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Social Studies:
Assessing Year 8 students’
knowledge and understanding
about New Zealand society.

A National Education Monitoring
Probe Study.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Policy changes in New Zealand education during the latter half of the twentieth century have had a significant impact on schools and teachers (O'Neill, Clark & Openshaw, 2004). In particular, the Achievement Initiative policy (Ministry of Education, 1991) heralded radical changes in curriculum and assessment. As a result of this initiative, the Ministry of Education (1993) published *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (NZCF), which along with a series of supporting curriculum statements became the basis for learning, teaching and assessment in New Zealand primary schools. In addition to identifying essential learning areas and skills the NZCF foreshadowed a number of critical assessment strategies, including the national monitoring of standards (Ministry of Education, 1993).

National monitoring of student achievement

National monitoring involves *“the systematic and regular collection, interpretation and reporting of information about important aspects of student achievement”* on a nation-wide basis (Flockton, 1999, p.3). In New Zealand this monitoring is carried out under the auspices of the Educational Assessment Research Unit. At the time when national monitoring commenced in 1995, New Zealand education was in the throes of major curriculum reform (Lee, Hill & Lee, 2004) which included the development, trialling, implementation and mandating of seven new curriculum statements over a rolling cycle from 1992-2002.

The purpose of the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) is to provide Government with detailed information about the educational achievements and attitudes of New Zealand students *“so that patterns of performance can be recognised, successes celebrated, and desirable changes to educational practices and resources identified and implemented”* (Crooks & Flockton, 2004, p.2). NEMP is therefore concerned with system wide accountability and improvement. Rather than gathering information from all

students at each level of the education system, random samples of Year 4 and Year 8 students are selected annually to complete the monitoring tasks. Details about NEMP's assessment procedures, assessment tasks and results are published annually (see for example Crooks & Flockton, 1996a; 1996b; Flockton & Crooks, 1996). Student achievement is assessed and monitored through NEMP in each of the seven essential learning areas of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1993) over repeating four yearly cycles. In addition, a number of essential skills (Ministry of Education, 1993) common across learning areas are also assessed. The first cycle of monitoring commenced in 1995, with the second beginning in 1999 and the third in 2003. Three learning areas and/or areas of skill are assessed each year. The learning area of social studies is the focus of the present probe study. Student achievement in social studies was assessed in 1997 and 2001 and is due for assessment again in 2005.

Social studies in the New Zealand curriculum

Diverse opinions about the character and purpose of social studies education in New Zealand have been apparent since its inception as a distinct school subject in the 1940s (Openshaw, 1998; 2004). Although the vehemence of associated debates has varied over time, a fresh level of intensity was apparent in the mid to late 1990s when a new national social studies curriculum statement was under development. The passion and zeal aroused across the country resulted in the publication, over a 36 month period, of three quite different versions of the curriculum: *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft* (Ministry of Education, 1994); *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum: Revised Draft* (Ministry of Education, 1996); and *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1997). The first round of national monitoring in social studies in 1997 was thus conducted at a time when the purpose and nature of the social studies curriculum was being fiercely contested. By the second round of monitoring in 2001 most schools had been using the final version of the curriculum statement for at least two years.

Openshaw (2004) has observed however that the 'final' version of the current social studies curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997) offers teachers little in

the way of support or guidance regarding the purpose, content and approaches to social studies education. This observation was supported in a review of New Zealand's national curriculum undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research where it was concluded that *"the structure of the achievement objectives [in social studies] does not provide schools and teachers with sufficient advice to implement programs that fulfil the aims of the learning goal"* (Ministry of Education, 2002b, Section 1, p.4). More specifically, it has been concluded that lack of an agreed upon body of knowledge and understanding specific to social studies has left it open to the inclusion of almost any topic (McGee, 1998) and susceptible to ideological capture (Partington, 1998). The nature of social studies education and what constitutes a suitable social studies 'topic' have been identified as issues in primary schools.

"In some cases people are not included or referred to in the specific learning outcomes developed by schools, and instead units of work focus on topics such as places or buildings" (Education Review Office, 2001, p.34).

Questions have also been raised about whether teachers have the background knowledge and skills to address the aims of social studies with their students (McGee, 1998) and it has been suggested that *"it is very difficult for teachers who have not themselves studied social studies subjects in depth, to address the demands of the curriculum without a great deal of effort, support and individual study"* (Education Review Office, 2001, p.34). Levels of teacher knowledge in social studies have been noted as an area of concern with particular reference to the primary sector (Education Review Office, 2001). Furthermore, it has been recommended by the National Education Monitoring Project (2002) that *"there is a need for opportunities for teachers to develop their own knowledge and understandings about New Zealand history and social organisation to help strengthen the content and delivery of programmes"* (p.3). The concerns highlighted above, singly and collectively, have the potential to impact significantly on the nature and quality of social studies programmes.

It is expected that social studies programmes will be structured according to the five strands and three processes outlined in the curriculum statement, in

association with their related broad statements of achievement (Ministry of Education, 1997). Knowledge, understanding and skills related to these strands, processes and achievement objectives are then contextualised with reference to specific settings (for example, New Zealand, Europe) and perspectives (for example, biculturalism, current issues). Topics and content for study emerge from the intersection of these elements. Decisions about the strands, processes, achievement objectives, settings and perspectives to be covered, and the nature of the resultant topics and content rest with individual schools and/or teachers. The only **requirements** are that Social Studies programmes: reflect a balance of strands, processes and perspectives within any two-year period; incorporate New Zealand settings into class programmes each year; include Pacific, European and Asian settings within any two-year period; and integrate essential learning about New Zealand society into programmes (Ministry of Education, 1997).

Nineteen broad areas of '*Essential Learning about New Zealand Society*' (ELANZS) are identified in the curriculum. These areas include: "*Maori migration, settlement, life and interaction in various areas of New Zealand over time; ... characteristics, roles, and cultural expression of the various groups living in New Zealand; major events in New Zealand's history; ... the physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape; ... cultural events and issues within New Zealand ...*" (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.23). Schools are required to develop a balanced social studies programme that includes New Zealand settings on an annual basis and integrates essential learning about New Zealand society when and where appropriate (Ministry of Education, 1997). While the structure of the curriculum and associated requirements indicate that the development of knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society is an important, non-negotiable aspect of students' learning, little guidance is provided about which particular areas of knowledge and understanding, if any, are considered significant and worthy of study. Decisions about these matters are left to individual teachers and schools.

How best to incorporate essential learning about New Zealand society (ELANZS) emerged as an area of uncertainty from interview respondents involved in Phase one of a 1999 Ministry of Education sponsored investigation into implementation of the social studies curriculum (Auckland Uniservices Ltd, 1999). A follow up survey of social studies co-ordinators in a random national sample of schools (Dewar, 2000) indicated that over a quarter (26.8%) of the primary respondents felt their schools needed moderate to high levels of guidance regarding implementation of the ELANZS requirements. Furthermore, 40% of primary teachers surveyed in 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2003) reported finding the information about ELANZS in the curriculum statement to be only ‘sometimes helpful’ or ‘not helpful’. These findings indicate that a reasonable proportion of primary schools and teachers felt they needed further guidance with reference to how best to integrate the ELANZS areas into their social studies programmes.

National monitoring and social studies

Given that the social studies curriculum statement identifies a number of broad areas of knowledge and understanding and does not prescribe specific ‘topics’ or content for study, a question arises about the basis on which NEMP makes decisions about what is worthy of assessment and monitoring. Flockton (1999) has stated that it is neither possible nor desirable for NEMP to assess and report on every skill, process or area of understanding identified in each curriculum statement. Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that curriculum details change over time and that the notion of curriculum extends beyond what is formally prescribed or implemented, NEMP monitoring addresses, yet looks beyond, nationally prescribed curriculum outcomes (Flockton, 1999). To assist in identification of the main aspects and important learning outcomes for assessment, NEMP develops its own, simplified, summary framework for each learning area. These frameworks identify “*the main aspects to be covered in assessment programmes with particular focus on **important** learning outcomes, or ‘big pictures’.*” (Flockton, 1999, p.26).

The richness and diversity of the conceptual nature of much of the content of social studies has presented NEMP with a number of task design and

administration challenges (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). Despite the complexities associated with these challenges, NEMP has identified important aspects of learning for assessment.

“These important aspects of learning, which are outlined in the assessment framework, have been the focus for exploring and developing tasks that are within the scope of national monitoring. Some aspects of social studies are quite measurable (knowledge, for example) whereas others require observation about matters for which there is no universal right or wrong.” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.9).

The 2001 NEMP framework for assessment in social studies is based on the five strands, three processes and the settings as outlined in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997). The important learning outcomes outlined in NEMP’s framework include:

- Culture and heritage: knowledge and understanding about *“how people’s heritage, understandings and practices contribute to cultural identity”*;
- Time, change and continuity: knowledge and understanding about *“the causes and consequences of continuity and change on people’s lives”*;
- Values exploration: *“Identifying and explaining values. Examining consequences of different value positions”*. (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.10).

Although New Zealand is identified as one of the settings in the NEMP framework, no direct reference is made to the ELANZS areas.

Results from the 2001 Social Studies assessment are reported according to the five organising strands of: Social Organisation; Culture and Heritage; Place and Environment; Time, Change and Continuity¹; and Resources and Economic Activities (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). Given the curriculum emphasis on developing students’ knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society and identification in the framework of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a setting, it would be interesting to use the curriculum notion *‘Essential Learning about New Zealand Society’* to explore the 2001 NEMP social studies assessment tasks and results. More specifically, this probe study examines

¹ Referred to as ‘Time, Continuity and Change’ in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997).

Year 8 students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society with reference to four questions.

Research questions:

1. What aspects of '*Essential Learning about New Zealand Society*' are assessed in the 2001 NEMP monitoring tasks for Year 8 students?

How are the ELANZS areas assessed?

2. What knowledge and understanding do Year 8 students' have about New Zealand society, as assessed in the 2001 NEMP tasks?

What are students' areas of strength and weakness, overall, in relation to the ELANZS areas?

3. What are some of the common misunderstandings and strengths apparent in students' responses to selected assessment tasks?

What are some of the possible reasons for the misunderstandings and strengths observed?

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of specific assessment approaches and tasks used with Year 8 students in the 2001 monitoring of social studies?

What suggestions might be made for assessing students' knowledge and understanding in the ELANZS areas for 2005?

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

NEMP probe studies provide researchers with the opportunity to carry out more detailed analyses of data collected during the annual monitoring of student achievement. The present probe study focuses on a re-examination of the 2001 results for Year 8 students with reference to the curriculum notion of '*Essential Learning about New Zealand Society*' (Ministry of Education, 1997). Analysis of the NEMP data occurred in three phases.

Phase one

The first phase of the study involved the two researchers in a determination of what constituted essential learning (knowledge and understanding) about New Zealand society. The 19 areas of essential learning about New Zealand society outlined in the social studies curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997; see Appendix A for a list of these areas) provided the point of reference for a critical content analysis of the 41 Year 8 NEMP social studies tasks, inclusive of link tasks². This analysis established which ELANZS area, if any, each task was linked to. Details about the nature of 26 of these tasks were available in the NEMP social studies report (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). Information regarding the remaining 15 unpublished link tasks was obtained from the Educational Assessment Research Unit. Rather than detailing specific aspects of knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society, or particular 'topics' for study, the ELANZS areas in the curriculum identify broad domains of study in general terms. The 'open' nature of these areas made their linking to NEMP tasks both problematic and easy: problematic in the sense there was no guidance and few constraints regarding what constituted appropriate aspects of knowledge or understanding for any ELANZS; easy in the sense that each ELANZS embraced a wide range of possible topics, content and knowledge and the determination of appropriateness was open to interpretation. A crucial feature of the research process was the development of a shared understanding between the two researchers about what constituted appropriate **aspects** of knowledge or understanding for inclusion in and exclusion from each ELANZS. Once a link was established between an

assessment task and ELANZS area, the strength of this link was determined according to a three-point scale (tenuous link; reasonable link; close link). In addition, each task was categorised with reference to the cognitive focus/cognitive intent of the task (factual knowledge or conceptual understanding) and the assessment approach (one-to-one; team; independent; station). The involvement of two researchers in these analyses provided opportunities for cross validation and triangulation.

Phase two

The second phase dealt with the ELANZS related tasks and Year 8 students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society. Students' knowledge and understanding was categorised overall, for each task, as strong, moderate or weak. Results for specific aspects of each task, summarised results for the overall task and the commentary included at the conclusion of each task in the published material (Flockton & Crooks, 2002) were all referred to when making judgements about students' knowledge and understanding. Once again, cross validation and triangulation were achieved through involvement of the two researchers.

Phase three

The final phase entailed an in-depth analysis of six ELANZS related tasks with reference to common student misunderstandings, specific areas of strong knowledge and understanding and possible reasons for these misunderstandings and strengths. Link tasks were removed from the pool of possible tasks for this phase of the study³. The remaining Year 8 ELANZS related tasks were sorted according to the assessment approach used. One station, one independent, one team and three one-to-one tasks (Flockton & Crooks, 2002) were selected. These generally reflect the proportion of task approaches used in the 37 ELANZS related tasks: 21 one-to-one tasks; seven station tasks; five team tasks; and four independent tasks (see Table 2, pp.11-

² Details regarding the link tasks are not published in NEMP reports as they are used in subsequent rounds of monitoring. An outline of the tasks was however available to the researchers for this study.

³ Details of these tasks cannot be published as they are to be used again in the 2005 cycle.

12). A further reason for selecting three one-to-one tasks was to consider in some detail, the effectiveness of this approach to social studies assessment. One-to-one assessment tasks provide opportunities to gain in-depth information about the nature of students' conceptual understanding. Such understanding is considered the cornerstone of social studies education (Barr, 1998). Students' written responses were analysed for the station and independent tasks while video-tapes of the task with accompanying written work were examined for the one-to-one interview and team activities. Care was taken to ensure that the 6 tasks selected varied according to the nature of the link with the ELANZS area, the cognitive focus and the overall level of students' knowledge and understanding. Table 1 identifies the six tasks selected and their respective characteristics.

Table 1. Characteristics of tasks selected for in-depth analysis.

Task:	Assessment approach:	Nature of link with ELANZS:	Cognitive focus / intent:	Overall level of students' knowledge / understanding:
Knowing New Zealand	Independent, pencil and paper	Close	Factual knowledge	Weak
Changes	Team	Tenuous	Conceptual understanding	Moderate
Symbols of New Zealand	Station	Reasonable	Factual knowledge	Strong
Treaty	One-to-one	Close	Conceptual understanding	Moderate
Time Line	One-to-one	Close	Conceptual understanding	Moderate
M.P.	One-to-one	Reasonable	Conceptual understanding	Weak

Once the six tasks were selected, a 1 in 18 sample of students/teams was taken for each task, resulting in 26 individual and 12 team responses. For '*Knowing New Zealand*' and '*Symbols of New Zealand*' however, the number of individual responses was 25 and 23 respectively as some students were absent on the day of that particular assessment task and were not replaced in the sample.

The final research questions dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of particular approaches to assessment and ways in which the assessment of knowledge and understanding in social studies could be improved. These questions were addressed at the end of phase three as they drew on data from all phases of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Findings: Phase one

Links between Year 8 NEMP tasks and ELANZS areas

Of the 41 NEMP social studies tasks for Year 8 students, four could not be linked to any ELANZS statement: ‘Mere’s Whakapapa’; ‘Countries of the World’; ‘Where in the World are we?’; and ‘Manda’. Although ‘Mere’s Whakapapa’ used a distinctive New Zealand name (Mere) and term (whakapapa), and the setting for the task was clearly New Zealand, the task itself required little more than comprehension of a simple written statement outlining relationships among family members and the placement of labelled photographs in appropriate positions to create a family tree. No ELANZS area addressed relationships between family members and/or knowledge about how to construct a family tree. The remaining 37 tasks were each linked to an ELANZS with three of the 37 being linked to two ELANZS (giving 40 linkages in total). In addition, each ELANZS linked task was categorised according to the cognitive intent/focus of the task and the NEMP assessment approach used. Table 2 identifies the Year 8 NEMP tasks, the cognitive focus/intent of each task, the NEMP assessment approach used and the relationship between the tasks and the ELANZS areas.

Table 2. Year 8 NEMP tasks, cognitive focus/intent of tasks and the link between tasks and areas of Essential Learning about New Zealand Society.

Year 8 NEMP Task:	Cognitive focus/intent of task:	NEMP assessment approach:	Essential Learning about New Zealand society:
<i>Three tasks were categorised twice (x2) giving a total of 40 tasks.</i>			<i>Full details in Appendix A.</i>
Special Days (x2)	Conceptual	One-to-one	The development over time of New Zealand’s identity and ways in which the identity is expressed;
NZ tourist pamphlet	Conceptual	Independent	
NZ coins	Conceptual	Independent	
Flags	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Kaiwakamoana	Conceptual	Independent	
Symbols of NZ	Factual	Station	
Samoa family	Factual	Station	
Aotearoa	Factual	One-to-one	
Mrs Chia and Eileen Ceremonies	Conceptual	One-to-one	Characteristics, roles, and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand;
Group leaders	Conceptual	Team	
Children and teachers	Conceptual	One-to-one	
	Conceptual	One-to-one	

A good team member	Conceptual	One-to-one	
We need a leader	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Leaders	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Marae meeting	Factual	Station	
Equal and different	Conceptual	One-to-one	Current events and issues within New Zealand;
Tree troubles	Conceptual	Team	
Saikoloni	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Earthquake disaster	Conceptual	Station	
School canteen	Conceptual	Team	
Time Line (x2)	Conceptual	One-to-one	People in New Zealand's history;
Famous NZers	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Knowing NZ (x2)	Factual	Independent	
A place to live	Conceptual	Station	The physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape;
Rivers	Conceptual	Station	
Relief map	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Special Days (x2)	Conceptual	One-to-one	Major events in New Zealand's history;
Time line (x2)	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Rodney's window	Conceptual	Team	Changing patterns of resource and land use;
Changes	Conceptual	Team	
Knowing NZ (x2)	Factual	Independent	The location and significance of important natural and cultural features ...
New Zealand places	Factual	Station	
A new law	Conceptual	One-to-one	The origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, ...
M.P.	Conceptual	One-to-one	
Early NZers	Conceptual	One-to-one	The subsequent migration, settlements, life, and interaction of British and other cultural ...
New Zealand's shape	Conceptual	One-to-one	Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this ...
Powhiri	Factual	One-to-one	Perspectives of tangata whenua as these affect contemporary systems, policies, and events;
Treaty	Conceptual	One-to-one	The Treaty of Waitangi, its significance as the founding document of New Zealand...
Tourists	Conceptual	One-to-one	Changing patterns of economic activity and trade;
			Maori migration, settlement, life and interaction in various areas of New Zealand ...
			European culture and heritages and the influence of these heritages on New Zealand's ...
			The nature and organisation of paid and unpaid work;
			The effects of colonisation for Maori and Pakeha;
			New Zealand's participation in significant international events and institutions ...

The first research question dealt with identification of the aspects of '*Essential Learning about New Zealand Society*' that were assessed in the 2001 NEMP

Year 8 tasks. Table 2 shows that *'the development over time of New Zealand's identity and ways on which the identity is expressed'* and the *'characteristics, roles and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand'* were each assessed by eight tasks. The ELANZS area *'current events and issues in New Zealand'* was assessed through five tasks. *'People in New Zealand's history'* and *'the physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape'* were each assessed by three tasks. Four further ELANZS were assessed by two tasks each; five ELANZS were assessed through one task each; and five ELANZS areas were not assessed by any assessment task. Thus 14 of the 19 ELANZS areas were assessed by a NEMP task.

The majority of the tasks by far, 30 in all, addressed students' conceptual understanding while the remaining seven addressed factual knowledge. Where a task assessed both factual knowledge and conceptual understanding (for example *'Treaty'* and *'Time Line'*) it was categorised at the higher conceptual level. It was noted that students may not necessarily have engaged in a task at the cognitive level intended by task developers. Using the task *'Relief Map'* as an example, if students were familiar with the conventions on similar maps, the task would assess factual knowledge. If however the students had limited experience with similar maps then the task may well address conceptual understandings. In such instances tasks were again categorised at the higher conceptual level.

Of the 37 ELANZ related tasks, 21 used a one-to-one interview approach. This approach involved each Year 8 student working individually with a teacher assessor as they completed a series of tasks. Interactions between the student and teacher-assessor were video-taped. Seven of the ELANZS linked tasks used a station format where four students worked individually through a series of practical, hands-on activities with a teacher-assessor available for guidance. A further five tasks employed a team approach where four students worked collaboratively on task related activities, supervised by the teacher-assessor. Group responses were recorded on paper and interactions were

video-taped. The final four ELANZS linked tasks involved students working independently on some pencil and paper tasks.

The nature of the link between each task and its ELANZS area was determined according to a three-point scale: tenuous link; reasonable link; close link. Table 3 outlines the nature of these links.

Table 3. Nature of the link between Year 8 NEMP tasks and ELANZS areas.

Year 8 NEMP Task: <i>Three tasks were categorised twice (x2) giving a total of 40 tasks.</i>	Nature of link:	Essential Learning about New Zealand society: <i>(See Appendix A for full ELANZS statement)</i>
Special Days (x2)	close	The development over time of New Zealand's identity and ways in which the identity is expressed;
NZ tourist pamphlet	close	
NZ coins	close	
Flags	close	
Aotearoa	reasonable	
Symbols of New Zealand	reasonable	
Samoan family	reasonable	
Kaiwakamoana	reasonable	
Mrs Chia and Eileen	close	Characteristics, roles, and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand;
Ceremonies	close	
Group leaders	reasonable	
Children and teachers	reasonable	
Marae meeting	reasonable	
A good team member	tenuous	
We need a leader	tenuous	
Leaders	tenuous	
Equal and different	tenuous	Current events and issues within New Zealand;
Tree troubles	tenuous	
Saikoloni	tenuous	
Earthquake disaster	tenuous	
School canteen	tenuous	
Knowing New Zealand (x2)	close	People in New Zealand's history;
Time Line (x2)	close	
Famous New Zealanders	tenuous	
A place to live	close	The physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape;
Rivers	reasonable	
Relief map	reasonable	
Special Days (x2)	close	Major events in New Zealand's history;
Time line (x2)	close	
Rodney's window	close	Changing patterns of resource and land use;
Changes	tenuous	
Knowing New Zealand (x2)	close	The location and significance of important natural and cultural features of the landscape;
New Zealand places	tenuous	
A new law	close	The origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, ...
M.P.	reasonable	
Early New Zealanders	tenuous	The subsequent migration, settlements, life, and interaction of British and other cultural groups ...
New Zealand's shape	reasonable	Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage on New Zealand ...

Powhiri	close	Perspectives of tangata whenua as these affect contemporary systems, policies, ...
Treaty	close	The Treaty of Waitangi, its significance as the founding document of New Zealand, ...
Tourists	tenuous	Changing patterns of economic activity and trade.

Sixteen tasks were deemed to have a close link to a specific ELANZS. The ‘*Treaty*’ task for example required students to: explain what a treaty is; identify when or how long ago the Treaty of Waitangi was signed; identify the groups of people in a photograph depicting the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (and their place of origin); explain what the Treaty of Waitangi is all about; comment on the idea that the Treaty of Waitangi is still very important nowadays; and explain why the Treaty of Waitangi is still considered very important (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). As such it clearly provided content valid information regarding students’ knowledge and understanding about aspects of the ELANZS area ‘*Treaty of Waitangi, its significance as the founding document of New Zealand, how it has been interpreted over time, and how it is applied to current systems, policies, and events*’.

Eleven tasks had a reasonable link to an ELANZS while 13 had a tenuous link. With reference to the latter, although a number of tasks was located in a New Zealand setting as evident in the photographs used as prompts and/or in the background information provided (see for example ‘*Tree Troubles*’; ‘*Group Leaders*’; ‘*Changes*’) students were not necessarily required to demonstrate knowledge or understanding about New Zealand per se. However, when responding to the task they may have demonstrated such knowledge or understanding: hence the tenuous nature of the link. In other instances, task titles such as ‘*Famous New Zealanders*’ suggested a strong New Zealand context. This link to New Zealand was reinforced through use of a book about famous Maori as a prompt. For these reasons the task was linked to the ELANZS area ‘*People in New Zealand’s history*’. The actual task however asked students to respond to the following:

“*If you were going to write a book about famous people, how would you choose the people to go into your book? What sort of people would they need to be? How does a person get to be famous?*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.53).

The task requirements focused on identification of the qualities of famous people and as such they did not necessarily provide valid information about what students knew and understood about *'People in New Zealand's history'*. For some students however, the context and prompt may have led them to illustrate their responses with reference to specific people in New Zealand's history - hence the tenuous nature of the link between this task and the ELANZS. As such, at least one third of the tasks was judged to have a tenuous link to an ELANZS area. The ability of these tasks to 'tap into' their ELANZS area is therefore questionable and a threat to the validity of any interpretations about the nature of students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society. This point is revisited in phase two.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings: Phase two

Students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society

The second phase of the study addressed the second research question: *'What knowledge and understanding do Year 8 students' have about New Zealand society, as assessed in the 2001 NEMP tasks'?* As a first step to answering this question, students' knowledge and understanding was rated overall as either strong, moderate or weak in relation to each of the 37 ELANZS related tasks. Table 4 identifies the ELANZS area, related NEMP task and the overall level of students' knowledge and understanding in relation to each task.

Table 4. Essential Learning about New Zealand Society, Year 8 NEMP tasks and level of students' knowledge and understanding.

Essential Learning about New Zealand society: <i>Full details in Appendix A.</i>	Year 8 NEMP Task: <i>Three tasks were categorised twice (x2) giving a total of 40 tasks.</i>	Level of students' knowledge / understanding
The development over time of New Zealand's identity and ways in which the identity is expressed;	NZ coins Symbols of N.Z. Special Days (x2) NZ tourist pamphlet Samoan family Kaiwakamoana Flags Aotearoa	Strong Strong Moderate Moderate Moderate Moderate Weak Weak
Characteristics, roles, and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand;	Group leaders Children and teachers A good team member Leaders Mrs Chia and Eileen Ceremonies Marae meeting We need a leader	Moderate Moderate Moderate Moderate Weak Weak Weak Weak
Current events and issues within New Zealand;	Saikoloni Earthquake disaster Equal and different Tree troubles School canteen	Moderate Moderate Weak Weak Weak
People in New Zealand's history;	Time Line (x2) Knowing NZ (x2) Famous New Zealanders	Moderate Weak Weak
The physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape;	Rivers Relief map A place to live	Strong Strong Moderate

Major events in New Zealand's history;	Special Days (x2) Time line (x2)	Moderate Moderate
Changing patterns of resource and land use;	Changes Rodney's window	Moderate Weak
The location and significance of important natural and cultural features of the landscape;	Knowing NZ (x2) New Zealand places	Weak Weak
The origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, ...	A new law M.P.	Weak Weak
The subsequent migration, settlements, life, and interaction of British and other cultural ...	Early New Zealanders	Weak
Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage on New Zealand's social, ...	New Zealand's shape	Weak
Perspectives of tangata whenua as these affect contemporary systems, policies, and events;	Powhiri	Moderate
The Treaty of Waitangi, its significance as the founding document of New Zealand, ...	Treaty	Moderate
Changing patterns of economic activity and trade;	Tourists	Moderate

Overall, students' level of knowledge and understanding was rated as strong for four (11%) of the 37 ELANZS related tasks, moderate for 16 (43%) of the tasks and weak for 17 (46%) of the tasks. The research question however sought to identify areas of overall strength and weakness with reference to **specific ELANZS areas**.

Areas of strength and weakness

The ELANZS area *'the physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape'* was linked to three tasks: *'A place to live'*; *'Rivers'*; and *'Relief Map'*. These tasks addressed a mix of factual knowledge and conceptual understanding. Students' knowledge and understanding was rated as strong with reference to both *'Rivers'* and *'Relief Map'* and as moderate with reference to *'A place to live'*. Furthermore, all three tasks were judged as either closely or reasonably linked to the ELANZS. It can therefore be concluded that students' knowledge and understanding of this ELANZS area was strong and relatively sound. This was the only ELANZS area of strength identified with reference to Year 8 students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society.

Students' knowledge and understanding was judged as weak in relation to six ELANZS areas. Two tasks, both addressing conceptual understanding, were linked to the ELANZS area that dealt with *'the origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, of the franchise, and of local and national democratic systems'*. One task had a close link to the area, the other a reasonable link. Students' knowledge and understanding was rated as weak on both tasks. Three tasks were linked to *'people in New Zealand's history'*, two of which were closely linked to the ELANZS area and the third tenuously linked. One task focused on factual knowledge the other two assessed conceptual understanding. Students' knowledge and understanding was rated as weak on two of the three tasks.

A single task was linked to *'the subsequent migration, settlements, life and interaction of British and other cultural groups in various areas of NZ, over time'*. This task assessed conceptual understanding. It was tenuously linked to the ELANZS and student's understanding was rated as weak. *'Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage of New Zealand's social, cultural, political and religious belief and systems'* was also assessed by a single task. The task had a reasonable link to the ELANZS and students' knowledge and conceptual understanding was rated as weak. The findings in relation to these ELANZS need to be interpreted with care as each ELANZS was assessed by a single task and it cannot be presumed that performance on a single task will generalise to other tasks in the assessment domain.

Two tasks were linked to the ELANZS area *'the location and significance of important natural and cultural features of the landscape'*. One of these tasks was tenuously linked to the ELANZS, the other closely linked. Both tasks assessed factual knowledge. Students' knowledge was rated as weak on both tasks. The area of *'current events and issues within New Zealand'* was assessed through five tasks that were tenuously linked to the ELANZS. All addressed conceptual understanding. Students' knowledge and understanding was rated as weak on three of the five tasks and as moderate on the remaining two tasks. The tenuous nature of the link between some of the tasks and their ELANZS area must be taken into account when making judgements about

students' knowledge and understanding **in relation to the ELANZS**. The fragility of the link not only affected the ability of the task to 'tap into' the ELANZS area it also posed a threat to the validity of any interpretations regarding students' ELANZS related knowledge and understanding.

A decision was made to carry out a further level of analysis where all of the tenuously linked tasks were discounted. The remaining tasks were deemed to have a moderate to high degree of content validity with reference to the ELANZS areas. In all, 13 tasks were discounted, leaving 24 tasks (three of these tasks were linked to two ELANZS). Overall, students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society was rated as strong for four (16%) of the tasks; moderate for ten (42%) of the tasks; and weak for ten (42%) of the tasks. These results present a marginally better picture in comparison to the results that included performance on all ELANZS linked tasks.

With reference to specific ELANZS areas of strength and weakness, the earlier finding regarding *'the physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape'* remained unchanged: it was the only area of strength. Two ELANZS stood out as areas of weakness. As in the previous analysis, *'the origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, of the franchise, and of local and national democratic systems'* remained an area of weakness. The ELANZS area of *'characteristics, roles and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand'* was also now identified as an area where students demonstrated weak levels of knowledge and understanding. Both ELANZS were assessed by more than one task and these tasks had a close or reasonable link to the ELANZS.

Two ELANZS areas previously designated as weak no longer featured in this category: *'current events and issues within New Zealand'* and *'people in New Zealand's history'*. Three further ELANZS were now assessed by one task each: *'changing patterns of resource and land use'*; *'Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage of New Zealand's social, cultural, political and religious belief and systems'*; and *'the location and significance*

of important natural and cultural features of the landscape'. While students' knowledge and understanding was rated as weak in relation to all three ELANZS, a single task provided insufficient evidence on which to base a sound and defensible judgement.

Although not included as a research question, it is worth noting the areas where students demonstrated a moderate degree of knowledge and understanding: *'the development over time of New Zealand's identity and ways in which the identity is expressed'*; *'people in New Zealand's history'* (previously designated as a weak area of knowledge and understanding); and *'major events in New Zealand's history'*. These three areas, two of which had a strong historical focus, were assessed by more than one task and the tasks had either a close or reasonable link to the ELANZS.

To summarise: students' knowledge and understanding was noted as strong in relation to *'the physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape'* and weak with reference to *'the origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, of the franchise, and of local and national democratic systems'* and *'characteristics, roles and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand'*. While students' knowledge and understanding was judged as weak in relation to a number of other ELANZS, it cannot be stated with confidence that these are areas of genuine weakness given, in some cases, the tenuous nature of the link between the NEMP task and the ELANZS area, and in other cases the assessment of the broad ELANZS area by a single task.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings: Phase three

An analysis of six selected assessment tasks

Phase three involved an analysis of six selected tasks with reference to common misunderstandings and specific strengths apparent in students' responses⁴. The six tasks were: '*Knowing New Zealand*'; '*Symbols of New Zealand*'; '*Changes*'; '*Treaty*'; '*Time Line*'; and '*M.P.*'. Possible reasons for the misunderstandings and strengths in students' responses were addressed as part of this analysis. This phase also considered strengths and weaknesses apparent in particular assessment approaches and ways in which the assessment of knowledge and understanding in social studies could be improved for the next cycle of monitoring.

Common misunderstandings and specific strengths

'*Knowing New Zealand*' (25 student responses) was an independent pencil and paper task that included multi-choice, completion and matching items aimed at assessing students' "*factual knowledge about New Zealand*" (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p. 39). While students' knowledge was categorised as weak overall, they scored strongly on some individual items.

The first four items (multi-choice) assessed knowledge about significant features of New Zealand's landscape and population. Results indicated that knowledge regarding these particular items was sound across the sample of students. The majority of students knew that Taupo is the largest lake; Waikato the longest river; Auckland the city with the most people; and Mount Cook the highest mountain. Common misconceptions were that Lake Rotorua is New Zealand's largest lake (20%); Wellington city has the most people (20%); and Mount Taranaki is New Zealand's highest mountain (16%). Understanding of the relationship between geographic location and climatic features was not however as strong. This relationship was assessed through a

⁴ In all tasks, results from the sample reflected that of the wider Year 8 student population as reported by Flockton and Crooks (2002).

matching activity where three statements were to be matched to one of five possible locations (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Nelson, Invercargill). Common misconceptions (or guesses) were that Nelson (24%) and Christchurch (16%) have the highest average temperature; Wellington (16%) the lowest average temperature; and Auckland (32%) and Christchurch (16%) the highest average sunshine hours.

In response to the prompt *'about how far is Australia from New Zealand'* thirty-two percent of students in the sample provided distances well below the accepted lower limit of 1,000 kilometres, with a number of students responding with quite specific distances such as 615 kilometres, 220 and 30 kilometres. Forty-four percent provided distances that were well over the upper limit of 3,000 kilometres and all of these were recorded as 'rounded' amounts such as 10,000 kilometres, 1,000,000 and 300,000 kilometres. While the Year 8 students may not have a clear grasp of distance as measured by kilometres, asking the distance as measured by travel time in a plane may produce a different result.

Although only half of the students in the sample were able to correctly supply the name of the ocean along New Zealand's east coast, no common misconceptions were apparent. Incorrect responses ranged from the Arctic, to Waikato and Waitemata with twenty-four percent offering no response. Similarly, only half of the students correctly identified the sea that lies between New Zealand and Australia with twelve percent naming this as the Pacific Ocean.

With reference to what the people on New Zealand's bank notes were famous for, students clearly knew why Sir Edmund Hillary and Elizabeth II were famous. Success on these two items may reflect the fact that both people are still alive and feature relatively regularly in the news. Non-responses from at least sixty percent of the students were evident in relation to Sir Apirana Ngata, Kate Sheppard and Lord Rutherford. Clearly students were not aware of the significance of the achievements of these three people in New Zealand's history. While Lord Rutherford attracted more attempts at a

response than the others, the majority of their attempts were incorrect. Lord Rutherford was: confused with Ken Rutherford the cricketer; renown for being a King; noted for discovering; and famous for finding gold. Using bank notes with the pictures of people possibly distracted some students who responded that Kate Sheppard was famous because she featured on the \$10 note, Sir Apirana Ngata was famous because he featured on the \$50 note etcetera.

‘Symbols of New Zealand’ (23 student responses) was a station task that involved students in matching eight named stickers to eight symbols. The task assessed students’ ability at *“relating symbols to things that are special to New Zealand”* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.32). Overall, students’ ability at relating symbols to things that are special to New Zealand was categorised as strong.

Two of the eight symbols were clearly recognised by all students in the sample: the gumboot was associated with farming and the Beehive building with Parliament. No strong pattern was apparent in relation to the incorrect responses. As this was a matching activity where there was an equal number of names and symbols, incorrect responses may have reflected students being left with two or three stickers to position and ‘taking a stab’ at their correct location. A further factor influencing some students’ responses may have been their inability to recognise the words on the stickers.

It was considered that the trawler and logging symbols were somewhat ‘obscure’. Although seventy percent of the sample students were able to correctly match both these symbols to their names this may have been the result of a process of elimination rather than knowing what each symbol represented. If students were able to correctly match six out of the eight items they would have a one in two chance of correctly guessing the other two.

Furthermore, much of the credibility of this task rests on the assumption that farming; sheep; logging; trawler; fern; Parliament; settlers/discovery; and the city of sails are *“special to New Zealand”* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.32).

The first four are related to economic activities and the second four seem to be based on commonly used symbols (koru emblem; Beehive; Endeavour; yachts). It may have been more useful to examine whether the students considered these (or other) symbols to be special to New Zealand and *why* they considered this to be so. ‘*Symbols of New Zealand*’ was linked earlier in this report to the ELANZS area ‘*the development of New Zealand’s identity and ways in which this identity is expressed*’. It may have been more useful to explore this understanding in a more focused manner. As it stands, the simple matching nature of this task provides little information other than students were very skilled at matching names to their appropriate symbols. It tells us little about students’ social studies knowledge or understanding.

‘*Changes*’ (12 team responses) involved students working in teams of four. In three of the sample teams one group member was absent on the day of the assessment. Individual and team responses were recorded on paper and the task was videotaped in its entirety. In addition, the assessor engaged in a short question and answer activity at the end of the task. The goal of ‘*Changes*’ was to assess students’ knowledge and understanding about “*the effect of historical changes on people’s lives*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p. 52).

‘*Changes*’ was comprised of four activities:

1. An independent analysis of two photographs of the same street scene - one representing ‘then’ and the other ‘now’. Students were asked to record ideas about “*what it would have been like living when each of these pictures was taken*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.52).
2. An oral sharing with team members of points listed in the above activity.
3. Use of ideas from the ‘then and ‘now’ sheets to record, as a team, “*four important changes to people’s lives and the environment that have taken place since the older picture was taken*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.52). Teams were also asked to record the ‘good things’ and ‘not so good things’ alongside each change.

4. An oral response by team members to the questions “*What would you have liked about living when the older picture was taken?*” and “*What wouldn’t you have liked?*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.52).

The first two activities served as prompts for the generation of ideas but these activities/ideas were not assessed. Students’ responses to the third and fourth activities were rated on a three point scale as either: rich and insightful; moderately full; or as having some worth. In addition, the manner in which decisions were reached by each team was rated on a four-point scale. Disregarding the latter, as it focused on assessing team processes and skills, students’ knowledge and understanding about the “*effect of historical changes on people’s lives*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.52) was, at best, moderate.

Flockton and Crooks (2002) noted that teams’ responses “*gave greater attention by far to changes in transportation, with other changes in technology and changes in buildings/houses next most prominent*” (p.52). This is not surprising given the prominence of the horse, cart, cars and buildings in the two photographs. The photographs both guided and constrained students’ responses. The role of the photographs with reference to the team chart was questioned by over half of the teams observed, either within the team or directly to the assessor. Students were unsure as to whether the changes to be identified were to relate directly to the features apparent in the photographs or to come from their general knowledge and understandings of ‘then’ and ‘now’. Some teams restricted their responses to the former:

“Transport; Roads; Buildings; RailRoads” (MO39);

“Transport; Houses” (MO21);

while others included the latter [own emphasis]:

*“Technology; Transport; **Law enforcement; Jobs**”* (MO76);

*“Transport; **Environment; More houses; Clothes and people**”*
(MO73).

The task as a whole was lengthy. The instructions identified five minutes for the first activity and ten minutes for the third activity. An additional seven to

ten minutes was needed for instructions and oral reporting back in the second and fourth activities, giving a maximum of 25 minutes. The videotapes of this task showed however that, for virtually all of the teams, the task lasted well in excess of 25 minutes with one team's video recording running for 36.06 minutes (MO80). The length of the task and its inability to engage a number of students seemed to contribute to some of the restless and barely restrained behaviour observed on the tapes. Furthermore, although students were directed to use ideas from their 'then' and 'now' list for the third activity, a number of teams did not refer to these and seemed to begin the task anew. Activities one and two, for some teams, did not seem to add to the quality of their subsequent responses and served only to lengthen the time taken to complete the task.

For activity three, eleven of the twelve teams in the sample identified their changes with a single word such as 'transport' or a simple phrase such as 'clothes and people'. The MO11 team however recorded four extended phrases, each prefaced by the word 'now'. Moreover, the first and last ideas recorded were expressed as comparative statements [own emphasis]:

*"now use cars **instead of** horse and cart"; "now trees are planted on the side of the road"; "now we have lights on the side of the road" and "now we have concrete roads **rather than** mud and dirt roads"* (MO11).

Although the focus of the task was on change this was the only team in the sample that appeared to capture this concept.

Despite the goal of this task being to assess students' knowledge and understanding about *"the effect of historical changes on people's lives"* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p. 52), students were not asked directly, at any time, about the *effect* of historical changes on people's lives. Rather, the activities focused on the 'good things' and 'not so good things' about a particular change and what they would 'like' and 'not like' about living 'then'. None of these specifically tapped into the *effect* of change on people's lives. Thus the content validity of the task can be called into question. Overall, while the intent of the task was considered relevant and

appropriate, the task itself did not directly address this intent and was both cumbersome and lengthy.

'Treaty' (26 responses) was a one-to-one video-taped task where students were required to answer a series of questions about *"the history, purpose and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi"* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.28). A number of these questions were based on a photograph of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Overall, students' understanding was rated as moderate for this task.

The questions *"Do you know what a treaty is?"* and *"Can you explain to me what you think a treaty is?"* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.28) drew a range of responses including *"nah, no idea"* (M007), *"a family or something"* (M081) and *"when two, say a tribe, or two tribes or a group of people agree on rules and what's going to happen or no war or anything like that"* (M008). In general, students in the sample stated that either they didn't know, provided an explanation based on the notion of an agreement or mentioned the Treaty of Waitangi.

In response to question two, eleven percent of the students in the sample stated that the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840. This result mirrored that of the Year 8 population reported by Flockton and Crooks (2002). A smaller percentage of students had a general idea that the Treaty was signed about a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. The majority in the sample however either guessed or said that they didn't know.

For question three, students were asked who they thought the people were in the foreground of the photograph and at the 'top table'. Those in the foreground were identified by most of the sample students as Maori or Maori chiefs. Students noted that those at the 'top table' were, in the main, British or English. With reference to the latter, the two responses noted in the NEMP Report (Flockton & Crooks, 2002) as worthy of consideration however were *"representatives of the Queen"* and *"soldiers"* (p.28). Although some students made reference to the people as soldiers no one in the sample

specifically identified them as representatives of the Queen. One girl did however mention “*James Busby and stuff, people like that who were the first Europeans to come to New Zealand*” (M026). It was interesting to note that she was not asked to explain who James Busby was. The majority of the sample students interpreted the “*who do you think these people are*” question as relating to nationality rather than the role(s) of those in attendance. Responses to question three therefore often pre-empted question four: “*What country did the people at the top table come from?*”. While at least seventy percent of the sample correctly identified the people at the top table as British or English, a common misconception (20%) was that they were Americans.

Responses to questions five and six are grouped together. These two questions dealt with why the people depicted were signing the Treaty and what the students thought the Treaty is all about. Six issues were identified for consideration when evaluating students’ responses (Flockton & Crooks, 2002):

- Because they represent their people;
- Saying their people will support the agreement;
- The Crown making a commitment to Maori;
- Maori making a commitment to the Crown;
- The Crown taking control of certain resources, responsibilities;
- Maori taking control of certain resources, responsibilities.

Students in the sample did not make any mention of the first two issues; at best a few alluded to the third and fourth issues; and the fifth and sixth were addressed with reference to land:

“to share the land ... so Europeans don’t just come and kill the Maoris and take the land” (M026);

“agreement between Maori and the British about the land and things like that and it said who could have what” (M027).

A common response from the sample students (at least 40%) was that the Treaty was primarily about “*stopping war*” (M024).

Finally, students were asked to respond to the following: “*Many people say the Treaty of Waitangi is still very important nowadays. Why is it still very*

important?” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.28). The notions of confirming rights; confirming partnership; building of partnership and correcting wrongs were to be considered when evaluating responses. Responses in the main dealt however with preventing any future wars:

“... *peace ... so there's no more war*” (M031);

and land ownership:

“*because if we didn't have it, the Maoris would want their land back, because we've got it, a lot of it.*” (M018).

Students appeared to know that the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was an important historical event and were able to identify the major parties involved in the signing. They were less assured about why the Treaty was signed and its significance today.

Overall, it was noted in this task that the nature of the questions often closed down the opportunity for students to respond in any detail. For example, the questions: “*Do you know what a Treaty is?*”, “*Can you explain to me what a Treaty is*” and “*Do you know when or about how long ago this ceremony took place*” could all be answered, and sometimes were answered, by “*No*”. The assessor and student then moved on. Some students and assessors interpreted these questions quite literally and as a consequence the students had little further opportunity to demonstrate their understanding. In one instance however an assessor asked the student to have a guess (MO90) and the student subsequently offered a more specific response. It would be interesting to know whether other students would have been able to respond further if the questions had been expressed in a more open and inviting manner, for example “*What do you think a Treaty is?*”, “*Explain to me what you think a Treaty is*” and “*About how long ago do you think this ceremony took place?*”.

As this task was carried out in a one-to-one situation, there was potential for assessors to engage students in dialogue rather than a static, rapid fire, question and answer session. A few of the assessors demonstrated an ability to prompt and probe at appropriate times, using statements such as “*Can you explain a bit more about ...*” and “*Would you like to tell me more about ...*”

to ‘draw’ additional information from the students. This however was the exception rather than the rule.

‘Time line’ (26 responses) was a one-to-one video-taped task that assessed students’ knowledge and understandings about “*historical events and dates*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.51). Students were presented with eight pictures each of which had a caption identifying the nature of the event, for example “*The ship Wahine hits a reef in Wellington Harbour*” and “*HMS Dunedin taking the first lot of frozen meat to England*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.51). Students were asked to put the pictures “*in the order in which you think [the events] happened*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.51). Once these were ordered the students were given five cards with dates and requested to “*put these cards at the right places between these pictures to show when the events happened*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.51). As a final activity, students were to state why each of the following events was important in New Zealand’s history: “*Captain Cook visits New Zealand*”; “*First Maori explorers arrive in New Zealand*”; “*Women in New Zealand are allowed to vote for the first time*” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.51). While students’ knowledge and understandings about historical events and dates was rated overall as moderate, performance on individual aspects varied markedly.

Students’ achievement with reference to the ordering of pictures is reported in the NEMP booklet in terms of placement directly before the next picture in the sequence, or in the cases of the Treaty of Waitangi and frozen meat, placement before either of the next two pictures in the sequence.

Out of the sample of 26, only one student sequenced all of the pictures correctly (MO93C3). Rather than focusing on placement before the next picture in the sequence, students’ responses in the sample were analysed broadly with reference to placement in three groupings: Maori, Captain Cook and Treaty of Waitangi (up until 1850); HMS Dunedin, votes for women and world war one (1850-1950); Hillary and Wahine (1950-2000). Nine students (34%) were able to place the pictures correctly in these three broad groupings demonstrating a general sense of historical sequence – detail with reference to

the exact sequence or finer details may have been incorrect (for example Hillary after Wahine; votes for women before HMS Dunedin) but the general clustering was accurate. A further six students (24%) also demonstrated a general sense of historical order except for the Treaty of Waitangi – all placed this third from their right, prior to Hillary and the Wahine disaster. Thirty-eight per cent of the sample sequenced their pictures in idiosyncratic ways, for example: World war one followed by votes for women, Captain Cook, first Maori, Treaty of Waitangi, Hillary, HMS Dunedin, Wahine. A common misconception among the latter two groups (62% of the sample) was that the Treaty of Waitangi was a relatively recent event. This may reflect treatment of the Treaty in schools and society in general as a ‘living’ document that structures current Maori/Pakeha relationships.

Some students had difficulty in following the instructions for the second part of this task - placing the dates *between* the pictures. Instead a number placed their dates *above* the pictures. Some assessors sought clarification from the students, asking whether the event occurred in that particular year, or after/before the year. This resulted in students altering the position so it correctly reflected their intention. Other assessors however did not seek such clarification when dates were placed above pictures. There was also a degree of ambiguity in the instruction, given that the correct positioning of 2000 was *after* all of the pictures not *between* two pictures. In one instance, ability to organise the dates in sequence appeared to be affected by the student’s understanding of number.

The final question examined why three of the above events were important in New Zealand’s history. Answers were rated as “*good and clear*” or “*basic*” in the NEMP report (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). In the main, students in the sample responded with a rewording of the caption on the picture. Whether this constituted a good and clear, basic or some other type of response is unclear. Responses that went beyond the data provided in the captions included [own emphasis]:

“*because Captain Cook **discovered** New Zealand*” (MO53C4);

“***first people [Maori] to arrive** in New Zealand*” (MO12C3);

“no other country in the world had done it [votes for women] before” (MO007C1).

Eight students (30%) did not respond to this activity because their assessor missed it out. It is uncertain whether and/or how this category of response was incorporated into the final published result. Was it, for example categorised similarly to the student who responded *“I dunno, I don’t know” (M124C4)*? A further five assessors remembered to do the activity ‘at the last moment’ – as they were moving on to the next task. One assessor mentioned as an aside to a student *“oh, I keep forgetting to ask people these [questions]” (MO53C4).*

‘M.P.’ (26 responses) was a one-to-one video-taped task that assessed students’ understandings about *“how MPs are selected and what they do” (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.22).* Students were asked to respond to the following prompts with reference to three photographs:

- How do people get to be an MP?;
- Try to tell me the most important things MPs do when they are meeting in this room;
- Try to explain what this diagram [of colour coded party seats] tells us (Flockton & Crooks, 2002).

Understanding on all three aspects of this task was rated as weak.

While half the sample had a general notion that MPs were voted for or elected:

“I think you get voted in to be, being Prime Minister, you go up for elections ... I think they’re ex Prime Ministers or they try to get voted in ...” (M112C2);

few were able to elaborate further even when prompted.

“um, is it they can vote ... [Can you tell me a bit more about that?] um ... [How do these people get themselves voted for?] um, they , um, they’d be best for the job ... they’d make changes ... [Who would vote for them?] the, might be the public” (M016C4).

A common response (27%) was that people get to be MPs as a result of their qualifications and/or training, for example:

“By going on courses, yeah, just going on courses ... hopefully they get voted in by people” (M129C4);

“um ... like a number of studies ... like six years in college, like studies ... social studies and maths ...” (M015C1);

“Education, degrees, university, what they study for like to be a lawyer or something ...” (M086C1).

Mention was also made of people becoming MPs because they had been Mayors, lawyers and/or bankers.

According to fifty three per cent of the sample, ‘talking’, ‘debating’ and ‘discussing’ were the most important activities that MPs engaged in.

“um, like they make choices ... talk a lot ...” (M015C1);

“um, they talk about what’s good and what’s bad and, and um, and they debate ... if one person is saying that’s not right and they don’t want to do it ... and they argue about it ...” (M044C2);

“They like talk about stuff they need to do ... make the country better ... their ideas and stuff ...” (M059C3).

Students were not however very specific about the nature of this talk, debate or discussion. Other ideas about the most important activities MPs engage in included the making of laws, “writing stuff down” and “yelling”.

The majority of responses regarding the diagram showing party seats focused on two key features of the diagram: the colour of the seats and the number of seats in each colour.

“Blue ... forty-one seats in parliament ... how many seats [for] red, sixty-five ...[it’s] where they sit, green [have] fourteen, fifteen ...” (M078C3).

Twenty-seven per cent of the sample was slightly more specific, noting that the colours and seats represented different teams, groups and/or parties:

“red, that’s one party, purple that’s one party, green another ... more red than the others, ... green party ...” (M096C3);

with eleven per cent linking these to the Labour, National and Green parties:

“... shows that the Labour party , the red, have more members and the National party have not as much and the Green party, they are struggling” (M073C3).

A common misconception noted in the sample (15%) related to the presence of different kinds of ‘judges’ in Parliament:

“Judges, everyone around here ... people here ... judge in the middle, trying for a job ... employ[ment] ... listeners, judging for a job” (M076C1)

“... think people sit here and here ... where does the judge sit? Here? ...” (M112C2);

“Different rows for different colour people ... judge sits ... different kinds of people – some watching, some MPs, some different kinds of people” (M059C4).

Overall, students demonstrated little understanding about *“how MPs are selected and what they do”* (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.22).

Strengths and weaknesses of particular assessment approaches

The final research question deals with the strengths and weaknesses of particular assessment approaches and ways in which the assessment of knowledge and understanding in social studies could be improved for the next cycle of monitoring. While the preceding discussion touches on issues related to these areas, this section specifically addresses each of the four assessment approaches used in 2001: one-to one interviews; team; independent; and station approaches, followed by a summary of suggestions for improvement.

One-to-one video-taped interviews were used in three of the sample tasks: ‘Treaty’, ‘Time Line’ and ‘M.P.’. Assessors read the requirements of each task, checking both before and during the task that students understood what they were to do. A noted strength of this approach was that participation in and completion of the task were not unduly influenced by students’ ability to read and/or write. Furthermore, assessors had opportunities to prompt students, drawing attention to relevant aspects of a task when a response was not forthcoming or did not relate to the focus question. During ‘M.P.’ for

instance some assessors asked the prompt question suggested in the task guidelines, ‘*What do you think the different colours mean?*’ (Flockton & Crooks, 2002, p.22), when there was no response from the student or when they seemed to ‘miss the point’ of the final question. This prompt drew students’ attention to the critical element in the photograph used for the task. Moreover, the prescribed nature of this prompt ensured assessor consistency. The one-to-one approach also provided assessors with opportunities to probe students’ responses. During the ‘*M.P.*’ task, one assessor asked a student “*Why do they [parliamentary parties] have sides?*” (MO36C4) and another inquired “*Debates - is what?*” (MO44C2). These probes did not advantage students as new ideas were not introduced and no ‘clues’ were provided regarding an appropriate response. Rather, the probes invited the students to expand on, clarify or explain further, specific aspects of their initial response. Probing of students’ responses was more apparent in ‘*M.P.*’ than in ‘*Treaty*’ or ‘*Time Line*’, and more apparent in ‘*Treaty*’ than in ‘*Time Line*’. Assessors not only seemed more au-fait with the ‘*M.P.*’ task, they appeared more confident in dealing with the content of the task and students’ responses. However, even within this task, probing of students’ ideas was the exception rather than the rule. Although a few of the assessors demonstrated confidence and ability to recognise specific aspects of a response that could be probed to reveal a richer picture of a student’s understanding, the majority ‘kept to the script’.

While assessors asked their students the same standardised set of questions, in the same order, and used the same resource materials, they differed quite markedly in their approach to the interview. In some instances these differences appeared to influence how students dealt with the task. Some for example conducted the interview like a rapid-fire question and answer session with limited use of ‘wait time’. The goal of the assessor seemed to be to keep moving through the tasks within the allocated time. Students responded accordingly, keeping their answers brief and to the point. In contrast, other assessors encouraged their students to engage in a conversation and provided relatively longer periods for a response. The goal of these assessors appeared to be to provide students with sufficient opportunity to consider and construct

an oral response that demonstrated the full extent of their knowledge and understanding.

Between-assessor variability in task administration was apparent in two of the three one-to-one tasks sampled. Students had varying degrees of access to the photographs in the *'Treaty'* task: some were able to hold and look at the photographs at close range, others could view them only as the assessor held or positioned them on the table and asked the related questions. In some cases this influenced the amount of time students had to study the photographs and to construct their response. Moreover, non-responses such as silence and "*dunno*" or short responses tended to be more prevalent when the assessor rather than the student was in control of the photographs. The most noticeable variations in task administration were apparent however in *'Time Line'*. The size of the table at which the assessor and student were situated affected the ability of some students to organise the eight photographs in a single line and to readily place the dates, as required, between the photographs. Having to order the photographs and dates into two separate lines because of the table size confused at least two of the students. Furthermore, some assessors involved their students in the recording of responses, asking them, once the order was established, to call out the numbers on the back of the photographs. This clearly distracted some students as the numbers were not consecutive and their comments indicated that they thought they had responded incorrectly. Other assessors laboriously recorded their student's responses and carefully packed the photographs away while their student waited. As noted previously, some of these assessors then omitted the final part of this task. For some assessors, the recording of responses seemed to 'signal' the end of the task.

The **team approach** to assessment used in *'Changes'* involved three or four students collaborating as they responded to task requirements. The main strengths of this approach with reference to the assessment of knowledge and understanding in social studies lay in the opportunities it provided for students to: work together and support each other in the generation, analysis and evaluation of ideas; engage in substantive debate and discussion; and demonstrate the depth and scope of their collective understanding. In the

'Changes' task however, there was little discussion between team members in relation to the more substantive aspects of the task. Much of the discussion centred instead on the nature of the task requirements. The lack of collaboration observed in some teams may be attributable to any number of factors, singly or collectively, for example: students' unfamiliarity with working collaboratively; self-consciousness with being video-taped; the gender composition of the team; students not having worked with other team members before. The most significant factor however was related to the nature of the task: at no time were students put in a position where they *had* to collaborate in the generation and selection of ideas to complete the task. Rather, the initial stages of the activity encouraged students to work independently – this set the tone for the task. Teams adopted different strategies when pooling their ideas on a group chart such as each person writing one of their ideas on the chart or one person asking for and recording ideas from individuals. Few teams however engaged in debate and discussion about the nature of the ideas put forward. Moreover, the final questions were answered individually without students having been asked to consider these as a group. Emphasis seemed to be placed on following task instructions and completing task requirements rather than discussion and debate of ideas.

Assessors also approached the team task in different ways. Some for instance went through the requirements of the whole task at the beginning while others introduced only the first part and went through the other components when the students needed these; some assessors remained seated at the table with their students throughout the activity while others removed themselves, to varying degrees, from the group; some assessors used timers for the first part of the task while others waited until every student had completed the recording of their individual ideas. Assessor practices such as these had an effect on the ability of some students to understand and follow task requirements; to remain 'on task'; and to sustain interest in the task.

Video-taping of the one-to-one interviews and the team tasks is carried out to obtain a detailed picture of what students and teachers did and said, allowing rich analysis at a later time of both process and task achievement (Flockton &

Crooks, 2002). It also means that assessors are not making ‘on-the-spot’ judgements about the quality of students’ responses: rather their role is to provide guidance and support as needed. While students did not appear aware of the video camera during the one-to-one interviews, a number of students ‘played up’ to the camera during the ‘*Changes*’ team task. This behaviour may however have been a reflection of the task itself – ‘*Changes*’ did not appear to engage or motivate a number of the students (see for example MO21).

The **station approach** used for ‘*Symbols of New Zealand*’ involved students from each team working independently on a series of tasks set out around the room. These tasks include hands-on activities with equipment and pen and paper tasks (Flockton, 1999). Use is made of rich stimulus materials such as video-clips and photographs with a number of tasks including practical problem-solving activities. Students have time to work through tasks at their own pace, to consider their responses and they can call on assessors if they need clarification and guidance about task requirements. The material analysed for the station task ‘*Symbols of New Zealand*’ offered few insights into the strengths and/or weaknesses of this particular approach.

‘*Knowing New Zealand*’ was carried out using an **independent approach** to assessment where students worked individually on a series of pencil and paper tasks which included multiple-choice, matching and completion/supply items. Noted strengths of the independent approach were an ability to assess a range of content areas; efficiency in the assessment of factual knowledge; and use of a range of assessment item types. The analysis of students’ responses in the ‘*Knowing New Zealand*’ task indicated that students were clearly comfortable responding, some perhaps by guesswork, when there was a range of answers to select from as in the multiple-choice items. They achieved at a significantly higher level on these items in comparison to the matching and completion/supply type items. Moreover, the unequal number of items to be matched removed, to a degree, the ability of students to use a process of elimination accompanied by guesswork. There was a higher percentage of non-responses and a lower level of achievement overall on the completion/supply type items. With reference to the latter, it is not known

whether non-responses were indicative of students not knowing the answer or reflective of a reluctance to commit ideas to paper. Some results may therefore be attributed as much to the item type as to the state of students' knowledge. The use of different item types however means that overall, the effect of drawbacks associated with any one type is minimised⁵.

Overall, one of the greatest strengths of NEMP's approach to national monitoring lies in its ability to integrate a range of assessment modes (oral; written; practical); a range of item types (multiple-choice; matching; completion/supply); and rich stimulus activities (video clips; photographs; artefacts; hands-on); into different assessment approaches (one-to-one interview; station; team; independent). The greatest challenge facing NEMP is to harness and exploit the potential of these features when assessing students' social studies knowledge and understanding.

Summary of suggestions for improvement

Ways in which the assessment of knowledge and understanding in social studies could be improved for the next cycle of monitoring have been suggested throughout this report. These suggestions are now summarised in relation to each of the tasks selected for analysis and each of the assessment approaches.

'Knowing New Zealand':

- The 'distance' between Australia and New Zealand could also be asked for in terms of time travelled by air;
- Pictures and names of famous New Zealand people could be presented without reference to bank notes or the question rephrased to eliminate the possibility of students responding that the people are famous for being on bank notes.

⁵ A detailed discussion of the relative strengths and drawbacks of NEMP assessment approaches in science and mathematics can be found in Eley & Caygill (2002).

'Symbols of New Zealand':

- Use of an unequal number of symbols and names to reduce the possibility of success through guesswork;
- Asking students *why* specific symbols are significant to New Zealand to assess knowledge and understanding about New Zealand's identity and how it is expressed. This may however have been addressed in one of the link tasks – if so, the usefulness of this task, as it stands, is not immediately apparent.

'Changes':

- Revision of the task so it assesses what it intends to assess - the *effect* of historical change on people's lives;
- Use of a video clip, a series of clips or a series of photographs showing a range of 'then' and 'now' comparative scenarios depicting artefacts, buildings, environmental attributes, clothing etc.;
- Less emphasis on individual students recording their ideas and more emphasis on discussion and debate about the effect of historical change;
- Recording of two or three ideas from the team that are judged as the most important effects of historical change on people's lives. The current emphasis on four ideas suggests one idea from each student - two or three of the 'most important' ideas suggests a need to discuss, debate, analyse, evaluate, prioritise and select;
- Overall, the creation of a task that holds students' interest, that is more focused and less time consuming.

'Treaty':

- Review and revision of questions with a view to encouraging responses from students (see suggestions earlier on page 28);
- Inclusion of pre-specified prompts (although the review and revision of questions may render prompts unnecessary);
- Letting students handle the photographs and examine them at close range;

- Probing of students' responses (a point discussed in more detail in the final section of this report).

'Time Line':

- Provision of sufficient space to spread photographs out in a time line;
- Use of either 'HMS Dunedin' or 'Votes for women'. Unless accuracy rather than a general sense of historical order is the critical assessment aspect, the distinction between these two events is too fine;
- Evaluating and reporting results in three broad time periods. This again will depend on whether accuracy or a general sense of historical order is the critical assessment aspect;
- Replacement of the year '2000' with a date prior to the sinking of the Wahine, or alternately less emphasis on placing dates *between* pictures;
- Once the photographs have been ordered and the dates positioned, asking students and/or the assessor to read out the captions in order for the video-tape rather than getting the assessor to record these;
- Leaving all photographs on the table for the final activity. The relevant photographs for the final question can then be picked up from the time line by the assessor and given to the student as the question is asked;
- Rephrasing the final question so it does not encourage students to repeat or re-word the caption on the photograph or, if students do repeat the caption, a pre-specified prompt is provided to ascertain whether the student can provide further information.

'M.P.':

- Probing of students' responses (a point discussed in more detail in the final section of this report).

One-to-one interview approach:

- 'Training' of assessors in the probing of students' responses (a point discussed in more detail in the final section of this report);
- More pre-specified prompts available;

- Development of assessors' skills in conducting one-to-one interviews for the purpose of assessing students' conceptual understandings;
- Using fewer one-to-one interviews in social studies (perhaps four to six fewer than at present) with more time to develop discussion and dialogue in the remaining social studies interviews ie: doing fewer in more depth and detail.

Team approach:

- Ensuring that the assessment tasks used for this approach 'demand' collaboration rather than individual activities;
- Greater emphasis on discussion and debate in comparison to the writing of responses, particularly on an individual basis.

There are no suggestions for the independent and station approaches to assessment.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

The final section of this report addresses three overarching issues that emerged during the course of the study. The first concerns the place of ELANZS in social studies programmes and in national monitoring; the second deals with the nature of the social studies curriculum statement; and the third relates to the use of one-to-one assessment interviews to gather rich, detailed information about students' knowledge and understanding in social studies.

Essential Learning about New Zealand Society

The purpose of the present study was to use the '*Essential Learning about New Zealand Society*' statements from the social studies curriculum to explore the 2001 NEMP social studies assessment tasks and results. Fourteen of the nineteen ELANZS areas listed in the curriculum were linked to a total of forty assessment tasks (see Tables 2 and 3). Students' knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society were judged as strong in relation to only one ELANZS area. Two clear areas of weakness and a further five possible areas of weakness were identified. Given that the ELANZS statements identify *essential* learning about New Zealand society, and they are presented in the curriculum as important, non-negotiable aspects of students' learning, it is concerning that the achievement of year 8 students was judged as weak in relation to half (seven out of fourteen) of the ELANZS areas.

Decisions about which ELANZS areas are to be integrated into social studies programmes rest with the individual school and/or teacher. The inclusion, over time, of nineteen possible ELANZS areas coupled with the broad nature of the associated statements has presented schools and teachers with a challenge. Findings from the current study lend support to the suggestion in earlier studies (Auckland Uniservices Ltd, 1999; Dewar, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2003) that reasonable numbers of teachers are struggling with the integration of ELANZS into their class teaching-learning programmes. This needs to be followed up through a programme of teacher professional development in social studies.

Furthermore, it is somewhat surprising that although schools are required to integrate essential learning about New Zealand society into their social studies programmes, ELANZS do not feature in the NEMP social studies framework. Rather, the setting of ‘Aotearoa/New Zealand’ is the preferred point of reference (Flockton & Crooks, 2002). As noted earlier however, just because an assessment task is *set* in Aotearoa/New Zealand it does not automatically follow that it assesses essential knowledge and understanding about New Zealand society. If it is considered important that a programme of national monitoring addresses the latter, ELANZS could be included in the NEMP social studies framework as either a separate category or in lieu of the setting ‘Aotearoa/New Zealand’. Within this structure, all ELANZS may be addressed in a single round of monitoring or it may be more productive to select three or four ELANZS for in-depth assessment in a single round, ensuring coverage of all ELANZS over time. In addition, the NEMP Report booklets could identify any links between tasks and ELANZS areas in a manner similar to the current information provided about ‘Approach’, ‘Focus’, ‘Resources’ and ‘Level’. It is acknowledged however that the large number of ELANZS areas and the broad expression of learning in each area would present task developers with a challenge – one similar to that faced by schools and teachers.

The social studies curriculum statement

Student learning is described in the social studies curriculum in terms of “*conceptual understanding rather than specific content topics ...*” (Ministry of Education, 2002b, Section 1, p.4). The separation of knowledge, understanding and skills from specific contexts and content in this manner suggests that students’ achievement can be described and assessed in terms of broad, decontextualised statements of learning. It is well established in the literature however that learning and achievement are always, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by contextual factors (Gipps, 1994; Resnick & Resnick, 1992). Thus decisions about the context in which teaching-learning programmes and the assessment of students’ achievement are embedded, and the specific aspects of social studies knowledge and understanding that are addressed, are critical.

Schools and teachers have the freedom to make their own decisions about which topics and content to use to contextualise the conceptual understandings identified in the curriculum. As a consequence, students in different schools may deal with the same broad conceptual understanding, for example “*how past events changed aspects of the lives of communities*” (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.42) through contexts and/or topics as diverse as the Napier earthquake, the bombing of Hiroshima and the land march hikoi led by Whina Cooper. These contexts and/or topics cover quite different areas of content. Similarly, while school programmes and NEMP assessment tasks address the same or similar broad conceptual understandings, there is no guarantee that the contexts and topics selected by NEMP are the same as or similar to those studied by any one student, by half or by most of the students in the sample. Results thus describe the state of students’ knowledge and understanding with reference to the contexts and topics in which the specific assessment tasks are embedded. NEMP deliberately sets out to identify what students *can* do rather than what they *should* do, acknowledging that the national monitoring tasks “*include, yet look beyond, national prescribed curriculum outcomes*” (Flockton, 1999, p.27). It would be unwise to assume transferability of students’ knowledge and understanding across contexts and/or to use results to generalise about the quality of social studies programmes in schools.

A recent review of the New Zealand curriculum commissioned by the Ministry of Education (2002) concluded that “*there is some merit in providing some advice to teachers about appropriate topic areas or foci for the social studies curriculum*” (Section 1, p.4). Debate continues however about what content and topics are appropriate for study (Ministry of Education, 2002a). Until some agreement is reached about these matters social studies will, as McGee (1998) feared, be open to the inclusion of almost any topic. The latter has already been identified as a concern with reference to primary school social studies programmes (Education Review Office, 2001). The continued lack of national guidance for schools and teachers in this area may well result in NEMP functioning as a de-facto means of identifying what constitutes appropriate social studies topics and content.

One-to-one assessment interviews

One-to-one interviews between assessors and students provide NEMP with a unique opportunity to obtain detailed information about the nature of students' conceptual understandings in the area of social studies. These understandings are recognised as the cornerstone of social studies education (Barr, 1998). The potential inherent in the one-to-one assessment interviews to provide such information does not appear to have been fully realised in the social studies monitoring undertaken in 2001. In particular, the majority of assessors failed to take advantage of opportunities to probe students' responses. Probes have been described as follow-up questions and/or statements designed to "*help [students] give fuller answers, to clarify their thinking, to take their thinking further ...*" (Pollard, 2002, p.291). When assessors did attempt to encourage students to extend on their response or take their thinking further, the probe often lacked clarity. As a consequence students seemed unsure of what they were being asked and did not extend upon or explain their ideas in any depth.

As part of their specialist training (Flockton & Crooks, 2002), assessors could be encouraged not only to develop skills related to the probing of students' responses, they could also be issued with a standardised series of probes or probe 'starters' such as "*Tell me more about*", "*Give me an example of ...*" and "*I'm not sure I understand what you mean by ... please explain it to me in another way*". These could be contextualised by the assessors with reference to students' responses. Furthermore, rather than probing students' responses at every opportunity, specific tasks and/or specific aspects of students' conceptual understandings could be targeted for further explanation. This would add credibility to NEMP's claims that it gathers quality information that can provide a rich picture of students' achievement (Flockton, 1999; Flockton & Crooks, 2002).

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APPENDIX A.

Summary of Essential Learning about New Zealand Society.

Maori migration, settlement, life, and interaction in various areas of New Zealand over time;

The subsequent migration, settlements, life, and interaction of British and other cultural groups in various areas of New Zealand over time;

The effects of colonisation for Maori and Pakeha;

Maori culture and heritage and the influence of this heritage on New Zealand's social, cultural, political, and religious beliefs and systems;

European culture and heritages and the influence of these heritages on New Zealand's social, cultural, political, and religious beliefs and systems;

Perspectives of tangata whenua as these affect contemporary systems, policies, and events;

The Treaty of Waitangi, its significance as the founding document of New Zealand, how it has been interpreted over time, and how it is applied to current systems, policies, and events;

Characteristics, roles, and cultural expressions of the various groups living in New Zealand;

Major events in New Zealand's history;

People in New Zealand's history;

The physical environment of New Zealand and how people interact with the landscape;

Changing patterns of resource and land use;

Changing patterns of economic activity and trade;

The origins, development, and operation of systems of government and law, of the franchise, and of local and national democratic institutions;

The nature and organization of paid and unpaid work;

The development over time of New Zealand's identity and ways in which the identity is expressed;

The location and significance of important natural and cultural features of the landscape;

Current events and issues within New Zealand;

New Zealand's participation in significant international events and institutions and its possible roles in world affairs in the future.

