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**Assessing Creativity: Teachers' perceptions of the  
effect of the National Certificate of Educational  
Achievement (NCEA) on teaching and learning in the  
secondary drama classroom in New Zealand**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the implications for New Zealand secondary drama educators of the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment in drama. Traditionally a "fringe" subject with little academic credibility, drama has moved to the mainstream of secondary education with the introduction of NCEA assessment. This has carried with it improvements in terms of the recognition of drama as a secondary subject; however, it has also required a re-evaluation of pedagogical priorities for drama practitioners.

The data which formed the basis of this research were collected through interviews with drama educators throughout New Zealand. A hermeneutic approach was employed in the analysis of data in order to understand the extent to which the teachers' priorities for teaching and learning were challenged by NCEA.

With no pre-existing models of national assessment in drama on which to scaffold the transition to NCEA, the introduction of NCEA assessment has necessitated the formulation of an entirely new system derived from a wide range of existing practices and approaches. In this study sites of tension were identified in the interface between the historic practices of drama education and the requirements of a national assessment system. Drama is an open and creative subject. Assessment systems, on the other hand, are necessarily defined by criteria designed to meet the objectives of national curricula. This thesis explores teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical challenges associated with arriving at a synthesis of these competing discourses in drama education.

The main findings from this study indicate that the personal ideologies of the interviewees, which had been influenced by the particular nature of the historical development of drama education, had a direct effect on their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. The participants in the study evinced an intrinsic commitment to nurturing student creativity through drama education by utilising a combination of kinaesthetic, interpersonal and linguistic approaches to teaching and learning. Interviewees perceived the existence of sites of tension in the process of assimilating the creative and explorative features of drama education into a prescribed schedule of curriculum and assessment requirements. These included challenges associated with structure and management of the assessment schedule and the workload generated by the implementation of NCEA.

The teachers in this study acknowledged that the introduction of NCEA assessment in drama had resulted in a shift from a marginalised position in New Zealand education to one of recognition as a mainstream secondary subject. This change in the status of drama education had generated increased enrolments in the subject; participants in the study, however, discerned a lack of appropriate pre-service teacher education in drama which would ensure its continued success in the future.

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