EM 705 Management Project

Christchurch College of Education
Te Whare Whai Matauraka Ki Otautahi

SOCIAL DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

ARE STUDENTS ACHIEVING IN THIS PROCESS?
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SOCIAL DECISION- MAKING SKILLS. ARE STUDENTS ACHIEVING IN THIS PROCESS?

Abstract

Social decision-making, values exploration and inquiry are the three processes that students are involved in to enable them to achieve the aims and objectives of social studies education. There is a deliberate separation of content knowledge from the processes. This study looks specifically at the skills involved in the process of social decision-making.

Social decision-making is about students developing the necessary skills to address problems they might encounter in their daily lives. As the name suggests there is an element of decision-making involved in working towards deciding upon a solution. The process includes evaluation against agreed criteria.

This study makes a contribution to the limited literature base on the process of social decision-making. The study uses the content of the social studies assessment tasks undertaken by the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) over the 1997 and 2001 period. These assessments loosely address social decision-making skills within the administered tasks.
It is noted that these skills do not receive separate treatment in the NEMP assessments. For the purposes of gathering and reporting information within the framework of the social studies curriculum, NEMP have broken the skills component into each of the following headings:

- Information
- Social and Co-operative
- Values exploration
- Creative and critical thinking

The skills referred to under the heading of Creative and Critical Thinking pertain to student achievement in interpreting, evaluating and decision-making. Social Studies Assessment Results 1997 (p.11). These related the most closely to social decision-making skills. I viewed 200 tapes of year 4 and year 8 student performances that were administered in the 1997 and 2001 social studies assessment cycles. These tapes were selected from an initial collection of 44 tasks that NEMP staff had identified as containing some aspects of social decision-making. It was from this selection that I identified four tasks as my focus for study. I considered that these tasks gave a balanced coverage of task type and opportunity for student achievement in the skills of social decision-making.

The aim of this study was to investigate how New Zealand primary school students were achieving in the skills of the social decision-making process. For the purpose of this study the decision making process was broken down into three skills:

1. Identifying the problem.
2. Suggesting a solution.
3. Deciding on appropriate action.

The results showed a modest increase of the skills in total over both year 4 and year 8, but there was a decided lack of achievement in the third skill – that of deciding on an appropriate action.
These results are similar to the findings of the *Forum Comment* that NEMP released in 2001 referring to the need to promote critical thinking skills within the social studies processes.

The study also revealed a lack of consolidation of increased complex skills that are necessary to equip students to achieve at Level One of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority standards in social studies. The message for educators involved in programme development and in delivery is to focus on higher order thinking skills and to incorporate them in school curriculum from year 0 onwards. Critical thinking needs to “taught”- not just assumed that it will be absorbed. I contend that a focus on professional development is highly desirable, so that teachers are aware of and confident in structuring learning situations appropriate to students’ experience, that will involve them in real critical thinking.

Problem solving has long been accepted as a necessary skill to learn in maths and science curricula. It is now time to teach students to recognise problems, within everyday social contexts and to teach them the skills of how to be involved in helping to solve them.

**Rationale**

The intention of this study is to provide a clearer understanding of the progression of social decision – making skills. This will have implications for practice, as well as a focus on the development of resources. There is an urgent need for the Ministry of Education to support the process of social decision-making by providing supplementary resources in order to help teachers address this much needed process skill. Similarly, in teacher education programmes there is a need to provide assistance for teachers. One possibility is to incorporate these features within the exemplars for social studies but these have still to be released by the Ministry of Education. My study is thus timely as it provides some interim guidance for teachers in the area of social decision-making and makes suggestions for specific professional development and advisory service support.
My interest in this topic stems from my role as the in-school facilitator for the Social Studies Contract. This responsibility involves the implementation of an area school wide social studies scheme (years 1-10). This includes on-going consultation with staff for the preparation of a programme to meet the needs of students at our school. Responsibility for producing a school wide scheme in social studies also involves the development of systems to track student achievement in both the processes and the strands.

Over the last three years, I have been particularly aware of the weaknesses in the development of social decision-making skills amongst the children in our school. This has been most noticeable between the primary part of the scheme and into the year 9 &10 area.

It became evident that student achievement of the social decision-making process wasn’t developing or consolidating to meet the achievement standards of the level one of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). I considered that the year 9 &10 students did not have the necessary skills to cope with the high degree of social decision making skills that the programme required.

Following consultation with the school staff we decided to focus on this skill “school wide” as a part of the review cycle. Year 1-4 teachers especially, were finding it difficult to teach and assess this process and this was a contributing factor to the lack of skill development throughout the whole of the primary school. There was some evidence of progress made in the year 7-8 area but this was noted only when the topic chosen to assess had a focus on social decision-making. At this level students own maturity and/or experiences also begin to emerge as a factor in achievement. We did not consider that there was a natural progression of skill building for the majority of students. Thus, the purpose of my research study was based on the need to highlight the progression of these skills in order to improve the teaching of social decision-making skills within our school.

My study draws upon the NEMP assessment information. My experience as a teacher administrator assessing the social studies curriculum in the 2001 round of NEMP monitoring sparked my interest in exploring the social decision-making data in more
detail. Assessing students in five different schools over a five week period reiterated my concerns about social decision-making and I realised that these did not just apply to the children at my school. In my role as a teacher marker of the assessment tasks I realised that there was a substantial collection of tasks that contained detailed information, which if analysed in more depth could provide the basis for my research study.

My application for a NEMP Probe study was based on the following research questions:

1. What skills do students use to demonstrate the social decision – making process?

2. Is there an increase of social decision – making skill in the Level 8 group as compared to the Level 4 group?

3. To what extent have children in both the year 4 group and the year 8 group improved in the achievement of social decision – making skills over 2 cycles of National Education Monitoring?
Chapter 1

Introduction

Firstly it is important to define what is meant by social decision-making before beginning to track its development within the social studies curriculum. This chapter provides an overview showing the context for social decision-making to highlight the historical path of social studies and its development as a core curriculum subject. It addresses the following aspects:

- Historical Influences
- The New Social Studies Movement
- The Social Decision-Making Process
- The Draft Curriculum
- The 1997 Social Studies Curriculum

Historical Influences

Social Decision making is about students learning to make decisions about issues in society and carry out possible actions that will improve or solve problems. This active participation in society is vastly different from the focus on disciplines involved in History and Geography, from which social studies evolved.

Issues surrounding what is necessary in a social studies curriculum have been widely debated since the 1920s. There have been many recommendations to support teachers’ work up to the present curriculum. The two drafts involved in releasing this final curriculum are indicative of the challenges that social studies has had to confront in order to exist as a core curriculum subject. As with the development of any curriculum, social studies was affected by broad issues concerning society and the changing nature of contributing disciplines in 20th Century thinking. In the 1930s the dominant worldwide theme in educational circles revolved around education for a better society.
New Zealander James Strachan, Principal of Rangiora High, travelled to the United States of America to further investigate this focus. His publication, “The School Looks at Life” (1943) was a result of the visits that he made to Teachers Colleges in Lincoln, Illinois and New York City. At the time his ideas were published there was a growing concern in New Zealand that direction for education should change so as to meet the needs of a wide range of pupils, not just the academic elite. Thus, the worth of the individual and community life began to replace the focus on the Monarchy and the rights and duties of the subjects that had developed as part of our colonial past. The emergence and recognition of the need to incorporate concepts and methods from sociology and anthropology meant a move away from the tradition of historical and geographical approaches.

Similarly the Thomas Report in 1944 supported this new direction with a recommendation that social studies ought to become a core subject in the curriculum. The creation of social studies as a subject in its own right had relevance in the light of these concerns, but it was strongly debated by those who still perceived it as an amalgamation of history and geography.

The “New Social Studies”
The “New Social Studies” movement emerged in America in the 1960s. Formative work carried out in California in the 1960s resulted in the text; *A Teachers Handbook to Elementary Social Studies: An Inductive Approach* by Hilda Taba, Mary Durkin, Jack Fraenkel and Tony McNaughton.

There were two streams of thought regarding the social studies curriculum in the United States. One was the idea that social studies should focus on the ideas of effective citizenship and citizenship education that would focus on values shared by all social groups. The second stream of thought on the “The New Social Studies” favoured in depth coverage of a few areas of content, with learning sequences based on inquiry and discovery. For many reasons the movement failed to become fully established in the United States but it became a catalyst for review, discussion and change in New Zealand.
By 1961 New Zealand Social Studies reform was already well under way. The introduction of a new syllabus for elementary schools incorporated the application of concepts that were present in other social sciences.

“Social studies is a study of people: of what they are like – their beliefs, their aspirations, their pleasures, the problems they have to face; of how and where they live, the work they do, and ways in which they organise themselves.” Social Studies in the Primary School (1961 p1).

More importantly the aims of this syllabus revolved around children taking a responsible role in the society they lived in, and encouraged children to take an intelligent and sympathetic interest in other cultures. These components were developed further in the 1977 syllabus guidelines and termed as the “Four Aspects of Social Studies”: Knowledge, Abilities, Values and Social Action.

Tony McNaughton, who was one of the writers of the “Teachers Handbook to Elementary Social Studies” returned to New Zealand in the 1970s and was active in ensuring “The New Social Studies “continued to dictate curriculum development and design. An intensive process of curriculum and professional development saw the emergence of “The New Social Studies” in a New Zealand context in the form of the Form 1-4 Social Studies Syllabus Guidelines published in 1977. This was really the first step to create a unified curriculum in New Zealand since the 1961 syllabus

Schools had received various discussion pamphlets and starter units with some of the most useful being the “Faces 4, 5, 6 and 7.” However, even though these did mention the skills of social studies, they provided little guidance for teachers who wanted to know how they could teach these skills. The justification for inclusion of these skills was evident in the 1977 curriculum document where they are referred to on page 4 of the Form 1-4 Social Studies Syllabus guidelines:

“Social studies should make students and teachers look at and think about human behaviour realistically objectively and with sensitivity. It should help us make decisions about our personal and social development and about our participation in a changing society
Knowledge, Abilities, Values and Social Action are complementary and inseparable aspects of social studies. Together they should help students and teachers towards a better understanding of themselves and others, and of their involvement in society.”

Trends in Social Studies Development indicate that the 1970s and 1980s emphasised Decision making but as Barr (1992) argues this was not always clearly connected to content and knowledge, or learning activities. Social decision- making in Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum 1997 is described as:

Involving students in applying their knowledge and developing their skills as they make decisions about actions… (p.18)

In the 1977 syllabus, the terms social action and social participation refer to the types of skills that are evident in today’s social studies curriculum under the umbrella of the social decision- making process. In Faces 6, the ideas included in social participation overlap into the co-operative skills. The 1977 syllabus, states that this overlap is to be expected and that the skills are inseparable and of equal importance. The definition of social action in the 1977 syllabus includes the phrases “participation in the affairs of the community” and “students realise that they can contribute to the life of their community.” These lead into the inception of the Action element of social decision making. The following diagram shows how the action aspect is an integral factor in the process of decision- making. Without action the decision- making process is unreal or invalid.
The Social Decision Making Process

Developing Awareness / Exploring an Issue
What is the nature of the issue or problem?

Processing / Judging
What will be an effective Decision or action?

Planning an Action
How will I communicate or Carry out my decision or Action?

Evaluation / Reflection
How effective was the Decision or action?

Deciding on and Action
How can we make a Difference?

The Draft Curriculum

The 1980s saw a revision of the whole curriculum. A Department of Education publication in 1989 – “A Guide to the Syllabuses” began the process of updating New Zealand Social Studies to meet the needs of a more diverse and changing society.
As emphasis on social issues evolved to become common place in our classrooms, social studies was the subject that expanded to incorporate these issues.
Examples of this in the New Zealand Curriculum were Taha Maori, equity issues, peace studies, and conservation issues. The subject became so broad that it began to lose credibility in some educational and political circles, as it was perceived as having no real depth or defined boundaries. Social studies was often seen as the “ragbag of issues which schools think should be covered somewhere but have no clear place within the traditional subject areas.”
With the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework in the 1990s, the process of developing a social studies curriculum with essential learning areas and prescribed achievement objectives began. The Draft Social Studies Statement (1994) mirrored the curriculum framework in its inclusive presentation format and content. There was a concerted effort to be pro-active in gender and culture inclusiveness. The trialling of this curriculum in schools resulted in positive feedback although there were many New Right concerns about the fact that the draft had a style and content that was perceived as being too far to the Left. Conservative criticism noted the use of the terms “Aotearoa New Zealand” and “Pakeha” and considered them unacceptable. Submissions on the draft were mostly of a negative nature, even though there were many people - Maori and teachers in particular, who liked many aspects of the draft but didn’t feel the need to make positive submissions.

The Education Forum commissioned English academic Geoffrey Partington to write their submission. Principals, Company Directors and Chief Executives backed this forum. This submission attacked the drafts’ so called preference for indigenous peoples and further commented about the “reluctance to confront the unattractive features of traditional Polynesian culture” (Education Forum 1995 p ii). The Forum clearly wanted a more empathetic approach to capitalism and individualism. Other submissions saw the draft as having shortcomings in the treatment of economics and in particular that students should be taught to recognise the advantages of competitive market conditions.

Although the submissions against the draft curriculum may have originated from different perspectives there seemed to be a common belief in the fact that knowledge ahead of skills should be delivered in our classrooms. The skills of critical thinking and social decision-making may have ultimately threatened the earlier knowledge emphasis that had existed previously. This change in emphasis may have been too different to the wider educational community, or perhaps it was perceived as a vehicle that could eventually change the current arrangements of power and wealth in the New Zealand economy. With such obvious dissension in the community the newly appointed Minister of Education, the Hon. Wyatt Creech, asked the government to commission a redraft with opportunity for feedback.
In 1996 the release of the “revised draft” and further reaction illustrated the polarisation of opinion that had occurred during the time of debate following the submissions on the first draft. Whereas the first draft was seen as being too open to interpretation, the revised draft seemed to be too specific and did not give enough scope in some of the strands. The first draft highlighted the advantages of open ended inquiry while attempting produce a new type of school leaver who had to exist in a bi-cultural society and be sympathetic to feminist viewpoints.

The revised draft sought to be more specific with a reformulated section on skills to include more research and inquiry skills. European culture and citizenship were prominent features of this curriculum, and there was a decided lack of appreciation of the culture that existed before a British colony was established, Harrison cited in Benson and Openshaw (1998). A number of supporters of the first draft claimed that this revised version illustrated that the Ministry had given into pressure from the Education Forum and the “New Right”.

By early 1997, the debate showed no signs of abating. The Ministry could have at this point chosen to abandon Social studies altogether as suggested by the Education Forum but this move would have been contrary to the New Zealand Curriculum guidelines. The final option was to have a third revised statement. In October 1997 the final version of Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum was launched.

**The 1997 Social Studies Curriculum**

The document was a compromise in many ways. Its content and style steered a middle course between the extremes of the first two drafts. One of the new additions to the structure of the curriculum was a new skills aspect that clearly defines inquiry, values exploration and social decision -making as the processes by which the aim of social studies education can be achieved. The importance of these processes is made clear by the fact that there is a separate section allotted to them with their own set of achievement objectives and indicators. This was a different approach from the 1977 syllabus, which had referred to these skills under the general heading of the “Four Aspects of Social Studies” 1977 Syllabus Guidelines, Forms 1-4 (1977 p 17-18). However the Knowledge, Abilities, Values and Social Action mentioned in the 1977
syllabus had definite parallels with the three processes of Inquiry, Values Exploration and Social decision-making that were termed as processes in the 1997 curriculum document. The Social Studies Processes are divided into 4 achievement level and there are specific Achievement Objectives for each component of these Processes. (See appendix 1).

The importance of these processes is implied within the parameters of the social studies curriculum. This aspect of the curriculum document gives opportunity for students to learn and think and act as responsible citizens who have opportunity to make thoughtful and critical social decisions. Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum (SSNZC) recognises that knowledge and processes are both important and that the development of inquiry, values and social decision making (the three processes) are tantamount in enabling students to develop the skills necessary to achieve in social studies. This research will focus on the achievement of the social - decision making process.
Chapter 2

Social Decision -Making in the New Zealand Curriculum

In this chapter I will discuss the process of social decision-making in more detail. The following aspects will be addressed in order to explain the issues that surround this process:

• *Links with other processes*
• *The Action Aspect*
• *The context for teaching social decision-making*

**Links with Other Processes**

The precursors of today’s curriculum dealt with social decision-making in two very different ways. The first draft highlights social action as being on an equal par with knowledge and ideas and values. The decision-making aspect is seen as being underpinned by the essential skills. In the revised draft the term “social action” was not mentioned. The curriculum that omitted social decision-making would not provide students with the opportunity to develop an awareness of social issues so that they can contribute in some way to positive social change. I believe that social action was perceived as a way that people in the future could influence society, and this was not what certain sectors of the educational and economic circles wanted.

Social decision-making is a process that, like the other processes – values exploration and inquiry necessitates the development of essential skills. Examples showing the relationship between the essential skills and the process of social decision-making can be seen on page 19 of Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum. The rationale for including social decision-making as an integral process of social studies education is seen in the aim of Social Studies and described as a need for students to “participate in a changing society as informed, confident and responsible citizens.” SSNZC (p8).
In some ways it is regrettable that the term “action” has been removed from the social action label or as we now know it; social decision-making. Real Action is what SDM is all about. An Australian text for teaching Social Studies links social criticism and social action together. Marsh, (1987) states that the central goal of social action is to help students recognise conflict in their society and search for ways to resolve these situations. An excerpt from Australian social studies planning kit reinforces this view relating to social action: “I know what’s going on, I’m part of it, and I’m doing something about it” cited in O’Connell, (The Advisor 1999).

Carol Mutch, (1999) elucidates the links between the three processes. To summarise, she maintains that the inquiry process involves students collecting, analysing, and reflecting on the process and the product. The values exploration process has students clarifying their own values and those of others. Social decision-making is the next step in the process as it relies on the information collected and reflected on in the previous two processes so that an appropriate course of action can be taken.

**The Action Aspect**

In this section I will expound the current views about social decision making and give examples as to how they are interpreted and implemented by various educational writers and teachers.

Social action or social decision-making has been accepted as an important aspect of social studies curricula. However, it is a skill that has remained relatively undeveloped. As the joint author of the University of Waikato Position Paper on Social Studies, Paul Keown contributed to the ongoing debate about social studies. The paper was commissioned by the Ministry of Education in order to provide advice on the nature and purpose of social studies.

Keown’s involvement with this paper and contributions to social studies in both research and active participation at all levels of planning and delivery lends weight to his ideas and implementations in this subject. In his paper, “The Nature of Social Studies and Role of the Values Exploration and Social Decision-Making Processes.” Keown (1999) points out that although the term social decision-making is used in our
curriculum document, the details regarding the action end of social decision-making remain circumspect. It is evident that teaching social decision-making skills is seen as problematic for teachers and schools. The writers of the “Position Paper” (1997) comment that the process of social action is poorly developed and frequently misunderstood by those who are expected to incorporate it into social studies programmes. The implementation of a new curriculum has not really changed that aspect of this process.

The action in social decision-making is the most important part. Edward de Bono writes:

“Tooften education is about description and analysis. That is the academic tradition and they are easier to teach than teaching how to act. But the real world involves action as well as knowledge.” Cited in The Advisor (1999)

De Bono isn’t a social studies educator but he is one of several outside this field who emphasise the importance of lateral thinking and the development of the information processing skills that the labour force in general will need to be equipped with now and in the future. Real action needs to be linked to real situations and involve students in making a difference that matters. The challenge for teachers is to build the possibility of social action into units of work so that the action is linked to the knowledge that students gain.

However, although real action has to be linked to the context of learning, it has to be about ethical decision-making and informed participation, not just as a service to the community. Kay Harrison voices her concern about this growing dimension in the United States; she terms it “service learning”. Helping those less fortunate than ourselves by performing acts of service in their communities, does not teach students about the injustices in our world. If the action is out of context then it is not the result of social analysis and consequent social criticism. “Students are not learning what is wrong and needs changing; they are learning about a necessary component in our society – the charitable sector” Harrison (1998 p10). Although responsible social action needs to have a knowledge base and a sense of agency it must be meaningful and effective in the face of injustice and inequality.
There is the very real fear that student participation in social action may address a problem that has a certain amount of risk attached to it. For example, if it appears to the community that the teacher has encouraged inappropriate political activity, this may cause a negative response towards the teacher or the school. Judging from the discussions I have had with my own staff and comments that social studies programme developers have made I have gathered that teachers and schools may be unwilling to promote social action in any depth because they know that there is a chance the students will move out of the neutral zone that is acceptable to the wider community.

If real action takes place, and the students begin to involve themselves in community issues in order to solve a problem or assist in contributing ideas to generate some solutions there is a chance that this will happen. The questions about what is appropriate and who are the judges of appropriateness must be considered.

**The Context for Social Decision-making**

For students to participate effectively in social decision-making, they need to work with factual information to construct their own concepts about a wide range of local and global issues. They will repeat this process again and again to assist them in refining their analytical skills in order to be able to apply them to different situations. Real social action and decision making is the result of an understanding of the concepts involved and a clarification of the students own values and willingness to hold onto them as they apply them to a specific situation by carrying out an action. This presumes that students have an ability to learn about and conceptualize difficult and abstract ideas about social situations.

Social decision-making encourages and enables students to participate in their community; this brings up images of lobbying, voting, petitions and public advocacy. In this light the skills needed for social decision-making are directed students whose cognitive processes can cope with investigative learning. The table below shows that the skills involved in social decision making are usually reserved for levels 3 and above in SSNZC. Paul Keown has adapted these processes.
Those processes aimed at level 3 upwards in SSNZC have been levelled for pupils at all levels but “appropriate to their age and abilities” Keown (1999 p.64).

**The Nature of the Processes.**

**Social Decision Making Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSNZC Process: Students will develop skills as they make decisions about possible social action.</th>
<th>Adapted Process (Keown 1999). Students will develop skills as they make decisions and carry out social action. (All pupils at all levels but in away appropriate to their age and abilities)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify issues and problems (All) -and their causes (level 3 upward)</td>
<td>Identify and investigate an issue or problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop solutions to relevant problems (all) Use criteria to evaluate a range of options (level 3 upward)</td>
<td>Devise and explore a variety of possible options and solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make choice about possible action(All) ... and justify this choice (level 3 upward)</td>
<td>Establish criteria for judging the merits of various options and solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan possible actions in relation to identified problems or issues and identify the likely consequences of these actions. (level 5 upward)</td>
<td>Decide on and justify a preferred option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect upon and evaluate steps taken and findings.</td>
<td>Design, implement and reflect on and evaluate an action plan and its outcomes.</td>
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Perhaps the most important feature of Keown’s adaptation of the process related to the curriculum levels is that it is possible to implement more complex aspects of the process at any stage. This in no way disregards the curriculum levels but does involve teachers in looking for opportunities to extend thinking in ways that are appropriate to the needs and experiences of the pupils.

NEMP assessment tasks do not relate directly to the New Zealand curriculum but rather to a framework that brings into focus important dimensions of learning such as skills, knowledge and understanding. The tasks support practice in schools and are in line with current theory in student achievement. Using these tasks to gather data for this research adds strength and validity to the rationale and results of my study.
The following excerpt from the 1997 assessment cycle clearly depicts how these skills or processes are not regarded as a separate entity of learning but rather add to the total picture of student achievement in the skills of social studies.

The example of the NEMP task *Roller Bladers* is used to show a clear parallel between the process steps that Keown has adapted and the process of social decision making that students are expected to achieve in. In this activity students watch a short video clip which shows some roller bladers having problems using their roller blades safely in a school. The students are asked to work through a sequence of problem identification and problem solving processes.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

This review will provide contextual information to highlight the difficulties that have been endured for those implementing the process of social decision-making in the curriculum. I will cover early global studies in this skill and then focus on research in New Zealand. To conclude this literature review I will focus on the information that has arisen from research regarding the most effective approach to teaching social decision-making.

Early Studies in Social Decision Making

There is very little written on social decision-making as an isolated skill within the parameters of the New Zealand curriculum. However early research on thinking and decision-making skills was evident as early as the 1930s in the United States. Reviews of methods and materials used for developing critical thinking in students became part of the empirical work of the period. Glaser cited in Shaver (1991) carried out measurement of the effectiveness of these methods and materials. He concluded that the direct instruction of thinking skills improved high school students’ ability to think critically.

More pertinently, Hyram 1957 (cited in Shaver 1991) researched the upper grades of an elementary school to see if these age groups were capable of increased achievement in these skills. Hyram’s experiment which lasted four months substantiated Glaser’s 1941 work and concluded in the in favour of direct teaching of critical thinking. Later in 1963 Taba advanced this theory by defining learning as a constructive activity rather than a responsive one. In constructive activities learning is a function that occurs as the learners try to derive meaning from the experience. This was an important development in the thinking about decision-making in social studies as it provided the rationale and procedures for embedding instruction on thinking processes within instruction on content objectives.
Although some of these studies are over 50 years old they still have relevance in the analysis of the social studies curriculum and in particular to the development of the social decision-making process.

Research on early learning suggests that by age seven children are capable of formulating accurate and abstract concepts. Armento, (1986). Furthermore, there is evidence that if children are involved in well planned and structured activities at an early age they are they could learn more difficult and abstract concepts much earlier than expected. Rice (1996).

**Recent Research in New Zealand**

In the 1980s the Department of Education approved a survey on Social studies subjects. The aim of these surveys was to provide teachers and the Government factual information that would be useful when planning future teaching and learning programmes. The survey was guided by the following questions:

i) What are aims and objectives of social studies, and are teachers aware of these aims?

ii) What happens in classrooms, what skills and activities are students involved in?

iii) How do students perform? What skills, attitudes and knowledge do they acquire?

iv) What is the expectation of the community regarding the teaching and learning of these subjects?

In relation to Social decision making or higher level thinking skills the results of this survey showed that there were few lessons planned for the development of such skills and students had few opportunities to practice higher level thinking and social and valuing skills.

In response to the *Report on the Social Studies Subjects* Surveys (1987) and possibly because of the lack of availability of data on the specific topic of social studies skills.
Graeme Whitehead conducted a research to determine the balance of skills taught and assessed in social studies programmes. His findings showed that in the early years of schooling the focus was on social and co-operative skills with an increase of the inclusion of critical and creative thinking skills from year 4 onwards. In years 5 & 6 values exploration started to have more emphasis but decision-making remained low. By year 7 & 8 there was an overall increased emphasis on all the thinking skills except for decision-making which was less well represented.

The data indicated that there was an obvious discrepancy between what was taught and assessed in the early and middle years of schooling compared to years 7 & 8. One suggested reason for this was that the revised draft which was in use at the time of this research, gave little or no guidance on how to teach and assess values and social decision-making.

Although the current curriculum identifies the key elements of social decision-making from level 1 upwards it does not define or give guidance for students below level 3 to develop the more difficult “thinking skills” like conceptual thinking and originality. Barr (1993). As noted earlier in the literature there is evidence to support students successfully achieving in these higher order thinking at an early age skills if they are involved in well planned and structured activities that are aimed at teaching more complex and sophisticated skills.

Literature gives some indication of reasons why there is such a superficial treatment of this skill in many classrooms in New Zealand. Keown believes that knowledge and facts are seen as being much more “rational, predictable, reliable and trustworthy” Keown, (p.139 cited in Benson & Openshaw 1998) than the more unreliable nature of feelings and opinions. Teachers in classrooms also reinforce this tradition as factual teaching is trusted and easier to teach and assess. Gilbert, (1996) maintains that assessment of social action requires clarification of the knowledge and skills in relation to appropriate activities. The appropriateness is addressed to the particular group of students, their age, how well the nature of the activity suits the learning needs and desired outcome within a meaningful context.
Depth over Content

Research shows that teachers achieve better outcomes in social action when they cover less content but enable their students to research and develop an issue in depth. It poses the question “What knowledge is of most worth?” Researchers, (Cornbleth, 1985, McPeck 1981 and Newmann 1988) cited in Parker in Shaver (1991) are of the opinion that thinking and decision-making objectives are best achieved by immersing students in limited content. The review in Olsen 1995 entitled; Less can be More in the Promotion of Thinking supports this theory. A practical example of this theory which illustrates techniques for developing an issue in depth is the Cycling Crisis which was an activity involving students in a real community issue in order to develop their decision-making skills. This activity was used at the Waikato University School of Education and highlights sophisticated decision making activities and skills. (Keown 1999).

The activity begins with the discussion of a newspaper headline that highlights a conflict in the community between, motorists, child cyclists and pedestrians. Students set about analysing the problems for all involved by using various strategies such as de Bono’s six hat thinking. They must research, discuss, and debate as part of process in order to come up with a proposed action. The strategy then moves students into finding a way of deciding on the right action and involves them in rating their decision against set criteria. Finally the students must make a decision that will be acceptable and justify the choice. While this sequence of decision-making was based around a safe cycling issue it can be applied to almost any issue that involves social decision-making.
Chapter 4

Methodology
As a trained administrator of the National Education Monitoring Project I initiated my research project with a good knowledge of the monitoring programme and its potential value for teachers.
In the first section of this chapter I will provide contextual background information about NEMP and their monitoring processes.

I will then report on the key aspects of my methodology, specifically:

- Criteria for tasks
- Selection of tasks
- Task description

National Education Monitoring Project

New Zealand’s National Education Monitoring Project started in 1993 with the aim of providing a national “snapshot” of children’s knowledge and skills. Because NEMP carry out their curriculum assessments in four year cycles, the information gained is useful in identifying trends in student achievement.

The main goal of national monitoring is to provide detailed information about what children can do so that patterns of performance can be recognised, successes celebrated and desirable changes to educational practices and resources identified and implemented.

Flockton & Crooks (1997p.4)

The Aims of NEMP

There are two aims of national monitoring; the first is to provide feedback to policy makers, planners and educators in order to guide curriculum development and resourcing. The second is to provide the public i.e.; government, tax payers and parents with information about how the education system is performing. These two
issues – supporting the teaching and learning process and accountability underpin the purpose of National Education monitoring and add validity to my decision to use NEMP materials for this research.

The Monitoring Process – Sampling

NEMP monitors student achievement at two levels, year 4 and year 8 in all of the essential curriculum areas. The 1440 year 4 students and 1440 year 8 students are randomly selected nationwide and represent 2.5 percent of the children at those levels in New Zealand schools. Not all students will attempt the same assessment tasks; the 1440 students selected in the main sample in each group are then divided into three groups of 480 students in order to be able to collect a wide amount of information.

Ethics

The process of involving students in the National Monitoring Project requires parental permission and provides the availability of an 0800 number as well as extensive information packs for schools and parents. The students are identified by numbers in the videos and pencil and paper tasks. There is no record of the names of the students or the schools evident in the viewing of the tapes.

The issue of ethics is well considered and covered under the NEMP umbrella. The Probe study that has been undertaken as part of this research stipulates confidentiality for any information that is not otherwise considered as part of the public domain. (Clause 7. sub contracting agreement NEMP Probe Study 2002).
**Task Approaches**

Four different task approaches are used by NEMP in order to allow for differing learning styles and assessment information requirements. Each student was expected to spend about an hour working in each format.

The Four types of tasks are:

- One to One interview – student works individually through a series of tasks
- Stations – students worked independently moving through a series of activity stations
- Team – Four students worked collaboratively sometimes supervised by a teacher on tasks
- Independent – Students worked individually on paper and pencil tasks

The one to one tasks and team tasks are both videoed and involved specific opportunities for students to explain their reasons for answers. This was an easy medium for me to observe and record my information so the choices for tasks were limited to these two task types.

**Criteria for Tasks**

The marking of NEMP tasks requires specific criteria for each activity, depending on what skills or knowledge are being assessed. For the purposes of this research I considered it necessary to specify a marking checklist that looked at the skills of social decision-making (SDM) in isolation. SDM skills have clearly set achievement objectives in the New Zealand Curriculum, however they are often difficult to assess, because of the very real and necessary overlap into co-operative skills. Throughout the literature, there are several “indicators” that stand unaccompanied and are applicable to social decision making only.

The three aspects that are common to all descriptors of the social decision-making processes are:

- Identifying a problem.
- Suggesting some strategies to solve the problem.
- Making a decision to help prevent/fix/minimise the problem.
The lists of skills that describe the Social decision-making process all start with the **identification** of a problem. All of the literature mentions a decision-making process that involves critical thinking and evaluating.

The Curriculum document describes the process as:

“Students identify and clarify a social issue then suggest a range of possibilities/strategies to address this issue.” *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum. (1997 p.18)*

More specifically the Position Paper 1997 (p6) lists these skills as:

- Problem solving.
- Decision-making.
- Critical reflection.
- Evaluation of options.
- Co-operation and leadership.

Similarly The Participatory Research Network (1982) cited in Keown, (1999) involves pupils in a sequence including:

- Problem identification.
- Analysis.
- Planning.
- Action.
- Evaluation and reflection.

The three most important aspects that could pragmatically be isolated, assessed and collated were: **identifying, suggesting and decision-making**. All three are fundamental to social decision-making but each skill can be assessed as a single component.

These are the skills that are clearly defined in the process indicators of the curriculum document at levels 1–4.
Students will demonstrate skills as they make decisions about possible social action by

• Identifying issues and problems (identifying)
• Develop solutions (suggesting)
• Make choices about possible action (decision-making)

SSNZC (1997 p 52-53)

Through my involvement on the social studies contract I had developed a school programme to ensure coverage of the three social studies processes. This in-depth knowledge of the processes in the social studies curriculum enabled me to recognise and select which skills to focus on in order to give consistency and accuracy in this research. All three of the above skills were also present in all of the literature that was reviewed in order to clarify a definition of what social decision making entailed.

Selection of Tasks

I made contact with the NEMP office in Dunedin, following the acceptance of my research proposal. I notified them of the purpose of my study and the support that I would require to carry out my research. Specifically, these were examples of assessment tasks that might indicate student achievement in social decision-making. A list of 44 possible tasks was supplied. (See appendix 2)

A date for viewing these tasks was set and I travelled to the NEMP offices in Dunedin to view the samples over a three-day period. I viewed a sample of each task along with its marking sheet that was supplied with the task. Notes were made as to how many times the skills of identifying, suggesting and decision-making arose. In order for a task to be considered for selection all three of these skills had to be noted.

Additional notes were made about the possibility for other problems, suggestions and decisions that may not have been mentioned but may well be with another sample of the same task. It was important for the tasks chosen to present as many opportunities for presentation of skills as possible. Each of the tasks then had a running commentary. The following task illustrates an example of the types of responses that I was able to identify.
**School Canteen** - task name

This task showed a video clip of a school canteen where there were teachers pushing in ahead of children, orders were not kept for people and students were pushing in front of each other.

After watching the video clip the students were asked the following questions:

*Question 1. What were the problems at the canteen?*
*Question 2. How do you think the problems could be fixed?*
*Question 3. What are some ways to let other students have a say about how the problems could be fixed?*
*Question 4. List three good reasons for having rules.*

All of the questions in this task provide opportunity to identify problems, suggest solutions and decide on a way that the problems could be fixed.

Some typical responses under each of these three headings were:

**Problems identified**
- Teachers pushing in
- Orders not being kept for people
- People pushing in
- Some people going without lunch

**Suggestions**
- 2 separate lines
- Teachers in own line
- Extra food
- Kinder canteen lady
- A queue with iron bars

**Decision making**
Teachers having to place their order in staffroom every morning, a student will collect the total order and money for the canteen.

**Other aspects not mentioned**

- Rules are needed
- Parents could be involved

The task provided me with enough information about what students can do but it also highlighted a lack of skill development in the process of social decision-making. The decision to have teachers place their order in the staffroom did not come from the original list of possible solutions and therefore did not provide the best solution for the bigger problem. This was the type of information that had implications for skill development within the process of social decision-making and would therefore be useful to me in the context of my research. When analysing the task commentary sheets it was obvious that some didn’t have all three aspects of the decision-making process. Only tasks that presented students with opportunities for identifying, suggesting and deciding were kept. This then resulted in 14 tasks that needed to be further analysed.

These were:

1. Working together
2. Equal and Different
3. Roller Blades
4. Saikaloni
5. Tree troubles
6. We Need a Leader
7. Refugees
8. Drinking Fountain
9. A Good Team Member
10. Children and Teachers
11. Ripeka
12. Playground
13. School Canteen
14. Disaster

From there these were sorted according to which activities provided equal opportunity for defining, suggesting and decision making to be evident. Final choices involved
two 1-1 tasks and two team tasks. These were “Saikaloni,” “We Need a Leader,” “Playground” and “Tree Troubles.”

The 1-1 tasks We Need a Leader & Saikaloni were administered to both year 8 and year 4 pupils so that would give a good comparison of skill levels between the year groups.

The two team tasks were different for year 8 and year 4. Playground was chosen for the year 4 task and Tree troubles for year 8. Both of the team tasks were link tasks which meant that the identical task had been administered to a group of year 8 students (or year 4 in the case of the year 4 task) in the 1997 NEMP cycle. This would give some indication of changes in achievement over time and could be used to add to the total amount of information as well as using the results to assess trends in achievement.

**Sampling**

From the four tasks chosen I requested a random sample of 50 for each activity. In total, that meant 200 representations of student responses. The supervisor of this research suggested 50 as a manageable number when looking specifically at any one task. The sample of 50 was made up of a comparison of 25 year 4 and year 8 responses for two of the activities, and a comparison of 25 1997 results against 25 2001 results in the same year groups. It would also give an indication of the achievement of year 4 students compared with year 8 students and look at any trends in achievement over time. Within the scope of that selection it would be possible to gain an accurate indication of the level of social decision-making skills that students are achieving at in terms of the wider definition of social decision-making. National Monitoring uses carefully selected random samples of students and national samples equate to about 6% of children in New Zealand Schools. The 200 samples chosen only represent a small percentage of the 2880 children tested each year but they were indicative of children in any New Zealand school.

**Data Gathering**
NEMP arranged the random sampling of 50 tapes in each of the 4 tasks and sent those and the viewing equipment to the researcher. The tapes were viewed task by task over a five week period. The marking sheets that were created for each task provided space for the number of each tape in order to ensure that none were repeated or omitted. A positive or negative column under each of the three indicators provided space for recording whether the responses provided evidence of any of the skills. This made it easy to total the positive responses at the completion of each set of tasks. (See Appendix 3)

**Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology**

I couldn’t help but perceive the differences in co-operative skills and other learning strategies that were apparent when viewing the tapes. It became obvious that certain tasks lent themselves to allow students to identify problems more easily than others. Judging from the students’ interaction and the quality of the responses it was also evident that some tasks were easier for year 8 students to achieve than the year 4 students. Although the results are collated and presented quantitatively, the anecdotal comments that were noted on the sheets will be discussed in the results. An assistant was used to evaluate student performance against the criteria and to cross check results with the researcher. This provided a degree of collaborative marking which helped clarify the interpretations of the tasks over the five weeks it took to view the selection of tapes

**Description of the Four Tasks**

**Saikaloni One to One Task** - 25 year 4 students & 25 year 8 students

This was a video presentation of a girl who was upset because the teacher couldn’t pronounce her name properly. She was named Saikaloni because she was born in a cyclone in which her uncle was killed. When the teacher tried to pronounce her name – “Saikaloni” she would get tongue-tied and mispronounce it. The rest of the class would laugh and this made Saikaloni upset and hurt. She used to like school but this has made her hate it.
The student was asked to identify the problems in this scenario. A typical response was to mention that Saikaloni had lost her uncle or a relative in the cyclone. The issue of the teacher mispronouncing her name was usually identified through the fact that Saikaloni disliked children laughing at her. When suggesting ways to help Saikaloni, most of the year 4 responses mentioned involving her mother. There was evidence throughout all of the responses regarding empathy towards others feelings. Some of the terms used like “The Principal should talk to the class about name calling and bullying” and “Saikaloni should tell them to stop laughing and tell them she doesn’t like it” are evident of the awareness of bullying and strategies to stop such behaviour in school cultures. One year 8 student out of the total 50 suggested that right at the beginning of the year the teacher should check her roll and learn the names of her students. Other suggestions about this issue were focused around how to prevent this sort of thing happening in the future.

A number of both year 8 and year 4 students mentioned a co-operative approach with the teacher asking Saikaloni about her name and how to pronounce. The name Saikaloni, the girl in the video and the place where the cyclone occurred are all Samoan. This may have had some bearing in the achievement or lack of achievement in students being able to relate to this situation. This was highlighted by a Samoan boy in year 4, who very quickly associated his own culture and memories of time in Samoa with this scenario.

Year 4 did not score over 50% in the decision making aspect of this activity. Only 2 year 4 students were able to make a decision about how to stop this problem happening again. 14 year 8 students were able to make decisions that would be helpful in providing a solution to the problem.
### Saikaloni Year 4 & Year 8 Examples of student Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying Problem</th>
<th>Suggesting solution</th>
<th>Make a Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Children laugh when the teacher says her name.</td>
<td>The Principal should talk to the class about bullying.</td>
<td>Teachers should check their rolls at the beginning of the year and learn how to say all the children’s names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saikaloni doesn’t like school anymore.</td>
<td>Saikaloni should tell her class to stop laughing because it makes her feel bad.</td>
<td>Teachers should ask children how to teach them to pronounce their names if there are any difficult ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saikaloni lost her relatives in a cyclone.</td>
<td>Saikaloni should get her Mother to come and talk to the teacher.</td>
<td>The Principal should be strict about not allowing bullying like this in the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total appropriate responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 Year 8</td>
<td>Total Year 4 Year 8</td>
<td>Total Year 4 Year 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 23</td>
<td>16 19</td>
<td>4 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Graph 1.
**We Need a Leader - One to One Task** - 25 year 4 students and 25 year 8 students

This was a video clip that showed a group of children trying to organise themselves into a sports practice. The end result shows children looking exasperated and one child stating the fact that they needed a leader. Students were asked why the children needed a leader. Even though this obvious part of the problem was identified the students had to identify specific problems that arose from the fact that there wasn’t any leadership. Responses recognised that the practice wasn’t happening and children were fighting and arguing with each other. The suggestions aspect of this scenario focused on students saying what they thought a leader could do in this situation. “Tell them what to do’ was evident in both year groups. “Help organise them into teams” “Make sure that there is fair play.” There was a clear gender perspective inherent in this tape as the majority of the answers regarding what a leader could do came quickly from both year 4 and year 8 boys. There was an added understanding amongst the boys that the teams should be playing games that gave the children catching and throwing practice. In general boys were more confident in this task than girls. The decision making aspect of this task involved a degree of critical thinking as the students had to recognise and state the qualities needed in a person to be a good leader. Less than 50% of both year 8 and year 4 students were able to do this.
We Need a Leader Year 4 & Year 8: Examples of student response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying Problem</th>
<th>Suggesting a Solution</th>
<th>Make a Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one is doing anything.</td>
<td>Choose teams.</td>
<td>Have a trustworthy person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no team.</td>
<td>Make up some games to practice skills.</td>
<td>Some one needs to know how to play the game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are fighting.</td>
<td>Have “fair play.”</td>
<td>The person needs to be nice and “fair.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total appropriate responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Graph 2.
**Playground Group activity** - 25 year 4 groups in 1997 and 25 year 4 groups in 2001

This was a video of a playground full of children clambering over playground equipment. Students were asked to identify the problem that they saw. Over 50% of students in both 1997 and 2001 were able to do this. “Children not taking turns” “Fighting over the playground equipment” Suggestions as how to fix this problem were much higher in the 2001 group than the 1997 group. There were lots of general ideas like “respect other people” and “be safe” in the 1997 group. In the 2001 group there was a noticeable improvement in the way the students related to each other – the co-operative rule of facing everyone in the group and eye contact was much more evident and there was mention amongst students of using “co-operative skills.” The 2001 group made more references to taking turns, student or class supervision and or adult supervision. There were three references made to rules that were already in place in schools in order to prevent this type of situation.

The second part of the video required the students to make a decision about who would do what in a scenario where one child had fallen off the equipment and appeared to be unconscious. This was where the students did not achieve as well as they had in previous aspects of this task. There seemed to be a problem with assigning roles to individuals, most students said that they would go and get a teacher, and some said one student could stay with the hurt child. Although the students were clearly asked what each person in the group would do in this situation (implying that there should be a different role for each group member), and were given time to discuss and assign these roles, there was little evidence of students thinking through the consequences and importance of these roles in a real life situation. See Appendix 4 for the NEMP summary of this task in the 2001 Assessment publication.
### Playground Year 4 1997 & 2001

Examples of student response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying Problem</th>
<th>Suggesting Solution</th>
<th>Make a Decision About Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Children not taking turns.</em></td>
<td>Take turns.</td>
<td>Go and get Principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>There is fighting in the playground.</em></td>
<td>Make a line.</td>
<td>Ring 111 for an ambulance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>People will get hurt.</em></td>
<td>Build more playground Equipment.</td>
<td>Stay with injured person.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total appropriate responses</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Graph 3.

The group of students were shown a video clip of some children and teachers talking about a tree that was growing very close to their classroom. The teacher was complaining that the tree was noisy as it scraped against the side of the classroom and the students complained that its branches were blocking light from coming into the class. There were other viewpoints considered in this task. The local Kaumatua who said that the tree was planted in scared ground, the community who had planted the tree to honour those who had taken part in the war, the caretaker of the school who was sick of tidying up the leaves that it shed and the board of trustees member who pointed out that the tree provided a sun safe shade. The students in the group were asked to take on one of these roles and argue their case. They then had to come to some agreement as to what to do with the tree.

This was an interesting situation because the students already had some direction as to where to go with their discussion and many of them enlarged and built on their role plays. In both year groups the consequences of the decisions were considered as they returned to the original problems that were identified. There was a noticeable increase in reflective thinking processes in the 2001 group. Comments like “If we cut the tree down that will make the teachers and students happy but what about the community? And the cost – who will cut it down?” “Perhaps we could sell the wood as a fundraiser?” “If we get the care taker to cut it back regularly then we will be able to keep the tree and help the teachers and students have more light and less noise in their classroom.”

Other issues that came out of this discussion were

- The role of the caretaker – is it in his job description to keep the grounds tidy?
- The tree keeps the school looking beautiful
- The waste of power that is used on heating and lighting in the classroom because of the tree.
- The board of trustees are under financial pressure
- The rising rate of skin cancer

All very valid points, but they made for difficult decision-making. Most groups came to a decision to keep the tree and get it trimmed, but some decided to replant it elsewhere. This scenario provided the students with a starting point and a model for their thinking processes. Both 1997 and 2001 scored over 50% in their totals with the 2001 year achieving a slightly higher rate in identifying specific problems and suggesting solutions. See appendix 5 for the NEMP summary of this task in the 2001 assessment publication.
### 1997 & 2001 Examples of Student Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying Problem</th>
<th>Suggesting Solutions</th>
<th>Make a Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tree makes a noise when it scrapes against the building.</td>
<td>Cut it back and keep it trimmed.</td>
<td>Cut it down, and sell the wood for firewood. Use the money to buy another tree and get it blessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It cuts out the light, so the classroom is dark and cold.</td>
<td>Replant it away from any buildings.</td>
<td>Get the Board of Trustees to build a shade area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is planted in Tapu land.</td>
<td>Replace it with a smaller one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It gives us shade.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a special tree because it was planted to remind us of the war.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total appropriate responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997 2001</td>
<td>19 18</td>
<td>20 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 2001</td>
<td>15 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Graph 4.

![Tree Troubles Year 8 Graph](image)

**Chapter 5**


**Analysis of Data**

In general our students are achieving in the social decision-making process with the exception of the actual “decision” skill. This is the action part of this process and, as cited in the literature review, is the area where teachers are most unsure about teaching and assessing. It is also the most abstract and complex of the skills and obviously not consistently planned for in our classrooms and teaching units.

When the results are broken down to compare year 4 students with year 8 students there is an obvious difference between the achievements of the younger students in the decision-making skill. This may be in part due to the fact that the cognitive developmental characteristics of year 8 students can better understand the world through meta transformations or abstract thinking. According to Smith (1998) the characteristics of year 8 students involve combinational and prepositional thinking which means that students in this age group can test propositions and consider as many combinations as possible. In contrast, year 4 student’s cognitive development implies that they will need more concrete tasks to help them solve problems.

**Variables**

In looking at these results there are several variables that need to be taken into consideration. In comparing the achievement of year 4 and year 8 pupils their chronological age and cognitive abilities need to be considered. In line with the cognitive characteristics of year 4 students their attention span is not as long as those of the year 8 students and the actual decision-making aspect of the process was always at the end of the activity or task. This was not the fault of the task itself; it is just part of the sequence of the process of social decision-making. After considering the issue or problem and developing suggestions in line with their values, students will then set about reflecting on what the best decision will be (Mutch 1999). The onset of adolescence at year 8 level must be considered as a variable in terms of how to involve students in meaningful contexts.

Although they will have had experience in aspects of defining, suggesting and deciding it is now important for them to take action in a meaningful situation.
Hypothetical situations will not elicit the degree of involvement and depth of thought processes that is required. Students at this age need to be challenged to participate in educational experiences where they can see themselves in a real community context in which they have a meaningful role to play.

The timing or sequence of the activities has to be taken into consideration. In the 1-1 activities of which there are 23 over a time period of approximately sixty minutes. The activity that was used for this research was the last one in a sequence of 1-1 tasks. It was noted that over a half of the children in the year 4 group were very restless by this time and this may have resulted in the low score for decision making in this age group. Although schools arrange for NEMP administrators to have adequate space and uninterrupted time frames for testing, there are often two administrators working on different tasks with different students at the same time. In some cases, this caused a noise distraction. This was especially evident amongst the year 4 students, and disrupted their concentration.

**Associated Skills**

It was noticeable that co-operative skills had been specifically taught in both the 1997 and 2001 year 4 groups. Students reminded each other of the rules of co-operative learning with phrases like “Everyone must take a turn.” “Who will be the leader?” “Listen to everyone’s ideas.” Even though co-operative skills are not what this research looked at specifically, they are essential to the process of social decision-making and are inextricably linked to the other two social studies processes. There was also a marked increase of physical group positioning amongst the year 4 students that lends itself to constructive group work. Many students were aware of the need to sit in a circle and face each other when discussing issues at the year 4 level. This did not happen as often in the year 8 groups possibly because of the differences in physical size and general unwillingness to conform to more ordered positioning.

**Research Questions**
The skills that students use in Social Decision-making are identifying, suggesting and deciding. Although the tasks prompted them in this sequence, the components were recognised and understood by the majority of the students.

The results shown on in graphs 1 & 2 clearly answer the research question about the development of process skills between year 4 and year 8 students. These results show a small increase in the achievement of identifying the problem at year 8 level, but a much larger increase in the decision making aspect than the year 4 students.

This can be attributed to the year 8 students’ level of cognitive development and also their social and emotional characteristics. Students at this level are increasingly able to make decisions, they can respond to the use of strategies and they are willing to accept responsibility in solving the problem that is identified. In viewing the tapes there was a noticeable quality of reflective thinking evident as these students justified their decision-making. They were more willing than the year 4 students to enter into meaningful and relevant conversation regarding the issues that were posed in the tasks and this interaction seemed to bring about decision making through their verbal evaluations.

The results over time in graphs 3 and 4 show that the year 4 achievement has increased in these processes but year 8 students have not progressed as steadily.

Perhaps the introduction of the NZ social studies curriculum in 1997 has given teachers a better frame of reference for teaching and including social decision-making process in their classroom programmes. This would mean that the year 4 students have had a more consistent exposure and involvement in this process throughout their schooling than the year 8 students who were part of this research.

The lack of increased skill level among the year 8 students over time is an indicator of the problem that I had identified in the introduction and rationale of this research. Even though the year 8 students are achieving at a higher level overall they are not consolidating and developing in this process at the rate and depth necessary to cope with level 1 of New Zealand Qualification Authority achievement standards. The NZQA level 1 equates to levels 5-6 of SSNZC.

Evidence of the need for more sophisticated thinking and teaching towards this aim is obvious in both documents. The difference between the achievement objectives in social decision-making in level 3-4 compared with level 5-6 is very marked.
Level 3-4

*Students will demonstrate social decision making skills as they:*

- Identify possible causes of issues and problems
- Use criteria to evaluate a range of solutions to relevant problems
- Make a choice about possible action and justify this choice.

This is the level that our year 8 students should be achieving. In the context of my limited research, I believe it was specific enough to show that this level isn’t being achieved as well as it should be in order for the students to cope with achievement objectives at the next level i.e. 5-6 which are as follows:

Level 5-6

*Students will demonstrate social decision -making skills as they:*

- Identify a range of problems associated with an issue and identify underlying problems.
- Generate a range of possible solutions.
- Plan possible actions in relation to the identified problems or issues and identify the likely consequences of these actions
- Make a choice about preferred action and justify that choice.

The level of achievement in level one of the NZQA requires knowledge of political, cultural or economic contexts that include social problems. In order to achieve Merit or Excellence the students must provide at least three possible social actions. There is an expectation that students will have had the experience in social decision making skills to be able to:

- Classify consequences using social studies ideas and terms.
- Describe and explain relationships and interrelationships between consequences.
- Use different perspectives to examine consequences.
There needs to be a more in depth approach and exposure to the process of social decision-making in the primary years of schooling in order to enable the consolidation of skills to achieve at this level.
Discussion

These results indicate a modest increase in the process of social decision-making over the range of age groupings. The focus on the three social studies processes that are defined in the 1997 curriculum has provided a context for the inclusion and teaching of these skills. The specific skill that students fail to make steady progress with is the decision-making aspect. This is the end result of the decision-making process so ultimately this will determine overall achievement. This aspect is the most sophisticated out of the three because it involves a degree of collaboration and critical thinking.

The first two skills, identifying the problem and suggesting a solution can be achieved on an individual basis, even when working in a group. A lot of the children were familiar with brainstorming techniques and this generated a flow of ideas in the first two stages of the process. The decision-making aspect involves the higher thinking processes of meta transformations and prepositional thinking. This type of thinking process is usually indicated in the cognitive development of children from 11 years and onwards.

Research by Armento (1986) and Rice (1996), mentioned in the Literature review, espouses the idea that it is possible to teach these higher order thinking skills to younger students provided that the skills are taught directly.

One of the possible reasons for younger students not achieving in the more sophisticated thinking processes required in decision making may be due to inexplicit instructional procedures. This idea is not a new development in the social studies field. Beyer (1985, 1988) had noted that educators generally just placed students into learning situations where they would have to “think” at whatever level they could instead of actually being taught the skills that were required to engage in the degree of thinking.

The delivery of social studies in our classrooms often assumes that thinking skills will spontaneously develop simply by involving students in tasks that will provide higher order challenges.
There is a school of thought that favours the direct instruction of skills separately from content. Presseisen (1986), Chance (1986), Costa (1985), deBono (1983) and Sternberg (1986) cited in Shaver (Ed 1991) all favour the teaching of thinking as a set of skills rather than trying to embed it in the curriculum. The direct instruction on thinking skills approach is not without criticism. If teachers spend all their time in teaching skills there is a concern that the events and ideas that make up the content of the curriculum will be disadvantaged.

However, there is an obvious middle ground perspective that would be advantageous to both teachers and pupils at any age, where there is a goal directed skill and a deep content approach. Keown’s work in the field of values and social action indicates that teachers need to seek out opportunities for their students to practise the skills involved in critical thinking and decision-making.

In the Publication Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum *Getting Started* there are examples of classroom activities in throughout all levels of the curriculum as to how students can practise the skills of social decision-making. In relating these activities to the achievement of pupils in my research there are several points I feel need clarification if students are to be achieving at the indicator levels.
These activities assume that students are capable of abstract thinking as the examples lead students in dealing with the possible instead of the actual eg: at Levels 1-2 “What if too many birds were hunted?” This sort of scenario is expecting students whose knowledge of the world is related to their own direct experience of it to work out a solution without a concrete experience.

The issue of choosing the best solution, matching it to the problem and justifying their choice indicates that they would have an in depth knowledge of the content of the situation. Depth of content is a necessary element in thoughtful learning, however it is time consuming and requires sophisticated thinking processes in the realm of consequential thinking. These expectations are are a matter of concern when there is no cognitive expectation of skill attainment amongst younger children to enable them to make these decisions.
In my experience as a classroom teacher and as a result of what I have ascertained from this research I now consider these tasks and expectations to be ill matched to children’s actual abilities. This is in no way meant to be a criticism of the text, there are many other publications present the same type of activities and infer the same level of student achievement.

**Development of Skills Over Time**

The increase of skill development over time is related to the acquisition and refinement of knowledge, skills, understandings, ideas and attitudes Flockton (1990). In measuring the degree of success of student learning there is a focus on the extent of the gains made by the year 4 year group and the year 8 year group. The year 4 students made genuine progress over the 4-year period. They are displaying progress in the development, understanding and retention of skills and ideas relating to the social decision-making process.

The year 8 pupils show a slower rate of achievement, and in the instance of decision-making a decline in the rate of achievement. This may well be related to the fact that the issues that involve action at this level are more complex. Developmental theory implies that student ability to deal with complexity of issues should be developing in line with cognitive development and the learning situations that they are exposed to. Smith (1998).

The lack of skill building in all aspects of this process at the year 8 level indicates that there is no consistent increase of exposure to more complex issues throughout students’ primary schooling. The cognitive development of students at year 8 level should enable them to have progressed in the skills of identifying, suggesting and deciding.

There has been much written about the values aspect of social studies, and there is a direct link between values and action. Again we come up against the question of what is an appropriate action as far as the age of the students and the nature of the problem are concerned.
Although students at year 8 level are more able to learn facts about wider global issues there still must be a meaningful context for student learning.

Gilbert (1996) points out that although students may explore a range of values positions regarding certain issues, it may be years before they become decision makers, taking action to express their values position. This is a valid point especially in relation to time frames for the teaching of such processes and accuracy of assessment and evaluation.

**Conclusion**

When the Position Paper on Social Studies in the New Zealand School Curriculum was published in 1997 it included references to the report on the *Social Studies Subjects Survey* (Department of Education 1987). Some of these references indicated that “Teachers gave students little practice in higher order thinking skills….. Many lessons were dominated by intake activities in which students learned facts mainly through listening to the teacher” Position Paper (1997 p53).

Although the achievement objectives of our present curriculum clearly define the involvement of students in the social studies processes, the results of this research show a lack of focus or real purpose in the teaching of thinking skills in order to facilitate successful social decision-making. From my own experience in discussions with teachers and from what I have read in the process of this research it is apparent that some teachers have difficulty defining exactly what thinking skills are and therefore find it difficult to design tasks to teach and assess them. This coupled with the fact that the emphasis in many school schemes is for coverage and balance of the strands puts pressure on teachers for coverage of the curriculum rather than in depth studies.
There are many issues to consider here, not the least of which is further research into higher level thinking skills. Aside from this obvious implication these points need to be considered:

- Are the accepted perceptions of children’s cognitive capacities accurate?
- Are curriculum expectations in social decision-making in line with student cognitive abilities?
- Can we build more concrete and relevant issues into younger students’ decision-making activities?
- Should educators be delivering more specific higher order thinking skill instruction in all levels of the curriculum?
- Is the process of decision-making too big for accurate assessment?
- Should we break down the skills involved in decision making and teach more specifically to each aspect?
- As educators, do we need to commit to providing students with real opportunities that might result in real action?

The implications of these results reach further than the social studies curriculum. The development of thinking skills is intrinsic in The New Zealand Curriculum Framework. We see the emphasis on problem solving, flexibility, questioning and interaction in all of our curriculum subjects. Literature is full of examples of theories about involving students in real life issues, lateral thinking and higher order thinking enhancement. We don’t lack inspiration but we do lack models that are aligned to the teaching of specific skills in relation to the achievement levels in our own curriculum.

Social studies is a broad curriculum with 5 strands for teachers to try to cover in a cycle. The issue of depth over coverage is definitely one that needs to be considered in relation to the teaching of social studies. This curriculum has provided opportunity for higher order thinking skills within the three processes. The social studies curriculum clearly states that the processes do not stand alone, that they overlap and complement each other. Facilitation of the 1997 curriculum involved a focus on co-operative learning and the inquiry process. Achievement in social decision making is necessary to support the values exploration and inquiry learning processes. The most recently released information from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) 2001 in social studies suggests that:
“More emphasis needs to be placed on the Social Studies processes which promote critical and analytical thinking about issues and situations.”

This is stated under the heading “Moving Forward” and is indicative of the need for educationalists to be focusing on the development of higher order thinking skills within the curriculum framework. This needs even more emphasis within the context of the social studies curriculum. The recent publication of the NEMP curriculum map by Dr Alison Gilmore (2002) gives an indication to teachers as to how they can tie the NEMP assessment tasks into the curriculum documents.

Out of the possible 44 Social studies tasks that were used to cover all 5 strands there is opportunity to assess 13 examples of the Inquiry process, 5 of Values Exploration and only 4 examples of Social decision making. This doesn’t reflect the lack of importance of social decision-making in the social studies curriculum, but rather the difficulty in selecting tasks that involve students in this skill. The results of this research uncover a lack of social decision-making skill development appropriate to the cognitive development of the students.

Chapter 7
The Implications for Practice and Professional Development

The results of this research indicate a need for social decision-making to be planned for and delivered in a manner that will consolidate and develop skill achievement in this process. There are four areas that teachers and educational programme planners could focus on:

- To focus on social decision-making at all levels of the social studies curriculum.
- To provide opportunities for students to work in real situations that have relevance to their environment and both their chronological and cognitive age.
- To chunk the skills involved in social decision-making into a focus for micro teaching.
- To be able to justify a more in depth coverage of topics in the curriculum as opposed to breadth of coverage.

There is an obvious need for more support for teachers in the form of professional development programmes. These programmes should focus on the skill development needed to support the social decision-making process.

Although the inclusion of the process achievement objectives in the 1997 curriculum indicates a focus on these skills, there has been little in the way of professional development programmes to support the teaching and assessing of social decision-making skills. Long term planning directives by the Ministry are required to support the curriculum. A focus on resource development that provides appropriate activities to guide the teaching and assessment of decision-making would enable teachers to be more specific in determining the teaching of specific skills within a context. These resources should be developed after careful consideration of the actual expectations of achievement of students in the process of social decision-making. Specifically these resources should:

- Be developed to provide opportunity for children to learn and practise higher level thinking skills.
• Develop thinking skills to enable students to participate in social decision-making to consolidate and extend skill level.

How to Provide Opportunity for Decision-making in the School Programme

As mentioned already in this research, Keown’s work in values and social action refers to the need for teachers to seek opportunities to teach the skills of social action in the school programme. This does not always mean that these opportunities will be within a social studies unit. Opportunities for social decision-making present themselves in day to day situations as well as within the more structured objectives of a specific curriculum.

The “What If” type of thinking scenario as indicated in the “Getting Started” excerpt on page 30 of this research is a good way to involve students. However, at level 1-2 these thinking activities should be based on knowledge that the students already have not knowledge that they are processing. For example:

• What if no-one fed the fish in our aquarium?
• How can we make sure that the fish will always be fed?

OR

• What if you discover that you have forgotten your lunch?
• What will you do?
• What could you do to make sure this doesn’t happen again?

The importance of making the decision-making aspect of social studies relevant to the child’s experience and knowledge is, I believe, the key to training students in this type of thinking. In the early years of schooling day to day opportunities to share in the process of social decision-making in a real context will present themselves. As well as sharing the talking aspect of the process it would be helpful to display these problems, choices and decisions in simple flow chart sequences for future reference. It is important to keep exposing students to possibilities for this process in the hope that the skill of problem solving will become more practised.
In the middle school, years 4-6 children need to continue to be exposed to this type of thinking but it is possible to add some complexities to the types of solutions. Instead of just identifying and suggesting, there should be an element of consequence and choice involved. If the problem is about a real life situation eg: Pens going missing from students desks, children should be encouraged to come up with a variety of solutions and then work through the consequences of each choice. For example;

- Have a desk check every morning
- Have a class detective
- Keep all pens in a box behind the teachers desk
- Make sure all pens have a permanent mark on them for identification

After these suggestions are made systematically go through each one in relation to the problem

- Desk checks are time consuming.
- Invade students’ privacy.
- Still allow people to hide pens elsewhere.
- They would mean that people had to keep their desks tidy,
- It would act as some sort of deterrent and might stop people taking pens.

All suggestions need to viewed in this way in order to compare the advantages or disadvantages of the solution. In this way the justification for the decision whatever that may be is already considered. This type of process would lead students into achieving in social decision- making at a higher level in years 7& 8 because the pattern for the process has already been established and can be more easily transferred into more global situations. However, the need to use this skill in everyday situations is still very important, even at the higher levels i.e. 4-5. I believe that a focus on this would increase independence, self esteem and responsible thinking in school cultures. Obviously the need to teach these skills would have to be adopted school wide and integrated into other curriculums.

The lack of development of the thinking skills that is apparent in the social decision making aspect of this process should also have implications for teacher training. I have observed the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy in encouraging student teachers to think
about their questioning skills, but there is a need to be more specific and rigorous in ensuring application in the classrooms. As with students in classrooms, exposure to different types teaching to encourage thinking skills isn’t enough. There has to be a system in place to teach these skills and a system to check that the skills have been taught and assessed. Learning these skills will become more crucial in the future as there will be more student interaction with information, and more requirements for them to reflect and make decisions as to what is worthwhile.

The skills and attitudes needed by students in the 21st century have been highlighted by educationalists in many forums over the last decade. What is common to all, is the need for students to be able to contribute to and influence society. The fabric of our society is reflected by the ability of individuals and groups to make informed decisions. We see more and more evidence of young people in our justice system who have been unable to think in real life situations about the consequences of their decisions.

In the New Zealand Educational Institute Schools for Tomorrow report (1977) Harvey McQueen lists critical thinking, problem solving and creative thinking as important learning skills that students will need in the context of successful learning in the 21st century. Social Decision- making is the process in our curriculum that encompasses all of these skills. The importance of ensuring that students are able to achieve in this process isn’t just about social studies but about responsibility and the knowledge that individuals can make a difference in working to reconstruct the society they live in.

Bibliography


Chapter 3: Social Organisation

Trend task

Approach: Team  
Focus: Rules about sharing resources fairly.  
Resources: Video recording on laptop computer, 5 question cards, recording book.

First Video Clip:

Questions/instructions:

We’ll start this activity by watching a short video which shows some children on an adventure playground.

Show the first video clip.

As you saw, there are troubles that need to be sorted out. I’m going to ask your group to work out how to improve things at the adventure playground.

I’m going to ask you some questions. After each question I will leave you to talk about it on your own. Then I will come back and you can tell me what you have decided.

Show question card 1.

1. The first questions for you to talk about are on this card:

What is the problem, and what is causing the problem?

I would like you to have a good talk about the questions and agree on what could be the problem.

Withdraw from the group and allow sufficient time for discussion (typically a couple of minutes) before rejoining to record responses.

You have talked about the questions. Now I want you to tell me your ideas and I’ll write them down on this chart.

Write down students’ ideas, then show question card 2.

2. Now let’s look at the second question card: How could you fix the problem? Talk about this in your group, then I will write down your ideas.

Withdraw from the group and allow sufficient time for discussion before rejoining to record responses.

You have talked about the question. Now I want you to tell me your ideas and I’ll write them down on the chart.

Write down students’ ideas, then show question card 3.

3. This time you are asked to make up some really important rules that everyone should obey. Rules that will help to stop the problem on the adventure playground and make it a safe place for playing.

Withdraw from the group and allow sufficient time for discussion before rejoining to record responses.

Now I’ll write down the rules you have decided. After I’ve written them down you can check them and make any changes you want.

Not taking turns 36 (40)
Battling over access to equipment 82 (80)
Risk of injury 9 (20)
Risk of fighting 27 (30)
Overall rating: strong 7 (10)
Moderate 60 (57)
Weak 33 (33)

Rules 44 (47)
Training 3 (3)
Student monitors/supervision 7 (0)
Adult supervision 24 (30)
Overall rating: strong 0 (0)
Moderate 40 (50)
Weak 60 (50)

Lining up 35 (33)
Taking turns 50 (50)
Not interfering with other children on the equipment 54 (70)
Overall rating: strong 9 (20)
Moderate 53 (43)
Weak 38 (37)
**Playground cont.**

---

**Second Video Clip:**

Write down the group’s rules and give them the opportunity to make any final changes. Then show question card 4.

4. To finish off this part of the activity, I want your group to talk about what could happen if people do not follow your rules. I’ll leave your rules here for you to see.

Withdraw from the group and allow sufficient time for discussion before rejoining to record responses.

Tell me now what you think could happen if people do not follow your rules and I’ll write down what you say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record responses</th>
<th>% responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>year 4 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fights</td>
<td>8 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injury</td>
<td>67 (73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>unhappiness</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>punishment</td>
<td>64 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall rating:</strong></td>
<td>strong 3 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moderate 50 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>weak 47 (57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now we’ll look at the second part of the video.

Show the second video clip.

5. An accident has happened, and nobody is doing anything about it. Imagine that you four people were there when the accident happened. I want you to talk about what you could do. I want you to say what each person in your group would do, because you might have different responsibilities. Talk about that now, then I will come back and you can tell me what you have decided.

Withdraw from the group and allow sufficient time for discussion before rejoining to record responses.

Now tell me what each of you would do. I’ll write down your first names, and I want you to tell me what I should write beside each person’s name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record responses</th>
<th>% responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one student going for adult help</td>
<td>96 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd student going for adult help</td>
<td>52 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but in different direction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student calling 111</td>
<td>46 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student staying to monitor/comfort</td>
<td>53 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injured student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>covering injured student for warmth</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trying to treat or revive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injured student</td>
<td>14 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moving injured student [NOT DESIRABLE]</td>
<td>37 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall rating:</strong></td>
<td>strong 13 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moderate 62 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>weak 25 (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total score:                          |             |
| (based on questions 1–4)              |             |
|                                       | 5–8 8 (13)  |
|                                       | 3–4 38 (37) |
|                                       | 2 27 (37)   |
|                                       | 0–1 27 (13) |

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**Commentary:**

Most of the year 4 teams identified the visible problem but were less aware of the associated risks. The most frequently suggested solutions were rules and adult supervision. The 2001 students scored slightly lower than their 1997 counterparts.
### Tree Troubles

**Approach:** Team  
**Level:** Year 8  
**Focus:** Value positions.  
**Resources:** Instruction card, opinion cards.

#### Questions/instructions:
In this activity your team is going to consider a problem that a school has with a tree in its grounds.

Your team needs to imagine that you are a special committee that has to help the Board of Trustees decide what to do about the tree.

Each member of your team will be given a card that tells them the role they are to play on the committee. One team member will be a teacher from the school, one will be a student from the school, one the school caretaker and one a Māori person who lives near the school.

The card tells you the opinions of the person you are representing. Your job is to present that opinion as convincingly as possible to the rest of the team. You don’t have to say only what is on your card, but need to make a good case to convince the rest of the committee.

After you have done that, your whole committee needs to work together to decide what to tell the Board of Trustees - what should happen with the tree?

Here are the opinion cards for each of you and an instruction card to remind you what to do.

Assign a card to each student, show instruction card and allow time until students are ready (up to 10 minutes).

Now I would like one person from your team to tell me what this committee will say to the Board of Trustees.

**Let a team member report back.**

Does everyone agree with that? Is there anything else you would like to add?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How strongly was the case presented for cutting down the tree?</th>
<th>2001 (% '97)</th>
<th>year 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very strongly</td>
<td>12 (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderately strongly</td>
<td>30 (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weakly</td>
<td>32 (30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very weakly</td>
<td>26 (23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How strongly was the case presented against cutting down the tree?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Commentary:
Most teams reached at least a moderately strong consensus, even though the cases for and against cutting down the tree often were not presented very strongly. Overall, the results achieved by the 2001 students were similar to those of the 1997 students.