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**The Effect of Policy on Practice:
An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions
of School Based Assessment Practice**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Educational Administration at Massey University**

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1999**

I certify that the thesis entitled **The Effect of Policy on Practice: An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions of School Based Assessment Practice** and submitted as part of the degree of **Master Of Educational Administration** is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Since 1990 the New Zealand education system has undergone a number of radical curriculum and assessment reforms with the official policy for teaching, learning and assessment now outlined in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF) (1993). National Curriculum statements provide expanded formulations of this policy and together with the NZCF form the basis of teachers' practice. Contained within these policy documents are implicit and explicit notions related to the purposes and functions of school based assessment including assessment for learning and accountability. Within the New Zealand context there is now a substantial amount of evidence which shows that the implementation of assessment requirements has been problematic for both schools and teachers.

Drawing from the interpretive paradigm this thesis utilised a multi site case study approach, involving several replications of a single case study, to investigate the relationship between policy requirements and teachers' articulations of their assessment practice and the factors which shaped and influenced this practice.

In each of the school's in this study assessment had been both a critical issue for teachers and a focus for school wide professional development as teachers worked together collectively and collaboratively to effect and manage curriculum and assessment change. Dissatisfied with their preliminary attempts to set up assessment systems to support the national curriculum there was some evidence that teachers were attempting to define what constitutes good assessment practice. However professional attempts to initiate change had been tempered by the perceived expectations of external agencies such as the Education Review Office.

In attempting to meet school based requirements teachers engaged in both formative and summative assessment activity. However, while teachers attributed great importance to assessment and its potential to enhance learning, their practice was

dominated by summative activity. The domination of summative assessment activity could be attributed to both teachers' lack of understanding of formative assessment and to the meeting of external demands that were often in conflict with their personal beliefs, but monopolised their time and energy.

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