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**Curriculum integration for early adolescent schooling in
Aotearoa New Zealand: worthy of serious trial.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

The concept of curriculum integration has long held seductive appeal as a way to unite knowledge *and* meet the educational needs of young people. However, researchers have largely dismissed the concept as a romantic but unworkable idea. Nonetheless in the short history of education in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), notions of integration have persistently reappeared in the national curriculum. In the 1930s, innovative teachers implemented world-class examples of curriculum integration in rural schools. Later, the Freyberg Project (1986-1991) demonstrated that curriculum integration admirably meets the needs of young people. Recently, the Ministry of Education trialled curriculum integration in several schools but, since the literature indicates that curriculum integration is represented by a plethora of models, this raised an important question: which model is preferable?

This thesis combines historical and theoretical methodology to conduct an investigation of the concept of curriculum integration with respect to the needs of early adolescents in NZ. The historical investigation demonstrates that curriculum integration is best described by two broad traditions which stem from nineteenth century USA: the 'student-centred' approach based on Dewey's 'organic' education and the 'subject-centred' approach based on the Herbartian notion of 'correlation'. These two approaches are represented in current practice by the student-centred *integrative* model (Beane, 1990/1993) and the subject-centred *multidisciplinary* model (Jacobs, 1989). The theoretical investigation draws from American experience to examine the respective claims of the integrative and multidisciplinary models as the preferred model of curriculum integration for middle schooling. It finds that the 'thick' ethics associated with the politics of the integrative model ensures that it meets the needs of all early adolescents whereas the 'thin' ethics of the multidisciplinary model is indifferent to the needs of young people. The thesis concludes that the integrative model should be seriously considered in the middle years in NZ. It also concludes that historical understandings of curriculum integration are vital to further research, policy-making and teacher education. Moreover, attention to political and ethical issues would enhance implementation of the integrative model in NZ and would help avoid a set of problems which have impeded implementation of the model in the USA.

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Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated to my wife
Marina
and our children, Ben and Christina
with my love and gratitude*

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