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**Discovery, a Case Study on the New Zealand
Lifeskills and Study Skills Programme for Adolescents,
and its Contribution to Adolescent Development**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Education
at Massey University, Palmerston North**

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ABSTRACT

This case study examined Discovery, a lifeskills and study skills programme for adolescents, and its contribution to adolescent development. The Discovery programme was introduced in New Zealand in 1991 through the Global Youth Foundation. Developmental perspectives in adolescence suggest certain tasks and skills need to be achieved in order to reach adulthood. These skills are developed from the maturational demands, and the psychological and social adjustments the teenager needs to make in order to resolve their identity crisis (Erikson, 1968) and achieve their own identity. A review of international educational programmes suggested some of these needs were addressed.

A case study on the Discovery programme probed into the programme's development, content and structure. Responses to Discovery from previous participants were also investigated. This study then focused on the 22nd Discovery programme in New Zealand and its contribution to teenage development. This involved an exploration into Discovery's contribution to lifeskills, study skills, coping with challenges and limiting or preventing depression in the adolescent years. The Lifeskills and Study Skills questionnaire (LASS) was developed to examine these aspects. Parent-Adolescent communication was also measured to understand what changes may have taken place between two weeks prior to Discovery and two months after the last day of the programme. The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale by Barnes and Olson (1982) was used to determine this.

The resulting trends in this research showed Discovery positively influenced the participants' development by providing a number of skills which were consistent with developmental perspectives of adolescence. Sections of Discovery were highlighted as important for an adolescent's growth and development and participant changes were since attributed to Discovery. This study showed that Parent-Adolescent communication

improved for both the majority of teenagers and their parents. Intrafamily communication also enhanced for more than half the families. Sections of Discovery could also be highlighted as beneficial for coping with challenges and the prevention or limitation of depression in the adolescent years.

Overall, Discovery provided the skills and knowledge appropriate for the development of an adolescent. The seven day programme provided the forum for an initiation into adulthood similar to many “rites of passage” formalities. This study highlighted the skills required for adolescents in the New Zealand context and the confirmation of the developmental tasks outlined in Newman and Newman’s (1995) “early adolescence”. Recommendations from this research strongly supports the need for further research into educational programmes for teenagers. It is also recommended that the Discovery programme continues to be made available to New Zealand teenagers.

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