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New Zealand Education’s Progressive Origin:
1937 to 1944 - The Seven Years from Idea to Orthodoxy

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Abstract

1937 marked a pivotal point in New Zealand's educational history. An international organisation known as the New Education Fellowship held a conference in New Zealand. Fourteen internationally renowned lecturers spoke on topics concerning the reorganisation of education in democratic societies. The New Education Fellowship delegates lectured from a pedagogical understanding which had most notably been developed by John Dewey and was referred to as both progressive education and new education. By the closing lecture of the conference, the idea of a new education pedagogy had been introduced to mainstream New Zealand educators and public.

Through the development of a thorough understanding of this conference, a historiographical survey follows the influence this idea exerted over the following seven years as it made its way from an idea to a pedagogical orthodoxy by 1944. Fundamental elements of Dewey's new education are identified. New education quickly found support from the Department of Education, the Minister of Education, and the Prime Minister during the 1937 conference. The bulk of national educators were quick to adopt and begin to experiment with the new pedagogy in the short months and years following the 1937 conference. The way in which these developments took place is examined in depth through this thesis. The new education pedagogy began to experience criticism in the early 1940s. The Minister of Education called the 1944 Education Conference to put an end to mounting criticism of the educational reforms and policies which had been introduced in the seven years since the New Education Fellowship lecturers had launched progressive education into mainstream New Zealand.

The course of the investigation identifies confusion surrounding the conflation of pedagogy and curriculum in its historical context in New Zealand, and in its modern form. Yet perhaps more importantly, this study identifies the origin of progressive education in New Zealand’s educational history and tracks the development of progressive pedagogy as it was propelled into orthodoxy through social, economic, and political means. In so doing, the origin of the split between progressivist and traditionalist educators still evident in New Zealand's modern educational setting is identified.
To my wife, Susie Couch.
Because I could not have reached this point without you.

To my parents, Jim and Lois Couch.
For encouraging me at every turn.

To my Lord.
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Your combined belief in me to complete this investigation has humbled and inspired me. Thank you for being a part of my journey. Words cannot express my gratitude.

And to my wife, thank you for all the meals you made, lawns you mowed, clothes you washed, dogs you walked, and firm German encouragement you provided whilst I toiled away on the beast. I suppose I shall have to make a rather difficult choice now: further study, or start to help around the house.
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Introduction

“...it is impossible to understand fully any period of education without knowing intimately the period that preceded it...”

C. E. Beeby (1992, p. 283)

Within democratic nations, a national education system is built upon the orthodox understandings and influences within that nation. In New Zealand, the 2007 Curriculum document makes this clearly evident from the outset. “The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). The following four sentences in the document, which detail what New Zealand most values in education, demonstrate an interesting emphasis.

[The Curriculum] takes as its starting point a vision of our young people as lifelong learners who are confident and creative, connected, and actively involved. It includes a clear set of principles on which to base curriculum decision making. It sets out values that are to be encouraged, modelled, and explored. It defines five key competencies that are critical to sustained learning and effective participation in society and that underline the emphasis on lifelong learning. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4)

The influences which shaped the writing of this curriculum statement began eighty years earlier when a group of internationally renowned educationalists brought an impassioned and fresh understanding of education as progressive to the forefront of the minds of New Zealand’s educators, public, and government.

This thesis follows the influences of that progressive understanding of education, which arrived in the mainstream of New Zealand education in 1937. It explores how new education ideas became the orthodoxy in New Zealand education between 1937 and 1944. In so doing, it is underpinned by a belief that the ideas presented in the 1937 New Education Fellowship (NEF) Conference created the influence which embedded progressive new education in New Zealand by 1944. It is maintained that this introduction of progressive new education is the origin of the dichotomy between traditionalist and progressive educators that has shaped the educational landscape in New Zealand since that time. This conflict is expressed in 2011 through the ongoing discussions around national standards, the continued confusion between pedagogy and curriculum, and the debate surrounding what knowledge is to be taught in schools. The thesis demonstrates, through the examination of historical events,
the certainty with which progressive new education became the orthodox pedagogy in New Zealand between 1937, where its influence was introduced into mainstream education, and 1944, where its ideas were so successfully entrenched that they began to be criticised. Further, it is established that the cultural context of the period enabled the ideology held within progressive education to become commonly accepted.

The thesis provides a social historiography of the progressive education movement in New Zealand between 1937 and 1944 to argue that in, 1937 at an Education Conference established by the NEF, New Zealand was introduced to the mainstreaming of educational ideology which had most recently been developed by American educationalist John Dewey. As the name of the Fellowship suggests, the progressive pedagogy was regarded as a new education system. In later years it became known as progressive education. This itself later came to mean something quite contrary to Dewey’s original concept of a child-centered pedagogy, becoming confused with a child-centered curriculum (Ryan, 1997). To avoid such confusion, the pedagogy originally known as both the new education and progressive education will be referred to throughout the thesis as progressive new education.

The manner in which early progressive educators understood the distinction between pedagogy and curriculum is discussed later in this chapter. The distinction was made clear between curriculum and pedagogy by early progressive new educators, including Beeby, and this understanding was central to the reforms in education during the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, it can be seen that the failure to acknowledge this separation of curriculum and pedagogy by many educators and general public alike, and the subsequent confusion which resulted, opened the door for constructivism in New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s.

The chapters within the thesis fall naturally under three overarching periods in the historical progression. The first four chapters introduce what it takes to create an orthodoxy and an understanding of progressive education, before dealing specifically with the 1937 NEF Conference. This is done in order to develop a comprehensive understanding around the ideas being advocated for in the 1937 NEF Conference, and the influential proceedings of the Conference itself. Chapters five and six examine the educational developments during the interim period of seven years between the 1937 NEF Conference and the 1944 Education Conference. These chapters inquire into the increasing assimilation of the ideas espoused in the first four chapters in mainstream education, considering the developments within a contextual understanding. Chapters seven and eight demonstrate that progressive new education had become the orthodox
pedagogy by 1944. This is done through an examination of the 1944 Education Conference, and a summary discussion of the main events of the preceding chapters.

This introductory chapter explores historiography as a method of research, taking into account historical revisionism. An understanding of orthodoxy, also referred to as hegemony, is expanded. Traditionalism is defined, and the important points of progressive new education’s historical development are then discussed. This is followed by a brief encounter with some criticisms of progressive new education.

Chapter two discusses the background and organisation which went into the 1937 NEF Conference. It examines the rise in profile and importance of the Conference and uncovers the growing anxiety felt by Conference organisers as the number of registrations reached unprecedented numbers. Having set the scene, chapter three introduces the international guest speakers at the Conference and examines the five core themes central to their sessions during the Conference. These are considered within the context of their importance to the NEF and progressive new education ideology. Significant criticisms of the educational landscape of 1937 as perceived by the international delegates to the NEF Conference conclude the chapter.

Chapter four is the final chapter in the analysis of the 1937 NEF Conference, and examines it through the eyes of the press. Conference proceedings were widely reported through the papers with some of the sessions even being broadcast over the radio. The considerable and prolonged attention of the nation’s media upon education was instrumental in disseminating the pedagogical concepts discussed during the Conference into mainstream thought and discussion. Newspaper interviews with international delegates provided direct opportunities for views to be shared and criticisms to be tabled. For the duration of the NEF Conference, and through the direction of the press, education became a commonplace topic for discussion throughout the country.

The second phase of the thesis, between the 1937 and 1944 Conferences, begins with a look at the immediate consequences of the NEF Conference in chapter five, describing the delegates’ private audience with Department of Education officials and the Minister of Education following the final session of the Conference. This discussion went a long way in shaping understandings held by instrumental figures in New Zealand’s education sector and the subsequent reforms which were put into place. The chapter also introduces Beeby, a defining figure in the New Zealand educational landscape whose contributions to national education spanned three decades. Chapter five begins a look into Beeby’s integral role in the educational developments between 1937 and 1944. The Government’s position on education during the years following the
Conference is identified and discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion around the NEF branches which were established throughout New Zealand as a result of the Conference and the way in which they were encouraged to experiment within their newfound understanding of pedagogy.

The educational reforms, which were embraced by the teachers and public of New Zealand during the late 1930s, came sharply into focus after a government policy statement in 1939 was followed almost immediately with the beginning of World War II. Chapter six examines the way in which this global event affected the educational direction in New Zealand during the early 1940s. Despite the considerable concessions of finances and manpower made by a nation during wartime, New Zealand’s educational leadership's commitment to enacting educational reform meant that educational reforms continued through the early years of the war. This chapter also examines the two main education journals in New Zealand, and the particular influences which they exerted on the educational landscape following the 1937 NEF Conference. A discussion around criticisms which began to arise in the early 1940s concludes the chapter.

The background to the 1944 Educational Conference opens chapter seven, and the final period of time. It goes on to discuss the manner in which the 1944 Educational Conference was introduced to teachers and the education community by the Minister of Education. While the Conference was officially called by the Minister of Education to examine the shape post war education would take concerning the 'fringe' areas of education, its clear purpose to respond to the criticisms which the Government was facing due to the reforms in education is identified and discussed. Through the preparations made for this Conference and the conversations held during its sessions, the acceptance of progressive new education ideology as the orthodox pedagogy of 1944 is unquestionable. Scrutiny of both the preparations for, and proceedings of, the Conference demonstrate this statement in depth. Chapter eight summarises the key events of this survey and draws on these findings to inform conclusions about the validity of the thesis statement that the progressive new education had indeed become the orthodoxy in New Zealand by 1944.

**Historiography**

Historical research in education, as a methodology, can be slippery to refine. Writing in 2000 with the strong conviction that historical research is an "important means of understanding and addressing contemporary concerns" (p. 5), McCulloch & Richardson express a degree of surprise at the lack of definitive works concerning historical research in education during the twentieth century given the quantity of historical
research in education undertaken within that time. It is, perhaps, due to the fact that historical research is an integral underlying component to any research venture. “Everything in a report is about what happened earlier. It is from historical scholarship that the world has taken the apparatus of footnotes, source references, and bibliography, which validate what is stated” (Barzun & Graff, 2004, p. 5). The analysis of historical events in education is such a foundational aspect to the educational research process, it is perhaps often discussed superficially or even overlooked in research methodology texts. “Both in the educational research methods literature and in works of historiography, the treatment of historical research in education has often been shallow and cursory or problematic” (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p. 25).

Danto illustrates the manner in which historical research varies from other research paradigms.

Historical writing can be deceptively simple, beginning with a single document or journal, but it is never a straightforward string of facts. It is very different from quantitative analysis or natural science writing. The researcher must patiently filter documents through an understanding of the original authors, where they come from, and how their stories changed over time. (2008, p. 9)

Here-in lies the crux of the method of doing historical research, termed historiography. It is an historical analysis carried out through a contextual approach exploring a past phenomenon. As with any form of research, the subjectivity of the evidence inversely decreases as the quality and quantity of the supporting evidence increases.

Danto (2008) identifies six different methodologies within the paradigm of historiography; empirical, social, cultural, feminist, postmodern, and postcolonial historiography. While the distinctions between the various methods within the paradigm of historiography are not entirely rigid, the method within which this thesis most appropriately sits is that of social historiography. The social historiographer seeks out information sources, ‘filtering’ them through contextual understandings in order that he might “describe what few people, if any, have thought worthy of historical attention before” (Danto, 2008, p. 15). Social historiography hinges upon a main event or, in the case of this thesis, two main events in the forms of the 1937 NEF Conference and the 1944 Education Conference, which act as a nucleus to the entire research process (Danto, 2008). Through the careful analysis of historical documents, both primary and secondary sources, and the subsequent critical selection of relevant information, social historiography is able to deeply understand a specific historical movement or event, and the social importance which accompanies it.

According to historical revisionists, historians undertaking a historiographical study do not do so from a neutral perspective. “The historian creatively disinters the
past, selecting from the surviving evidence available. ‘History’, therefore, is the product of the questions which historians use when they examine the material evidence” (Shuker, 1987, p. 10). Through the application of this process, bias is at least implicit. Howe (2009), on the other hand, states that while historians do make certain choices, they are not done in such a way as to alter the shape of an historical event.

There are much broader, underlying and perhaps often unconscious pressures with regard to our individual or collective choices of subject matter and its interpretation. While we might adopt an individual position, like a water molecule in a bucket of water, we are still all in the same bucket as all the other water molecules. (p. 14)

In an effort to avoid applying bias to the findings of this thesis, I have attempted to understand the influences which shaped the seven-year period of educational history under scrutiny by looking at the developments in a historically linear and factual fashion. I have drawn conclusions based on the subsequent impacts these developments have had on the shape of the educational landscape between 1937 and 1944. I have predominately used archival material and original newspaper and journal publications whilst developing the arguments within this thesis in order to remain true and accurate to historical accounts. Two cautionary points raised by Openshaw (1987) are important to my inquiry process.

First, while not ceasing to be aware of wider ideological and historiographical issues, education historians should continue to collect new evidence, and to interpret this evidence in the light of what it appears to illustrate, even if the result is sometimes not clear-cut, and, secondly, they must avoid the temptation to apply a sort of ‘rise-and-triumph’ model to their own field, viewing it as in some way ‘progressive’. (p. 3)

It is hoped that in the course of drawing conclusions from the historical developments under examination, both of these points have been adhered to.

**Elements of an Orthodoxy**

By identifying key elements of Joseph’s (2002) definition of hegemony it could well be stated that a passive revolution swept through New Zealand education from 1937 to 1944 by examining a linear sequence of events.

The concept of hegemony is normally understood as emphasising consent in contrast to reliance on the use of force. It describes the way in which dominant social groups achieve rulership or leadership on the basis of attaining social cohesion and consensus...In its simplistic form hegemony concerns the construction of consent and the exercise of leadership by the dominant group over subordinate groups; in its more complex form, this deals with issues such as the elaboration of political projects, the articulation of interests, the construction of social alliances, the development of historical blocs, the
deployment of state strategies and the initiating of passive revolutions. (Joseph, 2002, p. 1)

New Zealand’s progressive education revolution was set in motion by the Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Cunningham, when he wrote his invitation to Beeby to attend the scheduled Australian NEF Conference. Beeby seized upon the opportunity, and with the Government’s support, in the form of Fraser and Lambourne, ended up with a New Zealand based NEF Conference. The backing of the 1937 NEF Conference was, therefore, certainly political. *State strategies*, discussed in chapter two, were employed through allowing teachers, and others concerned directly with education, paid leave to attend the Conference. The manner in which key speakers held an audience with key members of State after the Conference was concluded, and the direct impact those conversations had on the direction of New Zealand education for the following decades, highlighted in chapter five, directly resembles a political project.

By 1939, the policy statement on education paved the way for the rolling revisions which were to come, and cemented a Government’s determination to see educational reform even through the second world war. And, as will be demonstrated in chapter seven, the 1944 Education Conference developed social alliances which proved to further strengthen the ideas of progressive new education; ideas which had transformed from marginalised and mistrusted to legitimised and heralded since the 1937 NEF Conference took place. In accordance with Joseph’s (2002) definition of hegemony, it is clear to see that progressive new education had engaged in the defining processes which hegemonic movements take, and had emerged in 1944 as the orthodox pedagogy held by educationists from the governing bodies of education to the bulk of the teachers throughout the country.

However, Joseph (2002) is quick to point out that there is another aspect which is involved in the development of an orthodoxy: the context within which an idea is developing must be conducive to the further development of that idea. “For a group to become hegemonic it must have behind it the economic, political and cultural conditions which allow it to put itself forward as leading” (Joseph, 2002, p. 125). We will see, in chapter two, how the NEF Conference obtained financial backing from the government. As the ideals were legitimised, they also gained political backing, thus prolonging financial support during the years of a Fraser/Beeby partnership. Progressive new education was also supported by the NZEI and its publication, examined in chapter six, in so doing reinforcing the government’s standpoint and providing a second and complimentary point of influence. The third component, a cultural context conducive to
the new method, must have also been in existence in order to identify this movement as culminating in an orthodox understanding.

On reflecting upon the cultural milieu during an introductory chapter, Beeby was surprised at the cultural context which the 1937 NEF Conference had uncovered. “The conference revealed, both in the teaching profession and among the general public, a demand for change in the school system that was more intense than anyone had suspected” (Renwick, 1986, p. xxi). Beeby’s comments on the idealistic nature of the mid-1930s, included in chapter five, demonstrate a national belief in the importance of education, a belief which was becoming increasingly evident among the general public. “[A] number of people in their twenties were deserting promising careers in more lucrative professions...to take up primary teaching” (Beeby, 1992, p. 90). He even went so far as to offer an opinion on why this increasing sense of social responsibility was emerging.

I have no qualification to trace systemically the social and historical reason for this burgeoning belief that education, if we could only understand it properly, was the key to the country’s future. Undoubtedly, the Great War, followed by the Depression, had shaken the trust of a whole generation in the political and economic structures on which our prosperity had rested, and some of us were willing to pin our hopes to less material faiths. (Beeby, 1992, p. 90)

His suspicion is well worth considering. By the mid-1930s the country had found itself involved in generational difficulties of considerable scale for the previous three generations. The 1880s and 1890s saw the Long Depression, simply named after its devastating length. 1918 marked the end of four years of world war. The Great Depression found its way to New Zealand in the late 1920s to early 1930s. At the close of each of these catastrophes, as is typical for a nation after such events, New Zealand looked to the services they could provide for their young who had endured such hardships.

By the 1930s, the nation was ready for change. The effects of the generational tragedies which the nation had endured led the Dominion firmly down a path towards a humanising reform, with a heightened degree of awareness of a duty of care towards her youth. “[T]he war was to throw unexpected difficulties in the way of [Fraser’s] reforms, but, in the curious ways wars have, it aroused a deep sense of responsibility towards the young” (Beeby in Renwick, 1986, p. xxii). This rang true with the election of the first Labour government in 1935, elected partly on the promise of reinstating schooling for five-year-olds, and re-opening teaching colleges. These actions effectively reversed cost-cutting measures which had been put in place during the Great Depression. It also carried on through the years of the second world war, which
proceeded to introduce New Zealand's fourth generation to tragic circumstance. "Progressive educational ideals, including internationalist and anti-war sentiment, attracted political support with the election of Labour in 1935, and during the late 1930s the alliance between political and educational radicals...further encouraged the spread of internationalism in education" (Openshaw, 1987, p. 196).

Coinciding with the election of the nation's first Labour government, New Zealand's financial position strengthened. This allowed the new government to reinstate funding to several areas, including those mentioned above. This return to financial security also went some way towards the Department of Education's ability to legislate for a state-funded secondary education in 1939. It was certainly the case that as finances became available education received its fair share of allocation. As will become evident in chapter five, wartime living began to see government purse strings tightened.

Education, as a result of the cultural context, was able to continue its reform.

To some it may appear that the Government should for the duration of the war go slowly with its educational policy. The nation is at war: money, materials, and human energy must be thrown without stint into the task of saving for the world those simple moral and political principles which give our education its meaning. The Government might...rest satisfied with the great progress made in education since 1935...did it not feel, with all thinking people, a new sense of urgency in education arising from the world crisis...So I make no apologies for reporting that during 1940 there was no slackening in the educational effort that has been a characteristic of the Government's policy, although the exigencies of the war situation have sometimes made it necessary to divert the effort into slightly different channels. (Department of Education annual report, *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1940, E.1, p. 2)

It is clear, then, that a culture receptive to the social emphasis of the progressive new education had come of age in New Zealand by the mid-1930s, which was to stay intact throughout the entire period under study in this thesis. This cultural conduciveness provided the soil within which progressive new education could be planted and develop roots, and be slowly nurtured through political and economic means. In so doing, it grew into orthodoxy.

Popular understanding of New Zealand education has long been dominated by the reification of progressive new education pedagogy. "Perhaps no country has so profoundly enshrined an egalitarian myth within its education system as has New Zealand. Peter Fraser's statement in 1939...has been translated into self-congratulatory official rhetoric" (Openshaw, 1987, p. 2). This sentiment is echoed by McCulloch (1991).

The liberal paradigm of historiography, evoking an egalitarian, consensual image of humanitarian progress, was dominant in New Zealand until the 1980s...this liberal paradigm emphasised the gradual progress of the national education system under the paternal eye of the state towards the creation of an 'educated
democracy’...Overall, it suggested that in the long term the growth of the education system has largely succeeded in achieving equality of opportunity in New Zealand. (p. 76)

McCulloch (1991) goes on to illustrate that this belief was strengthened by the ‘liberal-egalitarian’ educational policies which emerged up until the 1980s, with particular reference to those written during the Fraser/Beeby period. The 1939 educational policy statement has even fallen victim to romanticised reinvention, whereby it has been said that Beeby penned the words on the back of a napkin whilst enjoying coffee with Fraser. Not only did their relationship exist in a strictly professional manner, ruling out the probability of them sharing coffee together, Beeby’s own account of the incident demonstrates the true unfolding of events which are discussed in chapter five. The veneration with which that 1939 education policy statement has been held since its writing, however, demonstrates the power its sentiments hold in a democratic understanding of education. It has even become a permanent exhibit at the International Bureau of Education offices in Geneva (Rata, 2009). Its writing bears the direct influence of the 1937 NEF Conference ideology.

**Tradition**

“[S]et the Mind right, that on all Occasions it may be dispos’d to consent to nothing but what may be suitable to the Dignity and Excellency of a rational Creature.”

*(John Locke, 1902/1693, p. 20)*

There is an oblong room filled to bursting with furniture, three rows of desks interspaced by isles passable only through sidestep. The desks are wooden and heavy and hungry and consuming, wrapping with firm finality around their occupants. They progress in size, smallest at the front of the room graduating to largest at the rear by the door. The plaque standing just outside denotes that the room in the Howick Historical Village is typical of school buildings in the 1800s. John Dewey, in the late 1800s, had set out on a task to find desks and chairs suitable for the purpose of education, during which he was doubtlessly shown desks similar to those of the Howick Historical Village. Having a great deal of difficulty in finding appropriate furniture, he was struck by the remark of one furniture dealer; “I am afraid we have not what you want. You want something at which the children may work; these are all for listening” (Dewey, 2008/1915, p. 21).

Traditionalism’s main point of differentiation from progressivism is the emphasis placed on the ends of education (traditionalist) and the means of obtaining the ends (progressivist). From the outset, it is important to note that traditional educators have held their fair share of inspiring and excellent teachers. However, the traditional
classroom and traditional education is often remembered through biography and relived through fiction in a predominantly one-sided light. Growing up in Ireland, Frank McCourt retells of his 'good old days'.

There are seven masters in Leamy's National School and they all have leather straps, canes, blackthorn sticks. They hit you with the sticks on the shoulders, the back, the legs, and, especially, the hands...they hit you if you're late, if you have a leaky nib on your pen, if you laugh, if you talk, and if you don't know things. (McCourt, 1996, p. 97)

His traditionalist teachers imparted unquestionable knowledge from platforms at the front of classrooms, in positions of power second only to God, rewarding correct answers with scraps of apple peel, maintaining discipline through force and fear.

Dickens famously captured the nature of the traditional educator in interactions between Gradgrind, teacher, and children, his pupils and empty pitchers waiting to be filled with facts.

"Give me your definition of a horse."
(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)
"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals!" (Dickens, 2000/1854, p. 43)

Dewey's perception of the traditional pedagogue is that he is concerned predominantly with the transference of facts. In doing so, the belief is held that one must ignore and minimize the child's individual peculiarities, whims, and experiences. They are what we need to get away from. They are to be obscured or eliminated. As educators our work is precisely to substitute for these superficial and casual affairs stable and well-ordered realities; and these are found in studies and lessons. (Dewey, 2008/1915, p. 107)

**Pertinent Developments in Educational Philosophy**

This perceptual change of the child, from 'pitcher' to 'individual', has profound ramifications for the educator, and its development through educational thought can be traced through the ages from Plato, one of the first to consider education as central to political philosophy (Barrow, 2007). Writing around 360 BC, Plato remarked;

"[k]nowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind" (Plato, 1941, p. 151). In the Platonic philosophical framework, to "know the nature of man is to know the nature of education" (Dupuis, 1985, p. 30). The educational conservatism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a prevalent belief in the duality of mind and body. This was a dichotomous belief; man possessed a material and spiritual self. Through man's natural disposition to evil and sin, strong discipline and self-denial were
essential elements of social life and education. Strict stratification of social classes
followed a Platonic view of a ruling class privileged by birth. The purpose of the school
during this period "was primarily intellectualistic, and both the classical curriculum and
the formal teaching methodology served this" (Dupuis, 1985, p. 92).

In 1762 Rousseau threatened this conservative framework, founded on a
punitive understanding of God, when he wrote Emile. "Everything is good as it leaves the
hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (1979/1762,
p. 37). Such a statement

was considered ruinous of the accepted way of life, especially the moral code; it
contradicted the Biblical notion of original sin and its effects on man's behavior.
Instead man's natural inclinations were to be considered the guide to right
behavior. No longer could any ruler, class, or social group be considered the
authority in matters involving human behavior. (Dupuis, 1985, p. 96)

Emile was ordered to be burned by the Church. Yet such a profoundly provocative
concept was gaining traction. Rousseau's challenge to the commonly accepted divine
authority threatened the way of life. His attack on the belief that men were destined for
certain social classes followed shortly after John Locke's, who "argued that all men are
rulers; no individual or class can lay any claim to rule others" (Dupuis, 1985, p. 97). Of
this period in history, Mill noted:

A time, however, came in the progress of human affairs, when men ceased to
think it a necessity of nature that their governors should be an independent
power, opposed in interest to themselves. It appeared to them much better that
the various magistrates of the State should be their tenants or delegates,
revocable at their pleasure. In that way alone, it seemed, could they have
complete security that the powers of government would never be abused to
their disadvantage. (2002/1859, p. 2)

During this time the needs of the mind and the body began to be identified as
intrinsically connected. Locke had explored this connection in specific detail. Some
Thoughts Concerning Education directs the reader to pay attention to every need of the
learner, from tending to wet feet, suitable clothing, diet, even to the action of the bowels,
in the pursuit of a high quality education system (Locke, 1902/1693). "A Sound Mind in
a sound Body, is a short, but full Description of a happy State in this World. He that has
these two, has little more to wish for" (Locke, 1902/1693, p. 1).

Educationalists began to place attention for the first time on how to teach rather
than simply what to teach. Francis Bacon developed a pedagogic framework he termed
novum oranum, or the new method, "which he believed would enable man to divest
himself of the falsehoods and idols which reason and faith had created" (Dupuis, 1985,
p. 98). This new approach was heavily oriented around the senses, and focused on
observation and experimental study of one’s environment. Locke was also an advocate of such a pedagogic approach. In supposing that the mind were white paper, void of all things, Locke examined how it came to be filled with character, knowledge, and reason. “To this I answer, in one word, from experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself” (Locke, 1959, p. 26).

Seven decades later, Rousseau’s development of an educational framework through Emile is often heralded as initiating the progressive and alternative educational movements in the centuries that followed (Martin & Martin, 2010). A strict believer in holistic pedagogy, his detailed description in the raising of Emile almost pre-empted Piaget’s developmental stages. In the raising of Emile, the whole of his well-being is considered at each stage of his life. “The natural development and nurturing of the Rousseauian self are most clearly evident in progressive, child-centered, and humanistic theories and practices in education” (Martin & Martin, 2010, p. 91).

Some years later, Mill (2002/1859) wrote that the development of ones’ individuality was a component of personal well-being and, therefore, the well-being of a free and democratic society. For Mill, the exploration of all concepts seemed to spring from the desire to see the fulfillment of ‘human good’ (Appiah, 2005). Being truly free, or living under liberty, was for Mill linked inextricably to the development of individuality, as one is only able to develop her own individuality when she is at full liberty to choose the components which will make up her self.

It is desirable, in short, that in things which do not primarily concern others, individuality should assert itself. Where, not the person’s own character, but the traditions or customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress. (Mill, 2002/1859, p. 47)

If she is unable to be in sole command of choosing the components from which to compose her self, her ‘individual’ is a reproduction of an outside commanding force, therefore reducing her to a product of hegemonic influences and nullifying her individuality, as “individuality means, among other things, choosing for myself instead of merely being shaped by the constraint of political or social sanction” (Appiah, 2005, p. 5). Mill guarded against this potential, and forseeable, unwanted development of individuality in abstraction from social interaction.

As soon as any part of a person’s conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it, becomes open to discussion. (Mill, 2002/1859, pp. 63-4)
1859 not only saw the publication of Mill’s *On Liberty*, but also the theory which reshaped our understanding of the natural world. Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* details a theory devoted to comprehending and accounting for the progression of variations observed in domesticated and natural species of plant and animal. The theory of evolution has had a profound, if somewhat indirect, impact on education, as it was instrumental in Dewey’s development of his concept of attaining knowledge. Incidentally, it was also the first book which a young Beeby purchased years later. 1859 was a productive year as, apart from these two publications, it also saw the birth of John Dewey.

**John Dewey**

“The problem of direction is thus the problem of selecting appropriate stimuli for instincts and impulses which it is desired to employ in the gaining of new experience.”

*(Dewey, 2008/1902, p. 114).*

According to Dewey, the development of reflective thought leads to ‘new’ knowledge. Knowledge is, therefore, sequentially compounding (Dewey, 1997/1910). In creating opportunities for this knowledge building to take place, one must enable reflection around certain stimuli. In the sense of formal education, the stimulus becomes the curriculum. The manner in which students access this stimulus (the curriculum) is due to the pedagogical approach employed by the teacher. ‘Education’ as a whole can be broken into its two constituent parts, ‘curriculum’ and ‘pedagogy’. These, in turn, can be understood through placements on a continuum, as illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.

Pedagogy and curriculum share a complex connection. While they can be understood to be two separate entities, they contribute to their binding paradigm of ‘education’ interdependently. The curriculum is the reference bank of knowledge, and as such remains a noun, inactive. Pedagogy acts as a verb, the active value in the relationship. As the active partner, pedagogy dictates how the students access the reference material from the curriculum. Without it, the curriculum remains closed, yet without the curriculum, pedagogy becomes unnecessary. By way of illustration, one could imagine that education were the colour green, and pedagogy and curriculum the colours yellow and blue respectively. Together, they create education, yet the shade of education that they create is dependent upon the type of curriculum and pedagogy within their make-up. However, at no stage does what is yellow become blue, nor what is blue become yellow. Confusion invariably arises when the term ‘curriculum’ is substituted for the term ‘pedagogy’.
Just such a confusion has taken place around Dewey’s work since his early writings. Dewey’s educational writings are devoted to recalibrating common understandings of pedagogy from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘child-centered’ approach. He assumed that any subject of a pedagogical praxis must require the sound reference point of a knowledge-based, and socially relevant curriculum. When he did discuss the subject-matter of education in 1897 whilst writing his pedagogic creed as well as in many later writings, his emphasis demonstrates a desire to restructure the curriculum in such a way as to be more readily accessible by child-centered pedagogical approaches. Dewey believed that through the development of a socially relevant curriculum, a child-centered pedagogy is more capable of effectively meeting individual learning needs.

I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual, and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted – we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents – into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service. (Dewey, 1897, p.6)
In April of 1899 Dewey presented his ideas on the place of school within society in a series of lectures in Chicago. These were published in 1902 alongside a short study on the relationship between the child and the curriculum. His lectures set out to change the course of education, and they succeeded. He observed that the “obvious fact is that our social life has undergone a thorough and radical change. If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation” (Dewey, 2008/1902, p. 20). In order to begin this transformation, Dewey proposed what he termed the “New Education”, which later became known as Progressive Education. It was intended to shift the role of the school from a negligible ‘stand-alone’ institution, abstract from its context, into a community hub, inextricably linked to the milieu of its society:

We must conceive of [schools] in their social significance, as types of the processes by which society keeps itself going, as agencies for bringing home to the child some of the primal necessities of community life, and as ways in which these needs have been met by the growing insight and ingenuity of man; in short, as instrumentalties through which the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons. (Dewey, 2008/1902, p.10)

Dewey’s founding premise for this statement was an understanding that what was best for the individual was best for society as a whole. Therefore, the school, whose natural purpose was to develop the individual to his or her best interest (under the New Education) was meeting its democratic responsibilities and serving society’s best interests. Under the New Education, pedagogical practices were consistently under review in order to meet the needs of the individual learner.

Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is continuous reconstruction, moving from the child’s present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies. (Dewey, 2008/1902, p. 109)

It is important to understand that students under this ‘child-centered’ pedagogical approach were not engaged in a constructivist child-centered curriculum, for which Dewey often showed considerable contempt (Ryan, 1997). Rather, their studies were founded in knowledge-based curriculum.

Nothing can be developed from nothing; nothing but the crude can be developed out of the crude – and this is what surely happens when we throw the child back upon his achieved self as a finality; and invite him to spin new truths of nature or conduct out of that.

At over seventy years of age, he presented the Inglis Lecture in 1931 entitled *The Way Out of Educational Confusion*. By then his concepts of New Education were decades old, and had been distributed throughout the developed world. However, a comprehensive understanding of what New Education meant for different areas had not always traveled with the ideas. “[T]here is a different confusion due to combatants losing sight of what they are doing and where they are going, a chaos of uncoordinated movements and actions” (Dewey, 1931, p. 2). A large group of teachers, and public, had come to misunderstand the distinction between curriculum and pedagogy. They understood that Dewey advocated a child-centered *pedagogy*, yet mistakenly believed that in order to employ this pedagogy it must be accompanied by a child-centered *curriculum*. That this was never a component of Dewey’s philosophy has been established above. He again challenged educators to deconstruct dichotomous barriers between subjects, and to ensure that they held a strong understanding of a child-centered *pedagogy* whilst refining the *curriculum* to keep it current to the student’s world. “We use leathern bottles in an age of steel and glass. The bottles leak and sag. The new wine spills and sours. No prohibitory holds against the attempt to make a new wine of culture and to provide new containers” (Dewey, 1931, p. 40).

<table>
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<th>NEW EDUCATION (N.E.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>N.E. Curriculum ←------------------------------------------→ N.E. Pedagogy</td>
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<td>Knowledge based</td>
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<td>Stimulus</td>
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**Figure 1.2**

And so Dewey’s New Education advocated a marriage between a knowledge-based, socially relevant curriculum and a child-centered pedagogy. Dewey’s pedagogical framework was developed from his understanding of the way in which the brain takes on new knowledge, as well as the transference of the concept of evolution to learning. In 1896 Dewey published *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology*, in which he undertook a critique of the mechanistic reflex arc concept originally espoused by Descartes. Descartes understood learning as an arc between sense organs and brain. For example, a man’s foot is burnt by a fire (stimulus) which sends a signal up a cord to the brain. The brain sends another signal down a different cord to withdraw his burning foot (response), and completing the signal’s arc. Later, James was to attempt to develop this understanding further, suggesting that during the arc’s mid-point, associations were
able to be made enabling the individual to learn to adjust their behaviour or understanding (Hickman, 2001).

Dewey disagreed with the simplistic nature of the mechanistic ‘stimulus-response’ conception of learning. His approach was distinctive in drawing its principal inspiration from evolutionary theory rather than from the physical sciences. The idea that mind is an important factor in the adaptation of human groups and individuals led [him] to oppose all accounts that depicted mind as a mere effect of other causes or a passive spectator gazing at a given reality. (Bredo, 1998, p. 448)

His understanding of the theory of evolution, and his ability to transfer its properties to educational ends, enabled Dewey to understand learning as a continuing, compounding process which Hickman (2001) describes as a rhythm of imbalance and restored equilibrium.

For Dewey, the stimulus was composed of more than merely the light of the fire, or the light of a candle next to a child. Rather, the stimulus is sensory, motor, and contextual all at the one time. The context of the stimulus is dependent upon the child’s prior experiences, the environment that the child is in, and the level of engagement that the child is experiencing within that environment. As the child notices the candle for the first time, she enters a state of curiosity, or imbalance. She will assess the situation through her understanding of similar experiences in the past, and will decide to explore the candle further. She has earlier employed her sense of touch to explore objects, and reaches out to touch the flame. She is then burned, and withdraws her hand from the flame, while developing a transferable understanding of the flame, thus satisfying her curiosity, or restoring her equilibrium (Hickman, 2001). In so doing she has also developed her ‘prior’ experience upon which she is able to call, and build, in the future.

Dewey moved to Chicago in 1894, where he established an experimental Laboratory School not, as the name might suggest, filled with cages, wires, dials and distant screams from long corridors, but rather a place where he was able to put his New Education pedagogy to practice. “Letters to friends describing the first days of the school show the children always being propelled toward adult competence” (Ryan, 1997, p. 141). By 1910, when How We Think was first published, Dewey shared a five-stage schema which had been developed and refined during his decade in Chicago, one which he happily acknowledged was never followed in all its steps, and was to be applied fluidly rather than planned a priori (Ryan, 1997). He termed his schema “the complete act of thought”, and it incorporated the following five stages: “(i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv)
development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection” (Dewey, 1997/1910, p. 72).

This schema was built upon the shoulders of his evolutionary based understanding of psychology. “A psychology based on activity depicted organisms as acting to alter their own stimuli rather than being prodded from behind to respond” (Bredo, 1998, p. 447). While much of his writing around New Education in the years above are referred to as his early works, Dewey demonstrated a passionate belief in the importance of New Education, as well as its critical role in democratic nationhood, throughout his life’s work.

**Criticisms**

Progressive new education, as is the case with all social movements, did not develop in a vacuum, and criticisms of its methods have been around since it began to gain mainstream attention. Many of the initial criticisms were concerned more with the departure from a ‘tried and true’ traditional pedagogy, rather than a considered identification of inherent problems within the progressive new education approach.

Among Dewey’s traditionalist critics Robert Hutchins was one of the few who managed to say something intellectually to the point, before he lost his temper and slid off into silliness...Hutchins resurrected Randolph Bourne’s complaint that pragmatism was a philosophy of means and bereft of a philosophy of ends. (Ryan, 1997, p. 341)

Others have sought to address the absence of a focus on curriculum knowledge in progressive new education. Muller, in 2001, summed up the perspective succinctly. “Put more bluntly, progressivism does not have an explicit theory of knowledge, and therefore does not have an explicit theory of curriculum or acquisition” (p. 6). Dewey’s progressivism, as illustrated above, operated under an understanding that he didn’t need one. For him knowledge was fundamentally implied in any learning process.

Muller & Young (2010) paint a picture of the educational future based on three varying perspectives on the sociology of knowledge. Their second vision of the future, based upon an ‘over-socialised’ and progressive concept of knowledge, sees a future in which there is “a steady weakening of boundaries, a de-differentiation of knowledge and institutions, a blurring of labour market sectors, and a greater emphasis on generic outcomes rather than inputs as instruments of equalization and accountability” (p. 7). The concerns raised are legitimate, and while voiced in a modern forum, they are not new. As laid out in the pages above, confusion about the ideas which Dewey was developing around the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could easily (and at times did) lead to what Muller and Young (2010) feared. Chapter seven of this
thesis examines the period of history in New Zealand education when the progressive new education ideologies came under fire for having no perceivable knowledge base. Despite these concerns, it was in fact an integral aspect of consideration for the senior members in charge of the educational direction during the early 1940s. We must, however, begin at the start of our inquiry with an account of the 1937 NEF Conference.
Chapter 2 - The 1937 NEF Conference

This chapter examines the build-up to the 1937 NEF Conference. It follows the initial developments which led to New Zealand hosting the Conference. Preparations were made, and subsequently adjusted in order to facilitate the unexpected enthusiasm with which teachers and the general public embraced the Conference. It then looks into the development of a planning committee. This committee was able to ascertain financial backing from a number of sources, most notably including the Minister of Education.

Setting the Stage
The 1937 N.E.F Conference included fourteen internationally renowned speakers, lecturing under eleven main headings encompassing sixty-four sub-topics, at venues in Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, and Christchurch, over a period of fourteen days. Each day began with six simultaneous intensive lectures and discussion groups in the early morning and a larger lecture during the second half of the morning. The afternoons consisted of "a varied programme including excursions, demonstrations, discussions etc" (Tentative Programme Arranged, 3rd February 1937, para 3). Evening lectures took place in town halls, and special study groups were arranged at each of the centres.

Initial planning for the New Zealand N.E.F Conference had begun two years before it took place. It followed on the heels of a highly successful N.E.F Conference held in South Africa in 1934. Over four thousand people had attended the week-long conference in Capetown. Such was the demand, the conference was repeated in Johannesburg. Speakers at that conference included John Dewey, among others, on whose principles the N.E.F movement had been founded in 1915 (Beeby, 1992). South African Railways had assisted the 1934 Conference by providing free transport for attendees, a small indication of the far-reaching potency of the ideas being discussed. A rather larger indicator was the refusal of the National Socialist Government of Germany to allow the two invited German delegates to attend, substituting two speakers of their own approval, later found to be Nazi spies (Alcorn, 1999).

The South African N.E.F Conference had been attended by Ken Cunningham, the director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). He believed it to be of the utmost importance that the educational ideals held by the N.E.F, and sweeping the developed world, reach Australian educators, and was able to set the next N.E.F Conference for August of 1937 in Australia (Alcorn, 1999). ACER extended an invitation to New Zealand educators to attend sessions of the Australian N.E.F Conference. Dr. Beeby, then director of ACER's New Zealand equivalent, NZCER, soon fell into talks to
establish the feasibility of hosting a few of the speakers destined for the Australian Conference en route.

By June 1936 plans were being drawn up, and a planning committee chaired by Professor Hunter had been established (Alcorn, 1999). Having secured financial backing from most national educational groups, Beeby and Hunter approached the Director of Education (Lambourne) seeking further financial guarantees. In detailing the visit by letter to the Minister of Education (Fraser), Lambourne stated that “It was resolved that the present Committee constitute itself into a Dominion organisation to undertake the preliminary arrangements of a New Zealand Session of the Australian Conference of the New Education Fellowship” (Letter by Lambourne, 5th June 1936, para. 1). He closed his letter recommending a contribution of £250 towards expenses. By the end of the year it had become official, with members of the committee informing the Director of Education formally.

[A] number of distinguished overseas educationists will visit New Zealand in July 1937 to take part in the New Zealand Session of the Eighth World Conference of the New Education Fellowship...There is reason to hope that with the whole-hearted co-operation of all concerned, the Conference will give a new stimulus to progressive educational movements within the Dominion. (Letter by Howell, Smith, & Campbell, 4th December 1936, para. 1/3)

The committee had secured the services of Beeby’s assistant Davies to manage the Conference publicity. The excitement clearly evident in the language he, and others, used in discussing the up-coming Conference reflects what Beeby (1992) was later to describe as idealistic only by retrospect. The re-organisational power and virginal freshness of the concepts of New Education were as real in 1937 New Zealand as to warrant genuine excitement and hope.

The New Education Fellowship Conference will be the most ambitious event in education ever staged in New Zealand. It is heavily back by the Government and the most important educational bodies. It concerns teachers, clergy, administrators, nurses, librarians, artists and the general public. (Letter by Davies, 14 April 1937, para. 2)

Official government assistance came through by the 30th of March 1937, with Fraser committing to financial provision for the travel arrangements of all Conference speakers while in New Zealand, and guaranteeing £500 to cover conference costs should all expenses not be met by registration fees (Letter by, Fraser, 30th March 1937). The Conference preparations were well underway, and the committee were attempting to cover every necessary point. Ashbridge (secretary of NZEl and member of the Conference committee) even wrote to Lambourne to instigate a stamp advertising and commemorating the Conference (Letter by, Ashbridge, 22nd December 1936). While
Lambourne was favourable to the idea, and agreed to discuss it with the Director-General of the Post Office, the stamp never made it into production (Letter by, Lambourne, 12th January 1937).

In an effort to ensure that all lasting wisdom was retained from the international speakers, it was suggested that stenographers attend each meeting. Of this, Beeby informed Fraser by letter that the N.E.F Conference of 1934 had left its organisers with a pile of typescripts three feet high. “I know you will agree with me that not enough wise things have been said by educationists from the beginning of time to justify the publication of three feet of education” (Letter by Beeby, 11th June 1937, para. 1). Preparations were made, however, for the speakers to send transcripts of their key lectures to Beeby which were later published as proceedings of the Conference.

The initial response from the public, however, was utterly deflating. By the 22nd of March, 1937, only three teachers had enrolled due, according to Beeby and Ashbridge, to the fact that teachers were uncertain whether or not schools were to be closed during the conference. In some cases teachers, which had approached their Headteachers concerning leave, had been granted permission on the condition that they find a replacement teacher for the period of time. However the remoteness of the school coupled with the general shortage of teachers during that time led this to be a debilitating clause (Letter by Lambourne, 23rd March 1937).

Beeby sent a letter to Lambourne in early March asking for the situation surrounding teachers’ leave in order to attend the Conference to be clarified (Letter by Beeby, 9th March 1937), but got tired of waiting for a response. After a visit by Beeby and Ashbridge on the 22nd of March, Lambourne took swift action and wrote to Fraser. “It is undesirable that the attendance of teachers at so important a Conference should depend upon the consent of the Headteachers” (Letter by Lambourne, 23 March 1937, pp. 1-2). Fraser responded quickly to Lambourne’s letter, and by the 24th of March had given permission for Lambourne to issue the following memorandum to all Education Boards:

As the New Education Fellowship Conference to be held in July next is an event of unique educational importance, it is very necessary that every opportunity should be given all teachers to take part therein. I am therefore directed by the Hon. the Minister of Education to ask your Board to close all its schools during that week in July in which the Conference falls in its district or in the most convenient adjacent district. (Letter by Lambourne, 25th March 1937, para. 1)

Native School Boards were issued the same memorandum shortly thereafter (Letter by Lambourne, 19th April 1937). Teachers were further assured that they would be able to attend the conference nearest them with full pay (Letter by Fraser, 27th April 1937).
Enrolment forms in certain districts also included an easy method of payment for the £1 enrolment fee through deduction from their April salary. Perhaps as a reference to South African Railways’ contribution to the Conference of 1934, the Railway Department offered rural teachers attending the Conference a concession of twenty percent on both first and second-class tickets (Letter by Carrington, 2nd April 1937).

These measures removed the final barriers to enrolments for the Conference and over the coming months the numbers of teacher and public registrations grew at a staggering rate. School Inspectors, who had already organised their annual visiting schedules, wrote to Fraser asking permission to attend the Conferences. They were subsequently issued with a memorandum detailing the same paid leave as that of teachers, stating that “the Department was of the opinion of that Inspectors should attend the conference” (Letter by Acting Director of Education, 25th May 1937, para. 1). Localised committees had been formed in each of the four centers and were, according to Beeby, “functioning vigorously” (Letter by Beeby, 9th March 1937, para. 1).

Nearly three months after Lambourne’s (23rd March 1937) memorandum to schools informing them of closure during the Conference, organisers were faced with growing nervousness of a different kind. Beeby wrote to Fraser:

I sometimes get a little frightened at the enthusiasm with which New Zealand teachers are taking up this Conference. A letter from Australia yesterday says that their total registrations to date are only 1,500. Ours are between four and five thousand. I hope we are not going to disappoint them. (11th June 1937, para. 3)

Campbell, acting as Secretary for the Wellington N.E.F Committee branch, had begun inviting appropriate educators and government officials to chair Wellington sessions of the Conference. “Mainly because of the large number of registrations received” (Letter by Campbell, 21st June 1937, para. 1), he was required at one stage to inform Lambourne, whom he had invited to chair the opening day’s first session, of a move of venue.

The enthusiasm of New Zealand teachers and public were quite definitely matched by that of the organisers and education administrators. Fraser’s introduction to the Conference booklet is thoroughly soaked in this enthusiasm.

The New Education Fellowship Conference comes at a singularly opportune time when the whole education system of the Dominion is under review...[and serves to arouse] in the public mind that interest in and enthusiasm for education without which administrative reforms may be largely sterile. The Conference has the full support of the Government, and I hope that not only teachers, but all who have the interests of education at heart, will take advantage of this unique opportunity of making contact with movements overseas, and preparing
themselves to take an active and intelligent part in the reorganisation of education in New Zealand. (Fraser in NEF programme, 1937, p. 1)

Five thousand eight hundred and eighty-three people attended the N.E.F Conference in total (Alcorn, 1999), which included around two-thirds of the country's teachers (Letter by Fraser, 22nd December 1937). Some lectures were also broadcast on radio (Alcorn, 1999). After all accounts were paid, the planning committee found themselves £1,400 clear, and did not have to call on a single guarantor (Beeby, 1992).

This chapter has looked at the historical developments which enabled the Conference to be held in New Zealand. The manner in which the Conference gained momentum and obtained financial backing was also discussed. The Conference attendance had grown dramatically during the final few months of preparation and the final attendance left the planning committee almost embarrassed to have made a considerable profit (Beeby, 1992). The following chapter introduces the Conference speakers, and examines the proceedings of the various Conference meetings.
Chapter 3 - The Conference Speakers and Themes

The fourteen international educationalists who lectured during the Conference are introduced. The chapter then proceeds to examine the five dominant themes in the overall content of the lectures given by the fourteen delegates which are; the importance of the individual, criticism of examinations (including complete horror at the grading of teachers), administration, the role of inspectors, and physical activity in schools. The chapter concludes with a look at recommendations made by some of the lecturers specific to the New Zealand education system.

The Delegates Arrive

In his Foreword to *Modern Trends in Education* (1938), the document detailing the proceedings of the Conference, the Minister of Education (Fraser) described the visit of so many eminent educationists to New Zealand...[as] not merely the event of the year as far as education in the Dominion was concerned; it was the event of many years. It was an educational and intellectual enterprise which deserved, and obtained, the greatest measure of appreciation and support from all intelligently interested in that dissemination of knowledge about life in its manifold expressions which is the work of education. (p. ix)

Fraser (1938) called the Conference an adventure for those who were able to be a part of it, an adventure resulting in an “educational revival...Some of us hope, and have good grounds for believing, that it marked the commencement of an educational renaissance from which much will come” (p. ix, italics added). His sentiments were neither hollow praise nor ill conceived. The fourteen ‘eminent educationists’ to visit New Zealand held global acclaim. They are detailed below in Figure 3.1.

In total, the speakers gave more than seventy lectures, and whilst all dealt in some way with the reorganisation of education, the topics they covered were vast and varied. Reading through the lectures, however, one is able to discern several key elements and themes which feature prominently in the conference. Beeby, whose importance in the New Zealand educational setting will be discussed in the next chapter, wrote that in “most of the lectures there was an underlying assumption, common at that period, that education had a major part to play in bringing about a better and fairer society” (1992, p. 104). While the themes themselves can be broken into five main categories, they are far from discrete. Rather, they emulate the progressive interconnectedness which they espouse.

Beeby himself identified these five themes to have emerged from the conference. They were; the importance of the individual child, criticisms of examinations, calls for
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dr William Boyd</th>
<th>Dr Edmund De S. Brunner</th>
<th>Mr E. Salter Davies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Head of Department of Education, Glasgow University. Founder of first educational clinic in Great Britain, and one of the founders of the Scottish Council for Educational Research.</td>
<td>Professor of Education, Teachers' College, Columbia University. Director of various surveys, including missions to Korea, India, and Egypt. In charge of departments of rural sociology and of adult education at Columbia.</td>
<td>Director of Education, Kent. Life Trustee Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. President (1924), Association of Directors and Secretaries for Education. President, Library Association of Great Britain. Past-President of the NEF</td>
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<th>Dr Paul L. Dengler</th>
<th>Mr Arthur Lismer</th>
<th>Dr E. G. Malherbe</th>
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<tr>
<td>Director, Austro-American Institute of Education, Vienna. Twice Visiting Carnegie Professor to American Universities. Director, International Students’ Camps, 1911-1914. Vice-President, Home and School Federation.</td>
<td>Educational Supervisor, Toronto Art Gallery and a leading Canadian painter. Pioneer in the field of children's art. Vice-Principal, Ontario College of Art, Toronto, 1920-26. During 1936 organised art courses in South African Schools.</td>
<td>Director, National Bureau of Education, Pretoria...Organising Secretary of South African NEF Conference (1934) and editor of Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society; the report of the proceedings. Member of the Executive Board of the NEF Member of Commissions on the Poor White Problem and on Native Education.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dr Susan Isaacs</th>
<th>Dr I. L. Kandel</th>
<th>Mr G. T. Hankin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Head of Department of Child Development, Institute of Education, London University. Psychologist to London Clinic of Psycho-analysis. Chairman, Education Section, British Psychological Society, 1929-1931.</td>
<td>Professor of Education, Teachers' College, Columbia University. Editor of The Educational Yearbook since its inception in 1924...Authority on comparative education.</td>
<td>Staff Inspector and representative of the English Board of Education. Specialist in the teaching of history and civics and in the use of mechanical aids to education.</td>
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<th>Dr F. W. Hart</th>
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<th>Dr Harold Rugg</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professor of Education, Teachers' College, Columbia University. Organising Director of the NEF in the United States.</td>
<td>Headmaster of Experimental School, Helsingfors, Finland. Member of Executive Board and Chairman of the NEF</td>
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**Figure 3.1** A description of the fourteen educationists which visited New Zealand and spoke during the NEF Conference, adapted from Campbell, 1938, pp. xix-xxi. All are authors of books in their respective fields, with titles too numerous to list.

more activity in curriculum and classrooms, a concern at the over-centralisation of educational administration coupled with a desire to see more public participation, and a
scathing distrust for the system of inspectors in schools combined with a horror at the teacher grading system (Beeby, 1992).

**The Importance of the Individual**

The central theme upon which all else hinged, however, was the importance of the individual child. This concept was not new, and had found its validation through the explosion of interest in psychology in the 1920s (Beeby, 1992). Its ramifications for education, however, were still being explored. Perhaps one of the greatest indications that this exploration was in full swing was demonstrated through the description of a progressive new education.

Nearly twenty years ago, when Sir Michael Sadler was in India as President of the Calcutta University Commission, his colleagues asked him to write a description of a liberal education. This is what he wrote: 'A liberal education should be given under conditions favourable to health. The body should be developed and trained by systematic and vigorous exercise. The eyes should be trained to see, the ears to hear, with quick and sure discrimination. The sense of beauty should be awakened. The hands should be trained to skilful use. The will should be kindled by an ideal and hardened by a discipline enjoying self-control. The pupil should learn to express himself accurately and simply in his mother tongue. Through mathematics he should learn the relations of forms and of numbers. Through history and literature he should learn something of the records of the past; what the human race (and not least his countrymen) have achieved; and how the great poets and sages have interpreted the experience of life. His education should further demand from him some study of nature and should set him in the way of realising both the amount and quality of evidence which a valid induction requires. Besides this it should open windows in his mind, so that he may see wide perspectives of history and of human thought. It should also, by the enforcement of accuracy and steady work, teach him by what toil and patience men have to make their way along the road to truth. Above all, a liberal education should endeavour to give, but such methods and influences as it is free to use, a sure hold upon the principles of right and wrong. It should arouse and enlighten the conscience. It should give experience in bearing responsibility, in organisation and in working with others for public ends, whether in leadership or in submission to the common will'. (Meadon, 1938, pp. 49-50)

The definition is exhaustive, yet it demonstrated the development of a new education trend as it endeavored to incorporate the whole child, including the academic and physical aspects of her wellbeing. Meadon (1938) stated that the idea of a liberal education was flavoured through the social "outlook of [the] day. The great difference between those early days and the present day is due to the great increase in the mass of observed and established facts...the general public now expects to have its share of knowledge" (p. 48). Echoing the understanding of this development, and in referring to the transition into an age of industrialisation, and the developments in the machinery there-of, Rugg made the assertion that "[t]he implications of this for thinking men are
clear; they cannot deal with the problem of the new day with the ideas and attitudes of the old one” (1938, p. 34).

This theoretical understanding was being applied by many of the conference speakers. In light of the wave of psychological forays into the development of the child, and the ramifications which this inevitably held for educators, Isaacs, through her qualifications and positions, was able to speak from a place of particular authority on such ‘modern’ developments. Her lectures drew large crowds excited to hear the latest theoretical frameworks for the educating of young children, and she didn’t disappoint.

Typical infant school practice in England starts from the view that it is the child’s own activity which fosters his intellectual and his social and emotional growth; and his activity is directed towards the solving of problems which are real problems to him, arising in the natural effort of his mind to understand the life around him, the behaviour of things and people, and to communicate his own feelings and impressions, and understand those of others. (Isaacs, 1938, p. 143)

Isaacs reiterated her belief in the importance of the individual, and therefore the importance of educating the whole individual repeatedly during her lectures. Her perception of the aims of progressive new education, while more succinct than Sadler’s which Meadon (1938) had quoted, reflected the same core passionate understanding.

The aim of modern education is to create people who are not only self-disciplined and free in spirit, gifted in work and in enjoyment, worthy and desirable as persons, but also responsible and generous in social life, able to give and to take freely from others, sensitive to social needs, willing to serve social ends and to lose themselves in social purposes greater than themselves. (Isaacs, 1938, p. 83)

With her extensive experience with young primary school-aged children, she demonstrated the manner in which the accepted understanding of early education was transitioning from a period of education which prepared the students for later scholastic achievement towards “meeting the characteristic mental and physical needs of these years of development” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 146).

That this was a message that was commonplace among the lecturers should come as no surprise. The ideals of the NEF were founded upon the progressive ideals launched into popular educationist culture by Dewey at the turn of the century. The urgency with which the speakers lectured, however, demonstrated the gulf between popular practice between the academic educator and the society in which she worked. Boyd, direct almost to a fault, clearly identified what he understood as the singular priority for democratic education globally. For Boyd, a progressive new education in practice was emancipatory.

But the problem for the educator is not merely one of school studies. What is far more important than anything that is learned in school is the development in the
boys and girls of a free self-reliant personality, so that they can organise their own lives to good purpose in the times which are their own. For this there is needed a new kind of school where individuality and originality count for more than they do at present and learning is creative rather than imitative and secondhand. Children so set free will find no difficulty in solving the problem of leisure for themselves. (Boyd, 1938, p. 45)

Kandel, an expert on comparative education practices around the world, again called on democratic nations to display the democratic and socially responsive values fundamental to their existence within their education systems. As society had grown increasingly complex, so too had its relation to the school. In a previous time when each cultural group, such as family, church or trade, were responsible for undertaking the education of its ‘own’, such education could readily be formed by the immediate needs of its immediate members. However, with the development of central agencies of government,

education began to be provided and controlled by the State. No matter how enlightened state action might be, it cannot resist the temptation to standardise whether in the interest of conformism or of efficiency or of both. The result is that an agency established to provide the means undertakes to prescribe the ends of education. The next consequence is that all distinctions between group culture, national culture and a state-dominated culture disappear. (Kandel, 1938, p. 1)

Kandel identified two functions of education as having emerged historically; firstly the conservation, reproduction and transmission of a culture, and secondly the attempt for education “for growth beyond the type...The fundamental issue in education today is the emphasis that shall be placed upon these two functions” (Kandel, 1938, p. 3).

During one lecture, Kandel explored democratic education comparative to that seen in dictatorships, based primarily on a comparison with Nazi pedagogy. While democratic education wished to place its emphasis upon the development of critical and free-thinking individuals, necessary in comprising the active participants within a democratic nation, it must then be guilty of emphasising through education that which ensures its reproduction and conservation. Nor, too, can democratic education be found entirely divorced from indoctrination. Kandel limited an acceptable degree of indoctrination to “transmitting faith in the ideals of freedom and a readiness to accept the methods of argument and discussion as the basis of social progress” (1938, p. 7). He clearly considered the democratic ideals of enlightenment to be missing from educational practices, with far too great an educational emphasis resting upon the shoulders of reproduction and transmission evident in schools and in curriculum. “To provide educational opportunities for all is an essential need in all democracies; to provide an education suited to differences of individual interests and abilities is equally
a change demanded in the interests of justice and educational progress” (Kandel, 1938, p. 8).

Perhaps no other speaker at the conference was as qualified as Zilliacus to speak on the applied outcomes of progressive new education ideas. While partly funded by private endeavour, Zilliacus’s Finnish experimental school (reminiscent of Dewey’s school of the early 1900s) was bound by certain expectations due to a considerable portion of funding coming from the government. A "highly centralised Board of Education” (p. 166) demanded a matriculation examination and ensured that the courses of study at his school corresponded with the classes of the state schools. Regardless, after nine years of operation, members of the Board of Education had gradually come to appreciate Zilliacus’s ‘new method’, and endeavoured to provide him and his school with as much freedom as they were able. During a report of his experimental school in Finland, Zilliacus described the influence that the new method had had on his students as “considerable” (p. 169).

This new method made allowances for the child to experience an individualised learning environment. The students’ own needs were met by creating time for them to have one-on-one discussions about their learning with teachers. Art was also incorporated into the fabric of daily school life. Further, much of the teaching was done in groups of pupils in order to effectively target their specific learning needs and draw on their specific strengths. While commonly accepted as standard practice in New Zealand schools today, this was revolutionary at the time.

In large parts what made this possible was Zilliacus’s ability to keep class sizes low. The largest class in the school consisted of twenty-eight pupils, while the smallest numbered just twenty, numbers completely dwarfed by New Zealand schools even in 1937. The children of the school were largely responsible for the daily organisation of the school, including preparing lunch and cleaning duties, allowing them the opportunity to exercise ownership of their school.

But we have gone very slowly in building up this form of self-government. At the meetings, to which I am generally invited, I never interfere, nor do I interfere with a decision that I think is mistaken. I let the children make the decision and act on it, and sometimes they find that they have been wrong and alter it – and sometimes I find that I was wrong, and by having kept silent, need not admit it. (Zilliacus, 1938, pp. 171-2)

And the academic result? "Much to the consternation of our critics and the delight of our friends, all candidates passed [matriculation], one of them securing one of the most brilliant passes in the whole of the city” (p. 173). As to the teacher workload, while this very real application of progressive new education within the classroom required longer
hours and more exacting work than teachers in State schools, this was reflected in their salaries. The teachers were, in effect, recognised appropriately for their contributions towards the individualised development of their pupils.

**Criticisms of Examinations**

“Under examination, the examination system in all its phases has come out a rank failure” (Boyd, 1938, p. 245). In 1937, criticisms of examinations were nothing new. In fact New Zealand had just taken the revolutionary step in abolishing the dreaded Proficiency Examination by which a student earned the privileged access to education beyond primary, with strong criticisms dating back to the late 1800s (see figure 3.2).

Some of the first researches I know of were made in the United States about the year 1910 and were concerned with the reliability of marking...In England similar investigations into the reliability of examinations were carried out...investigators paid special attention to the examination used to select children for secondary education, and found its reliability to be very low. In 1927 the New Education Fellowship appointed an International Commission on Examinations which reported at the next world conference in 1929, and again at the Nice conference in 1932...As it was clear that much more research was needed, the Fellowship turned to the Carnegie Corporation and asked for funds for this purpose. Part of the projected research so interested the Carnegie people that they undertook it themselves, and the International Examinations Enquiry was begun. (Zilliacus, 1938, pp.249-50)

The criticisms which were laid out during the conference, reinforced by such thorough and widespread research, centered on the progressive new education understanding of a holistic education concerning a valued individual. Within these broad guidelines, lecturers pointed out criticisms. Examinations, Zilliacus (1938) maintained, created an internal tension within teachers, dissatisfaction with the system of examinations on the one hand, wanting their students to meet the mark on the other. The values placed on examinations by society had become a “dominating and standardising influence on the whole education system” (Zilliacus, 1938, p.249). Zilliacus (1938) illustrated the prevalence of the dominating influence held by the matriculation examination when he cited a story whereby an employer asked an applicant “if he had his matriculation certificate. The answer was, ’I have my M.A.’ ’I don’t care about your M.A.,’ was the reply, ’have you got your matriculation?’” (p.249).

Kandel believed that the entire concept of external examinations held no relevant position in ‘modern’ education, and that their very inclusion was non-sensical. It was inconceivable, argued Kandel (1938), that the underlying standards of assessment were always unchanging, that the opinions and judgements of the examiners were invariably infallible, and that the curriculum and courses of study were always adjusted to the needs and abilities of all pupils or students at a given level; hence the pupil or student who failed stood
condemned as incapable and was separated by a wide gap from the one just managed to pass. (pp. 238-9)

His criticism was founded on the fact that these assessments had rarely been employed for the identification of learning needs or as a basis for meeting these needs. Further, in

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 3.2** - A cartoon by Ashley Hunter entitled *The Uniform System, 1899*. Originally published in *The New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*, 6 May 1899, as printed in Campbell (1941, frontispiece). The sign above the school reads “The Educational Misfit Clothing Factory”, and the word “Standard” is stamped across each jacket.

an attempt to ensure impartiality and objectivity, the exams were marked by examiners who preferred “to know nothing more about the candidate than is revealed in his papers” (Kandel, 1938, p. 239). These examinations which may have been justified during previous years when places in higher education were allotted based on selective criteria, held no place in an education system which had moved from a problem of selection to one of the distribution of education, or identifying

the right education for the right pupil under the right teacher...The success of an educational system can or should no longer be measured in terms of the numbers who pass or fail in examinations but by the degree to which it has been able to discover the abilities and needs of pupils and students and has provided for them the type of education from which they are capable of profiting. And for this purpose the traditional type of examination cannot be used. (Kandel, 1938, pp. 239-40)
Hart made it very clear what he believed about a system of examinations and inspection without needing to step up to a lectern, his interview with The Dominion providing the general public with sufficiently provocative reading.

"As I see it, the trinity of evils in New Zealand schools is the segregation of boys and girls, examinations and the system of inspectors," said Professor F. W. Hart, professor of education at the University of California, in an interview. "This system is, in my opinion, a menace to achievement, and the child, the teacher and the inspector alike are caught in a mechanism of machinery which is obsolete and is defeating the purpose for which it was intended." (The Dominion, July 16 1937, p. 10)

Reiterating Kandel's (1938) perspective, Hart's description of an outdated system of examination that ill-reflect the social realities and progresses of the time were powerful and passionate. The conference, however, was a place where proposed solutions were never far from criticisms.

The rational practioner, stated Boyd (1938), is able to recognise that examinations are a valuable administration device, keep teachers and pupils up to the mark, provide guarantees of educational efficiency to controlling bodies, and enable predominately satisfactory selection criteria for the transference of teachers. The beast, after all, has its uses. The complete and total abolition of examinations from the education system may present itself as an appropriate measure in an idealistic society, built upon a communal trust in the "moral atmosphere of a school in the realm of character" (Boyd, 1938, p. 247). The unfortunate situation, as Boyd (1938) saw it, was that education had been built around examinations, and as such it was exceedingly difficult to view education from a non-examination perspective.

Boyd's (1938) solution to schools which were unable to abolish examinations altogether was simple. Abolish external examinations. Substitute it for a cumulative report which followed the student through her schooling life and was representative of her successive teachers' judgments. At necessary and key stages in the student's schooling more formal examinations could be beneficial, such as at the end of primary and school leaving. The obvious benefits of having some external collaboration on assessing students, such as accrediting the teacher's judgments, could therefore be attained through the formal settings. This system, however, comes with a clause. Internal examinations have the danger to become just as "grievous a burden" (Boyd, 1938, p. 247) as external. The presupposition was stated clearly that such a system relied on teachers adequately trained with a sound knowledge of testing and measuring results. "If teachers cannot be trusted to examine they should not be trusted to teach. The basis of any satisfactory system of education is the competent teacher. And if the
teacher is competent he should be left to manage his own business” (Boyd, 1938, p. 248).

Isaacs agreed with Boyd. As far as she was concerned, there was only one alternative to the examination system. In an effort to attain information about a student’s intellectual ability, academic attainments, social relationships, and emotional development one must develop a uniform system of recording this information. For Isaacs, this should be done through the use of cumulative records, or “records of development” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 253). Isaacs stated this as indisputable fact as, indeed, it was at the time. The research coming from around the world was singularly compelling in its uniformity of this point. The trouble, as Isaacs saw it, was how to map the ‘human’ elements of the individual. “The assessment of intellectual ability is a relatively simple problem... The more difficult problem arises with the more significant aspects of development – emotional attitudes, social relations and personality” (p. 253). Through the process of trial and error, a system to meet this problem was being developed by the University of London Institute of Education. The reports were initially exceedingly factual and comprehensive. “As a result of experience it was found possible to reduce their length and to lay greater emphasis on the dynamic as contrasted with the descriptive function of record” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 254).

By the time Isaacs was addressing crowds in New Zealand, the system had been refined from a comprehensive and detailed description of the student in these key areas to one in which rather than “merely describing each pupil’s abilities, interests and personality, more attention was given to the interpretation of these facts in terms of the pupil’s own special needs and the ways in which they could be met” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 254). These record forms monitored not only the children’s academic merits, but also the children themselves – their home life, physical condition and medical information. The advocacy of such information being included within a cumulative school report was fresh in New Zealand, and embodied the NEF’s holistic understanding of the child.

**Administration, Inspectors, and Physical Activity**

While the themes of calls for more activity in schools, concerns with centralised educational administration, and a disbelief for the system of inspectors in schools (as evidenced by Hart’s interview with *The Dominion*) were all heavily evident during the Conference, much of the criticisms for them were founded upon understandings already discussed above. At the heart of every comment was not a base desire to criticise and degrade an education system, but rather a paramount belief that education was fundamental to society, and that progressive new education was fundamental to
democratic society. Norwood (1938) made it explicit. “Education can save democracy, and only education” (p. 187). In light of such belief, and given the competing global political systems of the time, the lecturers had their share of thoughts devoted to the administration of a democratic education system.

Meadon (1938) quoted from Mill’s On Liberty when addressing the centralisation of educational administration to validate the theory underlying educational administration in England. Mill wrote

That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in State hands, I go as far as any one in deprecating. All that has been said of the importance of individuality of character, and diversity in opinions and modes of conduct, involves, as of the same unspeakable importance, diversity of education. A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation, in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body. An education established and controlled by the State, should only exist, if it exist at all, as one among many competing experiments, carried on for the purpose of example and stimulus, to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence. (Mill, 2002/1859, pp. 89-90)

England took heed of this sentiment in the organisation of its educational administration system. The responsibility of the State was purely the delegation of funding, while the Board of Education oversaw the attainment of general standards and local authorities oversaw the schools, a system much like that of New Zealand before the gradual centralisation of the 1920s (barring State funding).

Meadon brought the point home.

Whatever system is adopted, it is essential that it should give freedom to the teacher in every type of school and be based on trust and confidence between teacher and administrator. For effective functioning it is essential that the administrative and the teaching services in an administrative area should have a common outlook and have the desire to work together in the best interest of the pupils. (1938, p. 63)

While advocating an educational system which developed the individual, Kandel echoed the Millian concept that educating the individual was not only in the individual’s best interest, but also that of the society of which the individual was a part. Kandel contextualised this development by once again examining where in the situation an emphasis was placed. “In all the discussions for free education, however, the emphasis has been more upon freedom for the child than freedom for the teacher” (Kandel, 1938, p. 11).
Freedom for the teacher, however, also came under close scrutiny during the lectures. Hart (1938) began his session on the *Freedom of the Teacher* with three simple scenarios: the Director of Education in an organised society which held subject a people would allow no schools to exist. The Director of Education in a dictatorship would create free, universal and mandatory education prescribed in minute detail, and purge the system of any teacher who might stray from the prescribed path. The Director of Education in a democracy would also create free, universal and mandatory education. However, this education would be absent from prescription for the reason that in a democratic society, rather than a system which perpetuates the 'status quo' of the hegemony as it should in a dictatorship, it is desirable to develop critical thinkers “who will seek to know the truth and apply it to the betterment of society” (Hart, 1938, p. 439). Speaking in a nation wherein teachers were ranked and assessed by centralised inspectors, such a statement provided more than simply something to mull over, but rather asked a question which New Zealand would become uncomfortable in answering. As for his perception of inspectors...

There is a place for the inspection of schools. The water supply should be inspected and the building should be inspected...the heating and ventilation systems should be inspected...that comprises the only inspection that should be tolerated in a school, and the inspector who performs that type of service should be the only inspector permitted within gun-shot of a school. (Hart, 1938, p. 444)

Kandel made it explicit that no teacher could be considered “free if he is limited by a prescribed syllabus...inadequate equipment, examinations of an external kind, and even a system of inspection which seeks to assess a teacher’s qualities by one standard while professing other aims of education” (1938, p. 11). Rather, demanding freedom for the teacher must be accompanied by an unshakeable trust in her professional capability to meet the expectations placed upon her by her society.

The final prevalent theme which emerged during the Conference concerned, once again, a newly specific focus on the holistic well-being of the child. “The 'principle of activity' expresses the empirically discovered truth that the child grows by his own efforts and his own real experience, whether it be in skill or knowledge, in social feeling or spiritual awareness” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 83).

During one lecture, Isaacs highlighted the importance of creating relevant experiences (which she termed "problems of experience" (Isaacs, 1938, p. 86)) which required the application of logical problem solving techniques at appropriate stages of a child’s development. A child, she stated, solved these problems of experience by three main and progressive ways. The manipulative solution required little interaction, but rather relied on the manipulation of concrete objects in order to solve a problem. The imaginative
solution described a situation whereby the child would apply past experience to a present problem in order to expedite the process of finding a solution. Lastly, the solution by language would be applied once a child is able to transfer an experience to spoken word. “It is not true that the child cannot reason until he can use abstract verbal logic; he thinks first with his hands and his imagination, long before he can do so in words” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 87). This process is known and commonly accepted by the educator in 2011 understanding of pedagogy, for example in relation to the New Zealand Numeracy Project. In 1937 however, the discourse surrounding an alternative pedagogical practice involving an interactive and engaging process was refreshingly welcomed, and accepted whole-heartedly by Isaacs’ audiences.

**Significant Discussions**

Before the Conference took place, a few members of the delegation of education experts were approached and asked if they might provide an outside perspective of the New Zealand education system. Kandel’s ’stock-take’ was published on its own right, as well as being included in *Modern Trends in Education*. He described a positive education system in which class distinctions had disappeared, literacy was widespread, and equality of opportunity was provided for every boy and girl. Elements in which New Zealand was lacking, claimed Kandel (1938), were well known to its teaching body.

The teachers of New Zealand are as familiar with the changes needed in education as are progressive teachers anywhere else in the world. They know that a teacher’s best work cannot be carried on when he must concentrate upon preparation of pupils for examinations. They know that however well-intentioned a teacher may be, he cannot do justice to his pupils in classes of forty, fifty and even over sixty in a room. They know that modern educational theory is demanding greater activity on the part of the pupils themselves, and they also know that such activity is impossible in classrooms completely filled with desks, limited in scope to a minimum of books with but scanty library facilities, and restricted in the provision of equipment, that variety of modern equipment stimulates activity. They are aware of the fact that one of the essential forces for moulding character is the corporate spirit of the school, and as they look around at their schools they are impressed with the lack of halls in which pupils can work together as a corporate body. (pp. 463-4)

Boyd was rather less tactful with the delivery of his impressions. While this proved to be at times unfavourable with his audiences, he managed to become widely known through the press as will be discussed at a later stage.

I had a good look at the blackboards: the writing of the teachers was horribly good – it was the writing of people who were always thinking of the taskmaster. The examples of spelling and counting and grammar told the same tale. It was the tale of an educational system obsessed with the petty, empty things of education rather than its essence. In some schools the walls were decorated with work done by the children and I guessed that it was goods put in the shop
window for the inspector...I discovered, however, that the serpent in the garden is the English influence in New Zealand education which has demoralised your institutions...I suggest that if you had got on to good Scotch lines twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, there would be no need now for a New Education Fellowship Conference...[T]he biggest limitation of all is the lack of proper education interest on the part of the community...These are signs that New Zealand has still to learn that the greatest thing in the life of any people is education. (Boyd, 1938, pp. 475-6)

And he continued.

I say as forcibly as I can that until you get rid of the grading system the teaching profession in New Zealand will not be a decent profession and the schools will be subject to all the reactionary forces that make for tameness and mediocrity. In other words, you will be intelligent but dull. (Boyd, 1938, pp. 478-9)

While he had pleaded with the audience to observe his diagnosis as they would a doctor's whom they had never previously met, but who had met with their condition before (Boyd, 1938), he managed to upset even those openly critical of the narrowness of the New Zealand education system. His was the final lecture of the conference, and James Shelley, one of Beeby's formative influences during the 1920s, was due to offer a vote of thanks. He found himself instead making "a spirited critique which defended his adopted country" (Alcorn, 1999, p. 88).

While not every one of the fourteen lecturers have been discussed here, each brought a progressive new educator's perspective to their particular field of expertise. For example Lismer, at one conference hall in an art gallery, had to pause just as he prepared to begin his lecture due to the combined efforts of a rainstorm and a corrugated iron roof rendering him inaudible. During the interim of about half an hour, he examined the images displayed in the gallery, before proceeding with his lecture when the rain had subsided. His audience was shocked to hear him ask the question, "What have Malherbe and I done to be put in the morgue of dead English paintings?" (Malherbe, 1981, as quoted in Alcorn, 1999, p. 87). The images displayed by the gallery all depicted scenes in England, ironically intoning that New Zealand's indescribable beauty held no aesthetic significance. The gallery paid its immediate society no relevance.

Despite the critiques of the educational system, the Conference was pronounced an immeasurable success. Even such criticisms as those brought about by Boyd (1938) promoted reflection and the development of credible defenses and rationales for systems under attack, a successful outcome in itself. In his evaluatory letter of the Conference to Mrs. Esnor (founder of the NEF), Minister of Education Fraser's praise was genuine, and a testament to the planning and careful consideration which had
enabled the progressive New Education ideology to take hold throughout New Zealand in 1937.

In reviewing the educational progress made in New Zealand during the year now drawing to its close, I am convinced that the most important event of the year, and indeed of many years past, has been the session of the New Educational Fellowship Conference that took place in July.

(Fraser, 22 December 1937, para. 1).

This chapter has introduced the fourteen delegates who lectured during the Conference. It also examined the five dominant themes in the overall content of the lectures given by the fourteen delegates which are. It has concluded with a look at the recommendations made by some of the lecturers specific to the New Zealand education system. The following chapter examines the manner in which the Conference proceedings were reported by the media.
Chapter 4 – The Media and the Conference

This is the final chapter dealing directly with the 1937 NEF Conference. It examines the major newspapers during the time of the Conference, and follows the way in which they reported the Conference proceedings. The degree of attention paid to the Conference for its duration by the newspapers demonstrates that popular interest in the Conference messages and outcomes were high. Direct interviews with some of the delegates also enabled their messages to reach a national audience. It was largely through the newspapers that discussions around the role that progressive new education held in a democratic nation took place. This degree of reporting and public discussion is demonstrated as one method by which progressive new education ideas were disseminated on a large scale.

The Conference Through the Eyes of the Press

“The largest and most distinguished group of overseas educationists that has yet visited New Zealand arrived at Auckland by the Mariposa yesterday...to take part in the seventh regional conference of the New Education Fellowship, which opens in Auckland to-day” announced The New Zealand Herald on July 10th 1937 (p. 10). Over the course of the week-long Auckland session The New Zealand Herald published a recount of the main points provided by the delegates, as well as informing their readers what lectures were available during the day. In so doing, the newspapers provided an avenue for those that had enrolled, as well as those that hadn’t, to plan their daily lecture visits sound in the knowledge that the key points of those that they could not attend would be published the following day.

The arrival of the educators was marked with much pomp and circumstance. There were luncheons and dinners and addresses and proclamations, all of which were followed by an eager public through the pages of the local and national newspapers. University professors, members of the City Councils, Government officials and NEF Conference committee members were called upon to provide their views on the unfolding Conference. Their arrival was accompanied by speeches of hope and self-reflection, and a firm belief that the education system and therefore democracy had much to gain from the insights and knowledge which the delegates would impart. Auckland’s deputy-mayor, Martin, echoed what Fraser had made public in his introductory note to the NEF Conference booklets, that as the Dominion’s educational system was on the brink of a dramatic reorganisation the delegates’ arrival could not be more opportune. He also called on the educators to speak “what might be unpleasant
truths” (as quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, July 10th 1937, p. 10) for the benefit of New Zealand’s society.

Also published in the paper, and also in conjunction with the arrival of the lecturers, an article entitled “Official Blessing” detailed a letter from the president of the English Board of Education which described the breadth of the Conference’s topics as “nothing less, in fact, than education for complete living” (as quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, July 10th 1937, p. 10).

In attaining a feel for the education milieu over the time of the Conference, it was reported that the headmaster of Mount Albert Grammar School condemned a change to secondary curricula, labeling the ideas which would lead to it sprung from a trend towards “easy education” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 12th 1937, p. 12). He called for protest at the concept of centralised governance of secondary schools during the annual dinner with the old boys. While he felt a certain degree of attention was needed in order to lift education out of an academic rut, the article did mention that Mount Albert Grammar School had already undertaken efforts along these lines. Just days before these comments were published during the official welcome of the delegates to New Zealand, Fitt had spoken of two sections of educational thought in the New Zealand community. One “suffering from educational complacency and the other from educational discontent...[Fitt] hoped that the visit of the overseas authorities would have the effect of increasing the numbers in the latter class” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 10th 1937, p. 10).

Through the pages of the press the theory of the NEF and new education found its way into homes. With such widespread reporting, each lecture that took place was summarised and interviews with delegates published, it is clear that the Conference had taken a prominent position in current affairs during its time in New Zealand. Much of what was said will have been, indeed, revolutionary. Boyd spoke of the purpose of education, and was reported as saying that life was too short for teachers to teach unnecessary subjects, and therefore Latin and French would be wasted on the girls of New Zealand. “An educated person was not one with a detailed knowledge of literature and mathematics. The possession of a wide body of knowledge was the right goal” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 12th 1937, p. 11). Coupled with this was Hart’s novel research into what made a teacher popular. Rather than brushing it aside with a belief that such a question held no place in the life of the school, Hart’s empirically based results were overwhelmingly notable. “Eighty per cent of the students reported that the teacher they liked best was also their best teacher...while a half of 1 per cent only stated that the
teacher they liked least of all taught them most effectively” (Hart as quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, July 12th 1937, p. 11).

Criticism of the grading scheme found its way into the headlines quickly. The report of Boyd’s lecture on the matter made for interesting reading when he was quoted as saying that he “never saw an inspector come into the room without wanting to have a fight. The situation is annoying” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 13th 1937, p. 10). Hart’s perspective was clearly reported the following day. "It is an utter impossibility to grade teachers numerically and at the same time give an individual teacher fair play,” he said” (*The Dominion*, July 14th 1937, p. 10).

Row after row of headlines demonstrated the breadth of topics reported on. “New Education...Many Addresses Given”, they cried, “Child Problems – Basis in the Home – Clinical Investigations”, “Teaching Parents – Advances in Knowledge”, “New System in Vienna” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 13th 1937, p. 11). The press employed their considerable ability to attract and excite their reading public, and with the large audiences attending daily lectures and discussion groups in each main centre, the wave of enthusiasm and interest in educational issues was buoyed by the emotive headlines that reached across New Zealand each day.

Headlines such as those above emphasised two main aspects of the Conference, both of which lent the delegates an instant air of credibility; their knowledge was *international*, and it was *new*. Still radically isolated in the 1930s from the rest of the world, the methods and techniques brought by the delegates were perceived to be as exotic as the lands from which the delegates themselves came. Being but one or two generations removed from England and European migrants to New Zealand, developments which took place in these countries were not considered foreign by the majority of New Zealanders. Rather they were embraced as being the refined contemporary understandings of an established society. Public reaction to the barrage of reports and new education ideals was swift.

Preliminary steps for the formation of an Auckland branch of the New Education Fellowship were taken at a representative meeting in the Town Hall yesterday afternoon. Dr. William Boyd, who has been a prominent member of the society in England for many years, outlined the aims of the movement. It stood for well ordered freedom in education and for the unified expression of the desire of teachers to be relieved from outworn restrictions. As an international body, formed 22 years ago, it was “one of the most encouraging facts in the post-war life of the world.” (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 14th 1937, p. 15)

The intended aims of the Fellowship were published in *The New Zealand Herald*, and as such the NEF was introduced to the New Zealand audience as international, and therefore noteworthy, and democratic. Speaking as the head of the NEF, Zilliacus made
clear the purpose underlying the Fellowship and, subsequently, the Conference. “We are
democratic in outlook and aim to give every child in the world the best possible
education...Our definition of education is the provision of the best possible conditions
for growth and development. We must have with us the parents and those persons who
are specialising in the young child before it steps inside the school, and we have to take
seriously the problem of adult education. There is no boundary line to be drawn
between any age whatever in the education problem. The democratic and international
outlook of the new education is not easy to uphold in our world to-day, but all of us feel
that it is the only possible line for us to go on” (Zilliacus as quoted in The New Zealand
Herald, July 10th 1937, p. 10).

Perhaps the most attention-grabbing aspects reported about the Conference
were headlines which included ‘democracy’. The Press’s report of Meadow’s lecture on
the importance of education for a democratic citizen was indicative of the factual
manner in which the lectures were reported by local and national newspapers. It
outlined the main points from Meadow’s lecture, highlighting the need for democratic
education to be more ‘in-depth’ and emphasise the development of the individual’s
application of critical thought, or discrimination, to situations. “There were agencies
working against discrimination and against people thinking for themselves” reported
The Star (July 15th 1937, p. 7), which carried on to convey Meadow’s concerns that a
citizen must think about problems of local and central government in order to ensure
that the democratic State preserve itself. “The totalitarian States are spreading their
propaganda and if we are not careful there will be no democratic State to preserve”
(Meadon, as quoted by The Star, July 15th 1937, p. 7). Education, he felt, was the crucial
saviour of Democracy.

The report of Hart’s lecture on the same day stated "Democracy on Trial – Civic
Complacency Threat”.

A grave warning against the intrusion of “racketeering” into the channels of New
Zealand administration, criticism of what he termed “the ballyhoo optimism” of
indifference and an indictment of civic complacency were voiced by Dr. F. W.
Hart....He declared that the price of civic complacency was economic ruin, social
disaster and the death of democracy. (The New Zealand Herald, July 15th 1937, p. 13)

His concerns were all too real given the political climate of the late 1930s. On July 17th,
The New Zealand Herald led a reflection of the Conference by a lengthy discussion on
Hart’s address. Under the headline “Liberty and Apathy” the reporter made clear that
liberty’s undoing, apathy
is certainly affecting the conduct of public affairs in New Zealand. The signs of it can be found in almost every department the curious cares to investigate...The territory in which [democracy] has anything like an assured hold has shrunk rapidly in the past two decades. It will shrink further unless those who value democratic institutions and methods have a care...Nine-tenths of the alarms, dissensions and actual perils of Europe are due to the aggressive drive of dictatorships and of ideas in which dictatorship is an integral part. There is no special immunity protection English-speaking countries from the infiltration of similar ideas. (p. 14)

On July 13th, as the Conference got underway in Christchurch, The Press attempted to impress upon its readers the grand nature and importance of the occasion. "The lecturers...would be welcome in any circumstances but are, perhaps, specially welcome at the present time; and the reason why this is so and why the conference is an event of specially hopeful importance is that the Dominion has never before stood at quite so anxious a pause in educational progress" (July 13th 1937, p. 10). The article stated that though an educational leader had recently returned from overseas and assured New Zealanders that the system had little to learn from foreign methods, such a statement had failed to allay fears and concerns that the public held for their education system. The comments had

left unaltered the belief that social and economic change was presenting new educational problems, calling for a restatement of aims and a revaluation of methods and instruments. It did not remove the impression that reform was necessary and must be, like all true reforms, fundamental; that the system which has been elaborated more by chance than by design was in need of reconstruction according to an educational purpose rather than alteration according to an administrative scheme. But discussion of reform has been disjointed and uncertain. It has lacked leadership and concentration and impetus; it has wanted the stimulus of ideas flung into the circle from outside. The conference and its leaders bring to New Zealand what it wants at the time of greatest need; and its value is that of an opportunity eagerly awaited and certain to be fully used. (The Press, July 13th 1937, p. 10)

Every day's programme and lectures were reported on in the following day's paper. On the final day of the Christchurch branch of the Conference, a large portion of The Press's page 12 was devoted to reporting on the Conference. It not only shared the previous day's lectures in which Zilliacus called the world to apply a common understanding of education, among other things, in order to avert war, but also described theatres as being crowded, with big attendances at each address. Reporters noted that if the sizes of the audiences "listening each day to both private and public addresses and the number of interviewers besieging the lecturers attending the New Education Fellowship Conference in Christchurch this week can be taken as an indication, public interest in education is keen in the city" (The Press, July 16th 1937,
p.12). In fact, an additional lecture was arranged in Christchurch after organisers were inundated with requests for Lismer to speak again.

When the Auckland sessions of the Conference had concluded, the North Island delegates travelled on to Wellington in order to begin the week-long session which started on Monday the 19th of July. The Dominion heralded it as an "event of unparalleled importance in the education life of the community" (July 19th 1937, p. 12), and went on to impress upon its readers the grandness of scale of the Conference. "During the five days of the conference more than 40 lectures are to be given by nine different lecturers who between them will deal exhaustively with every phase of education" (The Dominion, July 19th 1937, p. 12).

During the week of the Conference in Wellington, Page 3 of The Dominion shared the schedule for the day’s lectures, including venue, lecturer, topic, and a brief description of what might be covered in each lecture. In reporting on the Conference, newspapers assisted the development of the conference by highlighting its importance on multiple occasions, for instance referring to the Conference as "the most important educational gathering yet held in New Zealand" (The Dominion, Tuesday July 20th 1937, p. 11). In its review of the opening day in Wellington, The Dominion quoted from Fraser’s address words that echoed his sentiments in the written program for the Conference. This once more enabled a population far greater than the reported 2000 attendees of the lecture to hear the Minister of Education and Acting Prime Minister endorse the intellectual content of the delegates on the eve of an educational reorganisation in New Zealand (The Dominion, Tuesday July 20th 1937).

The Wellington audiences for the Conference had had the opportunity to follow much of the proceedings of the Auckland sessions, as each lecture had been widely reported throughout New Zealand. On the inaugural morning of the Wellington sessions, The Dominion’s readers were provided a preview through a review of the Auckland sessions. Importantly, the article detailed a general agreement by Dr. Fitt, a Professor of Education at the Auckland University College, with the conclusions reached by delegates about New Zealand’s education system.

Briefly...the trend of the conference was the freeing of the teacher as a professional man or woman, the freeing of the child as a creative and expressive individual, and the broadening of the conception of education up to and including maturity, to include within its scope the full intellectual, emotional and bodily development of man. (as quoted in The Dominion, July 19th 1937, p. ?)

Professor Fitt had been called upon to comment on the education landscape at the beginning of the conference. He had chaired the Auckland committee of the fellowship, and stated that the educational methods employed in New Zealand could well be thirty
years behind those used in other developed countries (*The New Zealand Herald*, July 10th 1937).

The importance of the Conference was not lost on many educators, least of all Fraser who had illustrated its import both in writing and during an address. The value was also highlighted by *The New Zealand Herald*, which reported that the “Government is about to embark on a new education policy...the advice of the eminent men and women of the New Education Fellowship will be invaluable not only to the Government, but also to the community” (July 10th 1937, p. 10).

Fraser’s comments were treated with particular regard during the Conference. The responsibility to apply the theoretical understanding pouring through the town halls and meeting places was, after all, his.

The aims of State education in the Dominion were outlined by the Acting-Prime Minister, Hon. P. Fraser; “What we are aiming at is secondary education of some sort for all the people,” Mr. Fraser said. "We are trying to give equal opportunity to all, and to bring a measure of culture within reach of everyone with an appreciation of literature and art, regardless of occupation. We do not aim at an educational hierarchy.” (*The Dominion*, July 14th 1937, p.15)

Fraser took a particular interest in the Conference proceedings. Having been a part of the initial consultation and endorsing the event through the financial guarantee he had provided on the Governments’ behalf during the planning stages, it was clear that he was keen to see the effect which the Conference would have on the country. In addition, his comments about New Zealand being on the cusp of an educational reorganisation, as shall be discussed later, were entirely genuine. His participation in the Conference was not unnoticed. *The Dominion* reported that a keen and “personal interest has been taken in the Wellington sessions of the New Education Fellowship conference this week by the Acting-Prime Minister and Minister of Education...who has attended a number of the seminars and public addresses as an ordinary member of the audience” (July 23rd 1937, p. 12). Interestingly, Fraser was quoted as saying that he was looking forward to the final address of the Conference by Boyd entitled *A Scotsman Looks at New Zealand Schools*, the effects of which were most definitely confronting.

During the time of the conference, a popular topic for public debate had been the place of religion in education. Having been seperated from State education in an interest to present a democratic State-run education system with the 1877 Education Act, the topic had rarely been far from the headlines. The Conference itself did not escape ‘scandalous’ allegations. *The Dominion* reported that Father Timoney of the Christchurch Roman Catholic cathedral had stipulated in his sermon that the NEF delegates had not spoken about the developments and work being done in Roman Catholic schools.
because they had been told not to do so. By way of response, Ziliacus categorically denied any such suggestion and pointed out that speakers had “not mentioned the work of any group of schools in particular in our remarks because we have not pre pared it as our function to pass comment on any group of institutions, or indeed on any part of the system of education here” (Ziliacus, as quoted in *The Dominion*, July 19 1937, p. 5).

The reports concerning the Conference followed a variety of perspectives. One article published in *The Dominion* was quick to identify the perceivable gaps between that which was theoretically sound and that which was practically feasible. The reporter, while valuing three main suggestions made by the delegates, raised questions about the extent to which New Zealand would be capable of applying them. While one lecturer had said that he could not teach classes of 45 or 50 pupils, the minimum requirement in New Zealand was 40 pupils. “[B]ut even with this ideal there have been the hard facts of more accommodation and extra staffing, which means more expenditure to be considered” (*The Dominion*, Wednesday July 21st, 1937, p. 10). The two other concerns voiced in the article were founded upon the same problem, funding. Both the inclusion of mechanical aids, by which was meant radio and cinema, and the extension of teacher training would inevitably place a heavier burden on the available resources of New Zealand (*The Dominion*, Wednesday July 21st, 1937).

Criticisms of the system were not left out by publishers. Hart’s personable manner and insightful perspectives saw him

As I see it, the trinity of evils in New Zealand schools is the segregation of boys and girls, examinations and the system of inspectors,” said Professor F. W. Hart, professor of education at the University of California, in an interview. “This system is, in my opinion, a menace to achievement, and the child, the teacher and the inspector alike are caught in a mechanism of machinery which is obsolete and is defeating the purpose for which is was intended. (*The Dominion*, July 16th 1937, p.10)

During the article, Hart called for a re-organisation of the existing practices of inspectors and teacher ranking. He advocated for a method of teacher supervision in its stead.

Professor Hart held that no teacher could do justice to a child under his charge if success was to be reckoned in terms of success in examinations. Speaking of the inspectorate, Professor Hart made it clear the he condemned the system, not the individuals...It is well known psychologically that the human mind cannot distinguish more than seven degrees of difference when dealing with qualitative materials,” he said. “In my opinion, a long stride forward will have been made in New Zealand schools when the present inspectorial system is abolished and a system of supervision is substituted. Supervision has been defined as ‘teaching the teacher to teach.’” (*The Dominion*, July 16th 1937, p. 10)

However, as seen with the notable comments made by Fitt, the international delegates were not the only members of the educational sphere to be called upon to comment.
Notable New Zealand historian and educator Dr. Butchers iterated the need for New Zealand society, for humanity as a whole, to go deeper into its understanding of the role education must play in the betterment of society.

Life, instead of being an aimless fatalistic journey from the cradle to the grave, should be an ordered development of conscious power; entering into the magnificent heritage of the race and meeting the problems of existence with an inspiring faith in the evolutionary march of mankind. (Butchers as quoted in Dominion, July 17th 1937, p. 15)

The way in which newspapers reported the Conference proceedings has been explored during this chapter. The degree of attention paid to the Conference for its duration by the newspapers has clearly shown that popular interest in the Conference messages and outcomes were high. The newspapers’ discussions around the role that progressive new education held in a democratic nation has been identified. The extent of reporting and public discussion is clearly one method by which progressive new education ideas were disseminated on a large scale during and after the 1937 NEF Conference. The following chapter examines the initial consequences of the Conference, and introduces Beeby as an important character in the development of education in New Zealand.
Chapter 5 - Initial Consequences of the Conference

This is the first of two chapters examining the educational, and important cultural contextual, developments from the immediate closing of the 1937 NEF Conference to the beginning of the 1944 Education Conference. This chapter looks at the initial impact of the 1937 NEF Conference, beginning with a private meeting between some of the international delegates and key figures in New Zealand education. It introduces Beeby as a pivotal figure in overseeing the education reforms which resulted from the Conference, and the 1939 Labour education policy which he penned with Fraser. This chapter also examines the spread of the New Education Fellowship in New Zealand, as several branches of the NEF were established throughout the country. It closes with the announcement of World War II.

Behind Closed Doors

As the Conference drew to its close, New Zealand enthusiasm for education had never experienced such a height. Such rigorous debates, which had resulted from the Conference, and such in-depth coverage of the event by news media, had brought the topic of education into everyday life. “The ferment of ideas generated excitement and the messages fell on many receptive ears” (Alcorn, 1999, p. 88), six of which belonged to Fraser, Lambourne and Beeby who met with many of the lecturers after the Conference behind closed doors. Ziliacus, Boyd, Davies, Brunner, Meadon, Hankin, Malherbe, Kandel and Rugg met with Beeby and Lambourne in Wellington on the 24th of July (Verbatim record of proceedings, 1937, E. 4/10/26). Understanding that the opportunity to transform the excitement, which was bubbling around education into tangible aspects of educational administration and practice, was at hand, Fraser had asked Lambourne to compile a list of forty questions.

These questions had been designed to illicit specific and critical advice on the development and reshaping of the New Zealand education system. They covered nine topics which were clearly of interest for Fraser. A summary of the questions in each topic is displayed in Figure 5.1 below. The record of the meeting shows that while Lambourne, Beeby, Dyer and Deavoll (both Dyer and Deavoll were involved with the Wellington Board of Education) were present, they were there only so as to afford them first-hand experience of a discussion which would otherwise have to be passed on in note form (Verbatim report of proceedings, 1937, E. 4/10/26). The purpose behind the meeting was made explicitly clear in the Minister’s welcome.

[Fraser] felt that the question of re-organisation of education in New Zealand was not a question for the Government alone. It was a question for everyone
interested in education in the Dominion so that there could be the greatest measure of agreement and co-operation...He had requested the Director of Education to draft out a number of questions to put to the delegates and ask them, out of their long experience, for an expression of opinion. They were meeting in a private capacity and he wanted them to express their own opinion. (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, 1937, p. 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Questions centered on whether or not educational control should be unified, and the qualities and duties befitting a Director of Education. (“Should he be a trained secretary and accountant or a trained educationist?” (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26)).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing, salaries and grading of teachers</td>
<td>These questions were concerned with a substitute for the existing grading system which would simultaneously fill country positions, ensure a national scheme of appointment and promotion which avoided parochialism, and ensure a reasonable spread of the best teachers. Further questions enquired into adapting “efficiency bars to ensure that the teachers’ salaries do not automatically increased to the maximum on account of years of service only” (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, p. 3) if a salary scheme was to be adopted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training of teachers</td>
<td>Questions arose concerning who should control the teacher training colleges, how long the programs should be, and the qualifications of the individual appointed to run the college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary schools</td>
<td>Questions centered on whether post-primary schools should be multi-bias or long single course schools, the type of examination which held an appropriate place in post-primary schools, and the extent to which funding should be provided for those unable to access post-primary education due to financial reasons. More pointedly, the final question of the section asked, “It was said by one lecturer that our system of secondary education is appalling. Can you suggest the direction in which the system should be reformed?” (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, p. 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examinations</td>
<td>In light of the discussions around examinations that took place during the Conference, these questions sought the usefulness of examinations at higher levels for instance University Entrance, and what authority should accredit these examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Guidance</td>
<td>Here Fraser asked for help defining the extent of vocational guidance for which the educational authority was responsible in light of the Ministry of Labour’s role. Appropriate methods of instruction were questioned with specific regard to various age brackets, and the validity of school farms was investigated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspectorate</td>
<td>Rather broadly, the delegates were asked to define the functions of an Inspector of Schools, and whether one inspectorate should cover all grades of school or be broken into primary, secondary and technical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>The extent to which Universities were responsible for the development of professional training for professions such as Architecture, Engineering, Accountancy and so on was discussed. A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
question also examined the validity of aligning professional examinations with their corresponding degree courses.

| General | These few questions asked for clarification on the education and corrective exercises for students with special needs, as well as the control of curricula through creating a list of pre-approved textbooks. Interestingly, the thirty-ninth question asked “Do women make satisfactory heads of large –
a) primary schools
b) post-primary schools?” (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/24, p. 5). |

**Figure 5.1** – A summary of the forty questions under their respective topical headings which were discussed between Zilliacus, Boyd, Davies, Brunner, Meadon, Hankin, Malherbe, Kandel and Rugg and Fraser, Lambourne, Beeby, Dyer (Wellington Board of Education) and Deavoll (Wellington NZEI). Adapted from Verbatim report of proceedings, E.4/10/26, 1937.

Fraser began the meeting by reading the questions to the delegates. On the issue of educational administration, the answers given by the delegates were as varied as could be expected from such a group. Zilliacus praised the system of the time, stating that the system you now have is not an accident, but has been the most effective means of bringing the educational level as high as it is now. The idea of giving a great deal of responsibility and also freedom of choice as between different parts of the country will necessarily be supplemented by giving freedom in making the syllabus of schools. (in Verbatim report of proceedings, E.4/10/26, 1937)

Kandel disagreed, stating that unification of educational administration meant the unification of everything to do with the life of the child, adolescent and adult. He advocated for a method of localised control, stating that the “function of education administration was the education principle…the promotion of freedom and the sense of responsibility which could not be developed if the system was one built up on the principle of domination from its central body” (in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, 1937). The summary of the discussion, however, states that five of the delegates advocated strongly for the centralisation of control (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, 1937).

The educators were unified in their disapproval of the grading system of teachers. Davies stated that it was “disastrous if any Education Department or body of teachers was concentrated on the business of attempting to grade human personality” (in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, 1937). Fraser was quick to pick up the condemnation of the system, making the comment “I can take it there is a unanimous verdict against the grading system, because none of you say a word in its behalf” (in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/10/26, 1937). Boyd’s solution to the problem was
to improve the training of the teachers, thereby reducing the need for supervision. After
the discussion around staffing, which led in to a discussion about the make-up of teacher
training, the meeting was adjourned until the following Monday 26th of July.

And so the discussions went on, none particularly sticking to one aspect of the
questioning, and some answers covering several topics at once. Upon their return, the
delegates continued to discuss the list of questions under their respective topics, and
made a few more important suggestions to Fraser. They recommended against a
certificate upon leaving post-primary school, made no comment about University
Entrance examinations other than that it was for New Zealand to decide, and shared
strategies for tackling vocational guidance. It appeared that in most countries the
Ministry of Education would work alongside the Ministry of Labour (or their
equivalents) in providing vocational guidance (Verbatim report of proceedings, E.
4/10/26, 1937). Systems of inspection varied, from inspectors in charge of inspecting all
grades within a county, to a system of reporting which were collected at higher levels
and inspected then. Textbooks were gaining in importance in international systems, as
was the status of libraries with a good selection of books and pamphlets. And while
America tended to leave senior positions open for male applicants only, the British
didn't seem to see a difference, and the Finn stated that in Finland several heads were
women, and in all-girl schools the head must be female (Verbatim report of proceedings,
E. 4/10/26, 1937).

The Importance of Beeby

This mini-conference was extremely formative in validating much of the reforms which
Fraser and Lambourne were hoping to achieve. They were also immeasurably influential
for educational reform for another reason. When "Fraser asked the group who he could
appoint to implement change and reform, the advice was less ambiguous...Malherbe
responded... 'the only way I saw any of these suggestions being implemented was for the
Minister to appoint Dr Beeby as Director of Education'" (Alcorn, 1999, p. 90). The events
leading to Beeby's appointment had indeed been set in motion with his direction in the
organisation of the Conference, which hadn't escaped Fraser's notice. In his own words,
Beeby was surprised as events unfolded.

Early in 1938 I received a message from the minister of education asking me to
call on him. I had no idea of why he wanted to see me, and I had some faint
misgivings because my two earliest contacts with him had been unhappy...To my
relief, Fraser was friendly when I saw him, and he told me that N T Lambourne
was due to retire as director of education at the end of 1939 and that the
government was going to re-establish the post of assistant-director, which had
been vacant for many years, in order to have someone ready to take over the top
position as soon as it became vacant. He asked if I could suggest a suitable person...He had some objection to everyone I suggested...We shook hands but, as I was half-way through the door, he stopped me and said, ‘Would you take the job yourself?’ (Beeby, 1992, pp. 108-9)

Beeby's official appointment to the position of Assistant-Director of the Department of Education occurred on the 1st of August 1938, shortly over a year since the Conference's took place. He stepped out of his role directing the NZCER and into a role of administration during an exciting period of the political landscape in New Zealand. In 1935 Labour had won the election and "was in office for the first time, and with a powerful mandate for change. And change was what the new Government would deliver, on a scale unprecedented in New Zealand history up to that time" (King, 2003, p. 356). Immediate changes were largely made financially viable because of the fact that New Zealand was emerging from the Great Depression (Dakin, 1973). The previous coalition government had managed to balance the books, meaning that Labour inherited a surplus. Old age pensions were reinstated. Teacher-training colleges were re-opened, having been closed for an entire year in an effort to reduce spending. The previous administration had also raised the school starting age to six years old. This was returned to five years of age. Efforts were continued in an attempt to reduce class sizes, which as recently as 1932 had seen teacher-student ratios of between forty and fifty pupils per teacher, with thirty percent of classrooms having over fifty pupils (Butchers, 1932). Pledges were made to safeguard the physical well-being of students, and in 1936 the
Proficiency Exam, the final hurdle to a secondary education, was abolished (Beeby, 1992, Campbell, 1941, King, 2003).

Beeby (1992) described a setting where a number of people in their twenties were leaving lucrative careers in order to become primary teachers. There had become a burgeoning public belief that education was pivotal in New Zealand’s future.

There was something in the spirit of the 1930s that was conducive to this, a mood of idealism that may now look naive but that gave a new social and moral status to education. It was to come to a dramatic peak in the New Education Fellowship Conference in July 1937. (Beeby, 1992, p. 90)

By the time he took his place in the Department of education, Beeby was charged with channeling this educational excitement. The official report to Parliament at the end of 1937 stated that the Conference had “exceeded all expectations, and unprecedented enthusiasm was manifest during the whole of the conference, which could not, therefore, have any but a stimulating and inspiring effect upon the teachers and the public” (AJHR E. 1, 1937, p. 6).

One of his early duties was to amend an annual report to Parliament for education minister Fraser. He noted that the task of writing the annual report to Parliament for 1938 had been, as was customary, written by the department’s statistical clerk, “a reliable clerk who saw his sole duty as recording baldly the events of the past year; and he made a competent job of this, though it was scarcely enthralling reading” (Beeby, 1992, p. 123). The report had been returned with Fraser’s comment scrawled across it to the effect of “This report has nothing to say, and I won’t sign it. Send me a report that says something” (Beeby, 1992, p. 123). When Beeby reviewed the draft, he had one evening to rewrite the report. As such he had no time to review papers or ask advice, and so he wrote a Government objective on education as he felt Fraser would see it. Its word and sentiment epitomises the shifting tide of educational theory in post-Conference New Zealand.

The Government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a meretricious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. The structure of the New Zealand school system as originally laid down (and, indeed, of practically all the school systems of the world) was based on the principle of selection...From the beginning of this century the rigour of this selective system has progressively relaxed. New Zealand has moved far more rapidly in this respect than countries of the Old World, and had, even before 1935, given a large measure of free education even at the higher levels...the present Government was the first to recognise explicitly
that continued education is no longer a special privilege for the well-to-do or the academically able, but a right to be claimed by all who want it to the fullest extent that the State can provide. Important consequences follow from the acceptance of this principle...Schools that are to cater for the whole population must offer courses that are as rich and varied as are the needs and abilities of the children who enter them...Most important of all, perhaps, it means that the system of administrative control must be such that the whole school system is a unit within which there is free movement. It is only against this historical background that the Government’s policy in education can be fully understood. It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on a basis of selection and privilege, to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable. (AJHER E1, 1939, p. 2-3).

This concept of equal opportunity, which had been embodied in the NEF Conference, was not simply new to national education in New Zealand, it was revolutionary. Whilst the ideal in modern society has perhaps lost its tarnish, just six years prior to this statement a committee for the Wellington Chamber of Commerce combated the recommendations of the Atmore Report to raise the school leaving age to fifteen years. It stated that for those with moderate mental ability, “further education along general lines would not fit them for the modest role nature intended them to play in life” (as quoted in Beeby, 1992, p. 126). However, the foundation upon which Beeby built his understanding of education during his years as Director was a belief that equality of opportunity within education was a critical component of democratic policy.

Beeby’s appointment, and subsequent influence in New Zealand education, is perhaps not immediately considered as an undeniable and direct outcome of the Conference. However, the importance in which Beeby played in moulding the educational landscape of New Zealand was directed a great deal by his evolving personal journey and his ever-developing understanding of education in a democratic context. Born to Yorkshire parents, Beeby experienced a typical and unimaginative education at the hands of the Christchurch school system. He recounts his first impression of school being a place designed to meet his one need: to learn to read in order to digest Grimm’s Fairy Tales rather than wait for his mother or older brother to read them one story at a time. “Unfortunately, before I achieved that state of bliss, my idea of education became more complicated. After six weeks, the headmistress gave a prize for ‘best conduct’...and I discovered that education was also about beating other people and ‘coming top’” (Beeby, 1992, p. 1). His desire to read became unquenchable, and Beeby did well in his studies. The first book he bought, coincidentally, was Darwin’s The Origin of Species. He attended Christchurch Boys High School as the odd one out, coming from a working class family. Its parting words, delivered by a teacher of French, stuck with him. “What
are you going to do next year, Beeby? ’I’m not sure, sir. What would you suggest?’ Just
don’t be damn fool enough to become a teacher. It’s a mug’s game” (Beeby, 1992, p. 35).

Of his university education Beeby was overwhelmingly condemning until such
time as he was introduced to a world beyond the antiquated textbook and mind-
numbing routine of rote-lectures. James Shelley, the first professor of education at
Canterbury College, exposed Beeby and the rest of his students to a critical theory of
education. He employed a method of instruction foreign to the students of the early
1920s. Beeby remembered him highly. “Shelley, as a teacher, was not a man but a
multitude – actor, craftsman, artist, art historian, psychologist, sociologist, and a lecturer
who brought to the study of education in New Zealand a breadth and dramatic quality
that it had never known” (Beeby, 1992, p. 44). His relationship with Shelley was
longstanding. Shelley was pivotal in the planning phases of the Conference, and was on
the committee which hired Beeby into his position as Assistant-Director of Education.

Beeby successfully completed his B.A. with honours in philosophy, and
undertook a Masters in order to clear the way for a Ph.D. He was the only student in the
Masters programme, and throughout the writing of his thesis on the psychology of
laughter he was never once expected to read beyond the set list, nor make use of the
library. Successful in his Masters study, and in an effort to transcend the “intellectual
isolation of New Zealand in the 1920s” (Beeby, 1992, p. 44), Beeby travelled to Britain in
order to study for his Ph.D. His experiences overseas allowed him to understand
the potential for a narrowness within educational practices and thought in New Zealand.
Upon his return to New Zealand he set up the country’s first ‘Director of the
Psychological and Educational Laboratories’, a position at Canterbury College created by
two of his previous lecturers, one of whom was Shelley. These experiences, compounded
shortly thereafter with his role as the initial Director of NZCER in 1934, developed
within Beeby a set of personal principles and educational beliefs which were vital in
shepherding the New Zealand educational system to embrace the progressive new
education to lasting effect long after the Conference halls were closed.

NEF Spreads Across New Zealand

Beeby’s appointment was not the only initial consequence from the Conferences. After
heralding the outstanding success of the Conference, the Minister of Education's report
to parliament on the year 1937 detailed the importance the content of the addresses
held for New Zealand educators.

The addresses were an inspiration to teachers and administrators alike; and
those who were already working along somewhat similar lines will no doubt go
forward with increased assurance, while all undoubtedly will experience a
broadening in outlook and an improvement in technique therefrom. Already branches of the Fellowship are being formed in various centres, with a view to seeing in how far the ideas gained can be incorporated into our education system. (AJHR E. 2, 1938, p. 3)

Four initial branches of the NEF were set up in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Members of the education community in each area were quick to develop ideas and identify avenues in which to apply their new-found, and newly validated, enthusiasm. They belonged to a centralised National Committee which met monthly and included government members such as Lambourne, Beeby, and Fraser. This was an extension of the core group of members who had been meeting since early in 1936 in preparation for the Conference, and so was able to build on the momentum which its early members had developed. In the early stages shortly after the conference, the regional groups invariably sent messages to inform the Minister of Education of their ventures, and ask for support. Interestingly, the support sought was mostly validation of their endeavors rather than financial.

One such letter from the secretary of the Dunedin Section of the NEF advised Fraser of a collaborative project being developed for a ‘civic survey’ by members of the secondary schools in conjunction with the Medical School. At the bottom of the letter Fraser scrawled the comment “Consideration for support – draft reply – The idea seems worthy of encouragement. P.F. 11/12/37” (Dunedin NEF to Fraser, E. 4/10/26, 11th December 1937). It was clear that the Minister and the Department of Education supported the budding Fellowships around the country, and was keen to encourage their early forays into experimenting with their new-found freedom. There were a number of significant projects which stemmed from this support. The secretary of the Auckland branch wrote to inform the Minister of a recent resolution which they passed. Their experiments had been around supervision of art teaching by competent artists, and had found their success to be ‘striking’, with recommendations that the system be rolled out across the country (Auckland NEF to Fraser, E. 4/10/26, 1939).

In Christchurch, the NEF had won finance from the Carnegie Corporation (whose grant had initiated the NZCER, and whose assistance had paved the way for many developments in New Zealand education) in order to develop a better understanding of education in country schools. They had secured the help of Miss Dolton, a child guidance expert trained in England and America, for a length of two years (Letter by Beeby, 1938). At the time there were a number of inquiries by NEF groups into the feasibility of importing overseas practitioners which held experience and training in the new methods as a consultative expert for the area. The Auckland branch, it seems, had a
rather specific focus on where the help should come from. Their secretary wrote; "No
where in the world is better training available in this field than in Vienna which has long
been noted for the work in child guidance" (Auckland NEF to Beeby, E. 4/10/26, 1938).

Beeby, but a few weeks into the job as Assistant-Director of the Department,
responded citing the experimental work already being done in the Canterbury region by
Miss Dolton, stating that expanding the programme was inadvisable until the results of
the Canterbury experiment were able to demonstrate its validity. And while Beeby
agreed that Vienna had excellent training facilities, he was also quick to point out the
time it might take an overseas practitioner to adjust to the distinctly New Zealand social
and educational settings in order to be appropriately insightful with their guidance
(Letter by Beeby, E. 4/10/26, 1938).

Another series of developments sprung from the Dunedin branch of the
Fellowship. Throughout the area a number of schools decided to join what they termed
a group of ‘experimental schools’ in order to apply their understandings of the new
methods. In June of 1939 one of Lambourne’s secretary’s informed McIlraith, the chief-
inspector of Primary Schools, that he should like McIlraith’s thoughts on the
educational experiments taking place in Dunedin. A list was sent to McIlraith of the
eighteen undertakings of which the Department of Education had record. The nature of
these experiments ranged widely, from an increased attention being paid to the
development of “backward and problem children” to the development of “Arts and
Crafts, Dramatic work, and Music” (Record of Experiments, E. 4/10/26, 1939). Schools
were investigating effective methods of teaching reading, as well as the effects of
stressing the physical aspect of education. One of the experiments was designed to
discover the benefits, if any, of grouping students by ‘streams’ of ability.

As it was the first time such an undertaking was being seen in the country, and
McIlraith was able to spend only a short amount of time in his appraisal, he expressed a
desire to keep the report informal and confidential (McIlraith, E. 4/10/26, 1939). He
notes that the “six schools I visited had all initiated experiments but in only three had
the work been continued and become part of the regular curriculum” (McIlraith, E.
4/10/26, 1939). This was not to be perceived, however, as a failure, as the areas of
experimentation which were no longer aspects of the regular curriculum had been
deemed ineffective, or of no benefit. This demonstrated that schools were applying
critical reasoning to the experiments which were taking place. In other areas McIlraith
did question the validity of programmes.

Although the pupils of the Art and Crafts Club are enthusiastic, and the teacher
much interested, I formed the impression that the work was of very mediocre
quality. The Club teacher assured me that he knew little about the subject but
provided the pupils were keen the teacher's lack of ability did not matter. The Headmaster concurred in this view. I must say, however, that I have grave doubts in the matter, especially when I recall the very poor quality of much of the work...Freedom for the pupils was apparently interpreted as implying almost total absence of guidance. One can imagine what the result would have been had the same principle been applied in the Music and Hobbies Club.

(McIlraith, E. 4/10/26, 1939)

In amidst these critiques there was also praise. While the initial aspect of some experiments had been discontinued, McIlraith noted that they had demonstrated that the teaching methods used had been very effective, and that these methods were indeed being transferred to other areas. He also identified a number of Music programs which were successful.

And so it was that as Beeby trained to take over the directorship of the Department of Education from Lambourne, the progressive ideals driving the new education became more familiar with educators in the Dominion. The Department of Education, under Beeby's influence, had embraced the challenge of providing an education for the 'whole child', with the appointment of a specialised superintendent of Physical Education in 1938. In 1939 a School Publications Branch was set up, expanding the School Journal as well as developing textbooks which helped to impart a uniquely New Zealand character within schools. 1941 saw a national film library established, and a supervisor of Teacher Aids appointed within the Department. In 1942, a national school library was established, with further Department of Education appointments of specialists in the fields of music and the arts (Dakin, 1973). As wonderful as these advancements were, they were not wholly indicative of education legislation during the time period, nor were they sustainable. In September of 1939, two days after Germany invaded Poland, New Zealand declared war on Germany.

This chapter has looked at the immediate influence of the 1937 NEF Conference, which began with a private meeting between some of the international delegates and key figures in New Zealand education. It introduced Beeby, and the 1939 Labour education policy which he penned with Fraser. It also examined the establishment of several branches of the NEF throughout the country. The following chapter discusses the immediate impact war had on New Zealand, as the Labour government attempted to honour the policy it had published shortly before the outbreak of war. It also examines the influence wielded by two major education publications.
Chapter 6 - Immediate Effects of War and the Influence of Education Publications

This chapter looks at the immediate impact war had on New Zealand education. As education administrators vowed to maintain a focus on education, they were faced with a variety of challenges specific to wartime which they met with necessary ingenuity. Rolling revision of curriculum documents, and the changing role of school inspectors is discussed as curriculum advisors are introduced. Two education journals, the Department of Education’s Education Gazette and NZEI’s Education Today, are examined and their influence over the continued dissemination of progressive new education ideas is demonstrated.

A Nation at War

After its declaration of war on Germany on the 3rd of September 1939, Prime Minister Savage addressed the country by radio:

> With gratitude for the past and confidence in the future we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go; where she stands, we stand. We are only a small and a young nation, but with a union of hearts and souls to a common destiny. (as quoted in King, 2003, p. 392)

His voice was quavering, and he was dying, but King (2003) describes his statement as more than romantic notion. There was only one political party which opposed the war, the New Zealand Communist Party, and this represented an insignificant portion of the population. New Zealand was a nation prepared “politically, bureaucratically and in spirit” (King, 2003, p. 392) to join the war.

Apart from managing the Education portfolio, Fraser was Deputy Prime-Minister. Fraser succeeded Savage after he succumbed to cancer in March of 1940. In this, King (2003) counts New Zealand as singularly fortunate. (Mason took over Fraser’s education portfolio.) Fraser’s direct manner and shrewdness was starkly contrasting to Savage’s leadership, and while King (2003) recognised that Fraser would never be loved as Savage was, his war-time direction of New Zealand was instrumental in how New Zealand experienced the years of conflict. “Fraser imposed firm controls on the wartime economy in an effort to accomplish what he believed the administration during World War I had neglected to do – to conscript the country's wealth in addition to its manpower” (King, 2003, pp. 394-5).

It took seven months before New Zealand forces were to face their first considerable active duty against German forces. The war's economic reaches were also quick to bridge the distance between the European and African theatres and New
Zealand. "When I wrote the minister’s annual report on education during 1940, the war was biting deep into our resources and would bite deeper still" (Beeby, 1992, p. 130).

For most, joining an international conflict of this scale was not a new experience. Memories of the Great War were close at hand, as were memories of the sacrifices forced upon New Zealand’s youth as a result of wartime living. As news of the announcement of war broke, Beeby wrote a 'Message from the Director' to teachers, which Lambourne signed, that was published in the governments’ education publication, The New Zealand Education Gazette.

Many teachers must be wondering what they should say concerning the war to the children under their care. Those of us who are concerned with education have a great responsibility to bear, for the attitudes we adopt in these early months of the war will influence for life the attitudes of a whole generation of school-children...One thing is certain: no teacher can ignore the war. The schoolroom is now so closely related to life that it is impossible to carry on one’s teaching exactly as if the nations were at peace. The problem will arise in one form or another every day...The teacher’s position is not an easy one. He knows, as do all thinking people, that modern wars are not fought by the armed forces alone, that the whole State is at war, and that the mobilising of the public opinion in a country is no less important that the mobilising of men and guns...If it were possible, I would, I think, protect every child from all knowledge of the madness of an adult world at war, and let a generation grow up that was free from the hatred and bitterness that war engenders. It is not possible; but the alternative is not to use the children to win the war. We are fighting a government that has done just that for the past seven years, that has deliberately taught in its schools doctrines of racial hatred and intolerance, and has twisted the minds of a generation to gratify its own senseless ambitions. If the price of winning the war were to fill our children’s minds with lies and hatred, it would be better that we should lose, for it is futile to conquer the spirit of Nazism without if we yield to it within. The teacher’s duty, as I see it, is to act as a buffer between the world of the child and the warring world of the adult, to pass on to the child only such of the jarrings and jostlings of the adult world as he feels the childish mind can cope with at each stage. It is for the skilled teacher to say what burden of knowledge the child at each age can and should bear. (Education Gazette, October 2 1939, pp. 197-8)

The statement addressed concerns which many teachers were undoubtedly experiencing. As testament to this, portions of the statement were quoted in New Zealand’s other major education publication, NZEI’s National Education the following month. The statement itself speaks to the degree in which new education ideology was expected and accepted within New Zealand classrooms by 1939, acknowledging the interconnectedness between the classroom and the world outside its walls, and relying on the individual teacher’s professional judgment when discussing the war rather than issuing a central mandate.
Reform Marches On
Beeby’s official appointment to Director of the Department of Education in May 1940 was heralded by the Education Gazette as a beneficial appointment for New Zealand’s education system. While Beeby had been in the position for some months, Lambourne’s contract did not officially end until April 30th 1940, meaning that Beeby had been acting under the title of ‘Acting-Director’ since the 1st of February 1940. By the time it came to writing the annual report on education in 1940 Beeby, in his first year as Director, made clear what both Mason and Fraser supported – “that the war would not be allowed to halt the reform of education” (Beeby, 1992, p. 130). Fraser’s abolition of the Proficiency examination in 1936 had deconstructed the barrier between primary and post-primary education, and Beeby writes that it took the country “some time to realise that this appreciably altered the functions of both types of schools” (1992, p. 137). In identifying the approach required in reforming primary curriculum in line with Fraser’s ‘equal educational opportunity’ policy, Beeby sought the answers to four broad questions: “What should we teach? How should it be taught? How should teachers be induced to change their teaching practices? How should the achievement of students and teachers be assured?” (Beeby, 1992, pp. 137-8).

Beeby firmly believed that in order to truly effect a sustained change in one aspect of education, other areas of education must also be included in the reform. This was not only demonstrated by the manner in which he set about reforming New Zealand’s entire education sector over the period of a decade, but also earlier, while still in his role as Director of NZCER. Writing his findings after undertaking a survey of the state of intermediate schools in New Zealand, Beeby’s belief was made apparent within his first paragraph. “For [the intermediate school movement’s] slow and stunted development there seem to have been two main reasons, the economic depression, and the desire to make as few changes as possible in the rest of the school system” (Beeby, 1938, p. 13).

Reforming the entire education system, however, and doing so in a manner in which the changes would be accepted and assimilated into schools and classrooms, was far too large a task to approach in one fell swoop.

They had felt safe with the limited range of facts their pupils needed to meet the demands of the proficiency examination. It was their reaction that alerted me to a truth of which I have become increasingly convinced over the years – that it takes far longer to change the objectives of a body of teachers than it does to train them in new methods of achieving old objectives; if the gap is great, some never make the leap. It’s a simple, but often forgotten, truth that educational reformers ignore at their peril. (Beeby, 1992, p. 145)
Subsequently Beeby resorted to what was termed ‘rolling revision’. This was done to ensure that primary teachers, who were in charge of the whole syllabus, would be able to make the necessary adjustments to their practice without being inundated and overwhelmed, thus reverting to old practices. In a further effort to make changes ‘stick’, and with Fraser’s urging, Beeby set up annual consultative committees, “one for each subject, representative of the department, primary and secondary teachers, the training colleges and, where possible, the private schools – but not, it will be sourly noted in the early 1990s, the parents” (Beeby, 1992, p. 139). These committees consulted widely, and draft reports were published to elicit comments and criticisms. Once a final report was adopted by the Minister, its provisions were not compulsory until textbooks, necessary facilities and professional development were provided. In fact, such was the length of the process that final reports which were accepted into education spanned between 1943 and 1954. Rather than creating a fractious primary curriculum, Beeby states that the developments over such a period of time and in such individualised areas were able to create a competent and considered curriculum. This was due to considerable effort by the department of education and himself to ensure that the documents were consistent with the "general direction in which every reform should move" (Beeby, 1992, p. 140).

As the school leaving age was raised to fifteen, the new 1939 policy, providing equitable educational opportunities, meant that promotion to post-primary education was based on age instead of academic ability. In light of the abolition of the Proficiency examination and raised leaving age, one hundred percent of students required preparation for some form of post-primary education. Absence of the Proficiency examination also meant that more time could be spent on the whole of Strong’s school syllabus written in 1929. This syllabus centred on an education for the whole child, and included art, crafts, music, physical education, history and geography. While the consultative committees were established and developing curriculum areas, this long process had the potential to stifle the momentum of educational reform which had been maintained through NEF Committees and carried over from the Conference of 1937.

If we were to maintain the impetus that Fraser had given to thinking about education, we couldn’t wait for a series of committees, all of whose members were in full-time jobs, to present their reports over a decade. For that matter, the committees would work more imaginatively if they felt themselves to be working in a system where change was expected – was in the very air. So we had to devise methods of stimulating the liveliest teachers to experiment with novel methods on their own account, or to join together in groups of their own making to break new ground. We had to make teachers feel that the department expected change of them, that it had a clear idea of the general direction the changes should take, that it would condone honest failures and that their successes would be of value to the committees working on the new curricula. (Beeby, 1992, p. 140)
Inspectors played a large part in inducing teachers to change their practice. With their newfound freedom to spend more time with the most needy teachers, rather than required to spend an almost equal amount of time with each teacher due to their administration requirements, they were able to also work alongside teachers who were breaking new ground. Due to the judgemental nature of inspectors however, a new position of subject advisor was created in order to assist with the introduction of new methods in education (Alcorn, 1999, Beeby, 1992). While inspectors maintained charge over the more formal school subjects, a subject advisor named Philip Smithells was appointed for physical education late in 1939, and later in 1942 subject advisors in the arts were developed and distributed around New Zealand, though in a much more dramatic and less direct sense than Smithells.

Of the teaching of arts and crafts, Beeby writes that it was in a distressing state in 1939. “With rare exceptions, art lessons still centred on techniques and the immortalising in pencil of the chalk-boxes and staffroom teapots of my childhood” (1992, p. 141). Due to the shortages of materials available during wartime, even these lessons were uncommon. Much of art and crafts consisted of making things out of pinecones and the like, which Beeby defined as “the making of rubbish out of rubbish” (1992, p. 141). However, unfolding within the negative consequences of wartime upon New Zealand, a strange turn of events led to the validation of arts and crafts in mainstream education. When, on the 7th of December 1941, Japan entered the war, New Zealand mobilised its internal defence force, meaning that many schools were taken over for military and hospital purposes (Beeby, 1992). Douglas Ball, who was in charge of Native Schools and had been taught by an ex-student of John Dewey (Stephenson, 2009), was placed in charge of schools in the Palmerston North and Fielding areas, as they were disproportionately represented in schools that had been commandeered. The 1942 school year began with only two of their thirteen primary schools operational. As such, and with the Mason’s approval, a new initiative born of necessity was introduced which was referred to as ‘schools without walls’. It lasted for the duration of the emergency, and saw town halls, libraries, council buildings, empty shops and churches turned into schools. Ball’s intuitive use of the time laid foundations for the integration of an arts and crafts programme to be included in mainstream education.

Due to their unusual circumstances, and less-than-formal facilities, the students spent much more of their time engaged in arts and crafts than they would have been otherwise able to, with huge success.
I saw thirteen-year-olds who had never before been in a library or read a book for pleasure wallowing in picture books written for children half their age. The greatest success of all was in a large hall which became the art and crafts centre under a man, Sam Williams, untrained as a teacher, who had been a stage designer in England for Alexander Korda, and whom I happened to know. The place was a riot of activity. Charged as I was with the conservation of supplies in wartime, I didn’t enquire too closely where he found the masses of newsprint, paints, and pastels, but I took special interest in his programme for crafts because of its implications for general use in the school system. (Beeby, 1992, p. 142)

The ramifications of the experiment were far-reaching. "The scheme got wide publicity, and the public temporarily accepted the idea that the arts could co-exist alongside serious subjects. This gave us the opening we needed and...we got authority to set up a system of art and crafts advisers" (Beeby, 1992, p. 143). By the time these advisors were prepared to step into schools, headteachers had begun to be converted to the idea that the arts were indeed a valid part of the curriculum. Beeby (1992) writes that under “persistent pressure – it had to come from them, not from the department – we agreed to share [an advisor’s] services for a year or two with two neighbouring schools” (p. 144).

Figure 6.1 - Trainee physical education instructors in Hutt Valley during a fitness demonstration on 25th March 1944 (Retrieved from www.natlib.govt.nz). By 1942 instructors were beginning to graduate from their training programmes around New Zealand.

The Influence of Publications
There were two agents in particular that were charged with not only the dissemination of the new methods of teaching involved in both physical education and arts and crafts, but also with maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm for the new method which had come from the Conference. These were the Education Gazette and National Education. While National Education was the NZEI publication, and was thereby not required to support the emphases on the progressive new education published in the
*Education Gazette*, its director during those years was F. L. Combs. He was a highly enthusiastic supporter of the progressive new education ideals, and was a member of the education community whom Beeby held in the highest regard. The two shared both a professional and personal relationship, and had worked collaboratively in the organisation phases of the Conference. Outside of his influence over *National Education* and directorship of NZEI, Combs was an inspirational author in his own right, having published two books in 1939 and 1940, both powerfully concerned with advocating for progressive education.

*National Education*’s dedication to progressive education can be found clearly in its publications. The July issue of the magazine in 1937, perhaps as a teaser of the upcoming Conference, included a unique perspective on progressive education. A twenty-one year old, who had spent his primary schooling in a progressive school in New York, his high school in a regular State school, and was just completing his college education, reflected on his experiences of education and its outcomes. The article was introduced by saying;

> one of the most hopeful signs that the new education is growing up and has come to stay is the capacity of its chief exponents for self-criticism. The revolution – it virtually amounts to that – in America has been accomplished so far as educational theory is concerned: it will of course be some time before the theory becomes the general practice. (*National Education, July 1st 1937, p. 232*)

*National Education* had obtained the article from the American journal *New Republic*. It followed the life of a character named Keith who, in a progressive primary school, was able to follow his passions and interests. It provided New Zealand readers a rare glimpse into the educational practices employed by schools overseas, and shed some light on progressive education’s ideals.

The philosophy on which Keith’s school was run went something like this: the fundamental tenet was that “education is growth.” By “growth” was meant the acquisition of accurate knowledge, the development of desirable habits and the attainment of attitudes that would help the child to live happily and effectively. But the chief respect in which Keith’s progressive school differed was that it recognised the child as an individual. The school realised it was just as important for him to learn to think and act for himself as it was for him to learn to cooperate with his group. It understood that no fixed formula could be applied to obtain for each child the fullest attainment of his capabilities. (*National Education, July 1st 1937, pp. 232-3*)

As the introduction had alluded to, the tone of the article was not solely exaltative. The author outlined four areas which were covered by his schooling, the power to know, do, think and feel. The power to know was well instilled. Keith was able to hold conversation on almost any topic, and he was not alone. Of high school the author stated that “most of the boys from progressive schools fitted pretty well into a
single pattern. They did as little work as possible; they were interested in a great variety of subjects, but their interests led to almost no achievement” (*National Education*, July 1st 1937, p. 234). Keith’s main criticism, however, came with the power to do. While interests quickly grabbed his attention, his ability to follow a thing through to completion was under-developed. He was highly capable of thinking and perhaps above all else feeling but, for Keith, the ‘doing’ was his weak link. Did the author feel that, in light of this, his progressive primary education had set him up for failure? Quite the contrary.

All of the best characteristics Keith possesses can be traced to the development of his first ten years. On this basis it is fair to say that for him progressive education was on the right track. Its philosophy needs modification, not scrapping. Future Keiths need similar attitudes, similar creative urges and a similar variety of interests, but if they are to make the most of the opportunities life has to offer they must also be able to do a job and do it well. (*National Education*, July 1st 1937, p. 234)

The NZEI magazine was also an avenue for teachers to raise concerns over the progressive new methods in a legitimate forum. Shortly after the Conference in 1937, frustrations with what where perceived to be mixed messages from the Department of Education began to appear in letters to the editor.

Some of us are rather perturbed! You see we are trying the “new freedom” in an earnest endeavour to broaden our curriculum and “educate” rather than “instruct” our pupils. We are having a great time with projects, nature study excursions, new forms of handwork...and then comes the annual inspection! We find that the “new freedom” is a myth and a dream! Our learned superiors are not interested in our new ideas; they want the three R’s and nothing but! (*National Education*, August 2nd 1937, p. 267)

The letter, only a month after the conference, perhaps was expecting too much too soon from the inspectorate system, and its authors will most certainly have approved of the evolution which the inspectorate, and the entire system, was to undergo in the following few years.

The *Education Gazette*, which had included such notices for the Conference as timetables, information on speakers, final financial balances and the like, was similar in its selection of material to *National Education*. It included what might be deemed in 2011 as professional development articles on the teaching of reading and writing, as well as articles which were published in order to enable teachers to develop their understanding of progressive new education pedagogy. One such article, published in October 1937, was written by the Principal of Aberdeen University and contrasted old pedagogical method with the new.

I am not really certain what my own teachers were aiming at. They never told me. But I fancy their idea was that if we knew certain things and could perform
certain feats on paper, we should be educated people. They thought less of us than of the content of our minds. The modern idea is different. We don’t think so much about the Latin that is taught to little Willie, but rather about what little Willie will be like when he has learnt Latin. It is little Willie that matters; and the aim of the game is to make sure that he is active and not passive in the process. Education like digestion, is something that he must do for himself. *(Education Gazette, October 1st 1937, p. 174)*

The article was also published in *The Listener*, a current affairs magazine, meaning that the comparisons and evolving understandings of this progressive new education reached an audience beyond the school staffroom.

Another area of influence exerted by the *Education Gazette*, which was unique to the department of education’s publication, was instructional material for the teaching of arts and crafts and physical education. The appointment of Smithells, the specialist Physical Education advisor, in 1939 saw an increase in the frequency and depth of publications instructing teachers in Physical Education teaching. In April of 1940, alongside the announcement of Savage’s death and underneath an endorsement of the syllabus by Beeby, Smithells published the new Physical Education Syllabus in the *Education Gazette*, a direct copy of the 1933 British syllabus.

The 1933 syllabus has been conspicuously successful in Britain and has made the physical work extremely popular with pupil and teacher alike. It is simple, clear, and well illustrated. Although it is designed for playground conditions in England, it can be well adapted to the better conditions in this country. There will have to be a few modifications, and these will be suggested in the *Gazette*. *(National Education, April 1st 1940, p. 49)*

Figure 6.2 shows pictures of physical education in 1944, and arts and crafts and swimming in 1943, encouraging creativity and activity. As already outlined above, both publications were instrumental in disseminating important information to teachers and schools during initial stages of, and indeed right throughout, the war. They also became avenues to encourage teachers in the progressive new education as not only a critical development in the reformation of New Zealand’s educational landscape, but also as an integral tenet of a democratic nation. In the November issue of 1938, Boyd H. Bode’s words opened *National Education*.

Progressive education is confronted with the choice of becoming the avowed exponent of democracy or else of becoming a set of ingenious devices for tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. If democracy is to have a deep and inclusive human meaning, it must have also a distinctive educational system. *(National Education, November 1st 1938, p. 376)*

And indeed, during the course of the war, both publications utilised their standing to advocate for the progressive new education as a friend of the democratic citizen and
school. The attention of the New Zealand public on education as an agent of democracy was not particular to the Dominion. Published in *National Education* from England, Swannell called for education in England to become definite in its democratic aims. “Education for democracy must surrender the cosy complacency with the status quo, state a little more and assume a little less, and cultivate an awareness of its positive function as never before” (*National Education*, November 1st 1938, p. 407).
As had been seen with the October 1939 Beeby-Lambourne message concerning teachers’ approaches to war discussions in the classroom, the publications were also agents of wartime educational information and, sadly, of announcing fallen teachers. Over the period of the war 204, 000 New Zealanders served in the armed forces, 140,000 of them serving overseas. "And most had been involved in 'Hitler's war'. More than 11,500 had been killed, the highest casualty rate per head of population in the Commonwealth" (King, 2003, p. 407). The astounding number of soldiers killed in action touched the lives of each school member. Not only were there many teachers among the killed and wounded, but huge numbers of male teachers had put down their chalk to take up New Zealand’s call of duty. “[B]y 1942, nearly 70 per cent of male primary teachers and 36 per cent of male post-primary teachers were in the armed forces” (Beeby, 1992, p. 154).

The Department of Education went to great length to ensure that the rights of these soldier teachers were protected.

To those members of the teaching profession who have answered the call to serve the country either at home or abroad it is hardly necessary to say that the Government and the controlling Boards are particularly anxious that your interests as teachers should be safeguarded in every possible way while you are serving with the Forces. *(Education Gazette*, March 1st 1940, p. 34)

The rights which were outlined in the remainder of the article detailed provisions for promotions, salary, and superannuation upon their return to their duty as teachers. Financial assistance was even made to cover expenses such as rent, and interest on mortgages while the men were stationed overseas.

In light of this, Mason and Beeby were acutely aware of the need for publications which might lift teachers’ and students’ moral by celebrating successes from a battlefield half the world away. Mason had addressed the nation by radio, and his transcript was published in the *Education Gazette* in order that teachers might be able to share the message with students who did not hear the broadcast. After a collapse of Belgian forces, New Zealand soldiers were left with an exposed flank.

The Allied armies, greatly outnumbered by the hosts of the enemy, were almost surrounded, with only one little narrow neck of country left through which they were trying to fight their way to the sea...To many even in New Zealand it seemed that there was no hope – that there could be nothing but death or surrender for those hundreds of thousands of men. And then something happened. You could hear it in the voices of the English radio announcers, you could see it even in the cold print of the newspaper reports – a new hope, a new faith, a new courage. For those men were succeeding in doing the impossible; stubbornly and surely they were fighting their way back to Dunkirk and the sea, to the hundreds of vessels, large and small, that were waiting to take them back to England. *(Education Gazette*, June 15th 1940, p. 104)
Publications throughout the duration of the war in both NZEI and Department of Education magazines maintained an emphasis on the importance of incorporating progressive new education methods into teachers’ practice. The clear and tangible conflict of ideology between a progressive new education and a traditional approach to education was being played out on a grand and global scale. Traditional education had become the tool of totalitarian states for the indoctrination of its people, which was juxtaposed by a progressive pedagogy which developed a free-thinking and democratic citizen. By 1941 articles began to discuss ‘citizenship education’.

This is the new spirit in learning. It is a long time since Pestalozzi wanted to psychologise education, and most teachers to-day practise their art with due regard to the individual powers of their pupil...It is not enough, however, that the teaching of citizenship should depend upon the accidental attributes of games. It is becoming increasingly clear that man must learn whatever he eventually comes to know. (Education Gazette, November 1st 1941, p. 218)

As the nation began to get comfortable with its progressive education bedfellow, gradually becoming the hegemonic pedagogy within New Zealand, the whole nation, and educational leaders in particular, began to look to the end of the war. Concerned by the prospect of a call to return to a romanticised version of pre-war education, 1943 saw Mason call on the nation to prepare for an education conference whose purpose was the reconstruction and development of post-war education. In 1942 he had commissioned the Thomas Report, an audit of the nation’s secondary school curriculum in order to identify an appropriate method of accrediting students’ progress. His call to prepare for a conference was published in the Education Gazette, and was founded on an understanding that

reconstruction can never be a complete return to things as they were, that it means change and should mean an advance...I propose, therefore, to call as soon as possible a national conference, and such regional conferences as may be necessary, to formulate plans for educational reconstruction and development. (Mason in Education Gazette, September 1st 1943, p. 205)

The initial impact war had on New Zealand education has been examined during this chapter. As Beeby, Mason and Fraser vowed to maintain a focus on education, they were faced with a variety of challenges specific to wartime which they met with necessary ingenuity. Rolling revision of curriculum documents was introduced. The role of school inspectors was adjusted, and curriculum advisors were introduced for physical education and arts and crafts. The Department of Education's Education Gazette and NZEI's Education Today, were examined, clearly demonstrating their influence over the continued dissemination of progressive new education ideas throughout New Zealand.
The following chapter looks into the growing grumblings with education which led to the 1944 Education Conference. It discusses the booklet *Education Today and Tomorrow*, which was published in preparation for the Conference, and the proceedings of the 1944 Education Conference itself.
Chapter 7 - Background, Build-up and Proceedings of the 1944 Education Conference

This chapter begins by discussing the growing concerns which were being voiced over the dramatic changes which were taking place in education. These concerns were the influential factor which had led to Mason calling the Education Conference. *Education Today and Tomorrow*, a publication written by Beeby and signed by Mason, is examined in order to gain an understanding of New Zealand’s educational landscape immediately prior to the 1944 Education Conference. This is followed by an examination of the proceedings of the Conference itself. The chapter concludes by identifying progressive new education as the orthodox pedagogy of New Zealand by 1944.

**Beebyism**

*...the marginal minute of the dark when the grove is still mute, save for one prophetic bird who sings with a clear-voiced conviction that he at least knows the correct time of day, the rest preserving silence as if equally convinced that he is mistaken.*

(Hardy, 1985/1891, p. 89).

Swelling as a seven-year-long morning song, progressive new education had arrived to stay in New Zealand by 1944. With Beeby at the helm of the government’s wing of education, Mason overseeing ministerial duties, and a Prime Minister whose explicit passion for educational progress had followed Fraser from his previous role as Education Minister, three men in whom progressive new education ideology was entrenched were firmly steering national education down a path of progressive reform.

Mason’s invitation in 1943 to an education conference to discuss the reconstruction of education in New Zealand was a considered and important step in ensuring that the ongoing education reform was relevant to the education sector, and was perceived and informed by other stakeholders. Fraser himself was a strong supporter of consultation, one of the reasons behind the consultative committees which Beeby had established in order to drive the rolling revision of curriculum. Beeby’s (1992) observation that sustainable reform in education must involve teachers was a lesson well learned from the 1937 Conference and the way in which sweeping shifts in pedagogical understandings and, perhaps more importantly, attitudes had resulted from the overwhelming engagement by those involved in education. In preparation for the conference, which invited guests from outside the educational sphere, Beeby prepared a survey of New Zealand’s educational situation to ensure a common understanding.
during conference discussions. His publication, entitled *Education Today and Tomorrow*, laid the foundations for a conference on the reconstruction and development of post-war education scheduled for 1944. In order to lend it a stronger sense of government approval Beeby asked that Mason lend his name to the document. As a demonstration of his professional trust in Beeby, Mason assented. Beeby was the sole author of the book, which he had compiled with the help of a senior inspector of schools named John Ewing. "Later Beeby sometimes grumbled privately that Mason had received a lot of credit for writing his name" (Alcorn, 1999, p. 144).

The request for a conference concerning education was not made solely for the purposes of reform. As discussed in Chapter 1, progressive education was not without its critics. By the early 1940s, the educational landscape in New Zealand had changed drastically from that of a decade previous. Students were encouraged to follow studies that were ever-broadening in content and nature. While the Department of Education's inspectors were still instructed to maintain close attention to the correct teaching of 'the three R’s', teachers were being encouraged to teach in a manner which went beyond traditional pedagogical approaches and attitudes (Beeby, 1992). Great emphasis was being placed on the importance of what had previously been considered as 'weak' or 'optional' studies, such as physical education and arts and crafts.

![Figure 7.1](image-url) – Mason’s driving belief in the physical development of schools comes under fire by a media uninterested in the link between a child’s environment and achievement. (Image from *Evening Post*, Thursday 10th February 1944, p. 7).
Under Mason, and to the bemusement of the media (see Figure 7.1), school buildings were also experiencing physical changes. In light of his belief in education’s role in the development of the whole child, Mason was singularly convinced in the necessity to provide students with an environment which was open and free, thereby removing a physically restricting presence encasing the learners. Under his direction, school buildings adopted a markedly new ‘look’, as demonstrated in Figure 7.2 below. Apart from the buildings, the atmosphere of classrooms themselves had also developed, demonstrating the evolving understanding of both the importance of the individual learner, as well as the environment in which the child learned. Figure 7.3 below illustrates this process vividly.

![Figure 7.2](image)

**Figure 7.2** – From Mason’s *Education Today and Tomorrow* (1945, p. 16). The opening glass walls, high ceilings and large number of windows were all methods encouraged by Mason with the goal of creating a space most conducive to effective learning.

These physical developments in buildings accompanied the rolling revision of curriculum documents, the shifting role of the inspectorate, the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen years in 1944 (in the still noticeable absence of the Proficiency examination), and the fundamental readjustment of New Zealand teachers’ understanding of, and approach to, education which have been discussed in the preceding chapters. These changes were no longer fringe movements, but rather were permanent changes in the country’s mainstream education system. By the 1940s, criticisms of these changes began to gain public traction.
The nature of their positions was such that Beeby and Mason worked closely together on much of these education changes. Beeby became the public face of education in New Zealand, as author of many of the progressive policies which were implemented.

**Figure 7.3** – From left to right, top to bottom: NZ classroom 1904, NZ classroom circa 1920s, and NZ classroom listening to radio bulletin circa 1940, all from the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Classroom, *Education Gazette* (June 1st 1944, p. 139). Art class, *Education Today and Tomorrow* (1945, p. 46).
He felt a freedom to utilise the professional trust which Mason held in him, meaning that he was often able to write a policy and implement it without first having Mason’s approval.

The result was that my name was constantly associated with the changes that were occurring in education – and I was slow in picking up the traditional public servant’s device of anonymity...one newspaper invented the work ‘Beebyism’ which, as far as I could gather, meant anything you didn’t like in education.

(Beeby, 1992, p. 154).

Alcorn (1999) describes Beebyism as a term coined by conservatives who were unhappy with the changes in education. It was an abusive term for what they believed to be wrong with New Zealand education. It is perhaps important to note that for Beeby to be a focal point for criticisms over the progressive changes taking place was not only predictable, but also understandable “given the revolutionary nature of the changes he was committed to effecting in schools” (Alcorn, 1999, p. 139).

One of the main criticisms that gathered momentum in the early 1940s was a growing public concern that the new methods of education were leading to an overall slide in educational standards (Alcorn, 1999, Beeby, 1992). To conservative critics, this perceived decline of educational standards was quintessential Beebyism. Press criticism of education in the 1940s was neither new nor specific to New Zealand. However, criticism surrounding the decline of educational standards was serious enough for Mason to consider.

Within a year or two of the appointment of an ‘educational theorist’ as director, and before my feeble beginnings of reform could have had much effect, good or bad, the newspapers began to report employers’ complaints of a drop in standards in the reading, writing and arithmetic of both primary and post-primary school leavers. No figures were quoted, and the department had none to support or controvert the complaints, but it would not surprise me if there had been some drop in the average standard of certain groups of school leavers. (Beeby, 1992, p. 153)

While to suggest a drop in standards in any aspect of a national school system might elicit responses of shock or criticism, the national context during the early 1940s wielded considerable influence over the appropriateness of such a statement. As previously mentioned, nearly seventy percent of male primary and thirty-six percent of male post-primary teachers were enlisted in the armed forces by 1942, a number of school properties had been taken over by the internal defence for military bases or hospitals after Japan entered the war, and the considerable strain of a nation in wartime were but a few of the issues facing New Zealand education. With the subsequent shortage of teachers being but one of the many shortages that New Zealanders faced
during wartime, it would not be inconceivable that standards in some areas had declined as Beeby alluded to in his comment above.

However, to suggest that a perceived decline in standards was due to the very reforms being implemented to develop the quality of the education system as a whole was one suggestion too far. While Mason’s public invitation to the Conference was couched in language which denoted its primary function as the reconstruction of the education system in readiness for post-war New Zealand, Mason primarily wanted to use the 1944 Conference as a platform from which to address concerns around educational standards.

The minister decided that we should meet the mounting criticism head on, and he proposed to hold a national conference where representatives of all groups, for or against the new educational policies, should be free to have their say. I advised him not to call it, because I feared it would intensify the opposition, but he flatly turned down my advice, a relatively rare occurrence on a matter of major importance. Events were to prove that he was right and I was wrong. (Beeby, 1992, p. 154)

Alcorn (1999) states that questions had been raised about falling school standards since the abolition of the Proficiency examination in 1936. The examination had been widely perceived as the guarantee of a minimum standard of educational attainment deemed required to function effectively within society. Perhaps more importantly, most employers had themselves gone through the ‘good old system’, and were not always as willing to give themselves over to the new methods and emphases as many teachers were. The scathing criticisms of examinations by a number of the delegates during the 1937 NEF Conference had most certainly quietened such public comments, for a while at least.

Beeby decided that he would not speak publicly or take part in the running of the Conference. He realised that it was feasible to consider the Conference an evaluation of his directorship of the Department of Education, and did not want to create the least chance that valid concerns might not be brought up, and subsequently addressed, should members be concerned about speaking openly (Beeby, 1992). Beeby therefore thrust himself whole-heartedly into the preparation of *Education Today and Tomorrow*, that an accurate description of the education system might be presented without need for him to speak. He saw nothing wrong with seeking Mason’s signature on the document, stating that it was no different from writing an annual report to Parliament (Beeby, 1992). The illustrated book, one hundred pages long, was effectively an in-depth stock-take of New Zealand education in 1944. It addressed sixteen facets of national education from infant education to tertiary, and provided the baseline for discussions
during the Conference. Members of the conference who enrolled were provided with a copy to ensure that they arrived informed and prepared for the discussions that lay ahead.

Preparing the Public for a Conference on Education

Mason’s annual report to Parliament on education for the year of 1943 mentioned the upcoming Conference on education as seizing an existing opportunity based upon the enthusiasm, both good and bad, for education which was apparent at that time.

Even when the new interest shows itself in new criticisms it may be taken as a sign of grace, for education, to be healthy, needs both public interest and enlightened public criticism. To provide a focus for this gathering public interest I am calling an Education Conference which will be representative of a wide range of organisations directly or indirectly connected with education. I have invited any one who is interested to submit schemes and reports as a basis for discussion, and I hope to have published before the Conference a full review of the education system as it now exists and a statement of the Government’s plans for the future in those fields where policy has been fixed. I believe, however, that genuine advances in education, although they may be fostered by a Government, cannot simply radiate from some central authority. The great bulk of the people must not only understand what is afoot, but must also take an active part in working out the kind of education system they want for themselves and their children...I am hopeful that the deliberations of the Conference will be of outstanding value to the Government in shaping its future policy in education. (AJHR E. 1, 1944, p. 1)

While this was to be a conference on education, it did not resemble anything of the NEF Conference of 1937. The Conference was not open to public attendance, did not invite delegates from overseas, did not travel through several centres but rather stayed in Christchurch, and had a fraction of the attendees. Rather than a series of lectures on aspects of pedagogy, this was to be a place of debate. Invited Conference members were encouraged to discuss concerns and seek answers to these concerns from representatives of the Government and many other organisations which were in some way stakeholders in education. As the first conference concerning education since the 1937 NEF Conference, which was still relatively fresh in the minds of the nation, it was clear that these major differences needed explaining. The September 1st issue of the Education Gazette (1944) addressed these concerns, as well as expressing the Government’s belief in the potential for the Conference to powerfully inform the future of New Zealand’s education system.

What can the education conference achieve? Doubtless many teachers are asking this question. They will, perhaps, also want to know why it is being held this year, and why its representation is so broad as to include representatives from bodies that to professional minds may seem only remotely connected with education...In the first place, it should be clearly understood that the Hon. the
Minister of Education has arranged the Conference primarily to ascertain public opinion on aspects of education that concern the country as a whole. Furthermore, it is hoped to centre discussion on areas of the vast field of education that are at present on the fringe of the organised school system. This general background to the Conference organisation is reflected in the main topics of the agenda, which are pre-school education, youth services, adult education, religion in education, and rural education. All are topics of national concern, and many bodies apart from teachers’ organisations have a deep interest in them. So a large number of organisations have been invited to state their views on these vital questions and have found this a useful and stimulating task...There is no need to stress the importance of such a Conference at a time when post-war plans are being made in many fields of community life. The Education Conference of 1944 may well be a land-mark in the Dominion’s educational history. (p. 219)

The Education Gazette issue followed this statement with a copy of the letter of invitation to the Conference from Mason, which was scheduled to take place from the 24th to the 28th of October, 1944. In it Mason reiterated what was stated in his annual report to Parliament, laying part-responsibility for a strong educational future on the wider community’s involvement. His invitation to a wide range of organisations invited them to submit points for consideration and debate.

I trust that your organisation will welcome, as I do, this opportunity to discuss with representatives of other bodies interested in education, both lay and professional, practical questions to which none of us alone can find satisfactory answers. I can assure you that your deliberations will have a definite effect on educational policy in New Zealand. (Mason, in Education Gazette, September 1st 1944, p. 220)

The letter of invitation also clearly stated the Minister’s desire for the Conference not to be prescribed, nor follow any formal path to a specified end, but rather to “leave the Conference as free as possible to decide its own scope and procedure” (Mason, in Education Gazette, September 1st 1944, p. 220).

The obvious restrictions of time and an attendance of over one hundred and twenty members did of course mean that there was much preliminary organisation to be done. In order to circumvent these potentially limiting factors, Mason was prepared to set up committees after the Conference should it be deemed that a specific theme might greatly benefit education’s development through a more thorough investigation and debate than time permitted.

The topics to be opened up are so great that the Conference may, for example, see fit to recommend the setting-up of commissions or consultative committees to inquire further into the problems raised. I am most anxious to leave the Conference free to run its own affairs. I am convinced that it will make a real contribution to educational progress in New Zealand, and will be of outstanding value to the Government in shaping its future policy in education. (Mason, in Education Gazette, September 1st 1944, p. 220)
Demonstrative of his desire to see the Conference 'run its own affairs', Mason followed Beeby's lead in removing himself or any official Government representative from chairing the meeting. Mr Cocker, President of the Auckland University College was requested to act as an independent chairman, and he subsequently accepted. It was he who decided upon the final agenda, which incorporated the five key areas stated in the Education Gazette excerpt above. There had originally been only three areas for discussion, including pre-school education, youth services, and adult education. However, in a letter published from Cocker in the Education Gazette (September 1\textsuperscript{st} 1944), he stated that there had been adequate demand from submissions to discuss both religion in education and rural education alongside the original three topics. Their inclusion subsequently saw the extension of the Conference to the five days. "In view of the additions made, the Minister has been pleased, on my recommendation, to extend the Conference to five days" (Cocker, in Education Gazette, September 1\textsuperscript{st} 1944, p. 221).

The wheels were in motion for the upcoming Conference, the teaching body was duly informed as to the different purpose and function underpinning the 1944 Conference comparative to the 1937 Conference, invitations had been sent and accepted, submissions for topics of debate received and collated. Beeby's important baseline work, Education Today and Tomorrow, was firmly underway, auditing the educational landscape of New Zealand in order that the five items on the agenda, and of course the concerns surrounding standards, might be discussed in an informed and open forum.

Education Today and Tomorrow
As a book which bore Mason's name, the small volume did indeed include one page of his words. His introduction to the volume outlined firstly the purpose of the Conference, once again reiterating his "primary reason for calling the Conference on Education is to get the opinions of a wide and representative range of people on the problems that lie on the borders of the school system proper" (Mason, 1945, p. 5). His desire for collaboration between the various organisations invited to the Conference was also made clear, as well as his understanding of the hegemonic pedagogy in 1944.

But no one man and no Government can exhaust the vast field of education. When all achievements are written down and all policies stated, there still remain great areas barely touched where what has been already done can only help us to ask more intelligent questions for the future...It is simply because there is such a field where practice is sketchy and policy fluid that the Conference on Education is important. For practice and policy fail us at just those points where the schools system as we know it, ends, and where it merges into the life of the home and of the adult community as a whole. No one would pretend that all the problems of the classroom are solved; \textit{but at least it can be}
said that, with one or two notable exceptions, all the immediate major problems within the school system itself are concerned with means rather than ends. There is a good decade's work in putting into practice in the schools principles upon which the great majority of persons concerned with education are agreed. (Italics added; Mason, 1945, p. 5)

The statement by Mason emphasised above in italics explicitly conveys his understanding of the educational landscape at the time of the Conference. While he is quick to point out that all educational problems were not solved, 'at least' many of these problems were to do more with things such as the need for better buildings, increasing skilled teachers coming through universities, and better equipment in classrooms. The ends, as Mason saw them, were the application of a progressive new education pedagogy in every classroom in New Zealand. And these progressive new methods were the pedagogy that Mason clearly saw as being a hegemonic pedagogy at the time of writing. Beeby's thorough investigation into all areas of the education system further demonstrates the truth inherent in Mason's statement.

*Education Today and Tomorrow* began with a look at broad tendencies which had come about in New Zealand's education system. In line with Fraser's 1939 educational policy detailing equal opportunity for all members of society, these tendencies were symptomatic of the reforms which had taken place in education since the policy was announced, and Beeby saw fit to break them into three over-arching areas. The first was the movement towards a free education at all levels to those who desire it. The introduction of the policy had, foreseeably, brought with it a new set of considerations for the education system. “Since many children are not academically inclined this has meant the provision at the secondary level of a wide range of courses of a practical and non-academic kind” (Mason, 1945, p. 9). Examples of this new tendency included the abolition of the Proficiency examination, raising of the school-leaving age, and the development of technical high schools (Mason, 1945).

The second tendency involved the broadening of what the school had to offer. Originally the school concerned itself almost entirely with certain narrow intellectual skills of which the three R’s were the type. Within recent years...there has been a great extension of the functions of the school and the work of the teacher...The movement to broaden the basis of the work within the class-room has over recent years been paralleled by a movement to extend and deepen the contacts between the class-room and the world beyond the school gate. (Mason, 1945, p. 9)

A number of examples of this were given, including the inclusion of subjects like physical education, art and crafts, music and home management in the curriculum, the development of parent involvement in school life through parent associations and
parent days at school, and the provision of buildings, playing fields and equipment “better suited to an active type of education” (Mason, 1945, p. 10).

The third and final of the tendencies which Beeby noted within the education system of 1944 was perhaps the one most significantly rooted in the progressive new education which had been advocated throughout the 1937 NEF Conference, and the tendency which had underpinned all educational reform during the seven years preceding the 1944 Conference:

[t]he growing recognition of individual differences between children. In the old days, with enormous classes, it was scarcely possible to do other than treat children in the mass, to aim the pedagogic blunderbuss at the so-called "average" child, and hope that those who were not average were hit by a few of the flying facts. (Mason, 1945, p. 11)

The examples which were provided for the first and second tendencies were referred to as being indicative of this final tendency also, as well as the increased focus on education for students with mental illnesses or disabilities of any other sort which might impair their ability to access education to an equitable standard (Mason, 1945). These introductory statements were concluded by a cautious optimism.

These tendencies are, in my opinion, good, and I am doing whatever I can to encourage them. Like all social movements, of course, they have their dangers, of which I am well aware, and which are being guarded against as fully as possible. I feel that, by and large, the people of New Zealand, whatever their politics or creed, are sympathetic with these movements, which are in line with the spirit of the country. Yet I do not imagine that further progress will be achieved without great effort. (Mason, 1945, p. 11)

While five major topics made their way onto the agenda for discussion during the Conference, namely pre-school education, youth services, adult education, religion in education, and rural education, Education Today and Tomorrow covered the entire education system from infant room through to adult education. Its purpose was two-fold, to provide an understanding of the 1944 education system as stated previously, and also to provide the readers with an understanding of the goals for education held by the Department and Minister of Education. Every chapter contained statements which supported Beeby's initial observations of the 'current' educational tendencies as he described the various aspects of the system, and each chapter concluded with areas which required further development or consideration in order to embed the three tendencies to a further degree. Comprehensive as the volume is, this thesis is concerned with the considerable degree to which it makes explicitly clear that progressive new education pedagogy had indeed become the hegemonic pedagogy by the 1944 Conference on Education.
I trust I shall not be accused of complacency if I say that, with one or two exceptions, the policy problems at the primary stage are for the moment solved. It is not that I am satisfied with the schools as they exist (who can ever be satisfied in education?), but rather that I am acutely aware of the amount that yet remains to be done to put into full operation the policies that have already been adopted. Ten more years of hard work will not suffice to complete the tasks begun in the past ten, and so it would seem that the primary school will for some time be concerned with finding means towards accepted ends rather than with searching for new policies. (Mason, 1945, p. 26)

With each chapter, the tenets of progressive new education can be found within the system. For many of the educational areas, one of the goals for future development was the continual upgrading of school buildings to better meet the demands of the new methods. Intermediate schools were a fairly new development for New Zealand, being only twenty-two years in the making by 1944. For these schools, the Minister and Department’s wishes were focussed.

The type of building which the Government aims to provide eventually for all intermediate schools includes:-
1. Class-rooms, headmaster’s room, staff room, store rooms, sanitary blocks, &c.
2. Library.
3. Wood work-room, with a bay for simple metal work.
5. Needlework room.
6. Model flat or model cottage.
7. Art-room.
10. Special room to enable each intermediate school to experiment along some special line of its own.
12. Site of 8 to 10 acres. (Mason, 1945, p. 30)

The intermediate schools were viewed by the Department of Education as a method by which to “introduce all children gradually and sympathetically to the world of industry, commerce, and the professions” (Mason, 1945, p. 29). As such, the Department was eager to continue to build intermediate schools as quickly as wartime circumstances permitted. One of the major drawcards of building new intermediate school buildings was, of course, that the idealistic list of rooms quoted above might more effortlessly be included in the new schools.

One of the advances which secondary and technical schools had undergone was the combining of the two. "The combining of schools was intended primarily to do two things – to render impossible the social stratification that tended to develop between secondary and technical schools, and to enable the secondary schools to broaden their curricula by the inclusion of practical subjects" (Mason, 1945, pp. 33-4). Technical
schools in 1944 had seen an increased attendance by almost fifty percent compared to a
decade previous. With the school leaving age being increased only in 1944, much of the
growth can be attributed to an increasing acceptance of a non-traditional school system.

The Thomas Report, which had been commission in 1942 and examined the
suitable subjects which should be included in an accrediting system in order to gain
entrance to university, and the effects this would have on the post-primary curriculum,
had been published in December 1943 (Beeby, 1992). As such, secondary school policy
was also well under development, and once again the majority of considerations alluded
to in Education Today and Tomorrow concerned the physical and material aspects
impacting on school life. The final consideration for future policy concerned aligning
primary and post-primary curriculum, though the rolling curriculum revisions of the
primary school "should help materially in bringing this about" (Mason, 1945, p. 46).

These excerpts, above all else, are included to demonstrate the overall tone of
Education Today and Tomorrow, and are instrumental in seeking a definitive
understanding of the Department of Education's standpoint on pedagogy and schooling
in 1944. The consistency with which the volume focuses on the development of the
material aspects of education in order to better enable teachers to engage with a
progressive new pedagogy in their classrooms categorically demonstrates that the vast
majority of the teaching community of 1944 had accepted the new methods. The
concern being voiced surrounding the perceived decline of educational standards was
not levelled at the considerable impact the war was having on the country, but rather
aimed squarely at the reform that, by 1944, had swept the country. Progressive new
education was being welcomed by educators around the country. Isaac, headmistress of
Wellington East Girls' College, illustrated the point clearly when discussing the purpose
of education.

From now on, there is to be more emphasis on education as a preparation for
life, on things practical rather than on things theoretical, on the appreciation of
the beautiful rather than on what has come to be regarded by some as mere
mental gymnastics that leave one with one's feet off the ground. (as quoted in
Evening Post, December 12th 1944, p. 7)

After a comprehensive look at the educational system, Education Today and
Tomorrow came to a conclusion in a heady theoretical realm. It was clear that the author
was concerned with conveying, to the utmost of his ability, the very real purpose and
importance that education holds in a democratic nation state.

I believe that the experience of the war years has deepened our sense of the
individual's responsibilities to the community and to his country. Yet we are a
democracy fighting totalitarian nations, and, paradoxical though it may seem, the
war has also strengthened our determination that the individual shall never
become subservient to an all-powerful State...Sir Percy Nunn has said the same thing better than I can: "...the idea that a main function of the school is to socialise its pupils in no wise contradicts the view that its true aim is to cultivate individuality...While the school must never fail to form its pupils in the tradition of brotherly kindness and social service, it must recognise that the true training for service is one that favours individual growth, and that the highest form of society would be one in which every person would be free to draw from the common medium what his nature needs, and to enrich the common medium with what is most characteristic of himself.” (Mason, 1945, p. 93)

The 1944 Conference on Education and the discussion and critiques which took place categorically sealed progressive new education's place as the orthodox pedagogy of the day.

**The 1944 Conference on Education**

The 1937 NEF Conference had been welcomed with a flurry of publicity, images of delegates arriving on various steamers, and had mirrored the optimistic buzz and excitement of the Dominion's teachers who were looking forward to a fresh new era. The 1944 Conference was competing for public attention, and newspaper space, against column after column detailing battles, victories, defeats, and the heartbreaking losses of the second world war. Wellington's *Evening Post* mutedly reported its opening on page seven. "A conference representative of all classes of education – the first of its kind ever held in New Zealand – opened in Christchurch this morning. More than 120 delegates were present" (October 25th 1944)

A main difference again from the 1937 NEF Conference was that, in 1944, the Conference was made up of delegates representing organisations directly or indirectly linked with education, or stakeholders in education which might be able to provide a new consideration to the direction which education was taking. These 120 stakeholders represented seventy different organisations, and in addition to the discussion around the five main points on the agenda provisions were made for two open forums in which to discuss primary and secondary education. In his opening address, Cocker highlighted the designated times for these debates and reason for their inclusion.

[T]here was some disappointment expressed that the conference was not dealing with matters concerning the work of primary and secondary schools. It was decided to arrange for discussions upon those topics and tomorrow evening for primary education and the following evening and Friday if necessary for secondary education. (Cocker in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, B3 p. 5).
The delegates representing the Department were under no pretence as to what these two sessions might hold. “[I]t was in these that the liveliest criticism was expected” (Beeby, 1992, p. 156).

The discussions which took place around the five points on the agenda were indeed important, and in themselves indicative of the progressive new education ideology. For example, the very concept of Youth Services had been developed around a core understanding of a child as an individual, and was inextricably linked with the changes which were taking place in the schooling system. Mr Hanna, from the NZEI, stated:

I feel that uninformed criticism are levelled at our primary school system. The point I wish to make is if we are going to give our youths a definite inclination towards an activity that is going to occupy their leisure profitably, educationally and recreationally, then that attitude will have to be developed very much earlier. We will have to start at the very beginning of our primary school system with a definite end in view that we are going to develop a child who, at the end of his primary school period, will have definite inclinations. He will be going somewhere, and given an attitude towards a definite means of occupying his leisure-time. (Hanna in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, C1 p.3)

While these five main areas were of national importance in the development of what Beeby had identified as being on the fringes of education (Mason, 1945), the sessions around primary and secondary education, and the discussions which took place, are the discussions with which this thesis is primarily concerned. They were used as forums to address the criticisms of progressive new education which had grown increasingly louder.

Sinclair, representing the N.Z. Associated Chambers of Commerce, began the evening primary school forum by clearly expressing his constituents' concern over the perceived decline in standards, whilst at the same time pinning the reason for such decline firmly on the new progressive education system. He spoke at length, the verbatim record of his opening comment stretching three and a half typed pages. Yet his comments demonstrate two things: firstly, they embodied the 'secret' motivation for the calling of the Conference by Mason, and secondly, they call the progressive new education pedagogy into question, demonstrating once again its role as the hegemonic pedagogy in New Zealand in 1944.

We regard the education system as basic to our whole community life and we are fully conscious of much good work which is achieved in the schools today. We have no wish, for instance, to see a complete return to the old driving methods of teaching under which nervous scholars broke down and poor scholars were subjected to heavy physical punishment. Now I do wish to see a return to tomorrow a curriculum for education if complete, should provide for cultural and social, as well as vocational needs. We have introduced into our own
business organisations the same tolerant attitude to employees which the teachers have developed towards children in their classes, and we have done so because, we believe it is a logical, sane and humanitarian move. We do feel however that there are certain deficiencies in the school system today which should be corrected...The first and probably the most important deficiency from our point of view is the evidence decrease in skill in matters of fundamental importance – the ability to do simple arithmetical work, to spell correctly, punctuate correctly and compose a straight-forward business letter. We feel that if a child is adequately trained in the schools up to the age of 15 years...he should be able on the average to do simple arithmetical work, read intelligently, write usefully, spell correctly and know what is right and wrong in formal grammar. I feel sure that most members of the business community are sympathetic towards constructive improvements in the education system...but if the present system continues to present us with young people inadequately trained in fundamentals, then I can assure you that those concerned in education are taking a short sighted view. The Education Department cannot expect support from the business community towards the provision of further funds for education unless it produces through its school system scholars worthy of their hire...we feel that this decline is due in a large measure to reduced emphasis in the school syllabus on such subjects as English and Arithmetic, and an increase in emphasis on a wide range of loosely defined subjects where less concentration and effort is required. We feel that too much attention has been given to training for culture and leisure and too little attention to training for work...we do know that the ability of Standard 6 children in the three Rs is not as high today as it was fifteen years ago... (Sinclair in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D5 pp. 1-2,4)

Forsyth, a member of the NZEI delegation, opened the discussion with his response. At one point, while addressing the concern over slipping standards, the verbatim points breaks and merely states, as an aside, “(Mr. Forsyth from figures on the over-all percentage showed that there had not been much slipping over the past seven years)” (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D6 p. 3). Mr A. E. Campbell, son-in-law of F. L. Combs and the man whom had taken over from Beeby as director for NZCER (and was later to take over his position as Director of the Department of Education) entered into the discussion by calling attention to the passage in Education Today and Tomorrow which dealt with standards.

I would like to read you one paragraph at the end because it will show there is a good deal of common ground between us. Page 26. “Even at the risk of tedious repetition may I make my own and the Department's attitude clear on what is a matter of some public interest. I believe (a) that standards are fundamental to education...and (d) that there is nothing incompatible between good standards in the tool subjects and a full acceptance of the modern tendencies noted in this section. Hundreds of good schools in New Zealand have proved this in the past 10 years.” Personally, with a fair amount of knowledge of primary schools, I am much in agreement with that final statement. Some speakers have spoken as if you have a choice between the old and the more creative type of education. That is not my observation. (Campbell in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D8 p. 1)
Campbell went on to debunk any suggestion about the decline in standards, pointing out several facts. “[T]here is nobody in New Zealand who is in a position to make a definite and precise statement about what has happened to the formal standards of attainment over the last 10 or 20 years” (Campbell in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D8 p. 1). Research had been carried out in New Zealand which compared University students who had gone through traditional and progressive schools. It was found that in schools in which the progressive pedagogy was dominant that the students were slightly superior in nearly everything, “and in things like responsibility, mental alertness, the students from the progressive schools were definitely and unmistakably superior” (Campbell in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D8 p. 2). Sinclair had also stated that education standards were so low that a well-known firm in Auckland had taken it upon themselves to provide new employees with a period of schooling before they began work. They had hired a teacher and set up a classroom for the purpose. Forsyth had taken the initiative to have an NZEI representative visit the school. However, the business owner “would not admit to our representative that his school was set up to correct the deficiencies. He indicated that his school was not going at the moment” (Forsyth in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, D6 p. 3). Forsyth considerably quietened the criticisms further when he stated that he was sure that Mr. Sinclair was not taking advantage of the unfortunate fact that at least 60% of the country’s best male teachers were fighting overseas (Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944).

The following evening was dedicated to the discussion of secondary education. It was opened with comments by Thomas representing Rotary, and also the chair of the committee which had published the Thomas Report. Its purpose, as described above, was to identify an appropriate certification system for secondary education, and the effects which this might have on the secondary education system. As such, members of the Thomas Committee worked closely within schools in undertaking the collating of the report. Thomas passed on his observations during the evening forum.

First of all, we decided right at the beginning that there was no need [to do] any[thing] revolutionary; all we had to do was to keep abreast of the evolution which is taking place in the schools, so marked in many schools, where subjects had been introduced and the whole work of the schools was along the lines of modern tendencies in education in other parts of the world. (Thomas in Verbatim report of proceedings, E. 4/1/6b, 1944, G1 p. 1)

The evening also saw Hogben, representing New Zealand Secondary Schools’ Association, weigh in on the discussion around both standards and the mainstreaming of progressive new methods in education. As a principal of a secondary school, and
speaking from his personal experience, Hogben stated that as “headmaster of 10 years standing I am quite satisfied with the product of the primary schools. I have no criticism to make and think the change which took place in primary schools was one of the best things which could happen” (in Verbatim report of proceedings, E 4/1/6b, 1944, G4 p. 2). Quite apart from his lack of a desire to criticise the new methods in education, Hogben refers to the changes in education as having already taken place by referring to them in the past tense.

The Conference was successful in what it set out to do. As a result of debate and discussion a number of committees were established in order to explore some issues further or to create channels of communication that further discussion might be streamlined. Critics had been able to share and have their concerns addressed. For Beeby, the most beneficial outcome of the Conference was based on an incidental conversation during a tea break with some teachers who thought it would be a good idea to have Government provision of refresher courses for teachers. Beeby crossed the room and pulled Mason into the conversation. Mason committed to the programme on the spot (Beeby, 1992). Above all else however, the 1944 Conference on Education marked the maturity of progressive new education ideology in mainstream New Zealand education. Progressive new education bore the brunt of criticism by press and employers. Progressive new education was the system defended by educationalists. Progressive new education was referred to, and spoken of, as the orthodox pedagogy throughout the country. The voice of the prophetic bird announcing the new dawn no longer sang alone, as the grove gave way to light, and his voice was joined by multitudes.

This chapter began by discussing the concerns which were voiced over the dramatic changes that had taken place in education. These concerns were identified as the influential factor which had led to Mason calling the Education Conference. Education Today and Tomorrow was examined in order to gain an understanding of New Zealand’s educational landscape immediately prior to the 1944 Education Conference. The Conference proceedings were then examined, and progressive new education was identified as the orthodox pedagogy of New Zealand in 1944. The final chapter summarises the key points of the thesis, and concludes the thesis by asking further questions that have become implicit through this study.
Chapter 8 – The Seven Years from Idea to Orthodoxy

This final chapter of the thesis will summarise the progression of events from the momentum for the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference to Progressivism's status as the orthodoxy in New Zealand education and finally to the emergence of criticisms at the 1944 Education Conference. The trajectory from uncritical enthusiasm in 1937 to a more critical stance in 1944 demonstrates the manner in which the actions of the government, combined with the financial and cultural context of the seven year period, enabled an idea introduced into the mainstream of New Zealand during the 1937 NEF Conference to become an orthodoxy by the 1944 Education Conference. The thesis will conclude by identifying relevant issues this study leaves modern educators with in 2011. These concern the pedagogy-curriculum relationship, and the individual-society balance needed for the liberal democratic social contract.

The Introduction of an Idea

Dear Mr Cunningham, In reply to your letter of the 7th September, I have much pleasure in saying that when the idea of holding a Conference of the New Education Fellowship in New Zealand was first discussed I had no hesitation in recommending the Government with which I am associated to give the plan its full support. Much as I appreciated the advantages which would accrue from such a dissemination and exchange of ideas, I must say that the enthusiasm manifested by teachers and the general public far exceeded our anticipations. In all the four centres interest was maintained to the very last. The Conference, I may say, came at a most opportune time, for we had but recently taken our education system under critical review. By no means the least effect of such discussions, so representatively attended and so fully reported, has been the creation of a deep public interest which makes reform possible and subsequent progress assured. New Zealand, I feel, is much indebted to the Australian Council for Educational Research and to the lecturers generally for the privilege thus enjoyed. Yours sincerely, P. Fraser. Minister of Education. (Personal communication from Fraser to Cunningham, E. 4/10/26, 27th October 1937)

The letter to Cunningham, director of the ACER from Fraser shortly after the 1937 NEF Conference was filled with high praise for the Conference. Whilst Cunningham had written to Fraser asking after the success of the Conference, Fraser’s sentiments were not contrived, but rather sincere and, as time would prove, true. New Zealand indeed was indebted to ACER, and Cunningham in particular, for the opportunity to host the lecturers destined for the Australian NEF Conference. Cunningham’s participation in the South African NEF Conference in 1934 had inspired him to pursue hosting the next NEF Conference in Australia. After successfully securing Australia’s position as the destination for the next NEF Conference, scheduled for 1937, he extended an invitation to the director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Beeby.
What began as an invitation to New Zealanders for an Australian Conference quickly changed shape. Beeby looked into the feasibility of having a few of the lecturers visit New Zealand to give a lecture on their way to the Australian Conference. This idea had transformed by 1936, when a committee was formed to organise the New Zealand session of the Australian NEF Conference. After obtaining financial backing from most national educational groups, Fraser was approached. As he alluded to in his letter, he did not hesitate to commit the government’s financial backing, initially £250, and later doubling it to £500 as the scale of the New Zealand session of the Australian NEF Conference grew.

There appears to be no distinctive event which indicated the change from the Conference being understood as a session of the Australian Conference to being perceived as an independent NEF Conference in its own right. Perhaps it was when a final number of fourteen lecturers were secured to tour New Zealand. Perhaps it was when the number of registrations skyrocketed from a disheartening three to over five thousand in the space of a few short months. Whatever the case, as the first lecturers set foot in New Zealand, the newspapers, organisers and attentive audiences were united in considering the Conference very much a New Zealand affair.

The fourteen delegates gave their lectures on a large number of topics, and were as varied in their personal backgrounds as the subjects upon which they lectured. However, five distinctive themes emerged throughout their discussions. Of these themes, the common and all-pervasive belief, which informed all of the Conference proceedings, was in the importance of the individual.

The aim of modern education is to create people who are not only self-disciplined and free in spirit, gifted in work and in enjoyment, worthy and desirable as persons, but also responsible and generous in social life, able to give and to take freely from others, sensitive to social needs, willing to serve social ends and to lose themselves in social purposes greater than themselves. (Isaacs, 1938, p. 83)

The lecturers advocated for an education which aimed to develop a free-thinking, socially conscious individual, and a pedagogy which reflected this aim. In so doing, they advocated for a differentiated pedagogy meeting individual needs and moving individual students forward with their learning.

The subsequent themes which emerged during the course of the Conference were all tinged with this understanding. The lecturers were unanimous in criticising external examinations. Kandel argued that not only were examinations conceived divorced from social context in that the standards of assessment had remained
unchanged in a rapidly changing world, but their potential for negative influence on students was profound. Yet perhaps most importantly for educators,

examinations of such a type have rarely been used either as a means of discovering where a pupil’s weaknesses lie or as a basis for remedying these defects; still less have they been employed for diagnostic purposes, that is, to discover the type of course from which a pupil is most capable of profiting. (Kandel, 1938, p. 239)

Instead they advocated for the development of cumulative records. These were to be holistic, as they would record information concerning the pupil’s social development as well as academic achievements. Isaacs’ conviction of this was categorical.

Such information needs to be based on systematic observation, with a uniform method of recording, and it needs to be cumulative over a space of years, to make a link between one school and another at different ages. It is the only alternative to the examination system as a means of selecting children for particular types of education or special opportunities. (Issacs, 1938, p. 253).

The final three main themes to become evident during the 1937 NEF Conference were indicative of the lecturers’ progressive understandings. Several of the delegates were concerned over the trend towards centralisation of educational administration. In a time when democracy was increasingly coming under very real threats, lecturers such as Hart believed that education was critical in not only maintaining democracy, but should imitate democratic governance in its administration (Hart, 1938). However, the delegates were not unanimous on this front, and it was a concern that Beeby later identified as a necessary evil in order to drive consistent reform (Beeby, 1992).

The lecturers, who shared a scathing disgust at the grading system for teachers, also brought the role of school inspectors into question. Again, Hart led the charge, stating that inspection of schools should be strictly limited to the physical buildings themselves. Any other form of inspector, he mused, shouldn’t be “permitted within gunshot of a school” (Hart, 1938, p. 444). The principle of activity was the fifth dominant theme to come out of the Conference. This entailed not only the lecturers’ desire to see an increased emphasis on physical education, but also advocated for the incorporation of activity into classroom lessons. This, Isaacs stated, was critical in order to guide the learning experience as lessons could only be verbalised once they had been understood through “his hands and his imagination” (Isaacs, 1938, p. 87).

The Conference had been an immense success. Writing to Lambourne, Beeby and Hunter acknowledged his role in the developments.

The National Committee of the New Education Fellowship Conference at its meeting last week asked us to convey to you and your officers their appreciation of the great assistance you have given in connection with the Conference. If it
had not been for your initial far-sighted act in arranging for the schools to close
the Conference could have been nothing but a failure. In making clear by this
other means that the Conference had your backing, you gave it a standing it
could not otherwise have had...We trust that you feel that the Conference has
justified itself. All accounts are not yet in, but we are already quite certain that
we shall not have to call upon the Government or other guarantors for a penny.
(Letter by Hunter & Beeby, 2nd August 1937, E. 4/10/26).

Immediately following the close of the Conference the meeting between government
officials and Conference delegates was instrumental in informing the educational
reforms which were to come. Not only did it provide the government an opportunity to
clarify points which were directly related to its perspective on reform, but was a
meeting which also set the wheels in motion for Beeby to take over as Director of the
Department of Education.

There were several other tangible outcomes from the 1937 NEF Conference, one
of which was the development of NEF committees in the four main centers in New
Zealand. These were under the general influence of a central NEF body of
representatives based in Wellington, and its members were encouraged to take
‘pedagogical risks’ with their classes and schools. For the first time in the Dominion’s
short history, these experiments were being encouraged by central educational
administration. By 1939 some NEF branches had even had New Zealand’s chief
Inspector of Schools tour their projects, and report findings to the Department of
Education. This was a new mindset for teachers, one that many embraced.

1939 was also the year that Beeby took over the position of Assistant-
Directorship of the Department of Education. This was in preparation for the long-
serving Lambourne’s retirement due in 1940. Beeby’s first official act, rewriting the
educational policy for the report to parliament, had profound ramifications. It was then
that he penned the words calling for an equal opportunity to access education suitable
to individual needs. There was one other understanding held by the lecturers that
became widely accepted in mainstream education, and which culminated in the writing
of the education policy in 1939. “The call for equality of opportunity through education
was made by three or four of the speakers [at the Conference] and probably assumed by
others, but it didn’t arouse the fervour that it was to do a few years later” (Beeby, 1992,
p. 104). Reflecting on this during an introductory chapter, Beeby realised that this 1939
fervour was critical in the progression of New Zealand’s educational history. He writes
that educators and public alike had accepted “the objective of equality of opportunity
with almost messianic conviction; without that kind of faith, the war and its aftermath
would have been sufficient reason for postponing all educational changes” (Renwick, 1986, p. xxv).

The beginning of World War II had a substantial impact on New Zealand. Beeby’s 1986 reflection on the potential for the War to have brought educational reform to a premature pause is within that context. Yet with Fraser at New Zealand’s helm as Prime Minister by 1940, the national emphasis on education was maintained. Rolling revision of curriculum areas and content was introduced. This was done to avoid overloading teachers with un-trialed and potentially rushed changes which would, for Beeby, run the risk of alienating the teaching profession from the Department of Education. This was an outcome which Beeby knew the country could ill-afford. “[I]t takes far longer to change the objectives of a body of teachers than it does to train them in new methods of achieving old objectives; if the gap is great, some never make the leap” (Beeby, 1992, p. 145).

Subject advisors in Physical Education had been introduced in late 1939 as a way to assist with the development of new methods in education, and as a way to circumvent the inherently judgmental nature of inspectors. The role of inspectors had changed as well, meaning that they were able to spend more time with needy teachers, and also act as subject advisors for the more formal school subjects. They also spent time with teachers breaking new ground, a clear ‘government blessing’ for adventurous educators. As schools were taken over by New Zealand’s internal defence force during wartime and used for hospitals or military purposes, Palmerston North education was particularly effected. Douglas Ball, chief inspector of Native Schools, had been taught by an ex-pupil of Dewey, and was asked by oversee schooling in the Palmerston North area as they adjusted to schools without walls. The outcome of these ‘schools’ was dramatic, as more time was spent in these schools on arts and crafts and physical education. The results led to the introduction of subject advisors in the Arts and Crafts, and an increased awareness at the role these subjects could play in a balanced education.

The two main education journals, NZEI’s National Education and the Department of Education’s Education Gazette were instrumental lines of communication to the public and teaching body throughout this period of time. They were consistent and uniform in their progressive message, and provided a wide range of articles which encouraged progressive educators to continue to experiment with the new method. Their articles also carried a legitimising influence on the increasing inclusion of physical education and arts and crafts into the school day. Over time, however, concerns surrounding the unknown academic impact of the educational reforms began to mount. Beeby, the face of educational reform throughout the country, caught the brunt of the
growing criticism as the press invented the term 'Beebyism' to mean anything about education that one didn't like and the new method began to be referred to by some as the 'play way' (Alcorn, 1999).

Whilst Beeby was happy to ignore the assumptive and unsubstantiated groanings with the new system, Mason, who shared Beeby’s conviction in what they were doing, called a meeting to address the concerns head-on. The announcement of the Conference in the *Education Gazette* on September 1st 1943 couched the invitation to a national conference in terms which intimated a timely conference on the post-war reconstruction of education. Criticism of a perceived drop in standards were never discussed in the invitation, nor in the 1944 Beeby/Mason publication *Education Today and Tomorrow* which was printed so that all attendees of the Conference might have a uniform understanding of the national state of education in 1944.

The 1944 Education Conference was drastically different to the 1937 NEF Conference. Over one hundred and twenty members were invited who represented seventy organisations which were in some way affiliated with or stakeholders of education. The Conference was held in Christchurch, and was devised as a forum where five ‘fringe’ areas of education could be discussed. In an effort to make these meetings neutral, Beeby and Mason removed themselves from holding any affiliation with the proceedings of the Conference. The most important moments of the 1944 Education Conference were not the discussions surrounding the ‘fringe’ areas of education, but rather took place during two sessions which had been added to the programme in order to facilitate discussions “concerning the work of primary and secondary schools” (Cocker in E. 4/1/6b, 1944, B3 p. 5). In these sessions, criticisms were put forward, and appropriately responded to. That these criticisms surfaced and were centered on the reforms based on progressive new education methods introduced to mainstream educators by the 1937 NEF Conference, clearly demonstrates that progressive new education had become the orthodox pedagogy by 1944.

**Looking Forward**

Throughout this thesis the introduction of progressive new education into New Zealand has been identified and the influence this has subsequently exerted on education during its rise to orthodoxy has been traced. On the journey, two main issues which maintain their relevance for modern educators have surfaced. The first is the confusion surrounding the differentiation of pedagogy and curriculum highlighted in chapter one. The second, as demonstrated by the lecturers in chapter three, is the ongoing
importance of education as a means of self-actualisation and the subsequent need for a self/social balance in liberal societies.

In a planning meeting preparing for an up-coming term in 2008, I sat with four colleagues as we attempted to draw from the New Zealand Curriculum (2007). This led to some discussion, as it appeared sufficiently vague to warrant further enquiry online. Sitting at the computer in this pursuit, I was taken aback when one of my colleagues, with a straight face, authoritatively stated, “We can teach whatever we want. That’s the whole point of the new curriculum.” Just such a confusion around the differentiation between pedagogy and curriculum was the foundation of the concerns which were voiced in the 1944 Education Conference. It was this lack of distinction between the two which McIlraith found concerning on his visit to some of the NEF experiments in Dunedin. That it exists today is exceedingly unfortunate.

Progressive new education was never intended as a curriculum or a set of knowledge. As Muller (2001) identified, progressive education lacks an explicit theory of knowledge. However, as identified in chapter one, Dewey developed his understanding of pedagogy based on an assumption that it would be coupled with an appropriate knowledge based curriculum. It was developed as a pedagogy, a method, a manner in which knowledge is accessed by learners. Young (2010) clearly illustrates the demarcation.

The first idea concerns curriculum, which refers to the knowledge that a country agrees is important for all students to have access to. The second idea concerns pedagogy, which, in contrast, refers to the activities of teachers in motivating students and helping them to engage with the curriculum and make it meaningful. Curriculum and pedagogy, I suggest, need to be seen as conceptually distinct. (p. 23)

The confused effects which inevitably arise when pedagogy is conflated with curriculum are clear. In that conflation, the curriculum becomes instrumentalised. Young (2010) highlights two very real concerns with an instrumentalist curriculum. The first is the “proliferation of specific guidelines” (p. 24) for teachers, thus reducing education to a ‘check-list’ pedagogy. The second is that an instrumentalist curriculum provides governments with the opportunity to “claim that social or economic problems can be ‘solved’ by changes in the curriculum” (Young, 2010, p. 24).

Young’s (2010) considerations are based on the supposition of substituting pedagogy for curriculum. Danger is equally eminent for the reverse. If, as my colleague above proposed, the emphasis on a disciplinary-based curriculum is substituted for a child-centered pedagogy, we are introduced to an education system built without an adequate knowledge foundation. A child-centered curriculum will lead, as Dewey firmly
believed, to nothing. "Nothing can be developed from nothing; nothing but the crude can be developed out of the crude" (Dewey, 2008/1902, p. 114).

The introduction of progressive new education led to the split between progressivist and traditionalist educator. The dispute remains in place today, manifested by the debate surrounding what knowledge is taught in schools, the considerable discussions which are taking place around the government's implementation of National Standards, and the continued confusion surrounding the differentiation between pedagogy and curriculum. The ongoing conflation of curriculum and pedagogy from the progressive education era into the more recent period of educational constructivism has led to the emergence of the social realist school in the sociology of education. Here, writers such as Young (2008), Moore (2010) and Muller (2010) re-engage with the demarcation between the curriculum and pedagogy and what this means for policy and practice.

The second issue which maintains its relevance for modern educators is the key issue for the liberal social contract – that of the importance of the individual coupled with a recognition that the individual is a member of a social group.

With the renewal of physical existence goes, in the case of human beings, the recreation of beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, misery, and practices. The continuity of any experience, through renewing of the social group, is a literal fact. Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life. (Dewey, 2007/1916, p. 10)

By the time the 1944 Education Conference had been called, certain groups within the New Zealand community were in an uproar at what they believed were falling educational standards. The blame was laid squarely at Beeby’s feet. The increase in time given to subjects such as physical education and arts and crafts left the business world staunchly unimpressed. An increased focus on providing students with adequate lighting and air circulation was lost on employers who considered these attentions and expenditures superfluous to the aim of education.

What differed between the businesses and the educators of that time was their understanding of the aims of education. Rather than simply producing the next clerk, or lawyer, or cog in an economic machine, educators in the late 1930s and early 1940s were increasingly interested in seeing students finish their education as well-rounded individuals, capable of critical thought, reason, and equipped with interests and hobbies. This, it was believed, would effectively lead to a productive and happy society.

If it were felt that the free development of individuality is one of the leading essentials of well-being; that it is not only a coordinate element with all that is designated by the terms civilization, instruction, education, culture, but is itself a necessary part and condition of all those things; there would be no danger that
liberty should be undervalued, and the adjustment of the boundaries between it and social control would present no extraordinary difficulty. (Mill, 2002/1859, p. 47).

This was but one of the sentiments which the lecturers of the 1937 NEF Conference left New Zealand with.

When educators begin to accept the artist mind, with its way of seeing life as a whole, and its comprehension of history as a striving onward and upward, they will begin also to see a world where useful hands and seeing eyes are more than possessions for professional and vocational use by the adult, but are also extensions of personality leading to a higher morality of life, the enjoyment and pursuit of happiness and a richer way of living. (Lismer, 1938, pp. 230-1).

Identifying the point of balance between the pursuit of individual happiness whilst living in a socially responsible manner remains a central issue for liberal societies. Some point to the recent economic crisis as the result of a commitment to individualised pursuits at the expense of social responsibility (Finch, 2009). A whole generation has recently been branded as “Generation Me” (Twenge, 2007). Perhaps disturbing the point of balance between the social and the individual is the result of an over-long engagement with child-centered pedagogy, initially through the dominance of progressivism in education and more latterly through its inheritor – constructivism? This is certainly one of the claims made by those who argue that progressive education has failed to recognise that education’s role in individual self-actualisation must be balanced with the socialisation of the individual into the requirements of a liberal-democratic society. Ironically, both Dewey and Fraser may well have agreed with the claimants.

**Conclusion**

This thesis has identified the beginnings of progressive new education in New Zealand, and has traced those beginnings from a series of ideas presented at a conference in 1937 to the point at which they were understood as the orthodoxy in 1944. The seven year journey from idea to orthodoxy has irrevocably shaped the development of New Zealand’s education system and, in so doing, the nation itself. Through the introduction of progressive new education, the on-going division between traditionalist and progressivist educator was begun. However, as is the nature of any idea, progressive new education has transformed over time. Through the development of a thorough understanding of its origins, one is afforded the understanding that there is work yet to be done towards clarifying major issues in education today. As Beeby illustrates, “one thing I am certain: New Zealand will be a sadly static country if, within a decade – or
even within a century – any writer is justified in concluding a book on the objectives of education with the words THE END” (1992, p. 304).
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