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Mind the gap! Policy change in practice

**School qualifications reform
in New Zealand,
1980-2002**

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

**Doctor of Philosophy
In
Education**

**at Massey University,
Palmerston North, New Zealand.**

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2007

Abstract

'Policy gaps' in education mean that the visions of policy-makers frequently fail to materialise fully, or at all, in teacher practice. This thesis argues that a significant 'policy gap' developed in New Zealand around school qualifications policy during the 1990's, and puts forward some explanations for that. A significant shift in government discourses over that period, from largely social democratic to predominantly neo-liberal discourses, was not matched by a similar shift in the discourses of teachers or the union that represents them. During the same period, teachers and their representative bodies were excluded from policy development, reflecting this shift in government discourses. Government and teachers were 'talking past each other'. As a result, qualifications reforms that might have been expected to be generally welcomed by the profession, as a government response to calls from the profession over many decades, were instead rejected by the majority of teachers. Furthermore, the absence of the teacher voice from policy development meant that the shape of the reforms moved significantly away from the profession's original vision, a further reason for its unacceptability to teachers. Reform was only able to be achieved when teachers and their union were brought back into the policy-making and policy-communicating processes and a version of standards-based assessment closer to the union's original vision was adopted by government. Nevertheless, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement that resulted appears to still be perceived by teachers as externally imposed and its origins in the profession's advocacy for reform over many years have been lost. This indicates that 'policy gaps', while easily opened, are not as easily closed.

Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to my supervisor and co-supervisor, 'the two Johns', Emeritus Professor John Codd and Professor John O'Neill, for their unflagging support and friendly critique during the writing of this thesis. Our regular meetings have been at times challenging but always fun, making every trip to Palmerston North a pleasure.

I am also grateful to my two daughters, Miranda and Kate, for their unswerving faith that I could undertake this task, even though Miranda, with the wisdom of experience, warned of the massive toll a PhD takes on one's life. She was right, and so I also am grateful to Jills for her patient acceptance that while the thesis has taken time that we could have spent together, it would not be forever!

I thank my employer, PPTA, for its generosity with funding, study leave and access to union documents, and my work colleagues, especially the members of the Policy and Advocacy team, for their encouragement and their contributions to my thinking.

And finally, I owe a debt to my participants, teachers and others, who gave their time to be interviewed and to meticulously check transcripts. It was a privilege to be allowed to share their memories of times that for many have been difficult, whichever side of the fence they have found themselves on.

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Abbreviations used

ABA	Achievement-based assessment (see Appendix 4)
CICAQ	Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications
ERO	Education Review Office
HOD	Head of Department (subject grouping)
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional representation (electoral system since the 1996 general election)
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement (used here for the secondary school qualification implemented from 2002, not for earlier qualification with a similar name)
NEQA	National Education Qualifications Authority (early name for what became NZQA)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework (a system for registering assessment standards and qualifications on unified framework, from Level 1/Year 11 to Level 9/PhD)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority (administers the NQF)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OBE	Outcomes-based education
PCET	Post-compulsory education and training
PPTA/NZPPTA	New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (secondary teachers' union)

Chapter One - Introduction

This thesis uses a large and lengthy policy shift, the progression from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment for secondary school qualifications in New Zealand between about 1980 and 2002, as a case study to explore two key questions:

- What conditions are most likely to create or exacerbate a 'policy gap' between policy-makers and classroom teachers?
- Are conflicting discourses a significant factor in 'policy gaps' between policy-makers and classroom teachers?

I use the concept of 'policy gap' to mean a situation where those who are responsible for producing and communicating a policy and those who are responsible for its implementation tend to see the policy somewhat differently. The thesis contends that a 'policy gap' existed during the 1990's between government and secondary school teachers in the context of qualifications reforms, when government sought to impose the use of competency-based unit standards on a unified secondary-tertiary Qualifications Framework as the sole means of assessment for senior secondary school qualifications.

The particular educational policy shift chosen coincided with a well-documented shift in dominant government policy discourses in New Zealand from the mid-1980's on, from a largely social democratic discourse to a neo-liberal discourse. The case study provides an excellent opportunity to see how this shift impacted on education in a specific policy area.

The thesis argues that the 'policy gap' developed because the new dominant government discourse conflicted with the discourse dominant among teachers. Furthermore, it suggests that because the dominant government discourse included the notion that 'provider capture' must be avoided at all cost, the profession was excluded in significant ways from policy development, exacerbating the 'gap' caused by the divergent discourses. In the resulting struggle for power, government policy adoption was patchy and there was no consensus around the way forward.

This study analyses the discourses evident in key teacher union and government policy documents, in the recollections of a sample of 'expert participants' (key policy-makers at government and teacher union level, influential academics, and one employers'

representative) and in the recollections of a sample of practising teachers who were in the profession during the whole policy shift. While some general conclusions can be drawn from the data about differences in perspective evident in the documents and interviews analysed here, it would be simplistic to assume that there was homogeneity within any particular grouping of participants. The data demonstrate a number of ways in which differing discourses intersect, overlap, accommodate and co-opt each other as the various participants articulate their understandings of the policy shift and their thinking about policy change processes.

Possibly a unique feature of the thesis is its attention to the union perspective on this particular educational change. This is provided through a detailed study of union policy documents about qualifications from the mid-1960's on, and through interviews with a sample of union policy-makers. (The definition of 'union policy-makers' used here is that they are elected officials or staff of the union who have had a significant role in developing and advocating to members and government the union's policy on an issue, in this case policy on qualifications reform.) The study explores the discourses used by the union in its official policy and by these union policy-makers, and compares and contrasts that data with the discourses used in academic commentary and government policy documents, those used by the other 'expert participants', and also those used by the sample of classroom teachers.

The thesis argues that a further contributor to 'policy gaps' is what is metaphorically described here as the use of a 'wide angle lens' or a 'close-up lens' to look at education policy. This difference in 'lens' between policy-makers, including union policy-makers, and practising teachers was a further contributor to the 'policy gap', when combined with conditions in which practising teachers were excluded from involvement in policy development and in which the government discourses were shifting to discourses with which teachers were not in sympathy. Such differences have also been noted by other researchers (see Chapter Three).

2002 has been used as the end-point for the study because it was the first year of implementing in all schools a standards-based qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The thesis focuses on participants' memories of the policy shift to that point, although many of their comments will have been coloured by their experiences between 2002 and when they were interviewed. I am also not implying that the policy shift was complete in 2002. Implementation of the qualification

continues to require policy review leading to 'fine tuning' of the qualification, and it is unlikely that this will cease in the foreseeable future.

Origins of the research

This research arises in some interesting ways out of my own experiences.

Professional amnesia

I am a classroom teacher who gradually became a union policy-maker, firstly at the level of an elected official and later as a paid policy adviser, within the secondary teachers' union in New Zealand, the New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA). In the early 1990's I was elected to regional office and then to national office as an Executive member from Auckland, the union's largest region. During my term on the Executive, from 1994 to 2000, I took special interest in a range of professional areas, particularly curriculum and qualifications. This was a period of rapid change and intense conflict over these matters.

As a head of department in two successive low-decile West Auckland secondary schools between 1990 and 2002, I found myself leaning towards supporting change in the qualifications system because I could see that students like ours were not easily finding recognition for their achievements through the existing system. On the other hand, I knew that qualifications reform was far from universally supported by my colleagues.

I realised that grassroots members of the union were generally unaware of the extent to which their own union had been an active participant in and in many ways initiator of the policy shifts in the qualifications area at key stages of developments. As a union activist, when members decried the reforms of the 1990's, I often found myself saying, "But we must remember that the union has a long history of support for standards-based rather than norm-referenced assessment." This comment was mostly met with at least incomprehension and at worst derision. This revealed a conundrum. The union's long history of advocacy for standards-based assessment did not appear to be remembered by union members (the vast majority of secondary teachers), except among a few key activists. I wondered why that was so. This thesis seeks to explain that conundrum, and to establish whether this 'professional amnesia' in any way contributed to the 'policy gap' on qualifications reform.

It is certainly clear that the teacher participants in this study, by the time I interviewed them in 2004, mostly did not remember the union's extensive history of advocacy for standards-based assessment for qualifications (outlined in Chapter Five).

Different lenses

I suggested above that another contributor to the existence of 'policy gaps' in education may be the different 'lenses' that teachers and policy-makers and academics use when they look at education. My personal history has thrown some light on that as well. I noticed that as my activism in the union increased while I was still a practising teacher, I was increasingly struggling to function at a range of levels of policy. I was working (a) at national level within the union, participating for example in the development and implementation of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement from early 1999 on, (b) at a school-wide level, with responsibilities for assessment and qualifications from 2000 on, (c) at head of department level with responsibilities for implementation of the new system in my own department, and finally (d) as a classroom teacher with a wide range of students from Year 9 to Year 13.

It became increasingly difficult to function adequately at so many levels, not only because of conflicting demands on my time, but more significantly because it was difficult to make the constant 'lens changes' which were necessary to function successfully at all levels. At the same time, I realised that I was in an unusual and privileged position, in that I was experiencing in my daily life how policies developed at the highest levels of government might translate down to the classroom level. I began to recognise how gaps can develop between that high level policy development and the classrooms of New Zealand.

By the time I became involved in qualifications policy development at national level, government was beginning to move away from the extremes of neo-liberalism and to recognise that in the development of the NCEA, teachers' voices must be heard for it to succeed in resolving the impasse of previous years. Teachers, including their union representatives, were invited to participate in the development of the qualification and to help to communicate the new policy (see Chapter Five). But the distrust generated by the recent past persisted, and many teachers saw the NCEA as simply yet another wave of ill-conceived reform that was about to wash over them. It can be argued that the 'policy gap' is still in existence, if somewhat smaller, despite increased government willingness to invite teacher participation.

Talking past each other

This thesis argues that divergent discourses are likely to be a significant factor in opening up of a 'policy gap' between policy-makers and teachers. If the producer of a text uses a discourse that is not shared by the target audience to explain and justify a policy direction, then the text is unlikely to resonate with its audience, in the sense of being understood and supported, or expressed more idiomatically, groups end up 'talking past each other'. Furthermore, if the policy shaping and communication has not involved members of the target audience, in this case teachers, then the policy texts are unlikely to lead to a consensus of support.

In my work as a member of the union's policy advice and advocacy team, a key task is to seek to re-shape government policies and the ways in which they are communicated to teachers. I try to ensure that current practising teachers are involved with policy work, because they provide a 'reality check' of the likely acceptability of the policy, the manageability of the task and its timeframes, and the messages and mechanisms needed to ensure teachers receive the policy changes positively. I always argue that unless practising teachers through their union and subject representatives are closely involved in policy development and communication, even the most constructive policy changes will fail to be fully implemented.

The structure of the thesis

The key question 'Are conflicting discourses a significant factor in 'policy gaps' between policy-makers and classroom teachers?' requires an explanation of the approach the thesis takes to the concept of discourse and the processes by which divergent discourses interact. This is contained in Chapter Two, and provides the theoretical framework for the study. The thesis adopts a critical theory approach to the research questions, and draws heavily on the theory and methods of the field of critical discourse analysis, in particular the work of Norman Fairclough.

Chapter Two also details how the methods of critical discourse analysis were used across a wide range of data: union and government policy documents, interviews with a number of 'expert participants', and interviews with practising teachers. These written materials and interviews provide evidence of both the changing degrees of 'policy gap' in evidence and the discourses dominant among the various sector groupings at different stages of the policy shift.

The other key question is 'What conditions are most likely to create or exacerbate a 'policy gap' between policy-makers and classroom teachers?' This requires a foundation in the literature on teachers' responses to educational change, which is discussed in Chapter Three. There I highlight research in secondary school contexts, on the grounds that the subject specialist nature of secondary schools has a significant influence on the dynamics of change, for example through the power and influence of subject departments.

Because of the particular case study chosen to investigate the key questions, it was also necessary to provide a clear explanation of the history of the policy shift from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand. Chapter Four provides that history, and highlights academic discussion of the key events. While there is some evidence of the beginnings of concerns about the norm-referenced examinations system as far back as the 1870's (Strachan, 2001), the chapter begins the history in the 1970's, a period when debate about school qualifications became very lively. The final section of this chapter focuses on academic commentary on the discourses underpinning the events described, providing a useful lead-in to Chapters Five to Nine, where I provide detailed discourse analysis of data collected for the study.

The next five chapters draw on the wide range of data collected, to both illustrate and discuss the central argument of the thesis, that divergence of discourses, accompanied by exclusion of the profession from government policy-making processes, contributed to a 'policy gap' over school qualifications during the 1990's.

Chapters Five and Six begin to set out the evidence and the argument, by focusing on policy documents from two key sources. Chapter Five is an analysis of union policy documents on qualifications issues from the mid-1960's on. These demonstrate the long union history of advocacy for qualifications reform. Chapter Six places alongside this an analysis of government policy documents over the same period.

Chapters Seven to Nine continue to set out the evidence and the argument, focusing on interviews conducted for this study. In Chapter Seven, evidence from all of the interviews is used to compare and contrast the different groupings of participants' perceptions of the forces of change behind the qualifications reforms of the last few decades. Chapters Eight and Nine look at perspectives on the qualifications change processes, with Chapter Eight focusing on participants with national level policy-making

and policy-influencing responsibilities and Chapter Nine focusing on the perspectives of teachers. The two groupings of participants are separated in these chapters because the differences between their perspectives were so marked as to not lend themselves to the combined approach taken in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Ten brings the argument together into some overall conclusions, identifies limitations of the study and areas that would benefit from further research, and suggests key messages for policy-makers.

Chapter 2 – Critical discourse analysis

This thesis argues that, in the context of the lengthy policy shift from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment for secondary school qualifications in New Zealand, the shifting balance of power of different educational discourses has, at different times and to varying degrees, contributed to the existence of a 'policy gap' between government policy-making and classroom teachers. This chapter establishes as the theoretical framework and research method for the study the concepts and the tools of critical discourse analysis, as used by Norman Fairclough (1995, 2000, 2001, 2003) and other critical theorists in the socio-linguistic tradition.

I begin this chapter by discussing the origins of critical discourse analysis and what distinguishes the work of critical theorists in the socio-linguistic tradition. Here I explain some key concepts such as discourse itself and how social practices and ideologies link to discourses; the struggle for hegemony; and the process of interaction between one discourse by another. I then discuss critical theory, the framework within which critical discourse analysis is located. The next section explains how critical discourse analysis was used in this thesis, and some of the research issues this presented. Finally, because discourses are social practices that reflect underlying ideologies, the last part of the chapter introduces the three major ideologies that appear to underpin the discourses evident in debates about qualifications in New Zealand: neo-liberal, neo-conservative and social democratic ideologies, and begins to show how they have been reflected in the shifting policies on education in general and qualifications in particular.

The body of theory discussed below establishes that the struggle for hegemony of discourse is by its nature inconclusive, and similarities and convergences between competing discourses occur. This 'messiness' is reflected in the data reported in Chapters Five to Nine, where it is clear that while some generalisations can be made about differences between the discursive practices of the interest groups reflected there, there are also many ways in which discourses interweave and even coincide. Nevertheless, I conclude that this struggle for hegemony of discourse can still serve to partially explain the 'policy gap' between teachers and policy-makers that is evident in the data collected for this case study of the policy shift to standards-based assessment for school qualifications.

The theoretical framework

Critical discourse analysis focuses on power relations, and is an invaluable tool in the study of educational change. The work of Michel Foucault draws attention to the power of discourse to actually 'construct' human beings through establishing what come to be seen as 'truths' about the world that "become the taken-for-granted definitions and categories by which governments rule and monitor their populations and by which members of communities define themselves and others" (Foucault, 1980, cited in Luke, 1995, pp.8-9).

Because schools, like other significant social institutions, are constituted by discourse and discursive relations, Foucault's work offers educators a new way to view educational texts and discourses (Luke, 1995, p.9). However, Luke (1995) criticises the tendency of much Foucault-inspired research to remain at the 'macro' level, looking at the overall content of texts rather than doing more microanalytic text analysis, and failing to explain the political and ideological consequences of the discourses in practice (pp.9-11).

The work of critical discourse analysts such as Norman Fairclough provides an approach that is capable of this task because there is a greater focus on power:

It departs from much mainstream research with its focus on how power and identity are legitimated, negotiated, and contested towards political ends... Such an analysis attempts to establish how textual constructions of knowledge have varying and unequal material effects and how whose constructions come to 'count' in institutional contexts is a manifestation of larger political investments and interests. (Luke, 1995, p.12)

Thus the techniques of critical discourse analysis can be used as part of wider critical analyses to identify the ideologies and power relationships operating within society and to highlight the processes of social and cultural change (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Discourse, social practices and ideology

'Discourse' encompasses not only written and spoken language but also other texts including non-verbal language such as facial expression, body movements and gestures, and visual images (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.38). However discourse is not only the language of which such 'texts' are comprised, it is also the social practices surrounding the use of that language:

In this sense, *discourse* refers not only to the meaning of language but also to the real effects of language-use, to the materiality of language. A discourse is a domain of language-use and therefore a domain of lived experience. (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p.65, italics in original)

Social practices have four elements: physical, sociological, psychological and language (Fairclough, 2000). Language is just one element of any social practice, and interacts with the other elements. Fairclough (2000) uses the practice of government, in which language is a critical element, to exemplify a social practice:

A particular area of social life which is structured in a distinctive way involving particular groups of people ... in particular relations with each other [which] ... roughly sustains over long periods of time its identity as one area of social life in contrast with others. (pp.143-144)

Discourse links to social practices in three broad ways. Firstly, discourse is used as part of the social activity associated with a particular practice. Secondly, discourse is used to represent one's own and others' social practices. Thirdly, discourse is significant in the construction of identities, one's sense of one's own and others' identities. Networks of social practices constitute what Fairclough (2003) calls 'a social order', an example of which might be the social order of education at a particular time and place, and the discourse of a social order is termed 'an order of discourse' (p.206).

Discourse is thus both an element of the 'social practices' which make up social life and also works to shape those practices. In fact, Fairclough (2000) argues that much of what democratic government does is discourse, in that democracy arises from "public contestation between discourses – discourses are deployed by different parties and groups to win sufficient political support for particular visions of the world to act" (p.157; see also Olssen et al., 2004, p.64).

The link between discourse and ideology lies in the assumptions that underlie how people interact in language, assumptions of which people are generally unaware. These assumptions are ideologies because they reflect power relations, and because they perpetuate the legitimisation of existing power relations simply by being the normal ways of behaving. Because language is the most common form of social behaviour and the area where we most rely on these 'common sense' assumptions, it is important to study language (Fairclough, 2001, p.2). Thus ideology is more powerful

than just an overt set of ideas or beliefs that people can make choices about, because ideology becomes integrated into the discourse:

Ideology is *inscribed in* discourse in the sense that it is literally written or spoken *in it*; it is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of 'ideas' and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing. (Belsey, 1980, cited in Olssen et al., 2004, p.65, italics in original)

The power of ideologies, through the discourses and social practices that express them, to construct and re-construct the way human beings see the world should not be under-estimated.

The struggle for hegemony

Because of the significance of discourses in shaping realities, those who would wish to reshape realities will seek to achieve the *hegemony* of the relevant discourse. The goal of hegemony will have been achieved when the discourse is seen as 'reality' rather than just one way of looking at reality.

The concept of hegemony, as the struggle to achieve the dominance of one ideology over others, links power and ideology. The education system is a significant site for this struggle. As used by Gramsci, the concept focuses on the struggle of the dominant class to maintain consensual rather than coercive control of society (Ransome, 1992). Hegemony is a way of exercising power by the consent of those over whom it is held, rather than through physical coercion. Control of the discourses is a vital part of achieving that consent, so that the dominant ideology and its associated social practices become 'naturalised' as 'common sense'. Nevertheless, groups' and individuals' ways of participating in discourses are not homogeneous. Some resist and some comply with their own regulation (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Luke, 1995).

Hegemony works on individuals by saturating our consciousness "... so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world *tout court*, the only world" (Apple, 1990, p.5). Educational institutions are significant in the transmission of this dominant system, acting, probably unconsciously for the most part, as agents of hegemony.

But the power relations of modern society are unstable because society is by its very nature open, and the discourses and social practices and the power relations that they reflect are subject to challenge:

Hegemony is a bid for closure of practices and networks which is destined to fail to a greater or lesser extent because the social is by its nature open – the simultaneous operation of diverse mechanisms within any practice, and the fact that any practice is overdetermined (simultaneously determined by others), means that outcomes are never entirely predictable, and that resources for resistance are always likely to be generated. (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p.25)

Thus hegemony is never total, but works towards an unstable equilibrium, with constantly shifting power:

Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent. Hegemony is a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocs, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms. (Fairclough, 1995, p.76)

In education, such ideological conflicts abound, as groups with differing political, economic and cultural visions seek to use schools to help shape their ideal society (Apple, 1991, p.6).

A central tension in the modern economy between property rights and person rights is identified by Apple (1991). 'Property rights' give people the power to enter social relationships on the basis and to the extent of their ownership of property. 'Person rights' give people the power to enter social relationships on the basis simply of their membership of the social collectivity. Thus people who emphasise property rights would tend to align themselves with neo-conservative or neo-liberal ideologies, while people who emphasise person rights would align themselves with social democratic ideologies, and their struggles for suffrage, for the right to form unions, the right to have a job with dignity and decent pay, and for rules of due process and fairness (p.6).

Ten years later, Apple (2001) explains this struggle differently by asserting that the ideological struggles over education and other social policy areas are largely around different ideas of freedom: "Many of the ideological positions that are currently embattled in the arena of education have different presuppositions about this key word"

(p.12). He gives examples of different positions on freedom, such as religious conceptions of freedom to 'live with God', republican conceptions of freedom to live in a state bound by the consent of the governed, and the classical liberal concept of private and individual freedom from interference by the state. What he calls 'progressive movements' developed certain elements of that classical liberalism, radicalised them and mobilised them: "By organizing around issues of free speech, labor rights, economic security, women's rights, birth control and the control of one's body, a socially conscious national and regional state, racial justice, the right to a truly equal education, and many other struggles for social justice, a much more expansive definition of freedom has been fought for both inside and outside of education" (pp.13-14). Herbert Kliebard's influential book *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (1987) demonstrates, Apple (2001) says, "that educational issues have consistently involved major conflicts and compromises among groups with competing visions of 'legitimate' knowledge, what counts as 'good' teaching and learning, and what is a 'just' society" (pp.64-65).

Kliebard (1987) discusses the discursive struggles for the American curriculum up to only 1958, but the book is still of interest as evidence for the roots of the struggles which we have seen in more recent times. He says that by the beginning of the twentieth century the four major forces that would drive the development of the American school curriculum had already emerged. The first group, whose goal is to guard traditions and values from the Western cultural heritage, in this thesis would be termed 'neo-conservatives' (although Kliebard uses the term 'humanist'). The other three groups he describes as all reformers in some form, but with each group reflecting a somewhat different view of curriculum. The first of these groups he calls 'the child-study movement' or 'developmentalists', who pushed for a curriculum matching the natural order of development of the child. The second group he calls 'the social efficiency educators' whose vision of impending social decay drove them to push for "the school with a scientifically constructed curriculum at its core [which] could forestall and even prevent that calamity". The last group he calls 'social meliorists', and their position was that schools were the most important vehicle for social change and social justice. "The corruption and vice in the cities, the inequalities of race and gender, and the abuse of privilege and power could all be addressed by a curriculum that focused directly on those very issues, thereby raising a new generation equipped to deal effectively with those abuses" (pp.27-29). The dominant ideology of PPTA, the teachers' union discussed in this thesis, would fit the term 'social meliorist', but I have used the term 'social democrat' because of its wider applications (see below).

In the end no one group's discourse can gain complete ascendancy, but the struggle for power reflected in the relative dominance of conflicting discourses is of huge interest:

No single interest group ever gained absolute supremacy, although general social and economic trends, periodic and fragile alliances between groups, the national mood, and local conditions and personalities affected the ability of these groups to influence school practice as the twentieth century progressed. In the end, what became the American curriculum was not the result of any decisive victory by any of the contending parties, but a loose, largely unarticulated, and not very tidy compromise. (Kliebard, 1987, p.29)

Similarly, this thesis portrays the struggle over school qualifications in New Zealand as being between conflicting discourses, with an 'untidy' compromise in the form of the current school qualification, the NCEA.

Interaction of conflicting discourses

An essential concept in this thesis is the process by which conflicting discourses interact as part of the struggle for hegemony. Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) used for this the terms 'colonisation' and 'appropriation' of discourses somewhat interchangeably:

We may say that the discourse of one practice colonises that of another, or that the latter appropriates the former, depending on how power relations are expressed as relations between practices and discourses. So ideologies are domination-related constructions of a practice which are determined by specifically discursive relations between that practice and other practices. (p.27)

Later, Fairclough (2001) appears to prefer the term 'colonisation', drawing an analogy with Jurgen Habermas's assertion that contemporary capitalism has 'colonised' people's lives (pp.163-164).

More recently still, however, Fairclough (2003) uses the term 'intertextuality' rather than 'colonisation', saying that a particular text may contain a mix of discourses and in the way they are each drawn upon and articulated together (intertextuality), the creator of the text will seek to legitimise a particular discourse.

Such intertextuality is the norm, as texts link to each other through recurring arguments and language:

Any political discourse will also adopt and adapt useful terminology from other, adjacent discourses, including those of other political parties, popular religious groups, sciences, popular culture and advertising, and so forth. All texts are indeed multidiscursive; that is, they draw from a range of discourses, fields of knowledge, and voices. In this way, discourses are dynamic and cross fertilizing, continually relocated and regenerated in everyday texts. (Luke, 1995, pp.14-15)

O'Neill (2001) contends that exactly this process was happening in the context of the new curriculum and qualifications frameworks in New Zealand in the 1990's. He says that while these frameworks were centrally developed by a government for which exclusion of teachers' representatives from policy development was a key principle, in fact the texts produced "contained important continuities with the liberal-progressive agendas of an earlier corporatist state and, as such, they were unlikely to be rejected out of hand by classroom practitioners and workgroups simply because of their ideological provenance" (p.369). Two different ways of 'reading' these texts co-existed: the government reading of them as "responsible economic 'palimpsests' (necessary to the improvement of national achievement standards, providing an explicit linkage between the worlds of school and work, and modernising schooling to meet the entrepreneurial and technological needs of the national and global economies)"; and the teachers' and their representatives' reading of them "to allow for the pragmatic advance of their quest for curricula and credentials to meet the general educational needs of 'every person'" (pp.369-370).

The term 'intertextual compatibilities' (Ball, 1994a) is the one used by O'Neill (2001), however Luke's term 'intertextual networks and webs' or Fairclough's 'colonisation', 'appropriation' or 'intertextuality' of discourses embody similar concepts. In this thesis I have largely used the term 'colonisation' because of its clear link in New Zealand to concepts of power, for example in the Maori usage of 'colonisation' and 'de-colonisation' referring to their struggle for sovereignty. The term also reminds us that critical discourse analysis is located firmly within the wider critical theory perspective, for which power is central. A disadvantage of the term, however, is its tendency to appear to personify discourses, rather than conceptualise them as reflecting the language choices, conscious or unconscious, of their users. I have sought to avoid such personification in this thesis.

Critical theory

Because critical discourse analysis fits within the wider critical theory perspective adopted in this thesis, it is important here to define critical theory:

Critical theory starts from a critique of ideology, defined as *distorted knowledge*, to enable individuals to become self-consciously aware of knowledge distortions. This self-conscious awareness of knowledge distortion is enlightenment, a necessary precondition for individual freedom and self-determination. (Ewert, 1991, p.346, italics in original)

The influential critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas, asserts that instrumental rationality has become all-pervasive and is about prediction and control, leading to education being seen as the means to an end, providing the rationale for standardised solutions to educational problems. (An example of this is the shift to outcomes-based education discussed later in this chapter.) He asserts that humanity's practical and emancipatory interests require the application of different forms of rationality. The practical interests are in the communicative domain and centre around the pursuit of mutual understanding. Applied to education, this leads to an emphasis on the process of learning as a social activity involving complex human interactions which require highly skilled practitioners making wise decisions (Habermas, 1971, cited in Ewert, 1991). Humanity's emancipatory interests relate to the achievement of personal power and freedom from constraints, and being aware of the power of ideologies is part of this:

Dramatic personal and social change becomes possible by becoming aware of the way ideologies – sexual, racial, religious, educational, occupational, political, economic and technological – have created or contributed to our dependency on reified powers ... intent of education for emancipatory action ... would be seen by Habermas as the providing of the learner with an accurate, in-depth understanding of his or her historical situation. (Mezirow, 1981, cited in Ewert, 1991, p.354)

Education is intrinsically political because it is a social activity that is actively engaged in social reproduction, and educational qualifications have a major influence on individuals' life chances by limiting their choices (Ewert, 1991, p.356).

Critical theorists have been accused of lacking 'objectivity' and pursuing deliberate political agendas. They would argue that there is no such thing as ideological neutrality, that what poses as neutrality is actually commitment to the status quo (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.28). In fact it can be argued that there is no such thing as a non-

ideological statement or text: "The possibility of an ideologically disinterested and nondistorting text is at best debatable... all texts are normative, shaping, and constructing rather than simply reflecting and describing" (Luke, 1995, p.19).

Another line of argument against critical theory is to suggest that ideology is in some way neutral, just a particular world view of a social group linked to its interests and position in society. Van Dijk's (1995) definition of ideology implies that kind of neutrality:

Basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of sociocultural values, and organized by an ideological schema that represents the self-definition of the group. Besides their social function of sustaining the interests of groups, ideologies have the cognitive function of organizing the social representations (attitudes, knowledge) of the group, and thus indirectly monitor the group-related social practices, and hence also the text and talk of its members. (p.248)

Critical theorists would see this definition as weak in reference to relations of power and domination between groups. Fairclough (2003) provides what he typifies as a 'critical' view of ideology: "Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (p.9). He attributes the attacks on critical theory to the emergence in the previous ten years or so of an aggressive 'new right', but also to post-structuralist and post-modernist theory (e.g. Foucault, 1979) that has attacked ideological critique through arguments which also attack the concept of truth: "One line of argument here is that any form of ideological critique presupposes that the critic has privileged access to the truth, whereas any such claim to truth or knowledge is ... really just a coded 'will to power'" (Fairclough, 1995, p.16).

Critical theory, in contrast, critiques ideology and its link with power relationships in society: "What makes a theory critical is that it takes a 'pejorative' view of ideology as a means through which social relations of power are reproduced" (Fairclough, 1995, p.17). It is this link between ideology, power and domination that is so significant. Fairclough (1995) suggests that the work of Foucault has made popular an understanding of power as lying within "the technologies which structure modern institutions" and not acknowledged that power is "asymmetrical", or tending to be possessed by particular social classes, strata and groups: "My concern is that this sense of power has displaced the former, more traditional one, and more importantly

has helped divert attention from the analysis of power asymmetries and relations of domination" (p.17).

In this section, I have defined critical discourse analysis as an approach that highlights the power relations within society through the analysis of texts and other social practices, and I have portrayed the struggle for hegemony of discourses as a fluid and inconclusive process, of which a major feature is what I am choosing to call the 'colonisation' of one discourse by another. I have shown that because the struggle for hegemony is a struggle for power, critical discourse analysis fits within the broader field of critical theory. Later chapters will provide evidence of such a struggle for hegemony of discourse in the context of the qualifications reforms, and the contribution of this struggle to the 'policy gap' between teachers and government during the 1990's in particular.

The next section discusses the use of critical discourse analysis in this study.

Application of critical discourse analysis

In order to track the discourses dominant in discussions of school qualifications over the period studied, I analysed a wide range of written policy documents from government and the teacher union PPTA, and I also interviewed, after gaining ethical approval, a range of people in two general categories: (a) 'expert participants', i.e. people who were influential within the education sector either as bureaucrats or academics, or as union officials or union activists; and (b) teachers who had been in the profession for much of the period of focus and were currently implementing the new qualifications system, the NCEA. Bringing together these data sources provides a rich picture of the discourses underpinning the policy developments and of the differing perspectives of those involved.

I have termed the research 'a case study' in the ethnographic tradition, in that it describes an 'integrated system' (Stake, 1995) of educational policy-making around a specific issue over a defined period of time. Thus, as a case study of policy change, it has both temporal (i.e. 1980-2002) and substantive (i.e. qualifications policy) boundaries. It uses multiple sources of information that enable triangulation of evidence (Yin, 1994), and out of this evolves a rich picture of how a significant policy shift occurred and was experienced by a wide range of participants.

I took the view that textual analysis on its own would be insufficient, and analysis that focused both on specific texts and on 'the order of discourse', the social context of the language, would be more valuable, so my approach could be more properly called 'textually oriented discourse analysis' (Fairclough, 2003, pp.2-3). Hence in this thesis the commentary on data (see Chapters Five to Nine) is a mix of textual and content analysis.

Analysis of policy documents

My focus was on documents that set out government and union policy positions at key stages. Source documents for government policy included Department/Ministry of Education and NZQA publications and policy papers, and reports of various working parties. Source documents for union policy included annual conference papers and minutes, annual reports, circulars, letters explaining union policy to government agencies or to members, reports of union committees of inquiry, and the PPTA *Journal*.

Written documents are limited in their ability to convey a complete picture of 'reality', whether past or present:

They are 'social facts', in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways. They are not, however, transparent representations of organizational routines, decision-making processes or professional diagnoses. They construct particular kinds of representations with their own conventions. We should not use documentary sources as surrogates for other kinds of data. (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997, p.47)

On the other hand, that they are 'social facts' makes them of great significance, because they form part of the 'social practices' associated with particular discourses.

Few of the documents analysed in this study have clear authorship, although in the case of working parties their membership is often listed. The Hawke Report (1988) is unusual in Chair Gary Hawke's assertion of personal responsibility for authorship, or at least for the content and decisions: "Responsibility for this report rests with me alone" (pp.3-4). Yet even in this case, much of the thinking must originate from the committee and the secretariat established to support the committee. With many official and organisational documents, anonymity "is part of the official production of documentary reality" (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997, p.58). Some of the union documents, especially *Journal* articles, circulars and letters, have authorship stated, but in most cases these authors are assumed to be acting as representatives of the organisation rather than expressing personal views.

The research design, by supplementing document analysis with interviews with expert participants, many of whom were responsible for commissioning, producing or processing the results of some of the documents studied here, enabled me to test hypotheses developed on the basis of the documents alone. This provides a fuller and more accurate picture of events and makes links back to people involved with authorship of key documents.

Public documents of this kind also involve readers who are implied rather than directly addressed. In the case of the documents analysed here, they are generally directed at educational professionals, although many government and union documents aim to be accessible to a wider audience including parents, politicians and the general public. Some come close to being propaganda in their use of rhetoric and over-simplification, but others are written to seek feedback and are more open in their presentation of the issues.

In encompassing such a large range of documents, a purposive sampling process needed to be used, both in terms of the documents chosen and in terms of the sections of text analysed. Of the many documents produced over the period studied, I sought to select those that met as many as possible of the following criteria: relevance to the particular policy shift, significance in indicating policy developments, and availability to teachers and the public. I tried to avoid choosing only documents that would support my hypotheses (Platt, 1981, pp.38-39).

A reading of all relevant sections of each text was done to establish an overall sense of the type(s) of discourse present, and then samples that best illustrated the discourse(s) were chosen for analysis. It is recognised that elements of bias could occur in this process. In analysing each text, it is inevitable that further choices have to be made about what we seek in the text and the questions we address to it, and these choices will reflect our own assumptions and biases: "There is no such thing as an 'objective' analysis of a text, if by that we mean an analysis which simply describes what is 'there' in the text without being 'biased' by the 'subjectivity' of the analyst" (Fairclough, 2003, p.14).

I was very conscious of this issue when applying the technique of critical discourse analysis to such a wide range of texts. It was inevitable that I would miss significant features of the discourses simply because of the scale of the material and the time

available, and that certain features of the texts would have more salience for me because of my own experiences and my own opinions. I have tried to address this problem by making my own perspective explicit, and by providing direct quotes from the texts wherever possible so that a reader can judge whether my assessment of the discourse is fair.

Interviews with 'expert participants'

I sought to interview a range of people, categorised here as 'expert participants', who could reflect the perspectives of policy-makers, academics, union officials or union activists significant in the shift to standards-based assessment for qualifications. The 13 completed interviews covered a good range of people, in terms of time periods involved, roles, and different perspectives. Many of the 'expert participants' had written extensively on the subject of qualifications policy, and are therefore cited in the literature review sections as well. Interviews were conducted between August 2003 and April 2005, as participants were available. The list of 'expert participants' is provided in Appendix 1, with some details of their careers.

The interviews were semi-structured, based on an interview schedule provided in advance, with some questions used in all interviews but also questions specific to each participant because of their area of expertise. While the interview schedule gave a framework for the interview, the follow-up questions I asked and the expansions and digressions of the participants meant different emphases in different interviews. Three sample interview schedules are provided in Appendix 2.

Interviewing 'expert participants' requires a delicate balance between appearing to know plenty about the subject so as not to be dismissed as unworthy of engagement, and not appearing too knowledgeable in case the subject concludes they have nothing new to share (McHugh, 1994; Ball, 1994b). I prepared thoroughly for each interview, re-reading key writing by the participant, checking dates, and including in the schedule questions specific to each participant's contribution to the changing qualifications landscape. Sometimes a participant would 'test' me on my preparation (Gewirtz & Ozga, 1994; Walford, 1994).

It is also important not to be too directive and to "hand over control of the content of talk to the interviewee" (Ball, 1994b, p.97) and to be prepared to vary the order of questions and follow up leads provided by the participant (Walford, 1994; Silverman 1993; Kvale,

1996). For these reasons I used the schedule as only a general framework for the interviews.

There are particular challenges in interviewing powerful individuals involved with policy-making, especially when they know they are going to be named in the report, as in this case. It is possible that in some cases the picture they present is a misinterpretation of what actually happened, or even a deliberate misrepresentation for some reason (Philips, 1998; Ball, 1994b).

Interviews with teachers

From six schools in the Wellington region, I interviewed a sample of current secondary teachers who had begun teaching by 1980 or earlier and were still teaching and assessing for qualifications in 2004. I interviewed only teachers whose breaks from service in that time totalled no more than five years, to ensure that they had continuous experience during the study period. Across the six schools sampled, I was able to obtain 13 interviews with eligible teachers, between February and April 2004. The sample contained more teachers with very long experience than I had expected: the median career commencement year of the sample was 1973, one teacher had begun teaching in 1960, and the sample's mean teaching experience was 30 years. Between them, they had accumulated many years of memories to share with me, and it was a privilege to be allowed to hear some of these.

I used a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 2) that contained only open-ended questions, and I made generous use of follow-up questions. My aim was to give participants an opportunity to tell their 'work stories' (see below). Although the sample was small and therefore statistically the generalisability of the results is therefore low, the interviews are still a very rich source of data for this study. (For details of the sampling process, see Appendix 1.)

Participant memories

Some methodological issues are raised by endeavouring to access participants' memories of past assessment initiatives as well as their perceptions of current policies. Questions can be raised about the accuracy or otherwise of participants' 'stories', because the telling of a coherent story rather than accurate details may be what is heard: "The stories through which lives are told may be driven principally by the concerns of maintaining narrative identity rather than by any explicit aspiration for the defence of historical accuracy or truth" (Gardner, 2003, p.179). Gardner sees this as a

normal psychological process in which people sort the events and experiences of their lives into a coherent personal narrative, and argues that it may be sufficient for a researcher to engage with this narrative on its own terms (pp.177-179).

In all of the interviews conducted for this study, I sought to create a space for participants to tell their 'work stories' (Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid & Shacklock, 2000) in the context of assessment for qualifications. Telling stories is a key way for people to construct and express meaning, and it moves away from the traditional 'stimulus and response' process that focuses on extracting 'relevant' answers to narrow questions (Mishler, 1986, pp.66-68). The participants' 'voices' communicate the complexities of their decision-making about their work and the variety of their responses to the policy changes in which they have participated. For this reason, I have made extensive use of quotations from participants in Chapters Seven to Nine, weaving their stories together to form a narrative of the collective experience (Smyth et al., 2000, p.68) of educators across a variety of roles during a period of educational change.

What is important for the purposes of this thesis is how, at this point in time, the various participants make sense of their experiences of this particular policy change process, and the discourses that they use to explain it, not whether their memories of particular events are strictly accurate.

Ethical issues confronted during the research are discussed in Appendix 4.

I now turn to the three major ideologies that underlie the discourses evident in the conflict over qualifications change that is the subject of this thesis.

The major ideologies

Three major ideologies are described here, because they are the ideologies in evidence in the texts analysed. The ideologies are neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and social democratic. Apple (2001) identifies four different conservative ideologies struggling for power in America: neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, religious conservatism, and managerialism, however for the purposes of this study, managerialism is positioned as a subset of neo-liberal ideology, and religious conservatism is not addressed as it does not appear to have been of great significance in New Zealand education. I use the term 'social democratic ideologies' to encompass what others might call 'progressive' or 'liberal-humanist' ideologies.

Neo-liberal ideology

Neo-liberal ideology, which had a powerful influence on qualifications debates and policy from the late 1980's, has its roots in capitalist ideology and liberal ideology. The origins of capitalist ideology are in the seventeenth and eighteenth century writings of Hobbes, Locke and Hume, blending ideas from the natural sciences and economic determinism. Hedonism and the exchange value of labour are two principles that underpin capitalist ideology (Kaufman, 1984). The concept of hedonism, or the perceived tendency of people to behave in ways which maximise pleasure and avoid pain, links to Adam Smith's theory of classical economics in which people pursuing their own self-interests serve as the "invisible hand" which drives the market economy without the need for intervention (pp.75-76).

Neo-liberal or New Right ideology has also been called 'economic rationalism' "to describe the dominance of the economy and economic processes over most areas of society" (Codd, 1997a, p.131), but this term, while common in Australia, is not used much in New Zealand. The term 'neo-liberal' is more encompassing. Neo-liberal ideology continues to rely on the ability of Smith's "invisible hand" to drive the market but requires at least a minimalist government whose task is to provide the optimum conditions politically, legally, and institutionally to enable that market to operate (Peters, 1996, p.86). Contrasting with previously dominant social democratic discourses which emphasised a strong role for government and a welfare state to protect the vulnerable (also, ironically, arising out of earlier liberal thinking, see Olssen et al., 2004), neo-liberalism seeks to reduce government intervention in society and the economy but to ensure that capital maintains control through legitimization of neo-liberal ideologies. The hedonist of eighteenth century capitalist discourses becomes 'homo economicus', a 'rational utility-maximizer' whose sole motivation is to pursue their own economic self-interest in the market (Peters, 1996, pp.39-40). There is no place in neo-liberal ideology for the concept of society: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" (British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, quoted in *The Observer*, 1 November 1988, cited in Weiner, 1991).

The key theoretical constructs within neo-liberal discourses are Human Capital Theory, Public Choice Theory, Agency Theory, Transaction-Cost Analysis and Managerialism. Olssen & Matthews (1997) summarise the major presuppositions of these theories as being:

- economically self-interested subjects

- the economy is separate from the rest of society
- the uncoordinated self-interest of individuals correlates with the interests and harmony of the whole
- the individual is a rational optimiser and the best judge of his or her own interests and needs
- a 'flexible', that is, deregulated, labour market provides equal opportunities for people to utilise their skills and therefore optimise their life goals. (p.23)

The concept of 'capture' is another important tenet of neo-liberal discourses. Neo-liberals demand separation of policy-making from policy implementation (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p.39). This separation is justified on the grounds that it avoids "the situation where those who supply state services pursue their own interests *at the expense of the interests of consumers*" (Bertram, 1988, p.110, italics in original), known as 'provider capture'. In education, for example, teachers and educational administrators are positioned as unable to be trusted to act as professionals in the interests of their students. Their expertise is discounted and regimes of accountability are established to ensure that they correctly implement policies developed without their participation (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p.43). The Picot report exemplified this view: "Ministers need high-quality advice on which to base policy, and so we see a clear need to separate policy advisers from the providers of education to eliminate any conflicts of interest" (1988, p.5). This thesis argues that the notion of 'provider capture' was a significant factor in exacerbating the policy gap over school qualifications during the 1990's in New Zealand.

The impact of neo-liberal discourses on education in New Zealand has been widely discussed, e.g. Fiske & Ladd (2000); Grace (1988, 1990, 1994); Lauder & Hughes (1999); Olssen & Morris Matthews (1997). According to Lauder (1990), New Right educational policy has two basic tenets: that education is a private, not a public good, for which the individual should pay the costs, and that choice, in the form of competition between schools, is essential to the efficient functioning of the education system.

The argument that education is a private good links to human capital theory, a fundamental of neo-liberal ideology, where the value of human beings is calculated in monetary terms. For Milton Friedman, the guru of the Chicago School of economists, education was totally a 'private good': the benefits of education were entirely to the individual who received it, and there were no benefits to society. The Chicago School's approach to human capital theory had two core hypotheses, firstly that education and

training increase people's thinking ability and therefore their ability to be productive, and secondly that more productive people earn more, demonstrating that they are more valuable 'human capital'. In the ideal world, therefore, people left to privately fund their education would invest in it to the extent that its costs equated with its benefits (Marginson, 1993, p.38). This assumes a particular concept of the individual, as always acting in their own economic self-interest within freely competitive markets: "Other forms of behaviour are excluded or treated as distortions of the model" (Fitzsimons & Peters, 1994, p.254).

By the mid-1980's, thinking on human capital theory was being revised, with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Development) asserting that the 1960's theories of Friedman and others were "too general, too quantitative, and based on too simplistic theories of both education and the functioning of the economy" (OECD, 1986, cited in Marginson, 1993, p.48). Its pronouncements from then on seem to recommend that governments should take a more interventionist role in education because of its key role in state's ability to respond to technological and social change (OECD, 1987, cited in Marginson, 1993, p.48). This was seen in New Zealand in the discourse shift towards a more functional view of education, with the qualifications reforms integral to that (see Chapter Four).

This belief in a direct correlation between education and a successful economy is a fundamental tenet of neo-liberalism. Olssen (2002) cites Becker, a neo-liberal theorist, as describing education as "the most important single determinant of economic growth" (p.10). A former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jim Bolger, articulates this position while also using the language of social equity ('inclusive', 'place for everyone'): "In an economy which is integrated and growing – in an inclusive economy – there must be a place for everyone. And education is the key to participation" (Ministry of Education, 1993).

However, such a functional view of education may be based on false premises:

Human capital theory assumes an unreal certainty about the connections between education, work and earnings. There are also deep ethical problems in the conception of people as units of capital, controlled by economic forces external to them, rather than self-determining members of a democracy. (Marginson, 1993, p.54)

Wolf (2002) provides empirical data to show that the connection between qualifications and economic productivity is tenuous. Fitzsimons and Peters (1994) describe human

capital theory as seriously limited understanding: "Human capital theory is an impoverished notion of capital. It is unable to understand human activity other than as the exchange of commodities" (p.253).

Public Choice theory, another tenet of neo-liberalism, is part of what Gewirtz (2002) calls "the post-welfarist education policy complex" (p.3). While the impact of school choice policies in New Zealand in the 1990's has been extensively studied (e.g. Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Lauder et al., 1994; Marginson, 1997), the significance of the choice discourse in qualifications policy has been less of a focus for academic comment. Barker (1995) touches on it in his discussion of "purchaser demands" in relation to the impact of 'user-pays' policies in tertiary education: "Students are consumers of services with all the rights of the Consumer Guarantee Act. They demand to know what they are purchasing" (p.20). However Chapter Seven shows that for policy-makers, public choice discourses, often incorporating the word 'flexibility', were seen as significant forces for qualifications change, though generally intermingled with the social democratic discourses about increasing opportunities for students to succeed that featured in the responses of teacher participants.

Linked to the increasing dominance of neo-liberal discourses in the 1980s in New Zealand was a shift from a focus on economic factors and the restructuring of the industrial, economic and welfare sectors as causes of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, to a focus on education and training. Youth unemployment was seen, not as a structural economic and national problem, but as an individual and personal problem in which young people were unemployed because they did not have the right skills and qualifications. Schools, it was claimed, needed to be more vocationally oriented.

From 1984, in particular, with the election of the Fourth Labour Government and a marked shift to neo-liberal policies, the official discourses around the purpose of schooling increasingly came to emphasise the preparation of students for work, rather than the more general goals of developing socially and morally responsible citizens reflected in policies under former Director General, Clarence Beeby (e.g. Beeby, 1992), and in reports such as the Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944). There was a new emphasis on careers guidance and vocational education leading into "a later neo-liberal view of self-serving individuals, or autonomous choosers, pursuing economic rewards in the world of work and the new age of information via an education which is explicitly vocationally and technologically oriented" (Marshall, 1997, pp.305-

306). Put bluntly, the issue was: “whether schools are to become servants of technocratic efficiency needs, or whether they can act to help men and women humanise life under technology” (Wirth, 1988, cited in Marshall, 1997, p.306).

The concept of the Qualifications Framework, a unified system for registering assessment standards and qualifications for all levels from school to upper tertiary and work-based assessment, originated within this period when discourses were shifting to a more economically functional view of education. It was originally conceived as a tertiary level solution to the proliferation of industry training qualifications. The notion of incorporating school qualifications was a late addition, first surfacing in 1988, and linked to notions of improving schools’ contribution to upskilling New Zealanders.

The Qualifications Framework has been described as exemplifying “a ‘busnocratic’ view of quality”, in which skills are promoted ahead of knowledge and the consumers of education, business in particular, decide what is meant by quality, rather than the providers of education. Underlying this is a neo-liberal image of human nature, with people being “‘constituted’, produced and reproduced as autonomous choosers”, but whose range of choices is “imbued with business values”, and connects with the wider government agenda and economic theory: “The autonomous chooser becomes a unit in an enterprise and consumer-driven market totality” (Marshall, 1997, pp.318-320).

The influence of the Porter Project 1990-1991 on qualifications developments in New Zealand is noted by Codd (1997a). This Project was funded mainly by the Trade Development Board and supported by Treasury and the Reserve Bank. It asserted that New Zealand’s economic recovery demanded, amongst other things, major educational change. The Qualifications Framework represents a shift from knowledge as process to knowledge as product:

The ideology of instrumentalism emphasises knowledge as product, knowledge as performance, knowledge as commodity. What is diminished, as a consequence, is knowledge as insight, knowledge as appreciation, knowledge as understanding. Thus, what we have is the replacement of a personal developmental or socially transformative view of education by a narrow instrumentalist view. (Codd, 1997a, pp.133-134)

This shift is also very noticeable in curriculum documents, especially between the Curriculum Review of 1987, under a social democratic Minister of Education, Russell Marshall, to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework of 1993, under a neo-liberal

Minister, Dr Lockwood Smith (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p.69). The Curriculum Framework reflects values from the world of work, both in its principles and in the structures for its implementation, and is based on assumptions of a 'busnocratic' rationality (see above).

In his inaugural address as Professor of Education at Victoria University, Gerald Grace (1988) delivered a passionate attack on the neo-liberal concept of education as a commodity, focusing on its articulation in Treasury's Brief to the incoming government in 1987 (see Chapter Six). Treasury, said Grace, had demonstrated a 'production function' approach to education, seeking to encourage research to measure the relationship between inputs and outputs in order to assess the efficiency of the educational 'enterprise'. In couching education in these terms, Treasury was engaging in a classic "ideological manoeuvre in policy discourse", a manoeuvre resting on the "constant use of a particular form of language which it attempts to naturalise in a common sense way. If that language is accepted, taken up and used without question, an important part of that ideological position has already been assimilated". The potential impact of such language on our traditional ways of thinking about education is frightening:

For if we follow the logic of this position what do our children become but *inputs*; what does the educated citizen become – an *output*; what does the rich and varied experience of education become – a *production function*. Is this the Brave New World of education that we are invited to enter? (Grace, 1988, pp.6-8, italics in original)

New Public Management, the neo-liberal doctrine which underpinned the reform of the state sector in New Zealand during the 1980's and 1990's, has seven fundamental principles: "goal clarity, transparency, contestability, avoidance of bureaucratic or provider capture, congruent incentive structures, enhancement of accountability and cost-effective use of information" (Hood, 1990, cited in Fitzsimons & Peters, 1994, p.248). In education, a clear example of New Public Management in action is what has been described as 'outcomes based education' or OBE. In notes prepared for his Victoria University students, Hall (unpublished) defines OBE as "the declaration of the intended outcomes (objectives) of an education system or operation, the design and implementation of a programme or activities aimed at achieving these outcomes, and the monitoring of the actual outcomes against the intended ones" (p.1). This is referred to in the Ministry of Education as a 'tight-loose-tight' model of accountability: the first 'tight' because the objectives or standards must be met, 'loose' because

institutions have autonomy to design their own programmes to meet these objectives or standards, and the second 'tight' because institutions are held accountable for meeting the objectives or standards (p.1).

The Qualifications Framework is a perfect example of OBE in action. The objectives are set centrally as 'standards' ('tight'); the 'education provider' chooses the curriculum taught in preparing students for assessment ('loose'); the quality of the assessment is controlled through guidelines and moderation processes and results are published leading to the possibility of market sanctions on providers that have failed to deliver adequate levels of success ('tight').

The rationale for OBE, according to Hall (unpublished), is based on several premises, including:

- transparency – those who 'purchase' an education service should know what they are 'purchasing'
- choice – as far as possible, customers should have choice in what they 'purchase'
- devolution/decentralisation – under devolution, control over the design and operation of an educational service is devolved to providers and communities, e.g. Boards of Trustees; under decentralisation, responsibility for implementing centrally defined objectives and services is given to providers and communities. OBE in New Zealand is more decentralisation than devolution
- accountability – those responsible for delivery are accountable for meeting expectations set. (p.2)

The claims made for OBE that it is student-centred in focus because students receive clear information about what is expected of them and can work at their own pace are challenged by Hall (unpublished). He says that while this may be so, students have little control: "Assessment regimes tend to reinforce a content-centred (as opposed to student-centred) approach to learning and teaching" (p.3). It is also:

a relatively closed system of education in respect of knowledge generation and change. It tends to focus on existing knowledge, skills and values. It is most appropriate in situations where accepted truths, specific competencies, particular methods and proven techniques are being taught and assessed. In other words, the nature of what is being taught is able to be prescribed in advance in terms of prescriptive standards or criteria of performance. It is less successful where the knowledge being taught and assessed is contestable. (p.3)

It is clear from the above that there are many aspects of the neo-liberal prescription for education evident in the qualifications reforms of the 1990's, in particular a more functional view of education with skills taking centre stage ahead of knowledge, the promise of more transparent 'results' enabling greater accountability of 'providers', and the increased choice for 'consumers' of education. Furthermore, the deliberate omission of teacher representatives from decision-making about the reforms until the late 1990's (see Chapter Four) was evidence of the 'provider capture' notion at work. However, it is the interaction of these neo-liberal ideas with social democratic goals that are also achieved by the reforms (see below) that provides the 'messiness' discussed in this thesis, making it unwise to categorically reject the qualifications changes as a neo-liberal takeover of schooling in New Zealand.

Neo-conservative ideology

While neo-conservatism shares with neo-liberalism the same goal, a free economy, for neo-conservatives this is in order to secure the authority of the state and its institutions, whereas for neo-liberals it is a goal in itself. Neo-conservatism is distinguished from neo-liberalism by its prioritising of "social authoritarianism, the disciplined society, hierarchy and subordination, the nation and strong government" (Quicke, 1989, p.77).

In the United States, the kind of educational policies likely to be advocated in neo-conservative discourses are: "mandatory national and statewide curricula, national and statewide testing, a 'return' to higher standards, a revivification of the 'Western tradition', patriotism, and conservative variants of character education" (Apple, 2001, p.47).

Neo-conservatives regard the task of education as being to inculcate students with the values of the cultural heritage of their society, through a compulsory core curriculum. Schools also serve a drafting function, identifying the future elite and ensuring that their education prepares them for that role (Gutek, 1988, pp.198-199). Apple (2001) claims that neo-conservative educational ideologies are underpinned by an ethnocentric and even racist understanding of the world, evidencing this with the popularity of a book published in 1994, *The Bell Curve*, by Herrnstein and Murray, which argues for genetic determinism based on race and to some extent gender.

The traditional examination-based norm-referenced school qualifications generally suited neo-conservative purposes well. A Qualifications Framework predicated on a

principle that all students are capable of achievements worth of recognition under the same system was not destined to appeal to neo-conservatives. Some Education Forum publications on the Framework developments reflect elements of neo-conservative thinking (e.g. Irwin, 1994).

However, neo-conservative and neo-liberal discourses have some points of convergence, and Apple (2001) gives the growth in the United States (as also in New Zealand) of 'policing' of teachers' work as one of these. Increased 'policing' in the United States includes specification of content and regulation of teaching methods, backed up by administrative sanctions. For neo-conservatives, this 'policing' comes from a distrust of the motives and competence of teachers, and belief that a strong and interventionist state is needed to control them. For neo-liberals, it comes from a belief that teachers have exercised 'provider capture' over education, and that markets in education are needed to limit their power (p.51). Outcomes-based education, and a qualifications system that focuses on pre-specified outcomes, meet this shared concern to police the work of teachers and limit their autonomy.

It is clear that the dominant education discourse in New Zealand from at least the 1970's was largely social democratic (see Chapters Five and Six), and therefore in opposition to the neo-conservative position, such as that exemplified by government policies under the highly conservative Education Minister Merv Wellington from 1978 to 1984. By the 1990's, however, neo-liberalism was a far more potent force in New Zealand education than neo-conservatism, and thus this thesis focuses more on the struggle between social democratic and neo-liberal discourses.

Social democratic ideology

Defining social democracy is no simple matter, as it has a long history and has taken many forms over that period, having "a diverse, long-standing and contested tradition", whose interpretation in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Australia, for example, during the last fifty years or so, has been widely different. What unites all social democrats is the endeavour to reconcile three things: "economic efficiency, social justice and individual liberty" (Pierson, 2001, pp.55-56). Approaches tend to combine belief in the capacity of parliamentary democracy to legislate for social change, faith in the state bureaucracy and the public sector to deliver on progressive policies, belief in the need to redistribute wealth in the interests of social justice, and an underlying pragmatism or accommodation which distinguishes social democrats from more extreme viewpoints such as economic liberalism, fascism, or communism (Pierson, 2001, pp. 56-59).

The roots of social democratic ideology lie in classical liberalism, from which neo-liberalism also grew (Olssen et al., 2004), however social democrats reject the extremes of market liberalism, believing that the state must intervene in the economy in the interests of social justice and economic efficiency. Social democratic governments tend to adopt economic policies that would be termed 'Keynesian' after the work of John Maynard Keynes. Keynes challenged the market liberal proposition that 'hands-off' government would deliver economic efficiency, asserting instead that the market economy needed to be saved from the damage it could do to itself if left uncontrolled. The task of civil servants was to steer the economy as directed by government, intervening by the use of monetary and fiscal policy, but ensuring that the autonomy of civil society was maintained (Hirst, 1994, p.86).

It has been argued that the New Zealand education system was based from its inception in 1877 on social democratic ideology, in its egalitarian principles and its basis in historically important rights and claims (Olssen & Matthews, 1997). These rights and claims included the right to universal and free education, compulsory schooling to protect children against the self-interest of their parents who might otherwise demand their labour, and access for all irrespective of class, race or creed. At the same time, neo-conservative discourses were also influential, as demonstrated by the persistence for many decades of a qualifications system that entrenched high levels of failure in the interests of 'maintaining high standards' and 'drafting' students for different futures.

In his 'Buntine Oration' in Canberra in 1962, Peter Karmel asserts that education's function in relation to democracy is more important than any economic benefits it might produce:

I do not hold that the main virtue of education reposes in its economic consequences. Quite the reverse. I should tonight advocate a greater educational effort in Australia, even if its sole economic consequences were to reduce national production... I should do this since I believe that democracy implies making educational opportunities as equal as possible and that the working of democracy depends on increasing the number of citizens with the capacity for clear and informed thought on political and social issues. (Karmel, 1962, cited in Marginson, 1993, p.xii)

Both Marginson (1993) and Apple (2001) argue that different conceptions of freedom distinguish the social democratic and neo-liberal views of the role of education. Marginson argues that for social democrats, education is to prepare students to be effective citizens in a democracy "in which freedom is defined in terms of self determination and the power of choice", as distinct from the neo-liberal concept of freedom as "the absence of coercion by the state" (p.19). He cites Gramsci's concept that education enables every citizen to govern in the broadest sense:

Democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can govern and that society places him [*sic*], even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this. (Gramsci, 1971, p.41 cited in Marginson, 1993, p.19)

The social democratic tradition in education has several components: the assumption that every student has equal rights to education; a set of ideals of comprehensiveness and inclusiveness so that students will be educated alongside people from every type of background and hence learn flexibility, tolerance and cultural and social awareness; and the concept that learning programmes and the system of governance in education should explicitly prepare students for their democratic responsibilities (Marginson, 1993, p.20).

In his conclusion, however, Marginson (1993) suggests that the politics of equality of opportunity have, in Australia at least, tended to be about the opportunity to participate in a 'common culture' which usually means middle-class Anglo-Australian and mostly male-dominant culture. This 'deconstructs' the cultures of students who don't fit this norm, and leads them to have to "choose between their own backgrounds and the cultural requirements of the curriculum". He asserts that the process of common assessment of a common curriculum exacerbates the inequity of this imposed homogeneity. Market liberalism cannot remedy this, but social democratic policies can (p.245). The new qualifications system in New Zealand, with its underlying goal of giving 'parity of esteem' to all assessment by credentialling a wide range of learning on the one framework, can be argued to be a social democratic solution to the inequity Marginson highlights.

In a paper on the Australian Finn Committee's review of post-compulsory education, Collins articulates and defends a social democratic view of education against the neo-liberal ('economic rationalist') view:

The problem with any instrumental view of knowledge, and particularly an economic rationalist one, is that it fits with totalitarian political structures. Rather than being concerned to teach young people to think about their own society and to develop the knowledge and skills needed as citizens to maintain a democratic polity, knowledge within an economic rationalist frame of reference is about information and skills just for increasing productivity, usually in hierarchically organised firms. Economic rationalism treats people as objects – ‘human resources’ for the economy – as if the economy is an end in itself (Collins, 1991, cited in Marginson, 1993, pp.231-232).

However, Lauder, Hughes & Brown (1991) argue that social democrats have neglected the links between education and the economy in terms of the notion of the wastage of talent. They advocate rejection of the assumption that society contains only a limited pool of talent that needs to be captured to fill the executive positions in society (a neo-conservative position), in favour of the concept that “In a modernised high technology economy talent cannot afford to be wasted and any new education system will be designed to ensure that it isn’t” (p.64). The concept of ‘ability’, they say, has helped to legitimise inequalities in Western society, and what they call ‘bureaucratic education’ “is clearly designed to promote those with ‘ability’ and fail the majority” with streaming or banding and a curriculum which is designed to cater for different ‘ability levels’ through constructing success or failure through an examination system which cannot even be guaranteed to accurately certify as ‘successful’ those who deserve to be (pp.65-67).

They argue that a new kind of education system is required for a modernised economy, in which production requires people to be intelligent and creative, whatever their jobs. “Bureaucratic education”, by failing students, creates people who lack confidence in their ability to be intelligent and creative in this way (Lauder et al., 1991, p.67)

The Lauder et al. (1991) argument is interesting. While Lauder would never be categorised as ‘neo-liberal’, the argument demonstrates the same kind of intertextuality of neo-liberal and social democratic discourses that was reflected in many texts analysed for this study (see Chapters Five to Nine): neo-liberal, because it refers to the human capital function of education, but social democratic, because it emphasises equity and ensuring success for all. This same intertextuality is seen in many justifications of the Qualifications Framework, as a system that is designed to break

down the hierarchy of subjects and eliminate the categorisation of students into successes or failures and provide multiple pathways to success (see Chapter Six).

Social democracy, and its associated economic policies, have been subject to extensive attack in recent years, particularly by the proponents of neo-liberalism, but also more recently by those who would advocate a 'Third Way' which is claimed to comprise the 'best' of market liberalism and social democratic ideals (e.g. Giddens, 1994, 1998, 2000). (Bottery, 2000, calls this the 'New Modernizer' approach.) However, Third Way policies are outside the scope of this study, which focuses on the contestation between social democratic and neo-liberal policies rather than on attempts to bring them together.

Social democratic discourses are dominant in the union documents discussed in Chapter Five and in the interviews with the teachers and union activists reported in Chapters Seven to Nine. They are also strongly present in government documents up to the late 1980's, and echoes of them remain to the present, despite the increasing dominance in government during the 1990's of neo-liberal discourses (see Chapter Six).

Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework for the study and the methods used to apply that framework in the research. It has discussed the links between discourses, ideologies and social practices, and the constant struggle for power between the users of conflicting discourses. It is clear that education policy, including school qualifications policy, is a key site for this struggle.

What I have laid out here are the foundations for this thesis, which builds a detailed analysis of how that struggle has been played out in one particular aspect of education in New Zealand, the reform of school qualifications over the period from the late 1970's to today. From Chapter Four on, I demonstrate in more detail how the struggle for hegemony has been waged at different periods, firstly between social democratic and neo-conservative discourses, and then with the later intrusion of neo-liberal discourses from the mid-1980's between all three, and begin to theorise how this struggle contributed to a 'policy gap' over school qualifications between practising teachers and government and union policy-makers.

Chapter 3 – Teachers and policy change

This thesis, in seeking explanations for the 'policy gap' on qualifications that developed between teachers and government during the 1990s, explores teachers' experiences of that gap, including the experiences of the union, PPTA, traditionally the professional 'voice' of secondary teachers. The thesis considers questions of teacher agency, and how teachers and their union representatives tend to respond to different policy contexts in which they find themselves.

The thesis argues that neo-liberal discourses dominant in government from the late 1980's influenced both the content and the change processes of qualifications reform. During the 1990's, teachers and their union were deliberately excluded from government policy development. New Zealand secondary teachers' response to this exclusion, and to the nature of the policies being developed, was to test the limits of classical definitions of professionalism, with the union leading boycott action around professional responsibilities such as the implementation of curriculum and qualifications reforms in pursuit of both industrial and professional goals. A 'policy gap' became very evident, and this is yet to close completely despite teachers, through their union, being brought back into policy-making in the late 1990's.

Chapter Two discussed the concept of discourse and the features of the discourses dominant in government at different periods: largely social democratic discourses up to the mid-1980's, and neo-liberal discourses after that time. This chapter discusses the academic literature about teachers and policy change. It considers what the literature tells us about teachers' experience of and responses to major policy change, especially when it results from significant shifts in dominant discourses. I have focused in this chapter particularly on research involving secondary teachers, and especially New Zealand sources where available.

The first section considers the impact of neo-liberal discourses on the relationship between the government and the secondary teaching profession, including its union representatives, changing it from a close and productive relationship that respected the professionalism of teachers to one in which teachers were redefined as self-serving and requiring to be removed from decision-making to prevent 'provider capture'. I next outline the larger context of changing constructions of teacher professionalism under New Right government, as identified by a number of academics, following this with an

overview of literature about how teachers tend to react to such shifts in their positioning by policy-makers, and to attempts by governments to impose change upon them. The final section considers the extent to which teachers are able to continue exerting agency as professionals, and how this impacts on the fate of educational 'reform' which is imposed rather than originating within teachers' own practice. The body of literature discussed in these sections provides a framework within which to place the data in Chapters Seven to Nine about teachers' memories of the change processes.

Teachers and the government

Pragmatic partnership

A close working relationship existed in New Zealand up to the late 1980's between teachers as professionals, through their union representatives, and government policy-making processes, and this was true of policy about assessment as any other area (Capper & Munro, 1990; Simpkin, 2002 and forthcoming; Jesson, 1995). Codd (1990) describes that relationship: "For more than a generation, the character of our school system reflected the conventional wisdom of professional educators. A feature of that wisdom was the pragmatic recognition that change should be gradual and that professional advocacy should be tempered by an appraisal of political realities" (p.17). The ability of governments to control closely the work of individual schools and teachers is necessarily limited (Reid, 2003). Simpkin cites Dale's assertion that "governments pay the piper and call the tune, but teachers themselves decide how it will be played" (Dale, 1989, cited in Simpkin, forthcoming).

New Right reforms

The demise of the previous close working relationship at national level has largely been placed in the late 1980's (e.g. Jesson, 1995). The clearest signal to the union of the change of government stance appears to have been in the middle of 1988 in a letter from a Ministry official, Arch Gilchrist, to PPTA, in the context of the Secondary Staffing Review. The letter informed PPTA that the process of policy development had been changed. From that point on, policy input into education was now "directly through the Minister without the previous mechanisms of consensus working parties" (Jesson, 1995, p.141).

For Capper & Munro (1990), August 1987 was a significant date because of a change in stance at the State Services Commission (which at that time negotiated teachers' pay and conditions) to a position which viewed teacher unions as having no legitimate

voice in a wide range of decisions about education. While previously PPTA members had shown some ambivalence about perceiving themselves as 'unionists', the State Sector Act 1988 ended such debates by firmly positioning PPTA as a union (Simpkin, 2002, p.85).

There is some debate, however, over when this shift in the relationship between government and the profession started, with Openshaw (2003) differing from other writers in asserting that the events of 1987-1989 were not so much a sharp break with the past as the end of a historical continuum. He identifies 1970 as a turning point, in that from then the Department of Education began to face a different policy environment in which, rather than the Department promoting and defending educational policies introduced during the first Labour Government (1935-1949), it faced strong challenge from a "radicalized, fragmented educational Left" which "demanded a major role in curriculum change but also directly challenged the structures and ideals that had previously underpinned liberal educational reform" (p.135). From the 1960s, he argues, PPTA had reorganised itself into a more effective and activist body, and took a much greater interest in curriculum matters, leading to the production of the radical curriculum report *Education in Change* (NZPPTA, 1969). The PPTA agenda became increasingly challenging, with feminists and biculturalists becoming more influential and major challenges to the curriculum and to school power being issued. From the late 1970's the economy weakened, youth unemployment soared, and neo-liberal ideas began to take root in government and the Treasury. By 1984, market theory and privatisation were becoming increasingly influential around the world (Openshaw, 2003).

It is worth asking whether sector groups like the teacher unions actually recognised at first the threat to their influence that these growing neo-liberal discourses posed. It is interesting, because of the similarities with New Zealand, to consider the developments in the United Kingdom which led to a highly prescriptive outcomes-based national curriculum in the 1980's. Moon (1990) traces a breakdown in the post-war 'educational cohabitation' between government, local authorities and teacher unions to the mid-1970s, a similar time to when Openshaw locates it in New Zealand. There were the beginnings of reaction to liberal progressive ideas and a reaction to local education authorities exerting their muscle against central initiatives. By 1986 this had developed into what Moon describes as "a radical shift in the balance of power between government and the interest groups that had been so influential in building educational policy in the post war period" (p.19). Right-wing 'think tanks' were exerting

increasing pressure on the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who was “said to be showing an interest in education”, perhaps similarly to New Zealand’s Prime Minister, David Lange, a little later. The shift to a centralised curriculum was part of a set of measures to create accountability and efficiency, familiar words in a New Zealand context (p.23).

Openshaw’s analysis of the shifting balance of power between government and profession over a longer period is useful to remind us that major shifts do not emerge from nowhere. Nevertheless, it is the events of the late 1980’s, such as the State Sector Act 1988, that for the union signifies the most marked shift (Simpkin, 2002; Jesson, 1995), and during the 1990’s, PPTA shifted from its previous sometimes testy but generally affable partnership relationship with government to a strongly oppositional relationship (Jesson, 1995).

Under the New Right reforms of the 1990’s, the previous prevailing concept of accountability as “a sense of moral obligation” changed to teachers being seen as state workers whose accountability was to the government and to their ‘consumers’ (i.e. parents and students) rather than to their profession (Renwick, 1983, cited in Codd, 1998, p.152). Codd (1999) calls the new context for teachers “a culture of distrust” because the ideology behind the New Right ‘reforms’ treats individuals as “self-interested maximisers of wants and preferences” rather than as professionals driven by motivations of public service or commitment to social justice. State employees, including teachers, are assumed to need controlling through a mix of constraints and incentives within an educational marketplace to avoid their unfettered pursuit of self-interest (pp.45-52). This is antithetical to the social democratic concept of the teacher as an intellectual worker who carries emancipatory authority, including political and ethical obligations to challenge inequality and disempowerment (Lee, O’Neill & McKenzie, 2004).

In some respects, though, government’s control of teachers became more limited in the 1990’s under the Tomorrow’s Schools (Minister of Education, 1988) environment. Teachers, while state employees, are at an extra remove from government than state servants in government departments, and the Tomorrow’s Schools changes inserted what Simpkin (forthcoming) calls a ‘fictitious’ employer, a school Board of Trustees, which distanced teachers further from government and from the dominant neo-liberal ideologies of the time:

Schools education ... was now cut off from regular contact with the new ideology that informed many other parts of the state. While the central agencies of the new educational structures were operating according to the principles of neo-liberalism, policy implementation was in the hands of school Boards of Trustees which of necessity relied on guidance from the principal and teachers. Teachers, with their different values, were not forced into 'negotiation' with the new ideas on a daily basis. (p.16)

Nevertheless, an extensive surveillance framework exists to control them (Bottery, 2000, pp.151-154).

The qualifications reforms

One of the New Right fundamentals in education is to prevent 'provider capture' through teachers exercising inappropriate power over educational decision-making. It can be argued that a major reason for neo-liberal support of the 1990's qualifications reforms was that pinning down assessment to pre-defined standards gives an appearance, at least, of de-powering teachers and preventing 'provider capture' of the curriculum (e.g. Lee et al., 2004). While standards-based assessment may have many benefits to students, in its most extreme form of competency-based unit standards it is also a highly technocratic system in which the job of the teacher can be reduced to 'teach task then test'. It also appears to deliver better information about the effectiveness of teaching, thus fitting a managerialist approach to education where teacher performance, as evidenced by outputs in the form of student results, is able to be placed under close surveillance.

The political context in New Zealand within which the policy shift from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment occurred was one in which successive governments were coming under the influence of neo-liberal discourses. The shift also coincided with a time when the union had lost power over curriculum matters, except through negative means. There was only one forum in which they could make their influence felt, and that was collective bargaining (Simpkin, forthcoming). To exert bargaining power, the union withdrew support for implementation of the new curricula and qualifications, despite the fact that its leadership was not unhappy with the content of the curriculum changes (Jesson, 1995).

This shift to neo-liberal discourses may partly explain the development of a 'policy gap' on qualifications. An additional factor that should not be ignored, though, was that the shape of the reforms, developed largely without the profession's input because of the

drive to prevent 'provider capture' in policy-making, also diverged from the union's original vision (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, the impact of neo-liberalism on teachers' positioning as professionals, discussed in the remainder of this chapter, was a significant factor in the reaction of teachers, as evidenced in Chapter Nine.

Changing constructions of professionalism

Changing constructions of professionalism are key to efforts by government to exercise control over teachers:

The promotion of teaching as professional work, or of teachers as professionals, at any given time can usually be traced to a motive situated in the social and political imperatives of the time, and inspection of the rhetorical use of the term, at such times, will reveal the interests and values it serves. (Smyth et al., 2000, p.139)

The shift to neo-liberal government discourses in New Zealand and elsewhere has been associated with changing constructions of teachers' professionalism.

De-professionalisation

Recent changes in the nature of teachers' work have been positioned as 'professionalization' or 'intensification'. Hargreaves (1994) argues that for those who view them as 'professionalization', the teacher's role has changed and extended into new areas of expertise. A contrasting view, and the one with which I am more in sympathy, is that teachers' work has been intensified (routinised, deskilled, and overburdened with imposed change under conditions of work which fail to support them adequately) and therefore de-professionalised, but the discourses of professionalism lead teachers to consent to their own exploitation, for example by striving to do their best for their students despite adverse conditions.

Using Lyotard's (1984) theory of 'performativity', Gewirtz (2002) identifies a 'discourse of performativity' that has led to the de-professionalisation of teachers. This discourse prioritises the measurement of performance, productivity and output in order to prove 'quality' and 'accountability'. Drawing on research in four secondary schools in the United Kingdom, she asserts that managerialism has produced "subjugated classroom teachers, teachers who have lost control of what they teach, how they teach and the determination of the goals of their teaching, and who have to live in the shadow of constant surveillance" (p.150). Schools are experiencing, she says, "a diminution of teacher control ... over decisions about the ultimate goals and objectives of their work,

and pressure on teachers to become increasingly preoccupied with the technical aspects of meeting aims and targets set elsewhere" (p.72).

Observing that same United Kingdom policy context, Helsby (1999) says that within the discourse of educational policy-making:

The notion of the autonomous and responsible professional, dedicated to his/her students and trusted to take complex decisions in their best interest, has been largely displaced by the image of an occupational group that has somehow failed and is therefore in need of regulation and 'hard' management... The new vision of schooling which teachers are invited to share casts them in the role of efficient and cost-effective employees, vying with others to maximize the test scores of their students and striving constantly to improve their own performance in line with government requirements. (p.167)

Fortunately, it is never that simple in practice. These new discourses interact with traditional professional and social democratic discourses of education, and it is by no means clear, in the United Kingdom or New Zealand, that either discourse is in the ascendancy. Instead they appear to have reached an uneasy co-existence. A crisis in the recruitment and retention of teachers appears to be having a significant impact on public discourses, to the extent that there is now more emphasis placed on the 'professionalism' of teachers (Helsby, 1999, p.174).

O'Neill (2001) argues that in the second half of the twentieth century in New Zealand, three broad conceptions of the teacher can be discerned: the 'ideal' teacher, the 'professional' teacher, and the 'accountable' teacher. The 'ideal' teacher is reflected in the Report of the Thomas Committee (Department of Education, 1944) which envisaged schools delivering a curriculum differentiated to meet the needs of every individual student. However, O'Neill argues that a post-war crisis in teacher numbers and quality, the dead hand of the School Certificate exam and changing student composition all interfered with the ability of schools and individual teachers to perform according to this ideal (pp.97-98).

The second conception, the 'professional' teacher, is located in a series of PPTA publications between 1969 and 1974 (NZPPTA 1969, Shallcrass 1973, NZPPTA 1974). In these, PPTA presented a vision "of autonomous, educated, thoughtful and creative professionals working on the basis of 'mutual respect' in a humanistic partnership with students" (O'Neill, 2001, p.99). Delivery on this vision was also hampered by factors

such as staffing shortages, problems of classroom control faced by teachers, and lack of time for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. At secondary level, however, the development of subject groupings, firstly through PPTA's curriculum committees and later through regional and national subject associations, saw subject specialists exercising increasing influence with government (pp.100-101).

The third conception, the 'accountable' teacher, O'Neill (2001) locates in the 1986 Scott Report into the quality of teaching which argues that "as professionals, all teachers should be held accountable for learner outcomes" (p.102). Soon after this Report, Appendix G, listing a range of attributes of a competent teacher, became part of the secondary teachers' industrial agreement and was used when questions were raised about the competency of an individual teacher. The Appendix remained there until replaced by government-imposed 'professional standards' during the 1990's. The discourse of the 'accountable' teacher came to be the dominant discourse during the 1990's in government policy. There are signs that it is being replaced in the current decade by a new discourse of the 'quality' teacher. The extent to which this is different from the 'accountable' teacher, or simply an attempt to make the concept of the 'accountable' teacher more palatable to the profession, is yet to be seen.

In a paper to a PPTA seminar, O'Neill (2003) continued this schema by suggesting two further stages: the teacher as 'proficient assessor' of the 1990's, and the 'teacher for diversity', focusing on quality teaching, since 1999.

A different categorisation of teachers as professionals is Mac An Ghaill's (1994) typology of teachers' educational ideologies, developed during his work in a British secondary school: "the professionals" who were basically the traditionalists, opposed to progressive education, supportive of traditional forms of assessment, relatively authoritarian and hostile to recent curriculum change; "the old collectivists", who were keen union members and left-wing politically, anti-establishment, collectivist and egalitarian, in favour of criterion-referenced and course-based assessment, and concerned for equity and social justice; "the new entrepreneurs", who were anti-trade union, supportive of accountability systems, committed to promoting new courses including vocationalism, and favouring marketisation of schooling (pp.19-21). The first two of these categories appeared to be represented in the teacher sample for this study, making this typology useful in explaining the variety of ways that the teacher participants had reacted to the successive policy shifts in relation to qualifications assessment (see Chapter Nine).

Outcomes-focused education and de-professionalisation

Outcomes-focused teaching and assessment has been linked to a loss of teacher autonomy and professionalism (Bottery & Wright, 2000). Smyth (2001) places its appearance in the early 1980s, linked to "the new technology of control within education" whose purpose is to link education more closely to industry (p.85). As structural adjustment of economies is pursued, public funds for education decrease and the role of the state becomes that of an evaluator of the products of education rather than a provider of services. The focus shifts from inputs to outputs, with maintenance of central control over the targets of education (national curricula, guidelines, policies, assessment outcomes) but devolution of managing inputs to institutions (pp.86-88).

Like Hargreaves (1994), Smyth (2001) argues that educators, especially those in leadership positions, tend to consent to this new discourse because of its "apparent rationality" and its assurance of accountability:

The apparent rationality of the outcomes rhetoric offers teachers and school-level administrators an idealized and naturalized conception of the management and evaluation of teaching and learning at the school level. The notion that learning outcomes can and should be predicted, and then measured, seems sensible, objective, natural, and practical. Gone is the reliance on the teacher's value-laden, unreliable, and subjective assessments. Gone, too, is the uncomfortable and inefficient heterogeneity of curriculum content, and unpredictable and circumstantial pedagogy of classroom teachers. In its place is the promise of a concentration of schools and teachers on student achievement, and the heartening predictability of a standardized curriculum and scientific technology of measurement... Accountability is assured, and responsibility to parents and employers can be concretely demonstrated. (pp.91-92)

On the other hand, it can be argued that some educators may consent to this new discourse because they perceive, probably over-optimistically, the potential to use the devolved responsibility for inputs to achieve their social democratic goals (Sellar, 2005).

Locke (2001) studied a sample of New Zealand secondary school English teachers, divided into two groups: those who had begun teaching between 1961 and 1970, and those who had begun between 1995 and 1999. He asked them all to choose one of two definitions of professionalism to describe themselves: the classical model (typified by expertise, altruism and autonomy) or a managerial model (typified by conformity to

externally set goals and accountability systems). While a large majority of all teachers chose the former, rather more of the newer teachers chose the latter. Follow-up questions aiming to establish how teachers' professional identification squared with their responses to the new outcome-focused English curriculum and unit standard assessment showed that classical professionals tended to be less comfortable with these reforms. Some respondents felt strongly that the reforms undermined their professionalism, e.g. "If I'm reduced to a cog in a machine, I don't feel like a human being who is growing, responding, serving needs as I see them, etc..." (p.17).

Teachers as intellectual workers

Challenges to this positioning of teachers as de-professionalised technicians rely on concepts of teachers as intellectual workers, whose task during educational change is to critique and challenge the dominant discourses. For example, Smyth (2001), in reframing teachers' work as questioners or critical pedagogues, goes back to Gramsci as his theoretical base:

Gramsci (1971) argues that what is important about intellectual work, and hence the activities of intellectuals, is not their cognitive function, often seen as existing independently of issues of class, culture, and power, but rather their political and social prowess in developing the potential to engage with and transform dominant theoretical traditions. (p.198)

Similarly, Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) argue that theorising teaching as "intellectual labour" clarifies the ideological and material conditions needed for their work. They use Gramsci's concept of "conservative and radical organic intellectuals" and extend it to delineate four "ideal-typical" categories of intellectuals: transformative, critical, accommodating and hegemonic. While they recognise that teachers will move in and out of the categories at different times and in different contexts, their ideal is clearly the teacher as transformative intellectual, central to whose work "is the task of making the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogical" (p.46). Such a teacher understands "that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations" and that "making the political more pedagogical means utilizing forms of pedagogy that treat students as critical agents, problematizes knowledge, utilizes dialogue, and makes knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory" (p.46).

These conceptions of teachers as political actors challenging their own oppression are idealised, and may in fact bear little resemblance to most teachers (see Chapter Nine).

However, they remind us of the fundamentally political nature of teaching (Reid, McCallum & Dobbins, 1998), something that is denied under neo-liberal policy approaches, where centrally controlled curricula construct teaching as “a skilled and apolitical craft, based on technical expertise”, where “a competent educator is one who is able to implement effectively the policies of the government of the day” (p.251).

Teacher agency in policy change

Central to this thesis is the question of how much agency teachers can and will exercise when confronted with policy change originating from outside the school context. The literature discussed in this section throws some light on the factors which can influence the amount and type of agency demonstrated by teachers during such change.

Teachers' responses to policy change are multi-faceted, complex and poorly understood (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). There is a dearth of information, for example, about New Zealand secondary teachers' lived experience of dealing with curriculum and assessment change. O'Neill (2001) notes that studies tend to focus on the anticipated effects of change on teachers' autonomy and professionalism, but produce little evidence of the real experiences of teachers. Information available is limited to survey data on the consequences of change, such as workloads and stress, and some evidence from evaluations of various professional development contracts, but there is nothing which reveals “how the culture and history of secondary teaching in New Zealand influence contemporary teachers' ideologies and practice” (p.126). O'Neill himself made a significant contribution to filling this gap through his work with teachers in four secondary schools during a period of intense change in the mid-1990's (see below).

Educational change is a complex process, and often results in ‘a clash of cultures’ between policy-makers at government or district level, leaders at school level, and classroom teachers. This clash can create a gap in meaning-making, leading to what has been called a ‘policy gap’. This section considers research that may indicate factors contributing to such ‘policy gaps’.

Policy as text

The distinction Ball (1994a) makes between *policy as text* and *policy as discourse* is useful here. Considering *policy as text* reminds us that not only are there complex

struggles, interpretations and reinterpretations in the production or 'encoding' of policies, but at the reception or 'decoding' of the policy texts (e.g. at school and teacher level) there are equally complex processes:

We can see policies as representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context). A policy is both contested and changing, always in a state of 'becoming', of 'was' and 'never was' and 'not quite'. (p.16)

Hence the policy text that appears in a school (a Government White Paper, an announcement by NZQA, a statement in the *Education Gazette*) does not appear out of nowhere and is not read by an audience in a vacuum:

Thus, the physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or wherever, does not arrive 'out of the blue' – it has an interpretational and representational history – and neither does it enter a social or institutional vacuum. The text and its readers and the context of response all have histories. (Ball, 1994a, p.17)

Nevertheless, the process engaged in by teachers and principals to 'localise' the policy text is a creative process which requires "thought, invention and adaptation":

Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set. A response must still be put together, constructed in context, offset against other expectations. All of this involves creative social action, not robotic reactivity. (Ball, 1994a, p.19)

The term 'resistance', often used to typify the way that teachers react to policies, privileges the reality of the policy-maker over the reality of the teacher, and oversimplifies the complexity of the way that policy is interpreted in the context of the school. In any given policy context, there will be varying degrees of teacher agency and also of constraint on that agency (Ball, 1994a). O'Neill's (2001) discussion of the significance to Heads of Departments of the variety of curriculum texts with which they were having to deal in the mid-1990's demonstrates the range of degrees of agency accorded to teachers. HODs in his study were variously making decisions about whether to enter and remain in voluntary trialling of unit standards, about how to implement new compulsory national curricula, and in one case about whether to volunteer to engage with an entrepreneurial curriculum to address student needs (p.363).

A study of what happened in West Australia when central office bureaucrats attempted to impose on schools three New Right agendas, school improvement, accountability, and participative decision making, is of considerable interest here in demonstrating in practice Ball's (1994a) theorisation of 'policy as text'. Leggett (1997) shows that the understandings of teachers about the new government agenda diverged greatly from the understandings of the bureaucrats who developed the policy and produced the policy texts for schools. She describes the divergence of understanding as teachers "facing a different direction, constructing alternative readings of the policies, and speaking an apparently different language" (p.280). The teachers' different direction was typified by an orientation towards their subjects and their students, including their students' families, rather than towards government policy. Where the requirements appeared to conflict with this orientation, they were "initially resisted, avoided, ignored, or at best adopted with reluctance by secondary teachers" (p.280).

Different meanings were given to language used in the policy texts. For example, the word 'client', used in the context of the new accountability requirements, to the government officials meant the community, but to the teachers meant their students. This example illustrates clearly the different directions in which groups were facing: the bureaucrats valued schools' accountability to the state and their local communities, the teachers valued accountability to their students (Leggett, 1997, pp.282-283).

Leggett (1997) describes the process she studied as an attempt by the West Australia Ministry of Education "to impose the discursive practices of the new managerial agenda" (p.283). The end result was "an awkward compliance with ministry policy" in which teachers had reacted to the attempt to impose change on them "by selectively extracting, interpreting and modifying those elements which fitted or could be made to fit the discourse/s of the school, discarding, disregarding or oblivious to the remainder" (p.285).

Two possible readings of this situation are likely, with bureaucrats regarding schools and teachers as conservative and reluctant to change, and teachers seeing the profession as deliberately resisting change which they do not see as in their students' best interests. Leggett (1997) suggests an alternative reading, that the intended policy change failed to recognise the complex realities of schools, which exist to ensure that the needs of students are met:

The lived reality of a school is, and must remain, very different from that within central office. Different values dominate, and underpin the routine decision making. They are needed to ensure that the diverse needs of individual students are met on a daily basis. (p.286)

The implementation of a new National Curriculum in England and Wales in the early 1990's is another useful parallel to the New Zealand qualifications reforms at the same period. Ball & Bowe (1992) describe national policy implementation at school level as "a complex interplay between the history, culture and context of the school and the intentions and requirements of the producers of policy texts" (p.113). They use the term 'dialectical process' for policy change, whereby the legislation introducing the change, the documentation produced by the bureaucracy, and the implementation by teachers are 'loosely coupled'. Policy texts "are not closed, their meanings are neither fixed nor clear, and the carry over of meanings from one policy arena and one educational site to another is subject to interpretational slippage and contestation" (p.98). They distinguish between three aspects of any given policy: intended policy, which encompasses the 'official' statements of the policy at government and school leadership levels; actual policy, which is the written texts in the form of legislation, circulars and policy documents which set out to define the intended policy for practitioners; and policy-in-use, which is the practices and discourses of practitioners in response to the intended and actual policies (p.100). Between these parts of the policy process, there is ample room for the policy to become something quite other than what its developers envisaged; in other words, a 'policy gap' can develop.

Ball & Bowe (1992) draw attention to the importance in secondary schools of subject departments, and the fact that a policy may be interpreted differently not only between schools but between departments within schools. This can be caused by what they call a 'bricolage' of motives and theory that constitute the discourse of pedagogy in a department, the 'collective wisdom and history' of that department, or by staffing issues within the department such as whether it is a stable group of experienced specialists or a muddle of non-specialists, new teachers, part-timers (pp.104-106).

Different departments and teachers may also approach the policy texts differently. Ball & Bowe (1992) use the terms "writerly" and "readerly" for different approaches to policy texts. A "writerly" approach is that of a confident professional who proactively and critically interprets the texts as they seek to adopt them into their practice. A

“readerly” approach is reactive, passive and unquestioning, approaching the texts as a technician, making use of them as how-to-do manuals (p.113).

Applying this to the New Zealand context, O'Neill (2001) observes that most of the Heads of Departments in his study used a “writerly” approach to the curriculum and assessment policy texts they were dealing with. They saw them as documents they could use to further the goals of their departments, but did not see them as demanding overly significant changes to existing classroom practice or to teachers' professional autonomy. Nevertheless, they were having a significant impact on their work, in terms of developing new assessment regimes and rewriting departmental documents to meet new accountability requirements. In some cases, where the demands for change were incompatible with teacher's existing identities, they were resisted either by adaptation or by refusal to comply (pp.372-373).

New Zealand Physics teachers, faced with a new curriculum document in the late 1990's, took a similarly 'writerly' approach to the text, leading to a significant lack of pedagogical change (Fernandez & Ritchie, 2003).

It has been suggested that schools' adoption of policy depends very much on who is advocating the policy:

Many reformers went unheard – especially outsiders without clout. But when recognized leaders inside education – such as the professors and superintendents who used to be called the 'educational trust' – spoke about policy, other professionals were apt to listen and to adopt the reforms they proposed. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.58)

This raises interesting questions about the qualifications reforms in New Zealand. It could be argued that one reason for the relatively enthusiastic reception of the achievement-based assessment trials in New Zealand was because they were being advocated by trusted members of the profession or a trusted Department of Education, whereas unit standards trials were less enthusiastically received because they were being advocated by a new agency, NZQA, which had built up no credibility with teachers.

The significance of people mediating and moderating educational policy in the process of its implementation should never be underestimated. Helsby (1999) warns that because of this, consistency and completeness of policy implementation are an unrealistic goal:

Both in work generally, and in schooling in particular, external imperatives are constantly mediated and moderated through human agency and are incorporated to a greater or lesser extent into existing practice. In this way the nature of any change to teachers' work is never predetermined, but instead results from actions and choices that are made at different stages in the long process from the initial production of central educational policy texts through to day-to-day policy realization in the classroom. (p.15)

Some policy texts are not read firsthand by significant numbers of teachers, and key mediators such as principals (and in the New Zealand context subject associations and teacher unions) may be relied upon by teachers to contextualise the policy or to gatekeep (Ball, 1994a; Helsby, 1999). This contributes to the reshaping of intended policy as it moves closer to the practising teacher (Helsby, 1999, p.25). Further, teachers are often subject to conflicting demands, and in important respects the system actually relies on individual teachers making choices:

The educational system remains reliant upon individual teachers to balance these demands in relation to the needs of their particular students and to make a succession of practical choices within their day-to-day work. The accumulation of these choices shapes teachers' work and is an important basis of their relative but enduring autonomy. (Helsby, 1999, p.26)

The wider the 'policy gap', the more the likelihood that teachers' choices will reflect different priorities from those of policy-makers.

Policy as discourse

Discussing *policy as discourse*, Ball (1994a) argues that the scope for teacher agency is limited by the discursive power of policy texts to define 'truth' and 'knowledge':

[Policies] are set within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment. We read and respond to policies in discursive circumstances that we cannot, or perhaps do not, think about... Thus, in these terms the effect of policy is primarily discursive, it changes the possibilities we have for thinking 'otherwise'; thus it limits our responses to change, and leads us to misunderstand what policy is by misunderstanding what it does. Further, policy as discourse may have the effect of redistributing 'voice', so that it does not matter what some people say or think, and only certain voices can be heard as meaningful or authoritative. (p.23)

This is countered by O'Neill (2001), who suggests that the power of the official discourses may be less than some would argue. Secondary schools have a history and a culture that strongly influences teacher thinking, regardless of official texts:

Teachers' personal and collective theories of knowledge (epistemologies), the ways they view their occupational and social worlds (ontologies) and the values they espouse and use as the basis of decision-making (axiologies) are not ahistorical entities. Contemporary practices are embedded in longer standing cultures and politics of secondary schooling in New Zealand. (p.364)

In particular, he suggests that work-storied accounts which focused on the relational aspects of teaching were consistent with policy texts produced in the 1940's to at least the late 1970's; that concepts of school organisation appeared largely unchanged since the 1970's; that conceptions of curriculum seemed noticeably unaffected by the counter-discourses of back-to-basics, accountability, achievement standards and assessment which had begun to dominate from the late 1970s on; and that norms of inclusion and collaboration prevailed over the individualism of the 1990's (pp.364-368).

O'Neill's (2001) discussion of the experiences of teachers at 'Totara' High School in a trial of Science unit standards is an excellent demonstration of how teachers attempt to exercise agency over the policy discourses to ensure that their students' interests are still to the forefront. Science teachers at 'Totara' recognised that the more difficult assessment issues were given back to them by NZQA to solve, and that this was cloaked in a discourse about recognising their 'professional judgement'. This space for 'professional judgement' was in fact accorded only within tight parameters, and they were being used to solve technical problems that the agency could not solve. There was no scope in the trial for the teachers to question the fundamental principles of the new assessment system, or the process of its implementation. As one teacher said: "I think my moderator can get lost, I will just stick with what I know, I'll use my 'professional judgement'". O'Neill comments, however, that this decision was likely to give her only short-term respite from the frustrations of dealing with NZQA (p.270). Similarly, the teachers were aware of the power of language to deflect opposition or resistance, while at the same time there was a lack of clarity about the meaning of key words, such as 'sufficiency' or 'orally corrected'. He comments that a veneer of scientific efficiency was reflected in the "specific, elaborately technicist, non-educational lexicon" used to describe the assessment processes, whereas in fact the processes were "problematic, underdeveloped and poorly understood" (p.270).

Because participation in the unit standards trials was voluntary, subject departments had some professional freedom, first to decide whether or not to enter the trials and to stay in them, and secondly to decide to what extent they implemented unit standards. However this 'freedom' imposed a huge responsibility on Heads of Departments to negotiate the politics within their departments around making those decisions:

In particular, they had to decide whether the benefits of Unit Standards for some students outweighed the disadvantages in terms of workload and the realisation that much of the unpaid development work was being carried out by the individuated schools themselves. Should they continue or, alternatively, 'shelve' developments until the uncertainty at national level had been resolved? (O'Neill, 2001, p.343)

One HOD portrayed their decision making as protecting their students in the face of policy uncertainty:

So to protect our clients until the people who are decision making in New Zealand – Where are they? Who are they? Do you have a list of names? – get off their bums and actually make some commitment to this, and until we can see that it is actually a clear and shared vision for the future, we are just wanting to be protective to our clientele. (O'Neill, 2001, p.344)

This is a good example of teachers challenging the power of the policy discourses in what they see as the interests of their students.

In a small British study of thirteen teachers who identified themselves as 'marginalised' by their experience of a variety of mandated changes, Bailey (2000) also provides more critical insights into the range of teachers' reactions to policy discourses about change. She contends that change mandated from outside the classroom can never achieve a perfect 'fit' with all teachers' realities: "It is impossible for change mandated by someone other than those who are to effect the change, change not rooted in classroom realities, to take into consideration either teachers' working conditions or their core values" (p.116).

The pace of change

The pace of change is a significant factor in teachers' responses to reform, both in terms of their sense of ownership of the changes and in their willingness and ability to put the changes into effect in their practice. Prior to the shift to neo-liberal government discourses, change was generally gradual, and followed lengthy periods of debate and consultation, for example the change to single-subject passes for School Certificate in the 1960's. The late 1980's and early 1990's were characterised by rapid policy change

in education and other policy areas (Jesson, 1999). Teachers' responses to this included a range of forms of resistance.

Change inevitably impacts on teacher workloads. It means that they have to not only do their existing job but also ensure that they are implementing the changes required, and they must spend time in professional development and time re-planning to adapt to the new requirements. They probably face increased accountability measures to demonstrate that they are on track with the changes as well (Bailey, 2000). As a result, teachers may simply choose to allocate the change a lower priority than policy-makers might wish.

Teachers are faced with a huge range of competing demands on their time, and the immediate needs of the students before them may mean that change does not happen with the speed that government policy-makers expect (Ball & Bowe, 1992, pp.109-110). For those who try to keep up with the pace of change and to make unreasonable reforms work for their students, they may become overwhelmed, or "crippled by conscientiousness" (Hargreaves and Evans, 1997, p.2). Chapter Nine provides some examples of teachers who appear to have risked being overwhelmed by trying to keep up with rapid and ever-changing reforms, although most of them appear to have been quite selective about what changes they adopted.

Rapid change on a number of fronts, some of which may also be contradictory, presents huge challenges to teachers. Innovations have to interact with what is already present in the school; in trying to make a new policy work, teachers will see it through the lens of their existing approaches: "Teachers employ their 'wisdom of practice' to produce pedagogical hybrids. Innovations never enter educational institutions with the previous slate wiped clean" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.83). Furthermore, reforms rarely replace what is already there, but instead they add complexity to an already complex teaching task.

The sheer size of teachers' workloads has increased dramatically in the last decade or so, not only in New Zealand but in many other countries. Helsby (1999) cites an International Labour Office survey conducted in 1991 in forty countries, which found that most teachers' overall workloads had increased, causing stress and time pressures (p.100). In her own research with British teachers involved with implementation of educational change, Helsby found compelling evidence of teacher workloads increasing. This has certainly been the case in New Zealand (Bloor and

Harker, 1995; Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 1998; Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, Beavis, Barwick, Carthy & Wilkinson, 2005). This inevitably has a negative impact on teachers' ability or willingness to implement change that will further exacerbate excessive workloads.

Teacher skepticism is fed by the experience of change falling from favour with monotonous regularity, only to be replaced by a fresh wave:

Nearly all the teachers in the study had attempted to work with mandated changes. They had taken extra classes, gone to workshops, worked with consultants, pored over binders of materials sent out by the Ministry of Education. But just as they began to feel that they were achieving some degree of understanding and mastery the mandated change 'sort of fell from favor', to be replaced by some new enthusiasm... The overarching consequence of orphaning programs may be teachers' increasing reluctance to try anything new. (Bailey, 2000, pp.121-122)

This was New Zealand teachers' experience with the achievement-based assessment trials of the late 1980's/early 1990's, overtaken by unit standards by NZQA decree in 1993 (see Chapter Four).

On the other hand, Helsby (1999) points to evidence that individual teachers react in different ways to imposed changes in these circumstances: "Whilst some are incapacitated by them and suffer withdrawal, stress or burnout, others are able to impose their own interpretations upon the requirements and creatively exploit them to their own educational and professional ends" (pp.113-114). Helsby identifies a number of factors that help to determine whether teachers are able to find 'spaces for manoeuvre' within imposed change. The most significant of these seem to be teachers' professional confidence, availability of space and time for reflection, and the strength of collegiality in their school. All of these, of course, are endangered by rapid change coinciding with greatly increased workloads (p.114).

The influence of school context

A further factor in teachers' experience of change is their particular school context, and the data for this study showed that this was significant for the teacher participants (see Chapter Nine). The influence of school context should not be under-estimated, in fact Tyack and Cuban (1995) claim that the focus should be on how schools change reforms, because reforms only rarely change schools:

Some innovations seem to die on contact with the institutional reality of the school. It is the rare reform that performs and persists precisely according to plan. Even long-lasting reforms are not static but evolve in ways often not foreseen by their proponents. (p.50)

When reforms are not implemented as planned, the explanation from teachers is usually that policy-makers don't understand school realities, and they find ways to adapt or ignore the change:

Hence the best way to live with new mandates from distant legislators and administrative agencies is to adapt innovations to local circumstance, or comply in minimal ways, or sabotage unwanted reforms. And skeptical educators suspect that some reforms were never intended to work. Symbolic gestures, and the overpromising that accompanies them, have at times interested policy-makers more than substance. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, pp.60-61)

Tyack & Cuban's (1995) advice to policy-makers is to follow the approach of John Dewey, who saw reform plans "not as clearly mandated policies but as concepts to be evaluated on the basis of their practical effects, positive and negative, and then reframed accordingly" (p.63). One could argue, however, that in an environment dominated by performativity discourses (Gewirtz, 2002), the likelihood of policy-makers creating this amount of space for teachers is limited.

Teachers' values

Teachers' values may conflict with implementation of the mandated change, and Bailey (2000) suggests that the moral purpose of teaching, "to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies" (Fullan, 1993, cited in Bailey, 2000, p.117), is potentially challenged by change. The teachers in her sample did not appear to be averse to change *per se*, in fact they regarded themselves as constantly changing their practice as they adapted to new groups of students, but when mandated change required them to stop teaching in the ways which they had found to be successful, their student-centred values were challenged:

But teachers may be placed in the position of violating their own deeply felt beliefs about what children in their care need when they are told how and what to teach. The study participants believed mandated changes required them to abandon methods and materials that had been successful with their students. With mandated change, their impulse to evaluate new methods before adopting

them was disallowed: they were essentially denied their right to professional expertise. As a result they often felt like they were teaching 'blindly', and not 'doing right by [the] kids'. (Bailey, 2000, p.118)

Students rather than policy imperatives are central to a teacher. In interviews with high school teachers, McLaughlin (1993) found that students were the basic referents, whatever the topic for discussion. Furthermore, teachers' sense of identity and their professional rewards were primarily located in what happened with their students. At the same time, McLaughlin notes a substantial diversity in teachers' goals for students, reflecting individual teachers' conceptions of the teaching task and their particular students' needs (pp.81-83).

Teachers may doubt the values of the policy-makers who mandate change:

While documents that accompany mandated change initiatives typically argue that change is needed to better prepare children for the future, some of the teachers believed that these rationales were merely 'smokescreens' to provide an appearance of governmental action and to redirect public attention away from intractable problems ... They had no evidence that the mandates were developed as the result of studies of the sorts of conditions they experienced in their own classrooms. (Bailey, 2000, p.118)

When neo-liberalism is in the ascendancy, there is pressure on teacher values:

The educated teacher is more than a facilitator of learning or an agent of socialisation; he or she is a person who embodies fundamental educational values that are manifested not in a narrow set of technical competencies, not in a job description or an employment contract, but in personal initiative, self-knowledge and professional autonomy. Above all else, teaching is a moral enterprise. Education is about values. (Codd, 1998, p.160)

Bascia and Hargreaves (2000) suggest that one of the reasons that educational change efforts often fail is a lack of recognition of the four dimensions of teaching, the intellectual, socioemotional, sociopolitical and technical: "The context of change operates as a complex and interrelated system where everything depends on (or undermines) everything else... [W]hen a reform addresses one dimension of teaching, the others cannot be held in abeyance" (p.18). Their examples include: change such as the development of teaching standards which attends only to the technical dimension and ignores the complexity of the socioemotional context of

schools; change which challenges the intellectual dimensions of teaching but fails to provide the necessary time, access to ideas and information, and effective leadership needed for such intellectual work by teachers; and change which fails to recognise that teachers understand the practical realities of teaching and the conditions which are required for quality teaching and learning (pp. 4-14).

Teachers' emotions are significant in their response to change. Hargreaves (1994) says they may experience conflict between their desires for change or for stability. They judge change against an 'ethic of practicality', but this is more than just putting abstract theory against harsh reality, and involves a deep emotional response:

In the ethic of practicality among teachers is a powerful sense of what works and what doesn't; of what changes will go and which will not – not in the abstract, or even as a general rule, but for *this* teacher in *this* context. In this simple yet deeply influential sense of practicality among teachers is the distillation of complex and potent combinations of purpose, person, politics and workplace constraints. It is through these ingredients and the sense of practicality which they sustain, that teachers' own desires for change are either constructed or constrained. (p.12)

Fullan (1997) argues that leaders of change need to hear what both the enthusiasts and the resistant are saying, and find ways to reconcile the positive and negative emotions being expressed in order to release teachers' energy for change. He says that the role of enthusiasts in educational change has been overstated, and the value of those teachers who are resistant has been understated. Listening to the voices of the resistant is important because it ensures that change, when implemented, is grounded in the realities of teachers:

Enthusiasts can be helpful to be sure, but not if in the mid to long run they increase the gap between themselves as small isolated groups of reformers and the larger numbers of organizational members; and not if they turn out to be wrong because their ideas have not been subjected to critical scrutiny by nay-sayers who have a different point of view. (p.223)

What is not clear here is whether Fullan accepts that the resistant may have good reason to oppose the change altogether, not just to help modify it. Furthermore, his writing tends to ignore the hegemonic nature of many change discourses, and understate the courage that may be required to be a "nay-sayer".

Change in assessment practices can be particularly fraught for teachers because assessment results are the public face of their work:

Studies of classroom assessment, as well as our own research, suggest that it is one of the hardest and most consequential areas of teachers' work that carries a high emotional charge because it is where teachers' relative success becomes visible to parents and to the public at large. (Earl & Katz, 2000, p.98)

Clearly the process of educational change is immensely more complex than most policy-makers probably recognise.

Conclusions

The positioning by government in New Zealand of teachers and their union representatives changed over a period of time from their being seen as necessary professional partners in educational policy-making to their being seen as employees whose advice could not be trusted and who should simply be expected to implement policy without demur. The high levels of industrial conflict during the 1990's over pay, conditions and professional issues were a signal that teachers, through their union, have considerable power to resist such re-positioning. Nevertheless, this thesis argues (see Chapters Seven to Nine) that the exclusion of the teacher 'voice' during the 1990's did serious damage to the ability of government to persuade the majority of teachers as individuals or as union members to accept its proposals for qualifications reform.

Neo-liberal ideologies seek to replace a discourse of classical professionalism with a 'discourse of performativity' (Gewirtz, 2002) in which teachers are expected to focus on compliance with externally developed requirements. However, the evidence is that the 'loosely coupled' nature of teaching (Ball & Bowe, 1992) means that there are many ways in which teachers can deliberately subvert the will of policy-makers, or even be simply unaware that they are not fully complying with the intentions of the policy change. There is also a high degree of diversity in individual teachers' reactions to policy change. Reactions are influenced by variables such as the particular context of their school, the leadership in their school or subject department, their attitudes and values, their habitual reactions to policy texts such as whether teachers take a 'writerly' or a 'readerly' approach to texts (Ball & Bowe, 1992), their previous experience of change, and their particular personalities. (Chapter Nine discusses the differing

responses to change of the thirteen teachers interviewed for this study, and conveys some sense of these complexities.)

It is important not to idealise teachers' responses to externally imposed change. While, in explaining their decisions, teachers will generally justify their responses using students as their referent, usually there will be personal factors operating as well, such as whether they believe that they have the capacity to make the change given their current knowledge, skills and time, whether they anticipate being supported in making the change, and whether they believe that it is in their own interests (Hargreaves, 1994).

This thesis will argue that governments ignore these complexities of making change in education at their peril, and that one of the most important pre-requisites for successful change is the involvement of the profession in shaping and communicating the policy, not just in implementing it. Without that, 'policy gaps' are inevitable.

Chapter 4 – The shift to standards-based assessment

The policy shift from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment is used in this thesis as a case study of educational change. In reviewing the key events and academic commentary on the qualifications changes in New Zealand since the 1970's, this chapter begins to focus the discussion more intensively on the socio-political contexts within which these occurred, and the shifting discourses associated with the changes.

The current standards-based secondary school qualification system, the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA), is the latest in a series of moves away from the traditional norm-referenced assessment methodology reflected in the previous School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and University Bursaries qualifications. Earlier manifestations of standards-based assessment were some local experiments with the use of internal criterion-referenced assessment for School Certificate in the early to mid-1980's, the achievement-based assessment trials of the later 1980's and early 1990's, and the unit standards developments of the early to mid-1990's. The roots of these developments go even further back, to the 1960's at least, when the need to provide profile reports of a wide range of student achievements began to be discussed. There are also links between the movement for standards-based assessment for qualifications and the movement for specification of what have variously been called standards, levels, benchmarks, outcome statements or achievement objectives in the development of national curricula in many countries. In this thesis, however, the focus is on the use of standards in assessing for school qualifications.

The bulk of the chapter is organised chronologically, and moves from discussing the origins of the standards-based reforms in the 1970s and earlier, to the debates and developments in the 1980's, and then to the construction of the Qualifications Framework in the 1990's and the implementation of the NCEA from 2002 on. The final section considers academic commentary on the discourses underpinning the reforms, and concludes that there was a merging of social democratic and neo-liberal discourses in the arguments for reform.

Early origins of standards-based developments

Locating the beginnings of the concept of assessment against standards for qualifications is not straightforward, as school qualifications in New Zealand have been in a state of constant flux. Strachan (2001) gives examples from as far back as 1874 of debate about assessment, and refers to concerns about the negative consequences of external examinations expressed in two major reviews of education, the Thomas Report (Department of Education, 1944) and the Currie Report (Department of Education, 1962).

Most writers agree that the 1970's was a period of considerable ferment about qualifications. Assistant Director of Education in the 1970's, Bill Renwick, described the decade as "a restless exploratory phase" in which there were three trends: "(i) a search for 'social relevance' in teaching and learning; (ii) the participation of students in decision-making; and (iii) the development of a sense of community within the school" (Department of Education, 1973, cited in O'Neill, 2001, p.90). The traditional exam system was called into question by educators, as inconsistent with "this embryonic ideal of a general, liberal education curriculum designed to engage all students in productive modes of enquiry" (O'Neill, 2001, pp.90-91). Chapter Five outlines the union's growing support during this time for internal assessment and abolition of norm-referencing. In June 1971, the National Conference of Principals supported abolition of the School Certificate exam (Elley & Livingstone, 1972, p.74). The profession's position was supported by employers and the public (Strachan, 2001, p.248). By the end of the 1970's there was also a consensus for the removal of Universities Entrance to the 7th form, but the National Party Education Minister, Merv Wellington, did not concur, and that change did not happen until Labour took power in the mid-1980's.

However, some changes to the norm-referenced system during this period set the scene for the later shift to standards-based assessment. One of these was the introduction of single-subject passes for School Certificate in 1968 and for University Entrance in 1974, opening the way for multi-level study. Another was the introduction of Sixth Form Certificate in 1974, bringing internal assessment into the mix (O'Neill, 2001, p.93).

The rationale for change in the 1970s, just as in the 1990s, Strachan (2001) argues, was a lack of fit between curriculum and qualifications, and between qualifications and the needs of users such as employers and tertiary institutions and of the full range of

students. Yet despite these concerns, New Zealand was slow to move away from traditional qualifications (p.250).

In their critique of the secondary school examination system, Elley and Livingstone (1972) discuss assessment against pre-defined standards in the form of “*absolute or content-referenced scales*”, however they dismiss it as having only limited potential (p.50, italics in original). Interestingly, one modification that they suggested could be made with a minimum of fuss was to raise School Certificate pass rates to the levels common in other Western countries, sometimes as high as 80%. This is of interest here given the significance of the high rates of failure as an argument for reform. It is an idea that Elley reiterated frequently in his writing, and in his interview with me.

The Education Development Conference exercise, during the 1972-1975 Labour Government, appears to have been significant, involving some 50,000 people in 3,000 study groups. The final report demonstrated a lack of support for the education bureaucracy: “It was felt to be vast, faceless, ponderous and unresponsive, particularly to the special needs of women and girls, Maori and other ethnic minorities, all of whom were gaining a new assertiveness in this period” (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p.18). Not long after that Conference, in 1976, the *New Zealand Official Yearbook* began to publish data on the highest attainment of school leavers. The decision to publish this data reflected public disquiet about the number of school leavers with no formal qualification, and a recognition that the examination system was causing high levels of failure and alienated students who left school unprepared for work both academically and emotionally (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p.28).

The beginnings of the concept of a unifying framework of qualifications were also in the 1970's, not in the ferment within the school sector but in the post-school technical and vocational area where there was a proliferation of separate qualifications. Selwood (1991) cites a 1978 New Zealand UNESCO report: “The Committee believes that a national accreditation authority should be established with ... the function of establishing criteria and standards such as those recommended by UNESCO and the accreditation of particular courses in particular institutions” (Hercus, 1978, cited in Selwood, 1991, p.319). This idea came to fruition in 1990 with the establishment of NZQA.

Developments in the 1980's

In the 1980's the debate continued to engage the public, the profession and politicians, as it had in the 1970's. There were two official reviews of the core curriculum, as well as significant movements in thinking about assessment for qualifications.

Challenges to norm-referenced assessment

The grumblings of the 1970's about norm-referenced assessment grew in the next decade, especially in relation to scaling of examination results, and the concept of assessment against standards began to be discussed more. Nash (1983) uses the term "criterion referenced examinations" at fifth and seventh form as a solution to the problem of rationing of success caused by exam scaling, although he told me informally that at that time he was only envisaging subject results being reported as grades with generalised descriptors, not the separate reporting of a range of outcomes within a subject (conversation with Roy Nash 1/11/05).

The credibility of School Certificate, because of its scaling processes, was attacked: "The adjustment of School Certificate marks weakens at each step the educational meaning that students, parents, teachers, and the public can attach to the result" (Snook & St George, 1986, p.25). Interestingly, these writers go somewhat further than Nash, in that they appear to argue for reporting of specific outcomes, using the kind of language that NZQA was later to use to advocate for the Qualifications Framework:

If we want to select people capable of speaking Maori, solving quadratic equations or producing pleasing pieces of pottery, the sensible procedure is to devise ways of assessing their competence in the skill in question. School Certificate fails to do this. What, after all, is the point of a score which in 1983 means 'she can't speak Maori (solve quadratic equations, produce pieces of pottery etc.)' and in 1984 means 'she can'? (Snook & St. George, 1986, p.28)

Some schools began to offer alternative qualifications targeting lower ability students at Year 11, largely initiated by local or national subject associations. Some of these began to experiment with the use of assessment criteria (interview with Jim Strachan, 24/10/03).

The new Labour government, having decided in 1984 to shift Universities Entrance into the 7th form, set up the Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and

Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7 (CICAQ) to recommend further changes to qualifications. The internally assessed Sixth Form Certificate became the sole qualification at Year 12, but in the absence of a better moderation system, school results were moderated by School Certificate results of the previous year, as they were until the demise of Sixth Form Certificate after 2004. In its second report, CICAQ began to use the language of standards-based assessment, recommending that the assessment system should provide to all students:

appropriate recognition of their strengths, whatever their ability, at whatever level they are studying, and without the emphasis on what they have failed to achieve. The achievement of each student will be assessed independently of others, and results will not be adjusted to conform to a predetermined distribution of marks. (Department of Education, 1986, p.8)

In the aftermath of Labour's decision to shift Universities Entrance to the 7th form, two principals, David Hood (later head of NZQA) and John Murdoch, were seconded to address nationwide meetings in 1985 to explain Sixth Form Certificate. In their reports, both principals noted "almost unanimous support" for the change, and support for Sixth Form Certificate because it recognised different levels of achievement instead of passing or failing candidates (Lee & Lee, 1992, p.51).

Official trialling of an early version of standards-based assessment called 'achievement-based assessment' ran from 1987 to 1989, in seven Sixth Form Certificate subjects and involving 85 schools. The method assessed separate outcomes within a subject using 'grade-related criteria' on a scale of either 4 or 5 points, and all points on the scale were described in positive non-comparative terms, e.g. 'Uses simple vocabulary and structures' up to 'Uses language flexibly with flair' (for 'range of language' in Japanese). However, from the early 1990's NZQA adopted a more extreme form of standards-based assessment i.e. competency-based unit standards that recognised only Achieved or Not Achieved levels of performance.

Yet while the rationale for the ABA trials was to find a method for stand-alone moderation of Sixth Form Certificate, the shift to unit standards did not remove the need for moderation. This is still required in standards-based systems, and continues to be controversial (Alison, 2005).

The CICAQ vision was of largely school-based qualifications at Years 11 and 12, but with an externally examinable component at Year 13; NZQA, for reasons discussed

later in this chapter, tried during the 1990's to persuade schools to adopt an entirely internally assessed unit standards based system for Years 11 to 13. Today's NCEA, with its mix of externally examined and internally assessed standards, is perhaps closer to the CICAQ vision than to NZQA's, and in recognising four levels of achievement on grade-related criteria can be argued to be closer to ABA than unit standards. It brought to an end, for the time being at least, the norm-referenced assessment for qualifications that had been the cause of so much debate over the decades discussed here.

Rising unemployment and credential inflation

A major influence on thinking about school qualifications was the rising unemployment in New Zealand from the late 1970's, leading to claims that schools were failing to prepare students for the world of work. Whereas for many decades New Zealand had experienced an under-supply of labour, by the late 1970's this had changed, and by the mid-1980's the Department of Labour was forecasting 87,000 registered unemployed in March 1987. Young people were hardest hit: in the mid-1980's, teenagers constituted nearly 40% of the unemployed, although they were only 16% of the working age population.

Students were staying at school longer. Between 1962 and 1982, the proportion of students attending secondary school for four years went from 21% to 35%, and those attending for five years from 10% to 28%. This had led to increasing numbers seeking qualifications (Archer, 1983).

Schools were blamed as being unprepared for rising rates of 'reluctant returners'. The Department of Education "perceived the high school-leaver unemployment in terms of the failure of the school guidance systems and career education courses to adequately prepare school-leavers for employment and not necessarily as a structural economic phenomenon" (Khan, 1986, p.25). Schools attempted to respond to youth unemployment by developing 'transition from school to work' programmes to prevent their students becoming part of the rising statistics. At first seen as a temporary phenomenon, youth unemployment became more entrenched, and the Department began to shift its emphasis from solely job-seeking skills to putting more emphasis on building vocational courses, including work exploration, into the curriculum of schools (Khan, 1986).

However, many, for example Snook (1983), argued persuasively that schools were not to blame for youth unemployment. Furthermore, the number of school-leavers with higher credentials had actually been increasing and the number leaving with no credentials decreasing. The fact that unemployment was highest in the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations indicated that new technology was making people redundant rather than that people lacked sufficient educational standards (Khan, 1986).

There was an increasingly functional emphasis on education:

It is ironic that at a time when work is requiring less sophistication and daily life requiring more, our secondary schools are being asked to down-grade general education (the education of people as people) in the interest of vocational education (the education of people as functionaries). (Snook, 1983, p.4)

School qualifications were being used as credentials, as screening devices, despite being unsatisfactory for this purpose (Snook, 1983; St George & Smith, 1983; Philips, 1998). Credential inflation accompanied the increasing unemployment, putting pressure on schools to respond in the form of increases in retention rates and in the number of students leaving with qualifications (Philips, 1998; Snook, 1983). David Hood told me that his research for the Hawke Report showed how poorly credentials served employers:

An apprenticeship committee would say 'We want School Certificate passes in English, Maths and Science'. Now you start off with 50% in English, but not every student takes English and Mathematics so if you group together those who get 50% in English and Maths you're down to about 41%. If you then group that with Science you end up with about 32% of the population of New Zealand, so 67% of the New Zealand population couldn't even apply for an apprenticeship. I did analyses of polytechnic entrance requirements, and believe it or not I found one course at one polytechnic where 97.6% of all sixth formers in secondary schools couldn't actually even apply. (Interview with David Hood, 20/3/04)

The 'free-market' environment from the mid-1980s brought further pressure for change in the qualifications system. Politicians from all parts of the spectrum were becoming convinced that education and training had to change if New Zealand was to participate successfully in a modern global economy. The dominant view became that:

The way forward lay in accepting a competency-based education and training framework which, it was assumed, would further boost New Zealand's overall

skills base, economic output, international competitiveness and economic prosperity. (Lee & Lee, 2001, p.6)

By the 1990's, arguments in NZQA publications (see Chapter Six) that New Zealand needed huge increases in the knowledge and skills of its population in order to succeed in a globalising economy, and therefore students needed more qualifications, were sounding quite familiar.

Quality arguments

In the wider economy, the old industrial system of quality control that focused on rejecting the defective product at the end of the production process was being replaced by new systems of continuous quality checking. 'Quality assurance' became part of the dominant discourse of neo-liberalism, often in the context of ideas about managerial control. In education, it was argued that accountability would be achieved through 'quality assurance' methods that required specification of outcomes or performance standards (Philips, 1998, p.97; Winch, 1996). Standards-based assessment provided this. A good example of this quality discourse is provided by Hood (1998):

Standards based or competency based learning reflects the real world; it is based on quality principles and research on intelligence and how people learn best; it's about absolute standards; it's about serving, not sorting students; it's about recognising that the vast majority of students can learn, given the right environment and the right tools; it's about making schools accountable. (p.99)

It is ironic that one of the biggest workload burdens of the NCEA is the 'quality assurance' requirements it imposes on school administrators (Alison, 2005).

Modularisation

A necessary precursor to the Framework was acceptance of the concept of assessing and reporting on separate outcomes within subjects, i.e. modularisation of assessment. Interest in this was boosted by the visit of Tom McCool, Director of the Scottish Vocational Educational authority, in 1987 (Selwood, 1991; Philips, 1998). The Picot Report the following year picked up the theme: "We strongly support a system similar to the Scottish 16+ arrangement – one that contains modules, or short units of study which lead to the award of a single national certificate" (1988, p.72). Selwood (1991) associates this interest with a managerialist agenda of "cost-effectiveness, flexibility and consumer choice" and argues that there was little serious questioning of the validity of the educational claims made for modularisation. He asserts that the

potential fragmentation of learning was not considered by policy-makers at the time. Nor, he says, were the impacts on teachers' autonomy (pp. 192-199).

A framework for qualifications

The idea of a unified qualifications framework gained further shape in the 1980's, although for most of the decade still only for post-school qualifications. In a draft Green Paper on vocational education and training, never published, the Labour Department argued that for New Zealand to have a highly flexible, skilled workforce and culture of lifelong learning there needed to be changes in post-compulsory education and training. It raised questions about whether the current system sufficiently allowed for cross-crediting and portability of qualifications. By October 1986 the Department had "agreed to the establishment of an independent validation authority to endorse certificates awarded by other providers", similar to the qualification registration function of NZQA today but responsible only for post-school qualifications (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, pp.56-65).

The February 1988 *Report on Submissions to the Tertiary Reviews* (Dept of Education) also identified strong support for nationally recognised credentials which were transferable and portable, with a single central body responsible for the validation, administration and awarding of national credentials, and major involvement of industry with such a validation authority (Selwood, 1991).

The Picot Report, whose recommendations underpinned the devolutionary *Tomorrow's Schools* policy, refers to a single national validation authority in a number of places, and in a footnote reveals that the plans by April 1988 had expanded to include school-level qualifications: "This Authority would undertake the functions now carried out by such bodies as the Trades Certification Board, the Authority for Advanced Vocational Awards and the Board of Studies" (1988, p.17, my emphasis).

Also in 1988, the government established the Working Group on Post Compulsory Education and Training, known as the Hawke Committee. Their report recommended that a National Education Qualifications Authority be established, to oversee three divisions of qualifications: secondary school, vocational and academic. The Authority's task would not be to prescribe or deliver courses but to 'quality assure' qualifications delivered by a great variety of providers. In the formal establishment of NZQA in July 1990, the government adopted most of Hawke's recommendations but without the three divisions he proposed (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998).

Hawke also wanted accreditation and validation of qualifications to be voluntary, a view:

based on an economically oriented argument that in a contestable market the maintenance of standards would be in the interests of providers as they would otherwise risk losing their market share. In the same vein a voluntary system of validation would also be useful to providers as a marketing device. (Selwood, 1991, p.134)

The Employers Federation expressed unhappiness about this, despite the purported market logic, and sought national certification rather than an authority that simply validated locally developed certificates, arguing that a national credential would provide security of recognition and portability within and beyond New Zealand (Selwood, 1991, pp.134-136).

In February 1989 the government announced in *Learning for Life* (Minister of Education, 1989) that the new authority would be established, co-ordinating secondary school and tertiary level qualifications, including university qualifications. The Employers' Federation's wish for compulsory validation was partly met, in that only courses working towards accredited qualifications would receive government funding, and to be nationally recognised, qualifications would require the authority's validation (Selwood, 1991, p.139).

Separation of curriculum from assessment

One aspect of these developments with which teachers were very unhappy was the separation of curriculum from assessment, with curriculum the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and assessment that of NZQA. Lynn Scott, Chairperson of the Secondary Board of Studies whose functions had disappeared into NZQA, expressed the Board's unanimous opposition to this separation:

[The Board of Studies] believes that curriculum development and curriculum policy must develop alongside assessment strategies; that while the award structure must be acceptable to the public and be responsive to concerns about national standards, inter-school comparability and equitable entry to post-school courses, it must not dominate decisions about curriculum direction. (Scott, 1988, cited in Selwood, 1991, pp.205-206; see also Barker, 1995; Codd, 1997a; Codd, 1997b)

However Selwood (1991) argues that the separation of curriculum from assessment fitted the managerialist ideology driving the government of the time. By very specifically defining the role of the new qualifications authority as assessment, the government believed it would be able to evaluate the agency's performance. This was consistent with managerialist faith in target setting and monitoring as the way to achieve quality performance.

By the end of the 1980's, all the conditions were in place for the major shift to a standards-based qualifications system for schools: subjects treated singly allowing for multi-level study, acceptance of some internal assessment, support for the concept of modularised assessment, increased concern for meeting the school-to-work transitional needs of students, and the decision to establish an authority charged with establishing a unified framework of qualifications. But things were not destined to go smoothly in the next decade.

Developments in the 1990's

The decade began with the formation in July 1990 of NZQA as a stand-alone agency administering qualifications. The new agency embarked on a frenetic programme of consultation about the shape of the assessment framework they were charged with developing. The Framework was to be standards-based, and to encompass qualifications from senior secondary to the highest levels of tertiary education, as well as work-based learning. Some of NZQA's consultation documents are discussed in Chapter Six (e.g. NZQA 1990, 1991a – f).

At the end of 1990, the Labour Government that had initiated the reforms lost power, and was replaced by a National Government, whose Education Minister was Dr Lockwood Smith.

Lightning speed reform

NZQA attempted to introduce the new system at speed. Philips (1998) justifies this by saying that "incremental policy changes allow existing powerful sectors with a stake in education to regroup when a change occurs and to resist fundamental reform – so entrenched interest groups effectively maintain their power and influence" (p.95). He argues that the all-encompassing nature of New Zealand's reforms distinguish it from those of other countries which adopted an incremental approach.

Part of this approach to reform was a tendency towards propaganda in NZQA publications: "It is not for me to expand on and emphasise the benefits of this grand design. NZQA glossies have presented them in flowery rhetoric many times" (Elley, 1996, p.68). (Chapter Six provides some examples of this 'flowery rhetoric'.) Elley (1996) complains that the change process is proceeding apace without regard to the concerns of people like himself: "Yet the *bandwagon* charges on, gathering momentum and new adherents all the time ... The whole project is being pushed by political imperatives and limited government funds" (p.75, italics in original).

Lightning speed reform is a classic stratagem of neo-liberal politicians and had been seen from the mid-1980's in economic reforms in New Zealand (Jesson, 1999), but the education road turned out to be rather more rocky than the advocates for reform had doubtless hoped. While developments in industry were relatively calm, with new Industry Training Organisations creating qualifications and unit standards suitable for their purposes, the changes met a far less positive reception in the school and university sectors, and despite the rapidity of the process, resistance was lively.

Explanations for the less than enthusiastic response to the Framework by many teachers and academics vary. Lee & Lee (2001) identify three major areas of criticism: the assumption that all knowledge and skills could be assessed within a standards-based and modularised single framework; reliance on a pure pass/fail competency-based system of assessment; and the separation of curriculum from assessment (p.11). I suggest that there were two more: the drive to privilege skills over knowledge, and issues around reliability of results. It is in the debates around these five areas that the contestation between discourses is most evident. The next five sub-sections focus on this contestation in each of these areas.

A single standards-based framework

The Framework concept had many appeals to policy-makers: it was coherent but flexible, and it was a perfect example of the 'tight-loose-tight' system for managerial control (see Chapter Two). But many academics resisted NZQA's intentions, not only around including university qualifications in the Framework, but also around applying the model to secondary school qualifications. While recognising its appeal to policy-makers because of its superficial logic and coherence in bringing together all qualifications, academics criticised the universal application of standards-based assessment as lacking sufficient rigorous analysis (Croft, 1993).

Although they acknowledge some value in expressing objectives as learning outcomes, Codd, McAlpine & Poskitt (1991) assert that unanticipated outcomes may be just as important as anticipated ones, and that other outcomes, such as aspects of higher level thinking, may not be easily specifiable (p.10). They argue that curriculum coherence will be put at risk with a smorgasbord approach where schools can assemble combinations of units in whatever way they choose.

Some academics (e.g. Croft, 1993; Peddie, 1992) support the concept of assessing to a standard where that is appropriate for purpose, however Croft (1993) accuses NZQA of having exaggerated the advantages of standards-based assessment and failed to acknowledge the extent of its comparative nature in order to justify setting up a single framework of qualifications, at the expense of adapting assessment to purpose:

My conclusion is that the requirements of the Framework have been the dominant force driving promotion of standards-based assessment, when questions of validity should have been to the forefront. No single assessment strategy is likely to provide every answer. Choice of an appropriate strategy for a particular context seems preferable. (p.10)

In defence of the Framework, NZQA staff member Alan Barker (1995) argues that the current political context requires such a solution:

Clearly, with something as complex as knowledge and its application to new horizons, there are webs of connections, interrelations and manifestations that remain mysterious. At present, however, the swing of the pendulum is against the undefined holistic approach. Instead it favours stated and demonstrable objectives. It is important to recognise this position is not an absolute. Rather, the pendulum will swing again and so it must, because there are no immutable truths here. (p.27)

The concept of a single, standards-based and modularised Framework had become a non-negotiable aspect of the reforms, and was set to remain.

Competency-based assessment

Originally the Framework was to allow for both achievement-based and competency-based assessment. In fact, early in the decade, probably 1991, samples of achievement-based assessment criteria were issued to all schools for teachers to “experiment with them and enjoy the advantages of better teaching, learning and

assessment”, because at that stage it was envisaged that the needs of the subject would dictate which assessment method would be used (NZQA, n.d.).

An NZQA publication written under contract by Auckland University academic Roger Peddie (1992) reflects this early openness to a range of assessment methods within the Framework, even arguing that there is nothing wrong with norm-referenced assessment if the need is to rank students for selection. Peddie acknowledges that finding a clear line on when competency-based and when achievement-based assessment is more suitable is not easy, but suggests:

In general, we choose a competency-based approach when it is important for the learner to demonstrate that they can competently do/know something in which a specific standard is required, rather than one in which a measure of a range of achievements is appropriate. (p.25)

While acknowledging some of the problems in achievement-based assessment, such as the difficulty in writing clear and unambiguous descriptions of a range of levels of achievement, Peddie concludes that these problems can be solved, and that “all assessments require teachers to be aware of the purpose of the assessment and the strengths and weaknesses of the form of assessment which is chosen” (pp. 27-28).

Despite these arguments, however, in August 1993 NZQA announced that only the competency-based pass/fail model in the form of unit standards would be used in the Framework:

The achievement-based assessment approach (ABA) **is not** the model of assessment that will be used for the new Qualifications Framework. In assisting schools to implement the Qualifications Framework, advisory groups may choose to provide descriptors that identify stages of learning. These may be used in school reporting. Their use will be **optional**, and will in no way be considered to form the standards themselves (NZQA, 1993, p.4, emphases in original).

Sources within NZQA have told me in confidence that this decision reflected the dominance on the NZQA Board of employer representatives. The simple pass/fail model suited their needs, and the school and university sectors were not strongly represented on the Board. However, other sources believe the Minister made the decision (e.g. Shona Smith interview, see Chapter Eight). It may also have been seen as a ‘purer’ application outcomes-based education and therefore appealing in managerialist terms (see Chapter Two). In any event, the debate did not end with the 1993 decision.

The Vice-Chancellors criticised the adoption of competency-based assessment on the grounds that it did not sufficiently provide for excellence. While recognising that NZQA is keen to see models developed which include recognition of excellence, they assert that this contradicts the methodology adopted:

The existing unit-standard methodology, because of its reductionist nature, fails to promote the conditions essential for encouraging and assessing excellence. The methodology is far more suited to the teaching and assessment of skills of a technical or practical nature than to the higher order mental operations that universities associate with the notion of excellence: critical analysis and problem-solving, the synthesis and production of knowledge, and the conduct of original research. (NZVCC, 1994, p.12)

The position that assessment should be fit for purpose was reiterated in an Education Forum critique of the Framework:

The authors of this paper consider that the framework incorporates serious inconsistencies and tensions, is fundamentally unsound and should be reviewed. They recommend the adoption of a totally new approach – one which would accept that the purpose of assessment and the nature of what is to be tested should determine the appropriate assessment methods to be adopted, and not vice versa. This would allow careful choices to be made between the various forms of criterion-referenced (including standards-based) and norm-referenced assessment methods and between internal assessment and externally set and administered examinations. (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995, pp.25-27)

Even Bill Lennox (1995), an NZQA staff member at the time of writing, admits that while the Qualifications Framework is in many ways consistent with the change the profession had been seeking, the adoption of competency-based assessment was not:

The concept was not proposed by any of the advocates researched, the assumption always being that differentiation between levels of performance by grading would be retained ... It could be argued that the Framework has given advocates even more than they asked for, a more complete reform in the standards-based direction they espoused. However, competency assessment was never raised in the literature and advocates expressed a clear preference for grading based on criteria. The Qualifications Framework removes the style of assessment that advocates were condemning but replaces it with a style they did not ask for. (p.21)

This NZQA decision in favour of competency-based assessment for all unit standards proved to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks to teacher support of the Framework. The model was accepted as suitable for all standards by only 6.6% of 2566 PPTA members who responded to a survey in 1997 (Allen, Crooks, Hearn & Irwin, 1997, p.74). It is likely that the greater acceptability to teachers of the NCEA can be partly attributed to its recognition of levels of achievement.

Separation of curriculum from assessment

Structural separation of curriculum from assessment, through the formation of an authority, NZQA, responsible only for assessment, was consistent with outcomes-based education, a key plank of neo-liberal education policy (see Chapter Two). The state would specify, through standards, the outcomes of education required, and education 'providers' would be responsible for developing the learning programmes through which students would demonstrate these outcomes. Barker explains NZQA's thinking as being that curriculum should be in the middle of a circular process, flanked by outcomes that are defined first and followed by assessment whose criteria are also defined prior to the establishment of a learning programme and which then cycle back to the definition of new outcomes (QA News, Issue 9, cited in Selwood, 1991, pp.218-219).

However this separation sparked concerns from its first mootings in the 1980's (see above). Criticism continued into the 1990's:

The process of course design is dynamic. Knowledge and context are not static and the design process must allow for change and development; yet the unit-standard methodology is pedagogically weak precisely on this point. The elements and performance criteria specified in a unit standard act like coat pegs on which providers must hang content, assessment and teaching. Unit standards are not sensitive to change in knowledge and context – they are registered and must be addressed even though the course design may clearly indicate that the unit standard is unsatisfactory for implementation. (NZVCC, 1994, pp.7-8)

Later in the decade, in the context of the NCEA compromise, Hall (1999) makes a similar criticism:

If standards are to make sense they need to be embedded within a teaching and learning structure which ensures that the objectives, content, delivery and assessment are all connected. The danger with the NCEA model is that courses

will lose this overall focus on coherence: performance in a course overall will not be recorded, just performance on the parts. (p.191)

It is significant that after three years' experience with the NCEA, teachers echoed these concerns and believed that assessment was driving curriculum rather than curriculum determining assessment, and the separation of roles of NZQA and the Ministry of Education puzzled them (Alison, 2005).

Skills versus knowledge

Another significant area of debate was around the relative values of skills and knowledge. NZQA material in the early to mid 1990's was notable for its emphasis on skills rather than knowledge, even when applied to 'academic' school subjects (see Chapter Six). Skills are able to be measured and are recognised as behavioural attributes which enable people to be productive units in the economy, hence their appeal to neo-liberals for whom education is largely a private good which enables people to compete successfully in the labour market. Knowledge is much harder to quantify.

A wide range of academics said that NZQA was on shaky ground when they tried to apply standards-based assessment to knowledge-based subjects. Elley, for example, argues: "But in English, social studies, science, the skills to be mastered are less important than and cannot be separated from the knowledge they are applied to" (1993, cited in Croft, 1993, p.12). Irwin, too, criticises the assumption that knowledge and understanding are necessarily present because students can perform particular tasks: "Even where knowledge or understanding is specified as an outcome, the piecemeal unit standards approach is likely to reduce its value as general education" (1994, p.116). Peddie and Tuck (1995) criticise the concept of expressing standards only in terms of observable outcomes, which they call a "behaviourally based" model of assessment that has a negative impact on assessment of knowledge and understanding (p.203).

The Vice-Chancellors argue that many so-called skills are actually higher order mental operations which tend to be cognitive in nature, such as "reasoning, critical analysis, synthesis, composition, problem-solving, research (in its various forms and approaches), communication and aspects of numeracy" and may even include some attitudes such as "respect for the ownership of knowledge, and willingness to reflect on the validity of an argument before reaching a conclusion" (NZVCC, 1994, p.10).

However, the dominant discourse for some time had been focusing on a relatively low level view of skills (see Chapter Two), and the Vice-Chancellors' argument did not prevail with government.

Reliability issues

A further area of debate was around whether the assessment methodology could produce reliable results. Elley (1995) argues that introduction of standards-based assessment, especially for high stakes purposes such as qualifications, is premature because of fundamental difficulties with the methodology: "While the rhetoric is persuasive, the truth is that we are being promised more than can be delivered" (p.78). He predicts problems in at least three areas: the necessary generality and vagueness of the descriptions of the standards, the wide variability of student performance depending on the context, and variability of difficulty level of questions chosen to assess to a standard. As a result of these problems, he predicts that New Zealand's qualification system will lose credibility, and that assessment will focus on the easily measurable rather than what is important (pp.80-89).

Calling on experiences from the Sixth Form Certificate trials with grade-related criteria to show that consistency between assessors is not easily achieved in a standards-based system, Elley (1995) dismisses the use of exemplars as a solution to this consistency problem. In a later paper he predicts that without the problems he has identified being resolved:

NZQA will quickly develop a huge "credibility gap" because, for example, standards will be found to vary from school to school, students will turn out not to be competent in the skills they are claimed to be, and overburdened teachers will demand a return to a system even more conservative than the one which the Framework is attempting to replace. (Elley, 1996, p.75)

While the NCEA proposal developed in 1997/1998 was an attempt to find a political compromise, it did not address the technical issues identified by Elley. Reliability of results on external standards and consistency of internal assessment practices and moderation decisions continue to be a problem (Alison, 2005; State Services Commission, 2005b).

A divided profession

By mid-decade there was no easing of the conflict and a clear 'policy gap' had emerged between the profession and government. NZQA's 'hard sell' publications had failed to reassure schools or academics. Concerns included: "the eight Framework levels, the costs of developing, updating and moderating the vast number of unit standards required, consistency issues, inappropriateness of the model for 'academic' subjects, and the dominance of 'vocational' educational models over 'academic' subjects" (Peddie & Tuck, 1995, p.11).

In 1992-1993, PPTA members were under instructions to refuse to implement the Framework because of a dispute with the government over its intentions to implement salaries bulk funding. Other problems, such as the difficulties in actually developing unit standards for 'conventional' subjects such as Maths, were also causing delays:

Attributing responsibility for the lack of progress to a bolshy union is an oversimplification. It is still the case that much of what is valued in education cannot be easily if at all transformed into outcome statements of the type demanded by NZQA. (Tuck, 1994, p.236)

With the first PPTA moratorium lifted, trials of unit standards in Mathematics and Geography, the first two 'conventional' subjects to experiment with unit standards, got under way in 1995. Some schools, especially those already offering a wide range of vocational courses to meet the needs of their students, were supportive of the developments. However a further PPTA moratorium was imposed later in 1995 and not lifted until late 1996, and this was a further incentive for teachers to disengage.

Teacher discomfort about assessment by unit standards for 'conventional' school subjects was growing. Added to this was conflict at government level between NZQA who were responsible for writing unit standards for school subjects and for convening subject groups to assist them with what constituted defining a de facto curriculum, and the Ministry of Education who saw themselves as responsible for curriculum development. For teachers, there was increasing confusion about the two agencies' respective roles (Philips, 2003). This confusion continues today (Alison, 2005).

Nevertheless other subjects began to trial unit standards, and some teachers and some schools were committing themselves wholeheartedly to the Framework, both for 'conventional' subjects and in the industry-related areas. On the other hand, significant numbers of schools were refusing to engage with the Framework. The

existing norm-referenced qualifications system remained intact, and schools were able to choose to ignore the standards-based developments.

By 1996, papers began to be produced suggesting that the Framework could be broadened to include non-unit standards based qualifications, and the appointment of a new Minister, Wyatt Creech, in early 1996, a new Ministry of Education Chief Executive, Howard Fancy, in mid-1996, the resignation of NZQA CEO David Hood in October 1996, and a new coalition government from late 1996, saw the ground moving considerably (Philips, 1998 & 2003).

The NCEA compromise

In late 1997 a Ministry official, Don Ferguson (interviewed for this study, see Chapters Seven and Eight), and an NZQA official, David Nicholson, were charged with seeking a middle ground that all schools would accept. This resulted in the late 1998 announcement, under the title of 'Achievement 2001', of a standards-based and modularised Framework qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, which would include recognition for Merit and Excellence. While the intention was to implement it in 2001, the incoming Labour Minister of Education, after consultation with sector representatives, announced in early 2000 that there would be a further year of development, with implementation beginning in 2002. Unlike the unit standards developments, NCEA was to immediately replace the existing qualifications, a level per year, beginning with School Certificate in 2002. The only variation to this was that after pressure from the union during another difficult industrial round, it was agreed that the implementation of Level 2 NCEA would be voluntary in 2003 and 2004, but Sixth Form Certificate would disappear completely in 2005. By the end of 2004, none of the previous norm-referenced qualifications remained.

Some aspects of the NCEA development process were different from the earlier pattern: establishment of a Qualifications Development Group within the Ministry of Education, not NZQA, to steer the project; establishment of 'expert panels' of teachers and other subject experts to develop the achievement standards; and establishment of a 'secondary schools sector forum' comprising principals, teachers, union, trustees, tertiary and industry representatives to advise the Secretary for Education on the new developments (Hall, 1999, pp.175-176).

In 2000, the Ministry of Education, as the agency responsible for NCEA policy, commissioned Professor Paul Black, of King's College London, an international

authority on assessment, to do an analysis of the NCEA proposals. Few of his recommendations were actioned. While Black (2000) said that there was a great deal to be commended in the system, he identified “significant deficiencies which will have to be tackled in time” (p.1). He advised against design features such as the award of Certificates for particular numbers of credits, the plan to provide percentile rankings of results, the risks to parity of esteem of retaining two different assessment types (unit and achievement standards), the danger of unreliable results from external assessments, and risks to validity in the division of subjects into internally or externally assessed standards. He identified a failure to consider potential risks in a number of areas, a criticism of NZQA also found in the SSC’s report on the 2004 Scholarship exams (State Services Commission, 2005a). He also identified a number of key areas for research in the early years of implementation, particularly into reliability of assessment, equity, effects on teaching and learning, assumptions about the academic/vocational divide, and student perceptions of the new system. Only some of these have so far been addressed, and a PPTA study (Alison, 2005) highlighted again the need for such research.

The advent of the new qualification did not end the criticism. Hall (1999), for example, predicted that without a focus on two key issues, the reliability of the assessment of individual achievement standards and the pedagogical and practical implications of assessing students against separate achievement standards, the NCEA would not be a technically sound qualification. On reliability, Hall points out that the words of a standard are never enough to ensure consistent assessment across multiple markers, and student behaviour is also not consistent across assessment performances, making ‘one-off’ assessments such as end of year exams not reliable indicators of their ability. He suggests that the design of the NCEA is being influenced by political pressure to include a strong external assessment focus, and questions whether it will therefore be effective in blending the best aspects of both external examinations and teachers’ internal assessments (pp.178-187).

It is certainly clear that the NCEA was an attempt to strike a compromise between the views of the traditionalists for whom external examinations were the only acceptable form of high-stakes assessment, and those who were supporting Framework-style internal assessment. A further pressure was to ensure manageability for teachers. It was assumed by the designers of the qualification, and by teachers and their union, that inclusion of examinations as part of the assessment regime would reduce teacher workload. Hall (1999) recognises this, but says that there is a lack of public knowledge

(and I would add teacher knowledge) about the unreliability of examinations, especially as structured within the NCEA.

With considerable prescience, Lee and Lee (2001) argued that the goal of 'parity of esteem' between 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects was unlikely to be achieved. Using the initial introduction of School Certificate as an alternative to Matriculation as a parallel case, they show that the fact that School Certificate was designed to appeal to a wider range of pupils meant it had lower status than Matriculation. They predict that the same stratification of qualifications will happen again, with 'elite' schools looking for alternative qualifications from overseas (pp.27-31). The current interest among high decile schools in Cambridge International examinations may well be proving them right. Should this stratification become firmly established, it would destroy one of the major social democratic arguments for the reforms.

Furthermore, critiques of unit standards in terms of their emphasis on pre-specified and measurable outcomes that ignore other less predictable and less measurable learnings (see above) are not entirely resolved by the more general achievement statements in the NCEA. The NCEA has been criticised as compartmentalising knowledge and engendering a "relentless assessment regime" for teachers (Lee, O'Neill & McKenzie, 2004, p.57). Only time will tell whether ongoing refinement of the NCEA eventually leads to its widespread acceptance.

It is clear from this outline that the policy shift from norm-referenced to standards-based assessment for school qualifications was lengthy, beginning in the late 1960's and culminating in the complete replacement of the old system with the NCEA in 2002. It is also clear that its origins were in the profession as much, if not more, than in government policy-making. (Chapter Five provides further evidence of this.) Contestation of the reforms reached its peak during the 1990's as the profession and academics became increasingly uncomfortable with the implementation of an extreme version of standards-based assessment in the form of unit standards.

Discourses underpinning the reforms

The academic literature confirms the view taken in this thesis that both neo-liberal and social democratic discourses underpinned the arguments for the shift to standards-based assessment. Most academics argue that the rationale, at least from the late 1980's, was essentially neo-liberal (e.g. Roberts, 1996, 1997; Tuck, 1994), although

the elaborate bureaucracy required to implement the NZQA vision might sit more comfortably within a social democratic government framework. On the other hand, as later chapters show, for the profession the original rationale for change had been profoundly social democratic, and this thesis argues that the intrusion of neo-liberal rationales may well have been a significant cause of the 'policy gap' between government and profession in the 1990's.

Neo-liberalism, extreme bureaucratisation, or both?

As an enthusiast for the changes, Capper (1993) would have us believe that there was a 'grand plan' that was fundamentally social-democratic in character, originating from as far back as 1965. Selwood (1991), on the other hand, questions whether such a grand plan, neo-liberal or social democratic, existed at all, and debates whether the emergence of NZQA and the Framework can be attributed more to 'cock-up' or to 'conspiracy'. He concludes that while conspiracy theory is attractive to some it is unduly simplistic; the process of policy development is complex and can include some unpredictable and serendipitous events (p.49).

It is important also to recognise the influence on New Zealand of change in other countries: "While it [New Zealand] may have been in the vanguard of change in its achievement-based assessment initiative in the late '80s and early '90s ... it is now one of many countries seeking to match its assessment systems more closely to its educational targets" (Strachan, 2001, p.253).

Nevertheless, many writers have placed the reforms of the 1990's squarely into the context of the tide of neo-liberalism that swept New Zealand from the mid-1980's. Tuck (1994), for example, describes the language of NZQA as essentially neo-liberal, with teachers and educational institutions as 'providers', industry as the 'users' of skills who should therefore define the outcomes and performance criteria, and students as purchasers of services:

The language is the discourse of the enterprise culture ... Business should be involved in the development and implementation of educational policy. Education will be evaluated in terms of the production of credentials. The desired outcome is a skilled, motivated and flexible employee, and an internationally competitive economy. Human activity is interpreted in terms of economic self-interest. (p.233)

For Roberts (1996), Paulo Freire's contrasts between 'banking education' and 'problem-posing education' provide a basis for arguing that the Qualifications Framework is antithetical to a liberating (or social democratic) goal for education. Roberts asserts that the pre-packaging of outcomes under the Framework dehumanises the "complexities of the act of knowing". Furthermore, the decontextualised nature of the unit standards methodology is counter to Freire's insistence that "learning in an educative setting can ... only be assessed when the particulars of that setting have been taken into account" (p.311). Roberts also asserts that the Framework is a managerialist tool: "Measurable people are, potentially at least, manageable people ... The NZQA framework, in placing *all* qualifications on a single scale, is without doubt one of the most elaborate measuring mechanisms in New Zealand educational history" (pp.311-312, italics in original).

A number of writers have highlighted the contradiction implicit in the highly bureaucratic nature of the reforms. Tuck (1994) points to the extensive edifice involving both legislative and political control necessary to implement the vision (p.233). Philips (1998) describes the Qualifications Framework as "fundamentally behavioural in origin" and a means for NZQA to maintain bureaucratic control of qualifications:

NZQA's defining of the essential knowledge (with a heavy emphasis upon skills) which constitutes, when appropriately packaged, a qualification, and the technicist rationale serving primarily economic and political ends and aimed at improving the skills level of the labour force, with an emphasis upon systematising or bureaucratising qualifications, specified standards, a competency based assessment methodology, and a systems approach to quality management, could collectively be construed as a form of social control. (pp.280-281)

He asserts that the promise of 'transparency' in the new system was attractive to the state: "The increasing degree of specificity reflects the state's stronger interest in the content of the curriculum and qualifications as a means by which the state (also as a consumer, but at another level) defines and thereby controls important forms of knowledge to meet its own ends" (p.114).

Certainly the discourses used by government to justify the 1990's reforms were predominantly economic. Roberts cites a discussion paper prepared for the Cabinet Committee on Education, Training and Employment early in 1996 as providing a particularly clear articulation of the economic ideology behind the Framework:

Establishing a new qualifications system was part of the government's response to concerns about the education and training environment, including a lack of industry training, insufficient training options and career flexibility (particularly for young people), poor information flows and a lack of labour market flexibility. The new system was intended to encourage the development of a broader range of vocational qualifications, reduce artificial distinctions between vocational and academic training, and contribute to a situation where industry provided more guidance as to the types of skills and attributes it sought. (Mersi & Smith, 1996, cited in Roberts, 1997, p.166)

The reference to wishing to enable industry to have a greater role in determining educational goals is of particular interest here.

It is significant that major reform of the New Zealand qualifications system was happening just at a time when unemployment was at very high levels. Selwood (1991) suggests that it is tempting to see the proponents of reform as engaging in a "diversionary tactic" by creating a myth that if only young people would engage in more education and training and achieve more qualifications, jobs would appear for them. Alison Wolf, in her recent book *Does Education Matter? Myths About Education and Economic Growth* (2002), shows clearly that the connection between education and economic prosperity is not nearly as direct as some would assert it to be. Much earlier, Ivan Snook (1989) had made the same point, saying that rather than encouraging young people to blame their own unemployment on their failure to acquire qualifications, governments should be honest about why they wanted students to stay at school, e.g. to keep them off the streets, and be honest about the widespread unemployment caused by economic rather than educational decisions (pp.1-4).

The economic rationale for qualifications changes is outlined by Alan Barker (1995), in his role as Strategic Manager, Policy, Research and Review at NZQA: qualifications are important because they are linked to the labour market, but over the years they have become a muddle, inconsistent and unreliable. He even uses an economic term, 'stagflation', as a metaphor for this: "Instead there was a qualifications 'stagflation', a plethora of certifying and examining agencies, overlapping terminology and many subtle (and not so subtle) barriers to the attainment of the currency" (p.16). (Stagflation is "inflation that occurs while the economy is growing slowly ["stagnating"] or having a recession" (Baumol & Blinder, 1985, p.82). The image may be intended to signify growth in qualifications being available but no improvements in the number of people achieving them.)

Barker (1995) then goes on to debate the traditional separation of 'education' and 'training' and of 'knowledge' and 'skills'. He suggests that dualisms had developed which rated education more highly than training and knowledge more highly than skills, and that these dualisms are false. Education and knowledge had been equated, and training and skills. What has happened is a challenge to these dualisms. Language is central to these debates:

Not only has the concept of education as the pursuit of knowledge been questioned, but the very language in which the debate has been structured has been also questioned. Those who have sought recognition for skills have felt that they were having to undergo a further *cognising*, in a world apparently composed exclusively of knowledge. That helps to explain the ferocious debate. Language has fought language. (p.19, italics in original)

The reason this challenge needed to happen, he contends, is mainly economic:

Successive governments in New Zealand perceived that we could not develop the integration and blend of knowledge and skills if we persisted with a divided education system ... The worlds must be brought together. To do this, a common language is required. (p.19)

Pressure for reform, Barker (1995) argues, came largely from 'purchaser demands' in the form of students operating within a user-pays environment seeing themselves as consumers of services, government as the chief funder ("purchaser") of education services wanting value for money, and employers as hirers of students wanting clarity about their "purchases". The market ideology starts to become very obvious here: "In sum, all the purchasers want to know *what* they are purchasing. Second, they want to know whether there will be quality delivery" (p.21, italics in original). A second source of pressure, he claims, was from educational providers wanting consistency within and between institutions. A third source was pedagogical and originated from both teachers and learners wanting transparency of assessment. The last source was from the diversification of the tertiary sector, which he describes as "the entry of a large number of new players into the tertiary market", within an increasingly globalised education sector. There is a need to ensure that quality is consistent across the providers because the whole system's reputation depends on that (pp.21-22).

For Selwood (1991), the modularisation of learning, a key feature of the Framework, is neo-liberal in that it is managerialist and commodifies learning. He describes the visit to New Zealand in 1987 of the Director of SCOTVEC, the Scottish equivalent of NZQA,

as influential in the building of support for modules or short units of study as in the Scottish model because they were a means of increasing flexibility and ability to respond to labour market needs. He suggests that the later change of name in New Zealand from 'module' to 'unit of learning' may have been an attempt at sanitising the phrase because of the strongly managerial (and industrial) overtones of the earlier word. The learning issues associated with modularisation appear not to have been extensively debated in NZQA circles, although they were certainly raised by academics who used words such as 'compartmentalisation', 'atomisation' and 'fragmentation' in discussing its effects on learning (e.g. Codd, McAlpine & Poskitt, 1991).

Dissension on the political Right

Not all groups on the political Right supported the Framework, despite their endorsement of greater links between education, employment and the global economy. To a large extent, this reflects the differences between neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies. Roberts (1997) points to the beginnings of concerns that the unit standards assessment methodology was leading to a dilution of educational standards. He locates these concerns particularly among corporate elites and the staff of certain secondary schools, and suggests that they were becoming more evident from about 1995. These critics would largely identify with neo-conservative thinking on education.

The New Zealand Business Roundtable and its associated wing the Education Forum took a leading role in critiquing the Framework from a neo-conservative stance. Michael Irwin, a policy analyst with the Business Roundtable, says: "I see the NQF as undermining general or academic education and not meeting the urgent need for credible, high quality vocational qualifications for those in the senior school for whom the Bursary route to university is not suitable" (1995, cited in Roberts, 1997, p.177). Irwin was concerned about the atomisation of learning into separate units leading to rigidity of curriculum, about consistency of assessment, and about possible lowering of standards, and argued for continuing to distinguish between 'general' and 'vocational' education (Roberts, 1997, p.177). In this respect, Irwin is reflecting a neo-conservative rather than a neo-liberal ideology. He is keen for the employer class to exercise influence over the curriculum of schools, but he wants schools to continue to operate as drafting devices to sort students into appropriate tracks, a typical neo-conservative position.

However, Roberts (1997) describes the Business Roundtable as promoting “a curious blending of economic liberalism with moral and academic conservatism” (p.183), and suggests that while they have been instrumental in what he calls “the commodification of education” in defining it as a private good with an exchange value, a neo-liberal ideological stance, their appeal to traditional ideas about knowledge and understanding in their critique of unit standards is essentially neo-conservative. This mixing of neo-conservative and neo-liberal perspectives has been identified by Apple (2001) as very significant in contemporary education in the United States (p.11).

Social democratic rationales

To add to the complexity, many commentators appear to combine both neo-liberal and social democratic arguments in their advocacy for standards-based assessment, a complexity termed a ‘union of opposites’ by Tuck (1994).

In asserting that assessment change was needed because traditional assessment systems did not promote student learning, Strachan (2001) cites Cohen’s conclusion that “currently used assessment strategies constitute a corruption of education, curriculum and of student learning processes” (1990, p.38, cited in Strachan, 2001, p.257). On the other hand, Strachan (2001) puts up a further set of arguments around the demands of the economy for workers with the required skills and knowledge. Interestingly, all his references to these arguments are dated from 1993 on, and are largely from economists, employers and politicians rather than from educators. He links these demands for changed assessment to pressure for a change in purpose and direction of education itself:

Assessment must articulate with the wider educational menu needed to provide for the broader range of students now retained to the senior secondary school, and the broader and deeper range of skills that economy and society need them to develop. (p.263)

David Hood, too, mixes neo-liberal and social democratic discourses in his critique of secondary education *Our secondary schools don't work anymore: Why and how New Zealand schooling must change for the 21st century*, published in 1998 soon after his departure from NZQA. Hood was once an Executive member of PPTA, was the first chief executive of NZQA, and according to Capper was one of the creators of the Qualifications Framework. The book appears to have been a strenuous attempt by an architect of the reforms to stop them being halted at a time when they appeared to be

under threat. (Hood was also interviewed for this study – see Chapters Seven and Eight.)

Hood (1998) claims that intelligence testing provided a means to sift students by 'ability', and that this sifting became increasingly the role of schooling, with those deemed not capable of higher education being prepared for the Taylorist workplace of the day. The qualifications system was a key part of this sifting process. On the other hand, he argues, the Education Act 1877 presented a vision of universal, compulsory and secular education leading to social equality and justice for all, and schools live with the clash between this and their sifting function. The impact of this clash has been felt most significantly by students from low socio-economic backgrounds and Maori, but the blame for their lower achievement has been placed on the victims rather than on the schools and the system. The extent of this failure Hood demonstrates by citing retention rates in 1985: of 100 students who began secondary schooling, 86 got to Form 5, 54 remained in Form 6, and only 17 remained in Form 7 (pp.12-15).

This selectivity, Hood (1998) argues, is even less relevant to today's conditions than it was in the early 20th century. The industrial age has disappeared, and the "knowledge economy" has arrived, where mass high-level education is required because of the increased need for higher skills levels for work today: "The emphasis in today's world is on all young people, not some" (p.19).

This is a particularly interesting assertion for the purposes of this thesis, because Hood (1998) is arguing that the needs of the modern economy and the demands for social justice merge if all students are able to succeed at school rather than failure being seen as the natural outcome for many. Ironically, he goes on to use economic language to argue this point:

Access, participation and equity take on new meaning; they make economic sense just as much as they accord with the dictates of common justice. The consignment to marginality of large numbers of people, young or old, by an outdated education model represents enormous economic waste. It is gross inefficiency as it is tantamount to accepting that the resources expended can be 'written off'. It also exacts an enormous cost on society that simply cannot be afforded. It is no longer acceptable or defensible on economic, social or moral grounds. (p.19)

To Hood (1998), resistance to the application of the Qualifications Framework to school qualifications was not about technical issues, which he describes as “simply the froth”, but “a debate about ‘elitism’ versus excellence for all and about the needs and rights of consumers versus the ‘trust me, I know what’s best for you’ philosophy of much of the educational establishment”. He typifies the resistance as coming from a minority of schools, “primarily private or ‘prestigious’ schools, frequently single sex and mostly boys’ schools. They are schools which have ‘done well’ under traditional approaches” (p.106). He accuses them of having caused the traditional norm-referenced examination system to survive despite more than twenty years of reports calling for its abandonment.

The conflicting discourses behind the developments are clearly articulated by Peddie (1998). He uses the story of the Framework being designed on a serviette in a restaurant (see Capper, 1993, and also Chapter Five) to illustrate the desire of those who drove the developments, such as Hood, for clarity, unity, validity and simplicity. But cutting across this he identifies a government agenda that was more about accountability and about economic imperatives:

Certainly, the shift to an outcomes-based model was directly in line with other shifts towards an accountability model in government. The notion that institutions be professionally responsible was also a key facet of broader government policy, while the idea of comprehensive central monitoring was another general development both in education (e.g. by the work of ERO) and in other sectors. The government’s insistence that the Framework developments were ‘industry-driven’ did cause some concerns, as this rather transparent policy was obviously much more related to the economy and to supplying appropriately qualified people to the workforce than it was about education. While in one sense this appeared to reinforce the Authority’s belief that the vocational-academic divide should be broken, the underlying purpose of government was not the same as what senior officers in the Authority wanted to see. (p.466)

It would clearly be simplistic to describe the qualifications reforms as underpinned by solely neo-liberal discourses. It certainly can be argued that “access, participation and equity” (Hood, 1998, p.19) are social democratic goals that the Framework is better able to deliver than was the previous school qualification system, and this was a reason for many policy-makers and some teachers in the sample for this study to support the changes (see Chapter Seven).

Conclusions

This chapter has sought to clarify the chronology of the qualifications changes and to begin to identify the discourses underpinning the reforms. It is clear that support for a shift to standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand came first from within the teaching profession and from an essentially social democratic viewpoint (see also Chapter Five), however from the late 1980's, support for standards-based assessment also began to be heard from the advocates of neo-liberal reforms, and thus was as likely to be heard coming from the business sector, right-wing politicians and Treasury as it was to be heard coming from teachers.

The NCEA appears to have been an attempt by government and the profession to find a bridge between conflicting discourses. It was a political compromise between, on the one hand, the extremism of using the unit standards model of standards-based assessment for 'conventional' subjects and, on the other hand, a norm-referenced system that had entrenched failure on a large scale. It has yet to be seen whether this will eventually result in a qualification that is credible, robust, beneficial to all students, and manageable for teachers. At this stage, any consensus of support can be described only as 'fragile' (Alison, 2005).

Chapter 5 - The union's role in qualifications reform

This is the first of two chapters analysing the discourses of key policy documents related to the shift to standards-based assessment. Here I discuss key policy documents from the perspective of the union PPTA, as the main representative of secondary teachers. (In the next chapter I look at key policy documents from the government perspective.)

In this and the following chapters I take the position that discourses are more than just language, but encompass the social practices that surround the use of that language (see Chapter Two), hence I refer not only to the language of the texts analysed, but also to their content and to the contexts of their production and dissemination. Texts not only reflect their producers' attitudes and beliefs, but also have the potential to influence others and contribute to the further shaping of the social practices of the context within which they are deployed (Fairclough, 2000). Education union policy texts, if they reflect the perspectives of the majority of teachers, wield power in at least two ways: they influence and consolidate teacher opinion by expressing a collective voice; they also influence other actors within educational politics, in particular the government. Conference papers, for example, seek to establish a collective position so that the union's negotiations with government are supported by a clear mandate from the membership. Ultimately, this mandate may empower the union to order industrial action to enforce the members' will.

The union policy documents are notable for the continued dominance of social democratic discourses right through the 1980's and 1990's, contrasting with the marked shift in government documents to predominantly neo-liberal discourses in the mid- to late-1980's (see Chapter Six). They also mirror the discourses used by the teachers interviewed for this study (see Chapters Seven to Nine). This supports my central thesis that the gap between policy-makers and teachers that led to conflict over qualifications during the 1990's was caused partly by a shift in government discourses that was not reflected in the discourses used by teachers or their union representatives.

I begin the chapter by considering the validity of equating union discourses with teacher discourses. I then discuss key documents from the 1960's on. In the 1960's I focus particularly on *Education in Change* (NZPPTA, 1969) and its relationship to later

developments. The following sections trace the development of the union's thinking over the next three decades through a range of written texts. While most of the documents discussed here are executive and conference papers and reports, I also discuss some articles published in the union's *Journal*, on the assumption that the *Journal* generally reflected the executive's preferred policy directions and was used to lead membership opinion.

PPTA – The voice of secondary teachers?

PPTA was founded in 1952 as a merger of two previous teacher organisations, the Secondary Schools Association and the Technical School Teachers Association. Since that time, it has been the sole union representing New Zealand secondary school teachers.

It is important to first consider whether it is valid to equate PPTA's official documents with the voice of the secondary teaching profession. While PPTA's union density has always been well above 90%, numbers do not necessarily equal representativeness.

The key to a union's right to claim to represent its members lies in the quality of its democratic processes (Hyman, 1996), however the literature is somewhat vague about what constitutes union democracy. Madsen (1996) describes it as 'delegation democracy' in which members can participate at the workplace level and elect representatives for the workplace and higher up the union hierarchy. The system works if activists at workplace level are able to accurately reflect the views and needs of those they represent. As traditional union solidarity has been eroded, unions' strength relies on effective activism that results in representation from the top of the hierarchy that accurately reflects the views of the wider membership. This does not necessarily require all members to participate; passive members may be quite happy with how they are being represented.

Boxall and Haynes (1997) assert that unions are often split "between the 'administrative rationality' of an efficient bureaucracy and the 'representative rationality' of an organisation of volunteers" (p.570). As they grow they tend to become more bureaucratic and potentially less democratic, but there is always the potential for members to exercise considerable power over the union's direction. Unions are effective when they are meeting the primary needs of their members, such as better pay and conditions, a voice in workplace decisions that matter to them, and protection

against unfair management, but without the ability to change the employer's behaviour the union cannot be effective.

PPTA is a highly democratic union with excellent accountability to its members (Simpkin, 2002; Jesson, 1995). Its structures ensure that the entire membership can receive information and respond within a very short time. All positions are elected annually and there are clear lines of accountability to the membership. Simpkin concludes, for the purposes of her thesis, that "PPTA's communications and actions can be regarded as indicative of the views of secondary teachers at that time [1984-1989]" (p.89). The tradition of voluntary membership means that the leadership must always adopt positions that are genuinely representative: "The power of the membership cannot be used unless those using it are very sure they can call it up. This can therefore be an inherently conservative factor, in that the actions of the organisation have to reflect the diversity of interests yet also the majority view of members" (Jesson, 1995, p.474).

Some researchers (e.g. Hyman, 1992; Vilroxx, 1996; Valkenburg, 1996) have made a link between increasing individualism in society in changing economic conditions, usually identified as from the 1980's, and declining union membership and/or sense of solidarity, however much of this literature lacks an empirical base and does not relate to New Zealand conditions. Boxall and Haynes (1997), writing about New Zealand, identified four types of response by unions to a neo-liberal environment: classic unionism (servicing and organising, robustly adversarial and resisting co-option by employer); paper tiger unionism (servicing only, formalistic adversarialism); partnership unionism (servicing and organising, credible adversarialism but also extensive co-operation with employers); consultancy unionism (mostly servicing, routine adversarialism with some co-operative practices). PPTA would at most times describe its strategy as 'partnership unionism', however during the 1990's, there was a decline in the opportunities for co-operation with the employer, and the union was forced into more of a 'classic unionism' strategy involving a strongly oppositional stance to the employer (Jesson, 1995).

Furthermore, the dominance of the 'provider capture' notion required union engagement on professional issues with government officials to be informal and covert. This prevented full disclosure to the wider membership, and posed new challenges for PPTA. A Danish article (Bild, Jorgensen, Lassen & Madsen, 1998) hints at similar challenges for their union movement. The unions there survived a shift to the political

Right in the 1980's on the strength of their involvement in welfare policy on behalf of members, however the unions' participation with employers and government in co-responsibility for welfare provision challenge their democratic processes. Union leaders working in networks alongside other parties are required to consider the interests of those other parties as well as those of their members:

Open dialogue between leaders and members in the union can disturb the network partners' own internal shared logic, thereby threatening the network's possibilities for action. These closed decision systems both require and result in the professionalization of the conduct of policy-making. Those elected to serve workers' interests become experts themselves in their thinking and behaviour, and the rapidly growing stratum of employed experts becomes more and more politicized. The trade unions' social co-responsibility for welfare policies thus tends to operate in such a way that their internal democracy is weakened. (p.4)

In a New Zealand study of union-employer partnership at Fisher and Paykel Appliances (Harvey, 2006), unionists talked about a similar tension, where members may distrust representatives who have been given information confidentially that leads them to defend the company's position. A union representative said: "The longer you are a delegate the more you see things from both sides. That's when you get tossed" (p.22). Another local study of workplace reform in the 1990's (Perry, Davidson & Hill, 1995) drew a similar conclusion:

On the one hand, they [workplace delegates] must try and build new relationships with management while, on the other hand, they are under constant pressure not to appear as though they are co-operating with management-driven agendas. (p.265)

The process of policy development in PPTA involves all levels of the organisation in some ways, but tends to originate more at the centre. While the papers and remits debated at annual conferences always include some written by regions about issues raised by branches, the majority of conference papers appear to have always come from the Executive, and would today generally be written by staff working with an Executive or advisory committee. Most of the papers discussed in this chapter are attributed to the Executive; in earlier decades the balance of responsibilities between Executive members and staff for writing papers may have been somewhat different because there was a smaller staff policy team.

Conference papers and remits are circulated in advance to branches so that every member can contribute to the development of their region's position on the proposed resolutions. Regional delegates to annual conferences come with instructions on how to vote, and would be called to account by their region if they disobeyed those instructions once at conference. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that passing of a resolution at an annual conference is a fairly accurate reflection of the views of the membership at large, and beyond that of most secondary teachers.

The 1960's – early talk of standards

The 1965 Annual Conference of PPTA expressed concerns about the inability of School Certificate as it was then structured to meet the needs of the increasingly wide range of students staying at secondary school for three years, resolving "That this Conference considers that to provide suitable courses for the whole spectrum of our school population there is urgent need for modification of the School Certificate examination requirements and a rethinking of the educational philosophies on which it is based" (NZPPTA, 1966). Conference expressed a vision of School Certificate as the culmination of a broad education, with students entering at their first attempt for at least five subjects including English, Social Studies and Science. Abolition of the minimum aggregate pass of 200 over four subjects in favour of single subject passes was supported (and was implemented in 1968). Executive reiterated the importance of considering the needs "of what has been called the submerged third of our secondary pupils", reflecting the union's commitment to equity (NZPPTA, 1966).

Consistent with the 1965 Conference wish for a clear philosophical basis to the union's position on qualifications, the 1966 Conference instructed the Association to complete a wide-ranging study of the work of schools before trying to make decisions about the qualifications system, and a Curriculum Review Group was set up to do so. This Group reported in 1969 in the form of a key policy statement titled *Education in Change* (see below). By this time internal assessment was also an issue, with a 1968 survey showing the membership split on whether School Certificate should be internally assessed in some form: 49% voted for external assessment, 42% for internal assessment, and 9% abstained. Executive was instructed to research internal assessment systems, and a subsequent Taranaki region paper to the 1969 conference led to a new position firmly in favour, in principle, of internal assessment at all levels of secondary schooling (NZPPTA, 1975a).

Education in Change (NZPPTA, 1969) begins with a clear articulation of the social democratic ideology that underpins it:

This statement of major aims consists of a short list of human qualities which education should be concerned to promote at all times. The highest value is placed on: the urge to enquire; concern for others; the desire for self-respect. (p.1)

The report focuses on nine 'agents of change' impacting on education, which can be summarised as globalisation (termed there "the world society"), a changing economy, increasing family mobility, the changing family, changing adolescent norms, mass media, science and technology, the growth of knowledge, and changing demands on schools. All of these are approached from a social democratic viewpoint, for example globalisation is seen as demanding the development of world citizenship, and personal growth of students is seen as the key to the economic growth of the nation (pp.2-3). There is an emphasis on developing in students the ability and willingness to challenge: "Schools could help all young people by encouraging them to question their society, to test their ideas and values in open discussion and gradually think their way through to their own social criteria" (p.6).

The committee had clearly been influenced by the 'objectives movement'. Besides defining three major aims (see above), they also advocate the setting of educational objectives, citing B.S. Bloom, R.W. Tyler and others from that movement frequently. Objectives are explained as "performance-oriented", language highly prescient of the discourses around the Qualifications Framework:

The advantages of the behaviour position lie in the fact that words like *understanding* and *knowledge* must be defined in terms of abilities: What do children *do* when they understand? What do they *do* when they know? Any statement of objectives must therefore be a statement about the performances expected of pupils. (NZPPTA, 1969, p.30, italics in original)

The committee rejects competitive assessment and argues essentially for standards-based assessment:

The motivation most helpful to valid testing is the candidate's desire that the score should give *him* a true index of his growth, his desire to find out the truth even if it is unpalatable. This is not the normal competitive desire, where a high score is sought whether it is meaningful or not ... Co-operation between tester and subject is not an impossible goal: it can be achieved by taking the subject into one's confidence as to the test's purpose and letting him feel that it gives him

an opportunity to find out about himself ... In this context testing is conceived as a means of finding out about the pupil in order to aid his growth. (NZPPTA, 1969, pp.45-46, italics in original)

The Committee suggests that if schools were concerned with promoting the growth of individual students, then the current external examinations, which fail to aid further growth, should be abolished. They propose instead a system in which standardised diagnostic and teacher-designed 'achievement' tests, accompanied by profile reporting on the non-examinable personal qualities of students, would constitute the information provided to future employers and tertiary institutions. They recognise that this would require the establishment of a professional unit to produce such tests and train teachers, but assert: "A change of the kind described, costly as it would be, would make sure that the most powerful tool in education could at last be used to encourage learning and to measure pupil growth accurately" (NZPPTA, 1969, pp.46-47).

This approach to objective-setting differs significantly from the more recent outcomes-based education, however, in that the 1969 version involves teachers setting objectives themselves for their particular contexts and students, unlike the nationally designated curriculum and assessment objectives of the 1990's.

In a submission to a Lopdell House conference three years later (Dept. of Education, 1972), the union talked again about the need to clarify the objectives of education, referring to Bloom's advocacy for national or state curricula "which set out minutely defined sets of objectives in the context of highly systematised evaluation" but warning of the danger that "new orthodoxies may inhibit experimentation" (pp.8-9). (This warning suggests that union personnel may also have been reading critiques of the objectives movement such as those of Eisner (1967).) The union also called for professional development for teachers so that they could learn about "new concepts of the learning process and the growing emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of education, based on clearly stated and shared educational objectives" (p.14). Charmaine Pountney, active in union curriculum matters in the 1970's, talked in her interview about the objectives movement:

In the National English Syllabus Committee, we were looking at measuring objectives and it was all about aims and objectives in those days ... I went and saw Benjamin Bloom and people like that [in 1985 on a Nuffield Fellowship]. (Interview with Charmaine Pountney, 15/11/04)

Thus the 1960's appear to mark the beginnings of the union's advocacy for assessment against standards, although that word was not used then. Words like 'non-competitive assessment', 'profile reporting' and 'assessment against objectives' were replaced over the decades by, firstly, 'criterion-referenced assessment', then 'achievement-based assessment' and 'standards-based assessment'.

1970's policy developments

Education in Change established the philosophical base for the lively debates of the 1970's about School Certificate and qualifications in Years 12 and 13.

University entrance

In the early 1970's, the union's commitment to the abolition of external exams included a position that the University Bursaries and Entrance Scholarship exams offered in Year 13 should be abolished in favour of a broader final year. The General Secretary's letter to the Universities Entrance Board stating this position ends with a revealing comment that "the encouragement of intense competitiveness is not a desirable objective for secondary or indeed for any level of education" (NZPPTA, 1972). A later letter contains a plea for a ban on the publication of Scholarship and Bursaries results because of the competition between schools that promotes, quoting the principal of Dunstan High School who describes such competition as "appalling and educationally indefensible, a kind of academic pot-hunting" (NZPPTA, 1973).

Later, as the internally assessed Sixth Form Certificate became established in Year 12, the union advocated that University Entrance shift to Year 13. Annual Conference resolved in August 1975 that establishing a single award at Year 12 was its major priority, and urged the Department of Education's Assessment and Evaluation Unit to develop moderating procedures independent of School Certificate (NZPPTA, 1975f).

Internal assessment

As a key member of the School Certificate Examinations Board, the union influenced it to develop discussion documents on internal assessment of School Certificate, however while the union's official policy position was in favour of the introduction of an internally-assessed School Certificate with some kind of inter-school moderation system, it was harder to get consensus on what the system should be. The Examinations Board proposed moderation via a partial examination in Term 2, either in 2 or 10 subjects, that would determine the school's grade package, with schools then

allocating grades to students as they saw fit, similar to the 'reference tests' used later for internally assessed English, Maths and Science. This was overwhelmingly rejected by schools for a range of reasons: opposition to using an exam as a moderating device, opposition to the type of exams they would be, suspicions about the likely validity of the results, administrative burdens, and so on (NZPPTA, 1975b). In response, the Executive resolved that the union "re-affirm the principle of internal assessment without the need for moderating external examinations" (NZPPTA, 1975c), and embarked on a study of possible alternative moderating procedures (NZPPTA, 1975d). The union view that there was a consensus in favour of a shift to internal assessment, despite opposition to the proposed moderation system, was confirmed by the Board in a circular to schools: "The majority of teachers who voted continue to favour moves towards internal assessment. They consider they should rank their candidates and award grades" (Dept. of Education, 1975).

Principals were interested in the issues, and their 1975 conference heard papers on internal assessment including one by Dr Warwick Elley of NZCER. Elley told principals that internationally there was a move away from dependence on external examinations, but that inter-school moderation vexed other countries too. He argued that an acceptable method had to be found because there was clear evidence that comparability could not be achieved without moderation, and its absence would lead to a less rather than a more egalitarian system, with selection becoming dependent on what school a student attended rather than on qualifications awarded (NZPPTA, 1975e). These were similar arguments to those in Elley & Livingstone (1972), discussed in Chapter Four.

By 1976 the School Certificate Examinations Board was supporting experimentation with internal assessment. Some subjects were being fully internally assessed: Art, Japanese and Indonesian, and there were regional internal assessment schemes in Northland and Canterbury for Maths. Pilots in internally assessed Modular Science and English were beginning. However the issue of workload was already appearing:

Many of the teachers involved in internal assessment experiments have commented on the additional burden imposed on staff and ancillary services. PPTA has requested from branches specific examples of this burden in order to make a case for appropriate time allowances for teachers, and reimbursement for ancillary expenses. (NZPPTA, 1976a)

That year's annual conference passed resolutions calling for extra resourcing to schools involved in internal assessment trials (NZPPTA, 1976b).

Advocacy for standards

Significantly, the 1976 Annual Conference also passed, unamended, a very specific and radical recommendation from the Executive (NZPPTA, 1976b) that asked that the Examination Board investigate different assessment procedures and grading systems:

with a view to abolishing as soon as possible

- i) a 'pass-fail' concept, which is centred on the most unreliable point of the normal distribution curve,
- ii) percentage scores, which give a spurious appearance of fine distinctions, based on many areas of highly subjective judgements,
- iii) written examination papers as the sole means of assessment in most subjects which mean
 - a) many of the objectives of current prescriptions are not being measured, and
 - b) there is an unreasonably high correlation between almost all subjects and the general verbal intelligence of students so that one might as well base School Certificate awards on a single written intelligence test;

and with a view to developing

- i) extension of the concept of 'level' awards to subjects which, like Mathematics, can be assessed in terms of both developmental level and differing content ...
- ii) credit for practical work in such subjects as Science, Engineering, Home Economics,
- iii) criterion-referenced statements in areas where range of activities, rate of progress, creativity, and personal growth are more significant than actual present achievements in a limited range of skills, e.g. in Native Language Learning, Art, and Social Studies. (p.3)

This is the first use I can find in PPTA policy of the term 'criterion-referenced assessment'. Frustratingly, the Executive paper to conference delegates contains no argument to support the recommendation.

The union's position on the "pass/fail concept" referred to in this resolution was a preference for a system of grades rather than percentage marks (NZPPTA, 1977b; NZPPTA, 1977e). The concept of "mastery levels" was gaining currency, with the Nelson-Marlborough Mathematics scheme trialling the concept (NZPPTA, 1977d). An

article in the PPTA *Journal* (Nightingale, 1978) explained the concept to members, and here the words “gain credit”, so key to the Qualifications Framework, also appear:

What is so difficult about stating what it is we hope to achieve and then determining whether or not we have achieved it? It is certainly possible in mathematics to say what it is we expect students to be able to do ... We should then determine whether or not a student has achieved a result, without making any reference to what his neighbour did. In other words, I'm making a plea for criterion-referenced or domain-referenced, rather than norm-referenced tests. We should stop placing people in rank order and, instead, state the criteria they should meet. If they meet the criteria they gain credit for it regardless of the number or percentage of others who do so. (p.13)

The issues of moderation and teacher workload continued to be problematic, however, leading to Conference 1977 resolving “That there be no major changes in the School Certificate examination for 1978”, yet also resolving that the union “continue to work towards the elimination of the pass/fail concept at the Form 5 [Year 11] level” and “That branches be asked to submit suggestions on schemes for national moderation” (NZPPTA, 1977c). PPTA's goals for reform continued to be driven by the pursuit of equity, through nationally comparable standards, assessment of a wider range of abilities and personal qualities than exams can demonstrate, and a shift to reporting in grades (NZPPTA, 1977e).

Industrial issues clash with professional goals

However, as in later decades, industrial and professional goals clashed, so that in 1978 members were informed that there had been a most unsatisfactory response from the Department to their claim for time allowances and expenses for schools involved in internal assessment procedures, such that:

The tenor of the response was that teachers undertake the additional work voluntarily and therefore cannot expect more time or money for it. The time has come for this Association to take a firm stance on the extent to which teachers must carry the additional burdens imposed by essential change in curriculum and assessment procedures. (NZPPTA, 1978a)

In pursuit of a salary claim the same year, the union imposed what appears to have been the first ever ban on qualifications work, with members instructed to cease any work administering entries or the examinations themselves (NZPPTA, 1978b). Work on internal assessment procedures was not banned that year, however a further ban was imposed in 1979 on “participation in the 1979 School Certificate examination” but

was lifted "on the understanding that the Minister would give highest priority to increased time allowances for schools involved in internal assessment in the 1980 school year" (NZPPTA, 1980).

Board of studies

During the 1970's and 1980's the union worked persistently towards the establishment of a Secondary School Board of Studies, responsible for both curriculum and assessment matters (unlike the later Qualifications Authority that could be seen to be the successor to this proposal). It was already a live issue in 1975, judging by the wording of the following resolution: "That the Association renew its efforts to have established as soon as possible a Secondary School Board of Studies" (NZPPTA, 1975f). Two years later it is reported that the School Certificate Examination Board has established a sub-committee to consider PPTA's submissions on such a Board, and that the Universities Entrance Board has endorsed the proposal in principle (NZPPTA, 1977a). A paper by Peter Boag, a previous PPTA General Secretary who had become a senior Departmental official, supports giving such a Board responsibility for the Sixth Form and Higher School Certificate awards, while questioning its appropriate degree of independence (Boag, 1976). The union's response to his paper (NZPPTA, 1976c) asserts that the Board should supervise curriculum in the whole secondary area and co-ordinate the interface between intermediate and secondary as well. The union strongly rejects Boag's assertion that the current Examination Board is inefficient because of its "cumbersome democratic processes ... which decree that every proposal has to be circulated through every school in the country" (Boag, 1976, p.2). In words prescient of qualifications debates in the 1990's, the union argues: "It cannot be said often enough that it is clearly impossible to implement changes of curriculum or assessment without the active participation of teachers and ensuring their understanding of proposals and willingness to accept them" (NZPPTA, 1976c, p.4).

By 1977 PPTA had developed a very detailed proposal for the Board, covering its membership, functions and powers, sub-committees, finance and operation, and reported that there was "overwhelming support for the establishment of such a ... body" (NZPPTA, 1977b; also NZPPTA, 1979).

Membership engagement

It is clear that, in the 1970's, interest in qualifications issues among union members was at similar levels to later decades. A paper to the 1977 Conference reports that 143 of the 293 secondary and area school branches existing at the time (49%) had

responded to a discussion paper on qualifications (NZPPTA, 1977b). An even higher number (173) had responded to an earlier survey in 1975 (NZPPTA, 1975b), and somewhat fewer (128) to a survey on Bursaries and Scholarships in 1973 (NZPPTA, 1973). A similar number, 202 of 363 schools (56%), produced a response to the Qualifications Framework Inquiry's survey in 1997 (Allen et al., 1997).

Social democratic discourses

An Executive conference paper at the end of the decade exemplifies the social democratic discourses that underpinned the union's policy positions. Restating the educational goals set a decade before in *Education in Change* (NZPPTA, 1969), i.e. the urge to enquire, concern for others, self-respect, the union (NZPPTA, 1979) asserts that the curricula of secondary schools should aim to:

- Extend the skills and knowledge of students
- Assist in the personal and social development of students
- Prepare students for work and leisure outside the school
- Encourage equality of opportunity for both sexes and all ethnic groups
- Promote the growth of a harmonious multi-cultural society. (p.5)

The paper emphasises the diversity of students and communities, and the need for education in personal and social development, values, and for work and leisure.

The 1980's – sharpening the focus

Policy discussion in the 1980's focused on the same issues as the previous decade: the need to shift University Entrance to Year 13 to enable a broader curriculum in Year 12, reform of School Certificate, and the need for a Secondary School Board of Studies to co-ordinate curriculum and assessment. In the second half of the 1980's, once the Labour government had made the decision to shift University Entrance, the debates began to focus more on ways to assess and moderate Sixth Form Certificate, and there was increasing discussion about the principles and practices of standards-based assessment.

The policy discourse continues to be firmly social democratic. In a set of position papers (NZPPTA, 1981b), the union asserts: "The overriding consideration in determining the nature of curriculum and assessment in secondary schools must be the needs of *secondary school students* rather than the needs of any outside agency" (p.1).

Success on University Entrance

As reiterated at the start of the decade (NZPPTA, 1981b), the union's position was that the continued university dominance of the Year 12 curriculum through the University Entrance examination, despite the small proportion of students going on to university, caused inequity:

Efforts to reform the syllabus are at present in a position of stalemate because of a conflict between the desire of the universities to maintain standards of entry on one hand and the desire of secondary schools to offer courses more appropriate to the needs of their students on the other. In the meantime hundreds of sixth formers must persist with a course which is unrealistic and largely irrelevant. (pp.2-3)

The examination is criticised as retaining a Pass/Fail concept that is "arbitrary, misleading and socially destructive", and involving "a concentration on purely academic skills to the neglect of other worthwhile skills and attributes" (p.3).

While the union's position came from a social democratic commitment to a broad education for all, it also reflected teachers' experience of the rapidly changing Year 12 population: retention between Years 11 and 12 had increased from 36.5% in 1965-66 to 52.8% in 1979-80, combined with a similar increase in retention between Years 10 and 11 (NZPPTA, 1982a).

Frustration grew, and the 1982 Annual Conference instructed the Executive to bring a plan of action on the issue to the 1983 conference if progress had not been satisfactory (NZPPTA, 1982b). Progress was deemed insufficient, and the 1983 Conference, emboldened by strong support from secondary principals, resolved on industrial action: "That the Association instructs members to assess 6th form pupils in 1984 only by Sixth Form Certificate; and that they further be instructed not to participate in the administrative procedures of the 1984 University Entrance examination" (NZPPTA, 1983b). Arguments in support of this resolution were that the Minister was now intransigent after six years of negotiations, that the union had support from a wide range of sector groups, that teachers could no longer be expected "to operate an examination of which they disapprove", and that students would not be disadvantaged (NZPPTA, 1983c).

Gavin Muckle, a PPTA representative on the Universities Entrance Board, explained the policy to principals as an equity issue:

What I am saying is that while the present system is geared to meet the needs of a minority who do intend to go to university the new structure would redress the balance and provide a better framework and environment for schools to meet the needs of all senior students. (NZPPTA, 1983d)

Having resolved on industrial action, the union continued to seek the support of other interest groups, resulting in a document in which:

The Association of Heads of Independent and Integrated Schools, the Federation of Labour, the NZ Federation of Parent Teacher Associations, the Association of University Teachers, the Secondary School Boards Association and PPTA formally expressed their agreement with the principles of the Association policy. (NZPPTA, 1984, pp.7-8)

(A notable omission from this list is the Employers Federation, though another source (Jesson, 1995, pp.267-268) indicates they were also signatories.)

The Minister was unmoved. Despite the diversity of groups represented in this consensus, it took the election of a Labour government for the change to be made and industrial action averted. The new Minister, Russell Marshall, made a prompt decision to abolish University Entrance, leaving Sixth Form Certificate as the only qualification in Year 12 from 1986 on. At the same time, a Ministerial Inquiry into Curriculum and Assessment in Forms 5-7 (Years 11-13) was established.

Purposes of assessment

In a position paper (NZPPTA, 1981b), the union asserts that conflict over *how* to assess often has its roots in conflict over *why* to assess. It accepts the use of assessment to inform students, teachers and parents about progress and to assist employers to select among applicants, but rejects its use as a form of discipline, or to evaluate the school system's return on investment or the performance of individual schools and teachers. It recognises that some reasons for assessment focus on the needs of the student and some on community needs, and says:

This conflict in perception as to the functions of an education system has been defined as the conflict between those who want 'humanized education' and those who want 'industrialized education'. The Association accepts that the assessment system should attempt to meet the needs of 'industrialized education', *but only in so far as these objectives are compatible with the ideals of a 'humanized' system.* (p.2, italics in original)

Two years later, Muckle (NZPPTA, 1983a) asserts:

Any system of assessment which requires rank ordering on a national basis will inevitably discriminate against cultural minorities. Secondly the rank ordering of students places an undesirable emphasis on competition between students and undermines the objective of cooperation and concern for others. (p.2)

He goes on to present as an alternative, "favoured by those who want more radical change", criterion-referenced assessment. Its benefits, he argues, are:

- Moderation to rank students would no longer be necessary, although courses of study would need to be moderated to achieve some 'uniformity'.
- Schools would be freer to develop their own courses, taking into account the needs of the cultural minorities disadvantaged by the present system.
- Assessment would be more closely linked to learning and teaching.
- Employers, the tertiary system and the community would receive more specific information about student achievements. (p.2)

These arguments are very similar to the ones advanced in favour of unit standards nearly ten years later.

The paper acknowledges that the profession is in different 'camps' on assessment: those who want radical change "would tend to see schools as agents of social change and would want to encourage the development of a more cooperative and caring society" and those who are content with the status quo "would regard the primary purpose of the education system as being to prepare students to adjust to, rather than question the existing social order" (NZPPTA, 1983a, p.2). Muckle concedes therefore that the union does not have a membership mandate to pursue radical change, although it might have done so in the early 1970's. He posits that this waning enthusiasm for change may be caused by the difficulties in persuading government to resource adequately the increased workload from internal assessment. He concludes: "If we wish to proceed with promoting real change we will therefore need to stimulate greater membership awareness and debate" (p.3).

An effort to do just that is evident in a 1985 *Journal* featuring articles on assessment by teachers and academics. It reflects a new sense of optimism, with the change of government, about the possibilities of reform. A Glossary to assist readers, including terms such as 'achievement-related grades' and 'criterion-referenced assessment' indicates the radical change being envisaged (NZPPTA, 1985, p.5).

Gavin Muckle (1985) begins his article with an assertion that the impetus for change comes largely from teachers, arising out of their daily experience of the current system:

Most teachers recognise that examinations are at least fallible and that examination results are an inadequate and often unjust way of labelling and classifying young people. More than anyone else, teachers have personal experience of the effects of a system which tells many of these young people each year that they have failed. (p.6)

He recognises, however, that there is no clear consensus among teachers, and that a further complication is an increasing insistence by other groups, such as boards, parents, employers, trade unions, and university staff and students' organisations, to be involved in decision-making about education. While acknowledging their right to participate, he argues that this makes achievement of a consensus even more difficult. Assessment is fundamentally political, and people's positions on it reflect their values about society:

Those who favour a strongly competitive and individualistic society tend to regard education as a sifting and sorting process which selects young people for particular roles. They therefore also tend to favour an assessment system which ranks students in order and are sympathetic towards the retention of external examinations. The advocates of a more cooperative society, however, want an assessment system which can make positive statements about achievement, and which serves the interests of individual students, rather than any particular interest group such as employers or tertiary institutions. (p.7)

Social democratic goals are paramount for Charmaine Pountney (1985):

An education system based on the idea that all human beings have immense and, as yet, barely utilised potential for learning, and that society needs all its citizens to be as well educated as possible, is vastly different from one based on the idea that only a few need to be highly educated, most need to be average, and a significant number can't learn much anyway. (p.17)

National examinations provide no information about students' actual knowledge or skills and use only a narrow range of assessment techniques:

In effect, our nation states to young people and their teachers that what is valued is the obedient, private and competitive acquisition of knowledge; silent pen-and-paper skills; recall of arbitrarily fragmented information rather than information gathering, processing and generating; and the linguistic attributes of the present dominant social groups. In addition, the system values competition and comparison, not actual and described standards of achievement. (p.18)

The argument in this thesis that advocacy for qualifications reform originated within the union is supported by John Murdoch (NZPPTA, 1985). However, he makes an interesting link between pressure from teachers for change and the industrial context, suggesting that the late 1960's and early 1970's were more liberal than the later 1970's. In the early 1970s a big salary rise had made teachers feel more positive and willing to consider change, including internal assessment, but this faded as pay and conditions failed to keep up: "However, during the later 70s the boost of the salary increase and of the staffing changes died away, and I think that affected the whole approach of teachers towards curriculum and assessment" (p.42). This raises the question of whether, in a similar way, many teachers' resistance to the assessment reforms of the 1990's was related to the antagonistic climate that prevailed for most of that period between the union and government over salary and conditions issues.

The assessment system introduced into Scottish schools in 1984 is described by Alan Burton (1985) as a possible model for New Zealand, in what appears to be one of the earliest detailed descriptions for teachers of a Framework-type system, and one of the earliest references to the 'Scotvec' system that was to prove so influential.

Other articles in the *Journal* continue similar themes: John Nicholls writes about the impact of assessment on motivation, Shona Hearn says that curriculum should drive assessment, not the opposite, Bernard Gadd discusses the social class disparities in School Certificate results, Pat Heremaia presents a Maori view of the assessment system, and a group of academics discuss technical issues concerning the use of Sixth Form Certificate grades for university entrance (NZPPTA, 1985).

The jagged edge

Mid decade, PPTA staff member Phillip Capper (1986) summarised for the union executive the changes facing secondary education and their impact on the boundary between secondary education and beyond. He titled his paper 'Jagged Edge', arguing that this boundary was becoming increasingly blurred, or 'jagged'. The developments listed included curriculum and assessment reform, transition education, courses for unemployed school leavers, and Link programmes (students doing secondary and tertiary education simultaneously). He challenged the assumption that there would continue to be something called a secondary school in its current shape, and recommended reappraisal of some of the union's central policy principles. This was followed by a *Journal* article (Capper, 1987) in which he argued that New Zealand

would not be immune to such international trends as students staying in schools longer and being financially supported to stay in education or training, expansion of the senior curriculum, creation of school-industry links, standards-based assessment, modularisation of the curriculum, and re-evaluation of subject disciplines. The senior secondary school could no longer function to exclude those not progressing to higher education, but should aim to retain all students and meet their diverse needs.

Yet despite Capper's warnings, PPTA was unprepared when the government's review of post-compulsory education and training (PCET) (Hawke, 1988, see Chapter Six) began (Allen et al., 1997, p.16). A paper on PCET (NZPPTA, 1987a) had been debated at the 1987 annual conference. This established a *pro forma* union position that youth policy be committed to high levels of participation and training for 15-19 year olds and that PCET be co-ordinated, accessible, equitable, and standards-based, to enable success for all students and detailed recognition of achievement. The paper appears to advocate standards-based assessment:

The examination and certification system should therefore be reformed to be consistent with the need to provide all with a description of their actual achievements, to provide all with information which will assist them to make realistic choices about their future education and training, and which will lead to a recognised qualification for all. (p.4)

However, this *pro forma* position was not planned to become definitive policy until the August 1988 Conference, leaving the union unprepared to respond adequately when the Hawke Report (Hawke, 1988) was published a month earlier. This was unfortunate, as that Report, by recommending the establishment of a National Educational Qualifications Authority that would have oversight over school qualifications, had highly significant implications for the sector.

Board of Studies at last?

The incoming Labour government promised in 1984 to establish a Secondary Board of Studies by 1987, making it appear that another longstanding goal of the union had been achieved. It did eventuate, in January 1988, but this success was to be short-lived.

The union's Annual Report for the 1987-1988 years (NZPPTA, 1988) must have been written prior to the publication in July that year of the Hawke Report with its recommendation that the secondary qualifications role of the Board of Studies be taken over by NEQA (see Chapter Six), because it contains a large photo of Lynn Scott,

Chairperson of the new Board and former principal and PPTA member, and exults: "At long last the Secondary Board of Studies came into being at the beginning of 1988" (p.19).

By the following year's Annual Report (NZPPTA, 1989) the tone is quite different:

It must be a matter of profound regret, and an indication of the Government's lack of a long-term focus, that the Board of Studies is to be phased out, the decision being made during its second year of operation. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the concept of NEQA [NZQA] with a secondary standing committee, the manner of its creation, and the likely limitations on its responsibilities, are nothing short of disastrous. (p.25)

The report claims that the Tomorrow's Schools reorganisation of school administration has "overshadowed" the Hawke Report and its successor, *Learning for Life*. Ironically, the union, caught without a clear vision of its own, criticises government for having failed to develop a clear vision for PCET either:

Learning for Life was intended to be that vision but has signally failed to do the job. As with *Tomorrow's Schools*, *Learning for Life*, far from providing a point of reference, raises more questions than it answers. A consequence is that what actually happens is likely to emerge from a myriad of pragmatic decisions made by committed practitioners. (p.25)

It could be argued that the architects of the Qualifications Framework, key advisers to Hawke, were actually working towards a very clear vision by this time (see Chapter Six).

PPTA origins of the framework

It has been claimed by Capper (1993) that the concept of a single qualifications framework actually originated deep within PPTA. He traces its development from a paper to the Executive of PPTA written in 1965 by the General Secretary of the time, Peter Boag, in which he advocated that the Association recommend to government that there be a single secondary school qualification and a single examining authority (p.4). Capper claims that this paper marks the real beginning of NZQA and the Framework: "This paper represents the point of conception of the National Certificate and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (although at the time the need for integration with post school education had not yet become apparent)" (p.5). He cites two further pieces of evidence for this. One is the later roles of the Executive members who were asked to critique the Boag paper in its early development, people who went on to serve on examination boards, on working parties on assessment, to work for the Minister of

Education, and to be staff members at NZQA, including its first Chief Executive, David Hood. Capper's second piece of evidence is his assertion that he himself, along with David Hood, Mike Murtagh (one of those Executive members) and an unnamed person "mapped out the basic structure of the National Certificate in a way which, reference to personal notes confirms, remains virtually unaltered in 1993 practice" (p.5). He claims that the ideas developed by these people in their later roles were shaped by the Boag paper in 1965.

The Association's commitment over many years to the cause of establishing a Board of Studies, he says, was also part of seeking a single examining authority. Explaining the irony that no sooner was it established than it was abolished to be replaced by NZQA, Capper (1993) argues that by this stage, the time for the concept of a separate qualifications authority just for schools had passed, and the drive for a unified system covering school and post-school qualifications was inexorable. Efforts were being made to present the Scottish model of a universal qualifications authority as the right path:

The political shift was created by a small group of [people] inside and outside the public service, who started with the model of the Scottish Vocational Education Council, brought its Chief Executive Tom McCool to this country and ensured that he enjoyed maximum contact with Ministers and the media, and then eased successive Ministers into visits to Scotland. (p.10)

McCool's visit to New Zealand is recorded in PPTA's *Journal* (NZPPTA, 1987b) in an interview with him, a report by Ros Heinz, (principal of Hagley High School and a Ministerial appointee to CICAQ) on her visit to Scotland in 1986 to see the Scotvec work for herself, and a critical piece by an Executive member.

Workload

The issue of time allowances for teachers involved in internal assessment initiatives continued unresolved. The 1980/81 Annual Report (NZPPTA, 1981a) describes the dilemma neatly:

Internal assessment is Association policy and is seen as a desirable educational objective. On the other hand the Association finds itself having to act with caution in the introduction of new internal assessment schemes which members are enthusiastic about, but for which there is no provision for the necessary extra resources. (p.5)

Capper (1993) asserts that moves to introduce internal assessment caused conflict among teachers because of the impact on their conditions of work and the exposure to public critique:

In the notion of internal assessment an element was introduced into the debate which did not just have technical professional implications; it also had resource ramifications; it required changes in the working practices and conditions of teachers; it made it necessary to define the level of confidence which the community had of its teachers; and potentially it significantly altered who got what qualifications. (p.7)

Capper describes a situation for the union in the 1970's which has many similarities with the 1990's, where teachers' professional judgements about what assessment practices were best for students conflicted with their industrial need to insist that the reforms be adequately resourced. In most cases in the 1970's, the professional won over the industrial, leading Capper to write in a paper to Executive in 1982:

Our consistent experience is that members will get generally angry about the prospect of internal assessment being introduced without adequate resources attached, but when it comes down to their own students in their own classrooms they will accept almost any level of additional work and not enough resources if they perceive it as a productive development in their own work. In this instance the Executive needs to pay attention to what members do at school rather than what they say at PPTA meetings. (Capper, 1982, cited in Capper, 1993, p.8)

This may sound an unusual thing for a union official to say, but Capper's warning is warranted; PPTA's experience of less than total compliance of members with bans on professional work, such as assessment or providing extra-curricular activities, even when these bans have been supported by strong majorities of members at branch meetings, signals that teachers are often torn between union solidarity and doing their best for their students. Before ordering industrial action, especially around teachers' professional responsibilities, the union must be sure of strong membership support or it risks losing credibility if government sees high levels of non-compliance with union instructions (Jesson, 1995, p.474).

Workload was a major factor in conflict over qualifications during the 1990's, and continued to present tensions for the union between its professional and industrial goals (Alison, 2002).

Conflict and re-engagement in the 1990's

The establishment of NZQA in July 1990 left the union out of decision-making processes. At the time of writing the Annual Report (NZPPTA, 1990), there was still to be a standing committee responsible for secondary awards and qualifications, however it was to be much smaller than the soon to be defunct Board of Studies, and membership would be appointed by the Authority's Board as individuals. The union explains why this will be unsatisfactory:

Appointees selected in this way lack accountability to an electorate. In addition we must sound the warning that if teachers have not been consulted and involved in curriculum or assessment changes, such changes are unlikely to work in practice. (p.17)

The Report also warns that in a devolved environment, the new Qualifications Authority will be unable to ensure its policies are implemented and properly resourced in schools, and also that the needs of tertiary might dominate the Authority.

Cautious support

Despite the hostile climate, the union sought to seize the initiative by holding a Curriculum Conference in May 1991, where the big topics of the day were assessment, curriculum, and school-industry links (Capper, 1991). A subsequent paper to Annual Conference later that year (NZPPTA, 1991) recommends the union support developing links between schools and industry "provided that teachers are involved in developing the scheme", and also seems to support in principle the Qualifications Framework, by endorsing "a flexible, modular approach to learning ... within a coordinated framework" and "the development of standards-based assessment leading to a single national award available to students in Forms Six and Seven" (pp.3-5).

The union's response to NZQA's early consultation documents (NZQA 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d) was cautious:

The NZQA document 'The Framework' [probably *Designing the Framework*, NZQA, 1991a] was both exciting and daunting for teachers. In many ways it contains the potential for underpinning the radical restructuring of senior secondary schooling which is so obviously necessary. But it is a highly ambitious proposition and the demands that would be made of teachers in its implementation are a particular cause of apprehension at a time when teachers feel under pressure from all directions. The experience of teachers over the past decade is that spectacular, glossy books introducing exciting and radical new

curriculum and assessment policies emanate from central agencies with monotonous regularity but are rarely supported with realistic practical plans for their implementation in schools. When the inevitable failure ensues, teachers are blamed for their conservatism. (NZPPTA, 1992, pp.11-12)

In a new 'Jagged Edge' paper, Capper (1992) warned that while the debate about his first 'Jagged Edge' paper (see above) had been swamped by the union's response to the government's push on administrative and industrial reform from 1987, the emergence of the new curriculum and qualifications frameworks meant that the union could not afford to shift its attention from such developments again. He drew parallels with international trends: a growing view of compulsory schooling as the foundation for later specialism rather than as a basic universal education, post-compulsory participation in lifelong learning where the boundary between education and training was becoming blurred, distinctions between academic and vocation becoming viewed as 'invidious', and equal valuing of formal and experiential learning. He accurately predicted:

The next decade will see the gradual modularization of the senior secondary curriculum, a shift to standards based assessment using a wide range of assessment techniques, an increase in part time and adult students, the withering away of Bursary and Scholarship examinations, and a reorganization of trends will accelerate after 1995 as we rush to align ourselves with the European Community standard patterns for vocational qualifications and tertiary entry. (p.4)

All but the last prediction seem to have been fulfilled.

PPTA, however, was in conflict with the government over government attempts to introduce the bulk funding of teacher salaries, and negotiations in successive collective employment contract rounds became increasingly bitter as government attempted to claw back conditions at the same time as offering minimal pay increases. In 1992, as a way of stating teachers' opposition to salaries bulk funding and as an expression of a loss of goodwill over the educational 'reforms' of the National government, PPTA members voted overwhelmingly for a moratorium on work on the Curriculum and Qualifications Frameworks. This moratorium remained in place until April 1993.

Despite this, a paper to the 1993 Annual Conference (NZPPTA, 1993) supported the concept of a National Certificate on the Qualifications Framework replacing the existing qualifications, and wrestled with the challenges of 'seamlessness': possible loss of

students to other educational institutions, demand for a wider range of subjects, increased school-industry links, and increasingly complex pathways.

Conflict builds

In May 1995, government consulted on a proposal to shift a modified School Certificate to Year 10, as an alternative to abolishing it when the National Certificate was in place from Year 11. The union firmly rejected the proposal on the grounds that School Certificate had long ceased to have a role as a “drafting mechanism”, and that a “norm-referenced externally imposed pen-and-paper exercise” could not provide students with certification that described actual achievement. “In the nineties ... School Certificate has moved from being an anachronism to being a nuisance, a serious impediment to schools’ ability to genuinely cater for the needs of their student groups” (NZPPTA, 1995c, p.2).

By the August 1995 Annual Conference, however, in a context of continued conflict over industrial and staffing issues, membership concerns about the Framework were at a high level. These concerns centred on the educational validity of the method of assessment, teachers having now seen it being applied to two conventional subjects (Maths and Geography), and also about resourcing.

The Conference paper (NZPPTA, 1995b), while arguing that PPTA policy should lead the union to support the Framework, raises concerns about “the validity of assessment and credibility of moderation processes, the complexity of the task of incorporating unit standard assessment in school programmes and the resourcing and timeline issues attached to implementing the Framework” (p.5). The workload and resourcing issues that had dogged internal assessment trials in the 1980’s persisted: “Teachers assisting in the developments, for example those currently involved in the trial of Mathematics and Geography unit standards and those few who are members of NZQA’s advisory groups, are doing so largely at their own cost” (p.5). The extra costs to schools were also not being met by government: “Costs of attaining accreditation and purchasing unit standards are considerable” (p.5).

Debate on this paper was heated, inflamed by membership anger about a recent reduction in staffing in over 100 secondary schools, and resolutions included a moratorium on further implementation of the Framework until adequate resourcing was provided, a demand for representation on all relevant NZQA advisory groups, and a boycott threat should a proposal to move School Certificate to Form Four (Year 10) be

implemented. At the same time, though, the Conference called for the union to establish "an expert panel of professionals ... to undertake a process of review and audit of the Qualifications Framework during 1996" (NZPPTA, 1995a). This expert panel (see below) was unable to begin work, however, until this second moratorium was lifted in September 1996.

A deep divide was opening up over the Framework, and Capper's 1982 warning (see above) that the Executive should heed members' actual school behaviour as well as what they say at PPTA meetings proved highly prescient. Despite the moratorium, by late 1995 nearly half the country's secondary schools had volunteered to enter school-based trials of unit standards (O'Neill, 2001, p.68); on the other hand, the 1996 Annual Conference, while agreeing to negotiate a transition from the moratorium, resolved to 'review' the union's policy on both the Qualifications and Curriculum Frameworks, reflecting membership concerns about resourcing, workload, implementation processes and pedagogical issues. In the meantime, members were instructed not to do new work on the Frameworks unless resourcing which met union guidelines was made available (NZPPTA, 1996a). The neo-liberal 'purchasing model' was blamed for the exclusion of teachers' representatives from decision-making, and for having "created the powerful impression of bureaucratic imposition on schools and teachers" as well as leading to developments "which are increasingly less satisfactory to schools and teachers" (NZPPTA, 1996c).

The threats to the very existence of secondary schools first aired by Capper in his 1986 'Jagged Edge' paper had become clearer as the Framework developed and the concept of 'seamlessness' (Ministry of Education, 1993) between schools and work/tertiary institutions evolved. By 1996 the union believed it was facing contestability in public education with the possibility of EFTS (Equivalent Full Time Student) funding being applied to school students in the post-compulsory years. The neo-liberal discourse of choice clashed with the union's social democratic position. The union argued that tertiary institutions, driven by profit motives, would compete with schools for students but not provide the pastoral care and guidance that used up large proportions of schools' resources. This competition for students would have negative impacts on equity:

The encouragement of privateers, while touted as encouraging choice and free enterprise, has more to do with the Government's desire to ease its way out of the provision of universal education to whatever extent it can ... The community ... by and large wishes to see the continuance of a state-funded education

system symbolised by the existence of neighbourhood schools where their children receive a broad general education in a safe environment. (NZPPTA, 1996b)

Expert panel

In late 1996 the expert panel, a mix of academics and practitioners, began work. The academics were Terry Crooks, an assessment expert from Otago University and Kath Irwin of Victoria University, an expert on Maori education. Practitioners were Peter Allen, a principal and former President of the Association and Shona Hearn (now Smith), another former President, who in 1995-1996 had studied standards-based assessment at the University of London. Both Allen and Hearn (Smith) were interviewed for this study.

The panel presented its findings at a PPTA Curriculum Conference in July 1997. Launching the report (Allen et al., 1997, p.4), Shona Hearn acknowledged the divisions in the profession:

It doesn't seem to me so long ago that there was a real consensus amongst secondary teachers built up over a long period that the old status quo in secondary school qualifications needed to go and be replaced by something better. But once we got into the implementation of the changes, the consensus has fallen apart. In a way we should have expected it – it's always easier to agree on what we don't want than to sort out what should take its place. (Hearn, 1997)

A further reason for the breakdown of the consensus on qualifications was alluded to by the PPTA President, Martin Cooney, in his address to the same conference:

We now live in the most right-wing state in the world – the capitalist equivalent of Cuba. Superannuation is about to be privatised ... the Salvation Army is tipped to take over Social Welfare; private police operate in Howick and Remuera; health and education face continual moves towards privatisation ... This is the context for our debate. Forget fairness as a goal of Government policy. (Cooney, 1997)

The union, under his leadership, was moving into a highly defensive mode because of the scale of the swing towards neo-liberal policies during the 1990's.

The expert panel developed a set of eight criteria by which to judge an educationally valid qualifications system, that it should be fair, inclusive, cumulative, clear,

motivating, coherent, constructive and manageable (Allen et al., 1997, pp.95-100). These criteria are consistent with the discourse to be found in the CICAQ Reports of the 1980's, or even *Education in Change* in 1969. Employers are not mentioned, and the needs of the learner are paramount.

The expert panel supported standards-based assessment:

While well aware that standards-based assessment is not a panacea, and cannot be applied with great precision in some cases, **the Inquiry has accepted that standards-based assessment is more desirable on educational grounds than norm-based assessment.** The Inquiry therefore believes that New Zealand's qualifications system should place prime emphasis on assessment against standards: standards which are defined as clearly as possible. (Allen et al., 1997, pp.101-2, emphasis in original)

They were, however, concerned that developments in that direction were unravelling, and recommended a series of modifications that would enable the Framework to meet the criteria they had set and the concerns of teachers. These were largely technical modifications such as reporting three levels of achievement where appropriate, increasing the size of standards and making them less specific, finding ways to reduce re-assessment and improving the moderation system. In addition, they recommended a clear and realistic timeframe for change and proper support and resourcing so teachers could implement the changes effectively (Allen et al., 1997, pp.114-118).

Interestingly, in the light of later developments, they rejected full implementation of the Framework in Years 11 to 13 and the abolition of all existing awards. The only two scenarios they described as "viable" involved implementing the Framework only at Years 12 and 13. One retained School Certificate but not for credit on the Framework, and adapted University Bursaries so it could be credited towards the Framework. The other was the same except it abolished School Certificate (Allen et al., 1997, pp.119-121).

President Martin Cooney (1997) chose to disagree publicly with the position of the expert panel, arguing that the existing qualifications system separated schools from other institutions and thus served to keep the threat of EFTS funding, a logical consequence of 'seamless' qualifications, away from the senior secondary school. His logic was firmly rejected by Hearn (1997) as "a short-sighted attempt at protecting our patch" that would be "expediency at its worst" (Hearn, 1997). This was a significant

debate, demonstrating the interaction between qualifications policies and wider political considerations.

The union never adopted the panel's whole report as policy. Annual Conference 1997 adopted some of its recommendations, including criteria for judging the validity of a qualifications system and recommended modifications to the unit standards model. The criterion on which most of the debate at the 1997 Annual Conference centred was the last, manageability. However educationally valid any proposed system was, it had to be manageable for teachers and students, according to speakers at the conference. While the eight criteria were adopted as a statement of principle, a recommendation that came from the floor of the conference perhaps better sums up the way PPTA members were feeling: "The qualification system must be seen to be credible, fair and workable by students, teachers and the community; teachers are not to be used as guinea pigs for any under-resourced, untested qualifications systems" (NZPPTA, 1997).

The implementation scenario chosen by conference involved re-fashioning School Certificate and Bursaries into standards-based awards earning credit on the Framework, thus implementing the Framework throughout Years 11 to 13. Ironically, the fact that New Zealand now has high stakes assessment at all three levels of the senior school, with its implications for teacher and student workload and stress, can partly be attributed to that Conference's unwillingness to part with School Certificate, despite the union's concerns about that award for at least the previous twenty years.

Achievement 2001

The panel's report was one of the triggers for the development of the Achievement 2001 policy that created the new secondary school qualification, the NCEA (see Chapter Four), yet despite this, the new proposal did not meet with unequivocal support from teachers. PPTA had been largely left out of the concept development. Although the President and a PPTA staff member had been secretly consulted about the compromise proposal, no official or wider consultation with PPTA occurred in the lead-up to the Cabinet paper (Office of Minister of Education, 1998). A special presentation of the proposal was given in November 1998 to a group of PPTA representatives the day after the official announcement to a wider sector group, but this was seen as post-facto communication, not consultation (personal recollection). An advisory group was established but while it included two PPTA activists, the terms of their appointments were that they were there as individuals, not as PPTA

representatives. A July 1999 Conference paper (NZPPTA, 1999a) criticised this lack of inclusion of the union:

PPTA was not consulted about the overall structure of Achievement 2001 nor has it been consulted adequately about the elements of its implementation. The lessons of the past are that unless the profession has ownership of the changes they will not work. That's a matter of record. For the future full, adequate, genuine consultation which includes PPTA is absolutely essential for the success of Achievement 2001. (p.32)

The paper evaluates the Achievement 2001 initiative against the principles established by the 1997 conference. While the provision for merit and excellence is applauded, concern is expressed about the level of achievement expected for Credit leading to high failure rates, and about re-assessment, moderation, the implementation timeline and resourcing, especially in terms of their potential impacts on teacher workloads.

By the time Conference occurred, however, a supplementary paper had appeared (NZPPTA, 1999b) reporting on significant new developments in consultation processes and implementation details. In the area of consultation, three changes had happened: the Ministry of Education had invited PPTA to nominate representatives to the subject panels, a larger consultation body than the Joint Advisory Group (known as the Secondary Schools Sector Forum) with significant PPTA representation had been established and met once, and agreement had been reached for a national consultation exercise facilitated jointly by PPTA and the Ministry. (A letter had been sent out, under the two organisations' logos and signed by Graeme Macann as PPTA President and Howard Fancy as Secretary for Education, inviting schools to send representatives to forums run by the union and the Ministry together.) The other area of perceived progress was in the details of the qualification, however it was noted that in a number of respects the Forum had been restricted in its discussions by the decisions in the Cabinet Paper on which only a few Forum members had had any influence.

Conference delegates were still unwilling to endorse the new qualification, however, and resolved instead: "That PPTA continue to withhold final approval of the proposed NCEA until the concerns identified in this report have been resolved and that such approval be granted only by national ballot" (NZPPTA, 1999c).

In November 1999, the National Government was defeated, and the new Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, immediately faced the question of the timeline for

implementation. The consultative forums had revealed a sector split on whether the 2001 start was achievable and the Secondary Schools Sector Forum's support was conditional: "Forum members believed that the transition to the new system would be manageable as long as there is provision of: quality assessment materials; teacher professional development; and excellent on-going communications" (Ministry of Education, 1999c, p.2). In March 2000 the Minister announced (Minister of Education, 2000) a year's delay, to 2002. Speaking to the Forum, he expressed support for the NCEA, but justified the delay on the grounds that sufficient support was not yet available for teachers to implement successfully. He acknowledged concerns that continued to be expressed about administration, consistency and manageability, emphasised that the judgements teachers were going to have to make against standards were not simple and support was needed, and announced a significant increase in the amount of time the government would provide for professional development.

This message about professional judgement was one that was heard increasingly as the development work proceeded. In a letter written at the end of December 2000 to expert panel members, Tim McMahon, the Ministry official managing the Qualifications Development Group, developed this same theme:

One of the significant issues made clear by our experience so far is that many teachers hold a false expectation that the publication of standards will eliminate decision-making problems for them. We need to do much more with those teachers to show them that the standards, and the exemplars of student work, are a *guide* to their professional judgement, *not* a replacement for it. The new system requires teachers to use knowledge and skills they already have, in the context of qualifications assessment. (2000, italics in original)

Nevertheless, despite significant efforts to involve teachers in developments, and significant expenditure on communications and on professional development, the NCEA has still been a highly controversial innovation. Its first year of implementation was marked by PPTA ordering partial boycotts in pursuit of a Collective Agreement but also, arguably, as a reaction to a reform that most believed was under-resourced and some believed was ill-conceived. While the settlement in mid-2002 of the Collective Agreement and consequent removal of the union's ban on implementation of Level 2 were followed by most schools and teachers opting into Level 2, conflict was again evident in 2003. Resourcing concerns continued to surface, and the union continued to argue that the Bursaries examination should be available alongside Level 3 in 2004.

This position was dropped, however, after a referendum of members in June 2003 supported rescinding the policy. Full-scale introduction involving all four levels (including Scholarship at Level 4) proceeded in 2004.

Conclusions

It would be tempting to argue optimistically here that the wheel has come full circle, and that all of the union's assessment goals from the 1970's have been achieved: a single authority managing a unified qualifications system based on standards rather than norms, largely internally assessed, with high levels of teacher involvement in development and implementation, and recognising a wide range of types of student achievement enabling schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in the senior school.

But that would not convey the full story. The NCEA does not yet have the confidence of all teachers and schools. Opposition has been manifested, for example, by some schools opting into international qualifications such as Cambridge International and the International Baccalaureate. A recommendation opposing schools opting into Cambridge International put to the 2005 Annual Conference was carried, but against opposition from a vocal minority (personal recollection). The union's own research into teacher views of the NCEA at the end of 2004 and a membership survey in 2006 both report a broad spread of views of the qualification and many concerns with its operation (Alison, 2005; NZPPTA, 2006, p.5).

It is clear, nonetheless, that a large part of the origins of the current system lies far back in the history of the union's policy-making processes. This analysis of the union's policy documents confirms that the union was advocating qualifications reform from the late 1960's at least, and that while its advocacy appears to have been well-received by officials on bodies like the School Certificate Examination Board and the Universities Entrance Board, until the mid 1980's successive governments could be persuaded to make only minor changes. It is ironical that by then, failure to achieve adequate compensation in time and funding for the increased burden of internal assessment and an increasingly antagonistic industrial environment meant that teachers' appetites for reform appear to have waned at the same time as government's appetite waxed. Furthermore, the policy development processes of most of the 1990's, which excluded teachers as a matter of principle, turned something that the union had fought to achieve into something that many union members saw as externally imposed. As the

union warned decades earlier (NZPPTA, 1976c, p.4), change in curriculum and assessment will not happen unless teachers are involved.

It is clear that the union's advocacy for qualifications reform was underpinned by consistently social democratic discourses. In the next chapter, I show that, in contrast, the discourses in official government documents on qualifications shifted during the late 1980's from being similarly social democratic in nature to being a mix of social democratic and neo-liberal discourses.

Chapter 6 – Government discourses on qualifications

This is the second of a series of chapters discussing findings from the various data sources for this thesis. It focuses on the discourses used in key government policy documents relevant to assessment for school qualifications, over the period 1970 to 2002. From about 1987 on, there is an increasing dominance of neo-liberal discourses in the government documents, contrasting with the previously dominant social democratic discourses. This marks a divergence from the social democratic discourses used by the union (see Chapter Five) and by the teachers in my sample. The thesis argues that this divergence helps to explain the development of a 'policy gap' between government and teachers during the 1990's.

The 1970s – the debates begin

During the 1970s there was lively discussion among policy-makers as well as in the profession about the shortcomings of the existing qualifications system and the possibilities for change. This included the beginnings of discussion about the benefits of assessment against standards rather than against norms, and of internal assessment. Two government policy documents, both from the time of the one-term Kirk Labour government in 1972-1975, exemplify these early discussions.

Assessment in schools

As part of the Educational Development Conference processes, a report on assessment in schools was prepared for the Working Party on Improving Learning and Teaching. Two key figures in New Zealand's assessment history, both interviewed for this dissertation, were involved in the Study Group: Dr Warwick Elley and Jim Strachan.

The report (Educational Development Conference, 1974) blames the qualification system for a restricted curriculum and widespread failure of students: "Much concern has been expressed about the restrictive influences of external examinations on schools and the emotional effect of 'failure' on pupils. The vast majority of teachers are looking for a change in examination policy" (p.11). It recommends that School Certificate gradually become internally assessed, with a dual internal/external system as a transitional measure while research about moderation methods is done, reporting considerable teacher confidence in their ability to reliably assess internally.

It further recommends that School Certificate results be reported on a new and longer scale than the existing letter-grade system, with statistical adjustment of the distribution for each subject according to the ability of the group of candidates (Educational Development Conference, 1974, pp.13-14). Sixth Form Certificate should follow a similar system, and once a satisfactory moderation system has been developed, should replace University Entrance as the sole qualification at that level (p.14). The rationale is the de-motivating impact of the pass-fail system:

The present pass-fail system is discouraging for large numbers of conscientious pupils and their teachers. Each year 25% of School Certificate candidates gain no award whatever in recognition of their efforts and many less able pupils leave school without attempting the award. (p.20)

Employers and the needs of the economy are hardly mentioned, although a sample of employers had been surveyed. Their responses, however, are reported only in an appendix.

The Report exemplifies a social democratic discourse: students should not have to face failure, the curriculum and qualifications pathway should cater to a more diverse student body, and teachers can be trusted to make important judgements about students.

Towards partnership

The following year, a Committee on Secondary Education was established to advise government on action to be taken as a result of the secondary education review which had begun in the early 1970s. Its recommendations on assessment mirror the 1974 Educational Development Conference report: recognition of student achievement rather than ranking, motivating rather than selecting students, fair and valid assessment, development of a student leaver's profile, and gradual replacement of exams with internal assessment. The discourse is again clearly social democratic (Dept. of Education, 1976).

An interesting new development in this report is the use of the word 'criteria' in relation to measurement of each student's progress towards achieving the aims of the school: "Assessments should be made in terms of criteria derived from clearly stated school and course objectives" (Dept. of Education, 1976, p.53). While the committee does acknowledge the use of assessment for selection, it does not see external examinations as successfully fulfilling this purpose. It argues instead for continuous

internal assessment, sequencing of clearly defined learning steps and recognition of graduated levels of achievement, and uses the terminology “mastery or criterion-referenced measurement” which “shows each student how he or she is learning” to explain this new approach to assessment.

School Certificate is criticised as being beyond the reach of many students, clouded by pre-determined levels of failure, and unduly emphasising intellectual achievement at the expense of a wider range of valid achievement goals. Practical problems with the new kind of assessment are expected but seen as solvable. It is worth quoting from the report at length, to indicate how close it comes to describing standards-based assessment as we came to know it in the 1990's:

In some subjects it is more difficult than in others to establish graduated goals. Even in these subjects, teachers at present plan their lessons and student learning in sequence. They also assess progress and achievement with some performance criteria in mind. What is needed is that these sequences and criteria are spelt out ... These assessments should indicate what a student knows and can show he or she is able to do. This implies teacher observation and testing throughout the year and criterion-referenced assessment. It also means that moderation should be concerned with the criteria of performance and the ways of measuring it. Fixed pass rates and predetermined percentages of students given specific grades are incompatible with the idea of individual student progress and achievement. (Dept. of Education, 1976, pp.55-58)

Little progress was made on the recommendations of these working parties, however, under the National government that held power from late 1975 to July 1984.

The 1980's – change begins

At the beginning of the 1980's it must have seemed as if little would change in the area of qualifications, with the implacable resistance of National Minister, Merv Wellington, to even shifting Universities Entrance into the 7th form, a change for which there was a broad consensus (see Chapter Five). However the advent of the new Labour government in July 1984 changed that.

CICAQ

In 1984, a Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment, and Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7 (CICAQ) was established by the new Minister of Education, Russell

Marshall, to make recommendations consequent on his decision to shift the University Entrance examination into Year 13, leaving Sixth Form Certificate as the sole qualification at Year 12. Its first report (Department of Education, 1985) discusses ways of enhancing senior student motivation, such as by making available interesting and relevant courses, and by removing pass/fail examinations in favour of continuous internal assessment (p.8). Sixth Form Certificate, the committee asserts, conveys enough about student achievement to satisfy the needs of employers and the public, a view contrasting with the claims of later proponents of standards-based assessment who would assert that a grade in Sixth Form Certificate conveyed almost nothing.

The Committee's second report (Dept. of Education, 1986) looks more broadly at senior school curriculum and assessment, and, as in the first report, the discourse is broadly social democratic:

All young people should leave school believing that their time in the system has been a worthwhile and satisfying experience. They should feel well prepared for whatever they intend to do after leaving school, and see their schooling as just the beginning of a lifelong process of education. And they should feel that they have been encouraged to achieve at their highest personal standard in all they have undertaken. (p.8)

Some economic arguments do begin to appear, hinting at the neo-liberal discourses soon to dominate in government documents (see below), for example where the Committee justifies the cost of its proposals against the benefits in terms of producing more knowledgeable and skilful workers, however these are alongside social democratic discourses about educating for participation and citizenship:

The Committee is aware that its proposals carry a financial cost. This cost should be viewed as an investment in the country's young people. Such an investment should lead eventually to a more highly educated population, the members of which are able to use their knowledge and skills to the ultimate advantage of New Zealand in a challenging world. There are also social benefits in having an education system which encourages young people to accept responsibility for their decisions and actions, and to have positive feelings about themselves and the society in which they live. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.9)

The Committee proposes radical surgery to the system of qualifications: replacement of School Certificate with a Fifth Form Certificate recording achievement and available to every student completing the year, the continuation of Sixth Form Certificate but

reported in four rather than nine levels, and a mixed externally and internally assessed Form Seven qualification reported in one of five letter grades. Emphasis is on assessment for learning rather than for ranking, on involvement of students in the assessment, and on assessment that builds up students' self-esteem rather than creates winners and losers:

The Committee believes it is also important that an assessment system should recognise the achievement of individual students without diminishing the feeling of self-worth or mana of other students. The achievement of each and every student deserves recognition in its own right. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.57)

(The appearance here of a Maori word, 'mana', is an interesting development, reflecting a growing discourse of bi-culturalism in education policy texts.)

Finally, the concept of assessment against standards is described in some detail:

An alternative form of assessment is related more directly to what students have learnt, and how well they have achieved the objectives of the course, irrespective of the achievement of others in the same class, school, or group. This kind of 'achievement-based' system is not widely used in New Zealand secondary schools, but several overseas countries have done a lot of work in developing and introducing such systems. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.58)

The Report then discusses two of these overseas systems, in Scotland and in Queensland. Comments recognise that such systems are complex to introduce and administer:

From overseas experience, it is known that there are real difficulties in setting up achievement-based systems. It takes much time and effort to specify the achievement criteria in such a way that those carrying out the assessment are able to agree easily on whether they have been satisfactorily reached in particular cases. The greater the number of grade levels, the greater the difficulty in writing the grade related criteria. Achievement-based systems are simpler to set up in some subjects than in others in which the objectives are less precise. Whatever the subject, teachers have to be trained and resources obtained. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.61)

Despite these difficulties, CICAQ advocates proceeding with such a system for reasons of fairness and motivation:

Failure as it is embodied in examinations such as School Certificate is an undesirable and unnecessary feature of any assessment system, and most

[respondents to their discussion booklet] would wish to see its elimination in New Zealand. The common view was that failure is harmful to the individual, that it damages a person's self-esteem, and that some of the effects of being labelled a failure can be long-lasting. Few young people have been encouraged to stay at school and continue learning after being told they are failures, and the same people have had nothing to show later for their years at school. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.62)

The word 'skills' appears in this document, a word that began to dominate in the curriculum and qualifications documents of the 1990's, but here skills are subservient to knowledge, being to "enable students to acquire and apply their knowledge". Examples given include problem solving, reasoning, study skills, research and organisation (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.48).

This Report adopts a broad view of the purpose of secondary schooling, endorsing the School Certificate Examination Board's definition of an educated person as someone who:

should be able to relate easily with other people, have a flexible, open mind, and be compassionate and caring. The person should be confident in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, should understand him or herself and also understand something of the world around him or her. Conversely, an educated person would be less likely to display such characteristics as intolerance, bigotry, arrogance, insensitivity, cruelty, racism or sexism ... Human qualities are the most important aspects of an educational institution, and ... the demands of the subjects taken by students should not detract from this objective. (Dept. of Education, 1986, p.39)

The later neo-liberal discourses about preparing students to function in the economy are largely absent here.

Treasury outlines the neo-liberal agenda

The document most clearly marking a shift in the education policy discourses of government is Volume II of Treasury's 1987 *Brief to the Incoming Government*, which is entirely devoted to education. This document was an unprecedented intrusion by Treasury into what had up to then been generally accepted to be the business of the profession and the Department of Education. It signalled that the shift towards neo-liberal discourses that was being promoted by right-wing members of the Labour Government such as Finance Minister Roger Douglas was now to be felt by education.

This shift has been widely discussed (e.g. Grace, 1990, 1994; Olssen & Matthews, 1997; Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Fiske & Ladd, 2000) and will not be re-visited at length here. However, it is of interest to review what Treasury had to say about the purposes of education and about qualifications, because of its influence on later developments.

The Brief (NZ Treasury, 1987) is suffused with the concepts of 'human capital' theory, a fundamental of neo-liberalism (see Chapter Two). It asserts that because of the amount of state investment in education and its consequences to the economy, the system cannot stand alone:

The pervasive nature of education, the enormous resources employed by the system and the high degree of involvement in it by New Zealanders mean that education does not stand in isolation from the society in which it takes place. The educational system moulds, and is moulded by, the society around it. The pressures on it are cultural, social, economic and political. It is linked in a complex way to the process of economic and social development and high expectations are placed upon it. Given their volume, the productivity of the resources employed by the system is of crucial importance to society. A small change in the performance of the system as a whole can have a significant effect on the social and economic well-being of society. (p.3)

The language here is markedly that of human capital theory rather than education: schools, teachers and curriculum become "resources" whose "productivity" must be analysed because of their significant "volume".

Treasury argues that education policy has not shown the flexibility needed to keep up with new demands, and blames this on the history of consensus policy-making and on vested interests reflected in the current arrangements. It suggests that technological change and new demands within the economy are presenting new challenges to education: "The demands on the education system to fit *and refit* people for work are increasing enormously" (NZ Treasury, 1987, p.4, italics in original).

The document contains some notable examples of 'discourse appropriation' (see Chapter Two pp.14-15). One is the placement of a list of 'social' objectives to which education should contribute: "equality of opportunity, training for work, personal development, safe custody of children, economic growth, social mobility, training for citizenship, equality of provision, and more equal educational outcomes" (NZ Treasury, 1987, p.5) in the midst of a profoundly economic analysis of the purposes of education.

In discussing the purpose of education, the Brief (NZ Treasury, 1987) uses the economic term 'functions', relating to the individual, society, the economy and the relationship between parent and child. To the individual, the function is primarily personal fulfilment, to society it is integration, and to parents and children it is custodial. With regard to the economic 'function' of education, to which Treasury devotes the most space, it asserts that education's role is "to prepare the individual for his or her economic role (which need not be paid employment) through the provision of relevant skills and certification of skill, knowledge or ability levels" (p.24). It is not clear whether it is deliberate or not, but here the prioritising of skills as what education should provide, with "knowledge or ability" appearing as afterthoughts in the sentence, seems to presage the debates which were to rage later over whether the Qualifications Frameworks competency model of assessment was appropriate to assess knowledge and understanding, or only skills. Treasury later discusses "the benefits and costs of education" to the individual, their parents, the community or society including the economy, and the providers of education, to develop its argument that education is a private good that "shares the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the market place" (pp.32-33).

The Brief (NZ Treasury, 1987) claims that the economic function of education is becoming increasingly important at secondary and tertiary level "as the age of the student, and hence the likely point of entry into a full or part-time economic role, advances" (p.121). Acquisition of qualifications is seen as the way that an individual can "signal" to a potential employer their economic value:

Thus, educational qualifications serve a number of purposes in relation to the economic function: they indicate the possession of basic skills or of higher skills, of basic abilities or of higher abilities including adaptability and trainability, and they sort and rank individuals for the labour market ... The employer will utilise the qualifications and education concerned to reduce his transaction costs in hiring employees and, where the particular content of the education is relevant to the job, to externalise his or her training costs. (p.122)

The Brief (NZ Treasury, 1987) asserts that students' qualifications have only an indirect benefit to the economy:

Educational qualifications are used as signalling devices in the labour market – they do not, in themselves, directly provide value-added in the way that a piece of new machinery may. In fact, much educational investment by individuals appears to be a defensive expenditure to protect the individual's market share in

the labour market rather than to achieve net value-added to the economy.
(p.124)

On the other hand, educational credentials, if reliable indicators, can reduce transaction costs for employers: "To the extent that the employer can trust educational credentials to indicate a certain level of ability, then the transaction costs of obtaining new employees is reduced" (p.125). Generic skills that enable an individual to respond to changing demands in the labour market are more useful:

An individual who has come to place reliance for his or her economic life chance on the possession of specific, limited skills will be asset specific. They will be liable to become disadvantaged as their assets decline in value. (p.125).

Again the references are largely to skills, rather than to knowledge or understanding. The discourse is profoundly neo-liberal, using terms such as "public and private good", "signalling devices in the labour market", "value-added", "educational investment", "defensive expenditure", "market share" and "asset specific".

Treasury does refer to the number of students leaving school with no or few qualifications and the fact that Maori are more likely than non-Maori to be in that group. It expresses a hope that moving from a pass/fail to a grades system in School Certificate and the removal of the university entrance exam from Year 12 might lead to higher levels of retention and success, but does not imply that the qualifications system might merit a more radical overhaul. On the other hand, it argues that schools have an obligation to provide accurate information about students:

Any system of certification needs to command the confidence of students, parents and employers as well as teachers ... Attempts to suppress information about students arising from the process of certification or study in schools, whilst enabling those in the educational sector to feel they are being egalitarian, will increase the transaction costs of job seekers and employers and lead the latter to rely more on external signs such as the school attended by a job-seeker; thus imposing both equity and efficiency costs beyond the world of education. (NZ Treasury, 1987, pp.141-146)

The Brief, in so clearly delineating a neo-liberal approach to education, is in marked contrast to the policy texts previously discussed, and although later government documents are not as strongly neo-liberal in their discourses, a greater emphasis than seen previously on economic purposes for education is certainly present.

Hawke proposes qualifications authority

A year later, government published the report of the inter-departmental Working Group on Post Compulsory Education and Training, better known as The Hawke Report after its Chair, Professor Gary Hawke. The report (Hawke, 1988) is an interesting mixture of the social democratic discourses evident in earlier documents and the neo-liberal discourses so clear in the Treasury Brief. This mixture is not surprising, given its timing and the membership of the Working Group. It was written soon after *Administering for Excellence* (Picot, 1988) signalled major changes in the administration of the school system. The group's membership included Treasury, but also David Hood and Alan Barker, both soon to be key figures at NZQA. The person behind the pen, however, was indisputably Professor Hawke.

The Hawke group's task was not to design a new qualifications system, but to design a new administrative structure for the provision of post compulsory education and training, consistent with the devolution of education that was the basis of Picot's recommendations for education administration. The Hawke Report supports Picot's recommendations on qualifications (see Chapter Four).

For secondary schools, the most important recommendation was the proposal that a qualifications authority be established. Hawke's idea was that this authority would be a "federal" organisation with component parts responsible for secondary qualifications, vocational qualifications, and academic awards. He recommends that the recently established Board of Studies be retained but with a new brief, to advise on the whole school system.

Hawke (1988) expresses concerns that the qualifications administered by schools form barriers to further education rather than opening up pathways for students. His solutions include allowing students to study in more than one institution at a time, developing senior colleges, modularising the school curriculum, and replacing the "existing congestion of upper school qualifications with a national Leaving Certificate for all students of a 'profile' or descriptive character" (p.90). A number of these elements became part of the eventual concept of a qualifications framework.

Working party advocates standards-based assessment

Following the Hawke Report, a Ministerial Working Party on Assessment for Better Learning was established in 1989. Its terms of reference signal that its purpose was primarily about 'quality assurance' (see Chapter Four), in that it was to report to government on procedures for assessment that "can monitor the effectiveness of the

New Zealand school system on student learning” and “assess the effect of individual schools on students’ learning achievements” (Dept. of Education, 1990, p.5). The report notes that in education, “the main public preoccupation is with standards” (p.6).

The working party’s discussion document (Dept. of Education, 1989) comments on work being done on achievement-based assessment at Year 12 and endorses this as consistent with its ten “Principles for Assessment”, which emphasise the role of assessment in promoting student learning and minimising harm to students (p.19). However, the contradiction between using achievement-based methods to assess a range of knowledge and skills within a subject and then conflating the results into a single score or grade is pointed out, giving a foretaste of the shift to modularised assessment under the Qualifications Framework. The word ‘skills’ starts to achieve greater prominence here, in the suggestion “that results for each subject be reported as a profile of skills” and in the recommendations for a school leaving certificate (pp.31-33).

The working party’s report (Ministry of Education, 1990) recommends that the new qualifications agency proposed by Hawke (1988) pursue the work programme set out by the second CICAQ report (Department of Education, 1986) to apply achievement-based assessment to all levels beginning with Year 12. It recommends that the various national awards be consolidated into “a cumulative National Certificate of Education, to be issued to students as part of their school leaving documentation”, which would “list information about achievements only in subjects which are assessed in ways which achieve national consistency of criteria and standards” (Ministry of Education, 1990, p.10).

The Working Party claims that the current qualifications system cannot provide objective data about whether standards of student achievement are being maintained because of syllabus changes, variability in difficulty of exam questions, scaling and moderation procedures. Assessment against standards would solve this, it asserts (Ministry of Education, 1990, pp.12-16). (Experience with the NCEA has shown this to be far from simple, in fact.)

Some of the principles that came to underpin the Qualifications Framework are clearly signalled here: that certification should reflect the accumulation of achievements over the senior secondary school; that only successes should be recorded; that the system should be flexible, allowing multi-level study and even study in more than one

institution; that current qualifications should be allocated to levels of achievement in the same way as stages in a degree; and that a wide range of qualifications should be able to be recognised in this way.

Notably absent is any advocacy for the breaking up of subjects into component parts and recognising these separately, despite the fact that the earlier discussion document had aired a concern that conflating results from a range of achievements within a subject into a single score ran counter to the principles of achievement-based assessment (Dept. of Education, 1989, p.33). The final report acknowledges the current trials of achievement-based assessment, but does not see the methodologies as sufficiently advanced to be the basis of a publicly credible qualifications system, envisaging a timeline of at least three or four years to reach that stage (Ministry of Education, 1990, p.47).

The language of the Working Party documents, as in Hawke (1988), is a mix of social democratic and neo-liberal discourses. The group's terms of reference required it to report on system accountability mechanisms, yet on the whole the focus remains on assessment to benefit students in the form of better learning, and the Working Party is at pains to recommend assessment which is motivating for students, for example in its support for senior secondary school students having a wide range of choices because this "should lead to enhanced motivation, reduced problems of discipline, and higher educational attainments for these students" (Ministry of Education, 1990, p.40).

The detail emerges

The two *Learning for Life* documents (Minister & Associate Minister of Education, 1989; Minister of Education, 1989) develop the details of the administrative arrangements for the changes in education and training, rather than articulate the rationale for them. The changes were necessitated by the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms, which had removed any implementation functions from the Department of Education and turned it into a policy ministry. Implementation of qualifications, therefore, had to be placed elsewhere. Decisions about qualifications would be made in a new agency, NEQA (NZQA), which lacked any institutional history of consultative relationships with the profession, and whose organisational structure contained no formal provision for such consultation.

NEQA's priorities were to develop a framework and set standards for qualifications, including school qualifications. By this time, the intention to modularise assessment is clearer:

NEQA will accelerate the move towards organising curricula on a modular basis. This will allow courses offered by different institutions and providers to dovetail with each other, and so assist the creation of national standards and the transfer of students between one institution or provider and another. (Minister and Associate Minister of Education, 1989, p.26-27)

The rationale for standards-based assessment used here is not the one in the CICAQ reports, nor in the Working Party on Assessment for Better Learning, that it does not make sense to conflate a student's results for widely different types of achievement within a subject. Instead it is about flexibility through cross-crediting.

Neo-liberal concepts about how governments should manage are very evident in these documents. The discourse is about decentralised decision-making, separation of policy advice from implementation, establishing mechanisms for accountability and measurement of effectiveness and setting quality standards. The faults of the present system are claimed to include fragmentation, duplication, cumbersome rules and regulations, a lack of coherence that frustrates choice, vulnerability to pressure group politics and a lack of incentives to manage. 'Education' and 'training' are conflated, differences being simply a matter of emphasis rather than content. Equity arguments are also present as justifications for the reforms, e.g. the low numbers of students from low socio-economic groups, minority ethnic groups and women, although how the reforms would change that when students were to contribute more of their course costs under the new system is not clear (Minister & Associate Minister of Education, 1989, pp.8-12).

On the other hand, the full privatisation of education that neo-liberal ideology would favour is rejected. Government must have a funding role:

There are important reasons why the Government should maintain its present role as the principal funder of post-school education and training ... The broader benefits to society as a whole – in addition to the individual benefits – which result from training and education determine that the Government should remain the principal funder. (Minister & Associate Minister of Education, 1989, p.13)

The 1990's – a decade of conflict

Finally, in July 1990, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority came into being, and its vision began to be articulated.

The framework outlined

From October 1990 onwards, consultation documents and policy announcements emerged from NZQA with great frequency, especially during the first few years as key decisions were made (and in some cases reversed only a short time later). There is not space here to analyse all the publications individually, so this sub-section looks at key themes and language features across a number of them in order to provide a broad impression of the discourses in evidence.

Qualifications are presented as the key to New Zealand's economic growth, and a sense of urgency is conveyed. The language is technicist, using words like "instrumental", "tapping", and "harnessing". People become "human resources". For example, in *Towards a National Qualifications Framework: General Principles and Directions* (NZQA, 1990):

It [NZQA] has been set up to bring about change. There has long been criticism of our fragmented and inflexible qualifications system and low participation rates in further education and training. That situation must be turned around quickly. A reformed qualifications system will be instrumental in fostering an education and training culture in this country. Tapping the potential of all New Zealanders is the key to growth in a world in which economic and social development depend on harnessing the human resources of a nation. (p.1)

The Framework is described in structural terms such as "building blocks", "barriers", "flexible movement":

A module is a unit of study built around specific, measurable competencies. It can be thought of as a building block. An appropriate combination of modules would comprise a programme leading to a qualification ... A module needs to be large enough to provide a satisfactory unit of study but not so large as to be unattainable by an average student in a reasonable length of time ... The barriers that have impeded flexible movement within the qualifications system will be reduced. (NZQA, 1990, pp.9-13)

The word “skills” appears frequently, but with a range of meanings. For example, in relation to the original intention of retaining School Certificate as the final level below the Framework, NZQA says it should reflect a broad general education rather than a vocational focus:

While [compulsory schooling] should take into account the needs of employers and tertiary education, it should not be driven by them. It follows that employment training for under-fifteens should be limited to general preparation for the world of work, with the emphasis on generic skills useful in more than one type of job. More specifically, employment-related learning should be post-compulsory. (NZQA, 1991a, p.28)

The concept of a broad general education represented here is very different from the same concept in most documents of earlier decades. Education for self-awareness, for citizenship, for living in a multi-cultural society are absent. While employers and tertiary education should not drive the curriculum, skills, described here as “generic” but signalled as work-related by the words “useful in more than one type of job”, are important.

In a later document (NZQA, 1991b) a New Zealand Employers’ Federation submission is highlighted:

There is a need for a secondary school curriculum which is standards-based and capable of measuring generic or core skills (communication, problem solving, personal, numeracy, information technology and modern language skills) to provide the foundation for further learning and achieving in the tertiary sector or employment. (p.5)

The emphasis is on skills, not knowledge, and the list of “generic or core skills” reads very oddly. “Personal” skills, which surely cover a very broad area, are placed in the middle of the list just before numeracy and with no further explanation. The concept that a broad general education must “take into account the needs of employers and tertiary education” is repeated here (p.5).

A booklet targeting schools (NZQA, 1991d) begins with the needs of employers and the economy: “Advances in technology and fast-changing economic conditions mean the modern worker may well have to change direction many times in a working life. People must be willing and able to gain new knowledge and skills” (p.3). The answer provided to a question “Will the school curriculum become industry-driven?” is not convincing, despite beginning with a firm “No”. It asserts that “schools and industry will

need to clearly understand each other's viewpoints and agree on the personal and career value to students of particular learning" (pp.11-12).

NZQA writers in the early 1990's did not hesitate to use a wide range of persuasive language techniques to convince their audience of their case for change. Emotive language is common, for example:

The challenge we face is to create a world-class education system which will engender a new spirit of enterprise and initiative ... We must break the cycle of failure that condemns so many young people to dependence on the state, so that they can fulfil their potential and make their contribution to our nation's future. (NZQA, 1991a, p.2)

Issues for Maori are given particular attention and strongly emotive language, for example: "Enterprise and commitment will be needed to break the cycle of under-achievement that condemns a high proportion of Maori people to depend on the state" (NZQA, 1991a, p.8). Whakatauki (proverbs) and sub-headings in Maori begin to appear (e.g. NZQA, 1991a, pp.8-9). This conveys an impression that equity is a major concern of the proposals, although other aspects of them might suggest otherwise.

Rhetorical devices such as alliteration can be found: "a single streamlined system" (NZQA, 1991f, p.3) and "the learner's life-long achievement" (NZQA, 1991f, p.6). Imagery is also common: "The building blocks of the Framework" and "tailored packages of units" (NZQA, 1991d, p.5). All these are designed to secure the reader's emotional commitment to the concepts being outlined.

The language of managerialism is much in evidence, for example in the Board's policy announcement (NZQA, 1991c): "It will involve setting simple and clearly identified targets and expectations of delivery" (p.2). A set of "Principles for the Framework" reads as system decisions rather than educational principles. The language is technicist and students are present as "learners" or not at all. There is repeated reference to quality management systems, and to separation of roles: assessment is NZQA's responsibility, but teaching and learning are not. Units of learning will be defined in terms of "learning outcomes". Flexibility is the goal: "The framework aims to facilitate maximum flexibility in the provision and acquisition of learning" (p.5).

It is not hard to imagine that teachers would have found much of this language alienating, because it differs so much from the social democratic discourses they had, until recently, been used to reading in government documents.

Political propaganda

In July 1993, just a few months before the 1993 General Election, the Ministry of Education published *Education for the Twenty-First Century*. It was billed as a draft, with a response booklet, and a final version was promised for March 1994, but this never appeared. It was accompanied by a letter from the Minister, Dr Lockwood Smith, and there was even a television broadcast at 7.30 a.m. on a Saturday to support it. Because of its contents, and the fact that it was published near an election, I can recall many teachers perceiving it as National Party 'propaganda'. Whether that is fair, it is certainly remembered as a statement of the Minister's huge enthusiasm for what was billed "a seamless education system", and the contribution to this of the new Qualifications and Curriculum Frameworks.

The Introduction (Ministry of Education, 1993) repeats the same messages as the NZQA publications discussed above: technological change is accelerating, people are going to have to adapt including going on learning throughout their lives, and similar claims. The link between education and economic success in a global marketplace is overt: "We live in a global community and a global marketplace. If we seek to improve our economic standing relative to that of our competitors, our commitment to education and training must be greater than that of other countries" (p.7). The words "skills" and "training" appear frequently in this introduction: "Schools can no longer provide people with the specific skills they will need in adulthood, because we can no longer predict what those skills will be", "People are going to have to re-train several times through their working lives", "The skills of our workforce must improve faster than the skills of other workforces", "the skills they need to build life-long learning", "a population skilled enough", and "We must ensure that our workforce is suitably skilled in science, technology, and engineering" (pp.7-8).

On the other hand, there is reference also to social goals, such as alleviation of poverty and redressing inequity for Maori:

If our future economic prosperity depends on a renewed commitment to education, it is equally true that the harmony and progress of our society and culture depends just as much on education. Too many of our families are trapped in a cycle of failure. Unemployment, the lack of a sense of community,

crime, helplessness, and intolerance must be addressed through education ... Maori and mainstream initiatives need to be supported to create appropriate opportunities and choice for Maori if our society is to move into the future. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.7)

The irony of this section is that the government had slashed welfare benefits in the 1991 Budget, drastically cut government spending and continued the 1984-90 Labour Government's programme of sale of state assets, causing unemployment to rise to unprecedented levels. Education could hardly be expected to redress the inequities caused by such a policy programme.

This document is memorable for the visual image of the "seamless education system" which is developed throughout the first section. Page by page, a rectangle lengthens to represent schooling from "parents as first teachers" and early childhood and through Years 1 to 13. On one side of this is a column for the New Zealand Curriculum, and on the other side a column for the first four levels of the Qualifications Framework, with Level 1 arrowed to Form 5. Eventually the central rectangle becomes rocket-shaped with the addition of Tertiary Institutions, and points confidently skyward, and the Qualifications Framework column has grown to its full eight levels. But this is not the end. The next two page openings add in "Skill New Zealand" and "Second Chance" as triangles attached to the central 'rocket', linking them diagrammatically to both tertiary and senior secondary. Finally, under the heading "The Seamless Education System", the dividing lines between the sectors are removed to represent seamless education from cradle to grave (Ministry of Education, 1993, pp.10-21).

The visual imagery of the diagram and the language of the text are inflated, giving the document the tone of propaganda rather than serious discussion. The language at the end of Part One when the whole 'vision' has been unveiled illustrates this:

Modern technology will speed this development as distance learning breaks down traditional bricks and mortar and takes students from wherever they are into the virtual classroom of the future. The Minister of Education is currently working with the education community to design a way of resourcing this seamless education system to allow these educational opportunities to flourish, and to build education for the twenty-first century. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.20)

An interesting feature of this comment is that it is the "Minister", not the "Ministry" who is working with the education community, adding to the perception that this was very much Lockwood Smith's personal vision for education. It is interesting that in my

interviews with teachers, Lockwood Smith is often remembered as the architect of “seamless education”. Whether it was his invention or not, he was certainly keen to advocate for the concept.

The second section of the document (Ministry of Education, 1993) sets numerical targets for education, such as “The number of Maori students in tertiary education will by 1995 be 10 percent of the total tertiary student population” (p.29). Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress towards these targets are identified, and the estimated costs of meeting them are provided (but with no indication of how these were calculated). Absent is the action plan between the target and the monitoring, reflecting neo-liberal policy approaches in which the government sets the targets and evaluates whether they have been achieved, but leaves the ‘providers’ of education to decide how to achieve them. It also mirrors the operation of the Qualifications Framework: NZQA sets the outcomes to be achieved by students and monitors the assessment process, but the school or other educational ‘provider’ has ‘control’ over the learning programme, and no guidance about curriculum content or delivery is provided. This has been described as the ‘tight-loose-tight’ model of management (see Chapter Two).

All but one aim, “A community of shared values”, is followed by a set of “desirable outcomes”, a statement of the “context”, and then the targets described above. The aims themselves and the consequent outcomes are a mix of social democratic ideals, like “Equality of educational opportunity for all to reach their potential and take their full place in society” and “Full participation and achievement by Maori in all areas of education”, and those that have a more neo-liberal flavour such as “A highly skilled workforce at enterprise and industry level to enhance New Zealand’s international competitiveness” and “Improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of resource use in education”. The “Context” section under the last aim is typical neo-liberal language:

For resources to be allocated in ways that will best meet the needs of students, there need to be systems for setting priorities, for undertaking regular reviews of funding methods, for constantly re-evaluating resource allocation, and for rigorous accountability across all education sectors. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p.40)

An intention is declared to put in place “nationally comparable performance indicators”, “quality financial and non-financial management and reporting systems”, and publication of reports “on the efficiency of resource management ... and the overall performance of the school and early childhood sector in value for money terms” (p.41). All of these are features of managerialism under a neo-liberal regime.

Advice for schools

In January 1994, Ron Martin, a former teacher educator, school inspector and Education Review Officer, wrote for NZQA (Martin, 1994) a handbook on the Framework titled *Tomorrow's Learners*, presented as "a resource that will help open up the issues that need to be considered" in implementing the Framework (p.3). According to NZQA's Preface, Martin developed the handbook with an advisory group of Principals, and the intended audience is clearly the secondary teaching profession.

Significantly, Martin (1994) begins by positioning the Framework as about serving student needs rather than serving the economy: "I believe that while in the short term the changes may present schools with many challenges, these changes are inevitable if we are to continue to serve the learning needs of our students in the coming decades" (p.5). He concedes that the Framework will require major structural change in secondary schools:

It follows that a different school structure is required, one which is as flexible as the demands of society ... Schools are locked into structures which inhibit them from making a more comprehensive and systematic response to changed academic, social, personal and cultural learning needs of their students. (pp.6-8)

Martin (1994) presents the purpose of the Framework as much broader than the discourse of NZQA's own documents would indicate, as about meeting the community's learning needs. He outlines four areas of change required: improved access to learning and recognition of learning, removal of barriers to learning, more learner-centred learning, and supporting learners to take responsibility for their own learning (p.9).

In contrast with the discourses of NZQA publications discussed above, the focus here is on learner needs, the workforce is mentioned only once but after self-fulfilment and maximising "life chances". Part of Martin's (1994) argument for radical change is the opportunities presented by information technology and students' ability to independently access huge amounts of information:

This active approach to learning is particularly appropriate in a world in which the capabilities and potential of information technology have led to a continuing explosion of information which therefore needs to be accessed and intelligently used by individuals rather than stored in human memory. (p.10)

He argues that structural change is required so that students can pursue individual learning programmes rather than follow pre-determined course structures, and that the Framework will allow these programmes to be recognised in qualifications (p.10). Some managerialist discourses creep through, for example students or learners sometimes became “clients” and terms like “strategic management” are used occasionally, but largely the discourses are social democratic.

Martin's (1994) vision of where schools need to go must, nevertheless, have alarmed many of its audience. He suggests that schools need to undergo a transition from institutions organised around courses beginning in February and ending in November to institutions which provide “guidance, counselling and assessment to establish individual abilities, needs, requirements and goals and flexible access to learning and assessment” (p.18). On the other hand, he attempts to allay their fears in various ways, including by repeating many times that schools and teachers will need time to adapt to the new approaches.

It is interesting to surmise why Ron Martin was chosen by NZQA at this particular point to write a document addressed to schools. He was someone who had high credibility among teachers and principals from his work as a teacher educator and inspector. By January 1994 the level of conflict about the Framework within the school sector was becoming quite high. It was, presumably, hoped that Martin's name on such a publication would give it credibility with teachers, and perhaps persuade more of them to endorse NZQA's approach to standards-based assessment, thus building a critical mass of support for the Framework. This was not to be.

NZQA handbooks

Despite the lack of consensus in the school sector, NZQA was working with a variety of groups to develop and register ‘vocational’ unit standards that were beginning to be used in a wide range of institutions including schools. Some schools began to voluntarily trial unit standards in ‘conventional’ subjects, with unit standard trials in Maths and Geography beginning in 1995. Polytechnic courses were being assessed against unit standards, and employers were forming Industry Training Organisations and developing unit standards for their industries.

There was pressure on NZQA, though, to prove to doubters that the model was credible, and in January 1996 the first of what was promised to be a series of

handbooks was published. The Chair of the Board of NZQA, in his Foreword, provides a useful summary of some of the criticisms:

My colleagues and I on the Qualifications Authority Board have listened to a number of reservations about the practices that are appropriate for assessment against unit standards. We have heard concerns about the consequences of assessing against standards, the constraining influence of assessment on curriculum, consistency of standards interpretation, removal of competition, the ranking and recognition of excellence. Reassessment, assessment workload, lack of readiness to undertake standards-based assessment, have also been common themes. (NZQA, 1996, p.iii)

He concedes that some of the concerns are valid, but contends that the strategies in the handbook will help to address them.

The handbook differs from most of the earlier NZQA publications by addressing implementation issues in detail rather than simply justifying the model of assessment. The handbook also differs from other NZQA publications by bringing learners more clearly into the picture, including through frequent photographs of people in a wide variety of learning contexts. The rationale provided for the Framework, however, is the same:

- assessment can be integrated with a range of learning objectives, priorities and styles
 - there is transparency of objectives and achievement
 - specific learning outcomes rather than broad general objectives are assessed
 - assessment can be done in a wide variety of ways, not just paper and pen tests
 - a student can have more than one chance at being assessed for a standard.
- (NZQA, 1996, p.2)

The qualities of “good assessment” are listed, and these make interesting reading when compared with a broadly similar list assembled as part of the Qualifications Framework Inquiry report (Allen et al., 1997) the following year. What makes NZQA’s list rather limited is that it is only about “good assessment” against unit standards, so that, for example, appropriateness is not to do with using different types of assessment for different purposes, as Peddie (1992) and Elley (1995) would have it, but to do with choosing an appropriate method to assess against a unit standard, depending on “the performance being assessed”. Validity is to do with the evidence collected being focused on the requirements specified in the particular unit standard. Manageability is presented as a limited concept here: “the methods used

will be straightforward, readily arranged and will not interfere unduly with learning" (NZQA, 1996, p.7).

While this was probably a useful publication for those teachers who were implementing unit standards assessment, it would not have greatly reassured the rest of the profession, many of whom were by this time becoming strident in their opposition to the Framework.

New minister, pragmatism emerges

In June 1997, the government released a Green Paper on qualifications (Ministry of Education, 1997) and the following month PPTA released its critique of the Qualifications Framework (Allen et al., 1997, see Chapter Five). There had been a change of Minister prior to the 1996 election, and the new Minister, Wyatt Creech, was reported to want to revisit the Framework. In his letter accompanying the Green Paper he writes: "The Government is keeping an open mind on ways of resolving the different issues [for the future development of the National Qualifications Framework] and will carefully consider all submissions before reaching its decisions". The issues identified as needing resolution are around NZQA's demand for the universal use of unit standards for assessment, concerns that assessment is driving the curriculum, and concerns about the extra workload of assessment and moderation on classroom teachers (Ministry of Education, 1997, pp.3-4).

Nevertheless, the discourse of this document has many similarities with that of NZQA documents of the early 1990's, and neo-liberal ideologies about choice in a competitive qualifications market are in evidence. Considerable importance is given to the availability of information about qualifications being offered in the "market" so that students can optimise their choices and employers know what applicants can offer: "When students and employers invest in education, it is important that their choice of qualification is made on the basis of sound information" (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.10). All Framework qualifications will have clearly stated outcomes and be able to be compared through level and credit value designations, so that students and employers will share a "common currency" of outcomes, levels and credits to enable them to compare qualifications.

The document (Ministry of Education, 1997) includes a "Rationale for a Qualifications Framework" comprising largely economic arguments. The qualifications system is "to serve employers' and students' needs into the 21st century", with the order of the two

groups probably not accidental. The qualifications system is to help New Zealand “prosper” and be “internationally competitive”. To do this, “we must look to the skills and knowledge of our people to feed innovation and improvements in productivity”, although there is a new emphasis on higher level cognitive skills: “In a world marked by rapid technological change, intellectual skills will increasingly command a premium over manual ones” (p.10). Qualifications reform is needed because schools have been offering few qualifications alternatives for the range of students in their care, with negative consequences: “Failure in school examinations left many floundering in the job market. To meet the needs of these students, a greater range of qualifications was required” (p.12). Failure here is not a problem for its own sake, but because it leaves people unable to be productive employees.

While the document proposes an easing of the requirement that all qualifications registered on the Framework adopt the unit standard methodology, NZQA will maintain a role of quality control, by approving and monitoring qualifications which seek registration. Initially this role will be carried out by NZQA itself, but consistent with a neo-liberal preference for minimal government interference, the intention is that NZQA will delegate approval authority “where appropriate”. NZQA will operate as a neutral overseer of quality rather than a hands-on agency promoting a particular form of assessment (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.8). (This principle opened the way for the development of the NCEA – see below – as a school qualification developed by the Ministry of Education using a different form of standards-based assessment.)

The issues around recognition of merit and excellence within competency-based assessment are raised in this document, and an odd compromise is proposed, that NZQA will develop “a scale of nationally recognised excellence to be integrated into the NQF for school subjects assessed against unit standards. Grades awarded against this excellence scale would be recorded nationally”, and furthermore that “Providers may recognise high levels of performance by awarding marks or grades according to their own criteria. Such marks or grades would be recorded locally” (Ministry of Education, 1997, p.24). What these proposals would mean in practice is far from clear in the discussion of them, and they appeared to be a recipe for confusion. They certainly did not settle the critics, and another solution needed to be found.

The NCEA compromise materialises

In October 1998, a paper entitled *Qualifications for Young People Aged 16 to 19 Years* (Office of Minister of Education, 1998) was approved by Cabinet. This paper was the result of nearly a year of manoeuvrings behind the scenes, managed by officials from NZQA and the Ministry of Education. Their brief had been to try to find a compromise position on school qualifications in order to break out of the impasse that had developed with the school sector, which was largely refusing to implement the unit standards model for 'academic' subjects. Officials had talked with twenty-four principals and "selected stakeholders" representing the extreme positions on qualifications, from supporters of norm-referenced exams to supporters of unit standards. The Cabinet paper says:

The proposals in this paper take account of resolutions of the Board of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, proposals expressed in the Government's Green Paper on the National Qualifications Framework, submissions received on the Green Paper, and views expressed in *Te Tiro Hou*, a report commissioned by Post Primary Teachers' Association. (p.3)

The Executive Summary indicates the context in which the proposals were developed:

Given the polarisation in the school sector over the future of qualifications for this age group, the reforms will not meet all the demands of different sector groups. However, the proposals provide increased coherence and may reduce workload, particularly in the longer term ... Principals consulted confidentially on the proposed reforms have been supportive. (p.1)

The range of views is described as being "from those who support solely external assessment for qualifications, to those who support solely internal assessment for qualifications", and the authors predict that their proposal will gain majority but not unanimous support (p.8).

The title of the paper is significant, because the proposal involves elements of ring-fencing school qualifications from the rest of the Framework, while at the same time maintaining the "seamlessness" with post-school qualifications that had been presented as one of the Framework's big advantages. The proposal is that a National Certificate of Educational Achievement will become the principal school qualification, awarded at Levels 1 to 4 on the Framework. Credits will be generated from both internal and external assessment. The competency-based model of unit standards will be replaced for 'conventional' school subjects with achievement standards through which students' performance will be recognised at one of four levels, from Not Achieved to Excellence (Office of Minister of Education, 1998, p.5).

The rationale for this new qualification includes that it will provide flexibility to students and to schools. Credits can be generated from achievement standards and from unit standards (in both 'conventional' and 'non-conventional' subjects), enabling students' programmes to be a mix of types of subject: "The wider community expects more diverse learning options, flexible qualifications pathways and formal recognition of a wider range of skills and knowledge than has been traditionally provided by schools" (Office of Minister of Education, 1998, pp. 2-3).

On the other hand, the hope is expressed that the ability of achievement standards to recognise merit and excellence, and the fact that at least half the credits for any subject will have to come from external assessment, will satisfy schools and teachers still wedded to examinations. The mix of internal and external assessment is presented as being for the benefit of students:

Some students prefer external assessment such as examinations. Other students perform better with the greater range of assessment methods available through internal assessment. Having a mix of internal and external assessment should ensure that no student is unduly disadvantaged by the assessment mode and that all students feel that they have an opportunity to demonstrate their competency. (Office of Minister of Education, 1998, p.5)

This point seems to have been of particular importance to the authors, because it is repeated again only four points down on the same page.

The issue of teacher workload, a major cause of dissatisfaction about the Framework among teachers, is used to justify including a minimum of external assessment in each subject, alongside an argument that it would increase reliability. It is also hoped that eliminating "dual assessment" (assessment against unit standards and for other qualifications) may reduce workload (Office of Minister of Education, 1998, pp.5-6).

The development work would be done by the Ministry of Education, not by NZQA, but with a Joint Overview Group involving both agencies plus sector representatives. The timeline for implementation was for sequential introduction to begin in 2001, hence the project name "Achievement 2001".

The language of the paper is relatively neutral, perhaps reflecting the political pragmatism behind it. The government, New Zealand's first under its new proportional representation system MMP, needed a resolution to the conflict with the school sector

by putting in place a qualification system that would appease people in all 'camps'. Employers and industry are mentioned only as a group who need to be communicated to, the needs of the economy are not mentioned, and "skills" are only mentioned paired with "knowledge". The paper proposes huge involvement by teachers and principals in the development process, including a "roadshow" of principals to brief and consult with school representatives, and panels of subject specialists to develop the standards.

Marketing 'Achievement 2001'

The first publication on the NCEA was released in November 1998. It is entitled *Achievement 2001: Qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds* (Ministry of Education/NZQA, 1998). It is a glossy pamphlet with lots of photos of happy young people from a variety of ethnic groups, and a mix of other images ranging from paua shells and ferns to keyboards and other technological symbols. The language attempts to reassure people from all parts of the debates: "Achievement 2001 is a unified system of national qualifications that builds on current examinations and unit standards. It introduces a balanced and flexible qualifications system for 16 to 19 year olds" (p.1). The explanation for the change covers the usual ground: more students are staying at school, the community wants more diverse options from schools and recognition of a wider range of skills and knowledge, traditional assessment approaches don't suit this wider range. In a new departure, it even acknowledges that the various changes in assessment in recent years have increased the workload for both students and teachers.

The benefits of Achievement 2001 are listed as:

- encouragement to schools to offer innovative programmes
- a flexible system that maintains national standards and encourages schools and students to strive for higher levels of achievement
- links between school learning, tertiary education and the workplace
- a mix of internal and external assessment within a unified set of qualifications
- results that show how well students have done against each other and against national standards
- a system that makes workload manageable.

(Ministry of Education/NZQA, 1998, p.3)

This is an interesting list, especially the last two bullet points. The discourse about standards-based assessment has changed here in that comparative assessment has reappeared, presumably reflecting the Cabinet decision to report some kind of Grade

Point Average score as well as grades. Manageability of teacher workload has achieved a place of prominence in the official discourse.

By June 1999, panels of subject experts had been established for Arts, English, Foreign Languages, Maths, Science, Social Sciences and Te Reo Maori. The plan was for them to meet three times before October to develop Level 1 Achievement Standards in their subject areas and resource material to exemplify how each standard might be assessed. In a leaflet for schools (Ministry of Education, 1999a), the membership of these panels is listed, the process for developing the standards is outlined, and an implementation timeline is provided. Much is made of the fact that practising teachers are heavily involved in the development work and that not everything is going to change: "Expert panels of teachers decide what standards should be developed in each curriculum area. In doing so the panels refer to curriculum documents, exam prescriptions, unit standards and the best of current classroom practice" (p.1).

The rationale for the qualification is not laboured in the leaflet (Ministry of Education, 1999a), but it is described as "a broad-based qualification for fifth, sixth and seventh formers". It explains that "Most learning in senior secondary school (and some beyond school) will be able to generate credits towards the NCEA" (p.1). The place of School Certificate and University Bursaries is somewhat fudged: "At least half the achievement standards for each subject will be externally assessable through examinations just like the School Certificate (Form 5) and Bursaries (Form 7) examinations. Sixth Form Certificate will be replaced by the NCEA" (p.1). Assurance is given that material will be provided to support teachers in making consistent judgements: "Exemplar material will accompany every achievement standard. The examples produced will make it clear to teachers the quality of work students must produce, in either external or internal assessment, to achieve credit, merit and excellence in a particular standard" (p.3).

A further leaflet was published in July. In a section titled "Policy Drivers" it lists the issues which have divided the sector up to that point and which the Achievement 2001 policy is seeking to address:

- issues to do with 'micro-definition' of outcomes and associated workloads for students and teachers involved with assessment, marking, recording and moderation of unit standards;
- the applicability of unit standards to conceptual learning;

- the met/did not meet aspect of unit standards and lack of recognition for superior performance;
- public disquiet about comparability and fairness in internal assessment;
- the lack of recognition on the NQF of the traditional examinations;
- the importance of qualifications being standards-based: that is, based on explicit statements of what we expect students to know and be able to do in order that they'll be entitled to gain a qualification;
- the practical necessity for the standards-based system to be manageable for students, teachers and assessors.

(Ministry of Education, 1999b, p.1)

The differences between these NCEA publications and the NZQA booklets of the early 1990's are marked. Clearly political pragmatism was the order of the day, reflected in the Ministry of Education trying to speak to, rather than past, their teacher audience.

Conclusions

These NCEA publications make an appropriate place to end this chapter, because they encapsulate the extent to which the wheel has come, if not full circle, at least partly back to where the debates began. In the 1970's and early 1980's, teacher voices were a dominant force in qualifications debates, and reports such as that of the Working Party on Improving Learning and Teaching (Educational Development Conference, 1974) and CICAQ (Department of Education, 1985, 1986) reflect the same kind of discourses as those evident in teacher union publications of the time (see Chapter Five).

The 1987 Treasury Brief marks a change in the official discourse to one that must inevitably have been alienating for teachers, given the strongly social-democratic discourses evident in the union documents and my interviews with teachers and union policy-makers. While other documents of the late 1980's and early 1990's use a less purely neo-liberal discourse, they are still clearly influenced by the Treasury Brief. The mixing of discourses seen in these documents provides excellent examples of Chouliaraki and Fairclough's (1999) concept of 'discourse colonisation' (see Chapter Two). A new discourse of education, in this case a neo-liberal one, begins to dominate in the documents, but the writers make use of enough of the language and concepts of the previously dominant social democratic discourse to enable it to appear not totally foreign to its audience, hence reducing resistance to it. The fact that some

of my participants were willing to engage with unit standards trials in conventional subjects indicates that not all teachers were completely alienated by the policy material published by NZQA. The comment of participant Alan Barker, an NZQA official in the first half of the 1990's, that "ideologies are around and they capture the discourse and the language of the day and you get caught up in that" (see Chapter Eight), describes the experience of a teacher turned policy-maker immersed in such a discourse shift.

It is significant that the documents that emanated from the Ministry of Education, rather than from NZQA, in the late 1990's as the government as a whole moved away from extreme neo-liberalism and a new pragmatism emerged, are very different. Strenuous attempts were being made to gain the profession's support for qualifications reform, and this seems to be reflected in the discourse of the documents as well as in the fact of greatly increased teacher, including teacher union, involvement in the development work.

It is not clear from my interviews with teachers whether they recognised this later shift in the discourse, because the NCEA which it accompanied was a direct replacement of the existing qualifications system and they had no choice but to implement it. At the time that I interviewed them, when they were at the beginning of their third year of implementation, they were immersed more in making it work rather than in critiquing it. They appeared largely to see it as a continuation of earlier change, however, and therefore still something imposed on the profession rather than something created by the profession. A slight change in the official discourse would not be enough to change that perception.

In the next chapter, I begin the discussion of data from interviews with teachers and with 'expert participants'.

Chapter 7 – Forces of change behind qualifications reforms

In the interviews conducted for this study, participants were asked to describe the forces of change behind the reform of school qualifications in New Zealand over the last twenty to thirty years. This chapter analyses the discourses evident in their explanations of these forces, seeking to establish whether there are identifiable differences between people in policy-making roles and classroom teachers in terms of the discourses they use to describe these forces and even in their awareness of the forces that were operating. My thesis is that should such identifiable differences prove to exist, then it is likely that they have contributed to the 'policy gap' on qualifications reform between teachers and policy-makers that became so evident in the 1990's (see Chapters Four and Five). It would further provide support, from this case study, for the broader argument that differences in discourses between policy-makers and teachers contribute to, or at least exacerbate, 'policy gaps' in education.

The evidence here supports this. Neo-liberal discourses intermingle with social-democratic discourses in a clear illustration of the struggle for hegemony of discourse in education policy, and identifiable differences emerge between the categories of participants (government policy-makers, academics, an employers' representative, union policy-makers and teachers) as to the degree to which particular discourses dominate.

Fullan (1993) uses the term 'change forces' as a deliberate ambiguity to convey two senses of change: one about the ubiquitous and relentless nature of change, and the other as a call to educators to take control of change, turning the positive to advantage and blunting the negative (p.vii). However he tends to adopt a somewhat polemical tone that I believe over-states the level of power held by educators to influence change. I have chosen instead to use the expression 'forces of change' (sometimes shortened to simply 'forces') because I believe it conveys a sense of the unequal power of government and teachers over major shifts in policy. At the same time, it is important not to under-state the level of power held by teachers when they work collectively, for example through their union, or in their individual classrooms once the door is closed. (See Chapter Three.)

In Chapter Two I discussed the ways in which emergent discourses 'colonise' existing discourses as groupings of people compete for hegemony of discourse. This process is demonstrated here. Whereas the discourses on qualifications policies of most official and union documents prior to the mid-1980's were overwhelmingly social democratic in nature (see Chapters Six and Seven), the language used in these interviews, particularly by the government policy-maker participants, as in official documents from the mid-1980's on, clearly shows the influence of neo-liberal discourses. However, it is important not to over-simplify this. Social democratic discourses are also employed by all participants so that the two discourses inter-mingle, leading to a high degree of "intertextuality" (Luke, 1995; Fairclough, 2003). The discourses used by the teacher participants, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly social democratic.

The lens through which teachers see change in education is inevitably narrower and tighter, focused largely on the students whom they teach, than the 'wide angle' lens of policy-makers and academics. Teachers tend to view educational change from the perspective of their classroom and school practice, and how it will affect the students they see in front of them every day (Leggett, 1997; O'Neill, 2001; Helsby, 1999). There is some evidence, too, that many of them fail to perceive the wider context of the issues they are confronting (e.g. Bottery, 1998; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). This may explain the difficulties encountered by the teacher participants when asked to name the forces of change behind the policy shift to standards-based assessment (see first section). (It may also explain their relative imperviousness to the neo-liberal discourses dominant in government policy since the mid-1980's.)

In contrast, academics and people charged with system-wide responsibilities are more likely to contextualise the change in 'a bigger picture' and to be comfortable naming forces of change behind a policy shift, and this was evident in these interviews. Interestingly, the union policy-makers, all current or former teachers, were equally comfortable discussing 'the bigger picture'.

The chapter begins by discussing the teacher participants' struggle to name any forces of change. It then addresses the various forces of change generally identified by participants (the demands of global capitalism, the changing student population, producing human capital, increasing vocationalism, flexibility and choice, transparency of assessment and teacher accountability) and shows how the discourses around these forces merge and shift in emphasis among the different participants.

Quotations from 'expert participants' are sourced by name and relevant role, and from teachers by pseudonym and school decile range and type. For further details, refer to Appendix 1.

The forces of change

The teacher view

Teacher participants generally found it difficult to answer my questions about what they believed to be the forces behind the policy shift. They were less definitive than other participants about who or what the forces of change were, in some cases demonstrating quite a degree of confusion about the sequence and leadership of the changes. Evident also was a high degree of cynicism and a perception that the forces were from outside the teaching profession:

Well maybe he [David Lange] started it, because I remember when he decided he was going to take on education and everybody at school was saying 'Oh, isn't this wonderful, the Prime Minister is ...' and I said 'Oh, that's not so good because he's probably got something in mind'. Well, I don't know, I just thought it was something tied in with the Business Roundtable, I don't know why, maybe I put two and two together, I don't know, it seemed to me that it was a top-down decision, it came and it was foisted on people. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

The name of former Education Minister Dr Lockwood Smith came up often:

I really don't know why they did, change for change's sake, I think it was Lockwood Smith who did it. I don't know, maybe, why do politicians do anything? It's vote-catching, it's change again. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

I suppose it was the Business Roundtable, I don't know. It was all during Roger Douglas, wasn't it? Oh, and there was that idiot, the guy in the Wairarapa, what's his name? [Judie: Wyatt Creech?] No. He used to run that quiz show on TV for kids, games ... Oh, I haven't heard of him lately, he must be keeping a low profile. He was the education minister. [Presumably Dr Lockwood Smith] (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

One teacher guessed that achievement-based assessment might have originated within the profession, and thought employers were probably the instigators of later developments. But overall she felt that change was happening beyond her control and she just had to get on with the immediate priorities that were overwhelming her:

I actually have no recollection at all, but I suspect it would be some teachers who decided it [achievement-based assessment] was a good idea. I'm not certain about the unit standards, I wonder if that could be people like employers who wanted to know, I honestly can't remember, I don't know, probably wasn't really that interested, I mean we were terribly bogged down, you know. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

It is very significant that only one teacher recalled the union's early advocacy for standards-based assessment. Doug remembered back to the 1970's debates about the future of School Certificate, and associated the union's view then with later advocacy for achievement-based assessment. His comment about Merv Wellington being in agreement with the PPTA position is inaccurate (see Chapter Five), but at least he had a sense of the union's position:

All right, the push came, certainly PPTA were pushing for it, because PPTA as a group were quite anti-norm referenced assessment, and I think they were strongly supported by the various Ministers of Education at the time. [Judie: Is there any particular Minister you would associate with that?] Merv Wellington was one. [Judie: What period are we talking about?] Well, we're talking about the 70s, the late 70s. (Doug, mid decile boys' school)

Robert remembered the expert panel established by PPTA that produced *Te Tiro Hou* (Allen et al., 1997) and the questionnaires that the panel asked teachers to complete, and appreciated the union's role:

For a long time there were so many questionnaires but we always took them quite seriously and I can remember some really interesting discussions about things. PPTA showed some power when it came to that sort of thing, because they took the initiative to ask teachers and provide a voice which perhaps hadn't been tapped into before. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Other teachers' memories of PPTA involvement focused on the industrial initiatives of the union in relation to curriculum and qualifications change rather than its advocacy on professional issues.

It is worth pausing here to consider why the PPTA advocacy outlined in Chapter Six had been largely forgotten by this group of teachers. Part of the explanation may be that the union's shift in the 1990's from partnership with government to an adversarial relationship (Jesson, 1995) wiped teachers' memories of the earlier relationship. It

could also result from the speed and scope of educational change over the 1990's, leaving teachers with the kind of mental overload that can lead to memory loss. Whatever the cause, the loss of teacher memories of a more democratic period in education presents a challenge for policy-makers who would wish to re-engage with teachers in partnership. For this to happen, it will be necessary for teachers to "reclaim and revoice narratives of our radical past" (Fielding, 2005). No easy task, it would appear.

One teacher actually asked if there was a 'right answer' to my question about where the push for change originated:

I don't know where it originally started but once the notion was there, it was pushed by schools, yes, by schools like ours, by some schools, but as to where it came from I don't know, to be quite honest, I can't recall at all. Is there an answer to that question? (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Later, he demonstrated his teacher 'lens' vividly and somewhat apologetically:

Well you see I didn't think really much beyond what we did, which is probably very silly, but we didn't ... You know, we were educating our kids to the best of our ability to get them something to indicate what they could/could not do. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

In the last two decades at least, most change which teachers have had to confront has been initiated centrally, even if there has in some cases been scope for schools to 'choose' whether and to what extent to implement the change, as in the achievement-based assessment and unit standards trials. Structural changes, curriculum changes, accountability changes, and the more recent qualifications changes, along with many other changes, have been imposed on schools rather than negotiated with the profession (Jesson, 1995; Sullivan, 1994; Openshaw 2003). This makes it unsurprising if teachers see change as something coming from outside, with which they will have to cope, rather than something arising from within their profession.

But while teachers struggled initially to identify the forces of change, other participants had quite definite ideas about these, as the following sub-sections demonstrate. Each sub-section discusses a force identified by significant numbers of participants, and shows how their discourses around this force of change differ.

The demands of global capitalism

The demands of the changing face of global capitalism were cited often by policy-maker participants as a reason why New Zealand's qualifications system had to change:

It was a period ... of New Zealand exploring on all sorts of fronts a whole set of new ideas, and looking back in hindsight, I think it was a unique period and certainly not all wrong. It's very easy to look back and say, oh this mistake was made and that mistake was made and so on, but actually there were also some advances made. Basically New Zealand's come out of a cocoon and a whole lot of things it hadn't looked at and faced up to were starting to be looked at. Probably in hindsight things were done too fast, the policy process was rapid. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

For David Hood, this interacted with an equity discourse:

It's the whole equity thing, which seemed to me, in an age where people were increasingly saying in the global economy, the knowledge economy or whatever, the new information age, we've actually got to raise our levels of achievement so there's the social thing. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Among the union participants, only Phil Capper made any reference to the demands of global capitalism, and it was an oblique reference to increasingly rapid change and the consequent difficulty in knowing what are the best educational approaches to take:

I think it's hopelessly confused, it has been confused for a long time but – I mean there's one sense in which it's going to remain hopelessly confused as long as we have a rapidly evolving society – social change, demographic change, technological change, economic change have been going on all fast for 20 years, the rules change by the minute, sometimes. (Phil Capper, union official)

Some teachers, while describing a perception that the ideas originated 'overseas', made no link with changing global capitalism:

So I think someone came up with an idea, like ABA and unit standards no doubt, someone came back from overseas, went for a trip and came back with a new idea for assessment and said, well this will suit us. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

Up here I think there was a comment when somebody said some other country, I don't know which, tried this and thought no, this isn't working, but we can make it work, confidence or is it arrogance, whatever. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

On the other hand, two teachers did believe that there were global capitalist forces at work, in the form of global organisations like the OECD and the World Bank, and that OECD country comparisons influenced government thinking about education:

It aimed to give everybody a qualification, so that nobody would come out of the system without a qualification, and it was seen to be important that everybody had a qualification, we were always being compared with Europe and the fact that children or young people [there] were involved in gaining qualifications until they were 17, 18, 19 and that didn't necessarily include university, and we should be like that. We had too many students leaving the education system with either no qualification or too low a qualification, that was an argument that was often raised and we were always being compared with the OECD and what not. (Doug, mid decile boys' school)

This is what is being put on us because of a bigger picture, the World Bank wants to have, before it will approve big loans to us, they want to have more proof that we're doing a good job educating our kids ... I know the government is concerned about where we stand in the world in terms of people with qualifications and that stuff, which is probably my jaundiced view of why we've actually changed from the system we've had to this new system, because not enough people looked like they were getting qualifications before they left school and in terms of the OECD they had to raise our standards and numbers of people getting some sort of qualification, so this was a way of doing it. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

Changing school population

The union policy-makers all mentioned increased retention rates in secondary schools as a force of change. Phil Capper, for example, saw the pressure as having begun in the 1960's:

In the sixties for the first time you began to have kids from the working class staying on and the question was, what did you do for them? I arrived [in New Zealand] angry on this issue from my British experience both as a school student and as a teacher. And so I arrived with firmly held views which were idealistic but the reasons for these idealistic views were very close to the pragmatic. The pragmatic ... from the sense of, it was not survival but it was what is appropriate for these kids' needs ... You could be engaged in that debate even if you still believed that the job was to weed them out. (Phil Capper, union official)

Shona Smith realised that there were increasing numbers of students whose needs were not being met by the existing qualifications system, particularly working class students and Maori:

You were just realising, particularly with School Certificate, that School Certificate was taking a whole bunch of kids and kicking them in the guts and saying "You can't learn" in the middle of their schooling. I suppose when I first began teaching it was more normal for kids to leave from the Fifth Form, but ... you just began to see that in terms of retention, even if you agreed in having a selective exam, you don't want it in the middle of secondary school, you want it at the end, so realising the social consequences and educational consequences of having something that was so patently negative for kids at that point. (Shona Smith, union activist)

For Charmaine Pountney, as a principal, responding to the needs of a more diverse population was a strong reason for change:

We were forced to look at different things because our school made us different, the nature of the clientele, because we were one of the early multi-cultural schools because we had all these kids who couldn't speak English, obviously we had to do something that was a bit different, so we were under an immediate contingency for change, we had to change and we did. (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Government policy-makers also talked of the changing secondary school population. For example, Don Ferguson said that the greater diversity of students in secondary schools was a concern at the time that he was working on the NCEA proposal:

I don't know that the people at that [inter-departmental] meeting had particularly well defined philosophical views on qualifications. I think they were concerned about the issue that the current qualifications were not meeting the needs of the very diverse range of learners that were now in the senior part of the secondary schools. (Don Ferguson, Ministry official)

Surprisingly, none of the teacher participants linked qualifications reform to a changing student population, despite the rapid increase in student retention during the period of the teacher sample's service. In the ten years between 1985 and 1995 retention from Year 11 to Year 12 moved from 54.1% to 80.5% of students, and retention from Year 12 to Year 13 moved from 17.3% to 48.3% (O'Neill, 2001, p.81), and this trend has

continued to the present (www.minedu.govt.nz, searched 24/01/05). These are very significant increases, and would definitely have been reflected in a more diverse senior student population in these teachers' classes.

Producing human capital

Human capital discourses are key to a neo-liberal view of education (see Chapter Two), but they intersect in significant ways with social democratic discourses. It was argued by one of the union participants, Phil Capper, that in the late 1980's at least, the neo-liberal and 'left' agendas were pretty close in the area of assessment, because both wanted well-educated students: neo-liberals because that made them useful 'human capital' and avoided 'wastage' in the economy, and social democrats for reasons of social equity:

It was in the interests of both the neo-liberals and the democratic socialists that you had as many kids as possible being educated as far as possible. It was part of both agendas. (Phil Capper, union official)

He believed that the Labour Prime Minister and Education Minister of the late 1980's, David Lange, failed to see the extent to which his social democratic views were being taken over by stealth by a neo-liberal agenda:

David Lange never understood how his personal views were being co-opted by a completely different agenda, he never understood that, never understood any of the things, and that is the fundamental problem of the whole area is that you could actually - you could do the same - there are a lot of things you could do in education which were the same thing and ... the devil's in the details, depending on which agenda that was actually served. (Phil Capper, union official)

David Hood found himself caught up in this merging of discourses:

I mean it is interesting that in one 24-hour period, when I was Chief Executive of NZQA, I was accused by a certain principal in Auckland of being a left-wing radical and accused by an academic at a New Zealand university of being part of the New Right conspiracy. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

In his view, social democratic and neo-liberal discourses are inextricably intertwined in the idea that the more that the education system produces students who are able to contribute successfully to the economy, the more wealth the country will generate and the more that wealth will be shared among its citizens:

You can't separate the two. I mean one of the things that still amazes me is the number of highly intelligent people who actually believe that somewhere in the depths of the Beehive there is this bank full of gold bars and the government has an infinite resource. The reality is that the government's income comes from taxes and how much taxes they collect depends on how much the country earns, and the reality is that New Zealand has to earn its wealth and if you increase that wealth you will increase the opportunities for social justice, so that's where the two marry in my mind. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Marilyn Davies, asked to evaluate the relative importance of social justice and human capital discourses around qualifications, was also reluctant to separate them:

I would say that both as a teacher with some sort of understanding about the learning needs of young people, and somebody who purportedly represented the views of a significant range of employers, that it would be pretty much half and half. Maybe it's an artificial distinction and the question is still a valid question, but I think when I say 50:50 I'm probably talking 100% integrated and there are times when you can differentiate but mostly I guess you can't, because I guess it boils down to earning and learning, I mean for most people they never ever stop learning if they are earning because in order to keep on earning, you've got to keep on learning. (Marilyn Davies, Employers Federation)

However her use of 'earning and learning' as inseparable represents a largely human capital view of education and ignores its many social-democratic purposes, such as producing citizens who will question and challenge the social, political and economic order.

Davies developed the human capital argument further in terms of the state's interest in the education system requiring that the qualifications system demonstrate the outcomes of its investment:

The state pays for a state education system and he who pays the piper calls the tune. So if the state has a legitimate interest in education, and it does certainly in New Zealand, it's providing about 96% of the compulsory education system for children in the country, therefore it certainly has a legitimate interest in seeing that the money it invests into that system on behalf of the taxpayer is wisely and well spent. (Marilyn Davies, Employers Federation)

Cedric Hall also merged the human capital and social democratic discourses:

If you can raise people's financial well-being ... if you can put the words financial and well-being in the same phrase, of course you can, then you will improve social justice all round because people can afford things that others can, and education is one way of doing that. (Cedric Hall, academic)

Hall appears to be recognising that 'financial well-being', while only one kind of 'well-being', is significant to equity. He also makes a less direct link between education and financial success by describing it as "one way of doing that" rather than making the more direct link that some other participants did.

Phil Capper admitted that, at least sometimes, economic arguments were used strategically by PPTA as a means of pursuing its prime goal, social justice:

I spent a lot of time in the European Parliament [in 1987] and in Japan and in various parts of Britain and the general world view at that point was that we would have to come up with resources because the education system was not doing the right things for the nature of the work in our modern economy and that was the argument, that was the political argument for resourcing. PPTA bought into the social arguments and was using the economic arguments as a tactic. (Phil Capper, union official)

But most of the union policy-makers used social equity rather than human capital discourses. Charmaine Pountney placed the profession's early concerns about the impact of the qualifications system firmly in a social equity discourse:

The concern about pass rates and proportions of students being failed and unemployment and all of that kind of thing, and that became much more of a concern from the middle of the 70s on, to the point where the School Certificate Exam Board set up a major review of School Certificate. (Charmaine Pountney union activist)

Pountney described the motivation of teachers during the 1970s as lying in a discourse "of fairness and greater inclusiveness of a wider range of educational outcomes" and suggested that the debates were actually more about the nature of curriculum than anything else:

It was an ideology that if we were to teach oral language in English or French or German or Maori, if we were to teach practical Home Economics and Woodwork, then we should test it and kids should get credit for it, and that it wasn't fair that a boy doing Woodwork only got measured on the 3-hour written exam, it wasn't fair, it wasn't appropriate to the subject, so that some kids were disadvantaged by

the exam system because the very things they thought they were studying they got no credit for. It was about basic fairness in relation to curriculum outcomes and a breadth of curriculum outcomes. (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Peter Allen was also certain that social equity, rather than human capital, arguments drove him and his union activist colleagues, and saw PPTA's hui at Waahi marae in 1984 as a defining moment in the growth of his commitment to qualifications change:

I think that certainly as far as the PPTA was concerned most of the discussion was driven by a desire for social justice. Probably one of the turning points for me was the hui at Waahi which really crystallised in my mind the unfairness of the examination system and how clearly it was a gatekeeping device which targeted particular groups of kids from particular cultural and socio-economic groups which had nothing to do with their ability. The more I became aware of that and subsequent events after that hui in PPTA when our thinking crystallised about how much of an obstacle the examination system was to educational development, to progress in education, i.e. meeting the needs of kids, that you started to look around for more acceptable alternatives, and so you started to think about well you know if putting all kids through a regimented system of external examinations produced such a level of failure then we needed to look at better ways of recognising kids' achievement and then you started to look at well how do you do that? (Peter Allen, union activist)

Capper argued that the Framework concept, in providing a single method of certification of knowledge and skills, was an important step towards social justice:

The goal was to produce a single certification method, it was almost a matter of tidying, I mean it was the new image of what for me was a new image of what social justice meant. You gave a subject status or removed status from it in the public eye, parents' eyes, if you had different ways of allocating results and similarly the universities, the Vice Chancellors would have simply said there are only set subjects which are accepted and we'd be back where we started. (Phil Capper, union official)

For Shona Smith, "getting kids jobs" was not a strong motivator for standards-based assessment, but rather to ensure that they had "a good life":

Well, obviously I wanted kids to have a good life after they left school, and particularly as an English teacher I just believe passionately ... in the power and importance of language ... and I just think that if you don't give kids those skills

you are handicapping them for the rest of their lives, so in that sense, even prior to assessment, I would have wanted that. But I don't think I thought any more about getting kids jobs, if you like, then than I would earlier. Really it's always mattered for kids to have a good life when they move on. (Shona Smith, union activist)

No teacher participants expressed their perceptions of the forces in 'human capital' terms. Instead, social equity arguments around providing new opportunities for success and motivating lower-achieving students were the most common reasons given by teachers for the moves to standards-based assessment:

I think the philosophy [behind the Framework] was once again that of always wanting students to feel that they were achieving, and a bit of that New Zealand thing of we can't fail students, so I think the thought was it was going to make the students feel better and I think probably it did, the less able students did get quite a kick out of eventually getting a unit standard. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

Robert said that his low-decile school had been immediately positive about unit standards for reasons of social equity:

Oh, we were keen right from the very start because we saw the possibilities to broaden what we actually taught and also to enable some kids to get some sort of qualifications which they would not normally have got. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Vicky, whose work over the last decade or so had been largely with lower-achieving students including those with special learning needs, had always been a huge enthusiast for unit standards even though her school was very academically focused and most of the other participants from there were still resistant to standards-based assessment:

I think it was the transition training, this is what it was all about, about these kids who were falling through the cracks, that had gaps, and so I started using it [standards-based assessment] with them in transition and then when I started doing the unit standard training and started actually doing them myself, I noticed that it was just so great, it was so wonderful for these kids ... a lot of these kids, those ones that I'd get, what I refer to as 'sink kids'. I think these students had never really achieved. By giving them confidence I was going to be able to work with what they could do and pick out things which I thought they would be able to

achieve. And that's what I still do, I work on things which I think they can do.
(Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

'Human capital' concepts are clearly part of policy-makers' but not teachers' discourses around the qualifications reforms, perhaps because for teachers, a link between assessment and placing students in work was not strongly felt (see 'Transparency of assessment' below). For teachers, the changes in assessment were more about increasing students' chances of having their achievements recognised at school.

Increasing vocationalism

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Qualifications Framework has been placed within a context of increasing vocationalism of secondary education (e.g. Lee & Lee, 2001). This was evident in the comments of some government policy-makers. For example, for David Hood, the boundary between academic and vocational learning was too sharp:

Well I mean the reality is that it's like everything else, it's where you draw boundaries, and people used to argue the difference between for instance doing History and doing Typewriting, and the reality is however that academic theory is of no value except to an academic theorist. To a normal person, an academic theory has no value unless it has some value in terms of that person's use of it, so my view, formed very strongly, is that what we had done, and largely for status reasons, had made sharp divisions between what people called academic learning and vocational learning. In my view that has been pushed in order to argue a particular viewpoint. In my view what we're talking about is the academic is the knowledge and the theory and the vocational is its application. And the reality is that you've got to marry those two together. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Hood linked the Framework to an increased emphasis on 'skills' from the late 1980's:

There's so much history, the Vocational Training Council, which was one of those that was abolished when NZQA came along, and ETSA and so on, they conducted a survey following the reforms in 1985, now the reforms in the public service meant that none of those organisations like New Zealand Post and the Railways, who used to train a lot of the technicians, they went, not there, so there was the whole question about upskilling New Zealand, and therefore the need to put in place opportunities for people to develop their skills and not just in the traditional environment but even prior to NZQA being established there were

industries like the dairy industry and the engineering industry who were already talking about the concept of a framework, they were talking about having a competency-based or standards-based framework which would recognise the skills of those for whom there were no qualifications, like process workers in dairy factories, but at the same time having a pathway for people who get recognition as a process worker but then go to the trade level and then the advanced trade, the technician. They were talking about that kind of skills development within a framework kind of structure. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

James Irving (Department/Ministry of Education official) described the academic/vocational distinction as “a very Anglophone distinction” and asserted that many university subjects were vocational, for example law and medicine. However he thought that NZQA, in attempting to reduce the academic/vocational divide and to provide more flexibility and choice for students, underestimated the difficulties of assessing more abstract subjects in a way which suited more concrete subjects, a point also made frequently by Elley (e.g.1985, 1995). He saw parity of esteem as “a nice ideal”, but predicted (correctly) that some schools which considered themselves ‘elite’ would resort to overseas qualifications like the International Baccalaureate or the Cambridge exams rather than participate in such an egalitarian qualifications system.

Roger Peddie noted that the attempt to give ‘parity of esteem’ to academic and vocational subjects angered some educationalists:

What fascinated me throughout that period was the talking past each other notion. NZQA insisted that what they were trying to do was to make vocational education more thoughtful and rational and to bring into it some of the qualities that were typically associated with academic education whereas the opposing camp talked about dragging academic study down to the level of vocational. (Roger Peddie, academic)

For Alan Barker, the industrial origins of the Framework were clear, but he found himself unable to specify how or when schools became added to the mix:

I don't know when it got added in, or even how it got added in really. Probably it came on the train of a whole set of ideas around having a seamless education system. I mean that was a very key word, there are always key words that characterise debates at the time and seamless was one, a strong word always. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

Among union activists, too, there was high awareness of the influence of employers in qualifications change. Charmaine Pountney recalled involvement of employers in discussions about possible qualifications changes in the 1970s. As unemployment gained momentum, employers became increasingly interested in students' work-readiness:

They could see that they had to train people and they wanted people to come in better trained so that they would learn better, they were very interested in numeracy and literacy obviously, as they always are, and rightly so, but they were also interested in schools teaching more relevant learning at that stage, so they were actually quite interested in things like courses in textiles and fabrics and woodworking and engineering and so on and they wanted more kids coming through with those skills and they wanted to know what they could do practically, not just from their School Cert mark. (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Peter Allen thought most teachers had very little awareness of the origins of the Qualifications Framework idea in the vocational area, but he believed that PPTA leaders, and Phil Capper as the staff member responsible for this area of policy, were somewhat aware:

Well I think Phil Capper was aware of it, I mean The Jagged Edge [see Chapter Six] kind of hinted at those developments. Certainly there was no awareness in schools of that development, I'm sure of that, and I think that really you're talking about a development that was outside the comprehension of most teachers, most schools, it was so out of left field. I mean sure, I can remember the frustration about the multiplicity of [school] qualifications which became more and more obvious as the 80s went on and the 90s, but even in the 70s ... Well you got your traditional School C examination subjects, but then you started to get increasing numbers of alternative certificates being introduced because you just weren't meeting the needs of kids who weren't handling the traditional system and then as the 80s and 90s went on you got employer groups, industrial groups, seeking to put in place their own quals maybe, their own examinations to help sift kids out for their own occupations. (Peter Allen, union activist)

At the same time, Allen doubted that even most PPTA Executive members were aware of the major changes that were on the horizon from the end of the 1980s:

Phil was coming back and talking to Executive about some of those ideas, but there was no connection there, I think, with any particular issues that the PPTA needed to be concerned about that we were aware of. I don't think people at

that time had started to make any connections really. It might have been in Phil's head, like I said things like The Jagged Edge and so on started to tease those out, but for your average Executive member they didn't figure strongly on the horizon. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Teachers' awareness of the Framework's origins in industry's wish to have on-the-job learning recognised, and to rationalise a plethora of vocational qualifications, varied. One teacher remembered being told by a teacher educator about this:

People like [name] were involved from the beginning, she was involved in the creation of the unit standards and writing for that, she didn't want to do it but that was what we had to do. And that was, according to her, that was pushed on us by industry because they wanted to have standards that they could mark against in their workshop or whatever it was, Car Painting 101 or something, whatever it was that they were doing, and for some reason it was decided that it was going to be across the board. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

Another teacher remembered discussion of industry influence at meetings in the early 1990's:

When we first went to meetings there was a big push saying this is what the industries want, the ITOs and all those sorts of things ... yet when you speak to people who are in businesses, they had no idea what NCEA was so I'm not sure who in business [pushed for it]. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

The concept of 'seamlessness' was mentioned by some teachers. Vicky, who had been heavily involved in transition from school to work programmes, could see its benefits:

I ran vocational courses then, careers then. It was to benefit industry, it was to allow the people who wanted to go into, particularly into the, I'll call them manual, the manual workers to be able to be assessed on what they could do. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

Another teacher had unit standards firmly categorised as 'vocational', and was very aware of their link with industry, but perhaps not the Framework's origins within vocational training:

Unit standards always had a sort of black mark against them, people would say 'Oh unit standards' and right through [school name] and at [school name] there was a feeling that unit standards were for kids who weren't academic. And yet I

do know that industry embraced unit standards in a big way and somehow that was all right because they were non-academic things, so I suppose that sort of whole academic snobbery was alive and well, you know. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Norman also recalled that the word 'skills' started to be used more commonly in education around the late 1980's and early 1990's, and attributed this to industry influence:

Well industry sees things in terms of sets of skills. I would prefer to see things in terms of sets of understandings, or sort of a conceptual thing. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Yvonne saw the broadening of subject choice as linked to a changed view of the importance of skills, and linked this to industry influence via the 'practical' subjects:

When I started teaching in the 70s you delivered the knowledge and then you tested it and that was it, and you never asked a student if they could write a plan for an experiment or tested to see whether they could, you did practical work but you never tested it. Going back again to when students learnt to do the practical subjects, dressmaking or woodwork or whatever, and they attended to the skills, but they were never seen as being part of academic work, they were sort of put at the bottom of the heap, whereas now skills have become part of every subject. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

A perception that employers today do not understand and are not feeling well-served by the new school qualifications system may have overlaid teachers' memories of industry influences in development of the Qualifications Framework:

From my observation, employers that we've had dealings with over the years have been quite confused by the whole thing, and even as recently as a few years ago they were asking "Will so and so pass School Certificate?" you know, even occasionally they meant UE. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Other teachers either made no mention whatever of possible employer influence, or like Brian, absolutely denied that it would have been a factor in the changes:

I wouldn't have thought the employers were putting a big push into it, I can't remember that, but again some would have been fine, some would have been anti, but I don't remember any huge push from the employers. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

Flexibility and choice

Flexibility and choice are two key tenets of neo-liberal ideology. Neo-liberalism conceptualises a rational individual making choices in pursuit of his or her own economic self-interest in a flexible, deregulated market. The 'natural' result of large numbers of self-interested individuals independently pursuing their needs and wishes is believed to be a harmonious and efficient economy (see Chapter Two). The qualifications changes have greatly increased choice and flexibility, however participants framed this in a largely social democratic discourse about providing students with more opportunities to achieve success, rather than in a neo-liberal discourse.

For David Hood, for example, the Framework offered learners a choice of where and how they obtained qualifications, but rather than this being founded in a discourse about competition between providers, it was more about broadening opportunities to succeed. It was also about abolishing 'time-serving' as a basis for gaining credentials, in favour of recognising actual performance:

I had come to the very clear view that we needed to get away from the idea that qualifications were the domain of particular providers, so that whereas we might talk about secondary school qualifications, the reality was that you couldn't get a secondary school qualification unless you were enrolled in a secondary school and you were instructed for four hours a week, I mean these were all the regulations, but I think at that time I was beginning to form the view that it shouldn't be, it shouldn't matter where you actually studied or how you studied, but if you actually meet the requirements that are put in place you should get it, and therefore I was forming the view not only should there be much stronger linkages between different forms of qualifications but qualifications should be available to anybody and not be restricted. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

The concepts of choice and flexibility were also associated in Hood's mind with the ability of students to find different 'pathways' through the Qualifications Framework to certification that met their needs:

But in those days you see [mid-1980's] ... there was very little opportunity for people to get any credit. So you did one qualification, and then if you wanted another qualification you had to start over again, there was little opportunity for credit, so there were a lot of barriers to that sort of what people call vertical mobility. So that was, you see, another underlying idea, of a pathway or a series

of steps that people could climb up rather than start over again. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

The pathways concept was articulated by Don Ferguson in relation to the NCEA developments:

We wanted something which would recognise small elements of achievement and that students could build up a qualification. I mean the whole idea behind the NCEA was of providing far more flexible pathways. Within the design of the NCEA, we wanted to increase the numbers of pathways and ways that students could achieve the qualifications over time. (Don Ferguson, Ministry official)

The NZQA vision of credentialling all kinds of learning, whether school, industry, polytechnic or university, through the same vehicle (unit standards on the Qualifications Framework) aimed to accord equal status or 'parity of esteem' to a wider range of types of learning. This was presented not as increasing vocationalism (see previous section) so much as reducing failure by providing more choice and flexibility for students.

Alan Barker saw addressing failure as one of many needs met by the Framework:

The Framework was really about a far greater emphasis on internal assessment, a far greater respect for the professional judgement of teachers, far greater respect for teaching as a profession, about the importance of student-centred learning, about focusing teaching on the students and their achievements and what they ought to be ... what their needs were, and also I think quite clearly trying to combat some of the things that people felt were pernicious influences on New Zealand education, like the highly competitive examination system, pivoted on a one-off assessment event which left a lot of people pretty scarred. I mean if you didn't win in that event, a lot of people from that point on in their life decided they were failures, and that was not good. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

There certainly were high rates of failure in the school system. James Irving said that huge numbers of students had left school with nothing to show for their time there, and there was a drive to recognise what they could do. Interestingly though, this was not a necessary feature of norm-referenced assessment. Warwick Elley asserted that New Zealand did not have to make 50% the pass/fail mark and that other countries allowed far more students to 'pass' (see also Elley & Livingstone, 1972):

It [reducing failure] might have been used in favour of standards-based assessment to avoid the high failure rate, but you know I've always said the 50%

failure rate of School Certificate as it used to be was quite arbitrary, there was no reason why it shouldn't have been 60% or 70% pass or 80%, that's what other countries do. (Warwick Elley, academic)

However Cedric Hall said that in the NCEA, professional judgements about what constituted a sensible course of learning were being sacrificed to provide maximum student choice:

You can individualise learning by giving kids choices between courses, you can individualise learning by giving students choices between the standards, but if you do the latter you're not doing them any favours in terms of building up some of the higher-order processes and some of the integrated things, and in terms of learning theory chunking is good for learning, but what makes the learning stronger is when you start connecting the chunks and the over-arching gestalt if you like. (Cedric Hall, academic)

Teachers framed the concepts of flexibility and choice in the same way as other participants, in social democratic rather than neo-liberal discourses. Barbara, for example, thought that the changing nature of society had led to a need to broaden the range of subject choice:

I think too it was to broaden the subjects, like you couldn't do Dance at Bursary level, there are quite a few subjects you can do at Level 3 that didn't exist in Bursary so I think there was the idea too of broadening the subjects. I think the Ministry, I think they were trying to give students credit for things, they were trying to think a bit more laterally so that if students were in the school production they could maybe get some credits for that, put some more value on things like being in the kapa haka group. I think we are realising that a lot of subjects have been under-valued and I think we've been coming at it from a very white middle-class perspective, with the traditional subjects. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

Some of them noted, however, that the extent to which choice is real is linked to the 'parity of esteem' goal of the Framework; if particular standards or a particular type of standard (e.g. in the NCEA unit standards) are seen as lower status, then choice is constrained (Alison, 2005).

Vicky, for example, believed that while the system gave recognition to skills that had value in the adult world, they were not always valued by her school community:

If someone's got a Level 3 Furniture Making, but no literacy and numeracy and no Level 1 Certificate, but they've got Level 3 Furniture Making and they're going to be a furniture maker ... You know, status is what other people see, isn't it? I mean, this is a terrible area, if you don't go to university you're no jolly good, and that is what is perceived, it's that sort of area, so some of these kids have a hard time. It's a great school but it is fairly academic and you know, these kids, these 'sink kids', they get into a sense that they're in alternative this, alternative that, and they give up, they end up in trouble. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

Yvonne had the same concerns, and felt that standards should simply be evaluated by their suitability for purpose rather than in a hierarchy:

I think [we should] try and think just of standards, so that unit standards don't become the poor relation, because in some subjects, and I'm thinking of Technology where the achievement standards are way too hard for a lot of students who end up taking say Soft or Hard Materials Technology, and therefore the unit standards are much more suited to that course, and so they've got to be seen as meeting the needs of that course without putting it down. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

In her school, she believed, student perceptions of an 'academic/vocational divide' were fading as a result of the common currency of standards, leading to all students having a wider choice:

You're getting an increase in 'academic' students taking the more 'vocational' subjects because they see them as being equal and they're still getting the same qualification. Food, where often they ended to be lower achievers and now they're getting a mixture. Really nice for those teachers. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

Choice and flexibility within the Framework encompasses not only more choice at subject level, but also more choice within subjects, so that, for example, a Maths course at Year 11 could be assessed by quite easy Level 1 standards. Lynne, however, was worried that the Framework was being discredited in the public's eye because of the choice that it offered:

I think that's been some of the criticism from the public, the media pick up on certain stuff and they make jokes about things, like, oh you know, there was one just a few weeks ago about an achievement standard in guns or hunting or something strange like that. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

Yet for Hugh, the ability to select easier standards was a big benefit for his low-achieving students:

I used them [unit standards] really strongly with my Applied Maths course so these kids could sit there, and they were the dumbies in Maths yet here they were picking up credits, I had one kid there [previous school] got 19 credits one year. They were like add up numbers without using a calculator, subtract numbers, I mean some kids couldn't even do that, but from early on it gave them confidence, perhaps I'm not thick at Maths after all, and for some of them they were trying, they didn't give up on Maths. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

The union policy-makers also saw the goal of qualifications reform as having been promotion of student success through greater choice and flexibility. Peter Allen saw the union's advocacy for standards-based assessment as rooted in the 1970's debates over School Certificate, where teachers in subjects that did not lend themselves well to paper and pen examinations pushed for internal assessment as being more valid for their subjects and more enabling of student success:

Most of that internal assessment debate I think from my memory began in subject areas where teachers ... felt that external assessment was not meeting the needs of their kids, in other words you've got for example Workshop Technology and Art as two curriculum areas where the debates were very strong and that was around the issue of, well, a written two or three hour examination was not, doesn't meet the needs of the kids, we can't assess what the kids are actually doing, we can't provide a fair and accurate assessment of their work and therefore we have to come up with a different way of doing it, hence internal assessment. (Peter Allen, union activist)

This led to the development of assessment methods that were the precursors of the achievement-based assessment of the late 1980's and early 1990's:

Right back in the 70s with the development of internally assessed Workshop Technology and Art for example they had to be defining standards and working in an ABA type of approach. They didn't call it that and they didn't, I mean from my memory the term ABA was coined by Shona actually, but that was in the mid- to late-80s. Certainly ... in the 70s and early 80s there was no term given to it but now looking back you would say well that looks very like achievement-based assessment in a variety of forms. They still tried to statistically manipulate the results and scale and all that sort of thing but they were forced to do that by the School C regime. (Peter Allen, union activist)

For Phil Capper, there simply needed to be a wider range of ways for students to demonstrate success:

What I believed and argued and I think that most of the people I worked with believed and argued was that we were only recognising one sort of success, that was the issue and there were many sorts of success and they all deserved recognition and there were some sorts of success you couldn't recognise in an examination system, that's what we really believed. (Phil Capper, union official)

Transparency of assessment

Two quite different discourses about transparency were evident in the interviews: an educational discourse, that standards-based assessment can provide a precise picture of what a student knows and can do, and that this picture assists teaching and learning, and a neo-liberal discourse, that standards-based assessment provides more precise information to employers and further education institutions so that they 'know what they are getting' in prospective employees or students. Neo-liberalism favours the 'free' operation of an uncontrolled market where consumers, including employers, can have access to information about products, including employees, re-defined as 'human resources', in order to optimise their choices, and this demands detailed assessment information:

An important role of education and training is to help employers 'sort' (or 'screen') individuals ... Well differentiated systems for certifying skills in particular vocations increase the coverage and transparency of training, and hence promote the efficiency of both the education system and the labour market. (OECD 1987, p.71, cited in Marginson, 1993, p.49)

For teachers, the educational discourse dominated. Consistent with their 'close-up lens' on the students who face them every day, teachers saw transparency more in relation to the teaching and learning process than in relation to meeting the needs of 'end-users' of qualifications.

Lynne described the purpose of assessment to be "*to make a judgement of where somebody is at a certain point in time*" and talked about the importance to learning of a student and their parents knowing not only what they do know, but also what they don't know:

Well, you're making an assessment ... because you need to find out what the student knows and what they don't know. I think the students probably need to

know what they don't know as well, it's informative for them and for their parents so it can help them. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

According to some teacher participants, norm-referenced assessment failed to provide students with this kind of information:

In the past we'd just been, like, giving them a mark out of 20 for an essay and we weren't really making it clear to students why they got the marks they did, so I think it [achievement-based assessment] was giving clearer guidelines as to what a student had to do to get a certain mark. I think that was the main message, it was probably forcing us to be more analytical with their work, it allowed the students to see more clearly what they were doing right and wrong. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

But not all teachers agreed with that. Brian, for example, believed that norm-referenced assessment could also be transparent:

But it's interesting ... because people sold the NCEA on the fact that it tells you that in Science they could do this bit of Chemistry, they can do that bit of Biology or Physics so it does itemise it and that's good, no problem there, but I still think they're being less than honest in terms of that all that information was available in the old system, in School Cert, because they had a section on Genetics, or Metals, or Physics, and again those marks could have also told the employer or whoever was using it this, the student themselves, that they had got 15 out of 20 in Physics or 10 out of 25 in Genetics, that was always available, but was never used. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

The employer push for transparency was recognised by some teachers, although they still usually framed this push in a fairness discourse:

It makes the employer be able to cull out what he or she sees as deadwood if you like, so a qualification does that, and that was why School Cert was unfair, someone would look at 51 and someone with 49 and it was an overall subject whereas with NCEA if a person's looking to be a nurse then what they would look at would be their Biology or their Chemistry and look at specific standards. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

Yvonne believed employers wanted more detailed information, but she did not see this as a major reason for the changes:

I think some of it may well have come from industry, to give the employer a better feel of what students can and can't do. A lot of the ITOs have unit standards and

I think that's been important for them so probably to follow that through to NCEA because from standards-based assessment they're getting a much better view of what potential employees are capable of or are not capable of rather than a piece of paper with a mark on it, they're actually seeing what a student can do. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

Furthermore, this was not something all teachers were in sympathy with. David firmly rejected the idea that schools should assess students to provide information for the labour market, although he saw it as a gradually developing expectation of schools:

Well, in the classical sense of a teacher educating students you haven't tended to think of a function as being providing employers with a yardstick as to who they should employ or not. A lot of teachers haven't seen that as a function of their job. It's just crept up on us, hasn't it, over the years? (David, high decile co-ed school)

While Norman could see that more transparent assessment might be useful for employers, he doubted it would be useful to universities:

Now ... there's a set of skills that you can say 'This person tick tick tick' and that might make it easier to decide on a job applicant or something. I think where that is a negative is in the academic world where it's become a little bit more problematic to get to know whether a student is going to make it at university level or not, and over the next couple of years to watch how this new Level 3/Level 4 Scholarship thing works. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

On the other hand, neither Barbara nor Brian believed that the new system could provide the sort of accessible information employers might want:

The irony of it is part of the reason for this was to give them, they used to say, was to give employers a better overview of a potential employee's abilities, but I read an article recently where they said they were just feeling totally overwhelmed, it's too detailed, it's over-inclusive, they don't really know how to find their way round it. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

I hear they're trying to go through, nowadays, a student's record of learning 'Can interpret unseen text', 'seen text', 'previously seen text', whereas all they want to know is 'Is the kid numerate and literate and things like that?' (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

Other teachers were more optimistic, for example Trevor, who thought the goal of transparency would be achieved eventually as people gained understanding:

I've started to change my view, and a lot of it is now starting to grow on me and I think in the long run it will be a better method of indicating to people outside the education system, it will give them a better understanding of it. But it's going to take some time. (Trevor, mid decile boys' school)

Robert saw transparency in terms of being accountable to students and parents, an accountability he supported fully:

I think we're providing far more information to people, we're far more accountable to people ... because we're not waiting for a whole year to find out what the kids can or cannot do by which time it's too late, now if they don't achieve something in Term 1 then you can devise ways that they can achieve that, and the whole thing of moving from point 1, moving on the the next step still becomes an issue ... and I think that because of the assessment we can have much more intelligent discussions with parents. You can say to parents that they're not achieving and often you can pinpoint the reason why. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

For union policy-makers, too, educational benefits of transparency dominated their thinking. Charmaine Pountney said her commitment to change in assessment practice came in the 1960's when, as a marker for School Certificate English, she saw considerable marker variation, and she began to push for clearer definition of marking standards and for more valid ways of assessing certain skills, such as oral language in English or practical skills in other subjects.

Shona Smith's enthusiasm for standards-based assessment began with her passion for English, and a conviction that some parts of the subject could not be validly assessed under the existing examination system:

It was about recognising the skills, I mean it was about the nonsense of assessing speeches in an exam, that the more we came to understand writing and the need for time for editing and all of that and the growth of ideas, that you wanted kids to have an opportunity, and because you did that and you saw kids do great writing through that means and then you saw them get not wonderful exam results that it just seemed unfair that that quality couldn't be recognised. (Shona Smith, union activist)

While she recognised that transparency arguments were useful for explaining to employers the benefits of standards-based assessment, it was not one of her strong motivations, and she saw dangers there anyway in over-specification of standards:

I think that from the earliest days of the Sixth Form Action Committee we understood that if you're going to make any change, you have to explain it really well, not just to teachers but to the people out there, obviously kids but also parents and also potential employers and tertiary and in the process of thinking about how to explain it, I think people decided that this notion of transparency was one of the more helpful aspects of it, but of course the counter to that, in the early days of standards-based, particularly as it emerged in the UK, in Alison Wolf's work, was that you got the opposite of transparency, where you got forests of words, thickets of words, of ever-increasing specificity and ever-decreasing levels of comprehension. (Shona Smith, union activist)

For her, increased transparency was simply better pedagogy:

Where it's being done well I think that teachers are letting kids know what they'll be assessed on, they'll get course outlines, they'll get criteria for each assessment task that comes along, they'll be assessed against standards that they can see, they'll know what results they've got. I mean when you compare it with 19 out of 20 and it's in the teacher's head, there is undoubtedly greater transparency for kids. (Shona Smith, union activist)

On the other hand, among government policy-makers and academics, educational discourses about transparency were more inter-mingled with discourses about providing certainty to employers.

Don Ferguson believed employers in the 1990's wanted transparency of assessment information:

I guess there were some employers at that time also saying that the set of qualifications available at that time didn't necessarily help them to identify the best people for their particular occupations and jobs. I felt particularly from the point of view of having talked to numbers of employers that if for example a student applying for a surveying job quoted his mathematics mark which might be 80 out of 100, that's not going to tell the employer whether he's any good at trigonometry. The employer does want to know if he's going into surveying whether he can, is reasonably competent in geometry and trigonometry, so I could see that standards-based assessment gave more detail than any norm-referenced assessment would ever do. (Don Ferguson, Ministry official)

Transparency was very much part of Ferguson's discussions with the Employers Federation, when consulting them in 1998 about the acceptability of the NCEA proposal:

They were positive about the NCEA proposals we explained to them. They thought they were going to get better, more detailed, information about students' achievements. We explained to them about the wealth of information they would get about a student across a range of subjects. We also talked about the Record of Achievement and at least initially they thought the wealth of information might be a bit daunting - they wanted flexibility and simplicity. (Don Ferguson, Ministry official)

Marilyn Davies concurred, saying that the greater detail provided by a standards-based assessment system appealed to employers because it told them more about job-seekers:

Of course there are employers who have a legitimate interest in assessment and examination systems, and particularly what the results purport to tell future or potential employers about the achievements and likely usefulness, that's not a very nice word, of the candidates for jobs in their employer ... An employer's not going to take on somebody that they're going to have to want to get rid of in another three months. (Marilyn Davies, Employers Federation)

On the other hand, Ferguson also saw educational benefits in transparency in terms of increased clarity in the teaching and learning process:

I think I was attracted to it [standards-based assessment] after reading because I thought that basically both for students, for teachers and for others we had a clear expression of what students needed to know and needed to achieve to get the appropriate standard. I could see advantages in it because each of those groups had a clear understanding of what they had achieved, or what somebody had achieved. (Don Ferguson, Ministry official)

Ironically, David Hood suggested that this belief in precision of information may be exaggerated whatever the assessment system:

It's all to do you see with this thing that's been built over many years, what I call 'the illusion of preciseness', that somebody who gets 63 is actually better at doing Mathematics than somebody who got 59. I think because of our history there is that illusion of preciseness and we are continually striving to achieve it, and believe in it. I don't think that it is achievable, I think it doesn't matter what

system you put in place, there will always be a variation. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Warwick Elley was quite certain that the goal of transparency would not be achieved through standards-based assessment:

There are so many things that slip through the cracks, there's too much slippage, standards-based assessment as applied in a high-stakes system of examinations is just too vague and woolly and fuzzy, there are too many areas that cannot be assessed and will not be assessed, and it's a distorting process if anything. I'm interested to see in the commentary on last year's 2003 NCEA results that somebody is saying that now in five years' time we'll be able to tell whether standards are going up or down because we'll have a higher percentage of students passing in Algebra or a lower percentage in Formal Writing and we'll be able to see what's happening as a whole. That's just something you cannot do with the current method of assessment, the standards are far too woolly and every teacher is going to be interpreting them in their own way. (Warwick Elley, academic).

This inability to deliver "preciseness" has become highly contentious, with debates about year to year variation in NCEA results becoming particularly fierce from the beginning of 2005. Alan Barker discussed this lack of precision of all assessment in somewhat different terms from Hood's, but with the same message:

But it seems to me that what happened was New Zealand's education community has never really argued out, put on the table, and really talked solidly about assessment and its effect on learning. Instead it has been polarised by extreme positions which have been adversarial and combative. They haven't recognised that assessment is always imperfect and it requires compromises but you can't allow the compromises to push you in the direction I've just mentioned, which is having possible over-assessment. But the compromises have got to be focused always on 'Is this better for learning?' There's a phrase that I like which is 'the balance of advantage', I think it's Professor Smither's phrase. There's no perfection, it's the balance of advantage for learning and for the learners. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

Roger Peddie, nevertheless, saw standards-based assessment as being more transparent than norm-referenced systems:

As an employer I think I agree with the QA people you'd be able to see if the person had the skills you wanted, you'd see which bits were there ... A real

crunch one is when I'd talk to them [university class] about the pass mark and say things like, look if you get 70% or 50% in this paper it may be that you've done half of it completely correct, it may be that you have done some of it completely correct, some of it half correct and some you got nothing, or that you got everything half right. Now logically if you're an employer provided you get the information in a form that you can understand and that is logical about the skills of people that you're interviewing or looking at the jobs. (Roger Peddie, academic)

Making teachers accountable

A sub-set of neo-liberal discourse about transparency is a performativity argument (Ball, 2003) that standards-based assessment improves the system's ability to measure the performance of schools and individual teachers. The desire to make comparative judgements about teacher and school effectiveness was undoubtedly one of the main aims of the 1990's educational reforms (see for example Codd, 1998; Sullivan, 1994), and one of the forces of change in qualifications.

Jim Strachan admitted officials believed that only standards-based assessment enabled this:

The point's been made for decades that if you have norm-referencing which statistically maintains a constant distribution then you cannot make any judgements about whether the curriculum has improved, the quality of education, you cannot make judgements about whether teaching has improved, whether learning has improved, and all of those things. So that was there, never as a primary but certainly as a policy backdrop which influenced both the Department and the Minister... It was in their minds, that if you wanted to make use of information like that then you had to get standards-based information. (Jim Strachan, NZQA official)

Cedric Hall placed this within an increased focus on educator accountability as exemplified through the quality assurance movement:

Oh, there was at international level the whole quality assurance thing, with academic audits and quality management and all that stuff coming into being and specifically in the New Zealand context universities had to up their own performance in a sense to keep NZQA at bay. I have no doubt that that was part of the thing. (Cedric Hall, academic)

Warwick Elley, too, linked the changes to moves to make schools more accountable, a focus he rejected:

There was certainly a swing towards a more accountable outcomes-based education system, and anything that government could do to make it more apparent what the schools were doing and not doing would be of benefit to the government and to the society as a whole, that was the sort of talk. It's a pretty narrow focus, I mean it ignores a lot of the things that can't be assessed and it puts teachers in a straitjacket and makes them focus just on the things that can be measured and it's certainly contrary to my philosophy. (Warwick Elley, academic)

David Hood insisted, however, that teacher accountability had never motivated NZQA:

The accountability thing certainly did not drive the thinking in NZQA, never did. No, the prime motivators were ones of equity and economic reality, I suppose. We never saw it as a means of judging the competence of teachers. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Only three teacher participants perceived that standards-based assessment could provide greater teacher accountability for performance. Robert, a Deputy Principal, was one of them. Discussing the purposes of assessment, he said:

One is to see the level the student has achieved against the norm at that particular level. The other one is to provide some sort of accountability for the teacher, because it's very easy not to assess, extraordinarily easy not to assess, and then your accountability cannot be measured. Now with ongoing assessment you can actually monitor people's teaching, and that is something that we're quite anxious to do this year at [school] because we had one or two kids who did not do well in the last Bursary examination and we believe that we should have been able to predict that. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Robert appears to see potential in standards-based assessment for school managers to monitor teacher effectiveness through evidence of their students' performance, although this is softened by his explanation of the reason as being that there were students who were under-performing and the school would have liked to know that in time to intervene.

Norman was convinced that a concern to measure teacher performance was one of the forces of change:

I think initially there was a belief, a valid belief too, that we needed to be able to be more professional about that and to be able to say 'Well, this student is satisfactory because he or she can do this, this and this and has managed to achieve these skills' and that led to, I think, a lot of thinkers I suppose trying to come up with a system that was going to be an advance on what was happening. I think it got gazumped, and I think what happened was there was a little sort of politically correct movement that went on round about the same time where the thinking suddenly became a way of measuring teachers' performance and so if students weren't jumping through the hoops the way a system said they should, therefore the teacher must not be teaching appropriately. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Anne, while accepting that a government's interest in standards-based assessment might be as a way of measuring school and teacher success, contrasted this with her teacher perspective:

It's not what we're thinking about, not our goal when we go in front of a class and assess, we're meeting the needs as best we can of the kids in front of us. That's why we're here, isn't it? (Anne, mid decile girls' school)

Doug believed that standards-based assessment systems would not provide a reliable indicator of teaching effectiveness, even though he was aware that the community might wish for that information and have a legitimate interest in it:

I think they're entitled to that information, but they need to know that that information is not necessarily valid information, and I'm not sure that people appreciate it because of the way these are often presented, they're often presented by the media, particularly the newspapers, as top schools and lesser schools or institutions but you're not always comparing apples with apples, I don't think the people who read that necessarily discriminate, I think the vast majority don't, they'll look at the results from College A and say 'Oh yes, they're much better than College B', but College B might allow all their students to sit all the achievement standards, College A might say no you're not good enough, you're not allowed to sit, or with the internals if they don't pass them they don't enter them so they don't show up as having failed them. (Doug, mid decile boys' school)

Peter Allen also recognised that a standards-based approach lent itself to managerialist uses, making a link to the government's recent shift to a 'quality teaching' discourse that demands evidence for the impact of teaching on student outcomes, but

worried that NCEA results could not deliver results of sufficient reliability to be validly used for such purposes:

Now in almost every conversation we [School of Professional Development, Christchurch College of Education] have with the Ministry at the moment, almost the only conversation we have is about what evidence can be produced for improvements in student learning outcomes and how in our work with teachers to support them and advise and guide them, what evidence is there that those are flowing through to student outcomes and what evidence do we use? We've used NCEA evidence, you know the data that's been collected of which there is a voluminous amount growing by the year, but does it actually provide us with anything more substantial than we've had in the past? (Peter Allen, union activist)

Conclusions

This chapter has considered the participants' views of the forces behind qualifications change, and shows that there are noticeable shades of difference between the discourses used by the various groups.

The constant struggle for hegemony of discourse (see Chapter Two) is very evident in this data. 'Colonisation' of social democratic discourses is common. A good example of this is the way that many policy-maker participants overlaid human capital discourses about ensuring maximum economic benefit from the education system on social justice discourses about wanting all students to come out of the education system adequately prepared to tackle adult life, including the world of work. Government policy-makers inevitably would have been influenced by the dominant neo-liberal government discourse of the late 1980's and 1990's, yet they still merged social democratic discourses with neo-liberal ones. It is not possible to judge whether this is because they genuinely hold both sets of beliefs, or whether they have learned that neo-liberal discourses are more 'palatable' to education professionals when they are clothed in social equity garments, or, conversely, that social equity discourses clothed in neo-liberal garments are more acceptable to governments. Alan Barker talked passionately to me about the pressure on public servants to adopt the dominant government discourse (see Chapter Eight).

Nevertheless, substantial evidence emerges of a dominant social democratic discourse among the teacher participants. Global and local economic, political and social forces

of change feature less in their thinking than do the immediate needs of the students they face. It is intriguing to consider why no teacher cited the widening senior student population as a force for change. It is possible that gradual shifts of this kind are simply accommodated by teachers without their recognising that they are part of a wider trend. It is certainly consistent with their general reluctance to engage with questions around the forces of change behind the policy shift.

The next two chapters focus on participants' views of the change process itself, Chapter Eight considering the perceptions of policy-makers and academics, and Chapter Nine the perceptions of teacher participants.

Chapter 8 – Policy change processes

This thesis argues that a major factor in the 'policy gap' between teachers and government over qualifications changes during the 1990's was a divergence between the dominant discourse of government and the dominant discourse of teachers. It also argues that the shift of the government policy discourse to a predominantly neo-liberal discourse meant that the government became committed to avoidance of 'provider capture', leading to the exclusion of the teacher 'voice' from policy-making.

Chapter Seven analysed the discourses used to explain the forces of change behind the qualifications reforms, and concluded that there was evidence that different groups of people saw these forces of change differently, contributing to a policy gap. These next two chapters focus on interview evidence that the actual process of change at the system-wide level during that period, influenced by the 'provider capture' notion, contributed further to that policy gap. The current chapter draws largely but not exclusively from interviews with government policy-makers, academics, an employer representative, and union policy-makers. Because teachers' comments on change tended to be more about change processes from a school perspective, they are the subject of the next chapter.

The first section of this chapter is about the impact on qualifications change processes of the neo-liberal drive to avoid 'provider capture' (see Chapter Two). The first sub-section begins with union views of previous partnership between government and the union, followed by a sub-section showing how the breakdown of this coincided with the qualifications reforms of the 1990's. The next sub-section discusses some evidence that while the official discourses precluded involvement of the union, covert contact did continue. A further sub-section discusses one policy-maker's perceptions of the effect of the neo-liberal context on the discourses used to articulate the qualifications changes. In the sub-section 'The Missionaries', I discuss the perception of many participants that NZQA's attempts to achieve change quickly and to get teacher consent through persuasion or even propaganda were actually counter-productive, and I follow this with the observations of some teachers and union policy-makers about their experiences of subjection to rapid and externally imposed change. The final sub-section discusses the genesis and impact of the union's adoption of industrial tactics around professional issues, particularly the curriculum and qualifications changes.

The next section considers whether there is any evidence for a 'policy gap' between union policy-makers and grassroots members similar to that between government and teachers. It concludes that while a 'policy gap' might exist temporarily in a union, the democratic processes of unionism ensure that if leadership fails to shift the members' views, the policy will be adapted towards the majority position.

The final section briefly discusses participants' perceptions of the gradual re-engagement between government and union from the late 1990's.

Quotations from participants are sourced by name and relevant role, and from teachers by pseudonym and school decile range and type. For further details, refer to Appendix 1.

Provider capture

The neo-liberal notion that government policy-making must avoid 'provider capture' by ensuring that key interest groups are 'de-powered' fundamentally altered, from the late 1980's, a longstanding tradition of partnership between teachers, as represented by their union, and government. Alan Barker acknowledged its influence:

Provider capture was another prevalent concept and like all of these things, it had an element of truth to it, it wasn't just dragged out of the blue, but it certainly created problems because people naturally took offence at being excluded, they took offence at being told that they were capturing and manipulating the system.
(Alan Barker, NZQA official)

David Hood also acknowledged that around the mid-1980's the tradition that no change in education happened without extensive consultation with the teacher organisations, especially the unions, had disappeared, and that his work in NZQA had been adversely affected by that.

History of partnership

The change was dramatic, because until then the union had had a highly significant leadership role in qualifications reform efforts, including membership of the School Certificate and Universities Entrance Examination Boards. The union was an essential part of all educational policy development in the late 60s and early 70s:

PPTA mattered then ... I mean mattered in this, you know the Minister never made a move in assessment without thinking, will the union give me some

trouble, and it happened a few times but it was something, you certainly tried to make sure PPTA were onside before you shifted in the area of assessment which is scarcely, dare I say, the case today. (Phil Capper, union official)

Peter Allen believed that the union led assessment debates until some time in the 1980s:

I think Phil [Capper] was very influential in education generally, not just the PPTA, and his papers that he wrote, things like The Jagged Edge and so on, were ahead of their time in terms of Departmental thinking at the time, and in fact my view was that really in the late 70s and into the 80s PPTA basically I think ran the assessment debate in New Zealand and that was in the halcyon days before we got consumed with industrial matters really, provider capture and all that stuff and we got sidelined, but I mean most of the really meaningful stuff came out of PPTA debates and papers that were written. (Peter Allen, union activist)

The union's involvement was structural: "On things like the School Cert Exam Board, the UE Board, every syllabus committee they ever set up, it was just a given that PPTA would have to be involved" (Shona Smith, union activist).

Phil Capper admitted that the union may have wielded too much power, and in some ways invited its eventual exclusion from decision-making:

What teachers did, and when I say teachers I mean collectively through their institutions like PPTA which I contributed to, was we turned professionalism ... into a mystical priesthood, so questioning professional judgement became something "I can't explain to you, you're a lay person" so there was a gradually developing habit of warding off the public, the community at large from educational debates as is the case in medical debates. The way in which education institutions in the community, including PPTA, operated in the 60s and 70s and early 80s for that matter is unconscionable in a democratic society but what it did do was create some sort of structure and coherence around which you could debate. Picot and Tomorrow's Schools was honestly come by but the consequences of mistrust are what happened then, that is for a while the professional voice was almost totally disempowered. It went to the other extreme almost and that's why in 93-94 and the new Ministry of Education, PPTA was not to be talked to, similarly NZQA. (Phil Capper, union official)

This swing to the opposite extreme in terms of the neo-liberal notion that accountability to the community demanded exclusion of the teacher voice (see below) presented a huge challenge to the union. The union had begun to change its approach during the 1980's by hiring journalists and explaining itself to the public and trying to gain public support for its positions (for example about the need to remove University Entrance from Form Six, see Chapter Five), but this was overtaken by the Tomorrow's Schools changes which began a process of writing the union out of policy development. The fact that community involvement was a goal of Tomorrow's Schools stopped the union reacting at a key time:

The PPTA's whole frame about Picot, it paralysed itself, the Executive paralysed itself because it did not feel able to speak out. Because what's wrong with community involvement? (Phil Capper, union official)

The discourse shifts

The 'provider capture' notion was most clearly articulated in *Government Management Volume II* (New Zealand Treasury, 1987), which David Hood acknowledged was very influential:

Oh, I think undoubtedly it had a tremendous influence. Well, if you look at government agencies, every government agency was required to have a document of accountability which clearly specified the outputs that they had to deliver for X amount of funding, and things that might have been part of their operations such as working collaboratively with other agencies just disappeared. I mean when I was part of PPTA the relationship between PPTA and the Department of Education was a very constructive one, I mean we didn't always agree but there was a lot of work which we did collaboratively, and you know the provider capture model and the particular political views at that particular time meant that that kind of constructive debate and discussion disappeared. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

In the first of Labour's two terms, from 1984 to 1987, Russell Marshall, someone in the social democratic mould who valued co-operation between the profession and government, held the Education portfolio. It was when David Lange took over in 1987 that things began to change:

I think Russell Marshall had a much clearer vision of education as being a partnership between government and schools and teachers. A lot of the stuff, his ideas were around the idea of creating a stronger partnership between teachers and the Department of the time. That of course was not Lange's agenda. His

agenda was one of reducing the centralisation of administration, of education, pushing it out into schools, he was very much the proponent of the school-based developments that fed through from Picot and he was very much a convert to the idea that teachers were bodies who had a particular agenda that needed to be separated out from policy-making. (Peter Allen, union activist)

The 'provider capture' discourse prevented the union from articulating directly to government the collective voice of teachers. Those members of the profession who were consulted lacked accountability to the union because they were selected as individual 'experts':

I think PPTA was excluded quite deliberately because it was the official provider capture organisation and it was a union, and of course with the Employment Contracts Act and so on the role of an organisation like the PPTA changed and therefore the way it was perceived, and in those times, the late 80s and 90s, you were selected by the Ministry into a particular working party because of your particular expertise, not because you were a PPTA nominee. But what it meant was that you didn't necessarily get people there who had a mix of subject expertise and political savvy, and at times I think that the sorts of things that PPTA brought to discussions, around things like process issues for example, were lacking in that environment. (Peter Allen, union activist)

NZQA's formation coincided with the ascendancy of the 'provider capture' notion:

The NZQA model had shut us out. We weren't on the Board, that whole provider capture argument was strong, we were being shut out all over the place. We weren't on much at all. Lockwood had me on the occasional thing, I remember something about English and he put me on it because he sort of knew I was ... you know, but it was that sort of nonsense where I was on it, even though I was PPTA President I had to be on it as an individual, which was rubbish. We were certainly pretty miffed that we were ... you know the whole model had changed so drastically that there we were, not on the Board at all and not even on subcommittees or anything. So I think from the very moment that NZQA was set up, we were structurally shut out. (Shona Smith, union activist)

David Hood, NZQA's first CEO, talked of the dilemmas that this created for himself, as someone whose personal history included significant union activism. While there was a range of consultative groups established to advise NZQA, none of them had PPTA representation, because:

It wasn't kosher by then. I mean in the days of the 70s that would have been the politically accepted normal process, but that had gone, but I think I was keen to make sure that the kind of people who were on it were people who were knowledgeable and respected within the profession. You did what you felt was right at the time! But I think, you know, the myth about David Hood driving the Framework or whatever is still there but the reality is that there was a large number of standing committees that were involved right from the beginning.
(David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Allen recalled an incident at the PPTA Curriculum Conference in 1991 where he gave the vote of thanks to the new Minister, Dr Lockwood Smith, and used his speaking time to debunk Smith's "seamless education" model on the grounds that there had been a lack of consultation with teachers. He came to regret this action, however, because he concluded that it contributed to a further decline in relations between government and PPTA:

I was challenging more the lack of consultation of teachers, the lack of involvement of teachers, he was talking about policy developments that teachers in the end would have to implement and basically what I was putting forward was the point that unless teachers understood these proposed reforms and supported them, they had little likelihood of succeeding, which is only the reality of course. When I think about it now it was more serious at the time than I actually thought it was, it did have quite a major effect on the degree to which Lockwood was prepared to involve PPTA in discussions. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Barker asserted that the breakdown in communications was not caused only by NZQA, and that personalities also interfered with communication:

NZQA, and I know this for a fact because I was personally involved, made a number of attempts to engage PPTA but we ran into some very powerful personalities. I mean Martin Cooney [President at the time] was an obvious powerful personality, but not the only one, and ... I can see faces but I can't remember names. Just let me talk about Martin, I mean he was very difficult to engage, I mean he frankly didn't want to engage and he made it very clear to you sometimes that he wasn't going to engage, and then there were people around him because he was the President, you know, who then supported his position.
(Alan Barker, NZQA official)

Phil Capper agreed that PPTA activists contributed to the breakdown in relations between the union and government at this time:

I think PPTA made a big basic strategic mistake around that period. I always remember Ken Douglas [Council of Trade Unions President] talking to PPTA conference and he sat through the session where a number of people, Martin Cooney being one of them, made impassioned speeches to the conference about how PPTA was a bloody union, should stop messing around with assessment and curriculum and get on with being a union and we'd get better pay deals and Ken Douglas stood up and said "Well I was a truckie you know and what kind of trucks truckies drove and how they drove them was a union issue so why wouldn't curriculum be a union issue for teachers?" But that wasn't heard and so the initiative was partly taken away from the teachers and partly ceded by the teachers. (Phil Capper, union official)

Surreptitious 'partnership'

While on the surface and at the official level, government policy-makers were withdrawing from collaboration with the union, behind the scenes some relationships were maintained. Whether such contact came from a spirit of partnership or out of political expediency would have varied depending on the context and the people involved:

The provider capture thing can be overstated in a way because a lot of policy debate happens below the official level with anything, and to a large extent this sort of policy capture and exclusion debate was at that official, sort of final level, but it didn't cut off debate further down. People were still listening and had their feelers out and so on, but probably, overall, the concept of provider capture, the way it was presented, wasn't particularly helpful in the longer run. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

Another former NZQA official has told me in confidence that in the mid-1990's, he was left out of key internal committees because of perceptions that he was "too close to the union".

Barker claimed that despite the prevailing climate, his willingness to work in partnership with the sector had even gone so far as his being a member of the expert panel which wrote *Te Tiro Hou*, the PPTA Qualifications Framework Inquiry (Allen et al., 1997):

There were always attempts to keep channels open. For example one of the last things I did at NZQA was I was a member of the Te Tiro Hou group. I went along to a number of meetings, with Terry Crooks and others. I was being asked to

participate in the whole inquiry into standards-based assessment. I think it was, I can't recall now, but now that you've mentioned it, I think it must have been a 'below the table' arrangement or something. But there were plenty of 'below the table' arrangements that occurred over the years. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

The two union leader participants who were members of the expert panel were asked to comment on this assertion by Barker. Peter Allen recalled Barker attending a number of meetings “on a kind of ‘off-the-record’ basis because NZQA did not want to be seen to be actively engaging in the exercise”. He claimed that the Inquiry team “wanted to be able to influence what was happening in NZQA in respect of decisions around the Qualifications Framework and this was seen as a way of doing this”. Shona Smith agreed that Barker had attended some parts of meetings, but said it was “to gather information from him or to test some ideas we were exploring. We needed to talk to everyone who had something to contribute and obviously NZQA was a major player”. Nevertheless, Barker’s involvement was clearly surreptitious; even I, as a member of the relevant PPTA executive committee at that time, was not aware of his presence at expert panel meetings.

The language of neo-liberalism

A consequence for education of the ‘provider capture’ discourse is that policy-makers find themselves shaping and articulating policy without the involvement of teachers. This leaves considerable space for both the content of the policies and the language that is used to express them to lack teacher perspectives. If the primary audiences are government, employers, and the community, but not teachers, the ideas and the language may not ‘speak’ to teachers.

Alan Barker described how, despite his background as a teacher, the demands of his job at NZQA meant that he ended up speaking the language of neo-liberalism and starting to think that way:

In reality I think very few of us thought we were one ideology or another, and the sheer fact is that ideologies are around and they capture the discourse and the language of the day and you get caught up in that. I would strongly dispute I've ever been a neo-liberal but I don't really know what a neo-liberal is and what that means. Well, I understand what it means at a sort of intellectual level but it certainly would be fair to say that I was, talking about me personally, influenced by the debate I was involved with, and I was brought in to counter the extremes of some of the Treasury thinking and I continued to do that, and if you put them at

one end of the spectrum I was somewhere down the other end. But I think I started off, if I could use this image, I started off well down the other end and in the debate I came up towards the middle, you know, so I was influenced by things. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

I asked him to what extent he used the dominant neo-liberal discourses in order to achieve his policy goals. His answer showed a clear understanding of the complexity of the processes whereby discourses interact:

Well, I don't agree with what you've just said because the way you put it suggested that it was a conscious thing. I'm pretty sure that would have happened unconsciously, that the languages of the time, to use the term we had before, captured people to some extent and became the frame in which you thought, and at any point of time that's what's happening. So we're caught up at this moment in another frame of language and we won't be able to see that either until hindsight, and then we'll look back and we'll say 'Christ, did we really think that, you know, did we really say that?' and so on. So to that extent, sure, we were framed by a language and a set of concepts but they weren't, I don't think, quite as conscious as you are implying. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

It is interesting to compare this April 2005 comment with something Barker wrote ten years earlier, in which he acknowledges that NZQA was seeking to bring the different discourses of industry, vocational education and academic education into line, in a common discourse, one of standards:

Language has fought language. It also explains why a different 'language' has to be used to converse with industry from that used for educationalists; and why different languages have to be used even within education to converse with schools and universities and polytechnics. Nothing is sadder than this balkanisation of education into 'sector states' which war with each other ... The worlds must be brought together. To do this, a common language is required. The language will be intensely resisted because it attacks a mind-set and a traditional power base which has produced winners. This new language has been found in defined standards and, specifically, in the New Zealand context, the 'unit standards' that will be registered on the Qualifications Framework. (Barker, 1995, pp.19-20)

Ten years on, Barker recognised that the shifting discourses of the time had contributed to an increasing sense of alienation from government among teachers, in particular from the growing emphasis on outcomes rather than processes of learning:

The fact is, I've thought this quite often over the years, the language and the mindset of teachers, and it's a very hard thing to pin down because obviously teachers are individuals and what I'm talking about is a sort of group, an aggregate. But teachers think a lot about process, which is natural because they are involved in a process, the process of learning and development, so they don't think naturally in terms of outcomes and they don't think naturally in terms of deliverables, as it were, that's a current term, you know. I don't think that teachers naturally relate to that. I can understand that from their point of view, that they don't relate to it. But I had hoped over the years that, talking about spectrums, that they might move a bit towards the middle and some of the extreme language of deliverables might sort of move a bit further out so there was something of a meeting. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

In his view, the Qualifications Framework was exactly what teachers had been advocating for many years, but this difference in discourses interfered with teachers seeing that:

Well in the end I think a lot of the things that the Framework was putting forward were exactly the things that teachers themselves had been putting forward for many many years, and one of the unfortunate things about it was it got lost, that commonality got lost in the political discourse of the day, and in the political fights and battles... There was a lot of commonality of intent and emotion, but a lot of difference in language and frames. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

The 'missionaries'

Some participants believed that some NZQA staff, especially in the early 1990's, pushed their views with 'missionary zeal'. This is of interest here because a key part of neo-liberal strategy is to implement change rapidly in order to minimise the opportunities for opponents, seen as 'interest groups', to 'rally their forces' against the change. Bruce Jesson cites an assertion by Roger Douglas, the architect of neo-liberal policies in the 1984-1990 Labour Government, that reform should be very fast so that the opposition become disoriented: "Once the programme begins to be implemented, don't stop until you have completed it. The fire of opponents is much less accurate if they have to shoot at a rapidly moving target" (Douglas, 1993, cited in Jesson, 1999, p.106). NZQA's enthusiasm to implement the Qualifications

Framework rapidly in all sectors without extensive consultation or trialling is consistent with a neo-liberal approach to policy implementation.

Roger Peddie described the 'missionaries' in NZQA this way:

There were the missionaries who looked at you with a glazed look and said, teachers just have to change, the world's changed and they have to move with the change. We won't name names on this particular area but there was this group of them who were involved in the sort of promulgating of standards-based assessment and they spoke to teacher groups and so on. I remember going along to one of these occasions where somebody raised, there, talking to foreign language teachers and the language teachers raised a number of very sensible questions and objections, and the person from QA just sort of put on that missionary glow and said, the world's changed, there's no use thinking like that anymore, you'll just be doing it, that's it. If I'd been involved, the missionaries would never have got out of the building. (Roger Peddie, academic)

He also noticed an unremitting upbeat tone in NZQA documents (see Chapter Six):

You had to sort of read through QA News fairly carefully on occasions because it was all ra ra wonderful, marvellous, everything's fine, there's no problems etc. The official statements from QA were always positive, and I don't think it was siege mentality or anything, I think it was because they thought that was the best way that they could convince teachers and the public that this was a good thing, which they actually believed. (Roger Peddie, academic)

Alan Barker agreed that the Roger Douglas dictum underpinned government processes at the time:

Basically New Zealand's come out of a cocoon and a whole lot of things it hadn't looked at and faced up to were starting to be looked at. Probably in hindsight things were done too fast, the policy process was rapid. [Judie:But that was the Roger Douglas theory of course, don't give them time.] Yes, sure, absolutely, it was quite deliberate, and the consequences were not always good. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

He talked in terms of 'a paradigm shift' which teachers were part of but could not recognise, and also acknowledged, as one of those charged with making the shift happen, that the process had been flawed:

I remember speaking a lot about the paradigm shift that was happening in education and to me it was obvious, and I could see it, and then I realised that the teachers that were in that paradigm shift couldn't, they didn't see it, and I think they're probably still struggling to see it, in some places. And no, we didn't do enough preparation. But then, interestingly, when you look across history at paradigm shifts, no-one has ever been able to plan them and execute them, they're not that clean. They happen, you know, it's like growing old, it just creeps up on you and works you over so that ten years later you look ... But no, there was a clear lack of preparation for some of this stuff, you know, and in retrospect, in hindsight I look back, I would have loved to have had the wisdom I have now. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

James Irving described as “messianic zeal” NZQA’s belief that the Qualifications Framework model could work everywhere, in schools, universities and industry, and said that people like himself and Warwick Elley (an academic who criticised the Framework) were “seen as dinosaurs” by NZQA staff (James Irving, Department/Ministry of Education official). Elley told me that Ministers of Education did not listen to his criticisms:

Well Lockwood Smith was an enthusiast, he caught an idea, he wanted to push it and I think, I had a lot of discussions and correspondence with him and I don't think he listened to my arguments, I've found very few Ministers of Education are prepared to listen to the points I've put and then refute them. (Warwick Elley, academic)

Shona Smith postulated that David Hood, as NZQA's first CEO, might have let his personal “missionary zeal” about standards-based assessment get in the way of developing policy inclusively:

David, I know, particularly got more and more fed up with the conservatism of some principals and of the bureaucrats, the conservative bureaucrats in the old Department, people like [name], and so I think that what happened was David wanted change for kids and was impatient with adults who weren't prepared to go along with it, and I think gravitated towards those who would talk the same kind of talk and you see some of the more liberal end of the employer spectrum was talking talk that sounded similar, so I think that, I don't think that he would have set out to consciously shut out PPTA but I think that he may have got himself into a situation where he was an enthusiast who preferred to talk to enthusiasts. (Shona Smith, union activist)

But in her view, no change could happen in secondary schools unless secondary teachers were involved, as the NCEA experience showed:

In the end it's silly because they couldn't do any detailed stuff about secondary without involving secondary teachers and in the end secondary teachers have been, I mean NCEA only started working once secondary teachers were intimately involved. (Shona Smith, union activist)

Furthermore, such change could not be achieved quickly:

I think [when] you've got to shift the mindset and the positioning and the behaviour of a group like teachers, you just can't do it with that kind of steamrolling. They should have listened to Beeby [a previous Director-General of Education who talked about how long it took for change to percolate to classroom level]. (Shona Smith, union activist)

Marilyn Davies believed that NZQA was trying to counter the antagonism to the Framework from quarters such as the Education Forum and the media by pushing to get a credible system operational, but that without teacher support this could not succeed:

I think that what NZQA mistook here was that they thought that they were providing certainty and so on for the public that the system was working and that's what they were more concerned with than almost anything else in the early days, because they were trying to counter the stuff that was coming out of for example the Education Forum and the stuff that was being printed in North and South and Metro and those sort of influential media publications. So they thought that putting these sorts of things in place would help to counter that because at least they could say 'Well we've got this moderation system which works like this and everybody is on the right track and they're doing the right thing therefore you can trust the results that come out', so I could understand why they were doing it but they were, you know, killing the system along the way and not getting the actual practitioners necessarily on side. (Marilyn Davies, Employers' Federation)

Alan Barker talked about how defensively an organisation under attack can behave:

We were trying, definitely, at the start, really trying hard, and I say at the start because like anything, when warfare opens up around you, you get caught up in the warfare and you start ducking for cover and taking shelter when you can find it and a lot of things just got ... A lot of good intentions and so on just got caught up. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

He talked later about the negative impact of this on the relationships between government and teachers:

I think there are always clashes of frameworks between teachers and policy-makers and government, I can't really see how it could ever be different really, probably exacerbated in that time by the things we've talked about, the speed of change, the provider capture leaving ... some of the representative players on the margins. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

Jim Strachan, an employee of NZQA during this period, was aware of this sense that the organisation was trying to push the system into place against a certain degree of resistance:

Well I can remember saying to David Hood back ... I think it was the first half of the 90s, that we need to move to the stage where the NQF is pulled into place, not pushed into place, pulled into place because the universities are using it, the employers are using it, people get jobs on the basis of it, that sort of thing. As long as we keep trying to push it into place, we'll have resistance in front of us. It's always the way with something that you push. (Jim Strachan, NZQA official)

Unfortunately, that stage has probably not been reached yet.

Effect on teachers

For teachers, pressure for rapid change is alienating (see 'Pace of change' section in Chapter Three). The tendency for one wave of centrally initiated reform to be replaced by another wave, just as teachers are beginning to adapt to the first wave, leaves teachers feeling bruised and alienated (Bailey, 2000). This was true for the teachers and the union policy-makers in this sample. Barbara talked of her feelings about the sudden demise of achievement-based assessment:

It [ABA] was quite exciting actually and I still don't know why they did away with it, it worked really well. They never really gave the reason why. You know, one minute it was the best thing since sliced bread and the next thing we heard it was going and we were just getting into our stride with it. And I don't really think there were any great philosophical reasons given for stopping it. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

She developed these ideas further later in the interview, when she remembered the beginnings of NZQA and the unit standards trials:

Well, it felt kind of a lack of direction, we were just getting these directives and it wasn't clear who from or why. I got very frustrated, I found that just as you got

used to one system, then there'd be a new bandwagon and it put a lot of stress on a lot of teachers, obviously, because you'd just get your confidence in one system and have to change. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

Hugh, despite having enthusiastically tried all of the new models of standards-based assessment, including achievement-based assessment, expressed the same kind of annoyance with the constant shifts in policy when he said "but the ABA just went down the gurgler I suppose like all the others".

Pauline, whose experiences with achievement-based assessment had been less positive, greeted the first news of unit standards trials with cynicism because it was yet another wave of reform:

I remember switching off when it was mentioned because it was yet another thing, you know, we'd had this, we'd had that, present it to me and I'm afraid this is the attitude I've had for a long time, you present it to me with everything in order, with suitable assessments and then I'll think about it, but get it sorted out first. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

The decision to sideline the work which teachers, with NZQA encouragement, had been doing on achievement-based assessment, and to adopt the competency-based approach of unit standards, was taken at the time that the union was most excluded from participation in policy development. It was experienced by teachers and union activists as NZQA riding roughshod over the profession:

It was the issue of whether we were going to use an ABA approach or pass-fail, and that was where a kind of sense of betrayal by NZQA because we, and I'm speaking from my own school's point of view now, we spent in the early 90s a lot of time training in ABA techniques, and we had [NZQA official] come down and run a number of workshops with us and give us an absolute assurance that the approach with unit standards would be to use an ABA approach. And then suddenly there was a policy turnaround and it became 'We're going to use a pass-fail approach', and that's where the likes of [name] and company started to change their views about whether this was an acceptable approach or not, and it really was around their experience of running the unit standards approach with their kids and discovering that it didn't matter how hard the kids tried they weren't succeeding and yet there was an enormous amount of work, you know, that the teachers were having to put in, and not seeing any value for the kids or for themselves, so they pulled the plug. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Shona Smith remembered that trials of achievement-based assessment, which she favoured, had continued into the early 1990's, and she had made the assumption that this would continue:

I think part of the reason that achievement-based trials went on for a while was probably because there was nobody doing much about it because they were too busy getting NZQA up and running, but certainly as soon as NZQA, I think the very first announcement I remember saying positive things about as President, because I assumed that the philosophy would follow through, but of course it rapidly transpired that it wasn't [going to]. (Shona Smith, union activist)

She recalled her shock at hearing NZQA's decision to make competence-based assessment the only option under the Framework:

I just remember being at a meeting where Ray Meldrum just told us, this is it, and my jaw dropping, and saying 'When was this decided?', you know, who decided it? And Ray couldn't say either, but that was because, I think Ray tells me it was the Minister, it was Lockwood, Ray told me since it was Lockwood, but they were all officials and they couldn't say anything. (Shona Smith, union activist)

The decision came at absolutely the worst time as far as teachers were concerned:

Even if the Framework had been more ... had accommodated more of the views of PPTA liberals, it was still always going to be a somewhat difficult, somewhat fraught process to get to the point where everybody was on board. But of course what they did was that at the point where it really started to lose people like me was when they made that switch to can/can't without any consultation with teachers. (Shona Smith, union activist)

The decision made it impossible to get the majority of teachers to support the Framework for school qualifications, despite the best efforts of NZQA's 'missionaries':

Okay there were other sources of opposition, there were our teachers who didn't want to change anyway and there were workload issues and all of that, but I think that it might have been surmountable if they hadn't actually made the model itself unacceptable to teachers who really cared about pedagogy. (Shona Smith, union activist)

Clearly the decision to adopt universally a mode of assessment that suited industry but did not suit school subjects was very destructive of teacher confidence in the change

process, at a time when trust was already low because of teacher exclusion from policy processes.

Industrial response

Ironically, at least at the beginning of the 1990's, union curriculum leaders had been quite sympathetic to the government's direction on qualifications. It was the exclusion of the union that was the key problem:

Well, some of the things Lockwood was saying I'd have to agree with really. It was about providing clearer pathways for people from school through to beyond school into tertiary education, and about retaining people in education longer. I think part of the problem was because, I don't want this to sound like sour grapes, because from Lange's time through to Lockwood's time teachers had been so deliberately excluded, and I'm talking about PPTA now, there was very little understanding, because the key movers and drivers in the PPTA were completely excluded from any consultation, so their thinking was formed basically around what they picked out of the media or from official documents or from rumour I suppose you could say, but it wasn't really a good basis for building an understanding or agreement about what was quite fundamental educational reform, and so that tended to shape people's attitudes to the sort of changes that were going on. (Peter Allen, union activist)

But policies being enforced by other wings of government, particularly the attempts to enforce bulk funding of teacher salaries, were influencing the union's relationship with all agencies. The union policy-makers saw it as a sad irony that having led the assessment debates, the union ended up calling on its members to boycott developments:

The ironic thing was that the union, PPTA, worked very strongly to get internal assessment into those areas [subjects which did not lend themselves to an exam-based system] and yet boycotting the actual introduction of those was a key plank in PPTA's industrial action. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Shona Smith found it particularly ironical that she, having been extensively involved with professional issues through the union, was the one who proposed that the union should boycott professional developments to achieve industrial goals:

I dreamt up the first curriculum moratorium and I wrote the paper, it was in 92 I think when I was Senior Vice-President and it was as the threat of bulk funding became more real and I remember talking to Martin [Cooney, President] about it

and then, you see people had floated the idea of using curriculum as an industrial weapon before, and we'd always resisted it because we'd always known that it would be a two-edged sword but this time I kind of suggested, well maybe this time the industrial threat is so great that we have to, and so I proposed it and we did it and of course the members fell in love with it! ... And I felt bad doing it at the time, and I don't know whether I'd even have done it, if I could go back in time would I do it again? I don't know, because I do think that that was another factor in ... If a government wants to shut you out anyway and then you run a moratorium, it makes it very easy for them to do so, doesn't it? (Shona Smith, union activist)

However the boycott response was understandable, given the threats to the union and to secondary teachers' work. In the first budget under National, in 1991, generally termed Ruth Richardson's 'Mother of all budgets', 700 teaching positions were taken out of secondary schools by a government decision. The union challenged the decision in the High Court and won, only to then lose in the Court of Appeal. Furthermore, government was embarking on plans to introduce the bulk funding of teacher salaries, a direct threat to the union's ability to represent its members collectively. The union saw the struggle against bulk funding as a fight to the death for the survival of the union (Alison, Cross & Willetts, 2003).

Only two teachers talked about the industrial action in the mid-1990's against the Qualifications and Curriculum Frameworks. Hugh felt that the industrial struggle negatively affected teachers' motivation as professionals, including their willingness to innovate:

A lot of teachers in New Zealand prior to the bulk funding fiasco were open to suggestion, and I know when it came to bulk funding people then realised they'd a bit of spare time and they thought well, you know, I don't have to do this, you know, I've got a life if you like, and to a certain extent it started off with people not doing sport, then they realised well perhaps, you know, I don't have to do all these things, you know, and so teachers instead of being multi-talented and going out and diverging said 'Well you know I'm paid to teach and I'll teach a system that suits' and I think that, whether or not it's true, that was the feeling I sort of got, that the bulk funding had that effect on people saying 'Well, no-one really cares, you know, no-one cares, we're going to force this on you, we're going to force bulk funding on you' therefore people said 'Well okay, I'm going to force that I'm not going to do these things because if I don't think it's going to be

any good I'm not going to do it', and that's been sad because I think that's made a lot of teachers insular. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

Pauline recalled the industrial action of the mid-1990's as an opportunity to stop doing something with which she was not in sympathy anyway. An interesting feature of her comment is the implication that teachers followed the union's instructions only where it was consistent with their professional values, in that they complied where there was an alternative form of credential available, School Certificate or Sixth Form Certificate, but not where dropping unit standards assessment would have deprived the 'alternative' students of a credential:

There was some industrial problem, industrial action being taken and stopping working on unit standards was the thing we chose to do so we got about a third or almost a half of the way through the year and we just stopped assessing unit standards. We were dual assessing anyway. And we also used them with our alternative students. For them it was an incredibly motivating factor so we didn't stop with the alternatives, but anything we were dual assessing we stopped. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

Brian recalled only the later industrial action during 2002 when the union threatened, during a stalled pay round, to boycott aspects of the implementation of the NCEA, but he had no memory of the earlier bans. This may be understandable, since his department had chosen not to implement unit standards anyway so the ban would have had little impact.

Yvonne was unhappy about the union's call for industrial action at that later period of qualifications change, believing that it was not appropriate to use the NCEA as a bargaining tool in a wage round:

Initially I don't think they realised how much work it was going to entail to get it up and running and it created problems with PPTA and the fact that it then became a real issue and the whole programme got put back because they couldn't get it funded and adequately resourced within the timeframe. But unfortunately I think it got mixed up, this is my opinion, NCEA should never have been used as a tool within that wage round, I think it confused two things, they were two separate issues as far as I was concerned, I know not everybody agrees with me on that one but that was my feeling, NCEA should have been kept separate. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

Ironically, while few teachers recalled the union's industrial action against the qualifications changes, even fewer recalled the union's earlier advocacy for qualifications change (see Chapter Seven). Peter Allen was not surprised at this, however:

I'm not surprised that teachers would have a stronger recollection of the industrial action in a sense because it put every individual teacher on the line personally in terms of making decisions as to whether they were going to go with the PPTA action or whether they were going to stick to their guns. (Peter Allen, union activist)

The intrusion of industrial conflict into the professional arena was viewed by Alan Barker as a very negative development:

And I think the classic is the way in which, it was inevitable, but just the way in which industrial relations stepped right in the middle of professional debate. Now I think that was highly regrettable and my own personal opinion is that as a profession teachers should be well paid but there should be some quite high demands on them, you know, to justify that pay, but I mean I think it's really regrettable that teaching became quite an impoverished profession and it's had all these bad consequences. (Alan Barker, NZQA official)

It can be argued, however, that positioning teachers as workers rather than professional partners in policy-making, as the notion of 'provider capture' does, inevitably leads to their behaving more as workers and using industrial tactics to exert power. The damage done by this part of the neo-liberal discourse continues to contribute to a teacher perception of change as externally imposed (see Chapter Seven).

A union 'policy gap'?

It is interesting to consider whether the union's policy positions were always representative of teachers, or whether at any stage a similar gap existed between union policy-makers and teachers as developed between government policy-makers and teachers.

An engaged membership

Over the period that the dominant government discourse was social democratic, it appears that union members had been highly engaged with debates about

qualifications reform, and generally quite radical in their thinking. For example, Phil Capper recalled union members in the late 1960s and early 1970s having active debates about the purpose of assessment:

It was about selection and sifting and drafting gates, I didn't agree with that but that was articulated, people supported it, were able to mount an argument for it, that argument was discussed in staffrooms, and you could hold up what was actually happening with the kids who were presenting in form five and you could measure them against that view, so how well are you serving them? Do you want to serve them? If you don't want to serve them then why are they here? Nowadays I'm not sure you can do that. (Phil Capper, union official)

Peter Allen recalled lively debates about assessment in the 1970s among activists at PPTA conferences:

As far as SC is concerned, I think that PPTA was reflecting general membership views about the need for reform, I mean there's always a bit of leading and following in these things but ... And certainly I can recall a number of debates in PPTA Conference about whether the PPTA should take a policy stance about the abolition of School Certificate, some fantastic debates in the mid to late 70s around that. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Charmaine Pountney recalled unanimous support for the 1976 conference paper recommending a shift towards school level standards-based assessment for School Certificate (see Chapter Five), and believed that this reflected general support by the membership because the paper had been discussed in branches and regions in the lead up to annual conference.

Peter Allen believed that there had been a strong consensus of the membership about the abolition of Universities Entrance, and no significant qualms about the design of Sixth Form Certificate:

But I think that there was more unanimity amongst PPTA members about the abolition of UE, the practice of UE, the way in which UE was done in schools was pretty shonky really. When it came to the point where UE was abolished, Sixth Form Certificate looked bloody good really as an alternative because it was internally assessed and if you ignored the statistical convolutions that schools went through to try and determine how the grades were going to be allocated, it looked a whole lot better than UE basically. (Peter Allen, union activist)

On the other hand, Pountney admitted that the debates in the 1970's were largely theoretical and did not appear to have immediate practical consequences for teachers, hence their support was relatively easily gained:

At that stage it was sufficiently different not to feel threatening, it sounded just sensible, I think that was the problem, that it looked like a good idea and we were in favour of it but nobody had told us we actually had to do it yet. What happened, it seems to me, is that PPTA thinking and members' thinking is always somewhere ahead of reality, and the realities are governed by the government of the day and the particular contingencies of the school you work in, and these remain good ideas for some time in the future and people don't actually begin to practise them unless ... (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Improvements in conditions of employment were essential for educational change to actually happen:

It was easy to get support in principle for the directions of change, but in order to bring the change about there needed to be agreement on improvements in conditions of service. There needed to be two things. One was agreement on improvements in salaries and conditions of service, time to do the job, and the other was affirmation for teachers, and in fact we got a total negativity towards teachers. Russell Marshall was positive but David Lange was hostile, and then we got back into Lockwood Smith of course, so we had a period of acute negativity between politicians and the union. (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Furthermore, Pountney suggested that the conditions at school level have to be right for teachers to willingly embark on major change:

Well the conditions in a school tend to trap teachers in the contingencies of the present. Unless teachers have got time and a bit of leisure and encouragement and affirmation for thinking about alternatives, they don't do it, they might do it in theory but they don't do it in practice. (Charmaine Pountney, union activist)

Those 'contingencies of the present' might themselves prompt change, however. (See 'The influence of school context' in Chapter Three.) Pountney gave the example of Auckland Girls' Grammar, where she had been principal, as it faced a changing student population, and said that despite teachers' concerns that making changes would be stressful, they did it "because with women teachers and the needs of girls paramount in their minds, they just did it, you know, because the kids were all-important".

Shona Smith remembered a proactive union process around the mid-1980's whereby members were trained to run assessment seminars in schools to ensure that teachers were able to contribute to the discussions about assessment taking place in the Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications:

If you go back to 84, I reckon that in the 84-86 period of CICAQ, I think we were pretty close to where members were, because we were doing really ... Remember we trained members, we ran the assessment seminars, and we did about three sets of consultation through that period, and we reported back to Exec constantly after every meeting and we had Exec decisions that fed into each meeting, so I think we were pretty close. Now it's probably fair to say that we were at the more radical end of the membership, but we weren't there [gestures to one end of table] with the membership there [gestures to other end of table]. There was a continuum of members and we were at this end of it, but you know, the Martin's two-third/one-third thing, we were in the more forward-looking group, but I think it was two-thirds forward-looking and one-third not around that time, because you see what we did, we had access to more knowledge and ideas through the sort of quality stuff that PPTA was doing, because I was on the Curriculum Advisory Committee from its very first meeting, and Charmaine chaired it initially, and that Committee, we went right through a series of curriculum papers too, that was prior to that, so a whole lot of people had done a whole lot of curriculum thinking as well, and so had the members, I mean there were really exciting curriculum papers at Conference. When we did those assessment seminars, we were able to, because we must have pulled a good hundred people, or eighty or ninety anyway, down to Wellington for the training for those, and we were able to think around and think 'Who do we know who would be good for that?' and it wasn't too hard to think around your area and come up with 30 names of good people. (Shona Smith, union activist)

The link Smith makes between involvement of the union at government policy-making level and its increased ability to educate and involve members is interesting. It supports my argument that the conflicts between the union and government about qualifications developments that were a feature of most of the 1990's might have been avoided, had the union been involved and helped to shape ideas and the way they were communicated to teachers.

The less adversarial industrial climate of the 1980's had also made a big difference to the union's ability to focus on professional issues such as assessment:

We upskilled the members. It was something like a third/a third/a third, and then because we had access to that information, because of the time, and because we were not in major industrial strife really, I mean this was still the days of the annual general adjustment, where every second year we got an automatic pay rise without having to do anything, and in every other year we'd do a nice little pay claim, and really the most stressful thing we did was run a staffing campaign, and so we did have the time, energy and money to put into those things, and so we upskilled the membership and we had those PPTA assessment seminars in every branch in the country and so all the members were aware, and I think it's not unreasonable to say that about two-thirds were supportive, we were getting nearly unanimous supportive responses in some of the feedback and the surveys. (Shona Smith, union activist)

Phil Capper asserted that in the late 1980's the union executive even believed that advocacy for assessment change would assist with claims for improved conditions of employment:

There was a devil's pact there in that the industrial portfolio holders on the executive believed that by cranking up this you'd actually create better arguments so there was a pact there. I did my great world tour in 87 and I spent a lot of time in the European Parliament that year and in Japan and in various parts of Britain and the general world view at that point was that we would have to come up with resources because the education system was not doing the right things for the nature of the work in our modern economy and that was the argument, that was the political argument for resourcing. (Phil Capper, union activist)

He suggested that this was an example of a group consciously using the discourse of a powerful opposing group in order to achieve its goals: *"I think it's more the other way round, it's that PPTA bought into the social arguments and was using the economic arguments as a tactic".*

Engagement declines

In the early 1990's, however, as the shift to neo-liberal policies accelerated (e.g. Jesson, 1995), the membership appears to have become less supportive of qualifications reform, whereas many of the key activists were still supportive of change. Union members finally had to face the threats posed by the Picot Report that led to Tomorrow's Schools:

We could see all the threats that were in there [in the Picot report] because bulk-funding was signalled even in there, and there was all sorts of other stuff, the

abolition of the Department and the black holes and you name it, everything that was bloody coming we predicted at that [annual] conference [1988], and the members, it was too horrible and the members didn't want to know, but of course they then got to know it, of course over time they got to know it only too well, and what it meant was, instead of our being able to be people who could do the groundwork to work with teachers to get teachers to look forward and teachers mostly, if you can work with them to think about the interests of kids will do that, I mean they quite often will do things that don't seem to be in their own interests on a really selfish basis if it's in the interests of kids, but at this point we were having to go simply into looking much more hard-nosedly at the industrial threats and the next probably five years were just spent fighting them, weren't they? (Shona Smith, union activist)

Shona Smith believed that teachers became change-averse from 1990 on:

Every change that was coming seemed to most teachers to be bad. There was too much of it, it was too fast. They'd stopped distinguishing the changes and evaluating each one. (Shona Smith, union activist)

Jim Strachan, from his viewpoint in government, could see this too:

I would have said that part of the problem was the tensions between teachers and government institutions and authorities, and if you think back to the early 90s and the arguments that were going on there ... The other thing was, a lot of the rhetoric that was around then was a resistance to continuing change, and this was clearly going to be substantial change. You'd [teachers] gone through Picot, Lange's stuff, the administrative side of things ... There was a new curriculum, and there was a weariness, I think, and also a certain degree of confrontation as opposed to co-operation which was characteristic of that time. (Jim Strachan, NZQA official)

David Hood recognised that teachers' focus was different by the 1990's:

I think that in those days [1970's and early 1980's] there was a lot more discussion taking place in schools and nationally about education and I think we've lost a lot of that. Perhaps it was the advent of Tomorrow's Schools, I just think that there were a whole lot of different things that, if you like, worked against the idea of teachers working collaboratively, sharing ideas and opportunities for discussion forums, you know, I just think a lot of that went. [Judie: And they went, when?] Mid-80's. (David Hood, NZQA CEO)

Shona Smith grouped the membership into thirds, and said that by 1997 one-third of them were forward-looking and two-thirds backward-looking, and that if there was to be educational change, the leaders of that change needed to nurture the middle third as the ones next most likely to engage with the change. This was not happening under the President of the time, Martin Cooney, giving government agencies additional reason to not engage with the union:

Because the nurturing, which involved listening, genuinely listening, genuinely finding out the concerns of that middle third, and the extreme as much as you could too, but trying to find out what the issues were for members and what misinformation you might need to fix and what changes might need to be made to proposals to make them acceptable, and I don't think that was happening because by that stage you had a President who was quite consciously, quite actively, and he was deliberate about it and he would say so at times, he was pandering to the group who least wanted to change. He was to some extent seeding fears, suppressing information, not being neutral in any sense in the internal politics of it, as well as probably alienating people outside, as well as doing stuff which meant that agencies which would previously have worked with us were tending to avoid working with us and were seeing it as no help to involve us. (Shona Smith, union activist)

From his work with the PPTA expert panel, Peter Allen drew the conclusion that by the mid-1990's there was an “enormous gulf of understanding between the average PPTA member about assessment issues and the PPTA leadership”. He said that he believed that the expert panel had “assumed that the average teacher had a greater understanding of assessment theory and practice than they actually had”. He attributed this to a lack of emphasis on assessment in programmes of teacher education:

I guess from my particular point of view that became obvious in the work we did in my own school with the teachers with ABA and unit standards, that when it actually came to the crunch and you started to get individual teachers to talk about their understanding of what they were doing in the classroom in terms of scaling and ranking kids and so on that there was not a great deal of appreciation of why they were doing that or what the impact of that was, what the benefits of achievement-based assessment were, you know, those sorts of things, the whole pedagogical principles behind assessment really, and I put that down really to,

the question is where do teachers get their training in that, and the fact is that they don't, most secondary teachers. (Peter Allen, union activist)

A consequence of this was that the expert panel compromised between their concept of the ideal assessment system and what they believed teachers could accept:

We decided to stick to a mixture of what we thought would be pragmatically possible, i.e. we were kind of tempted to recommend that there would be no external assessment, and we recognised that politically that would not be a flier, so we had to come up with a compromise. (Peter Allen, union activist)

Phil Capper believed that the absence of the union from government policy-making processes under the Tomorrow's Schools environment had led to union members being poorly informed about assessment issues and that this had caused them to be less enthusiastic about the NCEA than they would otherwise have been:

It's better integrated, it's less fragmented, it acknowledges the inter-relationship between corpi of knowledge, it's not perfect but it's certainly a step in the right direction, but ... Here's my take on why you're having difficulties in selling it, one is you've had fifteen years in which every new teacher entering has not had a coherent debate going on about assessment as a professional issue. I hear resource issues being talked about around assessment, the time issues being talked about, 'How much bloody work I've got to do' being talked about, but I don't hear much talk about why I'm doing this. (Phil Capper, union official)

The dismissal in 1998 of Cooney from the PPTA Presidency (Grant, 2003, pp.273-288), combined with a new political pragmatism, increased government willingness to work with the union to achieve a consensus over qualifications. However there was still membership reluctance to support the NCEA compromise (see Chapter Five), and even today, evidence from a recent union membership survey (NZPPTA, 2006) shows that many PPTA members are reluctant to endorse the qualification.

Capper's prescription for the future was an increased involvement of the union and its members in policy-making around professional issues:

I hope it does come back into professional matters as a big voice because I think that's important – that's what I want to see in the next five years, PPTA back in the position it was vis a vis these issues because then you see once you've got PPTA acting as an actor in the system, it has an incentive as an organisation to build and create as much consensus as it can in its own members, it's got an

incentive to do so – if it devotes its resources to do so as it used to and then you begin to get some improvements in the education, in the profession itself and the only way improved coherence in the profession can be obtained is through PPTA, nobody else can do it. (Phil Capper, union official)

It certainly appears from this section that when PPTA has been excluded from an official role in developing education policy, it has led to members being unwilling to support change, even when that change is consistent with long-standing union policy. In a democratic union, this means that the union's policy, when the members cannot be persuaded to support it, has to shift to reflect the majority view (see Chapter Five). Elected union leaders who allow a 'policy gap' to persist are likely to lose office at the next opportunity.

Re-partnering

In terms of relationships between the Ministry of Education and the union, the period during which the union was officially ruled out of the policy process was from the late 1980's to about 1997. From then, there was a gradual re-engagement with the union. In contrast, engagement with NZQA has been slow to reach similar levels. What has occurred has largely been through Ministry of Education initiatives such as the secondary schools sector forum (see Chapter Four) which includes NZQA, rather than from NZQA initiatives (observation from personal experience).

A change to a more politically pragmatic Minister, Wyatt Creech, and the election, under a new proportional representation system, of a government with only a fragile majority, were significant in the changing government attitude to union involvement in policy:

My impression was that Creech was looking for a bit more dialogue with teachers and was prepared to listen to what the PPTA might have to offer in terms of a way forward, for example in terms of assessment reform, I mean I think that what came out in the form of NCEA owed a lot to Creech's readiness to listen to some of the concerns about current assessment problems. Creech always appeared to me to be the consummate political pragmatist, and I think that he was a fairly astute person and I think that he was unlike Lockwood, he was prepared to take advice, and so if NZQA had come back with advice that this offered a way forward, I'm sure he'd have picked that up and run with it. (Peter Allen, union activist)

The report of the union's expert panel, *Te Tiro Hou* (NZPPTA, 1997), has in fact been credited by government officials as having guided the development of the NCEA: "[*Te Tiro Hou*] was probably the main document and we quoted from it in papers and discussions that we had with people, so it was probably the most significant document" (Don Ferguson interview). The expert panel's work marked a swing back towards the position of influence that the union had held until the late 1980's. Two union activist participants, Peter Allen and Shona Smith, were members of that expert panel. Allen talked about being invited to a high-level meeting at NZQA to talk through their findings:

I think it clearly had an impact when it came out. I can remember going off to NZQA to have a meeting with the guy that got shipped off to Queensland [Douglas Blackmuir, CEO], and a few others, David Nicholson was there and so on, and setting out the findings of the Inquiry, and then remarking subsequently that some of the changes that came out of NZQA looked remarkably like the findings from the Inquiry. Clearly the report had a major impact on their thinking.
(Peter Allen, union activist)

The new political pragmatism led government to seek a qualifications system for schools that would be supported by teachers, but designing a system that was technically robust seems to have been a lesser goal. Asked whether he believed that the work of the officials instructed to develop a qualifications system for schools was grounded in research or not, Allen replied:

I think it was political pragmatism, I mean I got the impression that they were given a job to do by the Minister and they were looking for something that would be acceptable to the government and acceptable to the education system. (Peter Allen, union activist)

This view was confirmed by Don Ferguson, the Ministry official responsible for developing the proposal: "My view is that it was a pragmatic response, more so than a response with philosophical underpinnings."

Shona Smith also saw it that way: "We did feel that Creech had said 'Fix it' and he wasn't an ideologue so he didn't really care how they fixed it but he wanted something that would work politically".

The fact that politicians and officials have since then sought to work more closely with the union must be positive. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the next chapter, the

teachers interviewed for this study did not demonstrate a perception that they were in any kind of professional partnership with government. Rather, they saw themselves as the recipients of policy-makers' change processes.

Conclusions

It is clear that a number of intersecting factors led to change processes that contributed to conflict over the qualifications reforms of the 1990's. The neo-liberal discourse of 'provider capture' led to the exclusion of PPTA, the official voice of teachers, from policy-making on qualifications. The industrial climate of the 1990's, especially the Employment Contracts Act, the attempts to 'bulk fund' teachers' salaries, staffing cuts and other attacks on the union's power, exacerbated the situation and led union members to be willing to use industrial tactics against professional targets, in the form of moratoria on implementation of the qualifications changes. This increased the exclusion of the teacher voice from policy-making. The consequence was policies and discourses that failed to engage teachers and led to further resistance.

The stalemate was largely resolved by the waning of extreme neo-liberal discourses and an increased political pragmatism from a government less secure of its electoral base. In this climate, government appeared to recognise that education policy developed without involving the union as the official representative of teachers has little hope of achieving consensus in the profession, and leads to industrial strife that is politically unhelpful. There appears to have also been a recognition that the union's power had not been broken by the policies of the early 1990's (Alison et al., 2003) and that therefore it was safer to involve the union than seek to bypass it. The moment in 1999 when the union offered to run briefing sessions on the new NCEA proposal in partnership with government officials and had the offer accepted (see Chapter Five) was a highly symbolic signal of the change in processes that was taking place.

On the other hand, there is little evidence from interviews with teachers conducted for this study, or from other research (e.g. Alison, 2005), that teachers perceive themselves to be the professional partners of government in qualifications change. What it would take to achieve such a shift is far from clear.

Chapter 9 - Teachers and change

Whereas Chapter Eight focused largely on evidence from interviews with policy-makers about their perceptions of the qualifications change processes taking place in the period under study, this chapter focuses exclusively on evidence from teacher participants, providing extracts from the 'work stories' (see Chapter Two) of teachers involved in the implementation of major educational change. The data exemplifies many of the themes about teachers and educational change identified in the literature canvassed in Chapter Three.

The teachers interviewed for this study demonstrate clearly that the lens through which teachers see education is, in contrast with the wide-angle lens of policy-makers and academics, a close-up lens, focused largely on the students whom they teach. They tend to view educational change from the perspective of their classroom and school practice, and how it will affect the students they see in front of them every day (Helsby, 1999; Leggett, 1997; O'Neill, 2001). They utilise the teacher filter of what is practicable for them in their particular context with their particular students (Bailey, 2000; Ball, 1994a; Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; McLaughlin, 1993; O'Neill, 2001). Teachers are likely also to be evaluating the changes against their moral code (Codd, 1990 & 1998) and in the spirit of altruism that is part of classical professionalism (Locke, 2001).

At the same time, as discussed in Chapter Three, it is important not to idealise teachers' responses to change. Teachers are human, and their 'ethic of practicality' (Hargreaves, 1994) includes consideration of their own interests, reflecting a complex interplay between their professionalism and self-interest. The data here reports only what participants chose to say; it is unable to unravel the interplay of motivations that must have in fact been behind teachers' responses to events. Furthermore, it is based on teachers' memories, rather than being collected at the time of the events being discussed. Given those provisos, though, the data is still valuable, because how teachers now articulate their thinking processes at this point after a long period of change is also of interest.

In the last two decades at least, most change that teachers have had to confront has been initiated centrally, even if there has sometimes been scope for schools to 'choose' whether and to what extent to implement the change, as in the achievement-based

assessment (ABA) and unit standards trials. Structural changes, curriculum changes, accountability changes, and the most recent qualifications changes, along with many other changes have, however, been imposed on schools rather than negotiated with the profession (Jesson, 1995; Openshaw 2003; Sullivan, 1994). This makes it likely that change will be seen by teachers as something coming from outside, with which they will have to cope, rather than something arising from within the profession, from teachers like themselves, and this was certainly the case with this sample of teachers (see Chapter Seven). This does not mean, however, that teachers lack agency when faced with educational change, as the literature shows (e.g. Earl & Katz, 2000; Helsby, 1999; McLaughlin, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The chapter is organised around the various factors appearing to influence these teachers' responses to change. These factors are categorised as getting involved to learn, fit with values and current practice, the influence of context, human mediation, subject status issues, workload factors, and attitudes to change in general. Quotations from teachers are sourced by pseudonym and school decile range and type. For further details of the teachers, refer to Appendix 1.

Factors influencing responses to change

Getting involved to learn

A factor underpinning some teachers' decisions to engage with voluntary trials of standards-based assessment was that if they got involved 'at ground level' they would be better placed as professionals to handle the changes they saw as inevitable. A principal in O'Neill's (2001) study said her school had a culture where staff did not like 'being behind' and were eagerly awaiting the unit standards trials (p.258).

Hugh, an enthusiast for standards-based assessment, explained his rationale as that he would build his skill and confidence levels by getting involved. He believed that teachers who kept up with each wave of change were better placed to handle the next wave:

I'm glad I did unit standards because it gave me confidence to do NCEA and I took a bit of pride and a lot of departments, some departments at [previous school] took unit standards on, and those that didn't were stressing when NCEA came around. When unit standards came along they didn't take it on board because they thought oh well, it's going to be like ABA and they thought it would go away, and of course it has gone away but NCEA has sort of progressed from

that and you'd go to these meetings for NCEA and you'd see these schools, the traditional boys' schools, who hadn't taken it on board, and no doubt this was exactly the same here, I have no doubts about that, they said 'Oh we're not going to do this, it doesn't measure anything'. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

His comments are also interesting in how he perceives the behaviour of the 'resisters' who hoped that they could just ignore the successive waves of change.

His role as Deputy Principal also made him feel obliged to keep up with change:

I was DP so you had to be au fait with what was vogue at the moment, and that [unit standards] was what people were talking about. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

Barbara thought her English Department's involvement in unit standards trials demonstrated this kind of motivation:

I think most schools felt that they had to be up with the play, and if you get in at the beginning ... Everyone wants to be at the forefront of new movements, whether they agree with it philosophically or not, and I think I'm talking too much from a personal point of view, I don't know whether the rest of the department felt as strongly as I did, I just never really liked the philosophy of unit standards. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

However Barbara disassociated herself from this, saying that she herself was not that happy with being part of the trials, because while she favoured ABA, she was opposed to unit standards (see next sub-section). I asked Barbara how that had felt, implementing an assessment system with which she was not in sympathy, and whether it had caused conflict in the English Department. Her answer conveyed something of the micropolitics of a subject department but also a school:

No, I think everybody just boxed along with it, I think we had the sense of 'We're stuck with this so we'll do it', but I was pretty new in the department too, I didn't want to rock the boat too much. I don't know whether, to be honest, I voiced it [her reservations about unit standards] very passionately, I think I thought, it's a bit like NCEA in a way, after a while you feel 'Well look, just get on with it, it's here, stop whinging' and I think maybe we aren't looking carefully enough at the philosophy behind things and to some extent too your senior management are on the bandwagon and if you speak up too vehemently against the system there's a black mark against you or they think ... I think principals ... like to be seen to toe the party line really. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

Yvonne felt that the work her Science Department had done with an early experiment with standards-based assessment, the Wellington Science Certificate, had stood her department in good stead when it came to implementing unit standards later:

It was assessing skills rather than knowledge, and we had a five-level standard and this would have been back in the 80's, we had a five-level standard for the different skills, mainly in practical work or in research and so on, and so when we actually came to start looking at unit standards those Science teachers had quite a step-in already. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

At the same time, they were cautious about entering the unit standards trial for Science, and waited until the second year, when they tried just a few standards:

So we didn't get in on the very first year of unit standards, I think we came in on about the second year, and again we didn't do a huge number, we did about three, the most I got up to I think was in Year 12 Chemistry, we did about five or six in the year, and I used the theoretical assessments to count for both unit standards and Sixth Form Certificate so it was double marking. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

Fit with values and current practice

A number of researchers have commented on teachers' tendency to adopt change if they can reconcile it with their values and current practice, or can see ways to adapt the new development to fit (e.g. Bailey, 2000; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Earl & Katz, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; O'Neill, 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The teachers interviewed showed that they had applied judgements about whether the change fitted, or could be made to fit, their values and current practice.

Barbara felt her involvement with trialling achievement-based assessment in English had enhanced the clarity and ease of the assessment process, describing it as leading to "one of the most exciting English programmes I've been in". On the other hand, she was vigorously opposed to unit standards, which she was obliged to use when she moved to her current school:

I absolutely hate unit standards. I totally disagree with them. I had one student say to me, 'Miss, this is stupid. It's the equivalent of a surgeon operating on a patient and getting it wrong and saying 'Oh okay don't worry, let's stitch him up, do it again, and then oh don't worry, try again' and I thought yes. We found it very hard to motivate the bright kids because they thought the system was flawed. It was, you know, 'Don't worry dear, try again', and by the time they've

tried three times they're absolutely thick if they couldn't get it! I'm totally opposed to unit standards, there's never been anything so stupid. I think that period when we were doing unit standards was the time I disliked most in my sixth form programme. (Barbara, Mid decile girls' school)

Barbara was much more comfortable with the NCEA because achievement standards differed from unit standards, and re-submission was being handled differently:

Although I really didn't like unit standards, there are actually quite a few things about achievement standards I do like. You might say, well how come you like one but not the other, but I think it's that idea of, you know, with the unit standards that it was just re-submit, re-submit, I hated that, whereas although the NCEA students technically can re-submit we're not ... It's very much that you have to get it up to standard on this day. (Barbara, mid decile girls' school)

Robert looked at the new Legal Studies unit standards within the context of the kind of programme he wanted to teach. Coherence was a priority for him, and he was able to see a way to provide that, using unit standards:

I remember when I was investigating doing Law unit standards when I was teaching Legal Studies when unit standards first came in, although each of the unit standards appeared to be a separate thing, they had an immense commonality and if you sat down and worked it through you could in fact teach a hell of a lot of unit standards by just teaching an essentially ordinary and very interesting interconnected programme, but that required the teacher to sit down and do quite a lot of planning. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Hugh went to a course where he was convinced to try ABA, but he took ownership of the method by developing his own units of work and assessment activities:

In those days you didn't think about it, you just went to these meetings, they would sell it, I remember going to two meetings, two full-day stuff, yet a lot of schools never took it on. I'm not sure how it actually started way back in those days, I would have read about it or someone would have mentioned it, circulars would have come round saying the school's been doing the traditional form of assessment, have you thought about something different, and ... Obviously when I went to the meeting I had no idea what it was about, I can't remember, I must have gone with a couple of other teachers from [school] ... and I then developed my own units based on that, all my assessments, and of course once you do that I think you own it then. There were some very good resources, I've

still got them at home actually, lovely folders of the stuff, and a lot of teachers felt the same way and so we shared resources and you felt, well, perhaps this is a good way after all. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

In the same way, he later took ownership of unit standards, and ended up as Deputy Principal 'selling' the system to his school community, having decided that the system fitted his values or 'philosophy' about education and assessment. His value system appears to prioritise finding opportunities for students to succeed, and this was how he 'sold' unit standards to parents and students:

I thought it suited me, suited our kids and that was good enough for me. I went to courses and it fitted my philosophy I suppose of what assessment should be about and I'm a masochist for extra work anyway, so ... and it just grew on me and I could see kids achieving from it. I had to come up with you know the old parents' meetings and things where you had to talk about the advantages of ... I had to try and sell unit standards at Form 6 to parents, and I'd come up with about two different points, what does Sixth Form Certificate do, what do unit standards do, and the parents all thought it was great because it divided it up into chunks and not being assessed at the end of it and have a bad day and that's the end of it, because a lot of parents said, that was me, I had a bad day and I failed, and I think you know perceptions in society have changed a little bit since then, you know, we accepted failure. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

Lynne said that she had adapted her teaching to the new NCEA system, but also that as the system became more familiar to her, she was feeling less dominated by it and more able to return teaching to the centre of what she did by adapting her approach to the standards she was assessing:

Yes, and actually I'm changing my way of teaching as well, because the first year I did it I taught rigidly, I mean I focused my teaching to the assessment part, I mean I do that anyway but I was teaching to it rather than teaching what I thought they needed to know so I was torn the first time because I kept thinking that I was leaving stuff out that they needed to know but I was so pressured about trying to get through all the material in time, so I felt that my teaching suffered. So what I do now is, I'm teaching what I think they need to know and I'm assessing against the standard. I'm not teaching to the standard, I'm teaching from my experience of what I think they need and then I'm assessing against the standard. Now that's not what I started doing a few years ago. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

Lynne's comments remind us that teachers' adaptation to change is a continuous process, and that increasing familiarity with a reform enables teachers to re-engage with what they regard as fundamental to their practice and make the adaptations necessary to achieve a 'fit' between the changes and their values and understandings about teaching (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Lynne was a Moderator for both unit standards and achievement standards, and she gave an interesting example from that role of someone negotiating conflicts between her own values and the system requirements:

And then because it was the first year I felt like it was necessary to give teachers feedback on how they could do better, where the gaps were, or something. So, like the Correspondence School does, they call it 'tick and flick', you know, just tick boxes and get rid of it, I felt I couldn't do that. [Judie: Did they let you give feedback on how they could improve?] Well, I didn't care whether they did or didn't, I just did it because I thought if I was the teacher, how would I feel? I mean I didn't spend three or four hours, well I mean I did in some cases, but it probably only took me another fifteen or twenty minutes longer to give feedback to the teacher, but I thought, if this thing is going to be implemented successfully, these people need some information. We were told 'This is not a professional development tool for the teacher' but when this government cut the Advisory Service down to zero and you've got teachers out in Timbuktu or somewhere, there's no Art Teachers Association, they've got no colleagues around that they can contact, the only thing they've got is what they send off to you, then I think it's your responsibility to give them some assistance, particularly if you're slamming it. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

The value of collegiality was more important to Lynne than obedience to the central agency's instructions about her role as a Moderator.

Doug dabbled in unit standards, but withdrew quite fast except where he perceived them to be useful, in classes for lower-achieving students of Maths:

I was at [school], that would have been 1995, 1996 [and we implemented unit standards at] fifth form, sixth form, but not very many. There were a lot implemented in the Transition area, and in the Technology area, but in the Maths area we tried one or two and we were not that impressed. [Judie: So you tried one or two, for how long?] A year or two. But we persevered with them with the Maths with Applications courses in Year 12. In Year 11 we did the Maths Applied Certificate, but it was still achievement-based assessment, and then

when the achievement standards came in we developed more unit standard based courses. (Doug, mid decile boys' school)

Norman, on the other hand, talked throughout his interview about his concern that standards-based assessment led to assessment driving the curriculum rather than vice-versa, as he believed it should be. This was behind his antipathy to achievement-based assessment:

It was very black and white, you were either with 'em or you were agin 'em. [Judie: And why might you be with 'em?] Well, god knows, I fought against that and I argued all those same arguments about how it was driving what we taught by the assessment, that was my biggie. It was all-consuming, everything was to do with that and nothing was to do with the rest of the things that we do in the classroom, it was almost like the actual curriculum content was second fiddle to getting this assessment right, so whatever you were going to set as your assignment was looked at by the HOD in terms of what you are asking them to do, and then that had to be approved before we were allowed to go and teach anything. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

It is worth quoting Norman at length, because his appears to be a story of a passionate teacher who felt his professionalism was under attack as a result of change being imposed at school level with which he was not in sympathy, and the conflict that this caused with colleagues who were applying a different 'filter' in their decision-making. Part of the problem may also have been the way the change was interpreted at department level:

Absolutely it narrowed [delivery of the curriculum], that's why I felt really uncomfortable and that's what brought me into conflict with everyone, was the fact that I believed it was narrowing what we were doing. Now most of the people in the department ... had no previous experience to base anything on, they were all first or second year teachers, always, and so they would go along with whatever and so there were these fights and in the end it became personal ... only because it became the focus of the department. The department said 'This is the most important thing about what we are doing' and I was saying 'No, what we're doing is teaching the curriculum, and the assessment should be a part of that but not the only part of that.' (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Norman's fundamental objection to standards-based assessment appeared to be philosophical. He talked at length about his commitment to building his curriculum around the students before him, and found the concept of standards a straitjacket:

I think it's a view of education as a utility, something that you have little ticks in boxes on pieces of paper as opposed to the sort of holistic thing which I was trained in and grew up in. But [teacher educator] and her ilk seemed to be saying 'Well, schools are businesses, we're in the business of educating, the students need to be able to get value for their money in the sense that it's taxes, and we should all be accountable and if you don't perform then there must be a way of measuring that and if you don't meet the standards expected of professionals then ... (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Although he had some sympathy with the NCEA, Norman was still finding difficulties implementing it in a way that fitted with his approach to teaching because of what he saw as an overly structured approach to assessment in his current department. Norman saw his HOD's insistence on common assessments as unnecessarily restrictive and interfering with his sense of fun in teaching, an important value for him:

What I'm finding is that the department is saying, for ease of administration and later moderation, let's all do this one [assessment activity], which is back to my point of driving what we do, so it's making it a little bit harder to widen things out and have some fun. Now the reason for that is fear of not being able to accurately moderate between one piece of work that's been done in one classroom and a piece of work on the same standard but a different topic in another, and that's a battle which I'm planning to fight next year. I think it would be a sad day when we stopped being able to laugh with children. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

David worried that where teachers have to implement change with which they are not in sympathy, they might find it hard to be positive about it to students:

We have to be sold on this [NCEA], when we present it to the students. I assume, even the teachers who are opposed to it, I assume they're not saying 'Here's a crap system but you'd better do it', I assume they're not doing that. But certainly people like me, we would sell it to students. (David, high decile co-ed school)

Teachers face a moral issue in trying to reconcile their professional honesty about what they believe to be good practice with their responsibility to foster enthusiasm for learning among their students. I have not found any research into how teachers who

have to implement changes with which they are not in sympathy talk about it with their students, but it would be an interesting area to study.

Influence of context

One of the filters that teachers are known to use when deciding about whether to implement change is whether it will work for the students in their particular school context (Bailey, 2000; Helsby, 1999; Leggett, 1997).

It is reasonable to predict that the decile (socio-economic ranking) of a school will influence whether change to standards-based assessment will be seen to 'work' for students, because in low-decile schools, there were disproportionate numbers of students not experiencing success under the norm-referenced assessment system. Such a correlation appears to be borne out in my data in relation to teachers' and schools' decisions to enter voluntary trials of standards-based assessment, prior to the NCEA. Robert reflected that when he said about unit standards trials:

I think it was possibly being pushed by schools like [two low-decile schools], schools which had quite an amorphous mass of non-academic kids. I'm mindful of the schools which fought against it so therefore the push was coming from the non-Decile 10s, you know, the Decile 1, 2, 3 schools, because we felt all along that for our kids they could see some level of achievement. We were keen right from the very start because we saw the possibilities to broaden what we actually taught and also to enable some kids to get some sort of qualifications which they would not normally have got. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

A school-level decision at Trevor's previous low-decile school meant that he found himself assessing against unit standards at Year 12, even though later in the interview he expressed considerable reservations about their suitability in his subject area, Maths:

The policy of the school at that particular ... because of the level, the ability of the students more than anything else, I think, where the unit standards were used for students who were of low ability because they could have another go, and keep on going and going and going, whereas the Sixth Form Certificate assessments were a oncer, no reassessment. (Trevor, mid decile boys' school)

Mediators

Mediators within a school are known to be significant in whether and how change is implemented as policy-makers intend (Ball, 1994a; Helsby, 1999). Vicky saw principals as mediators:

I think it was the principals who were originally educated ... They tried to bring the principals on board first. A lot of that original information used to come down through principals. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

Pauline was required by her independent school principal to add the introduction of ABA to an already heavy workload generated by implementing the new Maths curriculum. Her cynicism about change that went nowhere because it was dropped very soon afterwards is understandable:

We were forced to by the principal at that stage, she forced the heads of department who forced us to bring it in when we didn't want to bring it in and the reason we had to do it was pressure from the principal and I suspect that was because she thought everybody else was doing it so we must too. It was a flash-in-the-pan, and we rearranged all our assessments, our marking schedules, everything was put onto the scale of 1 to 5, and then it was ditched within a year ... It was just probably in response to parental pressure, it wasn't a very satisfactory thing, we didn't feel that at that stage it was worth the effort. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

Her repetition of the word 'forced' emphasises her sense of powerlessness and frustration that the principal had imposed change and then dropped it within a year as a result of parental (and perhaps teacher) resistance.

Subject departments have the ability to moderate the power of secondary principals. Departments often have autonomy about whether to engage with voluntary change or not. Subject departments make a range of decisions, about curriculum reforms, qualifications changes, and other innovations, and HODs are charged with negotiating the micropolitics of their departments in deciding whether, and how, to implement change (O'Neill, 2001). Questions of subject status relative to other subjects also influence heads of department and subject teachers (see next section).

From these interviews, it appears that where individual departments had the choice whether to enter trials or not, subject-based factors were influential:

From my recollection the most difficult people to convince [to introduce unit standard assessment] were the Mathematicians, possibly the Chemists, I'm

biased in that direction. English people saw it as an advantage, I felt, probably because they could modularise it, they could clump it and give kids some sort of success and then move on. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Brian said that while the Maths Department in his school engaged with the unit standard trials, his Science Department did not:

I have had very little to do with unit standards, they were trialled, our Maths Department I think were involved in trials, we in the Science Department chose not to, having had not a very positive experience with ABA and seeing this was seemingly being advocated by the same people, same sorts of people, we stepped back ... to see what the trials would come up with, and again it seemed that unit standards had serious flaws which was why they weren't introduced nationally. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

Brian's principal had encouraged departments to trial unit standards, but Brian did not perceive there to have been any coercion. He recalled hearing the argument that it was useful to be involved at the beginning of change, but had not been convinced by that, and believed his department's judgement was proven right by the impact of the overwhelming workload on the Maths Department:

Well, some people say 'If it's going to happen, you're in early, getting the training, finding out the flaws' but it also created a lot more work for these people, especially when it's trialled with Sixth Form Certificate you have to double mark, they had to mark for unit standards then they had to mark ... In fact, it cleared our Maths Department out, within two years apart from the HOD and the Assistant HOD the Department were gone: Correspondence School, Australia ... (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

For Norman, however, his school's highly structured response to change (in this case the introduction of a new national curriculum) was, as he saw it, a reaction to the number of inexperienced teachers in the school, but it cut across his professional autonomy:

I think initially, and at that point I was at [school], initially it led to a sense that teachers weren't being trusted. Now [school] was an interesting place because it was a hard-to-staff school and so most of the teachers there were young, and because they were young, in fact I was the oldest teacher there at sort of 50, everyone including the senior management was younger than that, and so what they put in place were structures which basically told everyone what to do all of

the time. Now I found that personally and professionally incredibly limiting, and although I could intellectualise why it was there, and I could see the thinking, it nevertheless frustrated me. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

This lack of trust materialised again when the school moved to implement ABA:

And it was horrific because they didn't know what they were doing. You know, they tried really hard and we had endless staff meetings and everyone went away and tried to assess things and then we would reassess them and sort of moderate them and people were sort of labelled as no good at it, good at it, always good at it, and relationships fell apart and HODs left and we tried again and it fell apart again, you know, it was pretty fraught, and then [school] wasn't an environment, the English Department environment wasn't a good one, they had two permanent classrooms and the rest was a string of prefabs which stretched up the hill. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Staffing issues of this kind are among the factors which Ball and Bowe (1992) identified in Britain as having a significant influence on how schools approached the implementation of the new National Curriculum. A department made up of inexperienced teachers, physically scattered in a way which would hamper development of collaboration, would be more likely to adopt a lockstep approach to implementing change than one which was staffed by experienced professionals with well-established skills and understandings.

Norman moved eventually to a school where the Head of Department refused to implement change unless she was convinced of its benefits, and this was a happy time in his career:

Well, [HOD] was insisting on sticking with it because she wanted to make sure that whenever you changed the system it was going to be for the good, and she was in conflict with the management over that, and stayed in conflict until she left at the end of last year. Having said that, in some funny ways it was working in the best interests because I think their introduction to NCEA has been relatively smooth because I don't think the staff were traumatised to the same extent as everybody else was. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

No doubt Norman is not alone in having sought out a subject department where the approach to his specialism, including change in relation to it, conformed to his own.

Whether advocates for change are recognised as leaders or not is a significant factor in teacher decision-making (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p.58). Some of the teacher

participants were influenced to become involved by someone outside the school. In Lynne's case, this was a teacher educator:

I went overseas but when I came back [teacher educator] got in touch with me and said that I needed to get on board with this assessment thing because this was going to happen so I was trained up down in Christchurch on unit standards. (Lynne, Mid decile boys' school)

This was despite a lack of belief in the unit standards model of assessment:

Well, the Art teachers never did say that [they supported unit standards]. We all didn't like it from the first. We all said 'We've got an excellent system with School Certificate, why would we want to change it?' (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

When asked why then she had got involved with unit standards assessment, Lynne's answer demonstrated the powerlessness teachers can feel in the face of change:

We didn't really have a choice, we were told, we were told by, I presume it was NZQA, that we had to have, and people like [teacher educator] were involved from the beginning, she was involved in the creation of the unit standards and writing for that, she didn't want to do it but that was what we had to do. (Lynne, mid decile girls' school)

For Brian, too, a recognised leader, this time at a training day for Senior Biology in 1990, was influential in persuading him to adopt ABA, and later made a visit to his school to "train the whole staff on it":

They told us about how it had been trialled at various places, there was someone up north who was, Northland I think, but they were just introducing it to us. We were told that this was the way it was going to be, we used it at Sixth Form Certificate, using the training we'd got, but we soon found it didn't work, we weren't very impressed with it. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

His comment "we soon found it didn't work" could be read as him applying 'the ethic of practicality' (Hargreaves, 1994) to educational innovation, and choosing to reject it when it failed to meet that test. On the other hand, other comments made by Brian suggest that on Mac an Ghaill's (1994) categorisation, he is a 'professional', someone supportive of traditional forms of assessment, and hostile to recent curriculum change, suggesting that his trialling of the new system would tend to be approached in a fairly negative frame of mind.

Subject status issues

The differential status of subjects under the existing qualifications system was sometimes given as a reason to introduce unit standards because the Qualifications Framework promised to accord 'parity of esteem' to a wider range of subjects, through applying the same currency of credits to all subjects:

In my particular subject area [Drama] it [unit standards assessment] was absolutely fantastic because we had nothing until the unit standards actually came along, so my interest in it was to give some status to our subject which we always knew was there but it wasn't 'officially' recognised. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

This drive to get his subject equal status outweighed any concerns Robert might have felt about the new assessment methods. When asked whether he had worried that unit standards might 'atomise' learning, a common criticism of the system, he replied:

Certainly in my subject area that didn't really crop up because we were so pleased to get something that we could assess the kids against, I don't recall discussion on that. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Vicky became involved with standards-based assessment in a number of subject areas, ones that held lower status either because they had no qualifications available or because they were seen as 'vocational'. She taught in a high decile school which considered itself 'academic', but she talked often about her commitment to the students within that school who did not 'fit' the prevailing academic culture. Her desire to give greater status to subjects where these students could achieve success is understandable, in view of her values about meeting the needs of diverse students.

Her first experience with standards-based assessment was in the 1980's in Physical Education at a previous school, where she had helped to develop assessment criteria for Sixth Form Certificate, bringing it into the 'academic mainstream' of the school:

Well, I'd really finished PE but then they asked me, come on, there's this new thing coming in, nobody else could do it except me, so I said 'All right' but I actually really enjoyed it, it took me back into PE and when I first came here I was still doing PE because I really enjoyed that sort of making so much more of it. It brought PE into the academic world, gave it some status. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

In the early 1990's, as a Careers and Transition teacher, she began to use 'vocational' unit standards in the core generics area. At that stage, it appears she was working alone as a single Careers and Transition teacher, and did not have to negotiate the

micropolitics of a subject department to get involved, but she had the support of the school leadership:

There was lots of training available and they let me go, the school let me go to all the training that I wanted to do, so the first time I used them, the core generics ... Do you know, the first year I did them, it took me a whole year to write the unit standard [assessment activity] and to assess it, it took me a whole year. Now I do about forty a year, not all core generics, supported learning, but yes, so, 93, whenever they first came in I was in there straightaway, right from the start. I think it was the transition training, this is what it was all about, about these kids who were falling through the cracks, that had gaps, and so I started using it with them in transition and then when I started doing the unit standard training and started actually doing them myself, I noticed that it was just so great, it was so wonderful for these kids. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

The availability of professional development appears to have been a significant factor for Vicky, in building her skills and confidence with the new system, in the company of other teachers who shared a similar commitment to students failing in the current system. Her 'ethic of practicality', as demonstrated by her comment "*I noticed that it was just so great, it was so wonderful for these kids*", also seems to have been a factor.

Vicky appears to have been influential, working with her principal, in having unit standards assessment, sometimes in entirely new courses, introduced in a range of subject areas: Home Economics, Computing, Tourism, Employment Skills, Furniture Making. This was despite being in a high-decile school where many subjects had resisted introducing unit standard assessment:

Home Economics picked it up, and believe it or not, Computers picked it up as well. And I actually introduced a Tourism and Employment Skills course at Sixth Form and I taught that, I introduced that, I got that under STAR funding. And they're still going, those courses I introduced so long ago are still going. I also did a big spiel with a lot of teachers so we got furniture making as well, we also used to contract out with STAR getting automotive, with Hutt Valley Polytech. So I was instrumental, well partly instrumental, the boss and I used to, we went, established the STAR here so there was that training as well. And that had to be linked to unit standards, if you could link it like they do a Kiwi Leadership thing here, and I can't remember all the areas where people took on board what I was saying, totally with the boss's permission, and most of those unit standards have stayed, or progressed from there, but they're still there. I mean I was totally

committed to bringing them in in vocational areas. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

In the case of all the subjects she mentions, they were subjects that had a relatively lowly place in the informal subject hierarchy that prevails in secondary schools, or certainly did at the time she was recalling. It is reasonable to assume that the same motivation that Vicky articulated was behind the enthusiasm of these other teachers to trial unit standard assessment.

With all this experience behind her, Vicky's self-esteem was boosted by watching her colleagues in the 'academic' Maths area struggling with implementation of unit standards in their subject:

I was very interested in what was going on because I was quite familiar with it, and it was actually quite strange to see academic people going into unit standards because it became so long-winded [laughs], it became so top-heavy, you know, that I, I mean it survived but it was so ... But once I did it, it was 'Oh, so that's all there was to that', you know? But still people come to me, like somebody came from the Health Department a couple of weeks ago, and said 'Vicky, how do you think I should assess this? How should, what shall I do?' and I said 'Well, this is what I would do dah dah dah', and I said 'Take it or leave it', you know, and she's actually quite well up in it. I mean that sounds as if I'm blowing my own trumpet but I do know a lot about unit standards. (Vicky, high-decile co-ed school)

It is understandable that Vicky, as a specialist in relatively low status subjects, would enjoy having expertise to share with what she calls 'academic people' in her school.

Workload factors

Implementation of educational change at the classroom level inevitably involves additional work for teachers (Bailey, 2000), and it is rare for this extra work to be compensated for with sufficient additional time. The developments in standards-based assessment in New Zealand were typical in this respect (Allen et al., 1997).

Anne's description of her situation at the time of the interviews, in the first term of 2004, the third year of implementation of the NCEA, as *"it's all survival at the moment"*, probably reflects how many teachers were feeling. When asked whether she would want any further change, she said vehemently: *"I couldn't bear the thought of another immediate change at this moment"*.

Whether teachers are willing to take on the extra work of change is probably influenced by a number of factors, and some teachers will opt for placing their priorities elsewhere, if they have a choice, especially when change is coming thick and fast and there are many demands on their time (Ball & Bowe, 1992). If the change is believed to be in the interests of their students, however, it is much more likely that teachers will find the time to do it. Robert, for example, was driven by a belief that the new system would benefit his students and his school, and was therefore willing to do the extra work, but he believed that this was not the case for all his colleagues:

A lot of people were putting up barriers which were possibly not there, and also too a number of people were quite concerned about the need for documentation, you know, the quite huge amount of documentary work that had to go on to get everything up and running. it was a lot of work ... and then of course for example when Level One [NCEA] came in, a lot of people just simply pull the things down off the website and use those because to do your own you've got to go through such an amazing process, so in other words you could say that there's a central organisation dictating what people do. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Pauline talked passionately about the loss of staff morale in her current Maths Department caused by what she perceived to have been an HOD imposing his will on colleagues to have them implement unit standards:

I know very well what happened here, and they were still ironing it out, now what happened was, I think it was a year before unit standards were brought in, they were a trial school, before I came, so whatever year that was, and they lost something like their entire department because of it. It was driven by [name], who was Head of Maths at the time, and he was, I was told, looking to get a job in NZQA or the Ministry, and they just couldn't hack the pace, it was horrific for them, and that's when I came, they had lost yet another staff member, and we had a great deal of difficulty ... We kept it with our alternate students. Even then I don't think we were as well organised, I think by all the teachers leaving that I think [name] left us and when he went, he'd got what he wanted, he went off to NZQA and he left us in a bit of a mess, really, I mean he left the staff who'd been here pretty disillusioned, I don't think he needed much sleep himself so he didn't see that his staff needed it, he was actually quite a slave-driver, so when I came, I came in and very shortly became Assistant HOD and [name] was HOD, he burnt out last year and is on leave this year so that's why I've got his job, we've spent a lot of time trying to get our staff into a state where they felt

teaching was a worthwhile option and building up their confidence again and basically we needed to hold on to our staff. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

It is significant that she says “We kept it with our alternate students”, in other words where the teachers could see value for their students, they were willing to continue to carry the extra workload. Where they could not, they were not so willing.

Norman’s comments about the workload of change impacting negatively on morale within a department echo Pauline’s:

Basically you were so snowed under with doing it that you didn’t have time to take a breath and look around and think ‘Actually why don’t we do this and this and this’ and come up with some strategies. But again, we always had, we had about three HODs in as many years, and I think that by the time they realised what was going on, they were in the system and so they weren’t able to move it forward. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Doug, too, perceived the workload associated with unit standards implementation to be a reason to not introduce them in large numbers. There is another concern expressed in his comment too, though, that teachers would be unable to “get through the course”, so again his comment should not be read as simply teachers avoiding extra work in their own self-interest. At any rate, a degree of pragmatism about avoiding stress and exhaustion on the teaching team is reasonable, since an over-stretched teacher is unlikely to be a successful teacher:

The reason for us not liking it [unit standards] is that the course was chopped up into so many little bits, there were so many unit standards you would need to assess in order to cover the School Certificate course, the amount of time spending on the assessments, preparation for the assessment, the assessment, marking, reassessment, was so great you couldn’t get through the course. [School] were doing it and much more widely than we were and they were working huge hours in the Maths Department, and they kept it up for a couple of years till they almost dropped dead with exhaustion, they just couldn’t keep it up. (Doug, mid decile boys’ school)

Yvonne, while supportive of the NCEA, believed that the workload caused by the implementation of the NCEA had taken teachers’ attention away from discussing the merits of the system:

I think it got caught up more with the workload than whether it was a good form of assessment, and it did create a workload, it has created a workload and until it’s

fully instigated it will continue to create workload, but in my feelings it's actually going quite well, it's not perfect yet. (Yvonne, mid decile girls' school)

Helsby (1999) reports that greatly increased workloads interfere with teachers' ability to think deeply and collaboratively about how to make change work for their students, so Yvonne's comment is a warning that NCEA implementation may be having a de-professionalising effect on teachers as a result of excessive workload.

Attitudes to change in general

It has been suggested that while it is possible to generalise about teachers' reactions to change, especially to imposed change, there are also significant individual and contextual differences in how teachers respond (Bailey, 2000; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Helsby, 1999; Locke, 2001). The teachers in this sample demonstrated, through their comments and the decisions they had made, a wide range of attitudes to educational change.

An interesting contradiction in one teacher's comments was from Robert, who is a Deputy Principal. At one point in the interview, he said *"I don't think you could ever ideally make teachers do anything they didn't want to!"* But at a later stage, while saying that his school had not devoted any energy to considering whether the NCEA, which was compulsory for schools, was an ideal model of standards-based assessment, he made the comment: *"We were quite happy just to go along ... you know, because you can rail against these things but you're not going to win"*. His school had recently been through a difficult merger, and his latter comment was followed by a reference to that.

Trevor, who had reluctantly struggled with unit standards implementation, described compliance rather than enthusiastic adoption in his own and his colleagues' approach to the NCEA. He made it clear elsewhere in the interview that he had a number of personal reservations about the form of assessment, for Maths in particular. Trevor began teaching in 1960, so his attitude of passive compliance as he reaches the end of his working days is perhaps understandable:

But we went with the flow. From general discussion people were really working very hard indeed to implement what they needed to do. I'll go with it ... because I'm getting towards the end of my teaching career and I'll go with what is being put forward. (Trevor, mid decile boys' school)

Hugh, on the other hand, described himself as someone who approached each change with enthusiasm, though he shows some signs of having risked being “crippled by conscientiousness” (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997, p.2) at times:

Well since I've been in the system I've sort of jumped on a lot of bandwagons. When I first started it was norm-referenced in School Certificate and it was 50% pass and fail, and then it moved from there, when I got into ABA, I loved ABA, I got into that in a big way, and then I jumped on the unit standards bandwagon and then went into NCEA. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

It was not simple ‘bandwagon’ behaviour on his part; he also appeared to exercise judgement about whether change was in the best interests of his students. But even when he felt let down by the government agencies responsible for resourcing the NCEA developments, Hugh’s passion for change that he believed in carried him through:

Last year I was really upset, there weren't enough exemplars on the Net and I felt that was so unfair on the kids and that's what I thought, stuff you then, if you're not going to help me with the externals, I'm going to make sure the kids get the internals, and I thought well, if you're not going to give me any real good stuff, if you're going to give me one copy of something, and I thought no, that's not ... You're trying to make the kids fail, you've got to keep helping them, you've got to keep the teachers, and I thought blow you, I'm going to make sure the kids do well. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

David, on the other hand, worried about what he called ‘the bandwagon effect’ on teachers who get involved in new developments which then disappear:

In the background of my mind has always been, although I've tried to be open about change in education, I've worried about the bandwagon effect that maybe is the same in all walks of life, somebody seems to make a significant change or discovery or whatever, this becomes then the theme for the month or the year or whatever, people are drawn into this, start to find the faults, and then either it gets dropped or it fades, and it seems that has happened a lot in education. (David, high decile co-ed school)

While enthusiastically adopting unit standards, Hugh was unsettled by seeing colleagues in his own and other schools standing back from the change but he persisted and felt exonerated eventually with the arrival of the NCEA, which includes unit standards:

Well I was a bit disappointed, you know I was thinking, am I doing the right thing? And I looked at my kids and I thought, yes I am because they were still being written up by NZQA, getting a qualification, they might not have been university-accepted, I don't think it was accepted by the employers, now who knows why, because they knew what School Cert was and they knew that, they didn't know these other things, that's what education is for, teachers can pick up anything and make things in life easier for themselves, so they didn't understand it. So I felt disappointed that there weren't more subjects going for it. Right at the start it was just me, and then slowly English came on board and then it gave a little bit more credence to it. Prior to that the kids were saying well why, no-one else is doing this so why should I do it? So I thought I was fighting a rearguard battle but then slowly other departments came on board, not many, but a sufficient number to make it that perhaps unit standards are worth something, the kids began to think that and so it just can be a little hard to keep on going and as I said, I'm glad I did now with NCEA the way it is and I think a lot of teachers were thankful as well. (Hugh, mid decile boys' school)

David found himself in a tricky situation during the unit standards trials in his subject, Geography, as a facilitator assisting schools with the trial but with a department that entered the trial and then dropped out the following year. It appears that while he personally believed in the unit standards methodology, he had prioritised departmental harmony over insisting that his department continue to do something that some members did not support. This is a good example of the kind of balancing acts in which Heads of Departments have to engage (O'Neill, 2001):

Even though I was a facilitator for unit standards, I was in the interesting position of being a facilitator for unit standards so that I was moderating other schools, knowing very well that in my own school we'd given it away. We gave it away because, as I say, a couple of members of the Department were unhappy with unit standards, struggling ... And while we had School Cert and norm-referencing, they felt that we shouldn't be trying ... We should be doing one or the other but not both, and they were suspicious of unit standards. And we also, we had another reason for the suspicion, which was that the Moderator was unhappy with some of the work we were doing so there was quite a bit of unease and strain in the Department because here was I, a Facilitator, okaying other people's work, and yet being told by other Moderators that what we had sent through was in their minds not good enough. And therefore that tended to confirm in their minds, because they were doubtful about this whole thing

anyway, confirm in their minds that it wasn't a good system. (David, high decile co-ed school)

David was clearly not helped by flaws in the new system, whereby he, as a Facilitator and therefore supposedly an expert, judged his department's interpretation of the standards to be correct, but external moderators judged it otherwise. The reaction of some teachers in his department to these inconsistencies was to have nothing to do with the change until those responsible for implementing it had refined it.

Pauline, whose experiences with implementation of achievement-based assessment and unit standards assessment had been very negative, described herself as positive when the NCEA was first explained to her, although other comments suggest she was less so. The universality of the change seems to have appealed to her, but the process of implementation from Year 11 up caused her concern:

Well I don't think we were told anything about why it was so good, no I do remember this bit clearly, I remember that this was basically a fait accompli, I don't recall being told that it was good, or anything about it other than that it was going to happen and how it was going to be implemented, and I do recall very strongly at the time asking how many of the panel of experts had children who were going to be guinea pigs, and none of them did because, and I didn't either, but I said that to be fair to the students we should bring it in at Year 13, then Year 12, then Year 11, so that we didn't have the same students being guinea pigs, that we started with smaller numbers and got them progressively bigger until we were working with Year 11 students. I was very happy because I had seen that there was a need for change, particularly at Year 13 level, I felt very anti what was going on with the internal assessment at Year 13, I was delighted to see that School C and Sixth Form Certificate were going to go. I was very comfortable with change. Very happy for change at that time, very positive, I spoke very positively about it, amongst a lot of negativity I might say. [Judie: Why were you positive then? Because you weren't positive about unit standards. What was the difference?] Well, it wasn't muddy because everybody was going to do it, unit standards some people did it, some people didn't, some people did some unit standards, some people did other unit standards, some classes in the school did it, some didn't, it was difficult to get consistency between schools, consistency even within the classes within the same school, and I could see the flaws in that very much. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school)

A puzzling part of this comment is her assertion that *"I don't think we were told anything about why it was so good"* alongside her statement that she was *"very happy for change at that time"*, as if the question about whether it would prove preferable to the deficiencies she saw in the current system was irrelevant. It is as if she felt that as long as everyone was implementing a common system, any flaws would be ironed out.

Elsewhere, she said that once change became inevitable with the national implementation of the NCEA from the beginning of 2002, she was resigned, and didn't feel it necessary to read publicity material from NZQA that would argue for the changes. She limited herself to reading material on *"a need-to-know basis"*:

I honestly don't remember [what reasons were being given for the change] because there was no point in me actually reading whether it was a good thing or not because I knew it was happening. You know, you didn't have time to read all their [NZQA's] things, I knew it was going to happen, let me find out on a need-to-know basis. Having gone through the debacle of the new curriculum and nothing being supported and you know, the ABA flash-in-the-pan and the unit standards sort of being a helluva lot of work and we lost all our staff, I wasn't really interested in the fact of, I knew it was going to happen so how am I going to make this work? That's all I'm interested in. (Pauline, high decile co-ed school).

These comments suggest that Pauline was feeling so change-weary, she was adopting a passive approach to change, one in which she positioned herself as willing to just 'do as she was told'. This is not the whole story, however, as demonstrated by her comment that she would be interested in *"what impact it would have on my students, what impact it would have on my staff"*.

A number of teachers demonstrated a 'writerly' approach (Ball & Bowe, 1992) to policy texts about the various qualifications changes. Brian described communications from NZQA about the Qualifications Framework with great cynicism, and chose to defer action until further evidence of a need to make change:

They looked glossy, they used big impressive words about the seamless thing, and they had pretty diagrams like rainbows with things intermeshing, the strands and all that, it looked like PR, but because of my reservations about it I thought I'll wait and see, I had plenty of other stuff to get on with in this job as you probably appreciate. (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

His perception of NZQA as a change agent has not improved during his experience of implementing the NCEA, and he described the government agencies responsible in similar terms to the participants who talked about NZQA's 'missionary zeal' (see Chapter Eight), saying that they had failed to set out a balanced case for change and be prepared to pilot the ideas first:

There's no perfect system, I'm not sure this is a better, it's a different system, I'm not sure it's overall better but it has positive parts but it has negatives as well and these are not given any credence ... because they've presented it as a perfect system. They've invested too much in it to say, well, maybe there are things wrong with it, that's why they didn't trial it, you know, they trialled ABA, they trialled unit standards, why didn't they trial achievement standards? (Brian, high decile co-ed school)

Barbara, who had been very enthusiastic about the ABA trials of the late 1980's/early 1990's, remembered the advent of NZQA and the Qualifications Framework as a time of confusion and turmoil, and any policy texts she saw had not resolved this:

Well, it felt kind of a lack of direction, we were just getting these directives and it wasn't clear who from or why. I got very frustrated, I found that just as you got used to one system, then there'd be a new bandwagon and it put a lot of stress on a lot of teachers, obviously, because you'd just get your confidence in one system and have to change. (Barbara, mid decile boys' school)

Doug also remembered it as a time of confusion, caused by the extent of the changes that were all happening at once. Policy texts that tried to explain how the different levels linked up (e.g. Ministry of Education, 1993) had clearly failed to communicate to him:

Total confusion, to be honest. So many levels, there were curriculum levels, there were qualification framework levels and they were different and some of the textbooks we were getting in Mathematics were Australian so they were different by one year again, and we were still doing Form 3, 4 and 5 and there was the prospect of changing to Year 9 to 11, and they didn't match up with the curriculum levels, they were completely different, and you still had the qualification levels which were different again. To me it was just a confusion of levels and I just ignored them really. (Doug, mid decile boys' school)

Norman's attitude to hearing about the ABA trials, while at a previous school where he was "rushing around like a headless chook being a Dean of everything so I wasn't

focusing on my subject area", is an interesting example of a teacher choosing to ignore change that they are not required to introduce:

I knew of them [ABA trials], I mean we were given bits of paper that talked about them, that's all I can remember, and everyone went 'Mm' but I think it was probably timetabled to be done the year I left, I went to university, must have been '90, and it was like a grey fog, because people really didn't quite, I mean it was such a radical change, and [school] was wonderfully traditional. (Norman, high decile co-ed school)

Some teachers who had enthusiastically implemented new assessment methodologies attributed to others who had not done so a generalised fear of change. One example was Robert:

I do remember though that there was a lot of fear of them [unit standards], and I think a lot of the fear came out of a lack of understanding ... but also some people don't like change, they like to be able to look at last year's School Certificate and the previous year's School Certificate paper and make all sorts of predictions and teach towards that or use the same Sixth Form Certificate stuff each year and so on, and this was a huge change. (Robert, low decile co-ed school)

Brian and his colleagues in his Science Department might be the kind of teachers Robert is referring to, and certainly when Brian said about the unit standards trials "Well, we just kept on doing what we were doing and it wasn't made national so some schools carried on [with the traditional forms of assessment]" he could be read as a teacher resistant to change. However, in his interview he gave a wide range of clearly articulated reasons, all grounded in his philosophy of teaching and learning and the context of his subject and the students with whom he works, why he and his colleagues had chosen not to enter the trials, and he certainly did not appear to be someone driven by a fear of change per se. In that way he is a good illustration of why it is not helpful, perhaps, to over-simplify teacher behaviour as 'resistant' when they may well have recognised that the change does not fit their "lived reality" (Leggett, 1997).

Vicky, a teacher at the same school as Brian, who had accumulated considerable experience of unit standards assessment (see above), empathised with her colleagues when they reacted negatively to the competency-based model of assessment being proposed prior to the NCEA:

If I remember rightly the message from the Department of Education or whoever it was, the Ministry, was we're going to go the unit standards way, which was sort of the message that came out but if I remember rightly it was, everybody's got to go to unit standards, not quickly but this is what they were saying, and that frightened a lot of people and upset them and they looked at people like myself and other people in vocational areas doing it, and they saw achieved/not achieved, you know, and it was a very upsetting time for them, so I think possibly I probably would have been the same, my hackles would rise, and a form of defence come in, I can understand that, as I say in their shoes I probably would have felt the same. (Vicky, high decile co-ed school)

Vicky's own trials of unit standards assessment had been entirely voluntary, because she perceived them as a way of meeting the needs of her particular students. This was a very different situation from that of teachers in the 'academic' subjects who believed that what they were currently doing was meeting the needs of their students and therefore not requiring change.

Conclusions

It is clearly not possible to generalise about how individual teachers will respond to change, whether it is change they choose or change which they are required to implement.

Some of the writers discussed in Chapter Three have provided categorisations of teachers to try to exemplify different approaches to change (e.g. Aronowitz and Giroux, 1993; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). While these categorisations remind us that teachers' sense of their professional responsibilities will differ, they become artificial constructs that do not reflect the complexities of habits of mind, motivations and contextual factors that influence teachers' responses to change. The data in this chapter gives some sense of these complexities.

Some teachers see their responsibilities as requiring challenge to the status quo; others will feel an obligation to uphold the status quo, even as it shifts around them. Norman, for example, quoted at length above in the section titled 'Fit with values and current practice', appears to be a teacher who feels a strong responsibility to critique and resist change with which he is not in sympathy. Others will believe that they need to keep abreast of change, for example Hugh, or Barbara's colleagues.

Interestingly both Robert and Hugh were either currently or had been in senior management roles, and both appeared to be relatively willing to embrace change. Perhaps willingness to change is an expectation in such roles. Brian, on the other hand, although an HOD, appears to be relatively resistant to change. Pauline is not averse to change, but experiences of changes that require a huge effort and then are short-lived have left her fairly cynical.

Overlaid on individual differences like these are contextual differences such as school and departmental leadership, socio-economic status of school community, the influence of colleagues in other schools or in advisory roles, and historical subject status, all of which contribute to the complexities of predicting teachers' responses.

What is very clear from this data is that teachers' responses to questions about their experiences and involvement in qualifications changes were of a very different nature from the responses of policy-makers and academics. Their answers were tightly focused on their students, their subject departments, and their schools (demonstrating their 'close-up lens'). They showed no detailed awareness of the change processes at government level, although they sometimes expressed a perception that they were the victims of reform initiatives that were poorly conceived and poorly implemented. As noted in Chapter Seven, they had little awareness of the union's role in initiating the push for standards-based assessment, nor of its role in helping to broker the compromise that became the NCEA. No teachers mentioned specifically the exclusion of the teacher voice during the 1990's, although their perceptions of being powerless recipients of change rather than participants in its development no doubt reflect that.

It is interesting that although the NCEA developments involved large numbers of teachers in subject panels, advisory committees, sample task development, facilitation of professional development and later as moderators, only one participant in this sample of very experienced teachers appears to have held any of these roles (Lynne, as a Moderator for Art), and none of them conveyed a perception that the NCEA was different from the unit standards developments in terms of its involvement of the profession. It would be interesting to know whether or not teachers active in the union or in subject associations (where most of the teachers actively involved with the developments came from) are more likely to perceive the NCEA as a reform inclusive of teachers.

The next chapter brings together the final conclusions of the thesis.

Chapter 10 – Final thoughts

Conclusions

This thesis has argued that when the dominant discourses of government diverge from the dominant discourses of the teaching profession, the 'policy gap' that commonly exists between teachers and policy-makers will tend to increase. Further, it has argued that when that divergence of discourses is accompanied by an ideological determination on the government side to avoid 'provider capture' by deliberately excluding the teacher voice from participation in policy development and policy communication, this will also tend to widen such a 'policy gap'. The thesis further concludes that such a 'policy gap' does not evaporate as soon as the dominant government discourses change again to something closer to the dominant teacher discourse, but that it will remain for a considerable time.

The theoretical framework and research method of the thesis have been critical discourse analysis, with a particular focus on the processes by which new discourses interact with existing dominant discourses in the struggle for hegemony of discourse. The study indicates that while neo-liberal discourses became hegemonic in government education policy in New Zealand from the late 1980's, they have generally failed to take root in the language of secondary teachers or their union, PPTA. It also indicates that even where neo-liberal discourses are present, for example in government documents and the language of some policy-maker participants, they are still usually intermingled with elements of the social democratic discourses that typify teacher language. This indicates that the process of discourse 'colonisation' has taken place.

The evidence for these arguments has come from my case study of the policy shift from norm-referenced assessment to standards-based assessment for school qualifications in New Zealand. That shift had its origins within the profession from the mid-1960's, and has its latest materialisation in the NCEA, currently the major school qualification in New Zealand. This policy shift has provided an excellent opportunity to study the experiences and perceptions of a group of teachers who worked throughout a major educational change. While there is a body of research about teachers' responses to policy change, discussed in Chapter Three, not much of this has been in the New Zealand context, and very few studies have focused on individual teachers. This study therefore makes a useful contribution to that body of research.

Despite the considerable influence of the profession's long-standing advocacy for standards-based assessment on the final shape of the NCEA, the practising teachers whose 'work stories' contributed to this thesis showed almost no recognition that the standards-based qualifications developed in the 1990's were something akin to what the profession had been seeking for nearly three decades. Their perception that the developments of the 1990's were imposed upon the profession by policy-makers and politicians, and their explanations of the rationale for the changes (see Chapter Seven) are a clear indication that a 'policy gap' exists. This particular group of teachers conveyed no sense of 'ownership' of the qualifications reforms of the 1990's (see Chapter Nine), indicating that the rather more inclusive policy development processes used for the NCEA did not change the perception of these teachers that qualifications change had been imposed on them.

While there have been studies of New Zealand teacher unions' experience of policy change (e.g. Jesson, 1995; Simpkin, 2002), none of these have focused on the qualifications changes that have been a major professional preoccupation for PPTA for at least 40 years. This thesis, in highlighting the union's role in qualifications reform, has demonstrated some challenges for a union's policy processes. While the shift to standards-based assessment had clear roots in PPTA's own policy, when it was finally delivered in the 1990's, the union found itself unable to offer unequivocal support. Because the political environment had dramatically changed and the union was shut out of participation in refining the policy, the membership, faced with unwelcome change in many aspects of their employment conditions, were in no mood to trust government's intentions.

Furthermore, the study suggests that it is possible in such hostile conditions for a long-standing policy consensus among a union's membership to break down to such an extent that many teachers fail to even recall that it ever existed. The fact that only one of the teacher participants for this study considered that the union's advocacy for qualifications reform might have been a force of change behind the developments of the 1990's is a significant finding, confirming my own personal experience as discussed in the introductory chapter, and is a useful lesson for union policy-makers.

It is clear from the literature discussed in Chapter Four, from evidence in government and union policy documents analysed in Chapters Five and Six, and from the discourses of participants analysed in Chapters Seven to Nine, that there was a shift in

government discourses from the late 1980's. It would, however, be simplistic to claim that the discourse of government shifted from a social democratic discourse to one that was unremittingly neo-liberal while the discourse of teachers remained social democratic. The picture is much more complex, and therefore much more interesting. As discussed in Chapter Two, as new discourses appear, they become familiar and influential through a process of 'colonisation' of the previously dominant discourse, so that what we see is a merging of discourses, sometimes termed 'intertextuality', rather than a sudden shift to a new discourse. As the new discourse elements become familiar, they become more dominant in the discourse, so it is necessary to study discourse change over some time before it is clear that a shift has happened.

It is significant that despite this process happening around them, the discourses of the teachers interviewed seemed so unaffected by the shift in government discourses. For example, despite about two decades of government communications having emphasised the role of schools in preparing students for the workforce so that the economy can flourish, these kinds of arguments were largely absent from the comments of teachers about the purpose of education and the qualifications system. Teachers still did not appear to regard their role as being to produce 'human capital' for the economy.

In contrast, policy-maker participants tended to place the qualifications changes within a framework of global economic change, new demands in the workforce, students' need for choice and for flexible qualifications, and the need for transparency of assessment to improve accountability to 'consumers' (primarily students and employers) and to government. At the same time, the social democratic discourses of teachers were also evident among policy-makers. For them, too, the qualifications reforms were to increase equity, by providing new opportunities for success, recognising a wider range of achievements, and improving teaching and learning.

It is clear that teachers and policy-makers use different lenses when they view education. Teachers tend to use a close-up lens that focuses on their students in their context at this current time, and they see policy in terms of whether it enables them to do their best for those students. Policy-makers are more likely to use a wide-angle lens that places education within a wider context of national policy, in terms of its contribution to the functioning of the economy, and sometimes to the functioning of a successful democracy.

The thesis has also provided evidence that the processes used in educational change are significant in whether 'policy gaps' develop. There is not a large body of research showing how New Zealand secondary teachers have experienced educational change. The data gathered for this study, through interviews with teachers who were in the profession during the whole period of the successive waves of qualifications reforms from the mid-1980's through to the beginning of the 21st century, is therefore significant as a case study of teachers' experience of change. It provides some indications of how teachers make decisions about whether, and to what extent, to involve themselves in change. It also indicates the extent to which those decisions may be influenced by forces within the micropolitics of schools, such as pressure from principals or the school's culture (see Chapter Nine).

It is clear that from the late 1980's qualifications reform was rapid, and teachers and their union were largely excluded from the processes. This led to disaffection and overt conflict, which meant that NZQA was unable to persuade schools to implement unit standard assessment as planned, nor was the union able to adopt a position endorsing the reforms (see Chapter Eight). Teacher participants' individual responses to these change processes varied, but overall they conveyed little sense that they had welcomed the changes as something long sought by the profession.

It would be fair to claim that the development and ongoing implementation of the NCEA has involved the profession, including union representatives, more than did the unit standards developments. From my own experience, I must acknowledge that this is the case. Yet the processes still fall short of the ideal. It is still too common for teacher representatives to be presented with a 'fait accompli' which they are then asked to 'tweak' and then 'sell' to the profession. Furthermore, there is no evidence from this study that teachers are conscious of improved teacher or union involvement in NCEA development.

Limitations of study

This study has drawn upon the memories of participants, asking them to tell their 'work stories' of the qualifications changes. While such 'work stories' have value in themselves (as discussed in Chapter Two), they do not provide a detailed portrayal of the change process in action. The study focuses on the discourses of participants rather than praxis, and thus includes no observational data of teachers' actual practices in response to the qualifications changes. Ideally, system-wide educational change

would always be accompanied by longitudinal research that closely monitored the perceptions and actions of policy-makers and teachers and identified areas where 'gaps' were developing, feeding this information into the policy development process. Such research is currently rare.

The study also drew on small samples of teachers and 'expert participants'. This raises questions of generalisability, although there is some compensation for the small number of interview participants in the depth and range of interview material, and the use of documents as a further source of data complements and expands the interview material.

Critical discourse analysis requires the study of samples of text, because it is not feasible to analyse whole texts. This introduces the risk that texts sampled will reflect the researcher's biases, and the research will produce the answers that the researcher hoped to find. This was a heightened risk because of my own participation in substantial ways in the policy change studied here, as a teacher and as a union policy-maker. I have sought to substantiate my arguments by providing copious quotations from the texts, and this will assist readers to draw their own conclusions as to whether I have succeeded in avoiding such bias.

Areas for further research

There is a need for much more research into the factors that contribute to teachers feeling 'ownership' of education policy in times of change. There is plenty of research (see Chapter Three) showing that when there is a 'policy gap' the efforts of policy-makers to implement policy change are thwarted by teachers in a wide variety of ways and for a wide variety of reasons. Much of the research on change has focused on the leadership level, and much of this has been theoretical rather than firmly grounded empirically; there is a need for more research into classroom teachers' experiences of change, to show how system change is translated into action (or inaction) at classroom level and why.

This would be of benefit to policy-makers as well as to teachers, by improving understandings about what constitute successful policy change processes in education. Unfortunately the usual model of educational change is that politicians and/or policy-makers decide change is needed, put in place a change process, and then seek the profession's compliance, treating teacher objections as unhelpful

'resistance'. This was certainly the case with much educational change during the 1990's.

Last words

'Policy gaps' are probably unavoidable in education, partly because of the difference in 'lenses' identified here. Nevertheless, I contend that a goal of educational policy-makers should be to minimise rather than maximise such gaps, and that the way to do this is to make education policy in an inclusive fashion. This requires that practising teachers be involved at all stages of educational policy-making: identifying issues, scoping solutions, consulting with the profession and others, recommending preferred courses of action, communicating decisions and assisting with implementation. Clearly not every individual teacher can be involved in this way, but it is important that those who are involved are representative of the profession, either through union or other professional association networks, with clear lines of communication from and to their colleagues that will give their advice credibility.

Only teachers can turn a policy-maker's vision into a classroom reality for students. We need to know how those policy-makers' visions can be better fitted to classroom realities so that they become shared visions, and how those classroom realities can be changed to enable shared visions to become actualities. This requires a climate of respect for teachers as responsible professionals who are committed to the well-being of their students, not a climate in which teachers' compliance is sought through accountability regimes that communicate distrust of their professionalism.

Appendix 1 – Details of participants and sampling process

Expert participants (named)

N.B. The biographies that follow are selective. They try to highlight from lifetimes of commitment to education the particular work of the participant in teaching, union leadership, and professional roles in relation to curriculum, assessment and qualifications. They should not be taken as complete biographies.

Allen, Peter

Teaching:

1970-1982 Secondary school teaching, with two years (1972-1973) in UK

1982-1985 and 1988-1989 Deputy Principal, Taupouui-a-Tia College

1990-2002 Principal, Rangiora High School

2003 to present Director, School of Professional Development, Christchurch College of Education

PPTA:

1979-1982 PPTA Executive member; 1984-1985 PPTA Junior Vice-President

1986-1987 PPTA President; 1988-1989 PPTA Senior Vice-President

Other Education Roles:

1982-1983 Member of the Core Curriculum Working Party (Dept. of Education)

1984-1985 Member of the Curriculum Review Committee (Dept. of Education)

1988-1989 Member of the Secondary Board of Studies and of Chairperson's Committee of the Board

1995-1998 Chairperson of the Teaching Council of Aotearoa/New Zealand

1996-1997 Panel member of NZPPTA Qualifications Framework Inquiry that produced *Te Tiro Hou*

1998-2001 Member of Ministry of Education's Advisory Forum on National Certificate of Educational Achievement

2001 to present Member NZQA Learning and Qualifications for Secondary Education Advisory Committee

2003 to present Co-opted member of NZ Council for Educational Research

Barker, Alan

Teaching:

Secondary school and tertiary teaching background

Other Education Roles:

Member of the Committee advising Prof. Gary Hawke in the late 1980s and subsequently the Chairman of the interdepartmental Officials Group that developed and implemented the reforms to tertiary education that resulted in the Education Amendment Act 1990

1990-1997 Manager of policy at NZQA and subsequently a manager in the State Services Commission

2000 Joined PwC Consulting as a director in their public sector practice in S.E. Asia. Currently an independent consultant, living and working in Hong Kong

Capper, Phillip

Teaching:

1966-1967 Secondary school teaching in Scotland

1968-1979 Secondary school teaching in New Zealand

PPTA:

1976-1977 West Coast Regional Chair

1978-1979 Executive member for Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast

1979-1990, 1992-1994 PPTA staff: Assistant Secretary responsible for curriculum and assessment

Other Education Roles:

1994 Founded WEB Research (Centre for Research on Work, Education and Business Ltd.). Works with schools, government agencies and other clients providing policy advice, policy evaluation and management advice in areas such as curriculum and assessment, workplace reform, organisational learning, education/labour market interface, systems safety, workplace education and training, and developmental work research

Awards/Fellowships:

1993 Visiting Scholar, College of Education, University of Illinois, Chicago

Davies, Marilyn

Teaching:

Secondary school teacher and HOD for 17 years until 1988

Other Education Roles:

1988-2001 Education and Training Adviser, NZ Employers Federation

2001 to present Self-employed education consultant, with contracts with Ministry of Education, NZQA, Skill NZ, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQ)

1999 - present Deputy Chair, ITPQ Board

Elley, Warwick

Teaching:

1951-1959 Primary school teaching, Auckland, London, Vancouver

1955-1956 Secondary school teaching, Christchurch, London

Other Education Roles:

1959-1966 University teaching, Universities of Alberta, and Auckland;

1967-1977 Test Director then Assistant Director, NZ Council for Educational Research

1977-1982 Reader then Professor, University of South Pacific

1982-1995 Professor, University of Canterbury

1982-1987 Chair, NZCER Advisory Committee

1988-1992 Chair, Steering Committee of IEA Study of Literacy in 32 nations

Consultancies include to Fiji Education Ministry, Indonesian Ministry of Education and Ford Foundation, NZ Ministry of Education, South Pacific governments, NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka Ministry of Education and World Bank, READ Education Trust South Africa, University of South Pacific (Fiji)

Widely published in areas of reading, writing and assessment

Currently Emeritus Professor of Education from University of Canterbury. Continues his interest in assisting developing countries to raise their literacy levels

Awards/Fellowships:

Awards include Carnegie Research Fellowship (University of Alberta), Citation of Merit (NZ Reading Association), International Citation of Merit and Election to Reading 'Hall of Fame' (International Reading Association), McKenzie Award for Excellence in Educational Research (NZARE), Election as Honorary Fellow (NZ Educational Institute), Honorary Ruth Wong Lecture (Singapore)

Ferguson, Don

Teaching:

1965-1974 Intermediate and secondary school teacher

Other Education Roles:

1975-1984 Curriculum Officer, Science, Dept. of Education

1985-1986 Development Officer, New Zealand Planning Council

1986-1989 Senior Education Officer, Dept. of Education

1989-2004 Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Education

Hall, Cedric

Teaching:

1970 Secondary teaching in Australia

Other Education Roles:

1970-1976 Exams and Tests Research Unit, NFER, UK

1977-1988 Lecturer, Victoria University, Wellington – curriculum, assessment, research methods, evaluation, teaching and learning

1989-1996 Director, University Teaching Development Centre, Victoria University

1997 Professor of Education, Dean and Head of School of Education, Victoria University

1998-2001 Head of School of Education, Victoria University

2002-2004 Professor of Education, Victoria University

2005-present: Deputy Dean, Faculty of Education, Victoria University

Involvement in quality assurance activities: university audits, programme approvals, monitoring of programmes

Awards/Fellowships:

2002 Victoria University Excellence in Teaching award

Hood, David

Teaching:

Secondary school teacher and principal

PPTA:

1970-74, 1984-85 PPTA Executive Member

Other Education Roles:

1986-1990 Department of Education, in wide variety of roles, including School Inspector, public relations on abolition of University Entrance, Executive Officer to Working Party on Post-Compulsory Education and Training (Hawke Report)

1990-1996 Foundation Chief Executive of NZQA.

Since then has been working as a consultant in education and educational management, including two periods as Interim Director of the NZ Council for Educational Research

Irving, James

Teaching:

1959-1965 Intermediate and secondary school teacher in New Zealand and Fiji

Other Education Roles:

1965-1967 Vocational guidance officer

1968-1971 Research information officer at NZCER

1972-1978 University lecturer at Victoria University

1979-1989 Held senior positions in Department of Education (International Education and Research and Statistics) and in Ministry of Education
 1990-1995 Manager of Educational Assessment Secretariat, responsible for overseeing development and initial implementation of new programmes in national educational monitoring and assessment
 Has held short term contract positions in educational development with UNESCO (Fiji 1975) and World Bank (Tanzania 1996, Latin America 1997)
 1995-2002 Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, Victoria University, teaching post-graduate courses in contemporary education policy, curriculum, learning and assessment, and assessment and evaluation in action
 Produced, with Warwick Elley, the widely used Elley-Irving and Irvin-Elley socio-economic indices. Extensive publishing record on a wide range of educational topics

Peddie, Roger

Teaching:

1965-1977 Secondary school teacher and then lecturer at Auckland Teachers College

Other Education Roles:

1978-2003 University of Auckland, holding positions as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer in Education, Deputy Dean (Faculty of Education), Director of Centre for Continuing Education, Associate Professor (School of Education), Head of Cultural and Policy Studies in Education Group

2003 to present Honorary Research Fellow, Cultural and Policy Studies in Education, School of Education

Areas of research and expertise: educational programme evaluation, curriculum and assessment (theory and issues), languages in education (policy and practice), comparative education (theory and practice)

1989-1990 Evaluated Sixth Form Certificate inter-school moderation trial in French
 1992-1995 consultancies with NZQA including writing an introductory text on standards-based assessment and two reports on excellence/merit, and development/monitoring of NZQA research programme

1997-1999 Evaluation of moderation system for NZQA

1999 International literature review of the use of exemplars in outcomes-based curricula (with John Hattie and Karen Vaughan) for Ministry of Education

1999-2000 Evaluation of Assessment for Better Learning programme

2000 Evaluation of Science professional development programme

Pountney, Charmaine

Teaching:

1965 Began full-time teaching, Rutherford High School

1978-1988 Principal of Auckland Girls' Grammar School

PPTA:

1974 – 1980 PPTA Executive member

Other Professional Roles:

1960s and 1970s Member of National English Syllabus Committee, School Certificate Examination Board and Universities Entrance Board

1989-1992 led Hamilton Teachers College through to merger with Waikato University into School of Education.

1984 represented NZ at international conference of English teachers in USA;

1985 represented NZ at OECD committee meeting in Paris and international conference on education for girls in science and technology in London

1990 represented NZ at conference on teacher education, Singapore

1992 to present In self-employment as consultant and organic grower

2001 Founded FREEE (Franklin Research, Education, Enterprise, Employment) and organising projects to improve schools, school-business links, environmental education, waste management and tertiary opportunities in Franklin

2002 to present Board member then Chairperson of Felix Donnelly College (special school for young people with serious behavioural problems)

Keynote speaker, writer, broadcaster

Awards/Fellowships:

1985 Nuffield Scholar

1993 Awarded NZ Suffrage Medal

2002 Made Companion of the NZ Order of Merit for services to education and the community

Smith, Shona (previously Shona Hearn)

Teaching:

1976-1985 Teacher of English (Orewa College, Green Bay High School); 1986-1997 Head of English (Birkenhead College);

1998 to present Deputy Principal (Waitakere College)

Involved in NZQA trial of unit standards in English, as Head of Department and as regional moderator and working with NZQA to develop resources

PPTA:

1984-1989 PPTA Executive member

1990-1991 PPTA President

1992-1993 PPTA Senior Vice-President

1980-1991 Member of PPTA's Curriculum Advisory Committee, closely involved in writing and presentation of a number of key policy papers

1985-1986 Represented PPTA on Ministerial Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications, Forms 5 to 7

1986-1990 Represented PPTA on Secondary School Board of Studies

1996-1997 Convenor of Qualifications Framework Inquiry that produced *Te Tiro Hou*

Other Education Roles:

Founding National Council member of NZ Association for the Teaching of English; established Auckland Association for the Teaching of English Language; member of School Certificate Examination Board, Universities Entrance Board and Department of Education committees on English at Forms 5, 6 and 7; on organising committee for National Teachers Refresher Courses;

1998-2002 Member of NCEA Forum

2001-2002 Scholarship Reference Group

Awards/Fellowships:

1995-1996 University of London Institute of Education, New Zealand Fellow, studying standards-based assessment in UK and NZ under supervision of Professor Alison Wolf

Strachan, James

Teaching:

1963-1967 Science teacher (Wanganui Boys and Nelson Colleges)

Other Education Roles:

1968-1972 Head of Preliminary Chemistry, University of South Pacific, Fiji

1973-1974 Secretary to Working Party of the Education Development Conference

1974-1987 Education Officer, Examinations and Testing, Curriculum Development Unit, Dept. of Education

1981-1987 Senior Education Officer, Examinations and Assessment Unit, Dept. of Education

1987-1990 Assistant Director then Acting Director, Qualifications and Assessment
Division, Dept. of Education
1990-1999 Tactical Manager, Assessment and Moderation Systems, and Professional
Co-ordinator, New Zealand Qualifications Authority
1999-2006 Full-time then part-time contractor to New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Teacher participants

Sampling process

The teacher participants were found through a staged sampling process:

- A stratified sample of six Wellington region state secondary schools was drawn up reflecting the range of school types i.e. co-educational, single sex girls and single-sex boys, and a range of deciles. In one case a school declined to participate, and another similar school was drawn and agreed to participate. (The sample was limited to schools in my home region for purely pragmatic reasons of access to participants and time.)
- On 2002 roll numbers, 64% of Wellington students were in co-educational schools, 20% were in girls' and 16% in boys' schools. This indicated a sample of 4 co-educational schools and 1 girls' and 1 boys' school.
- The 2002 decile ratings showed that almost all the single-sex schools in Wellington region were in deciles 5 or above, so one of each was randomly selected, both of which were in the mid decile (4-7) range. The co-educational schools covered a range of deciles, with seven of the schools low decile (1-3), nine mid to high (decile 7 or above), and none in deciles 4 to 6. Two low decile co-educational schools were randomly selected, group, and two from deciles 7-10. Unfortunately, although both lower decile co-educational schools agreed to co-operate, in one only one participant volunteered, and in the other no respondents volunteered. This may to some extent reflect the demographics of staff in such schools tending to be younger and with more immigrant teachers, making the available pool smaller. Thus the sample from co-educational schools is somewhat biased towards teachers in higher decile schools, although over the whole sample the decile spread is reasonably representative:

Decile of School	No. of Participants
Low (1-3)	1
Mid (4-7)	7
High (8-10)	5

- The Board of Trustees and Principal of each school were asked whether they would allow their school to be part of the sample and if so, to give me staff meeting time to distribute an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 3) to all teachers. The consent forms were able to be either posted to me or placed in a sealed posting box in the staffroom. Some Principals were unwilling to allow staff meeting time for the research, so I gave them information sheets, consent forms

and stamped addressed envelopes and they either made an announcement themselves to staff and left the material in the staffroom for eligible teachers to collect and action, or they placed the material in the pigeonholes of teachers they believed to be eligible. In a few cases, teachers who had chosen to participate encouraged colleagues to do so as well, and this helped to boost the sample.

- Only current teachers who began teaching at least by 1980 and whose breaks from service in New Zealand totalled no more than five years were included in the sample. (In fact, the median year of commencing teaching was 1973.) It might be argued that inclusion of any teachers with breaks in service would negatively impact on the quality of the material; on the other hand, to include only those with no breaks in service would have had the effect of eliminating from the sample many women teachers, who typically have breaks in service to have children. By including those with breaks in service, a good gender balance was achieved (males 7, females 6).
- I had no strategy in place to achieve a spread of subject area in the initial stages, but had hoped to be able to address this by selection from volunteers if it appeared that the subject balance of the sample was very skewed. In the end, the subject balance was satisfactory for such a small sample (see table following).

Teacher participants

Pseudonym	School Decile	School Type	Subjects	Past Positions Held	Current Position	Began Tchng NZ
Anne	Mid	Girls	Maths, Science, Chemistry	Teacher	Maths teacher	1971
Barbara	Mid	Girls	French, English, Social Studies, Literacy	Asst. HOD	HOD	1973
Brian	High	Co-ed	Science, Biology, Maths	Asst. HOD	Dean & HOD	1977
David	High	Co-ed	Geography, Social Studies, Economics, Life Skills	HOD, Dean, AP	DP	1970
Doug	Mid	Boys	Maths, Science, Biology, Physics, Social Studies, Geography, Technical Drawing	Careers, Dean, DP, Acting P	HOD Maths & Accounting	1974
Hugh	Mid	Boys	Science, Biology, Health, Maths, PE, Social Studies	Guidance Teacher, DP, Acting P	HOD Science	1976
Lynne	Mid	Girls	Art, Music	Adviser	HOD Art	1965
Norman	High	Co-ed	English, Media Studies, Maths, Science, Social Studies, Health, Outdoor Education	P (primary), Asst HOD, Guidance Teacher	Media/English teacher	1978
Pauline	High	Co-ed	Maths, Science, Music, Religious/Social Education	HOD	Asst HOD Maths, Dean	1979
Robert	Low	Co-ed	Accounting, Economics, Drama	HOD, Dean, Examiner/Mod erator	DP	1971
Trevor	Mid	Boys	Maths, Chemistry, Science, Commercial Practice	DP, Acting P, Inspector	Maths teacher	1960
Vicky	High	Co-ed	PE, Science, English, Maths	Transition, Careers, DP	Special Education	1976
Yvonne	Mid	Girls	Science, Maths, Computer Studies, Physics, Chemistry	Dean, Acting DP	HOD Science, Principal's Nominee (school's NZQA contact)	1970

Appendix 2 - Sample interview schedules

Expert participants - Sample

Interview schedule – Don Ferguson (Ministry of Education official)

1. What can you remember about the beginnings of discussion in New Zealand about some form of standards-based assessment as being an improvement on norm-referenced assessment (focusing particularly but not exclusively on assessment for qualifications)?
When was it? What was being said? Who was saying it? What were your initial reactions to those ideas?
2. Tell me about when you yourself first got involved in developing policy around or commenting on policy around any form of standards-based assessment?
When was it? What kind of assessment was it? What was your position on the policy? What happened next?
3. Tell me about your involvement in the development of the NCEA. To what extent was your role to find a way to reconcile conflicting ideologies? How successful do you think you were?
4. I want you to think some more about the purposes of using standards-based rather than norm-referenced assessment. Do you think that over the time and the changes that we've talked about, there has been any change in your **personal** thinking about why we might use standards-based assessment? How would you describe the **ideologies** which have underpinned your thinking at different stages?
5. Do you think that New Zealand teachers are doing a better job with assessment, especially for qualifications, now than we were doing say twenty years ago? (When I say 'a better job', I'm thinking about better for different groups – for students themselves, for teachers, for parents, for 'end-users' like employers, tertiary institutions.)
What makes you say that?
6. What would you like to see happen about assessment, especially for qualifications, in the next five or so years?
Do you want to see any more change? What sort of change would it be? Why is it needed?
7. Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you want to tell me?

Interview schedule – Alan Barker (ex-NZQA official)

1. What can you remember about the beginnings of discussion in New Zealand about some form of standards-based assessment as being an improvement on norm-referenced assessment (focusing particularly but not exclusively on assessment for qualifications)? *When was it? What was being said? Who was saying it? What were your initial reactions to those ideas?*
2. Tell me about when you yourself first got involved in developing policy around or commenting on policy around any form of standards-based assessment? *When*

was it? What kind of assessment was it? What was your position on the policy? What happened next?

3. Do you think that over the time and the changes that we've talked about, there has been any change in your **personal** thinking about why we might use standards-based assessment? How would you describe the **ideologies** which have underpinned your thinking at different stages, e.g. when you were a practising teacher compared with when you worked at NZQA?
4. In your chapter in Peddie and Tuck's book *Setting the Standards* in 1995, you put up, alongside some clearly educational arguments, what reads as a strongly neoliberal economic argument for standards-based assessment and the Framework, by arguing that at tertiary level at least, 'purchaser demands' by students, government and employers require transparency of what learning is being 'purchased' and of its quality. To what extent would it be fair to say that NZQA was dominated by neoliberal thinking (human capital theory, public choice theory, etc) in, say, its first 5-7 years or so? Where do you position yourself now?
5. It's somewhat ironic that you are back working on an SSC review of NZQA's performance in relation to variability in external assessment, when in 1995 in the same chapter you argued that assessment is never perfect, that "examination results are usually reported in a number form and an impression of an exact science is created", and that "When restricted to a one-off event, they [written tests] have dubious reliability", and that "Achieving consistency of assessment will always be difficult in a standards-based system". Do you think it's possible that in their enthusiasm to persuade the profession to the merits of standards-based assessment, the agencies failed to ensure that teachers understood the complexities you were writing about in 1995?
6. You left NZQA before the beginnings of development of the current NCEA. What is your opinion of the compromises about school qualifications made in the late 1990's that produced it?
7. Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you want to tell me?

Interview schedule – Peter Allen (union expert participant)

1. What do you remember about the beginnings of discussion in New Zealand about some form of standards-based assessment as being an improvement on norm-referenced assessment (focusing particularly but not exclusively on assessment for qualifications)?
When was it? What was being said? Who was saying it? What were your initial reactions to those ideas?
2. Tell me about when you yourself first got involved in developing policy around or commenting on policy around any form of standards-based assessment?
When was it? What kind of assessment was it? What was your position on the policy? What happened next? (Clearly the Qualifications Framework Inquiry will be one part of this, but can we talk about earlier involvements you had as well?)
3. I want you to think some more about the purposes of using standards-based rather than norm-referenced assessment. Do you think that over the time and the

changes that we've talked about, there has been any change in your thinking about why we might use standards-based assessment? How would you describe the **ideologies** which have underpinned your thinking, and the thinking of other people/groups, at different stages?

4. What do you remember about the relationships between PPTA curriculum leaders like yourself and PPTA members at the various stages of the progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications?

For example, were you espousing views widely-held among the membership, or were you generally leading a resistant membership?

5. Do you think that New Zealand teachers are doing a better job with assessment, especially for qualifications, now than we were doing say twenty years ago? (When I say 'a better job', I'm thinking about better for different groups – for students themselves, for teachers, for parents, for 'end-users' like employers, tertiary institutions.)

What makes you say that?

6. What would you like to see happen about assessment, especially for qualifications, in the next five or so years?

Do you want to see any more change? What sort of change would it be? Why is it needed?

7. Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you want to tell me?

Interview schedule – teacher participants

N.B. The italicised additions to the questions are ideas for follow-up questions, to be used only if necessary.

1. Can we start by you talking to me about what you understand by the terms 'standards-based assessment' and 'norm-referenced assessment'?
How would you define each of them? What do you see as the main differences between the two?
2. How would you answer someone who asked you what the purpose(s) of assessment was/were?
3. Now I want you to think quite a long way back in your teaching career. What can you remember about the beginnings of discussion about some form of standards-based assessment as being an improvement on norm-referenced assessment (focusing particularly but not exclusively on assessment for qualifications)?
When was it? What was being said? Who was saying it? What were your initial reactions to those ideas?
4. Tell me about when you yourself first got involved in implementing any form of standards-based assessment.
When was it? What kind of assessment was it? Why do you think you yourself, and other people, thought they were making that change in assessment practice? How did it work out in practice? For you? For your students? What do you remember about the opinions of the various groups involved, e.g. teachers, students, parents, Dept/Ministry of Education, politicians, employers, general public?
(This line of questioning to be repeated for each successive form of standards-based assessment the respondent has been involved in implementing, e.g. Sixth Form Certificate, unit standards, achievement standards, any other.)
5. I want you to think some more about the purposes of using standards-based rather than norm-referenced assessment. Do you think that over the time and the changes that we've talked about, there has been any change in thinking about why we might use standards-based assessment?
Tell me about that. (Try to get not only their own thinking, but also how they think other people's/group's thinking has changed.)
6. Do you think that we are doing a better job with assessment, especially for qualifications, now than we were doing say twenty years ago? (When I say 'a better job', I'm thinking about better for different groups – for students themselves, for teachers, for parents, for 'end-users' like employers, tertiary institutions.)
What makes you say that?
7. What would you like to see happen about assessment, especially for qualifications, in the next five or so years?
Do you want to see any more change? What sort of change would it be? Why is it needed?
8. Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you want to tell me?

Appendix 3 – Information sheets and consent forms

Note:

At the time of commencing fieldwork, this thesis was at Masters level. It was later upgraded to PhD, and participants were informed of this and the impact on the likely timeframe of the research.

Expert participants

INFORMATION SHEET

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

The progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand.

Introduction

I am a student with Massey University, and I am working towards a Masters in Educational Administration. (Some of you may also know me in another role as an Advisory Officer at PPTA, but I wish to make it clear that this research is being conducted in my role as a student, not as a union official.) My contact details are phone: 04-479-3079 (home) or email: judie.alison@clear.net.nz. My supervisor is Professor John Codd, and he can be contacted at Massey University, ph.06 351 3365, email J.A.Codd@massey.ac.nz

The Research

The objectives of my research are:

- To establish the philosophies and ideologies which underpinned the progression towards standards-based assessment in New Zealand, with a primary focus on the period 1980 to the present.
- To investigate how a sample of current secondary teachers recall their experience of the shift in policies over the period 1980 to the present, and how they now position themselves philosophically and ideologically in relation to standards-based assessment.

I have been conducting historical research, looking at significant documents about the various developments over the period. I am now endeavouring to talk with some people who were involved with the developments in roles such as key decision-makers or influential academics, as a way of triangulating my historical data. I believe your participation would add considerably to the quality of my information.

Confidentiality

It could be difficult to avoid your contributions being identifiable in the final report, and anonymity cannot therefore be guaranteed. You may in fact wish to be named in the report. I will provide you with an opportunity to view, amend and edit as you see fit the transcript of the interview with you, so that you can ensure that the information collected from you is correct and contains only material that you would be happy to have published in the report. The interview will be at a time and place suitable for you, and will probably take about an hour of your time. Interviews will be tape-recorded.

Participation in the Research

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the following rights:

- You can decline to answer any particular question(s).

- You can terminate the interview at any time.
- You can ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- You may ask questions about the study at any time, either of me as the researcher or of my supervisor.
- The interview with you will be transcribed, and you will be given an opportunity to view, amend and edit as you see fit the transcript of the interview and then to sign a release form permitting its use in the research.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time before signing a release form.
- When the research is completed, you receive a one to two page summary of the main findings, and will be able to have a copy of the whole thesis as a .pdf file if you wish.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please complete the Consent Form attached and post it to me at 8 Mysore St, Ngaio, Wellington or hand it to me personally at the beginning of our interview.

If you have any questions about the project before or after you agree to participate, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor (contact details above).

Ethics Committee Approval

This project was reviewed by the Massey University College of Education Ethics Committee and found to meet the university's ethical guidelines.

CONSENT FORM

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

The progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand.

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I agree/do not agree to being named and having my statements attributed to me in the final report.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

To enable me to contact you again, please provide some or all of the following information:

Contact details: _____(work phone), _____(home phone), _____(mobile), _____(email).

Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

The progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand.

Introduction

I am a student with Massey University, and I am working towards a Masters in Educational Administration. (Some of you may also know me in another role as an Advisory Officer at PPTA, but I wish to make it clear that this research is being conducted in my role as a student, not as a union official.) My contact details are phone: 04-479-3079 (home) or email: judie.alison@clear.net.nz. My supervisor is Professor John Codd, and he can be contacted at Massey University, ph.06 351 3365, email J.A.Codd@massey.ac.nz

The Research

The objectives of my research are:

- To establish the philosophies and ideologies which underpinned the progression towards standards-based assessment in New Zealand, with a primary focus on the period 1980 to the present.
- To investigate how a sample of current secondary teachers recall their experience of the shift in policies over the period 1980 to the present, and how they now position themselves philosophically and ideologically in relation to standards-based assessment.

The Sample

I have been conducting historical research, looking at significant documents about the various developments over the period. I now need to talk with about twenty secondary teachers who were **teaching at secondary school level in 1980 and are still teaching and delivering subjects for qualifications in 2003, and whose breaks from service in New Zealand in that time total no more than five years.** I have drawn up a sample of six secondary schools in the Wellington region, representative in terms of type (co-ed, single-sex) and decile rating. Your school is one of the six drawn in the sample. The number of teachers to be interviewed from each school will depend on the size of the various schools. I also hope to have a range of subjects represented in my sample, and also to have a balance of women and men teachers. I will try to interview everyone who offers to participate, but please understand that this may not be possible to achieve.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this research will be kept entirely confidential. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place agreeable to each respondent. While the research report will make use of verbatim comments from respondents, these will be used in such a way that no individual will be identifiable.

Interviews will use a semi-structured interview schedule and will take about an hour. They will be tape-recorded.

Participation in the Research

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the following rights:

- You can decline to answer any particular question(s).
- You can terminate the interview at any time.
- You can ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- You may ask questions about the study at any time, either of me as the researcher or of my supervisor.
- The interview with you will be transcribed, and you will be given an opportunity to view, amend and edit as you see fit the transcript of the interview and then to sign a release form permitting its use in the research.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time before signing a release form.
- In the research report, your name will not be used and every effort will be made to conceal the identity of participants.
- When the research is completed, you receive a one to two page summary of the main findings, and will be able to have a copy of the whole thesis as a .pdf file if you wish.

If you match the criteria above under 'The Sample', and are willing to be interviewed, please complete the Consent Form attached and either put it in the sealed posting box in your staffroom within the next week or post it to me at 8 Mysore St, Ngaio, Wellington.

If you have any questions about the project before or after you agree to participate, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor (contact details above).

Ethics Committee Approval

This project was reviewed by the Massey University College of Education Ethics Committee and found to meet the university's ethical guidelines.

CONSENT FORM

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

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I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

To enable me to draw the sample and contact you, please complete the following information:

Current school: _____

Year you began secondary teaching in New Zealand: _____

Number of years since 1980 that you have **not** been secondary teaching in NZ: _____

Main subject(s) taught at senior level: _____

Your gender: Male/female Your ethnicity: _____

Contact details: _____ (school phone), _____ (home phone),

_____ (mobile),
_____ (email).

Schools

INFORMATION SHEET

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

The progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand.

Introduction

I am a student with Massey University, and I am working towards a Masters in Educational Administration. (I may also be known to you or some of your staff in another role as an Advisory Officer at PPTA, but I wish to make it clear that this research is being conducted in my role as a student, not as a union official.) My contact details are phone: 04-479-3079 (home) or email: judie.alison@clear.net.nz. My supervisor is Professor John Codd, and he can be contacted at Massey University, ph.06 351 3365, email J.A.Codd@massey.ac.nz

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The objectives of my research are:

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- To investigate how a sample of current secondary teachers recall their experience of the shift in policies over the period 1980 to the present, and how they now position themselves philosophically and ideologically in relation to standards-based assessment.

The Sample

I have been conducting historical research, looking at significant documents about the various developments over the period. I now need to talk with about twenty secondary teachers who were **teaching at secondary school level in 1980 and are still teaching and delivering subjects for qualifications in 2003, and whose breaks from service in New Zealand in that time total no more than five years.** I have drawn up a sample of six secondary schools in the Wellington region, representative in terms of type (co-ed, single-sex) and decile rating. Your school is one of the six drawn in the sample. The number of teachers to be interviewed from each school will depend on the size of the various schools. I also hope to have a range of subject areas represented in my sample, and to have a balance of women and men teachers. I will try to interview everyone who offers to participate, but if too many teachers from a school volunteer to participate, I may not be able to interview everyone. All teachers who volunteer will be contacted, however.

I would very much like your agreement to interview teachers from your school. The school will not be named in the research report, and will be simply identified by their type, e.g. "Co-ed school", "Single-sex girls' school". The report will say that schools sampled were in the Wellington region. Teachers from your school who participate will also not be identified. Instead, there is likely to be a brief description beside any quotation from an interview, e.g. "Female teacher, single-sex boys' school". Listed below are the rights which will be accorded to any teacher who chooses to participate. Interviews will not occur during teaching time.

If you agree to your school participating, I would need five or ten minutes time in a staff meeting to explain the project and to hand out Information Sheets and Consent Forms. I would also like to be allowed to place a box somewhere in your staffroom where

teachers could place their consent forms if they were comfortable doing that. (If not, I am offering the option of posting them to me.)

Confidentiality

Teachers' participation in this research will be kept entirely confidential. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place agreeable to each respondent. Interviews will use a semi-structured interview schedule and will take about an hour. They will be tape-recorded.

Participants' Rights

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If a teacher chooses to participate, they will have the following rights:

- They can decline to answer any particular question(s).
- They can terminate the interview at any time.
- They can ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- They may ask questions about the study at any time, either of me as the researcher or of my supervisor.
- The interview will be transcribed, and the teacher will be given an opportunity to view, amend and edit as they see fit the transcript of the interview and then to sign a release form permitting its use in the research.
- They will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time before signing a release form.
- In the research report, the teacher's name will not be used and every effort will be made to conceal the identity of participants.
- When the research is completed, the teacher will receive a one to two page summary of the main findings, and will be able to have a copy of the whole thesis as a .pdf file if they wish.

If a teacher matches the criteria above under 'The Sample', and is willing to be interviewed, they will be asked to complete the Consent Form attached and either put it in the sealed posting box in your staffroom within the next week or post it to me at 8 Mysore St, Ngaio, Wellington.

If you have any questions about the project before or after you agree to participate, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor (contact details above).

Ethics Committee Approval

This project was reviewed by the Massey University College of Education Ethics Committee and found to meet the university's ethical guidelines.

CONSENT FORM

Promise fulfilled or poisoned chalice?

The progression towards standards-based assessment for qualifications in New Zealand.

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to this school, _____, participating in this research project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

**Full Name and
position - printed**

Appendix 4 – Ethical issues

There was potential for conflict between my role as researcher and my role as PPTA staff member responsible for assessment policy. It was very important that I acknowledged my work role to potential participants in the information sheet (see Appendix 3), but I made it clear that in this situation I was acting as a researcher, not a PPTA staff member.

There was also the potential for issues to arise in my work at PPTA if my findings should raise questions about current PPTA policy on the NCEA. I discussed my research topic with the General Secretary as my employer, and he gave written confirmation of his agreement, subject to any publications arising out of my research needing to clarify the role in which I was writing.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) and were reminded at interview that they were free to withdraw their consent at any time. Participants were promised a short summary of the results at the end of the research, and the whole thesis as a .pdf file if they wished.

Teacher participants and their schools were guaranteed confidentiality so that their participation would not be disclosed to anyone and their individual contributions would not be able to be attributed to them. Pseudonyms have been used for all quotes in the report. 'Expert' participants were offered the same degree of confidentiality if they wished it, but they were all happy to have their contributions attributed to them by name, after having had the opportunity to check the transcript of the interview and remove anything which they did not want to be quoted.

Participants chose where the interview was conducted, so that anyone who wished complete confidentiality about their participation in the research could be interviewed away from their place of work. In the event, most were comfortable with being interviewed at work. Only two interviews were conducted in teachers' homes, and this was because of factors other than a wish for privacy. Two expert participants chose to be interviewed at my place of work, for their convenience.

Consent forms and material concerning setting up the interviews were kept securely in a filing cabinet in my study at home. Transcripts and tapes of interviews with teachers were coded to indicate pseudonym, school and demographic data but no real names

were attached to these. These were also stored in the filing cabinet. Transcripts and tapes from interviews with expert participants were also stored in the filing cabinet.

Data stored on my computer uses pseudonyms rather than names for all teacher participants.

Appendix 5 - Assessment terminology

This appendix provides detailed information about the various assessment terms used in the thesis, for the assistance of readers who may not be familiar with all such terminology.

Norm-referenced assessment

Traditionally, assessment of students, especially for qualifications, was based on the concept of the normal curve, which assumed that on any well-designed assessment tool, the achievement of a representative group of students would tend to cluster around the middle, and relatively smaller numbers of students would perform very well or very poorly. Norm-referenced assessment rates a student in relation to the performance of their peers, rather than in relation to any particular standard of achievement: "Norm-referenced tests are designed to produce familiar proportions of high, medium and low scorers. Since students cannot control the performance of other students they cannot control their own grades" (Gipps, 1996, p.253). In norm-referenced assessment, a 'pass' level is set, often at 50%. At this level, the pass/fail boundary is right in the middle of the bulk of learners, who are usually clustered around the mid-point. Students below this pass level are defined as failing and students above it as succeeding, yet the difference between the performance of someone scoring 49% and someone scoring 50% would be as likely to be the result of chance factors as evidence of differing levels of achievement.

Norm-referenced assessment served in New Zealand for selection and certification purposes for many years, and it is likely that the same technologies were also used formatively to a significant extent. Whether it served those purposes effectively is the crux of the debates that emerged during the 1960's and beyond. The shift in thinking on which this thesis has focused is away from norm-referenced methodologies towards methodologies that assess a student against a pre-defined standard of achievement. It is important to remember, though, that in the setting of a pre-defined standard of achievement, cognisance is usually taken of past norms of achievement demonstrated by the target group. For example, in setting the levels of the achievement standards for the NCEA, the subject panels were asked to consider both the levels of the relevant national curriculum and the prevailing examination prospectus as published and as demonstrated by recent (norm-referenced) examinations (personal recollection). It is thus more appropriate to think of norm-referenced assessment and the different types

of assessment against pre-defined standards as points on a continuum rather than as polar opposites.

Achievement-based assessment

'Achievement-based assessment' is a term that was mostly used in the 1980's in relation to trials at Sixth Form Certificate level. Generally it is regarded as a sub-set of standards-based or criterion-referenced assessment (see below). Four or five levels of achievement are described, and an effort is made to describe all levels in a positive fashion, such as '1 = Begins to write a report'. Phillips (1998) suggests that achievement-based assessment has the benefit of being able to be used both for end-point assessment and for diagnostic and formative purposes: diagnostically to identify students' prior knowledge before teaching begins and to isolate learning difficulties during teaching, and formatively to monitor progress and involve students in tracking and planning their own progress as they move up the 'staircase' of level descriptors (p.11).

The assessment methodology used in NCEA achievement standards has many similarities to achievement-based assessment, which is probably one of the reasons why it was more acceptable to teachers than competency-based assessment, but it differs in that it has a Not Yet Achieved category, whereas achievement-based assessment described all levels of performance in positive terms.

Competency-based assessment

'Competency-based assessment' is the term used for the assessment model adopted for unit standards in the 1990's, where a student either reaches or fails to reach the standard, thereby being judged either 'competent' or 'not yet competent'. No gradations are provided within the 'competent' range. Brown (2003) traces the 'ancestry' of competency-based training and demonstrates the industrial roots of competency-based assessment in World War 1, when war industries required skilled tradespeople and skilled instructors, a problem addressed through the work of Charles Allen. He analysed trade processes, broke them down into learning units and stages of progression for learning the whole task, with testing at each stage. After the war, this methodology carried on into industry: "In these programs the key elements of individualisation, evaluation by performance, progression by mastery, modularisation, self-instruction materials, an emphasis on outcomes and the derivation of curriculum from analysis of the job role contributed to the success of the program" (p.50). Almost all of these are elements of the Qualifications Framework today.

Standards-based or criterion-referenced?

NZQA has tended to use the term 'standards-based assessment' as the umbrella term for assessment against a set standard, e.g. "The Government intends to maintain and strengthen School Certificate, but as a standards-based qualification", with the term defined in a footnote as "assessment of learners in relation to defined levels of attainment" (NZQA, 1991a, p.28). At the time this definition was written, it was envisaged that the Framework would encompass both achievement-based and competency-based assessment. When the decision was made in 1993 to allow only competency-based assessment in the Framework, the global term 'standards-based assessment' continued to be used.

NZQA does not use the term 'criterion-referenced assessment', but it has been suggested to be the more appropriate umbrella term for assessment against a set standard rather than against others in a group (e.g. Croft, 1993, p.3). Peddie (1992), confusingly, equates criterion-referenced assessment with competency-based assessment because "the standard ... is a **criterion** level in specified skills or areas of knowledge" (p.24, emphasis in original) but later (Peddie, 1995) seems to be using it as an umbrella term: "Intriguingly, criterion-referenced assessment is seen in this significant Ministry of Education publication [*Assessment, Policy to Practice*, 1994, p.9] as a sub-set of standards-based assessment, instead of the other way around" (p.13).

It could be argued that achievement standards in the NCEA, because they are assessed against four levels of achievement (Achieved with Excellence, Achieved with Merit, Achieved and Not Yet Achieved) would more properly be termed 'criterion-referenced assessment', as being for when a range of levels of performance is described and grades allocated: "Where different levels of performance are to be recognised ... judgements can be facilitated through the provision of accurate descriptions of performance now frequently referred to as grade-related criteria (or should it be grade-related standards?)" (Low & Withers, 1990, p.10).

However, in drawing together a number of definitions of criterion-referenced assessment, Low and Withers (1990) cite Sadler's distinction between a criterion as being a selected property and a standard as being a qualitative level of attainment, leading to a description of standards-based assessment as occurring "when competent teachers make professional judgements about summative performance, not in terms of aggregate scores, but in terms of the configuration of performance on selected criteria

across a series of assessment tasks” (Sadler, 1987, as cited in Low & Withers,1990, p.9).

Given that achievement standards describe a student's performance across a range of criteria and often across a series of tasks, by Sadler's definition the NCEA is properly described as standards-based. In an achievement standard, one or more criteria are required to be met to achieve a defined level of achievement, for example, in English 1.1, 'Produce a piece of creative writing', there are four separate criteria at each level, and all must be met to achieve at that level:

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Express idea(s) with detail in a piece of creative writing.	Develop idea(s) with detail in a piece Of creative writing.	Develop idea(s) convincingly with detail in a piece of creative writing.
Use a writing style appropriate to audience, purpose and text type.	Use a controlled writing style appropriate to audience, purpose and text type.	Use a controlled writing style appropriate to audience, purpose and text type, and which commands attention
Structure material in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose and text type.	Structure material clearly in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose and text type.	Structure material clearly and effectively in a way that is appropriate to audience, purpose and text type.
Use writing conventions without intrusive errors.	Use writing conventions accurately.	Use writing conventions accurately.

Moderation

'Moderation' is a key feature of standards-based assessment systems. *Assessment: Policy to Practice* (Ministry of Education, 1994) defines moderation as: "a process which ensures that assessments made by different people in different places and/or times are comparable. The process starts with agreed objectives and can include common assessment tasks, common scoring schemes, shared marking or grading, and discussion between the people carrying out the assessments" (p.48). This definition works for the processes carried out within a school to ensure comparability at that level, but the Qualifications Framework requires much more extensive processes to ensure comparability between schools. In the case of the NCEA, this requires schools every year to submit for 'external moderation' a set number of students' marked work on specified achievement standards. Across schools a variety of assessment tasks will have been used, requiring different scoring schemes, and moderators work alone but with some random checking by Chief Moderators. This aspect of the NCEA has been quite controversial (Alison, 2005).

In the case of externally assessed standards for the NCEA, processes operate to ensure comparability between markers, including marking schedules, markers' meetings, check-marking and the like. This is not dissimilar to processes used under norm-referenced examination systems. However, the statistical scaling of examination marks to a consistent mean and standard deviation, a process which endured for most of the history of School Certificate and all of the history of the University Bursaries examination, was also a form of moderation, designed to adjust for the inevitable differences in difficulty level of examinations and to ensure comparability between one year's results and the next. The absence of this for external assessment of the NCEA has been problematic, and in 2005 NZQA initiated a system of 'profiles of expected performance' to use to identify standards where adjustment of the marking schedule and re-marking was necessary because the profile of student achievement diverged beyond acceptable levels from the patterns of previous years. This can be argued to be re-introducing normative concepts into a standards-based system, but was a pragmatic solution to the inevitable year to year differences in difficulty levels of exam questions.

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