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**PRINCIPAL APPRAISAL:
*FLUXION AND ABATEMENT***

**A Grounded Theory of principal appraisal
in a small selection of New Zealand schools**

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

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the circumstances in and around the principal appraisal process in five New Zealand primary schools. An outcome of this investigation was to generate a theoretical explanation of what was happening in this appraisal process. Data were gathered from five principals and their appraisers through a questionnaire and an interview. Through a constant comparative analysis of the data, a basic social process was discovered that consisted of four conceptual categories labelled as *metamorphosis*, *metamorphic reaction*, *adaptation* and *palatableness*. These categories were linked into a core category labelled *fluxion and abatement*.

Fluxion and abatement is a conceptual statement of a continually changing appraisal process that has been grappled with and abated in a meaningful way by the appraisal participants. That no school site, of principal appraisal development and implementation, closely resembles another, is testimony of the *fluxion and abatement* theory. That schools are still talking of *adaptation* to the latest *metamorphosis* of professional standards and that a *palatableness* state is some time, even years, away, strengthens the theory produced in this study.

These findings have important implications for a number of areas of school operation. The first is leadership. Will the school site strengthen or move away from a collaborative model of leadership? The study argues for a supportive board of trustees to the principal, who should engender a transformational leadership style. These collaborative approaches will see schools as educative communities rather

than managed organisations. The second implication is in teaching and learning. Principals, working with their staff, need to have refined the meaningful data on what is happening in teaching and learning within their schools. The third implication is the principal appraisal process. This process should be used as a purposeful tool to achieve and produce evidence of the other stated implications. The last implication, school effectiveness, is the prospective outcome of such a principal appraisal process.

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