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SEPARATE OR MIXED SCHOOLING:

A REVISIONIST STUDY OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION IN
MARLBOROUGH (1946-1958)

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Philosophy
in Education at
Massey University

Ralph Barry Cocklin
1983

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were twofold; to provide an in-depth and systematic account of secondary education in Marlborough from 1946 to 1958, focussing particularly on the debate over single-sex and co-educational schooling; and, to examine critically the ideologies and assumptions underlying the single-sex/co-education debate in Marlborough from 1946 to 1958. Two procedures were chosen as the most appropriate for fulfilling these two objectives. First, the presentation of a systematic and in-depth documentation of the events, issues, and people involved in the single-sex/co-education debate in Marlborough between 1946 and 1958. Data was obtained from newspaper clippings, interviews, and such documents as Board Minutes and Records. This data is presented in two phases: first, a descriptive account, in approximately chronological order, of the events and debate which characterised this 13-year period in the history of Marlborough College; and, second, through the presentation of a critical analysis of the underlying assumptions and ideologies. This critical analysis is based upon what is popularly referred to as a 'revisionist perspective' and involves the examination of two competing explanations of the historical data and the selection of a Marxist-Feminist framework as the most appropriate method for achieving the second major objective.

The embryonic nature of such an investigation notwithstanding the study is seen to offer scope for further development, both as regards investigations into educational decision-making itself and in the application of the theoretical perspective to such historical analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The cooperation of a number of people has made this thesis possible and I take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge their assistance and encouragement.

Dr. David Battersby supervised my research. The guidance, constructive criticism, experience and insight David provided, along with his friendship and encouragement has made the completion of this thesis possible.

The late Professor Clem Hill first suggested the continuation of my studies which has resulted in my pursuit of further qualifications. Professor Ray Adams has provided support and assistance which have enabled me to continue at Massey University while working on this project.

My colleagues in the Education Department at Massey University have willingly given both of their time and their knowledge in aiding me with this project. Mrs. Doreen Howes through her friendly advice has been a constant source of motivation towards the completion of this thesis. Mr. Eric Archer, Dr. Roy Shuker and Mr. John Clark provided constructive critical comment on an earlier draft of the report of this investigation.

The people of Marlborough who provided access to information and documents enabled this project to proceed. In particular, appreciation is expressed to the group of Informants who provided a valuable insight into the historical period, and the Marlborough Colleges Board for their assistance.

This thesis is dedicated to Heather whose support, assistance, and encouragement provided the conditions under which the study became possible. Finally, John and Marie, through their faith, understanding, and tolerance, have greatly assisted in the completion of this project.

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INTRODUCTION

*I keep six honest serving-men,
They taught me all I knew;
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.*

Rudyard Kipling

Within the requirements of the Standard Scheme of Control for Secondary Schools and the particular school Act (e.g., Marlborough College Act, 1899), a secondary school Board of Governors has a considerable degree of autonomy in the making of decisions which can then affect successive generations of secondary students. Two such decisions made by a Board of Governors in Blenheim, New Zealand, provide the focus for this study. First, their selection of a new College Principal in 1946 brought with it new and different ideas to their district. Second, in 1958, this Board of Governors decided, after 13 years of debate, to recommend to the Department of Education that the existing co-educational college in Blenheim be converted to a single-sex college, and that a new, also single-sex, secondary school be established.

Although both these decisions have had widespread and prolonged ramifications for the Province of Marlborough, there has been no attempt to examine systematically the outcomes of the decision to appoint this particular Principal in 1946 nor of the reasons which led the Board of Governors in 1958 to support the establishment of two single-sex Colleges in Blenheim. Indeed, while descriptive and historical accounts of the New Zealand educational system exist spanning the period from 1946 to 1958, there are no detailed references to secondary education in the Marlborough Province. Further, nor do such descriptive accounts provide critical scrutiny of events, involving individuals (e.g., the College Principal) and groups (e.g., The Marlborough College Board of Governors) as a way of exposing ideologies and assumptions concerning

Marlborough's secondary education during this 13-year period.

Accordingly, the present study has as its major objectives:

To provide an in-depth and systematic account of secondary education in Marlborough from 1946 to 1958, focussing particularly on the debate over single-sex and co-educational schooling; and,

To examine critically the ideologies and assumptions underlying the single-sex/co-education debate in Marlborough from 1946 to 1958.

The report of the study carried out toward the fulfilment of these objectives is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, which follows, briefly outlines the origins of the debate over single-sex and co-educational secondary schools in New Zealand, and then focusses attention on the establishment and development of secondary education in Marlborough up until 1946. Against this background the methodology and objectives of the current investigation are elaborated. Chapter Two provides an historical overview of the events and debate concerning secondary education in Marlborough which characterised the period from 1946 until the establishment of the two single-sex Colleges in the early 1960's. Chapter Three will present a revisionist perspective, based on a Marxist-Feminist framework, which will then be utilised, in Chapter Four, to achieve the goal of examining critically, and more closely, the lengthy debate leading up to the decision to establish two single-sex colleges in Blenheim. The report will conclude with an overview of the investigation and its implications.