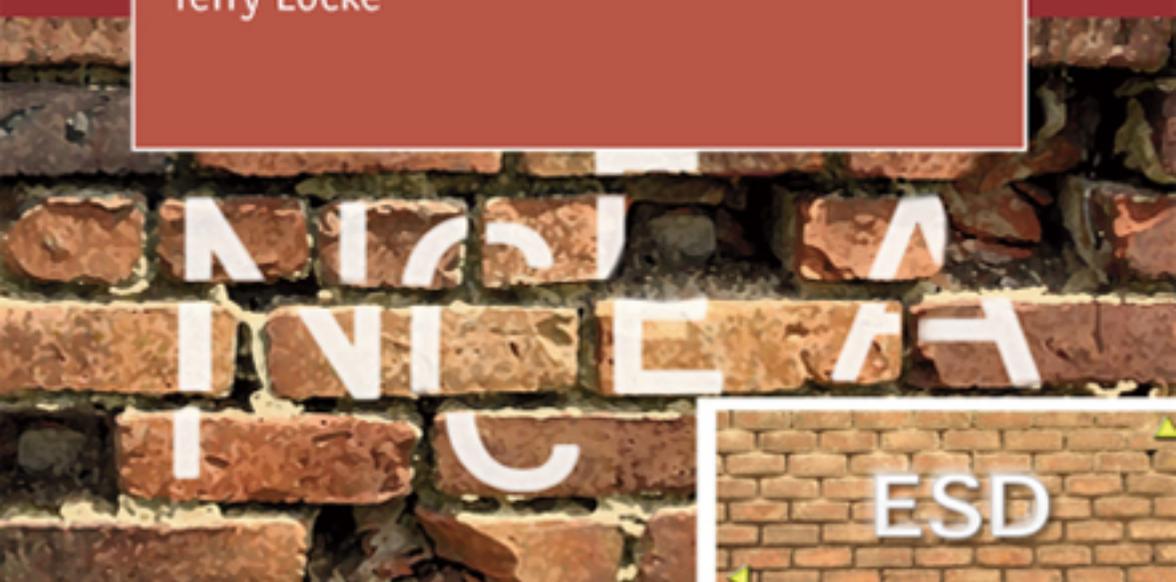


# Resisting Qualifications Reforms in New Zealand

The English Study Design as  
Constructive Dissent

Terry Locke



INTELLECTUAL  
ESD

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*The English Study Design as constructive dissent*

Terry Locke  
*The University of Waikato, New Zealand*



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To my wife Linda who helped me to survive the English Study Design  
relatively intact and for her commitment to and practice of the  
ideal of teaching as an art.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Author	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	xv
1 The professional English teacher in the context of reform	1
2 The English Study Design as enacted activist professionalism: An overview	13
3 The construction of English	27
4 The design of English programmes: Coherence and continuity	51
5 The shaping of pedagogy: Conversations around texts	69
6 The ESD and the assessment of English	91
7 The grail of a reliable, standards-based qualifications system	105
8 The political arena revisited: Future blueprint or futile gesture?	125
References	145
Appendix 1: Glossary of abbreviations	151
Appendix 2: Timeline of reform in New Zealand	153
Appendix 3: ESD Year 12 External Examination: 2001	155



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terry Locke is currently Chairperson of the Arts and Language Education Department of the School of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand.

His research interests include curriculum and assessment reform, teacher professionalism, constructions of English as a subject, literacy and ICT and the teaching of argument. He is currently engaged in a major research project on the teaching of literature in multicultural classrooms. He is coordinating editor of the journal *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. His most recent book is *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Continuum: 2004).





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The French poet and critic, Paul Valéry once said that, “A poem is never finished, only abandoned.” This book is about to be abandoned. As I write this, in July 2006, New Zealand’s largest newspaper, the *New Zealand Herald*, has published yet another spate of letters about the country’s new qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which began its implementation phase in 2002. On June 28, one letter came from a Waihi College student, Anne O’Hagan, who had this to say:

If Steve Maharey [current Minister of Education] believes that NCEA is all about strengths, I disagree.

NCEA does have its strengths but in a system where people can get the same credits for highlighting information as for doing two compositions in music, it must be asked if it is fair.

It does not seem fair that it is easier to achieve credits in non-core subjects, for example tourism courses at my school, than achieving credits in subjects like English and maths.

Students will obtain the same NCEA level 1, 2 or 3 having been assessed at different levels of difficulty. Students taking these “non-core” subjects can cruise and pass, while those taking core subjects have to work harder.

Also, what about the endless resubmissions students are given to improve their unachieved grade and get excellence the second and third time around?

It is not fair that students who work hard and get an excellence grade the first time get the same credits as those who resubmit.

It doesn’t seem to encourage us to work hard. The university system doesn’t give these second chances.

I have on file many such letters from students and teachers who have made the effort to make their views on the NCEA public since it was implemented. The bases for their dissent have varied, but in general their concerns have been consigned to the margins as a kind of necessary, accompanying dissonance to a radical, far-reaching qualifications experiment.

I want to acknowledge these people, because the character of our democracy depends upon them. They deserve more than the diet of reassurance fed to them by successive Ministers of Education, typified most recently by a reported statement by current Minister, Steve Maharey, that “These are good practical issues we have to solve, but none of this suggests that NCEA is not a good, strong system...” (Cheng, 2006, A3).

A letter published alongside Anne O’Hagan’s came from Warwick Elley, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury – a New Zealand educationalist of international standing. He wrote:

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In his reply to Anne O’Hagan about NCEA, the Minister of Education only perpetuates the myths NZQA have long promoted. Does he really believe that NCEA “clearly shows a student’s strengths and weaknesses?” If the minister had done his homework he would realize that the first four years of results have repeatedly shown large, indefensible variations in pass rates, from year to year, despite the best efforts of NZQA.

Furthermore, he would realize that the so-called standards are anything but clear, that the examinations vary in difficulty from year to year and that the student profiles of strengths and weaknesses are too unreliable for employers’ needs. He would realize that for the internal standards, teachers are setting tasks of varying levels of challenge, with different opportunities to resit.

The evidence is clear and widely accepted elsewhere, that the performance levels of large national samples of students provide a better benchmark for judging student achievement than vague standards, assessed with untried exam questions. Of course NCEA is unjust.

Here is Elley, the professional, lending his weight and reputation to the felt convictions of a young student, who by virtue of her date of birth has found herself involved in a continuing experiment with the lives and futures of a nation’s senior, high-school students. The marginalization of Elley, and people like him, by educational policy-makers and reformers in New Zealand is a subject that is touched on in this book, but warrants a book on its own. I want to pay a tribute to educational leaders like Elley – now in his seventies – for their willingness to speak their minds and argue their case on the basis of sound research and theory.

My more specific indebtedness, however, is to the people without whom the English Study Design project and the *University of Waikato Certificate of Studies: English* qualification which grew out of it would not have happened.

- First and foremost, the members of the original English Study Design Project team, whose collective vision for English for a time became a reality: Elody Rathgen, Julie Moor, Jenny Brown, John Lovell, Helen Martin, Barry Gough, Gerda Smith, Katharina Ruckstuhl and Lesley Shepherd.
- Those joining the ESD Project team and later serving on the *Certificate of Studies: English* Programme Committee: Ian Ellwood, Steve Saville, Bill Mannens, Trish Eames and Marion Borrell.
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- Warwick Elley for his support and probing comments in respect of our attempts to design a system using standards-based assessment.
- Helen Howells and her team who, in 1989, developed the original English Study Design for the new Victoria Certificate of Education (VCE).

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my pre-service, English student-teachers who have trusted me as a teacher educator to negotiate with them a vision of English teaching which will not be circumscribed by the here and now. You are my hope for the future.



# INTRODUCTION

This book is about many things. In the first instance, it is a book about a sustained act of constructive dissent. It is about applying a critical lens to policy and practice, and suggesting that there are better ways of doing things. It is about the courage to do things differently. It is about a group of teachers and teacher educators – the English Study Designers – from a small country (New Zealand) who decided that a proposed qualification reform was flawed and who had the effrontery to develop a high-stakes national qualification in English and for two years to make it work.

I was a member of this group, which became over a period of seven years what Wenger (1998) has termed a “community of practice”, engaged in a “joint enterprise” (p. 77). I am therefore writing this book as a community insider, as an interested representative of a particular kind of critique. The book embodies an argument for a particular position on the curriculum and assessment reforms that have occurred in New Zealand over a period of 15 years.

As a group, we saw ourselves as acting out a particular kind of professionalism. In the various writings that some of us engaged in, we have described this brand as traditional classical professionalism – expert knowledge, altruism, autonomy – laced with “critical savvy”. When Judyth Sachs (1999) began using the term “activist” professionalism in the later 1990s, we recognized ourselves in her description of various Australian enterprises. She saw activist professionalism as inherently political, collaborative, reliant on concerted networking and aimed at improving the education system at all levels. One of the intended audiences for this book are those with an interest in teacher professionalism and the ways in which teachers attempt to negotiate this professional identities in inauspicious times. (See Chapters 1, 2 and 8.)

Established as a project in 1997, and coordinated by the author, the English Study Design team, funded by the School of Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, made a decision to develop and trial in a number of collaborating secondary schools a senior, secondary-school English qualification. We called the qualification the English Study Design (ESD), a title we borrowed from colleagues in the Australian State of Victoria, who had developed a similarly named qualification in 1989 as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)(see Howells, 2003).

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, our initial act of resistance was towards the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The latter was the brainchild of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), established by legislation in July 1990 and charged with overseeing all post-compulsory education in New Zealand. The NQF might be thought of as a giant matrix, composed of small, discrete assessment units called (Unit Standards<sup>1</sup>). The original NQF vision was for all knowledge domains, whether in schools, universities or the industrial training sector, to be refabricated into Unit Standards matrices. The realization of such a vision would result, according to the NQF architects, in the recognition of prior

## INTRODUCTION

learning, flexibility, transferability, seamlessness and self-paced learning. Looking through and beyond the rhetoric, the ESD project team (see Chapter 2) identified what it viewed as flaws in the Unit Standards model, particularly for secondary school subjects such as English, and developed and trialled a qualifications template that they viewed as superior.

With the announcement by the New Zealand Government in 1999 of a new, secondary-school qualifications system (the National Certificate in Educational Achievement – NCEA), the project team committed a second broad act of resistance in deciding to continue with the ESD at Years 12 and 13, and to persuade the University of Waikato to own it as a qualification. In an unprecedented move, the University took up the challenge and successfully managed the qualification, now called the *University of Waikato: Certificate of Studies: English*, for two years during 2003 and 2004. At the end of 2004, in the face of insurmountable bureaucratic obstacles, the University of Waikato decided to put the qualification in abeyance (see Chapter 8).

## ELEMENTS OF THE BIG PICTURE

At the macro-level, this book is also about a set of powerful trends set in motion in a range of national settings by a process of economic globalization – trends that have had a role to play in precipitating a series of educational “reforms”, which began for many countries in the Anglophonic world in the mid-1980s. This book is also aimed at readers with an interest in the relationship between global trends in the systematic uptake of discourses and policy directions and their impact at the local level on national policies and prescribed practices (See Chapter 1 in particular).

Much contemporary discussion of the context of educational reform begins with these global trends and the social restructuring which has occurred in many countries as a result of the spread of neo-liberal economic ideology (variously called Thatcherism, New Right economics, economic rationalism and, in New Zealand’s case, Rogernomics) (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; Robertson, 1996; Smith, 1992; Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid and Shacklock, 2000). The context-profession connection that characterises these discussions might be set out as follows:

- A series of virtually irresistible global trends are having an enormous impact on the socio-political structures of individual nation states.
- As a result, many individual governments, in accordance with the agendas of transnational corporations and other agencies, began a programme of socio-economic restructuring.
- This restructuring is known under various names, for example, post-Fordism, described by Robertson (1996) as characterised by: a global regime of capital accumulation based upon the principle of flexibility as a result of intensified competition for diminishing markets; an increasingly flexible labour process centred in the principles of core, contracted and

contingency labour and a new set of production concepts based upon teamwork, self-management and multiple but basic skills; and modes of regulation which are in the main governed by the ideologies of the free-market, individualism and private charity (pp. 37-38).

- In varying degrees, this socio-economic restructuring has impacted upon and even driven educational changes, especially the devolution of managerial responsibility and the centralisation and increased state intervention in curriculum and assessment.
- These educational changes have tended to redefine teacher professionalism, teacher accountability and teachers' work.

When the New Zealand Labour Government (1984-1990) began its reform of administration in the educational system, for example, in the direction of self-managing schools, it was mirroring changes occurring elsewhere in England and Australia. Likewise, when a newly elected National-led Government (1990-1999) began its reform of the national curriculum and qualifications system in 1991, it was following (and in certain respects apeing) curriculum and qualifications reforms elsewhere in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Across a range of national settings it is possible to identify certain common logics or ideological drivers lurking behind a rhetoric that proclaimed loudly that the reforms would be good for everybody. These can be expressed as a list of propositions.

- The goals of the education system cannot be separated from the nation's (that is, the current government's) economic agenda. The need to compete globally calls "naturally" for an education system that values competition.
- Schools and teachers (renamed as "providers" and "deliverers") have had too much say in policy. It is the turn of other stakeholders (central government and employers) to have their say.
- Consultation will be redefined to imply "discussion after the event".
- Intrinsic accountability is not enough. "Transparent", extrinsic accountability technologies are required to ensure that schools and teachers fulfill their new, centrally defined obligations.
- The best way to manage performance, of schools and teachers, is via the technology of standards or "measurable" outcomes and the establishment of a management culture ("managerialism").
- An extrinsic accountability regime is enhanced by curriculum and assessment structures which partition learning into discrete, measurable chunks indexed to levels.
- Classical forms of teacher professionalism are to be superseded by a managerial model based around the efficient implementation of centrally defined agendas.
- Students and parents (reworded as "clients" and "consumers") are to be deferred to, and entitled to "flexibility" and "choice" in respect of both choice of educational provider and how the provisions might be packaged.

## INTRODUCTION

In an earlier paragraph, I put the word “reforms” in quotations marks is deliberate. Doing so might be thought of as another act of resistance, that calls into question ways of “wording” the world in discourse. The “same” experience or object will be *worded* or framed differently in accordance with differing discursive positions. One person’s “terrorist” is another person’s “freedom-fighter”. “Professional development” (like words such as “creative”, “child-centred”, “integrated” and “accountable”) sounds desirable; but as Fairclough (1992) has pointed out, such words have multiple meaning potentials. Roger Dale (1989) has used the term “sense legitimation” to denote a strategy for manufacturing consent in a group as a step towards achieving the hegemony of a particular discourse. The strategy involves couching potentially unpopular policy changes in words whose meanings have been subtly altered. So-called “professional development” can be a euphemism for induction into ideological and technical compliance.

For teachers in countries such as England, the United States, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, the implementation of reforms based on the above propositions precipitated a crisis of professional identity, which mirrored a wider crisis in respect of the purpose of schooling itself.

The crisis in teachers’ work can really be summarized as a crisis in confidence around the purposes for which schools exist – as annexes of industry, spot welded on to the economy, rather than autonomous, dialogical or interpretive communities committed to enthusing the young with the tools and critical sensibilities necessary to interrogate society (Smyth *et al.*, 2000, p. 5).

The New Zealand English teachers involved in the English Study Design Project, like counterparts in England and Australia, had been asked to implement a new curriculum document which was partitioned into strands and tied, outcome by outcome, into a “progression” of levels viewed by many educators as flawed. Like teachers in England, they worked in schools which were regularly audited by the Education Review Office (ERO) to ensure that schemes existed to ensure that student progress was monitored in relation to each outcome<sup>3</sup>. Like teachers in a range of countries, they found their work increasingly constrained by extrinsic accountability measures. And their personal visions of what it means to be an English teacher were compromised by the subtle ways testing and assessment regimes were “reconstructing” their subject.

## POLICY AND PRACTICE

This book is also about the complex relationship that exists at any one time between national educational policy and classroom practice, mediated as the latter is by curriculum documents, testing regimes, printed and digital resources, “professional development” courses, and filtered by the dispositions of individual teachers and English departments. It is about the kind of contestation about knowledge that is always contingent upon the process of curriculum negotiation and construction – when policy-driven curriculum-related discourses meet teacher

expertise and disposition head on. English, as a subject, has always been a discursive battleground, and non-New Zealand readers with an interest in English will find many resonances with the process of English “construction” that has occurred in New Zealand (see Chapter 3).

At the micro-level, the book is also about pedagogy, the teaching and learning that occurs in secondary-school English classrooms, particularly at senior level. In particular, it explores the pervasive ways in which high-stakes assessment regimes impact on a range of classroom practices: unit planning, questioning and classroom talk, formative assessment and activity design.

While the English Study Designers began with a programme, the major issue they were confronting was high-stakes, qualification design at a national level (as manifested in the NQF and the NCEA). They had examined two official ones and found them wanting. So they came up with their own. So why might a non-New Zealand audience (or a New Zealand one, for that matter) have an interest in a “failed” educational experiment, involving less than 20 secondary schools in a small country in the South Pacific? My answer is that both the English Study Design (ESD) and the qualification which grew out of it were the product of sustained engagement with a number of issues which continue to challenge policy-makers and educationalists in many parts of the world. These issues can be expressed in the following questions:

- How important is programme coherence and is there still a place for a “syllabus” in the development of a national or statewide qualifications system?
- What is the best way to balance flexibility and coherence in a qualifications system?
- What is the best way to develop a standards-based, senior secondary school qualification, given the difficulties posed by standards-based assessment in respect of validity and reliability?
- What is the relationship between norm-referencing and criterion-referencing in a high-stakes assessment regime?
- What is the best way to address issues of reliability, validity, moderation, authenticity and reporting in a high-stakes assessment regime?
- What does it mean to be a secondary English teacher at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- In what ways does the design of a high-stakes assessment regime affect the construction of a subject such as English and its related classroom practice, and how might these effects be mitigated?
- How can teacher professionalism be nurtured and enhanced in “managerial” or technicist times in the face of policy initiatives which tend to concentrate power in the centre?

As members of the ESD Project team, and with help from participating schools, we developed and trialed a number of solutions to these issues, which were

independently evaluated by Professor Cedric Hall of Victoria University (Wellington). Our solutions are detailed in Chapters 2-7.

What made New Zealand a special case among countries which began undertaking major reforms in the late 1980s was the relationship between national curriculum and qualification system. As I will be discussing in detail in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, curriculum and qualifications reforms in New Zealand began at a similar time, but under the auspices of two separate government agencies, the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, both set up as part of the reform process. While newly developed NQF qualifications for senior secondary students were supposed to reflect changes in the national curriculum, in practice there were tensions between them, with the qualifications tail tending to wag the curriculum dog. It is instructive to compare the New Zealand situation with the contemporaneous development of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Australia (see Howells, 2003). In both instances, curriculum and qualifications reforms occurred in tandem. However, in Victoria, assessment was tailored to an integrated and coherent, programme structure that retained the concept of a syllabus. While assessment was standards-based (using an achievement-based assessment or ABA model) and, at least initially, there was substantial internal assessment, standards-based assessment was moderated by norm-referenced procedures. In contrast, in New Zealand, with the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the concept of a syllabus was abandoned, a pure system of competence-based assessment (CBA) adopted, norm referencing demonized and done away with, and post-compulsory learning reduced to a multiplicity of discrete standards, each with its own number of credits, that could be packaged in an infinite number of ways for client consumption.

The NCEA has been a radical educational experiment and was never trialed. In respect of qualifications reform in England, it may be that the writers of the Tomlinson Report (DfES, 2004) have taken note of the commentary and research that have been generated since the commencement of NCEA implementation in 2002. It certainly appears the these writers, in developing their system of diplomas, have opted to avoid the NCEA's excesses, and to make their starting point an integrated and coherent programme that at the same time affords a degree of flexibility and a range of pathways for the 14 to 19-year-old age-group. On the face of it, the emphasis on coherence, a desire to reduce assessment, a commitment to more internal assessment, a focus on rich tasks and the adoption of three kinds of marking scale sound promising. However, a lot of the NCEA devil was in its detail, and one might assume that the same will be true as the process of qualifications reform unfolds in England (wisely over a ten-year time period). A sentence such as "young people who particularly require external motivation will be able to 'bank' credits as they go along" (DfES, 2004, p. 9) will ring alarm bells for many New Zealand teachers, who have seen internal motivation to learn replaced by a widespread, credit-gathering (banking) mentality.

The latter unintended effect of the NCEA is just one reason why qualifications developers, policy-makers, teachers and parents in a range of countries will benefit by learning lessons from its implementation. For such an audience, this book may

serve as a cautionary tale. But, of course, it is more than that, because it details the history of the English Study – a qualifications “road not taken” that, having proved its worth, was effectively suppressed by a series of NZQA bureaucratic tactics. Meanwhile, rather ironically, the system of English A-levels, called into question by the writers of the Tomlinson Report, is being increasingly adopted in New Zealand (via Cambridge International) by over forty schools, private and state, disenchanted with the country’s own, indigenous qualifications system. Neo-colonialism is not just the fate of “developing” nations.

#### A CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 begins with the challenges posed to the professional English teacher in the context of “reform”.<sup>4</sup> It discusses the “reform” context, especially in relation to the New Zealand education system, offers a way of viewing the English professional and suggests that the “reform” process, in New Zealand and elsewhere, has been accompanied by an erosion of teacher professionalism (or increase in deprofessionalisation).

Chapter 2 is particularly pertinent to readers with an interest in the concept of “activist” professionalism. It suggests that in embracing such a professional identity, teachers and others involved in the educational sector can to some extent withstand forces of deprofessionalisation. It provides, as an example of activist professionalism in action, an overview of the implementation and trial of the English Study Design and its successor, the *University of Waikato Certificate of Studies: English* qualification.

Chapter 3 is of particular interest to English teachers and those with an interest in constructions of the subject. It raises the charged question: What is English? It suggests that the answer is: Many things. In doing so, it identifies the “discursive forces” that have a role to play in determining the *kind* of English that is enacted in the secondary-school classroom. By way of example, it contrasts the ESD’s “version” of English with other versions or constructions available to English teachers, in New Zealand and in other Anglophonic settings.

Chapter 4 continues the work of Chapter 3 but turns its attention to questions of coherence and continuity (or partition and progression) in relation to the planning of programmes of work in English. It begins with the big picture – how curriculum and assessment policy documents impinge on issues of coherence and continuity – and then discusses the approach to English programming favoured by the English Study Design.

Chapter 5 addresses the micro-level of pedagogy – the sorts of conversations a particular approach to English encourages teachers and students to have around texts. It begins with a critique of some of the practices encouraged by the New Zealand English Curriculum and the NCEA, and focuses on some of the pedagogies favoured by the ESD. It is particularly pertinent to those with an interest in the way curriculum and assessment policy impacts at the micro-level of classroom practice through a range of technologies.

## INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 is concerned with assessment models and asks specifically: How is English best assessed? It focuses in the main on formative and summative assessment. It critiques the assessment of English in both the traditional examination model and the more recent NCEA. It then offers the ESD as an example of an achievement-based assessment (ABA) system developed within the broader category of criterion-referenced assessment (CRA).

Chapter 7 is particularly pertinent to those interested in some of the broad issues in relation to high-stakes (national) qualifications systems. In terms of the New Zealand context, it offers a brief critique of some of the ways the NCEA system approaches issues of reliability, moderation, authenticity and reporting and explains how the ESD has dealt with these issues, as an example of what Cedric Hall calls an “integrated standards” model of assessment.

Chapter 8 revisits the political arena. It argues that the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) had reason to be threatened by the fledgling qualification, the *University of Waikato Certificate of Studies English* programme, and by a covert policy of obstructionism succeeded in creating conditions that made it impossible for us to continue offering it to schools. So, did all the work that went into the ESD and *CS English* count for nought? As argued in this chapter, the answer is no. Indeed, in its short life-span, the ESD modeled and tested a number of features that qualifications developers in any setting might well take note of.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Non-New Zealand readers unfamiliar with the term need to realise that “unit standards” as developed for NZQA are used for assessment for national qualifications. They describe both *outcomes* which students need to perform in order to achieve credit on the National Qualifications Framework (e.g. English 8812 reads “produce transactional written text in simple forms”) and the *standard* (in the performance criteria) of performance required to meet the outcome (NZQA, 1998 p. 1.5). (The English unit standard 8812 has four separate criteria expressed as competences: writing develops idea(s); ideas are logically sequenced and supported by relevant details and/or examples; conventions of chosen form are observed and appropriate to purpose; final product is crafted to publication standard.)
- <sup>2</sup> For a useful comparative study of these reforms in England, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, see Clark, U. (2001). *War words: Language, history and the disciplining of English*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- <sup>3</sup> The equivalent of ERO in England is the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
- <sup>4</sup> As discussed at the start of this introduction, I put the word “reform” in inverted commas to distance myself from its use and to highlight its constructedness. Using the word uncritically suggests that there was something that needed reforming, and that the new measure is an improvement over what precedes it.

## THE PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH TEACHER IN THE CONTEXT OF REFORM

I grew up in New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s and began teaching in the 1970s. It was a country that used to pride itself on its landscape, racial harmony, social progressiveness (it had been the first country to give women the vote), welfarism, low unemployment – and its education system. It was the country that had produced educators such as Sylvia Ashton-Warner<sup>1</sup>, Marie Clay<sup>2</sup> and Warwick Elley<sup>3</sup>. Observers, noting the worm in the rose, would have noted the complacency, of course, and raised questions about the degree of self-congratulation.

The education system was administered by a large bureaucracy, the Department of Education. Teacher unions were strong and, on the basis of what might be termed their “guild knowledge”, enjoyed an assured place at the negotiation table for all education-related issues. Curriculum reform was usually painstakingly slow and managed by officers from the Department of Education Curriculum Development Unit, usually ex-teachers for whom progression to the CDU was a natural career path for those with a desire to maintain their curriculum specialization in a management, policy or advisory capacity.

Secondary English teachers had worked with a national curriculum at least since the 1940s. In 1983, a new syllabus – called the NESC after its designers, the New English Syllabus Committee – was introduced after fourteen years of consultation. Developed in the long shadow of the Anglo-American Dartmouth Conference of 1966, and influenced by theoreticians such as John Dixon, the syllabus was a paragon of progressive education – the learner-centred, “personal growth” version of English which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 3.

English teachers working with the NESC syllabus were not told what texts to use with their students; nor were they given detailed programmes of work or assessment criteria. Rather, they were given sets of broad objectives that an English programme should embody. The following language objectives, embracing an amalgam of activities, skills, attitudes and knowledge content, conveys the flavour of the document:

To increase each student's ability to understand language and use it effectively, students need to:

- develop competence in all language modes<sup>4</sup>;
- have opportunities to consider, generate, extend, and refine their language in many different roles, registers, and contexts;
- become aware that language is influenced by convention and habit so that they can develop sensitivity and competence;