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.
‘Defending the High Ground’
The transformation of the discipline of history into a senior secondary school subject in the late 20th century: A New Zealand curriculum debate

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education
Massey University (Palmerston North) New Zealand

(William) Mark Sheehan

2008
One might characterise the curriculum reform … as a sort of tidal wave. Everywhere the waves created turbulence and activity but they only engulfed a few small islands; more substantial landmasses were hardly touched at all [and]…the high ground remained completely untouched.

Ivor F. Goodson (1994, 17)
Abstract

This thesis examines the development of the New Zealand secondary school history curriculum in the late 20th century and is a case study of the transformation of an academic discipline into a senior secondary school subject. It is concerned with the nature of state control in the development of the history curriculum at this level as well as the extent to which dominant elites within the history teaching community influenced the process. This thesis provides a historical perspective on recent developments in the history curriculum (2005-2008) and argues New Zealand stands apart from international trends in regards to history education. Internationally, curriculum developers have typically prioritised a narrative of the nation-state but in New Zealand the history teaching community has, by and large, been reluctant to engage with a national past and chosen to prioritise English history. Also in the international arena the history curriculum is shaped by government agencies but in New Zealand in the late 20th century, a minority of historians and teachers had a disproportionate influence over the process. They eschewed attempts to liberalise the subject by the Department of Education (and thereby reflect contemporary developments in the parent discipline) and shaped the curriculum to reflect their own professional interests.

This thesis puts forward a hypothesis that seeks to explain the nature of continuity and change in the senior history curriculum in the late 20th century with a view to illuminating the origins of recent debates in the history teaching community. It argues that it is the examination prescriptions that dictate what is taught at this level and that there are three key criteria that must be met if a senior curriculum initiative is to be successfully introduced, or an existing area of historical knowledge is to be retained. Firstly, it is necessary that the decision-making elite share a consensus that a particular body of historical knowledge is of higher status than any alternative. Secondly, a successful initiative must reflect the existing scholarly constraints and boundaries of the parent discipline. Finally, advocates of a particular area of knowledge must be able to establish alliances with major stakeholders in a subject community who are sympathetic to their cause. The role of dominant individuals in this process was paramount in the 1980s as Department of Education curriculum committees at this time operated on the ethos of ‘consultation’, with little explicit philosophical direction and no authentic evaluation. This model is examined by considering the examples of women’s history (that was successfully embedded in the 1989 curriculum), Māori history (that was not) and 16th and 17th century English history (that has dominated the history curriculum in New Zealand for over 30 years).
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my principal supervisor, Professor Roger Openshaw, for his guidance, wisdom and perceptive comments during this research project and to Associate Professor Peter Lineham, for his advice and feedback. Both supervisors have been generous in sharing their considerable knowledge in regards to history curriculum matters with me. I am also grateful to the following historians and teachers who made time to consider my research: The final draft of my thesis was read by Professor Giselle Byrnes (Waikato University), Professor Keith C. Barton (Indiana University, Bloomington, USA), Gregor Fountain (Head of History, Wellington College), Bruce Taylor (Head of History, Correspondence School), Michael Harcourt (Wellington High School) and Steve Watters (historian, Ministry of Culture and Heritage). An early draft of my thesis was read by Dr Robert Guyver (University College Plymouth St Mark and St John). I very much appreciate the feedback of these individuals on my work and the insights that they provided.

Victoria University College of Education has been wholly supportive of my research. The Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dugald Scott, and my Head of School, Linda Tod, have been unstinting in their encouragement. The Jessie Hetherington Centre for Educational Research provided financial assistance in the form of an internal thesis grant, that released me from my teaching and other responsibilities for 6 months and Susan Kaiser’s proof reading and formatting of my thesis was invaluable. I acknowledge the encouragement of my colleagues in the Social Sciences Department (namely Louise Starkey, Mike Taylor, Andrea Milligan and Bronwyn Wood) who have engaged me in robust and thoughtful conversations about my research that have helped in developing my thinking. Furthermore, I am profoundly grateful for the long-term mentoring by my colleague Dr Joanna Higgins over the last five years. I am also grateful to Massey University for providing financial support that allowed me to travel within New Zealand to conduct the interviews for this study.

It is my good fortune to be a member of a wider community of history educators who share my passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning history, and have been willing to talk with me informally on history curriculum matters and assist me in any number of ways. These include Graeme Ball, Liz Hay, Paul O’Connor, Carol Jarman, Graham Hucker, Claire Dixon and Richard Manning (who provided assistance in procuring some useful documentary material). I would also acknowledge the enthusiasm and commitment of the student-teachers I have been
lucky enough to have worked with at Victoria University in the *Teaching Senior History* programme. I am especially grateful to Tom Brooking, Geoff Rice, Harvey McQueen, David Wood, Greg Taylor, Cynthia Shaw, David Gledhill, Erik Olssen, John Rosanowski, Myra Kunowski, Robin Gwynn, Jim Peters, Russell Stone, Michael Graves, Gresham Poole, Peter Lineham, Marcia Stenson, Margaret Tennant, Graham and Susan Butterworth, Bill Renwick, Roy Shuker, Nicholas Tarling, Kerry Howe, Judith Binney, Bruce Taylor, John Jenson and Rex Bloomfield who agreed to be interviewed. Their willingness to share their memories of this area of the past was invaluable and some of these individuals generously allowed me to view their private papers for research purposes.

Finally, my thanks are due, as always, to my wife, Natalie Coynash, without whose devotion, support and unfaltering love this thesis would not have been written.
Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures ............................................................................................................. vi
List of Tables ............................................................................................................ vi
Glossary ....................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter 1 Introduction ............................................................................................ 1
Chapter 2 An integrated Year 11-13 History Syllabus - The National History Curriculum Committee ................................................................. 28
Chapter 3 Theoretical perspectives and Methodological approaches .................... 40
Chapter 4 Years of Turmoil and Change: New Zealand in the 1980s ..................... 67
Chapter 5 Themes and Issues in New Zealand History Education in the 1980s . 86
Chapter 6 ‘As much about pedagogy as about content’: Teaching and Learning History .............................................................................................................. 104
Chapter 7 Competing Histories: International developments in History Education ................................................................. 117
Chapter 8 ‘What use is a useable past?’ History and Social Studies .................... 135
Chapter 9 ‘Completing the Picture’: Embedding women’s history into the history curriculum .............................................................................................................. 153
Chapter 10 ‘Avoiding painful realities?’ The place of Māori history in the school curriculum .............................................................................................................. 172
Chapter 11 Tudors and Stuarts as the foundation of our heritage? 16th and 17th Century English history and the New Zealand curriculum ...................... 190
Chapter 12 Conclusion ............................................................................................ 208

References: Interviews, archival documentary sources, private papers, bibliography, websites .............................................................................................................. 211

Appendices: Membership of the NHCC; letter requesting an interview, ethics approval .............................................................................................................. 232
List of Figures

Figure 1:   Year 11 (Form 5) School Certificate history topics 1975-1988 ..............5
Figure 2:   Year 12: (Form 6) University Entrance history topics 1975-1988 ........6
Figure 3:   Year 13 (Form 7) University Bursary history topics 1977-1989 ..........7
Figure 4:   Criteria for a successful initiative in senior history ...........................27
Figure 5:   Membership of the National History Curriculum Committee .............34
Figure 6:   The Embedding of Women’s History into the senior History Curriculum: A successful initiative in senior history ...........................................155
Figure 7:   Māori and the History Curriculum: An unsuccessful initiative in senior history ..................................................................................................175

List of Tables

Table 1:  Senior History examination candidates 1968-82 .....................................13
Table 2:  Response to suggested history options in Year 11 (1986) ......................169
Table 3:  Response to suggested history options in Year 12 (1986) ......................169
Table 4:  Percentage of candidates sitting bursary options: 1984-86 ......................193
Glossary

CDD  
Curriculum Development Division (Department of Education):
This division was made up of a number of subject specialists (including history) who had responsibility for maintaining and developing their subject.

DMIE  
Division of Māori and Island Education (Department of Education)
This division was responsible for issues and initiatives concerned with Māori and Pasifika education.

NHCC  
National History Curriculum Committee
The Committee was known as both the National History Curriculum Committee (NHCC) and the National History Syllabus Committee (NHSC). The former was more widely favoured in official documents and is used in this thesis.

NZHTA  
New Zealand History Teachers Association
The national body to represent New Zealand history teachers, NZHTA was established in 1994.

NZHA  
New Zealand Historical Association
NZHA is the national body that represents historians and is affiliated with history researchers and teachers working outside the academy (including NZHTA).

PPTA  
The secondary school teachers’ union, The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers Association, had curriculum panels in all senior subjects and was closely involved with curriculum design and implementation in the 1980s.

Prescription  
The content that is prescribed for an examination.
SC School Certificate:
SC was under the auspices of the Department of Education and was a summative examination offered for the first time at the end of three years secondary education (Year 11/Form 5). Students’ results were scaled and it served as an exit qualification for those who were not destined for tertiary study, as well as a benchmark for those students going on to the senior school.

6FC/SFC Sixth Form Certificate:
6FC was one of two qualifications offered in Year 12/Form 6. It was internally assessed and in 1986, when UE was disestablished, it became the principal qualification offered at this level.

UE University Entrance:
UE was offered after 4 years of secondary education (Year 12/Form 6) and was the minimum requirement for entry into university. Most students who passed were accredited and only 5% of the total 6th Form cohort passed by sitting the formal examination. In 1986 UE was disestablished and the University Bursaries Examination became the requirement for entry to university.

UB University Bursaries
Commonly known as Bursaries, students entered this examination at the conclusion of five years' secondary education. UB was a high status qualification that carried some monetary awards for high achievers.

UEB University Entrance Board
Dominated by subject specialists from the universities (with assistance by teachers), the UEB was responsible for setting and marking UE, UB and US.

US University Scholarship
When the NHCC was meeting, US was a separate, highly academic examination that was offered at the end of Year 13/Form 7.