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

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Abstract

Moral education is a complex and contested area of curriculum in New Zealand schools. This thesis examines the moral education debate from 1970 to 1985 and argues that much was achieved before the 'reforms' of the late 1980s diverted energy and time to other matters.

The first part of the thesis introduces the debate by outlining theoretical considerations, historical influences, and social, economic and political contexts. The main thrust of the thesis explores different aspects of the debate through the reports, courses and conferences of the 1970s. The final section of the thesis examines the significance of developments in health education between 1980 and 1985 to the moral education debate.
Preface and acknowledgements

Roger Openshaw's post graduate paper 'Education and Historical Analysis' kindled an interest in the history of curriculum development. The paper brought together two aspects of my own background: that of undergraduate studies in history as a student at the University of Canterbury during the early 1970s and my role as a teacher and later health education coordinator from 1986 to 1995 at Central Normal School, in Palmerston North. As I worked my way through Roger’s paper, I recalled the legal framework for consultation which has been a unique feature of health education since 1985. The starting point for my research was therefore to look at the historical context of consultation and legislation in health education.

Preliminary research indicated that provision for consultation and the need for legislation were products of a moral education debate that had engaged the Department of Education, teachers, parents and the community for many years. The thesis topic was consequently revised to consider health education within the context of moral education.

I could not have completed this thesis without the support and encouragement of many people. I am indebted to my supervisors Associate Professor Roger Openshaw and Emeritus Professor Ivan Snook who have guided me through the process. I am also grateful for advice and encouragement from colleagues at Massey University College of Education, particularly Kerry Bethell. My thanks also to Colin McGeorge, a senior lecturer in the Education Department at the University of Canterbury, for advice and useful material.

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