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**SHARDS OF TEACHER AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
IN FOUR NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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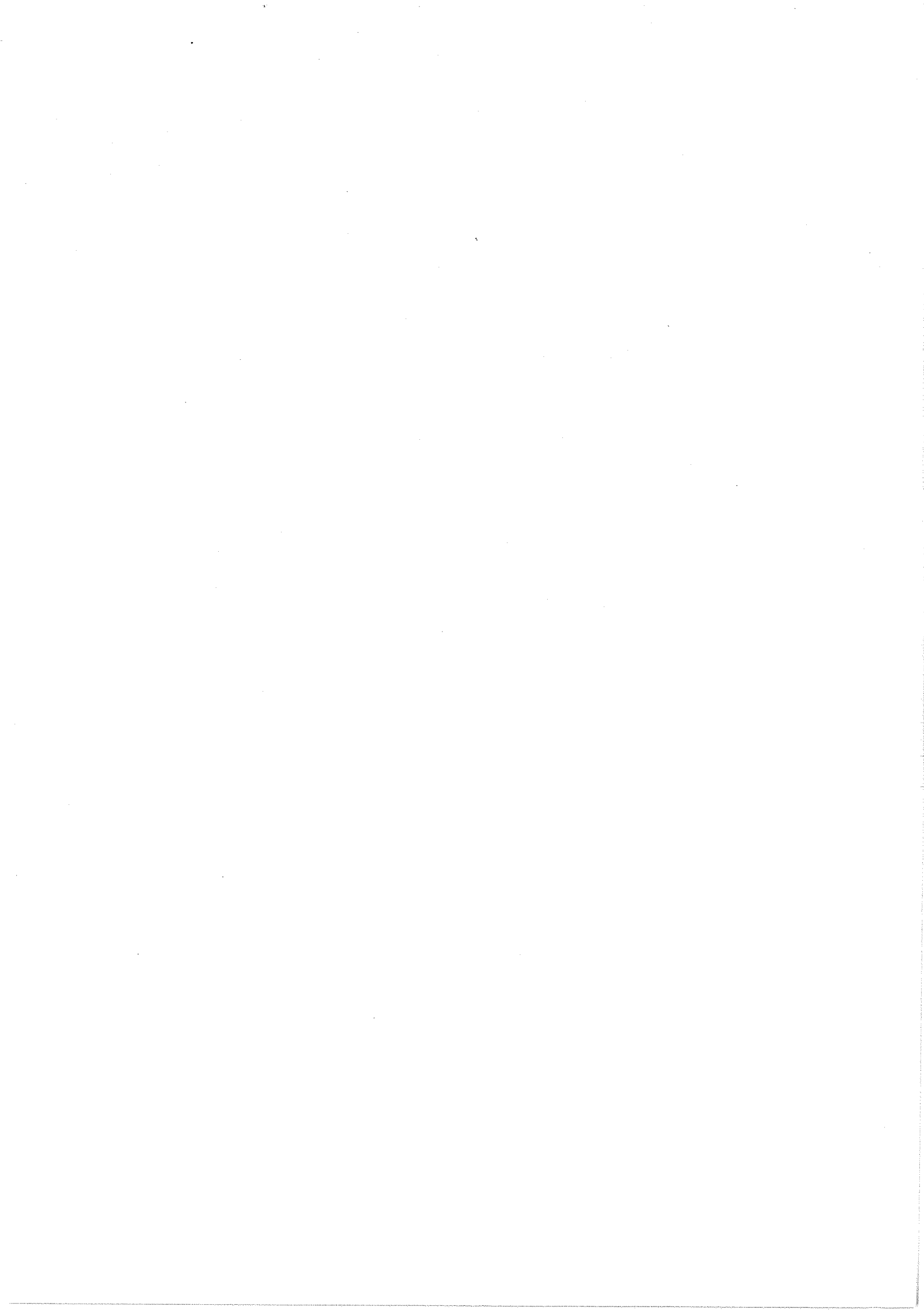


ABSTRACT

This study examines teacher and curriculum development in the period of intense curriculum policy reform of the mid-1990s. It is based largely on interviews conducted with teachers in four New Zealand secondary schools. It documents and analyses the thinking and strategising that informed their attempts as teachers and curriculum leaders to develop their individual and collective practice and respond to external demands for change. The accounts are contextualised within the history, politics and culture of New Zealand secondary schooling since the Thomas Report on *The Post-Primary School Curriculum* in 1943, and parallel developments in secondary schooling in other anglophone countries.

The study attempts to understand the workgroup, organisational and systemic constraints within which secondary school teachers conduct their work and how they seek to exercise their individual and collective agency in order to gain more control and knowledge of their occupational circumstances. The study links contemporary dilemmas of practice to longer standing, embedded tensions of curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment. It identifies continuities and discontinuities of secondary schooling practice in the decades since the 1940s and shows how contemporary policy options and proposed solutions are simply the latest staging post in a protracted sequence of political efforts to solve 'problems' of curriculum and credentialling.

In some respects, the official policy texts introduced in the 1990s spoke directly to teachers' own pragmatic concerns and aspirations. Thus, in this study, teachers and curriculum leaders engaged creatively and energetically with the challenges posed by school-based Unit Standards trials because they appeared to offer the opportunity to end secondary teachers' long search for meaningful alternatives to examination dominated schemes of work, assessments and credentials. However, curriculum innovation always took place alongside other day-to-day routines and seasonal patterns of work. For curriculum leaders in this study, these multiple demands meant that any potential benefits of voluntary curriculum innovation had constantly to be weighed against its costs in terms of other workgroup priorities, the energies and dispositions of fellow workgroup members and their personal health and well-being.



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