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"Mind the gap": Cultural revitalisation and educational change

Abstract

The success or failure of a school reform can be indicated by whether or not a new reform becomes an accepted, effective, and sustainable part of the school's culture. For example, as the National Middle School Association (2003) argued, "new programs must become integral to the school culture" (p. 11) before a school can call itself a "middle" school. Culture itself has come to reflect a holistic way of life that refers to the rituals, customs, traditions, group norms, espoused values, formal philosophy, rules, climate, shared meanings, and the hidden symbols that are imbued in the physical space of the organisation. But how can a school monitor its progress towards a new cultural reform and at what point can a school claim that a new reform or new program has been successfully integrated into its culture? Wallace's revitalisation theory (1956), Hall and Hord's Processural structure (1986) and Hall, Wallace and Dossett's Concerns Based Adoption Model (1973) are used here to describe the cultural revitalisation that is taking place with the introduction of middle schooling into Australia and to explore the progress of such cultural reform within three Queensland middle schools. Results from an examination using Wallace's theory have highlighted the barriers to a sustainable middle years reform in Queensland middle schools. That is, structural and organisational changes are being made without the development of a new belief system. Gaps and tensions points have arisen that need to be resolved before any widespread cultural transformation can be claimed.

Acceptance, effectiveness, and sustainability of middle school practice, cultural revitalisation, middle school reform, school culture, reform evaluation

Introduction

Wallace (1956) found that the transformation of whole cultural systems, or at least substantial portions of such systems, are characterised by a uniform process that he described as a “revitalisation.” This process has involved recognition of the need for a rapid and total change including a “new way of doing” or “changes to all key aspects” of an organisation. Although the revitalisation framework has historically been used to examine religious revivals and cultural disruptions following colonisations, it has also been used to draw parallels with educational reform (see, for example, Muncey & McQuillan, 1993; Paulston, 1972). Pendergast (2005) argued that recommended directions for a middle school reform agenda in Australia require major simultaneous changes in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Moreover, these “changes are not about repackaging, but about a new way of doing” (p. 19). She also noted that, for a middle years reform “to have any cogency and impact on the educational experience of students and the workplace conditions of teachers, it requires the articulation of all key aspects rather than isolated change” (p. 5; see also, Swain, 2004). Such revitalisation has indeed begun to create a synergy between the recognised developmental needs of young adolescents and their educational experience.

In education, the plan to implement a new reform has often been considered a “process” requiring a rational technological approach. This approach assumes that, if a facilitator

works through a series of predictable stages, the result will be the successful implementation of the reform. However, as Williamson and Johnston (1998) argued, the implementation of a middle years philosophy via strict adherence to a mere checklist of the identified essential features of middle schooling may actually undermine the very essence of middle schooling. Owing to its preoccupation with the “physical” aspects of the innovation such as structural reform, teaching teams, and block timetables that have been shown to be much easier to establish, a technological approach to middle years reform may overlook the importance of developing a whole new middle years culture within the school. Chadbourne (2001) noted that a particular type of school structure “does not guarantee that middle schooling will take place” (p. iii). Thus, the use of a merely technological approach to middle years reform may apply new “layers” to a school’s existing culture without having any lasting effect on the entrenched norms and values of the organisation.

In 1982, Sarason investigated and attributed the predictably high failure rate of school reform to a lack of understanding of school culture. More than a decade later, when revisiting school culture and the problems of change, he noted that “the school is, in a social and professional sense, highly structured and differentiated – a fact that is highly related to attitudes, conceptions, and regularities of all who are in the setting” (1996, p. 49). A cultural approach to reform recognises the way stakeholders experience change and the interaction of an organisation’s internal culture with the change process. Using a cultural approach, consideration is given to the complexities of the change process from “within” the organisation and at all levels (i.e., individual, sub-groups, and whole

organisation). Wheelan (2005) argued that a school's culture is born in small groups of teachers and then shared with others in the school community until common beliefs and values have been developed and diffused among the whole school community. Thus, many crucial parts of a school's culture are established from the "bottom up" rather than being imposed from the "top down". Indeed, Van Houtte (2005) argued that an organisation's culture influences the behaviour of individual members. That is, pressure is exerted on individuals to adopt the group's customs, values and norms so as to be able to function effectively within the group.

Drawing on current Australian literature on middle schooling together with ethnographic research conducted in three Queensland middle schools, it can be argued that the implementation of a middle years reform shares many features of Wallace's (1956) model of revitalisation movements. Within middle years reform in Australia, the use of a revitalisation framework offers an insightful view of this reform from a cultural perspective. This is claimed for several reasons. First, unlike the introduction of middle schooling in Britain or in America, a conscious choice has been made by government and independent schools to implement middle schooling for its perceived educational benefits for young adolescents. The effort to change both belief and behaviour of teachers, students, and whole schools is in response to the mounting evidence that the middle years are a difficult time for young adolescents and need to be "fixed." Second, the revitalisation principles acknowledge that the attempt for cultural change is based on the premise that the end result will be better for all stakeholders involved in the reform.

Finally, as a middle years reform has required a rapid and total change to this phase of schooling, the revitalisation framework provides a processural model to study and understand the developing culture of the schools. The use of such a non-technological or revitalisation model also allows for contextual differences across time and space in schools implementing change. Since “all educational reform efforts...encounter some resistance and adjust their formulations accordingly it seems crucial to identify and understand that resistance as well as the nature of the program’s response” (Muncey & McQuillan, 1993, p. 394). If Australian middle schools are to avoid the boom-to-bust-to-reinvention cycle experienced in parts of America (Beane, 2001), then the use of such a framework to parallel processes as they are being implemented within middle schools may help steady the direction in which middle schools may be heading.

Middle schooling as a part of educational revitalisation

The middle years (Years 5-9 approximately) have been widely recognised as a time when there is a gap between the needs of young adolescents and the curriculum offered. A number of major Australian reports have provided evidence of this gap (see Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996; Cumming, 1998; Luke et al., 2003; Pendergast et al., 2005). Clark (1972) argued that one reason new cultural forms emerge is that a crisis forces an organisation to examine its traditional ways. By definition, for a revitalisation to occur, those involved in the process must perceive their culture, or substantial parts of it, as unsatisfactory and make a “deliberate, organised effort...to create a more satisfying culture” (Wallace, 2003, p. 164). In response to reports on student alienation and

disengagement in the middle years, a deliberate attempt to innovate through the implementation of middle schooling has begun here.

In a review of cultural change across the anthropological literature, Wallace (1956) found that major cultural innovations seem to follow a somewhat uniform process of progression through a series of five stages. The first three stages include (i) “the steady state” which includes tensions that fall within tolerable limits; (ii) “period of increased individual stress” that individual and group efforts fail to resolve; and (iii) “cultural distortion” where stress levels increase to intolerable levels and resolutions are still ineffective. This point marks the onset of a revitalisation period or stage four of the process. Stage four has five subprocesses that need to be accomplished before a cultural transformation can occur. These subprocesses include the development of a new ideology that is communicated, organised and undergoes an adaptation period which, if successful, results in a cultural transformation. The fifth and final stage in Wallace’s theory is the “new steady state” where the cultural transformation is maintained albeit with its own tolerable tensions.

Hall, Wallace and Dossett (1973) also proposed a conceptual framework, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), that, when explored alongside Wallace’s theory, may assist in identifying the challenges faced by individuals during the implementation of school reforms. The CBAM framework is based on three dimensions, namely (a) individuals’ “concerns” about the innovation placed on a continuum from “awareness” to “refocusing”; (b) individuals’ “use” of the innovation placed on a continuum from “non

use” to “renewal”; and (c) innovation configurations which utilises “a checklist of components, derived from definitions of program characteristics” (Loukes & Hall, 1981, p. 8). Hall and Hord (1986) documented the process of school change and noted a series of five subprocesses involved in the CBAM framework. They argued, however, that, although these subprocesses “cannot be explicitly portrayed as a linear set of discrete phases...the phases do indeed follow in a sequence [that] are cyclical and interactive” during the reform process (p. 82). The subprocesses identified by Hall and Hord (1986) are: assessment (assessment of current practice), adoption (adoption of a response that will “cure” the identified weaknesses), initiation (introduction of new practice), implementation (phase supported by activities for putting the innovation into practice) and institutionalisation (unclear when this phase is completed). The Wallace (1956) framework, especially the concepts of communication and organization, addresses critical organizational components that are lacking in the CBAM framework; whereas the CBAM framework could help to highlight some of the individual struggles experienced by teachers involved in the reform process. For example, individuals may be aware of the need for team practices to effectively implement a middle years reform (concern) but may not have the skills to implement the new practice (use of innovation).

The implementation of a middle years reform and development of a middle years culture can be aligned with the staged process outlined by Wallace (1956) and further enhanced by the subprocesses outlined by Hall and Hord (1984). It is not proposed that the revitalisation construct be used exclusively or slavishly to describe the results of middle years reform in Australia. Rather, it can be used to provide a model that can increase

understanding of the events to date in three Queensland middle schools and how specific outcomes were achieved. Table 1 outlines the implementation of an Australian middle years reform aligned with the processes of revitalisation (Wallace, 1956) and school change (Hall & Hord, 1984).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The dimensions of individuals' concerns and use of the innovation may be used as indicators of progress in the change process involved in the ideology reformulation and communication phases of Wallace's (1956) model. That is, it can be asked if teachers involved in a middle years reform have understood and accepted the reform and its components and have teachers' level of understanding and training enabled them to implement the practices necessary for effective reform.

Position of Australian middle years reform implementation within the revitalisation process

In the Australian context, the need for a middle school reform has become widely accepted and has driven national and state projects into this phase of learning (see, for example, ACSA, 1996; Barratt, 1998; Chadbourne, 2001; Hill, Mackay, Russell, & Zsbar, 1999; Luke et al., 2002; Pendergast et al., 2005). As middle schooling is not exclusively an Australian initiative, it can now build on decades of international research surrounding the implementation of middle years reforms. Indeed, the hope of a middle years reform in Australia is to mirror the claims by Lounsbury (1997) that "the face

of...education [can be] remade” (p. xi). As above, Australian middle years reform may be described as being within the “revitalisation period” of the process outlined by Wallace (1956).

Applying revitalisation theory to three Queensland middle schools

The original study set out to examine the formation and development of middle school teaching teams over the course of one year (Author, 2007). It also examined how a school’s organisational structure (i.e., the physical layout, programming, allocation of resources, and administrative support) influenced the quality and quantity of team practices that were undertaken. Data generated from this research identified six main features that either positively or negatively influenced the participants’ ability to function effectively within middle school teams. These features concerned: (a) training (i.e., both preservice and inservice); (b) administrative support throughout the teaming process (i.e., from formation to establishment and maintenance); (c) attitudes of team members to teaming (i.e., a willingness to participate in a team and experience and confidence in contributing to the team); (d) relationship building; (e) conflict; and (f) school culture.

Data from the original study were organised into emergent themes that were constantly revisited after initial coding, until no new themes were seen as emerging. However, it was observed that there were discrepancies between what was being espoused as the beliefs, norms, values, and knowledge of the participants and their respective schools and what was actually happening. Initial results from the study were reported as a descriptive analysis (Author, 2007). Upon reflection, it was decided that the use of an organisational

cultural framework such as Wallace's revitalisation theory might be useful in further understanding the status of the reform process. An *a posteriori* analysis of the data has been conducted using this lens.

Method

The three schools involved in this study were all government run purpose-built middle schools. The study involved teaching staff from four middle school (Years 6-9) teaching teams. One teaching team was studied from each of two outer Brisbane P-12 schools (School A and School B), and two teaching teams were studied from one outer Brisbane high school with a 7-12 class range (School C). All schools were implementing a middle years reform incorporating small learning communities and teaching teams. Various others signature features of middle schooling were evident across the schools including an integrated curriculum, middle school specialist staff, student-centred learning, and community involvement (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Each team consisted of a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 teachers ($N=24$). Participants were involved in a small group discussion at the beginning of the school year in 2005 and a round of initial individual semi-structured interviews that took place during Term 1 of 2005. The researcher was involved as a participant observer at each school for one day each week during Terms 1 and 3, 2005. During this time, the researcher observed team practices and how the team functioned as a micro-system within the macro-system of the middle school.

All three schools were "new" middle schools (i.e., all less than 7 years old at the time of the study) and were part of the five trial schools announced in 1999 (Education

Queensland, 2000) All schools were structured using a three-tiered system. The creation of these schools incorporated a separate junior, middle, and senior school. Schools A and B were P-12 schools and School C was a Year 7-9 school. The junior school for School C was on a separate campus. These schools, each promoting the introduction of a middle schooling philosophy within their middle school, were encouraged to “adapt policy to local needs” (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 37).

Each school was very different in its physical set up and curriculum implementation. School A formed teams of four teachers that planned together and worked in teaching partnerships. Teams were allocated common planning time and teachers planned together and team taught across all key learning areas in teaching partnerships. Students were arranged in Year 8/9 multiage classes. School B had interdisciplinary teams with four core teachers and a head of curriculum located in the Pod. Teams were allocated common planning time and teachers planned together. This school was targeted as a “new basics” school and its curriculum was based around the new basics suite of tasks (Education Queensland, 2001). Teachers taught within their own specialist areas as well as in integrated study units. Teachers were encouraged to team teach. Students were arranged in Year 7/8/9 multiage classes. School C had interdisciplinary teams with four core teachers and a head of department located in each Pod. Teams were not allocated common planning time and teachers taught a compartmentalised curriculum. Teachers planned using a parallel curriculum (Wallace, Venville, & Rennie, 2005) whereby common themes were taught across key learning areas. Each of these schools had been purpose built including the physical structures to support all the ideology of middle

schooling. Students were in straight Year 8 or Year 9 classes with two multiage year 7/8 classes in one Pod.

Nine of the 24 participants were beginning teachers (i.e., within the first 12 months of their teaching career). Of these nine teachers, four had been trained as middle years specialists, one was trained in a traditional primary program, and four were trained in traditional high school programs. All of the other 15 participants were trained in traditional high school programs. Table 2 outlines the demographics and qualities of each of the middle schools involved in the study. The complexity of the curriculum integration appeared to be the most tangible difference between schools that created tensions within teams in the study. That is, Schools A and B had an integrated curriculum, whereas School C had a parallel curriculum. The integrated curriculum required a higher level of collaboration between teachers thus creating more potential for tensions to arise.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Findings and Discussion

As a macro system, these three purpose-built middle schools have set up the physical structures to promote middle schooling practices. However, guidelines for how teachers actually set up teams and implement these practices have been less clear. A school's cultural features, such as its rules, rituals, traditions, and espoused values, are intrinsically linked to the functioning of the micro systems of teams and their ability to function effectively within a school. For example, in School A, middle school teams were

originally housed in temporary buildings. These buildings each consisted of two separate classrooms that did not facilitate team teaching and open collaboration between classes. Teacher 4 noted that team practices were “much easier when the Pods were completed” and classrooms could be “opened up.”

The implementation of middle schooling into Australian schools has moved into the revitalisation period of the overall process of reform. How each of these schools has managed the six major tasks within this period may provide a starting point to evaluate the implementation process and its progress towards developing a new middle schooling culture. An explanation of how each of the six major tasks identified within this period applies to these schools follows.

Ideology reformation

During the ideology reformation there are similarities between what Wallace’s revitalisation theory calls “mazeway reformation” and the implementation of a middle years’ reform. As in Wallace’s theory, a leader (whether a scholarly expert, educational authority, principal, or teacher) has a vision of an ideal culture and contrasts this ideal with the existing culture. This leader views these cultures as being “connected” by a system of operations and follows a technological approach to reform which, if followed step-by-step, will change the existing culture into the visionary’s ideal culture. As in Wallace’s theory, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) and then later, *Turning Points: 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) developed an “ideal” middle school culture that contrasted with the existing school culture.

Contrary to Wallace's model, studies on Australian middle schools have shown that there is not one true model or "ideal" of middle schooling (Chadbourne & Harslett, 1998; Luke et al., 2003; Author, 2007). Rather, state, district, and local leaders need to be sensitive to the overarching cultural and organisational contexts of each school and develop individual understandings of how the underpinning philosophies of middle schooling will be implemented within each site. Thus, while the implementation of a middle years reform has an overarching vision of an ideal culture consisting of values and beliefs about teaching young adolescents that contrasts with the existing culture, this ideal in practice will look different from school to school (see, for example, Chadbourne & Harslett, 1998).

The new ideology appears to be a top-down construct imposed with few teachers specifically trained as middle years specialists or converted to the new way of doing middle school. Most teachers involved in the study volunteered to work within the respective middle schools with a small number ($n = 4$) having specialist training in middle years. Where teacher choice was afforded, teachers appeared to be more accepting and enthusiastic about middle schooling. Teacher 1 noted that, "*Teachers need to want to teach in middle school and like the age group.*" Where teachers were assigned to teach in middle years classrooms resistance was evident. Although Teacher 23 knew she was going into a middle years setting, she said, "*I don't think I understood what it was all about. I don't think any senior teacher would really enjoy not teaching their specialist area at all. [and] you'd probably lose the ability to teach a lot of the higher order*

thinking that [I] focus on in the senior schooling.” Teacher 1 also expressed concerns that indicated her lack of understanding of a middle years ideology (i.e., dynamics of team teaching). She stated. *“I’m concerned with, I haven’t read any research that backs it either, but I don’t think that you can teach 60 kids.”* Teacher 9 noted that she *“didn’t know a lot about middle schooling”* and that *“It just sort of happened.”* Teachers from all schools commented positively and negatively about middle schooling. Experience in the setting or prior training appeared to be the major determinant of teachers’ positive attitudes and acceptance of a middle years ideology.

Participants had mixed responses to the effectiveness of and, therefore, their commitment to middle schooling. One teacher (Teacher 4) in School A was excited about her new team and commented that, *“the team that I have now is really going to work to get [this school] back out there in middle school educational circles.”* Teacher 4 had been at the school since its inception and commented on the difficulties in getting programs and staff up and running. Teacher 4 also noted that for middle schooling to be effective, teachers who taught in middle school *“need to want to teach in middle school and like the age group.”*

A number of the participants who were high school trained specialists were not yet committed to the middle school ideology. Comments such as,

“I wouldn’t accept a [permanent] position here to work in the middle school...I am trained to teach senior classes and that’s what I need to do;” “there are a

number of people here who don't want to be here...they were unasked for transfers for various reasons;" "high school teachers don't volunteer to teach in the middle school. They see it as a lowering of status;" and "I don't think any senior teacher would really enjoy not teaching their specialist area...I think you could do it [teach in the middle school] for a year or two"

were reflected by at least one teacher in all teams. These teachers were not converted to promoting the middle years philosophy, but, rather, more focused on maintaining the integrity and passion of their particular specialist areas. In three of the four teams, these teachers were science/maths specialists who felt disconnected from their like-minded peers. In the fourth team, it was the English specialist teacher, Teacher 7, who expressed discontent with teaching in the middle years. Teacher 7 had completed significant further studies beyond her teaching qualification and was teaching to gain experience so as to progress in her career. However, the majority of teachers were enthusiastic and agreeable, in principle, to middle schooling but were uncertain as to "how" to put their fledgling ideologies in to practice.

Communication

The next task within the revitalisation movement is the communication or dissemination of the new ideals, values, and norms that identify the new culture. The communication process also concerns the way in which the new ideology is presented. Wallace noted that the new ideology is communicated with the promise of "spiritual salvation for the individual and...cultural salvation for the society" (1966, p. 160). The dissemination of

middle years practices in Australia has been undertaken through the development of state policy and position statements and the commitment and passion of those “converted” to middle years reform and improved school learning if not actual salvation. In 2001 a national Middle Years of Schooling Association was established that publishes a biannual journal and distributes regular newsletters to members. Regional conferences are held throughout Australia and the international conference, held every second year, attracts over 700 attendees from across Australia and internationally. The purpose of these conferences and journals has been about sharing ideas and how individuals or schools are implementing practice rather than advocating for any one “true” model or orthodoxy of middle schooling. Calls for the establishment of a research collaborative across Australia to provide a more systematic approach to research in the middle years are beginning to be made (Author, 2007).

Teachers within this study reported ongoing professional development surrounding a middle years philosophy. However, teachers who had been in schools from the school’s inception reported that a much greater focus was placed on understanding a middle years philosophy in the early stages of the school’s development (FN). All schools in this study were institutional members of the Middle Years Association and received newsletters and journals that were distributed among staff. Staff in all schools were encouraged to attend the biannual International Middle Years Conference and professional development funds were provided by all schools to enable at least heads of departments to attend the conference. In School C, all members of the team planned to attend the conference as both a “team building” exercise and a professional development opportunity. The school

contributed half of their attendance fee. Some professional development activities directly targeting concepts of middle schooling were provided on student-free days (teachers are paid to attend school for professional development and planning) in all schools.

Those teachers who were middle schooled trained specialists were all beginning teachers and, as such, were struggling with the demands of being new to the profession. Only one of the middle school trained specialists had done a practicum in a middle school classroom. Teacher 14 noted that *“the opportunities weren’t there to go into middle schools [and] all my practicum placements were in traditional high schools and primary schools.”* Other teachers had little knowledge about middle schooling per se (i.e., *“I have never really done anything on middle schooling so I’ve only read little bits and pieces here and there”*) but were following a program that had been designed for the middle years. Teacher 1 noted that she had *“no experience...in this particular context [and had] been given this model.”* Another teacher complained about a lack of set texts within the middle school, *“I don’t know if you call it a policy or a decision [that was] made about the middle school [but for me] it is an issue.”* Teacher 12 reflected on her preconceptions of working within a middle school and the reality of what was happening. She stated, *“I originally thought that the idea and concept of this collaboration between the different curriculum areas for middle schooling actually meant that we sort of really tried to make our lessons more connected.”* These comments reflect the “fuzziness” of teachers’ understandings about what is or isn’t part of middle schooling.

Teacher 15 was a middle school trained beginning teacher and felt a strong commitment to the middle schooling program being faithfully implemented. At the beginning of the year she stated,

Some of my kids don't like always having the doors open but it is not an option for them and if they don't like it then they could change into a different class because that was the way it is going to work because it is the way that middle schooling is designed.

However, by the end of Term 3 of that same year, all teachers in this team were teaching independently. Even if the doors were left open, implementation gaps had opened up.

Although the majority of teachers within this study spoke positively about the new reform, at least one teacher in each team did not seem committed to it. Some teachers committed to the reform expressed the concern that, when teaching teams were not functioning well, it reflected badly on the middle school (i.e., “*Our Pod had a really bad image in the middle school as being a really bad Pod because [middle schooling] wasn't working.*”) Teacher 12 reported that “*the Pods are a lovely idea and reflect the middle schooling sense of community. [However], I haven't got a wealth of experience to make judgements about middle school and how well it works but I have to say that I like to teach within my specialty areas.*” One very experience teacher, Teacher 24, was more philosophical about difficulties she was facing as a middle years teacher. She explained,

“the school is still in its infancy. You have to look at where it fits in and where the problem is. Yeah, because I want to know if stuff is a problem because of the

middle school or the way we are running the program or if it is because it is such a new school and you're trying to establish all these protocols and processes."

Organisation

The task of organisation requires the establishment of a hierarchy of leadership within the revitalisation movement. Wallace (1956) claimed that during this stage there was "emotional appeal" with a "prophet" or leader who organises believers in accepting a new plan for new behavioural norms. This new mission seeks to replace the traditional norms that have persisted over time but now fail to meet the demands of the culture. The leader communicates the new ideology and inspires others and organises "disciples" to promote it. Unlike Wallace's theory, Australian middle years reform has not had any one charismatic leader or prophet to lead the reform. Rather, a number of government and independent education departments have synergistically been promoting and guiding a middle years reform through policy and position statements. For example, Education Queensland initiated five middle school trials in 1997 in which schools were encouraged to adapt policy to local needs. The directive was to "actively promote schools that combine primary and secondary years" to "reduce the difficulties for students in moving from primary to secondary schooling" (2000, p. 37). Thus, education departments have taken on the role of the prophet, district and school leaders have adopted the position of the disciples, and teachers working within these schools are "converted" to the new ideology as practices and programs are disseminated and implemented.

Each school within this study had a separate administration for the middle school. Initial interviews with school principals identified schools that were implementing a number of the signature features of middle schooling (see Davis, 2001) and were committed to a middle years philosophy. School A and B had actively recruited trained middle years specialists. Schools A and B were considered “model” middle schools and classrooms were opened for visitors to view how these schools were implementing middle school practices. School C had a head of middle schooling that coordinated professional development for teachers and supported teams.

Leadership of this policy initiative differed to that proposed by Wallace (1956). As a policy initiative, a distributed leadership has prevailed on a site-by-site basis. In School B, the founding principal was very committed to a middle years reform and used an instructional leadership style (Kruger, Witziers, & Slegers, 2007). Through this style of leadership there was a strong emphasis on the curriculum, the coordination of the new program, supporting teachers, and disseminating the vision of middle schooling to all stakeholders. However, upon his retirement in 2003 the new principal had different ideas and understandings about middle schooling. This and subsequent changes in leadership have resulted in a significant number of program changes. Although Schools A and C have had more stable leadership, these schools have still undergone significant program changes with a “trial and error” or “catch-as catch-can” approach to curriculum and class configurations. Kruger, Witziers, and Slegers (2007) found that a principal’s “vision” “had a substantial impact on the behaviour and strategies used by educational leaders in the school” (p. 17). In schools where the principal’s “vision” was clear and leadership

continuing, schools made progress towards revitalisation. However, where the principal's vision was unclear or lacking continuity, the organisational phase of the revitalisation was disrupted. This was evident in all three schools within this study.

In each school, structural efforts were made by administration to support teams and promote collaborative practices. This support was evidenced by an administrative "link" (i.e., head of curriculum, head of department, head of middle school) being assigned to each of the teams within the study. However, a small number of teachers were not willing to engage in or become "converted" to the reform but rather held tight to their historical beliefs and practices. Although these were in the minority, in three of the four teams where even one teacher was not converted to the reform, tensions arose within the team over expectations and role definitions.

Adaptation

Handling of this task is the greatest predictor of the success or failure of a revitalisation movement. It is based around two main issues: the practicality of the group's doctrine and the amount of resistance that is experienced from others. Initially, the new ideology is presented as beyond being questioned. However, as mismatch problems with the existing culture emerge and ambiguities in the new ideology become more evident, resistance grows from those who consider there to be personal gain in maintaining the status quo or through only making superficial changes. Resistance in some cases may "be slight and fleeting but more commonly is determined and resourceful" (Wallace, 1956, p. 274).

Adaptations from the ideal culture have been required at several levels during the implementation of middle schooling. At a system level, the middle years overlaps the traditional primary-secondary divide and creates questions of where the middle years are positioned. On a whole school level, some signifying features of middle schooling such as teaching teams and the creation of small learning communities have required adaptation within the constraints of a predominately two-tiered system. Also, the creation of interdisciplinary teacher teams has created challenges to teachers' work histories and personal philosophies of teaching. The elements of a particular team working in any school, including any particular middle school setting, can contain many variables that influence its operation. Because teams can operate in assorted configurations of various spatial and temporal parameters within a school, together with various combinations of student groups, teams have been allowed greater flexibility of practice than teachers working in more traditional settings. Without formal guidance as to *how* to team effectively, teachers in three of the four teams reverted to more traditional working conditions (i.e., working in isolation) by the end of the year.

Although a number of universities are now offering specialised middle years programs, training and development of human resources prior to implementing educational reform have not been up to Wallace's approach to conversion or managed change. A lack of prior training has been shown to obstruct the implementation, and, therefore, achievement of reform goals (Louis & King, 1993). Indeed, where two middle school trained specialists were assigned to one team, an experienced teacher (T4) explained

enthusiastically, *“The team that I have now is really going to get [this school] back out there in [middle years] educational circles....We can show, this is our integrated curriculum. This is how we work as a team.”* Teachers without prior training who are working within a middle school reform have reported difficulties understanding and implementing new practice (Author, 2007). This lack of understanding has resulted in resistance leading to a reversion to previous practice: even to a form of apostasy.

At the beginning of the study, all teams reported collaboratively planning, some team teaching, and collaboratively assessing. By the end of Term 3 that same year, no teams were observed team teaching and planning in two teams was much less collaborative than at the beginning of the year. Teacher 24 expressed concern at the middle year program being implemented and commented, *“I’d certainly like to see less of some things and a little bit more time to do the basic literacy and numeracy stuff.”*

Cultural transformation

The success of a revitalisation movement is “signalled by the widespread acceptance of its ideology and the concomitant effects of this acceptance, that is, extensive cultural change” (Muncey & McQuillan, 1993, p. 411). Wallace called this extensive cultural change “cultural transformation.” Middle schooling in Australia is gaining widespread acceptance but many schools have focused their improvement efforts on the structural aspects of the school by using an all too technological approach to reform. But changes in structure and the reconfiguring of the stakeholder mix alone do not necessarily result in changes in attitudes, beliefs, and habits of staff. As Fullan (1993) argued, “reculturing

leads to restructuring more effectively than the reverse” (p. 68). Sadly and predictably, in reform efforts, the expectation that new structures would automatically result in new behaviours and develop new cultures has not been realised in most cases. However, where a bottom-up approach is used as when teachers and administrators begin working in new ways, school structures may be altered to meet the requirements of the new reform (Fullan, 1993). Teachers in School C demonstrated some evidence of bottom-up initiatives. Team teaching was not an expectation within this setting and yet several teachers saw the value for themselves and students in working collaboratively. Attempts were made to team teach where timetables facilitated teachers working together in and across subjects.

As a new reform, the acceptance, effectiveness, and sustainability of a middle years reform is still under review. No new way of such schooling is evident on a large scale with only small pockets of cultural transformation being reported as schools implement and develop middle schooling principles effectively. In a previous large-scale study of middle schooling reform around Australia, evidence of a “dip” or gap between the initiation phase and the development phase during the implementation of the reform was noted as a major concern (Pendergast, 2006). While the introduction of a middle years reform has been initially greeted enthusiastically by teachers, it is unable to be sustained without formal guidance. Adequately trained staff and effective team practices have been identified as key factors to lessen the severity and duration of the slippage experienced by schools implementing middle schooling (Pendergast et al., 2005).

Routinisation

At the time of the study, these three Queensland middle schools were still predominately only “innovating.” During the final and still awaited phase of routinisation there would be a shift in the aims of the revitalisation movement from that of “innovation” to that of “maintenance.” During this stage the new ideology becomes established as “normal” and proves itself to be viable (Wallace, 1956). But not yet. It is in this stage that the CBAM framework may be able to provide insight and direction to the reform. The three dimensions outlined in the CBAM framework may be used to diagnose the point and/or extent of the change effort in these schools.

Conclusion

Middle schooling has gained widespread acceptance in Australia by policy makers and educational leaders. However, within the three schools in this study, a middle schooling “frame of reference” (Van Houtte, 2005) had yet to be established. That is, the prevailing norms that would usually exert pressure on individuals to conform and identify with the group were not in place. The majority of staff within each of the teams studied had accepted the ideology and engaged in the concept of middle schooling but as yet had not had sufficient exposure to or support in the skills training necessary to implement and sustain the innovation. All three schools were still in the early stages of the revitalisation period. That is, the middle schooling ideology was still fluxing between the communication (communication of the new ideas, values, and norms) and the adaptation (development of strategies to overcome resistance) stages.

As highlighted by an analysis using the revitalisation framework, tension points have arisen in the adaptation phase that need to be resolved before any widespread cultural transformation and routinisation of middle schooling can be claimed. First, the top-down drive to implement middle schooling through the construction of purpose-built middle schools has failed to include sufficient training of those teachers who are attempting to translate the espoused policy into observable practice. Agreement, common meanings and understandings about middle schooling and how it should “look” in practice have not been established. Thus, the three middle schools that were studied are still undergoing the phase of communication. This task has been further complicated (yet again) by the high turnover of staff within these schools. A more coordinated dissemination of middle years research together with targeted professional development for teachers and administrators is needed.

Second, efforts to document and report progress on the interpretation and implementation of middle schooling principles and the adaptations that need to occur to ensure these principles are an effective and sustainable part of a schools’ culture need to continue. Observing and documenting middle schooling practice using the revitalisation movement framework to organise and analyse observations may offer one means to better understand how aspects of middle schooling may be interpreted, implemented, and measured. The use of the framework as a process model suggests that certain “basics” need to be completed systematically during the reform implementation. These basics include: (a) a clear understanding of the new ideology (i.e., the plan and its intended outcome); (b) communication of the new ideology to a broader base of those involved in

the implementation of policy to practice; (c) the establishment of a pool of resources and expertise that can be used to assist schools embarking on a middle years reform; (d) empirical evidence that the new ideology is being implemented with reporting on the intended and unintended outcomes; and (e) empirical evidence that middle schooling has been established as a new culture and is a recognised part of the new steady state of Australian education.

The use of an organisational cultural model such as the revitalisation framework to examine middle school reform highlights aspects of school change from an alternative perspective to that of the rational-technological approach. In turn, this processual model may provide deeper understandings of the changes that need to occur within schools if there long-term effects on the beliefs and values of schools are to be achieved. The gaps that may open up when using such a model designed to analyse social reformation may be reduced through the layering of diagnostic reform models such as Hall, Wallace, and Dossett's (1973) CBAM into it. Aspects of leadership (whether provided by a scholarly expert, educational authority, principal, or teacher) to support such a widespread and varied policy initiative such as middle schooling also need to be considered and factored into the organisational phase of the model. Further research using this model is merited.

Table 1.
Process of revitalisation aligned with the implementation of an Australian middle years reform

Stage	Processural structure (Wallace, 1956)	Processural structure (Hord & Hall, 1986)	CBAM (Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973)	Australian middle years reform	
Steady State	A culture is not ideal but stress within the system varies within tolerable limits and there has been no demand for radical change.			Traditional primary school (P-7) offering a student-centred, integrated curriculum and secondary schools (8-12) offering a subject-centred compartmentalised curriculum.	
Period of increased individual stress	Increased individual stress when initial efforts (both individual and group) to resolve tensions associated with cultural disruptions prove ineffective.			Recognition of transitional issues from primary to secondary school and student alienation, disengagement, and academic failings in the middle years.	
Cultural distortion	The period of cultural distortion when stress increases to intolerable levels and any efforts to resolve this stress are shown to be ineffective.	Assessment Assessment of present practice. Can be bottom-up or top-down mandate. Arrives from a review of the school's current performance.		Major studies providing mounting evidence on adolescent development and the disparity between adolescent needs and available curriculum.	
Revitalisation period	Revitalisation period. During this stage, six major tasks must be achieved for the revitalisation to be effective:			Implementation of a middle years reform into Australian schools.	**Current middle years reform implementation process
	Ideology reformulation Within a social context when individuals begin to search for new alternatives they construct a "new, utopian image of sociocultural organization" (Wallace, 1956, p. 270). A new "code" is developed. That is, a new set of beliefs and values is established.	Adoption Adoption of a response. Response is often accompanied by high expectations that it will "cure" the identified weaknesses.	The Concerns-Based Adoption model has three dimensions that are used to diagnose the point and/or extent of the change effort <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of concern (individuals' concerns about the innovation) (Hall & Loucks, 1978) • Level of use (individuals' use of the innovation) ((Hall, Loukes, Rutherford & Newlove, 1975) • Innovation 	The philosophical underpinnings of middle schooling have been adopted from America and Brittan. Studies have resulted in commitment to the development of policies, programs, and pedagogy that relate specifically to young adolescents. However, the ideology reformulation can be seen more as a top-down mandate.	
		Initiation Introduction of new practice. Commitment and enthusiasm from some individuals.		Specialist training in middle years has seen a number of trained middle years specialists enthusiastic and committed to the reform.	
	Communication The communication of the ideas, values, and norms of the new culture. Converts believe that the new culture is better for them individually and for society as a whole.			Communication has been done in such a way as to attract new "converts" to the curriculum, pedagogy, and programs promoted as middle schooling.	

	<p>Organisation A few special people emerge as special “disciples” and three levels of organisation occur: the prophet or visionary, the disciples, and the followers. Disciples are responsible for spreading the word.</p>		<p>configuration (most often a checklist of components of program characteristics)</p> <p>These dimensions are utilised during the implementation phase of the innovation or reform.</p>	<p>The “tiers” of organisation in middle years are established through federal and state policy and position statements. Government and independent education departments replace the “prophet” as the head of the revitalisation movement. Disciples or leaders are appointed at various levels to implement the vision. Followers are “converted” as practices and programs are implemented and disseminated.</p>	
	<p>Adaptation The development of strategies to overcome resistance from others in society who do not share the belief in the new ideology. This task is the greatest predictor of the success of a revitalisation movement. It is based around two main issues: the pragmatism of the group’s doctrine and the amount of resistance that is experienced from others.</p>	<p>Implementation Phase that should be supported by a set of activities for putting the innovation into practice. Implies skills training and one-on-one problem solving interventions. Designed to help the individual use the innovation.</p>		<p>Adaptation has been required at several levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whole school - constraints of a predominately two-tiered structure ▪ Team level – interdisciplinary teams with an overlap of traditional primary/secondary divide ▪ Individual level – curriculum and pedagogy in middle schooling is foreign to the traditional paradigms and experiences of teachers 	
	<p>Cultural transformation Widespread acceptance of the new ideology with a cultural transformation from the old to the new.</p>			<p>The acceptance, effectiveness, and sustainability of a middle years reform is under review. A new way of doing is not evident on a large scale with only small pockets of cultural transformation being reported as schools implement and develop middle schooling principles effectively. Research in middle schooling in Australia is in its infancy.</p>	
	<p>Routinisation The shift from the role of “innovation” to the role of “maintenance”</p>	<p>Institutionalisation Not clear what this means in terms of the everyday innovations. It has been difficult to identify when this stage has been reached and descriptions and analyses of this part of change have not been abundant.</p>		<p>Middle schooling in Australia is still “innovating.”</p>	
<p>New Steady State</p>	<p>The new steady state produced by a successful revitalisation movement (uncommon).</p>			<p>Middle schooling is an accepted, effective, and sustainable model for the middle years of schooling.</p>	

Table 2
Demographics and qualities of Schools A, B, and C

	School A	School B	School C
School configuration	Purpose built middle school with separate administration. Pod* arrangement with 4 core teachers	Purpose built middle school with separate administration. Pod* arrangement with 4 core teachers and head of department in each Pod	Purpose built middle school with separate administration. Pod* arrangement with 4 core teachers and head of department in each Pod
Age/Grade Configuration	11 - 14 Years; Grades 6 - 9	12 - 14 Years; Grades 7 - 9	12 - 14 Years; Grades 7 - 9
Students within each Pod	Approximately 120	Approximately 120	Approximately 120
Middle years signature features included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interdisciplinary teams ▪ curriculum integration ▪ block scheduling ▪ authentic assessment practices ▪ formation of strong relationships with students ▪ advisory programs of pastoral care 	Features observed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ curriculum integration ▪ block scheduling ▪ authentic assessment practices ▪ formation of strong relationships with students ▪ advisory programs of pastoral care 	Features observed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interdisciplinary teams ▪ curriculum integration ▪ block scheduling ▪ authentic assessment practices ▪ formation of strong relationships with students ▪ advisory programs of pastoral care 	Features observed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interdisciplinary teams ▪ block scheduling ▪ formation of strong relationships with students ▪ advisory programs of pastoral care
Number of teachers in Pod	4	5	5 and 5
High school trained teachers	2	3	5 and 5
Middle school trained teachers	2	2	0

*Pods are a cluster of classrooms (usually 4) with a common staff room

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