Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Teachers’ Conflicting Responses to Change: An Evaluation of the Implementation of Senior Social Studies for the NCEA, 2002-2006

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

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2008
Abstract

The thesis provides a socio-historical perspective through which to evaluate the first five years of implementation (2002 to 2006) of social studies within the National Certificate of Educational Achievement [NCEA] in New Zealand secondary schools. The experiences of both lead educators, with responsibilities at a national level, and classroom teachers provide insights into the personal, contextual and institutional factors which have enabled and constrained the implementation process, especially at NCEA level one.

The inclusion of social studies as a subject for the new qualifications and assessment system in New Zealand, the NCEA, heralded a significant opportunity for this integrated subject to gain academic status and acquire a unique identity within the senior secondary school curriculum. Paradoxically it set a relatively strongly framed assessment system beside a curriculum that has traditionally been weakly classified and framed (Bernstein, 1971). This paradox has created tensions for teachers who have responded in different ways, from full implementation to a more functional approach.

Two groups of teachers were identified in the course of this study. The idealists are passionate advocates for senior social studies and are likely to implement it to all three NCEA levels in their school. The pragmatists, on the other hand, are more likely to offer only level one social studies, typically to their more academically able year 10 (Form 4) students for extension purposes, and also to induct them into the assessment requirements of the NCEA system before they study the traditional social science subjects at levels one, two and three. This pragmatic approach reflects past practices of the pre-NCEA, School Certificate era (1945-2001). It continues to reinforce the low status and unclear identity of senior social studies within the social sciences as well as within an already overcrowded senior school curriculum. At the end of this first five year period of implementation the viability of senior social studies is at a critical juncture, with its on-going success not yet assured.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A doctoral thesis is a very long and often lonely undertaking. I would not have survived the process had it not been for:

- The social and emotional support, initially from my EdD cohort, then the Wednesday doctoral breakfast group (Kama, Jenny, Judith & Zoe), my colleagues at Massey University College of Education, my friends and, unfailingly, my husband Bruce and my family – my mother Win, my children and their partners David & Melanie, Anne & Sally, and Clare, Rod & Luke, plus the wider Taylor family;

- The academic support from my two supervisors, Professor John O’Neill and Associate Professor John Clark – I have appreciated their honesty, humour, insightful comments, attention to the big picture and to the detail. In addition my Heads of School, Emeritus Professor Wayne Edwards then Professor Howard Lee, have always been interested and supportive of me completing the task. Rose Atkins has done some of my teaching during the period and acted as a critical friend;

- Financial support from Massey University and the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (Inc);

- The members of the social studies community who have so willingly and honestly shared their stories with me and completed the postal questionnaire. I’m not able to name you but you know who you are. Thank you for your pioneering work in senior social studies and please don’t give up;

- Finally, I would like to acknowledge the pivotal work of Robyn Irvine who was a fiercely loyal and staunch supporter of senior social studies but who did not live to see its full implementation. Robyn, I wonder how different this story would have been if you had still been here to advocate for the subject.
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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS**

**Research Participants**

INF = Informant - Lead educators interviewed during the élite interview phase  
PAR = Participant - Teachers of level one social studies participating in the four day action research cycle  
RES = Respondent - Teachers of level one NCEA AS90218 who responded to the postal survey

**Acronyms used in this Thesis**

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<tr>
<td>ANZFSSA</td>
<td>Aotearoa New Zealand Federation of Social Studies Associations</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Achievement standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>Curriculum Marautanga Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERO</td>
<td>Education Review Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HoD/HoF</td>
<td>Head of Department/Head of Faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>National Certificate in Educational Achievement</td>
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<td>NCSS</td>
<td>National Council for the Social Studies</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZC</td>
<td>New Zealand Curriculum</td>
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<td>NZCER</td>
<td>New Zealand Council for Educational Research</td>
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<td>NZCF</td>
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<td>New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers’ Association</td>
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**Other**

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