school.
5 The principal communicates warmth and caring to all students.
6 The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in the light of new understandings.
7 The principal listens to concerns and responds appropriately.

Cont’d
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel comfortable talking with the principal if I have a concern or question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>0.9181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The principal has a clear understanding of the school's mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The principal is &quot;highly visible&quot; throughout the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in the light of new understandings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The principal shows respect and has high expectations for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The principal visits classrooms to observe and give productive feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The principal ensures that staff is involved in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teachers work under the principal guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The principal distributes leadership among the staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The principal takes my opinion into consideration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>0.8863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The principal is &quot;highly visible&quot; throughout the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I feel comfortable talking with the principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am pleased with the leadership of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Students believe principal will listen their concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I understand that principal of my school knows each student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX X: INSTRUMENT FOR THE PRINCIPAL

1. Beliefs and understandings

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. School is responsive to the unique developmental needs of early adolescents (physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral).

2. School is responsive to the learning needs of the adolescents.

3. All staff members are responsive to adolescents' needs for:
   a. diverse learning experiences and relationships,
   b. opportunities for self-exploration,
   c. meaningful participation in the school and community,
   d. positive social interaction with peers and adults,
   e. health and physical education for the students.

4. The school has a clearly articulated mission which is shared by all.

5. The goals are reviewed annually focusing on improving students’ performance.

6. Teachers hold high expectation for students.

7. The school recognizes excellence in achievement.

Cont'd
8. Students' academic excellence is the major purpose of the school.

9. Teachers praise all students.

10. Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending school.

11. Students have adequate learning opportunities.

12. What is the evidence that school mission is being utilized in determining the school improvement process?

2. **School and class organization**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.

2. Their vitality and high interest are observable in everyday routines.

3. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.

4. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.

5. The school environment is inviting, caring and encouraging.

Cont'd
6. The school environment is safe and free from violence (substance abuse and threatening behaviours).

7. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders.

8. School routines promote personalized relationships.

9. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.

10. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.

11. A written code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour.

12. The code of conduct has been publicized widely.

13. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.

14. Discipline is administered in a neutral manner and focuses on the students’ correction.

15. Out-of-school expulsion or suspensions are minimal.

16. Students treat teachers and each other with respect.

17. Classroom atmosphere in this school is conducive to learning.

18. The secure feeling students found in their self-contained elementary classroom is maintained in higher classes.

19. Teachers' professional behaviour reflects concern for each student as an individual.

20. Teachers do not refer to students by labels.

21. Teachers take extra steps to learn more about students.

Cont'd
22. Teachers treat students fairly, consistently with respect.  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. Teachers and students exhibit a sense of pride in the school.  
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. Please rate the following as current problems:

(1). Never
(2). Rarely
(3). Occasionally
(4). Frequently
(5). Consistently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Vandalism of the school property.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>b. Robbery or theft.</td>
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<td>c. Physical conflicts among students.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>d. Use of alcohol on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>e. Use of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>f. Sale of drugs on school campus.</td>
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<td>g. Presence of weapons on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>h. Arguments or fights between students of different races/cultures.</td>
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<td>i. Verbal abuse of teachers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Classroom teaching programs

Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Fully implemented
(2). Partially implemented
(3). At the active discussion stage
(4). At the initial discussion stage
(5). Not under consideration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fully implemented</th>
<th>Partially implemented</th>
<th>At the active discussion stage</th>
<th>At the initial discussion stage</th>
<th>Not under consideration</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. The use of teaching strategies that focus primarily on the characteristics of the learners are:</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>2. The use of teaching strategies sensitive to the individual's level of intellectual maturity are:</td>
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<td>3. The use of teaching strategies that demonstrate the relationship of content to real life situations are:</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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Cont'd
4. The use of teaching strategies that meeting students' varying developmental needs are:

5. Instructional arrangements for special and gifted students are:

6. Opportunities for interdisciplinary team teaching and learning activities built into the curriculum are:

7. An intellectually stimulating program in multiple areas is:

8. A variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, hands-on activities are:

9. Teaching strategies providing academic, physical, social and emotional experiences appropriate for early adolescent learners are:

10. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regards to supervising teaching?

11. **Curriculum Planning**

   Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

   (1). Very true
   (2). Somewhat true
   (3). Not very true
   (4). Not at all true
   (5). No opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. In curriculum planning, attention is focused on continuity across grade levels and courses.

   0 0 0 0 0

2. Curriculum integration has widely been used by the teachers.

   0 0 0 0 0

Cont'd
3. The curriculum addresses issues and skills that are relevant to early adolescent learners.

4. The school curriculum broadens students' learning to meet the worldly needs.

4. Professional learning teams

Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Fully implemented
(2). Partially implemented
(3). At the active discussion stage
(4). At the initial discussion stage
(5). Not under consideration

1. Continuous staff development based on adolescents' needs is: 

2. In-service training, which focusing on students' achievements is: 

3. Professional development tied with the technology material and data based inquiry is: 

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

4. Time for teachers' collective learning and collaboration is built into school's schedule.

5. Most of the staff share the value, vision and the central mission of the middle schooling.

Cont'd
6. Teachers are especially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents.

7. The emphasis of skill development is based on common purpose.

8. Staff development is based on the latest research findings.

9. Real sense of belonging and collaboration is seen within the teachers and staff.

10. Teachers work in teams and share information about students’ learning.

5. **Intervention and special assistance**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Counsellors coordinate support services.

2. A faculty member is available for each student who knows the student personally and help when needed.

3. Health education programs are personalized for personal hygiene and physical fitness.

4. Health education programs are customized to the physical characteristics of early adolescent development.

5. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.

6. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.

7. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.

8. How does the school assure that the needs of all students are met?

Cont'd
6. Home, school and community partnerships

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in activities of the school (e.g., play, sports, student programs).

2. Parents are informed about the latest research on student learning.

3. Parents are provided support by the staff to help their children in learning.

4. Parent-teacher conferences focus on students' achievements.

5. Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students' progress.

6. A two-way connections between the school, home and community is encouraged.

7. Most parents understand and promote the school's instructional program.

8. Parents of students in the school have opportunities to visit the school to observe the educational program.

9. Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.

10. Parents are involved in school decisions through advisory committee.

11. Parents provide support to the school on discipline.

12. The staff brings parents into a co-active role in achieving the goals of the school.

Cont'd
7. **Leadership and coordination**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. The school engages its internal and external stakeholders in leadership and decision-making.

2. Teachers are involved in decision making about their areas of expertise (curriculum and instruction).

3. Administrators review school operations in the light of agreed-upon goals for student performance.

4. Staff opinions are taken into consideration when initiating actions that affect their teaching and practice.

5. The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in the light of new research understandings.

6. How does the school leadership use the most current information about education to promote continuous improvement in the school?

   +--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------+
   |                                                                                             |
   +--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------+
   |                                                                                             |
   +--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------+
   |                                                                                             |
   +--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------+

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Your participation in this research study is highly appreciated. Your response and responses from your school will remain anonymous and confidential. Kindly return filled in survey questionnaire on the date and time mutually fixed.
**APPENDIX XI: INSTRUMENT FOR THE TEACHERS**

1. **Beliefs and understandings**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

1. School is responsive to the unique developmental needs of early adolescents (physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral).

2. School is responsive to the learning needs of the adolescents.

3. All staff members are responsive to adolescents' needs for:
   a. diverse learning experiences and relationships,
   b. opportunities for self-exploration,
   c. meaningful participation in the school and community,
   d. positive social interaction with peers and adults,
   e. health and physical education for the students.

4. The school has a clearly articulated mission which is shared by all.

5. The goals are reviewed annually focusing on improving students’ performance.

6. Teachers hold high expectation for students.

7. The school recognizes excellence in achievement.

Cont'd
8. Students' academic excellence is the major purpose of the school.

9. Teachers praise all students.

10. Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending school.

11. Students have adequate learning opportunities.

12. Please read the statement below and explain how far you and other teachers in your school are successful in adapting teaching and learning, in order to meet the needs of young adolescents?

*Effective middle level educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents. They understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents and are as knowledgeable about their students as they are about the subject they teach* *(NMSA, 1995, P.13).*

2. **School and class organization**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.

2. Their vitality and high interest are observable in everyday routines.

3. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.

4. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.
5. The school environment is inviting, caring and encouraging.
6. The school environment is safe and free from violence (substance abuse and threatening behaviours).
7. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders.
8. School routines promote personalized relationships.
9. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.
10. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.
11. A written code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour.
12. The code of conduct has been publicized widely.
13. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner.
14. Discipline is administered in a neutral manner and focuses on the students’ correction.
15. Out-of-school expulsion or suspensions are minimal.
16. Students treat teachers and each other with respect.
17. Classroom atmosphere in this school is conducive to learning.
18. The secure feeling students found in their self-contained elementary classroom is maintained in higher classes.
19. Teachers' professional behaviour reflects concern for each student as an individual.
20. Teachers do not refer to students by labels.
21. Teachers take extra steps to learn more about students.

Cont'd
22. Teachers treat students fairly, consistently with respect. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. Teachers and students exhibit a sense of pride in the school. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. Please rate the following as current problems:

   (1). Never
   (2). Rarely
   (3). Occasionally
   (4). Frequently
   (5). Consistently

   a. Vandalism of the school property. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   b. Robbery or theft. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   c. Physical conflicts among students. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   d. Use of alcohol on school campus. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   e. Use of drugs on school campus. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   f. Sale of drugs on school campus. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   g. Presence of weapons on school campus. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   h. Arguments or fights between students of different races/cultures. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   i. Verbal abuse of teachers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. **Classroom teaching programs**

   Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

   (1). Fully implemented
   (2). Partially implemented
   (3). At the active discussion stage
   (4). At the initial discussion stage
   (5). Not under consideration

   1. The use of teaching strategies that focus primarily on the characteristics of the learners are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   2. The use of teaching strategies sensitive to the individual's level of intellectual maturity are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
   3. The use of teaching strategies that demonstrate the relationship of content to real life situations are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

   Cont'd
4. The use of teaching strategies that meeting students' varying developmental needs are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5. Instructional arrangements for special and gifted students are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. Opportunities for interdisciplinary team teaching and learning activities built into the curriculum are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

7. An intellectually stimulating program in multiple areas is: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

8. A variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, hands-on activities are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

9. Teaching strategies providing academic, physical, social and emotional experiences appropriate for early adolescent learners are: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

10. How you think that multiple intelligence approaches are evident in your classroom?


11. **Curriculum Planning**

Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

1. In curriculum planning, attention is focused on continuity across grade levels and courses. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Curriculum integration has widely been used by the teachers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Cont'd

422
3. The curriculum addresses issues and skills that are relevant to early adolescent learners.

4. The school curriculum broadens students' learning to meet the worldly needs.

5. What is the process for continuous curriculum renewal at the school?

6. Is anything you are not doing that you would like to do to reinforce learning?

4. Professional learning teams

Please use the given scale to rate the following statements and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Fully implemented
(2). Partially implemented
(3). At the active discussion stage
(4). At the initial discussion stage
(5). Not under consideration

1. Continuous staff development based on adolescents' needs is: ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏

2. In-service training, which focusing on students' achievements is: ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏

3. Professional development tied with the technology material and data based inquiry is: ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏

Cont'd
Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Time for teachers' collective learning and collaboration is built into school's schedule.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Most of the staff share the value, vision and the central mission of the middle schooling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teachers are especially trained to understand the developmental uniqueness of early adolescents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The emphasis of skill development is based on common purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Staff development is based on the latest research findings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Real sense of belonging and collaboration is seen within the teachers and staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Teachers work in teams and share information about students’ learning.</td>
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</table>

5. **Intervention and special assistance**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Counsellors coordinate support services.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A faculty member is available for each student who knows the student personally and help when needed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Health education programs are personalized for personal hygiene and physical fitness.

4. Health education programs are customized to the physical characteristics of early adolescent development.

5. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.

6. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.

7. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.

6. **Home, school and community partnerships**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in activities of the school (e.g., play, sports, student programs).

2. Parents are informed about the latest research on student learning.

3. Parents are provided support by the staff to help their children in learning.

4. Parent-teacher conferences focus on students' achievements.

5. Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students' progress.

6. A two-way connections between the school, home and community is encouraged.

7. Most parents understand and promote the school's instructional program.

8. Parents of students in the school have opportunities to visit the school to observe the educational program.

Cont'd
9. Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.

10. Parents are involved in school decisions through advisory committees.

11. Parents provide support to the school on discipline.

12. The staff brings parents into a co-active role in achieving the goals of the school.

7. **Leadership and coordination**

The following statements are descriptions of leadership that may or may not reflect leadership practice in your school. Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. The principal has a clear understanding of the school's mission.

2. The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students, and parents.

3. The principal shows respect and has high expectations for staff.

4. The principal is "highly visible" throughout the school.

5. The principal visits classrooms and gives productive feedback.

6. The principal ensures that staff is involved in decision making.

7. Teachers work under the principal's guidance, teachers work

8. The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.

9. The principal distributes leadership among the staff.

10. The principal takes teachers' opinion into consideration.

11. The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.

Cont'd
12. The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in the light of new research understandings.

13. Regarding the leadership of your school, what type of professional qualities do you believe are lacking and adversely affecting middle schooling philosophy?

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Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Your participation in this research study is highly appreciated. Your response and responses from your school will remain anonymous and confidential. Kindly return filled in survey questionnaire on the date and time mutually fixed.
APPENDIX XII: INSTRUMENT FOR THE PARENTS

1. Beliefs and understandings

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Very true</th>
<th>(2). Somewhat true</th>
<th>(3). Not very true</th>
<th>(4). Not at all true</th>
<th>(5). No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School is responsive to the unique developmental needs of early adolescents (physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral).</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School is responsive to the learning needs of the adolescents.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All staff members are responsive to adolescents' needs for:</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. diverse learning experiences and relationships,</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. opportunities for self-exploration,</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. meaningful participation in the school and community,</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. positive social interaction with peers and adults,</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. health and physical education for the students.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school has a clearly articulated mission which is shared by all.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The goals are reviewed annually focusing on improving students’ performance.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teachers hold high expectation for students.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The school recognizes excellence in achievement.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students' academic excellence is the major purpose of the school.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers praise all students.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
10. I agree with the overall purpose of the school.  
11. The school purpose and goals are communicated to the parents.  
12. Learning is seen as the most important reason for attending school.  
13. Students have adequate learning opportunities.  

2. **School and class organization**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Very true</th>
<th>(2). Somewhat true</th>
<th>(3). Not very true</th>
<th>(4). Not at all true</th>
<th>(5). No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Students and staff enjoy being at the school.  
2. Their vitality and high interest are observable in everyday routines.  
3. Physical facilities are kept clean and are reasonably attractive.  
4. The school environment is positive and promotes a sense of community.  
5. The school environment is inviting, caring and encouraging.  
6. The school environment is safe and free from violence (substance abuse and threatening behaviours).  
7. There are open channels of communication among the stakeholders, teachers and administration.  
8. School routines promote personalized relationships.  
9. Collegial working relationships exist among all professional staff.  
10. The school has clear rules which are framed by all stakeholders.  

Contd.
11. A written code of conduct specifies acceptable students’ behaviour. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

12. The code of conduct has been publicized widely. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

13. Follow-up on absenteeism and tardiness occurs in an orderly manner. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. Discipline is administered in a neutral manner and focuses on the students’ correction. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. Out-of-school expulsion or suspensions are minimal. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. Students treat teachers and each other with respect. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18. Please rate the following as current problems in the school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Consistently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Vandalism of the school property.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Robbery or theft.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Physical conflicts among students.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Use of alcohol on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Use of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Sale of drugs on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Presence of weapons on school campus.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Arguments or fights between students of different races/cultures.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Verbal abuse of teachers.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A variety of courses is available, other than the basic subjects. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Students have the opportunity to consider their own work habits and processes through structured self-reflection. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Contd.
3. Class time is lost because of disruptive students.

4. The teachers’ classroom teaching time is free from interruptions.

5. Teachers assign meaningful homework.

6. My child gets extra help by the teachers when needed.

4. **Professional learning teams**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1). Very true</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2). Somewhat true</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3). Not very true</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(4). Not at all true</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5). No opinion</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Most of the staff share the value, vision and the central mission of the middle school.

2. Leaders provide resources for ongoing professional development for staff.

3. Teachers are engaged in professional development and collegial learning activities.

4. Staff members routinely share ideas and work together to improve the instructional program.

5. **Intervention and special assistance**

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Very true</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Somewhat true</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Not very true</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Not at all true</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) No opinion</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. All extracurricular activities are available to all the students.
2. A faculty member is available for each student who knows the student personally and help when needed.

3. Health education programs are personalized for personal hygiene and physical fitness.

4. Health education programs are customized to the physical characteristics of early adolescent development.

5. There are opportunities for students to explore careers.

6. Resources required in the classroom are available for all.

7. Extra time and support is built into every school day for students who fall behind.

8. How does the school assure that the needs of all students are met?

6. Resources needed to ensure the effectiveness of instructional programs are available and allocated according to established priorities.

7. Extra time and support is built into every school day so that students who fall behind can get help when they need it in specific assignments.

6. Home, school and community partnerships

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true
(5). No opinion

1. Opportunities are available for parents to watch or participate in activities of the school (e.g., play, sports, student programs).

2. Parents are informed about the latest research on student learning.

3. Parents are provided support by the staff to help their children in learning.

Contd.
4. Parent-teacher conferences focus on students' achievements.

5. Teachers frequently communicate with parents on students' progress.

6. A two-way connections between the school, home and community is encouraged.

7. Most parents understand and promote the school's instructional program.

8. Parents of students in the school have opportunities to visit the school to observe the educational program.

9. Parents and teachers cooperate to monitor the homework.

10. Parents are involved in school decisions through advisory committee.

11. Parents provide support to the school on discipline.

12. The staff brings parents into a co-active role in achieving the goals of the school.

13. Community agencies, businesses, and industry are encouraged to extend support to schools' programs.

14. The school seeks partnerships with business, social service agencies and other organizations.

16. In the current or most recent school year, how often do/did you do the following?

| 1. Check whether your child has done homework |
| 2. Help your child with homework. |
| 3. Give special privileges to your child because of good grades. |
| 4. Limit privileges because of poor grades. |
| 5. Require your child to do chores. |

(1). Often
(2). Sometimes
(3). Rarely
(4). Never

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
6. Limit the amount of time your child spend on watching TV, or using Internet.  

7. Limit the amount of time your child goes out with friends.  

8. Discussed with your child the selection of courses or programs at school.  

9. Discussed with your child school activities or events.  

10. Discussed with your child his/her grades or report card.  

11. Discussed with your child national or world events.  

12. Parents attend school meetings regularly  

13. Parents phone or speak to the teacher or counsellor.  

14. Parents attend school events in which their child participates.  

15. Parents act as a volunteer in the school.  

7. Leadership and Coordination

The following statements are descriptions of leadership that may or may not reflect leadership practice in the school of your child. Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principal has a clear understanding of the school's mission.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The principal communicates openly and frankly with staff, students and parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The principal sets a respectful tone for interaction with parents and students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
5. The principal communicates warmth and caring to all students.

6. The leadership of the school agrees to bring changes in in the light of new research and understandings.

7. The principal listens to concerns and responds appropriately.

8. The principal has foresight and is fair and firm in making decisions.

9. I feel comfortable talking with the principal if I have a concern or question.

10. I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.

Thank you for completing the Survey. Your participation in this research study is highly appreciated. Your response and responses from the school will remain anonymous and confidential. Kindly return filled in survey questionnaire on the date and time mutually fixed.
APPENDIX XIII: INSTRUMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

1. Beliefs and understandings

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true

1. The principal, teachers, students and parents share the same vision.

2. Students feel that everyone is working towards the common goals.

3. The school gives students the recognition.

4. Students are involved in decision-making.

5. All work together to improve the school.

6. My teachers require me to think to the best of my abilities.

7. My teachers expect me to learn as much as I can.

2. School and class organization

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true
(2). Somewhat true
(3). Not very true
(4). Not at all true

1. I love to attend school regularly.

2. Students remain absent from school very often.

3. I am proud of the way my school looks.
4. I would rather go to any other public school than to this school.  

5. I would rather go to a private school than this school.  

6. The school building is clean and most things work.  

7. Everyone at school takes good care of the school.  

8. Teachers and students respect and trust each other at my school.  

9. Teachers respect all students at our school.  

10. The school safety rules are enforced.  

11. The school safety rules are obeyed.  

12. I believe the adults in my school would take care of any unsafe situation.  

13. The staff in my school supervise the students when they are in groups out of the classroom.  

14. All staff in my school would take care of me.  

15. I have never seen a student being bullied at the school.  

16. When safety concerns are reported to the adults in my school, they are handled in a timely manner.  

17. Please indicate what activities you want to do in the school but are unable to do.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
|                                                                                           |
|                                                                                           |
|                                                                                           |
|                                                                                           |
|                                                                                           |

Contd.
16. It is easy to make friends in this school.

17. I have never been bullied (physically or verbally assaulted).

18. I have never seen a student being bullied at the school.

19. When safety concerns are reported to the adults in my school, they are handled in a timely manner.

20. Please indicate what activities you want to do in the school but are unable to do.

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

(1). Very true  
(2). Somewhat true  
(3). Not very true  
(4). Not at all true

I feel secure while:

1. Riding a school bus (Reply only if you ride on school bus).

2. At the bus stop (reply only if you use bus).

3. In the canteen.

4. In the hallways during class changes.

5. In the toilets at school.

6. Outside the building before and after school.

7. When I participate in activities before or after school.

8. When I attend school events (sports, festivals, etc.).

9. Do you remember any event when you didn’t feel safe?

   a. Yes--------------------- No----------------------

Contd.
10. How often do the following things happen at your school? Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Never</th>
<th>(2). Rarely</th>
<th>(3). Occasionally</th>
<th>(4). Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a. Vandalism of the school property. □ □ □ □
- b. Robbery or theft; □ □ □ □
- c. Physical conflicts among students. □ □ □ □
- d. Use of alcohol on school campus. □ □ □ □
- e. Use of drugs on school campus. □ □ □ □
- f. Sale of drugs on school campus. □ □ □ □
- g. Presence of weapons on school campus. □ □ □ □
- h. Arguments or fights between students of different races/cultures. □ □ □ □
- i. Verbal abuse of teachers. □ □ □ □

11. Please indicate anything which disturbs you most in the school:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Contd.
3. **Classroom teaching programs**

This is about the activities done in classroom. Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Very true</th>
<th>(2). Somewhat true</th>
<th>(3). Not very true</th>
<th>(4). Not at all true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very true</td>
<td>Somewhat true</td>
<td>Not very true</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I am interested in the courses I am taught.

2. Most of my classes are boring.

3. I learn to think more clearly about the courses I study.

4. At school I am learning what I like to learn.

5. The courses I study are increasing my interest in learning more.

6. Curriculum content is current and relevant to meet the worldly needs.

7. My textbooks and/or workbooks are interesting.

8. After-school activities help me to become a better student.

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Never</th>
<th>(2). Rarely</th>
<th>(3). Occasionally</th>
<th>(4). Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. My attention is focused on my studies without any interruption.

2. I actively participate in the class.

3. My intellectual curiosity is being stimulated in the class.

4. My mind wanders a good deal during class.

5. I try to relate the course material to other things in my experience out of classroom.
6. I often work with other students on class projects. □ □ □ □

7. I help classmates in their learning. □ □ □ □

8. In my class, students work in small groups. □ □ □ □

This is about your teachers, how you feel about them. Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very true</td>
<td>Somewhat true</td>
<td>Not very true</td>
<td>Not at all true</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**My Teachers …….**

1. are helpful when students are confused. □ □ □ □
2. are friendly with the students. □ □ □ □
3. are enthusiastic. □ □ □ □
4. set complex meaningful assignments. □ □ □ □
5. treat students fairly. □ □ □ □
6. expect students to follow rules. □ □ □ □
7. really care about me as a person. □ □ □ □
8. listen to my questions and concerns. □ □ □ □

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very true</td>
<td>Somewhat true</td>
<td>Not very true</td>
<td>Not at all true</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In the classroom:**

1. Students are encouraged to volunteer their own opinions. □ □ □ □
2. Students discuss one another's ideas. □ □ □ □
3. Students feel free to disagree with the teacher. □ □ □ □
4. I generally feel encouraged to ask questions/contribute or comments. □ □ □ □

Contd.
### 4. Professional learning teams

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Most of my teachers know the content knowledge of the subjects they teach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The teachers seem knowledgeable in teaching and experimentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The teachers use exploratory programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Teachers introduce new concepts so fast that I find them hard to grasp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Most of the teachers are willing to help the students with personal problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Teachers are trained to use varied instructional strategies to plan class activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Intervention and special assistance

Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I believe that my education will prepare me for higher education and career development.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I believe I can talk with my counsellor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>This school offers good facilities of counselling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>My school has the equipments and books I need in order to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I use computer regularly in the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I spend time in the library to do my assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
6. **Home, school and community partnerships**

In the current or most recent school year, how often do/did your parents do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Never</th>
<th>(2). Rarely</th>
<th>(3). Occasionally</th>
<th>(4). Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 1. Check on whether you have done your homework. |
| 2. Help you with your homework. |
| 3. Give you special privileges because of good grades. |
| 4. Limit privileges because of poor grades. |
| 5. Require you to do work or chores around the home. |
| 6. Limit the amount of time you can spend watching TV, using Internet. |
| 7. Limit the amount of time you go out with friends. |
| 8. Discuss the courses or programs with you. |
| 9. Discussed the school activities or events of particular interest with you. |
| 10. Discussed your grades or report card. |
| 11. Discussed the community, national or world events with you. |

In the current/most recent school year, how many times do/did your parents (or guardians) do any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1). Never/Almost never</th>
<th>(2). 1-2 times a term</th>
<th>(3). Once a month</th>
<th>(4). More than once a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 1. Attend a school meeting. |
| 2. Phone or speak to the teacher or counsellor. |
| 3. Attend a school event in which your child participated. |
| 4. Act as a volunteer in the school of your child. |

Contd.
Please read each statement. Select one of the following responses and tick the appropriate box.

|--------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|

7. Leadership and coordination

1. Most students believe the principal will listen to their concerns.
   - [ ] Very true
   - [ ] Somewhat true
   - [ ] Not very true
   - [ ] Not at all true

2. I feel comfortable talking with the principal if I have a question.
   - [ ] Very true
   - [ ] Somewhat true
   - [ ] Not very true
   - [ ] Not at all true

3. I understand that principal of my school knows each student personally.
   - [ ] Very true
   - [ ] Somewhat true
   - [ ] Not very true
   - [ ] Not at all true

4. I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.
   - [ ] Very true
   - [ ] Somewhat true
   - [ ] Not very true
   - [ ] Not at all true

5. The principal is "highly visible" throughout the school.
   - [ ] Very true
   - [ ] Somewhat true
   - [ ] Not very true
   - [ ] Not at all true

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your response will remain anonymous and confidential.