

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

*ResearchSpace@Auckland*

### **Copyright Statement**

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

### **General copyright and disclaimer**

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

NEW ZEALAND'S  
NATIONAL STANDARDS POLICY:  
THE GAP BETWEEN  
RHETORIC AND REALITY

Dirk Smyth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Educational  
Leadership

2012

University of Auckland

## **Abstract**

In New Zealand, as in other OECD countries, there are on-going concerns about the inequity of outcomes of state education. The New Zealand National Standards system is portrayed as an attempt to address the problem of the ‘one-in-five’ students, predominantly Māori and Pasifika, who leave school without levels of literacy and numeracy seen as necessary in order to be successful. National Standards is presented as an assessment-driven, policy response to this ‘long tail of underachievement’, which aims to raise teacher’ reporting, assessment and evaluative capabilities. It is argued that these improvements will provide the catalyst for improving student achievement.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which this publicised rationale for the National Standards policy is supported by the evidence. Critical Discourse Analysis is used to consider education policy texts and media texts, which can be considered public representations of discourse. This dissertation challenges the claims made about National Standards, and evaluates the extent to which the National Standards policy is likely to raise student achievement. It also challenges the claim that this policy will ensure that the negative consequences of national testing, seen in other countries, can be avoided in New Zealand. The findings indicate that National Standards is better described as an ‘assessment for accountability’ policy rather than an ‘assessment for learning’ policy and that accountability, not building capacity, is the main motivation behind this policy initiative.

## **Acknowledgments**

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor and mentor, Dr Georgina Stewart, for your continuous advice and encouragement over the past six months. I have learnt a great deal from you, and am a huge admirer of your incredible knowledge, your wisdom and your eye for detail. Thank you for pushing me and having such high expectations of me.

To my wife, Megan. Thanks for your unwavering support. You are the best.

# Table of contents

## Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
Table of acronyms.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and methodology .....	1
1.1 Dissertation overview .....	1
1.2 Introduction to National Standards .....	2
1.3 Education policy .....	4
1.4 Methodology - Critical Discourse Analysis.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: Literature review - context .....	9
2.1 New Zealand’s standards history .....	9
2.2 Neo-liberal context - standards and accountability.....	12
2.3 International context - “you don’t fatten a pig by weighing it” .....	14
2.3.1 No Child Left Behind (or ‘measure and punish’) .....	14
2.3.2 High-stakes testing in England .....	17
2.3.3 The Australian experience .....	18
2.4 Locating National Standards.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: New Zealand’s National Standards .....	21
3.1 Developing the standards .....	21
3.1.1 Background .....	21
3.1.2 The arrival of New Zealand’s National Standards.....	23
3.1.3 National Standards policy-making – a systems approach.....	25
3.2 Policy problems - the publicised rationale.....	26
3.2.1 Student underachievement .....	27
3.2.2 The rise of the one-in-five.....	29
3.2.3 Assessment and reporting .....	32
CHAPTER FOUR: A closer look at the publicised rationale.....	35
4.1 Behind the one-in-five .....	35
4.1.1 The escalation of the rhetoric of failure .....	36
4.1.2 Folk devils, electioneering and the blame game.....	38

4.2 Reporting, assessment and capacity building .....	41
4.2.1 Reporting to parents .....	41
4.2.2 Assessment.....	43
4.3 Building capacity - the link between prescription and outcome.....	45
CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion - the gap between rhetoric and reality .....	48
5.1 League tables .....	48
5.1.1 Campbell's law .....	49
5.1.2 Collateral damage .....	50
5.2 Accountability.....	52
5.2.1 Standards for accountability .....	52
5.3 National Standards - data reliability and future implications .....	55
5.3.1 Moderation.....	56
5.3.2 Implementation vs. enactment .....	57
5.3.3 National Standards - what next? .....	59
5.4 Conclusion .....	61
References.....	63

## Table of acronyms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
BOT	Board of Trustees
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
e-asTTle	electronic assessment Tool for Teaching and learning
ERO	Education Review Office
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GloSS	Global Strategy Stage
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAGs	National Administration Guidelines
NAPLAN	National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEMP	National Education Monitoring Project
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
NZEI	New Zealand Educational Institute
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OIA	Official Information Act
OTJ	Overall Teacher Judgement
PaCT	Progress and Consistency Tool
PAT	Progress and Achievement Test
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPTA	Post Primary Teachers' Association
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
STAR	Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and methodology

## 1.1 Dissertation overview

**Chapter One** introduces New Zealand's National Standards policy to the reader. It provides a rationale for this dissertation and identifies the key research questions. It considers the nature and role of education policy, the policy-making process and policy discourse. This chapter also introduces the main methodological approach used in this study, Critical Discourse Analysis. It outlines Fairclough's framework as an analytical tool for exploring the problematics behind the National Standards policy.

**Chapter Two** takes the form of a critical review of the literature in order to locate National Standards within its historical, social and political contexts. It considers the history of the standards debates in New Zealand and identifies several key themes that emerge from this analysis. It explores the neo-liberal elements of the market, performativity and managerialism, and the roles of assessment and accountability in modern educational reform. It investigates the national testing approaches in the USA, England and Australia as examples of neo-liberal standards-based reform, and documents these countries respective experiences.

**Chapter Three** traces the development of New Zealand's National Standards policy from its roots in the late 1990s, and identifies recent attempts to introduce literacy and numeracy standards into New Zealand primary schools. It describes the National Party's 'crusade for literacy and numeracy' and outlines the National Standards regulatory framework. National Standards is described as an example of a 'systems approach' to policy-making, characterised by the three elements of coherence, hierarchy and instrumentality. Chapter Three introduces the publicised rationale behind the policy. Addressing student underachievement is identified as the main justification for National Standards. This policy problem, also known as the 'tail of underachievement', evolves into the convenient, political catch phrase, the 'one-in-five'. This figure represents the proportion of students not succeeding in New Zealand schools, and represents the National party's 'smoking gun' in justifying National Standards. Chapter Three also identifies the need to improve schools' reporting and assessment capabilities as further rationale for this policy initiative.



**Chapter Four** takes a critical look at the claims behind the publicised rationale. It reveals the one-in-five figure as a product of the escalation of the National Party's rhetoric of failure. It explores the reasons behind this one-in-five message of failure and uncovers the twin motivations of electioneering and the 'politics of blame'. This chapter also evaluates the claims that National Standards can build schools' assessment and reporting capabilities. It identifies the importance of developing schools' evaluative capabilities in order to raise student achievement, and questions whether National Standards can stimulate this kind of capacity building in schools.

**Chapter Five** considers the gap between the rhetoric and the reality. It identifies the requirement that schools report disaggregated, National Standards data to the Ministry, as the key to fully understanding this policy. It investigates the extent to which this reporting requirement is an Achilles heel of an assessment policy designed to build teacher capacity, or whether it is a seed of accountability, ready to sprout league tables, high-stakes testing and performance pay. The prospect of league tables, and the role of Campbell's Law, is explored in detail in this chapter. As a high-stakes, accountability-driven policy emerges, the conclusion is drawn that for the Government, league tables and its negative consequences are a form of unavoidable collateral damage. Concerns over data reliability and the role of moderation are also explored in this chapter, and these shed light on the future implications of National Standards.

## 1.2 Introduction to National Standards

In December 2008, the newly elected National-led, New Zealand Government passed the Education (National Standards) Amendment Act 2008, ushering in its crusade for literacy and numeracy (New Zealand National Party, 2008a). This Amendment Act gives the Education Minister the power to publish standards in literacy and numeracy for particular groups of students, and it obliges schools to set student achievement targets against these standards in their annual charters.

A year later, after a short consultation period, compulsory standards in reading, writing and mathematics were set for all students in Years 1 to 8. Changes were also made to the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs), which set out the Government's administrative requirements for schools' boards of trustees (BOTs). These changes require schools to report

to parents, twice yearly, on student progress and achievement against the standards. They also require schools to report to the Ministry of Education (MOE), in their annual reports, “the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including by Māori, Pasifika and by gender” (Ministry of Education, 2012c). Throughout this dissertation, this policy initiative will be referred to as ‘National Standards’.

It is important to note that in addition to the National Standards, the Māori medium standards, Ngā Whanaketanga Rūmaki Māori for te reo (Māori language) and pāngarau (mathematics) have also been developed by the MOE (Ministry of Education, 2012f). Ngā Whanaketanga are a separate system that diverges from the English medium standards, with a focus on progression rather than summative achievement (the word ‘whanaketanga’ means development or progression), and are part of a broader programme designed to strengthen Māori-medium education. An analysis of Ngā Whanaketanga Rūmaki Māori is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The National Standards policy is a local version of a broader, international educational reform movement that uses standards as benchmarks for establishing what students ought to be able to achieve in key subject areas. It represents a form of outcomes-based education, where student performance is measured and evaluated against literacy and numeracy standards. Countries including the USA, the UK and Australia have all introduced forms of standardised testing to evaluate student performance. These initiatives have been widely criticised as creating ‘high-stakes’ environments, leading to league tables and a host of negative, unintended consequences. New Zealand has avoided national testing by relying on overall teacher judgements (OTJs) to evaluate student performance, where teachers have the flexibility to select from a range of available evidence to inform their professional judgements.

The publicised rationale for introducing National Standards is overwhelmingly conveyed as a policy response to the ‘long tail of underachievement’, often referred to as the ‘one-in-five’ students not succeeding in New Zealand schools. It is argued that the standards will set high expectations in schools and will raise teachers’ reporting and assessment capabilities. This will enable teachers to identify students’ learning needs and raise student achievement.

This study documents the range of concerns and motivations behind the development and implementation of National Standards in Year 1 – 8 schools in New Zealand, by examining the debates surrounding the development and inauguration of the policy. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which the publicised rationale for the development of the National Standards policy is supported by the evidence. It considers the extent to which the dual aims of capacity building on one hand, and accountability on the other, are driving the National Standards policy. It also considers the future implications of the National Standards policy.

### 1.3 Education policy

Attempting to define policy is not a straightforward process, given its considerable complexity and cross-disciplinary nature. Policy can be described as both an outcome and a process (Ball, 1993). Viewed as an outcome or product, policy can be seen as a response to an identified problem. Policy can be described as

the implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed, or to be followed in dealing with a recognized problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals, (Harman, cited in Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 14).

This definition of policy is a goal-oriented one, emphasising policy as an outcome, and it resonates strongly with the development of the National Standards policy, as an attempt to address identified problems. Policy as process, however, emphasises the location of educational policy within its historical, social and political contexts. This is key to understanding policy as a “contextualised practice or set of practices” (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, p. 3).

In order to understand the rationale behind the National Standards policy, its development, and its possible future implications, it is necessary to situate this policy within its own historical and socio-political contexts. This contextualisation necessitates an examination of the history of the standards debate in New Zealand over recent decades and of the literature on overseas experiences in standardised testing. Since policy is also informed by ideology (Gale, 1999), New Zealand's National Standards policy needs to be viewed through the lens of the prevailing neo-liberal influences that have helped give it shape. These contextual influences will be explored in Chapter Two.

Describing policy as a responsive attempt to finding solutions to identified problems is a systematic approach to defining policy. This aligns with a ‘systems approach’ to policy-making (Ozga, 2005), which defines the ‘policy objectives’ as solutions to problems. This ‘systems approach’ is characterised by “organised action that has three main elements: coherence, hierarchy and instrumentality” (Colebatch, cited in Ozga, 2005, p. 3). National Standards is very much a policy that is responding to problems, so utilising this approach to policy-making can be useful in describing and understanding its development. This ‘systems approach’ and the elements of coherence, hierarchy and instrumentality will be explored further in Chapter Three.

“Education policy-making is a dynamic process in which the nation state exerts power and deploys resources in conjunction with regional, local and even institutional agencies” (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 4). The exercise of political power within a hierarchical system is a strong feature of the National Standards policy. Carol Mutch’s research interviews with seven influential educational policy-makers in New Zealand affirm the Government’s role as the most influential factor in the local education policy-making process (Mutch, 2004). This is characteristic of the top-down approach to policy-making that she describes as dominating the local landscape, one where “the Ministry’s task is to implement the policies and the sector’s task is to enact the policies” (ibid, p. 5).

Policies are not simply implemented by schools. Schools are both policy actors as well as policy subjects, and there are significant elements of interpretation and translation within the policy implementation process (Thrupp & Easter, 2012). Policy is not simply a solution to a problem but a process that is contested and interpreted by institutions (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011). Policy is enacted rather than implemented and involves a “recontextualisation through reading, writing and talking of the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices” (Braun et al., 2011, p. 586).

The role and function of policy is not confined to the preserve of government. It is “contested by all those with an interest in education” (Ozga, 1999, p. 38). Reading education policy texts requires the researcher to go further than understanding its context. It needs to infer meaning from “the relationship between the text and the social structure” (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 3). It requires a critical reading that goes beyond a technical-empirical approach to interpreting policy, one where policy documents are simply interpreted as “expressions of political intent ... to be discussed by the public before being implemented as official policy” (Codd, 1988).

Ball conceptualises policy as both text and as discourse, as “textual interventions into practice” (1993, p. 12). Policy as discourse goes beyond interpreting government policy as a response to an identifiable problem existing somewhere in our communities. It takes a critical look at the problem itself and considers the extent to which the problem has been shaped through the policy response (Bacchi, 2000). Policy as discourse “frames policy not as a response to existing conditions and problems, but more as a discourse in which both problems and solutions are created” (Goodwin, cited in Bacchi, 2000, p. 48).

Policy is directly influenced by the nature of the discourse that dominates the existing socio-political environment (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). It is discourse that attempts to bring the different elements of policy together in a coherent and meaningful way (Gale, 1999).

Discourse does not simply refer to the meaning of language, nor can it be deemed neutral. It is caught up in the nexus of the socio-political environment in which it is being used. In this sense discourse comprises of “material social practices, and as such they both mediate and constitute relations of power”(Olssen et al., 2004, p. 67). The neo-liberal discourses of ‘managerialism’, marketization and performativity (Ball, 2003) currently dominate global education policy discourse, and standardised testing is a manifestation of this discourse. New Zealand’s National Standards represent a variant of the standardised testing regimes evident overseas, but it still fits within a “standardised testing template,” with its “formula of standardised benchmark ‘targets’, reporting requirements and the flexibility to add teacher accountability measures” (George, 2012, p. 19). These are important characteristics of the National Standards policy that are explored further in this study.

## 1.4 Methodology - Critical Discourse Analysis

The main methodological approach used in this dissertation is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is an established qualitative research method that “aims to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes” (Taylor, 2004, p. 435). CDA considers how discourse is shaped and influenced by relations of power and how language as a ‘cultural tool’ can mediate these relationships (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). CDA is critical because it takes the analysis beyond describing and interpreting language, and

attempts to explain the way in which language is used as a tool of influence and power in society (Rogers et al., 2005).

CDA is a valuable tool for educational policy analysis since education policy can be viewed as a discursive practice. It can uncover multiple and contending discourses within policy texts yet it can also reveal marginalised discourses and “discursive shifts in policy implementation processes” (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 433). Bacchi (2000) talks of the ‘non-innocence’ of how policy problems are framed, how this influences what is thought about, and how this impacts on possible courses of action. It also influences what is not thought about. For example, the National Standards policy problem of student underachievement is framed as an educational problem, yet it is silent on the complex mesh of socio-economic factors that affect student achievement. A view of policy as discourse can “bring such silences in problematizations out into the open for discussion” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 50). The words used in labelling an educational policy problem can highlight as well as inhibit solutions to the problem, and can promote certain values and interests. CDA can explore the extent and significance of ‘spin-doctoring’ in what Fairclough (cited in Taylor, 2004, p. 434) calls ‘the increased technologization of discourse’, which can be viewed as deliberate attempts to control and direct discursive practices. Policy documents can be seen as official state discourse and therefore politically motivated. The way language is used in the construction of this discourse can engineer the “production and maintenance of consent”, and frame the policy response as being in the public’s interest (Codd, 1988, p. 237).

Fairclough’s three-tiered framework can be used as a guide in conducting CDA. Using this framework, an analyst can firstly set about *describing* the relationships found among the policy texts and discourse. The second goal is the *interpretation* of these discourse practices, while the final goal is to provide an *explanation* for why such practices are established and how they evolve. Three broad levels of analysis can be discerned: written or spoken text, the discursive practice that is involved in the creation and interpretation of policy texts, and sociocultural practice (Rogers et al., 2005).

As Fairclough explains:

by ‘critical’ discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by

relations of power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (1993, p. 135).

My approach to this dissertation analysis will utilise elements of Fairclough's framework when exploring the problematics behind the National Standards policy. It will consider both education policy texts (written and spoken) as well as media texts. Both forms of text can be considered manifestations of discourse that appear in the public sphere, as both can, and do, have an influence on public opinion. Such discourses can be described as forms of social practice that are constructed within certain power relationships (Thomas, 2002). CDA therefore provides the researcher with a tool for "talking back to public discourse, for disrupting its speech acts, breaking its narrative chains and questioning its constructions of power and agency" (Luke, 1997, p. 365). CDA will be used in this dissertation to interrupt and challenge the National Standards discourse by probing, questioning and critiquing the publicised rationale and motivations behind this policy.

## CHAPTER TWO: Literature review - context

The research presented in this chapter takes the form of a literature review that enables National Standards to be located in its historical, social and political contexts.

Education policy must be contextualised both nationally and globally as a transformative discourse that can have real social effects (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 3).

### 2.1 New Zealand's standards history

The current debate over numeracy and literacy standards in New Zealand schools is not a new phenomenon. In fact, concerns over the quality of numeracy and literacy have been robustly debated since at least the 1940s (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a). The following section provides an important historical, but also socio-political, context to the most recent of these debates which have culminated in the current National Standards policy, and identifies a number of key themes that emerge from an analysis of literacy and numeracy policy discourse in this post-war period 1945 - 2005.

The debate and criticism around falling standards has been robustly contested throughout these 60 years, but there are three noticeable periods during which the criticisms over falling standards have peaked. The current National Standards debate is merely the most recent in a long line of policy debates and initiatives, dating back to at the 1940s, that have been designed to improve numeracy and literacy proficiency (Openshaw and Walshaw, 2010a). The educational standards debate first peaked during the 1950s over concerns that standards in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic were slipping, culminating in the Currie Report in 1962. Although this report did not directly address educational standards, it did calm public anxiety by endorsing the direction in which the educational sector was heading. Walshaw and Openshaw argue that this occurred during a period of comparative prosperity which may well have softened “the political impact of concern over literacy and numeracy basics” at the time (p. 55).

The second period of debate began in the late 1960s and 1970s during a period of increasing economic uncertainty for New Zealand. It led to the release of Educational Standards in State Schools in 1978 (Department of Education, 1978), and following an intensification of this debate in the early 1980s, to the Picot Report of 1988 (Department of Education, 1988). This



resulted in far-reaching reforms in the 1990s, including Tomorrow's Schools and the advent of the self-governing school model. These structural changes to New Zealand's educational administration system did not, however, end the standards debate. They simply paved the way for an intensification of concerns from the 1990s onwards. National Standards has its political roots in this post-Picot period, a period that put New Zealand educational reform on an increasingly neo-liberal trajectory.

Each of these three cycles of contestation has been characterised by a distinct polarisation of views. These cycles can be seen as "a series of overlapping and cyclical discourses, in which the discourses in one era are seen to have remarkable synergies with the discourses of another time" (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 7). Much of the earlier debate involved a struggle for teacher solidarity in the face of public criticism. More recently, the debate has focused on a struggle for public support for teachers in the face of perceived government hostility. Public criticism stemmed largely from the belief that new teaching methods and curricula were behind the fall in standards, leaving teachers to defend themselves against these allegations. The discourses were characterised by a closing of ranks of the teaching profession in the face of what were perceived to be unjustified criticisms of the standard of public education. This subsequently evolved into a far more combative and defensive approach taken by teacher unions, which has now led to the notion of "fortress education" (p. 86) that characterises the more recent standards debates.

Numeracy and literacy have been valued, almost universally, as essential skills necessary for students to become effective citizens. It has been commonly accepted that "numeracy + literacy = success" ( Openshaw and Walshaw, 2010a, p. 6). Success has increasingly been defined as the ability to compete in a global, technological world with a literate and numerate workforce needed to drive a successful economy. This has been reflected in the role that international studies have played in assessing countries' performance in literacy and mathematics. International studies that provide comparative data on New Zealand's performance in basic literacy and numeracy skills have become increasingly valued by politicians and the media as important measures of student progress. Results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies have dominated much of the political discourse in the last two decades over falling standards. New Zealand has, on average, performed very well in these studies. Indeed,

much of the education system now revolves around the identification of students as either successful at literacy and numeracy or not.

A tail of underachievement, predominantly affecting some student populations, has emerged as an important theme during the most recent period of the standards debates. Much of the data from these international studies, as well as data gathered from New Zealand, such as that from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), have revealed a pattern of student achievement where the majority of students do well, but a minority do not, leaving students without these essential literacy and numeracy skills. They have become known as the “tail of underachievement”, and Māori and Pasifika students are overrepresented in this tail.

The standards debate became increasingly politicised during periods when New Zealand’s socio-economic standing was deteriorating. This was the case in the 1970s and has intensified again more recently with parliamentary exchanges between Government and Opposition becoming steadily more vitriolic. Recent attempts to remedy the perception of falling standards in literacy and numeracy have also been marked by an increase in government interventions aimed at improving student achievement. The increasing hype over falling standards, and the political rhetoric over where the shortcomings lay, has tended to marginalise the significance of social, political and economic circumstances. The response to public concerns has been “at once both political and cosmetic in nature” (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010b).

The media’s role in the standards debates has increased markedly during recent decades. The deregulation of New Zealand’s mass media in the 1980s hastened the spread of educational debate in newspapers, magazines and on television, and promoted the media to their new role of “gatekeepers for the selection and presentation of educational news” (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 104). The media’s portrayal of the standards debate has tended to fuel rather than alleviate public fears about falling standards.

The most recent cycle of the standards debates has been heavily influenced by prevailing neo-liberal ideologies, particularly in the 1990s following Tomorrow’s Schools. New Zealand was at this time “firmly in the grip of the antipodean variant of neo-liberalism, often referred to as the ‘New Zealand Experiment’” (Thrupp, 2001, p. 187), an ‘experiment’ characterised by economic rationalism, managerialism and the application of public choice theory to national education (Leane, 2000). During this period, governments came under increasing pressure to adopt, rather than challenge these neo-liberal ideologies (Thrupp, 2001),

promoting a ‘managerialist’ culture, one preoccupied more with the recording and reporting of teaching and learning outcomes than on the educational process itself (Codd, 2005). Recognising these neo-liberal influences is essential in understanding the development of National Standards in New Zealand.

## 2.2 Neo-liberal context - standards and accountability

Neo-liberal reforms have dominated the educational landscape over the last two decades and are characterised by three related, interdependent elements; the market, performativity and managerialism (Ball, 2003). Advocates of such reform believe that market-driven mechanisms lead to more effective and efficient schools, ones that allow parents, as consumers, to make informed choices based on the availability of school data (Hursh, 2008). Neo-liberal reforms demand that schools regularly produce evidence of its performance to central authorities. While modern schools may have greater local control over their affairs in a deregulated or self-governing environment, the imposition of more and more managerial policies diminishes that control, allowing the state to maintain “steerage at a distance” (Apple, 2001, p. 190). Ball calls this a process of *re-regulation* rather than de-regulation, a “new form of control” (2003, p. 217). This is a kind of performativity-based regulation which relies on appraisal meetings, inspections, reporting and the publication of results, while employing “judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change” (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

Types of managerial policies thus include appraisal systems, national curricula, national standards, target setting and national testing. Assessing against national standards can be viewed as a mechanism by which comparative school data can be generated and published as league tables, providing the impetus for market forces to work through consumer choice (Apple, 2001). A key assumption behind this view is that competition between schools, coupled with parental pressure, will ensure schools are held accountable for their performance and ultimately raise standards of learning (Lingard, 2010).

A key purpose of assessment, particularly in education, has been to establish and raise standards of learning. This is now a virtually universal belief – it is hard to find a country that is not using the rhetoric of needing assessment to raise standards in response to the challenges of globalization (Stobart, 2008, p. 24).

Assessment thus becomes a key driver behind education reform, with high-stakes national testing firmly in the driver’s seat; “the major steering mechanism of schooling” (Lingard,

2010). League tables become instruments of accountability that “determine one’s relative value in the educational marketplace” (Apple, 2001, p. 186). The danger with this market driven approach is that it can shift schools’ focus away from student needs, and how schools can cater for these needs, towards student performance and the value students bring to the school in the education marketplace (Apple, 2001). As Ball puts it, “value replaces values” (2003, p. 217).

Assessment-driven reform is part of the recent shift towards establishing and maintaining accountability systems that are prevalent in many Western countries today, including the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, each of which has introduced national education standards. Accountability systems focus more on measurable outcomes than on inputs and processes and this can lead to the risk of measuring only what is simple to measure.

Measuring what is important is not so easy given the diverse nature and purposes of schools. “What is counted is what ultimately counts” (Lingard, 2010, p. 135). Assessment-driven accountability is often criticised for placing too much responsibility onto schools for student success while ignoring significant factors such as socio-economic status. It is also criticised for developing education standards that are of questionable validity (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006).

Stobart suggests three basic questions concerning the validity of assessment.

- What is the principal purpose of this assessment?
- Is this assessment fit for purpose?
- What are the consequences, intended and unintended, of this assessment? (2008)

Standards can be described as *assessment for learning* standards if their purpose is to improve students’ learning. If the purpose of standards is to act as benchmarks for success and for reporting purposes, then they can be described as *standards for accountability* (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2010b). High-stakes testing lacks sufficient validity or reliability even if their intended purpose is to improve student learning, as they can lead to numerous unintended consequences, many of which are detailed in the next section. The potential for standards to succeed in improving outcomes lies in building teachers’ capabilities to make informed teacher judgements about student learning and progress, something which high-stakes testing fails to do (ibid).

If “an effective driver is one that achieves better measurable results with students”, then capacity building is a more effective driver than accountability (Fullan, 2011, p. 4). Fullan

warns that focusing on accountability as a driver for school reform is a flawed approach, not only because it won't succeed in improving student outcomes, but also because it will fail to achieve greater accountability (2011). Accountability, although necessary, must be driven by an attitude that is focused on capacity building, trust building and engagement rather than one that "uses standards, assessment, rewards and punishments as its core drivers" (p. 8). Standards can be used as a basis for improving teachers' and schools' evaluative and instructional capabilities and therefore teaching and learning, but only if "professional and community learning – rather than punitive accountability – remain to the fore" (Timperley & Parr, 2010, p. 11).

## 2.3 International context - "you don't fatten a pig by weighing it"

National standards have been introduced in many countries, including the United States, the UK and Australia, and standards are usually accompanied by a regime of national testing. It is often done with the aim of holding schools and teachers accountable for student achievement, in an attempt to "drive mediocrity out of the system" (Hattie, 2009, p. 1). Despite these efforts, there is little evidence of improved student achievement, but there is considerable evidence of the numerous unintended, negative consequences of these policies. In order to better understand the direction that New Zealand's National Standards are likely to take, it is necessary to locate them within the international context.

### 2.3.1 *No Child Left Behind (or 'measure and punish')*

"NCLB is like a Russian novel. That's because it's long, it's complicated, and in the end, everybody gets killed" (Wallis & Sonja, 2007, p. 1).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed into United States law in January 2002 with the aim of closing the achievement gap "through high standards and accountability" (Bush, 2001, p. 7). This law represents a very ambitious, outcomes-focused piece of legislation that requires all students nationally to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014. There are no national achievement standards. Each state is required to develop its own standards in reading and mathematics and to establish corresponding annual tests for all children in Grades 3 – 8 (approximately 8 to 13 years old). Schools are also required to report

student results to parents and to report disaggregated student achievement results “by race [sic], gender, English language proficiency, disability, and socio-economic status” (Bush, 2001, p. 8) to the public.

States are required to set “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) targets as annual milestones for schools, to enable states to close the achievement gap between ethnic and socio-economic groups and reach grade-level proficiency levels by 2014. The tests are “high-stakes” because federal funding decisions are made on the basis of individual school’s performance. Schools also face a series of sanctions and punishments if they fail to meet these AYP targets. These include replacing all the staff and reopening the school as a charter school; a possible consequence if AYP targets are not met for five consecutive years. The AYP targets must apply specifically to students identified as disadvantaged, as well as to the rest of the student population (Bush, 2001), something that then-President George W. Bush famously claimed would end “the soft bigotry of low expectations”.

An important motivation behind this reform is the idea that making public a school’s student achievement information, combined with a “high-stakes” accountability regime, will improve the school’s productivity and raise student achievement (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Another assumption is that high expectations will increase the performance of underachieving students and close the achievement gap (Cronin, Kingsbury, McCall, & Bowe, 2005). The extent to which NCLB has succeeded in accomplishing this is well documented and while there is some evidence of improved student achievement, there are also numerous negative consequences that have resulted from this policy.

Proponents of NCLB claim that one its greatest achievements is that it has “shone a light” on poorly performing schools, as well as on underachieving groups of students within schools, and demanded that they improve. There is limited evidence that this has helped teachers develop their evaluative capabilities by better aligning their pedagogy, curriculum and assessment practices (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). There is also evidence of improved student achievement, particularly in mathematics, but also in reading (Cronin et al., 2005; Jennings & Rentner, 2006). This evidence, however, is not conclusive. A study by the Harvard Civil Rights Project found that under NCLB,

neither a significant rise in achievement, nor closure of the racial achievement gap is being achieved. Small early gains in math have reverted to the pre-existing pattern. If that is true, all the pressure and sanctions have, so far, been in vain or even counterproductive (Lee & Orfield, 2006, p. 5).

Recent nation-wide research into student achievement in reading and mathematics reveals similar mixed results. For example, although there was evidence of student gains in fourth grade mathematics, there was no evidence that NCLB improved students' reading achievement (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

The critics of NCLB are far more numerous than those defending it, and there is a long list of unintended, negative consequences that have been attributed to this policy. Berliner and Nichols are blunt in their assessment of NCLB, claiming that it "puts American public school students in serious jeopardy" (2007, p. 36). There is evidence of cheating, the falsification of school data, the forcing of underachieving students from schools, student labelling, the humiliation of special education students made to repeatedly take (and fail) tests, and the disproportionate focus on "bubble students", those on the verge of passing, at the expense of high and low achieving students (ibid).

Another sharp criticism of NCLB is that it is responsible for narrowing the curriculum. Any gains being made in student achievement in reading and mathematics come at the expense of other subjects. Not only is there an increase in the amount of time being spent on teaching reading and mathematics (Jennings & Rentner, 2006), but there is also more time being spent on test preparation, rather than on actual instruction (Berliner & Nichols, 2007). Evidence of improved results must, therefore, be countered with the increased tendency for teachers to teach to the test, and their use of so-called "drill and kill" approaches to teaching (Darling-Hammond, Noguera, Cobb, & Meier, 2007).

The aim of high-stakes testing reforms like NCLB may be less about raising student achievement and closing the underachievement gap than it is about the surreptitious take-over of public education by a market-driven system (Hursh, 2007). The testing industry has become big business - a multi-billion dollar industry. Smyth believes that it is money that is "the driving force behind these contemptible standards" (2008). Diane Ravitch, former Assistant Secretary of Education and ex-supporter of NCLB, now one of its staunchest critics, adds weight to this argument:

I came to realize that the sanctions embedded in NCLB were, in fact, not only ineffective but certain to contribute to the privatization of large chunks of public education (2011, p. 102).

Ravitch describes the underlying philosophy of NCLB as "measure and punish". Under NCLB, schools that continue to fail to meet their AYP targets can be forced to restructure and become privately managed charter schools. With increasing investment in charter schools, the

results are, according to Ravitch, predictable; motivated students in well-funded, urban charter schools, and public schools increasingly the schools of last resort, schools for the poorest and least able students (2011).

### *2.3.2 High-stakes testing in England*

Although high-stakes testing has been introduced across the UK, it is only in England that it has persisted. This section only considers the English experience. National testing in England consists of a series of National Curriculum assessments that were first introduced in 1991. They are a product of the 1988 Education Reform Act that not only introduced a national curriculum but also an assessment regime that assesses students in English, mathematics and science at the end of four “key stages”. Attainment targets were set for each of these key stages, for each subject. These stages are: key stage 1 (five to seven year olds), key stage 2 (eight to 11 year olds), key stage 3 (12 to 14 year olds) and key stage 4 or GCSEs (15 to 16 year olds).

Initial attempts at classroom-centred, criterion-referenced assessment practices, though more educationally sound, were soon scrapped as unworkable, given the workloads involved and the mass nature of the testing system (Whetton, 2009). This led to the establishment of externally assessed, mark-based tests where authenticity and validity had to make room for manageability and reliability (ibid). These National Curriculum Tests are colloquially known as SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks). In 1992, GCSE league tables were first produced and in 1996, primary schools were also ranked in league tables when the key stage 2 results were made public for the first time. With these league tables came increased school accountability.

Many of the criticisms levelled against NCLB have also been identified by critics of the English National Curriculum assessments. Some critics have targeted the validity of the tests themselves, with evidence of teaching to the test, and of students being better trained on how to take the tests, both of which cloud the interpretability of the data (Tymms, 2004). League tables and their accountability function have also been condemned for placing too much pressure on schools, and therefore on students, leading to increased stress and anxiety among students (Tymms & Merrell, 2007). In 2005, changes were eventually made to the key stage 1 testing, with a return to teacher assessment and teacher judgements for younger children. However, 11 year olds were still subject to high-stakes testing and league tables. The results of these league tables can be inconsistent with the school review evaluations conducted by



OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) which are based on a more thorough assessment process (Job, 2008).

National testing has also been criticised for resulting in a narrowed curriculum (Harlen, 2007; Tymms & Merrell, 2007). As one parent put it:

For my son, and for most 10-year-olds in the country, the next nine months will be ...a sterile, narrow and meaningless exercise in drilling and cramming. It's nothing to do with the skills of his teacher, who seems outstanding. Nor do I blame the school. It's called preparing for Key Stage 2 SATs (cited in Harlen, 2007, pp. 21-22).

A 2008 House of Commons enquiry into assessment, while defending the *principle* of national testing, echoed these criticisms:

In particular, we find that the use of national test results for the purpose of school accountability has resulted in some schools emphasising the maximisation of test results at the expense of a more rounded education for their pupils. A variety of classroom practices aimed at improving test results has distorted the education of some children . . . We find that 'teaching to the test' and narrowing of the taught curriculum are widespread phenomena in schools (Whetton, 2009).

From a political vantage point, the national testing system in England can be considered successful in that it has brought an increased level of accountability to schools, and has raised standards of achievement (Whetton, 2009). From an educational perspective, however, both the US and the English approaches have been widely criticised as failures. An examination of English students' performance in international studies shows a decline in educational outcomes, and the chief culprit is that accountability is being used as a driver for system reform (Mansell, 2007).

### *2.3.3 The Australian experience*

In 2008, Australia joined the USA and England when it too introduced national testing in numeracy and literacy, in this case for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (approximately 8 to 14 years old). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) oversees this national testing process which is called the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Disaggregated data is reported at national level by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status (Job, 2008). In 2010, ACARA developed a national 'My School' website which lists schools' NAPLAN results, and compares them against national averages. The 'My School' website has proven to be very popular and the Australian government has cited this as evidence of the scale of demand that exists within the

public domain for greater accountability (Lingard, 2010). This website has met with significant opposition from educators and teachers unions who have criticised the validity of the data, and raised concerns over the use of this data by the media to construct league tables (Lingard, 2010). ACARA believe such criticism to be on the decline, claiming that “analysts and press correspondents are much less likely now to challenge the data than to use them to clarify their thinking and support their arguments” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], n.d.). The results of an Australian Education Union survey suggest otherwise, however, with over half the principals surveyed claiming that the NAPLAN tests were a waste of time and resources that created unmanageable workloads (Paine, 2012).

The punitive sanctions evident in overseas testing regimes are not present in the Australian model, with no threats of school closure and federal support and financial assistance available to underperforming schools. There is some debate over whether or not NAPLAN can, in fact, be considered a high-stakes testing regime, given the lack of sanctions and officially endorsed league tables. The introduction of the ‘My School’ website along with the substantial media attention it has generated suggests that NAPLAN should be considered high-stakes (Polesel, Dulfer, & Turnbull, 2012), even though it is not a straightforward process creating league tables from ‘My School’ data. There is additional contextual data on the website, such as socio-economic status, and comparisons are made only against similar schools, defined as those schools “from statistically similar backgrounds” (ACARA, n.d.). The ACARA ‘My School’ terms of use agreement even has a clause that attempts to prevent the construction of league tables, requiring users to first seek permission if they are to “create lists of comparative school performance from content on this site directly or indirectly for commercial purposes” (ACARA, n.d.). This has not prevented the media from constructing their own unofficial league tables, however, such as those published in Australia in February 2012 (Parker, 2012).

It is too early to know what impact NAPLAN testing is having on Australian students’ learning, or whether or not the ‘My School’ approach to publishing school data will spare Australia from the ‘name and shame’ regime prevalent in England and the USA. The main assumption underpinning this “educational revolution” (ACARA, n.d.), namely the assumption that “competition between schools and parental pressures will push up standards and strengthen accountabilities” (Lingard, 2010) will, however, very likely be vigorously challenged.

## 2.4 Locating National Standards

Understanding National Standards as a contextualised set of practices (Olssen et al., 2004) emphasises the importance of establishing links between context and policy. National Standards has shifted the standards debate in New Zealand from concerns over falling standards to concerns over the ‘tail’ of student underachievement. What has not shifted is the political rhetoric over where the blame ought to lie. Chapter Five explores the ‘politics of blame’ inherent in the National Standards policy. Later chapters also reveal the neo-liberal, ‘managerialist’ culture behind National Standards, and the Ministry’s preoccupation with data collection and reporting, rather than on the educational process of capacity building.

National Standards can be seen as variant of assessment-driven reform evident overseas. It avoids a standardised, national testing regime, relying on professional teacher judgments to determine if students have met the standards. This has been done in an apparent effort to prevent the negative consequences of high-stakes testing evident in other countries. If National Standards is revealed as an assessment-driven policy, however, then there is the potential that New Zealand will simply develop its own variant of these negative consequences, particularly if league tables surface. The recent introduction of charter schools to the New Zealand educational landscape begs the questions of what the future implications are for schools who fail to meet their National Standards targets. Is there the potential for ‘failing’ New Zealand schools to be restructured and reopened as charter schools, and what will this mean for the future of the tail of underachievement? Many of the themes raised in this chapter will be returned to in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER THREE: New Zealand's National Standards

### 3.1 Developing the standards

On 23 October 2009 the right-of-centre National-led government fulfilled its election promise by launching its much-anticipated National Standards policy. In doing so, the government mobilised its “crusade to improve literacy and numeracy standards throughout New Zealand's school system” (Key, 2008). The Education (National Standards) Amendment Bill, passed under urgency in December 2008, gave the newly-elected government the power to set national standards in numeracy and literacy for all students of a particular age or year. In 2009, after a short consultation period, the New Zealand Curriculum National Standards were published. These documents set expectations in reading, writing and mathematics for all English-medium schools with students in years 1 to 8, with schools expected to implement these standards from 2010 onwards. Teachers determine whether students are achieving at a standard by making on-balance judgements about students' performance, as measured against the standard. These on-balance judgements are called ‘overall teacher judgements’ (OTJs). In making these OTJs, teachers are expected to draw on multiple sources of evidence, such as students' class work, observations, interviews and assessments. OTJs cannot be based on any single assessment task.

#### *3.1.1 Background*

The origins of National's modern literacy and numeracy crusade can be traced, symbolically at least, to a 1998 *National Business Review* article entitled “Let Standards Crusade Begin” (cited in Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 144). Although Labour had in 1997 briefly entertained the idea of national testing for primary school students, they hastily withdrew their support for such a policy in the face of considerable criticism from the education sector (Lee, 2010). The *National Business Review* article was fully supportive of the educational reforms occurring in the United Kingdom and this stimulated further debate on standardised testing (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a). This encouraged the National Party to fill the vacuum left by Labour. In a May 1998 Green Paper entitled *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*, National proposed a system of externally referenced national tests in literacy and mathematics for Year 6 and Year 8 students. Professor John Hattie, of The

University of Auckland, criticised the Green Paper's suggestion of introducing national testing. He pointed to the lack of evidence that testing enhances educational outcomes as well as to the detrimental effects that high-stakes testing in other countries has had on their students' learning (Hattie, 1998). He also made a number of recommendations, including the following:

That it be recognized that increasing National Testing leads to less innovation in schools, less self-management for teachers, and an attention more on outcomes to the detriment of inputs and processes (p. 6).

That alternative methods to National Testing be investigated to meet the aims cited in the Green Paper (p. 23).

National were not swayed by this criticism, and in 1999 released their *Information for Better Learning* assessment policy, which included national testing in literacy and numeracy for Year 5 and 7 students (Lee, 2010). Education Minister Nick Smith made clear the extent to which neo-liberal influences were affecting local policy decisions when he claimed that those against national testing were "swimming against the tide of education internationally" (cited in Lee, 2010, p. 74). He also underlined the government's assessment-driven, managerialist focus by stating that:

Parents, teachers, schools and government all need better information on how well our children are learning so we can focus on achieving excellence for all pupils. Better assessment is essential if we are to reach our goal of having all nine-year-olds able to read, write and do maths (cited in Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 146).

The election of a Labour government at the end of 1999 ushered in a nine-year period where national testing was off the government agenda. It also marked a period when National shifted their position away from national testing towards national standards. In 2003, national testing was proposed in National's discussion document entitled *Schools of Excellence* (Smith, 2003), yet by 2005, under National's *School Reporting* policy, national standards in literacy and numeracy were being proposed (Thrupp, 2007). In May 2006, attempts were made to introduce national standards legislation in literacy and numeracy for primary school students by way of amendments tabled by National at the committee stage of the Education Amendment Bill (NZPD, 2006b). The amendments included a requirement that schools report to the Ministry, in their annual reports, an analysis of student progress against proposed standards. Labour voted against these amendments, but it was a reminder that although national testing had been abandoned by the political right-wing, the twin neo-liberal pillars of performativity and managerialism had not.

A second attempt at introducing national standards occurred in the form of Bill English's private member's bill, the Education (National Standards of Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Bill, which was announced in November 2006, but failed to get a first reading. It also contained the requirement that schools report student progress against the standards to the Ministry, through the submission of their annual reports. It is worth noting that both attempts to introduce national standards occurred during periods of relative prosperity. As Openshaw and Walshaw have discussed, concerns over falling standards in New Zealand tend to heighten during periods of increasing economic uncertainty (2010a). When National were re-elected in 2008, it was in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, at a time when New Zealand and much of the rest of the world was being dragged deeper into recession. The newly-elected National government subsequently wasted little time in pushing through their National Standards policy.

### *3.1.2 The arrival of New Zealand's National Standards*

On the 2nd of April 2007, at the University of Auckland's Epsom campus, National officially announced their new National Standards policy. In a speech delivered by the party leader John Key, National announced three requirements of primary schools that underpinned this policy. Firstly, "clear national standards" in reading, writing and mathematics that would provide teachers with a "common language to describe the progress of students". Secondly, "effective assessment" that would require "all primary schools to use assessment programmes that compare the progress of their students with other students right across the country". Finally, "upfront reporting" that would require schools to report assessment information both to parents and to the MOE (New Zealand National Party, 2007, p.1). Key also made it clear in his speech that national testing was off the agenda.

Eighteen months later, on the eve of its November 2008 election victory, National released its education policy document entitled *2008 Education: Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy*, a crusade that National describes as starting with "10 critical steps" (New Zealand National Party, 2008a, p. 1). This policy is dominated by the introduction of National Standards in numeracy and literacy, and includes the following:

1. Set National Standards in literacy and numeracy.
2. Require every primary and intermediate school pupil to be assessed regularly against National Standards.

3. Require primary and intermediate schools to report to parents in plain English about how their child is doing compared to National Standards and compared to other children their age (ibid).

Three weeks later National won the general election. In his *Speech from the Throne*, on 9 December 2008, new Prime Minister Key included the following statements about National Standards:

In primary schools, the introduction of National Standards in literacy and numeracy and the new requirement that every pupil's progress be assessed against these standards will ensure that problems are identified early and confronted. In addition, parents will be better informed about their children's literacy and numeracy progress through a new requirement that National Standards results be reported in Plain English. These steps will be critical parts of my Government's intended crusade to improve literacy and numeracy standards throughout New Zealand's school system (Key, 2008).

The newly-elected government immediately set about mobilising its literacy and numeracy 'crusade'. The same day as Key delivered his *Speech from the Throne*, all three readings of the Education (National Standards) Amendment Bill were pushed through Parliament, under urgency. This legislation gave the Minister of Education the power to set standards in literacy and numeracy "applicable to all students of a particular age or in a particular year of schooling" (Education (National Standards) Amendment Bill 2008, p. 2). It also obliged schools to set student achievement targets against these literacy and numeracy standards in their annual charters.

In 2009 the Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, set about developing the standards, and after a short consultation period (25 May to 3 July) the New Zealand Curriculum Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were developed and published. On 23 October 2009, Key launched these standards at an Auckland primary school. That same month, the national administration guidelines were updated to include a new guideline, NAG 2A. NAG 2A requires schools to report to parents, twice yearly and in plain English, students' progress and achievement against the standards. It also requires schools, through their annual reports, to report school-level student achievement data against the standards to the Ministry. The annual report has to include "the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including by Māori, Pasifika and by gender" (Ministry of Education, 2012c), with the first of these reports due in May 2012. The regulatory framework was now in place and from 2010 onwards, schools were expected to implement the standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

### *3.1.3 National Standards policy-making – a systems approach*

The main justifications for this policy is problematic in nature, with the government framing National Standards as a policy that is responding primarily to a problem of student underachievement, coined as either the ‘tail of underachievement’ or the ‘one-in-five’ students failing in our school system. Other justifications for the policy point to the need to improve both the quality of reporting and the use of assessment data in primary schools, as evident from various ERO reports (Thrupp & Easter, 2012). The objectives of the National Standards policy can therefore be interpreted as attempts to find solutions to problems. This, as signalled in Chapter One, fits with a ‘systems approach’ to policy-making, one characterised by the elements of coherence, hierarchy and instrumentality (Ozga, 2005).

Coherence is:

the assumption that all the bits of the action fit together, that they form part of an organized whole, a single system, and policy has to do with how this system is (or should be) steered (Colebatch, 1998, p. 3).

In practice, maintaining coherence is problematic, even if the intention of the policy-making process is to fit the policy actions into an organised and coherent system that can be steered in a particular direction (Ozga, 2005). National Standards policy struggles to demonstrate coherence as, for example, there is no clear alignment between the problem of student underachievement and the one-size-fits-all policy response that targets all students. Nor is it clear how a policy that is dominated by demands for more reporting will improve student achievement. Academics point to the “lack of clarity around what the policy framework is designed to improve and, more specifically, how the [National Standards] might relate to solving the achievement disparities” (Robinson, McNaughton, & Timperley, 2011, p. 732). Lack of coherence is also evident by the narrow focus of the National Standards on reading, writing and mathematics, when considered against the personalised and flexible learning objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum.

With regards to hierarchy, the systems approach assumes that policy is authoritative and hierarchical, where the government sets policy and then communicates it down the relevant channels. This resonates very strongly with the top-down approach that the government has taken towards the development and implementation of National Standards. The National-led government released the details of its education policy less than a fortnight before the 2008 election and in a clear demonstration of its power proceeded to rush all three readings of the



Education (National Standards) Amendment Bill through Parliament in a single day, barely a month after winning the election. The government, through this bill, directed school boards to set achievement targets in relation to the new standards and to report student achievement results to the MOE in their annual reports. Further evidence of this exertion of power came in 2009 when the government began implementing the National Standards “at speed and without effective consultation” (Thrupp, 2010, p. 41) and then proceeded to threaten to sack BOTs who refused to comply (Trevett, 2009). By October 2009, exactly one year from having released its policy to the public, National Standards had been fully launched.

The final element of the systems approach, instrumentality, views policy as a means to an end: a tool or instrument wielded in order to address issues of concern, (i.e. policy problems). This approach to policy-making is technicist-empiricist in nature, where policies are not ends in themselves, but are the “best means of achieving predetermined goals” (Codd, 1988, p. 237). How these goals are achieved is a question of implementation. The government’s position of authority and power legitimises these policy problems, allowing them to be moved down the hierarchy and implemented. In this way policy can be seen as a problem-solving process that utilises the resources available to the government to realise its policy objectives. There is strong alignment between the systems approach model of policy-making and the National Standards policy, and this demands a closer inspection of the policy problems that this policy is intending to solve.

### 3.2 Policy problems - the publicised rationale

At face value, when looking at its legal framework, National Standards is a policy that concerns itself with assessment and reporting. An obvious rationale, then, for introducing National Standards is the need to improve schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities. As it turns out, improving these capabilities has indeed been publicised by the National Party as an important justification for their policy. However, this rationale has been almost completely overshadowed by another justification that is far more controversial: namely, that National Standards are needed in order to address the urgent problem of student underachievement. In fact, the National Standards policy has been so overwhelmingly publicised as a solution to the “tail” of student underachievement that assessment and reporting have tended to play supporting roles at best in the publicised National Standards debate. This did not happen by accident. It represents a deliberate strategy by the National Party to take advantage of

educational circumstances in order to gain the upper hand in the public discourse over literacy and numeracy standards. Before considering why this happened, it is necessary to first identify the main, publicised rationales behind the National Standards policy.

### *3.2.1 Student underachievement*

Since 2008, the message of raising student achievement has dominated the Government's publicised rationale for their National Standards policy. For example, the MOE website states: "National Standards aim to lift achievement in literacy and numeracy (reading, writing, and mathematics) by being clear about what students should achieve and by when" (Ministry of Education, 2012e). Further, in a 2009 letter to BOTs, principals and teachers, then-Minister of Education Anne Tolley reinforces this message when she asserts that "the National Standards will enable us to improve student achievement by providing sound information about how students are progressing," (Tolley, 2009b). Student underachievement is the problem that has been identified and National Standards the policy response to solve this problem.

This message of needing to raise student achievement can be partially linked to New Zealand's performance in international assessment studies. These studies have often been cited by politicians, teacher unions and the media as benchmarks for analysing comparative student achievement (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a). Analysis of these international studies since the 1990s, including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), regularly sees New Zealand placed near the top of all participating countries in literacy and numeracy achievement (Elley, 2005; Hattie, 2009). This is the case despite some mediocre results, such as in the 2007 TIMSS study, released in 2008, which showed New Zealand students performing in the middle of 36 countries in maths and science. New Zealand's overall National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) results nonetheless support the view that there is no legitimate overall underachievement problem in literacy and numeracy among New Zealand students. For example, in 2001 the NEMP findings found that primary school students were better and more confident readers when compared to students from the previous study four year earlier, and in 2005 students in years 4 and 8 showed improvement in almost all areas of mathematics (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a).

A full-page article in the Listener in 2002 by Brian Easton, entitled “World Class: Contrary to Popular Myth, New Zealand Schools Are up with the Best” emphasised this at the time (cited in Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 135). The student underachievement problem is, as a result, not very convincing when described simply in terms of overall student achievement. It does become more persuasive, however, when the high variance evident in these results is considered. Easton’s Listener article described this variance as one of the “bigger bottom tails among the OECD” (ibid), a sentiment echoed by then-Minister of Education Trevor Mallard, who in 2004, expressed concern about New Zealand’s wide gap between the best and poorest performing students (NZPD, 2004). This ‘long tail of underachievement’ became a regular theme over the following years, a tail that was over-represented by Māori and Pasifika students (Robinson et al., 2011; Thrupp, 2010). Prime Minister Key stressed the significance of this tail in his opening parliamentary speech by stating that:

Of particular concern to my Government is the long tail of underachievement that it sees in our schools, with as many as one in five young New Zealanders leaving school without the skills and qualifications they need to succeed (Key, 2008).

The reason student underachievement became the main justification behind the National Standards policy can therefore be attributed to this ‘tail of underachievement’ or, more accurately, to the ‘one-in-five’ discourse that has evolved over the last decade. This ‘one-in-five’ figure became synonymous with the ‘tail of underachievement’ and came to represent a convenient estimate of the number of students not succeeding in New Zealand schools or, to be more blunt, failing school. It came to prominence in 2005 following a comment by the Education Review Office (ERO).

When ERO presented its June 2005 annual report to Parliament, it included the following comment by Acting Chief Review officer Mike Hollings, under the heading “The system does not work for every child”:

New Zealand’s best students perform with the best in other countries but there is a group at the bottom, perhaps as large as 20 percent, who are currently not succeeding in our education system (Education Review Office, 2005, p. 6).

The National Party, through their education spokesman Bill English, picked up on this comment as justification for the need to introduce national standards in numeracy and literacy into New Zealand schools (English, 2005a). Even though the ERO report made no mention of literacy and numeracy skills (in fact it made no mention at all of how this 20 percent figure was calculated) the inference was understandable. The 20 percent or one-in-five figure was

already well established in political and educational circles, due primarily, but not exclusively, to the earlier results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).

The IALS is a comparative survey that represents a mammoth undertaking, with over 20 participating countries, which by 1998 had covered over 10% of the world population (Kirsch, 2001), with the New Zealand leg of the survey having been conducted in 1996. Literacy in the context of this survey extended as much to numeracy as it did to literacy, since it covered the three domains of prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. The main reason for conducting this large-scale assessment was to provide a relevant, comparable and interpretive body of evidence that would enable policy-makers to make informed policy decisions (Kirsch, 2001). Unsurprisingly, it gained a great deal of political attention amongst government bodies in New Zealand. A 1997 Ministry of Education Report on the results from this survey found that “of particular concern for New Zealand, as with a number of the nations in this study, is the high concentration of adults with poor literacy skills (around **1 in 5** New Zealanders)” (emphasis added, Walker, Udy, & Pole, 1997). This one-in-five statistic subsequently became a key driver behind the Ministry of Education’s 2001 “More Than Words” Adult Literacy Strategy document (2001). The IALS results also informed a 2004 Treasury paper entitled Adult literacy and Economic Growth (Johnston, 2004). Matt Robson, from the Progressive Party, referred to this report in Parliament to highlight the ‘one-in-five’ as a “major problem” (NZPD, 2005a, p.18383).

Further references to the one-in-five figure can be found in a 2001 Education and Science Committee report on the teaching of reading in New Zealand (Education and Science Committee, 2001). In reference to this report, Liz Gordon (Chair of the Committee) commented in the House that “one in five students in New Zealand get to secondary school unable to read and write well enough to access the curriculum” (NZPD, 2001). In 2003, Professor John Hattie painted an even more worrying picture of the one-in-five, commenting that the “top 80% of our students are very competitive and performing at world class standards, while the bottom 20% are falling backwards” (Hattie, 2003).

### *3.2.2 The rise of the one-in-five*

The evidence cited above shows that the one-in-five figure was well established prior to 2005, but it was ERO’s comment in June 2005 that gave the Opposition the ammunition it needed to attack the Government on education, right at the beginning of the Labour-led

Government's third term in office, which began at the end of 2005. The ERO comment generated considerable criticism in the House, initially from the Māori party. Tariana Turia referred to the 20% group as a "national disgrace" (2005, p.1) and Te Ururoa Flavell followed this up the next day by demanding the government explain how they were going to address this 20% of students who were not succeeding in New Zealand schools (NZPD, 2005b). That same day, in a media release, Bill English introduced National's new education team and used this as an opportunity to raise public concern over the 20% figure representing student underachievement (English, 2005b). In early 2006, Alan Peachey (National MP) precisely quantified this 20% statistic as representing 153,000 students, in reference to a calculation made by the New Zealand Herald (NZPD, 2006a).

National's first attempt at legislating for National Standards in literacy and numeracy came shortly afterwards. On the 2nd of May 2006, the Education Amendment Bill was at the Committee stage of the House, having already passed its first and second readings and contained nothing in relation to any form of national standards. It was at this point that National tabled amendments to the bill to include a new clause under the national education guidelines to allow for national standards in literacy and numeracy to be set. Although the amendments were not agreed to, ERO's 20% figure loomed large as justification for the new assessment and reporting practices that these standards would introduce (NZPD, 2006b).

The ERO comment was soon reverberating throughout the House and into the public domain and it stimulated a discussion that led to an important inquiry into student underachievement. On the 3rd of May 2006, the New Zealand Herald, under the headline "MPs to ask why one in five pupils fails", reported that a parliamentary inquiry was being set up to investigate "literacy and numeracy standards and why so many students were not succeeding" (Thomson, 2006, p.1). The results of this inquiry, however, were to be a long time coming, with the final report presented to the House nearly two years later, in February 2008 (Education and Science Committee, 2008). Meanwhile, the one-in-five figure was taking on a life of its own. On the 22nd May, the Herald reported the following:

Committee chairman Brian Donnelly said yesterday the ERO had come before the committee late last year and when questioned about how it had reached the 20 per cent figure "they fluffed around, they couldn't really say". It was now a widely held view that a fifth of New Zealand students were failing, yet there appeared to be no data to back it up or disprove it. (Berry, 2006a, p. 1).

This concerning lack of clarity about ERO's 20% figure did not stop National from brandishing the one-in-five statistic, weapon-like, against the government, with Education

Minister Steve Maharey coming under considerable pressure as a result. On the 23rd of May, a National Party statement by Bill English was released to the press under the headline “Maharey tries to cover up failure in schools” (English, 2006a). Steve Maharey attempted to deflect the criticism by pointing to the lack of substance behind ERO’s 20 percent figure:

One in five children is not failing and once Mike Hollings is back in front of that select committee, which is where I hope they will start ... [it will become clear] that he didn't mean there was one-in-five kids in New Zealand failing (Maharey, cited in Berry, 2006b, p. 1).

Unfortunately for the Minister, the one-in-five genie was now well and truly out of the bottle. On the 15th of June 2006, the following headline appeared in the Dominion Post: “One in five schools failing, says ERO chief” (Nichols, 2006). National now had a convenient ‘smoking gun’ that it could use to justify the introduction of National Standards. When John Key announced his party’s national standards policy in reading, writing and mathematics in a speech given at the University of Auckland’s Epsom campus on 2nd of April 2007, he referred directly to ERO’s one-in-five statistic as justification for these standards. In fact the speech was titled *Encouraging Success, Confronting Failure* (New Zealand National Party, 2007), suggesting that the one-in-five figure really did represent student failure. This led to headlines such as the one in the Manawatu Standard; “Busting schools’ 20% failure rate” (Power, 2007).

John Key continued to exploit the ERO statistic as justification for his party’s policy. This is evident from a series of speeches he made to various National Party regional conferences in 2007 (Key, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d). On each occasion the ‘one-in-five’ was used as a reason for the introduction of national standards. For example, in his speech to the Central North Island Regional Conference in May 2007, he made this link absolutely clear.

At a bare minimum, we need to do something about the one in five children who are failing at school. That’s why, in a speech last month, I announced our policy of setting national standards in reading, writing and maths (Key, 2007c, p. 6).

The question over exactly what ERO’s original 20 percent figure represented was eventually answered when the Education and Science Committee released their findings, in February 2008:

This comment in the Education Review Office’s annual report for 2005 stimulated the discussion that led to our decision to conduct an inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child, as it suggested that it was not working for an alarmingly large number of students. We understand that ERO’s 20 percent estimate represents an aggregation of data from various sources, including PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, as well as NCEA results. Professor John Hattie of the University of Auckland has also said that the bottom 20 percent of the

achievement range is a cause for serious concern (Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 7).

The report, however, did not rule out the possibility that this 20% figure did in fact represent “student failure”, as opposed to the more palatable “student underachievement”:

The size of the group of students who fail in the schooling system cannot be quantified precisely. We examined data from NCEA and other assessments used in New Zealand schools, and from international studies. Different indicators produce different results, making it impossible to arrive at an exact figure, but most suggest that it is between 10 percent and 20 percent of the school student population. Even the lower end of this range represents an unacceptably large number of young New Zealanders leaving school ill-equipped for their adult lives (Education and Science Committee, 2008, p. 6).

This was good timing for the National Party as it ratified their rhetoric and set the stage for the launch of their official national standards policy and their “literacy and numeracy crusade” on the eve of their election success (New Zealand National Party, 2008a). On 20 October 2008, National released their official National Standards policy document. The first sentence of this document reads: “one-in-five Kiwi children – a staggering 150,000 – are not succeeding at school” (New Zealand National Party, 2008b). A February 2010 message from the Prime Minister, as schools began working with National Standards for the first time, reinforces this one-in-five message.

So I’ve been concerned to learn that up to one in five children leave our schools without the literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed. That’s right, up to one in five New Zealanders leaving school with inadequate reading, writing and maths skills. That’s why the National-led government is introducing national Standards... (Key, 2010)

Education Minister Anne Tolley subsequently went on to use this one-in-five figure “almost mantra like” during National’s first term in Government (Thrupp & Easter, 2012, p. 19). The one-in-five statistic had now graduated to become the cornerstone of the National Standards policy.

### *3.2.3 Assessment and reporting*

The National Standards policy makes no direct demands that schools improve student achievement. What the policy does demand is that schools use OTJs to measure student achievement and progress in relation to the reading, writing and mathematics standards, and to label each student’s performance as either “above”, “at”, “below” or “well below” each standard. It also requires schools to set achievement targets against the standards in its annual charter. Finally, under NAG 2A, it compels schools to:

(a) report to students and their parents on the student's progress and achievement in relation to National Standards. Reporting to parents in plain language in writing must be at least twice a year;

(b) report school-level data in the board's annual report on National Standards under three headings: school strengths and identified areas for improvement; the basis for identifying areas for improvement; and planned actions for lifting achievement.

(c) report in the board's annual report on: the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including by Māori, Pasifika and by gender (where this does not breach an individual's privacy); and how students are progressing against the standards as well as how they are achieving (Ministry of Education, 2012c).

If student underachievement is the main problem that National Standards is trying to solve, then improving schools' use of assessment data and their quality of reporting are the prescribed remedies. The implication, of course, is that schools are not currently gathering, using and reporting their data well enough. This leads us to two additional and related justifications for the introduction of National Standards; to improve primary schools' assessment and reporting capabilities.

Improving these capabilities has been a consistent theme behind National's recent history of educational policies. This is evident in the 1999 policy document *Information for Better Learning*, the 2003 discussion paper *Schools for Excellence*, the 2005 policy document *School Reporting*, the proposed amendments to the 2006 Education Amendment Bill, Bill English's 2006 (National Standards of Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Bill, and the recent rhetoric leading to the development of the National Standards policy. The development of the current policy has seen these capabilities playing second fiddle to the one-in-five problem of student underachievement, yet the Government has nonetheless provided a number of plausible justifications for why there is a need to improve these capabilities.

For example, on the National Party's Q&A page it cites a March 2007 ERO report entitled *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information in Schools* as evidence that primary schools' evaluative and reporting capabilities are weak (New Zealand National Party, n.d.-b). This Q&A page states that "most primary schools are generally ineffective at using school-wide information to improve achievement" (p. 2) and that "49% of primary schools were generally ineffective at reporting achievement information to parents and their community" (p. 1). John Hattie is also referenced on this page, bringing some academic credibility to the argument that parents are not receiving quality information about their children's achievement. "Out of reports from 156 different schools, he found 98% of students had positive comments about their achievement, effort and attitude" (p. 1).



In December 2009, Education Minister Anne Tolley cited another ERO report, *Reading and Writing in Years 1 and 2 (December 2009)*, as justification for National Standards. In a press release, she stated that nearly two thirds of school principals were not properly monitoring student achievement and progress. She also stated that 30 percent of teachers are ineffective at teaching reading and writing. According to Minister Tolley, this partially explains “why one in five children are leaving school without the basic skills they need” (Tolley, 2009a, p. 1).

National Standards, as a policy response to the need to raise schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities, are further justified by the Ministry’s claim that the standards are underpinned by ‘assessment for learning’ principles. Since National Standards entrusts schools and teachers with making professional, overall judgements about students’ achievement, using multiple sources of evidence as opposed to relying on a single national test, they are cited by the Ministry as having the potential to “be used formatively to support better learning” (Ministry of Education, 2011a).

According to the Government, National Standards will give schools a shared set of expectations about what students ought to be achieving, and oblige schools to report student achievement and progress against the standards to parents twice yearly, in plain English. By clearly identifying underachieving students, and by keeping parents well informed about their progress, National Standards will stimulate the improvements needed to address the “tail” of underachievement (New Zealand National Party, 2008a).

## CHAPTER FOUR: A closer look at the publicised rationale

The publicised rationale for introducing National Standards is dominated by the claim that it is a necessary response to the problem of student underachievement. It is further claimed that National Standards will provide the required leverage to raise teachers' assessment and reporting capabilities, both of which are necessary conditions for succeeding in raising student achievement. The following chapter takes a critical look at these claims, and evaluates them in light of the evidence.

### 4.1 Behind the one-in-five

There is little doubt that New Zealand has a "tail" of underachievement. The 2008 Education and Science Committee's *Inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child* pulls a few punches in pointing this out:

there is compelling evidence that the schooling system does not meet the needs of a significant minority of underachieving students, and that this group is larger than it should be... . The large gap between the low achievers and the rest, combined with the comparatively large number of low achievers, causes this group to be referred to as "the long tail" (p. 5).

More recent results of the 2009 PISA study on reading literacy for 15-year-olds provides further evidence of this "tail".

Among the eight top or high-performing countries or economies, New Zealand had the widest range of scores ... between the bottom five percent (5th percentile) and top five percent (95th percentile) of students (Telford & May, 2010, p. 14).

When it comes to quantifying the size of this tail, there is much less clarity. The 2008 Education and Science Committee Report points this out, saying "it is difficult to determine the size of this group of underachieving students" (p. 7), and acknowledges that this is partly due to the difficulty in agreeing on what actually constitutes a minimum standard of achievement. Thrupp and Easter also recognise the complexity of this calculation, but put the number closer to one in ten, a figure advocated by Terry Crooks (2012). "NEMP results suggest that at most 10% of year 8 students seem to lack the required skills to succeed in secondary school" (Crooks, cited in New Zealand Educational Institute, 2010, p. 11). Adding to this lack of clarity, the results of the 2009 PISA study put the figure at close to 14% (Telford & May, 2010). Despite this lack of consensus, the Government has conveniently and repeatedly pegged the number at one-in-five, or its dilution "up to one-in-five". This figure is

now being challenged by the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) which is seeking an independent evaluation of this one-in-five claim. Robin Duff, PPTA President, says "we are interested in evidence-based policies and feel that the evidence here is really lacking" (Wastney, 2012, p. 1). It is difficult to see what the PPTA hopes to gain by arguing over the size of the tail, and it may even backfire on them. The Government could make the case that the PPTA is more concerned with splitting hairs than in tackling student underachievement. This is not to suggest that using questionable evidence to promote an evidence based policy shouldn't be challenged.

#### *4.1.1 The escalation of the rhetoric of failure*

Between 1998, a year that represents the symbolic beginning of the current standards crusade, through to the launch of today's National Standards policy, there has been a subtle yet significant shift in the National Party's education policy discourse. National's 1998 Green Paper *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools* and their 1999 policy document *Information for Better Learning* each proposes a national testing regime for primary school students. In both cases the need to raise student achievement is given as the aim of the proposals, yet it is the rhetoric of improving schools' assessment and reporting capabilities that drives these discussions. This is evident in the respective titles of these two documents where 'assessment' and 'information' are the policy drivers.

The 1999 policy document, *Information for Better Learning* states National's position on needing to raise schools' assessment and reporting capabilities:

The Government's aim is to raise achievement levels for all students, and address disparities in students' achievement. Useful information from appropriate assessment can help schools and teachers to close that gap. While schools and teachers currently monitor students' progress and achievement using many different activities and tools, many schools do not compare their students' achievements with national externally referenced data (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 2).

Furthermore, the rationale presented for the need to raise student achievement is aspirational, with no mention at all of student failure or underachievement in this document.

The future world our young New Zealanders will live and work in will bring them challenges we can only dream of. We owe it to them to provide them with the best possible opportunities to meet those challenges with confidence, and with appropriate knowledge and skills (p. 4).

In 2003, as Opposition under a Labour-led government, National introduced their discussion document *Schools of Excellence* (Smith, 2003). Again, nationwide testing is proposed but this

document marks the emergence of the “tail of underachievement” (p. 2) and with it, the opposite of the previous aspirational message of the 1990s. “There can be no ‘Knowledge Economy’ while significant numbers of school leavers cannot read or add” (p. 3).

Despite the gloomy picture of student underachievement painted in this document, assessment is still portrayed as the main driver behind the national testing proposals.

Will national testing help raise literacy and numeracy standards? New Zealand needs better objective information on children’s literacy and numeracy to drive good teaching practice in the classroom and to lift the numeracy and literacy skills of all children (p. 5).

The prospect of national standards in literacy and numeracy, based on existing tests, was raised shortly before the 2005 election when National announced its *School Reporting* policy. Once again the title reveals the rationale for the policy, focusing on the need to improve schools’ assessment and reporting practices, this time with a particular focus on providing better information to parents (Thrupp, 2007). By 2006 National had officially abandoned their national testing policy in favour of national standards, yet the main driver behind their policy discourse continued to be the need to improve schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities. National’s Education shadow minister Bill English’s Education (National Standards of Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Bill 2006 provides further evidence of this:

The aim of the Bill is to amend the Education Act 1989 (the Act) to " ... enable parents to be well-informed about students' schooling and to assess whether remedial action may be required for schools and students whose achievements fall short of the national standards

In November 2006, when referring to this bill, English reinforces this assessment and reporting message by stating that “parents and schools need to know where every child stands relative to national standards and what progress they are making” (English, 2006b, p. 1). By now, however, the one-in-five rhetoric and its message of student failure, was gaining greater and greater traction, both in the House and in the media and soon it was driving the policy discourse.

In 2007, student failure finally usurps inadequate school assessment and reporting capabilities as the main driver behind National’s literacy and numeracy standards policy. When John Key announces his party’s National Standards policy in April 2007, the words “fail”, “failing” or “failure” appear a total of 11 times in the speech titled “*Encouraging Success: Confronting Failure*”. This speech also mentions the one-in-five figure as representing about 150000 students. The goal of improving schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities has been

relegated to the side lines. By the end of 2008, National Standards had evolved into a policy synonymous with addressing student failure, and the one-in-five figure was now driving the policy, getting top-billing in National's 2008 education policy document.

Ironically, even though ERO's 2005 one-in-five comment led to the 2008 Education and Science Committee's *Inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child*, National Standards are not mentioned at all in the 12 recommendations made in the Committee's report (Education and Science Committee, 2008). Indeed, the report cautions against the setting of minimum standards, "because of the huge variation in students' performance and potential" (p. 6).

The question then has to be asked: Why has the Government deliberately positioned National Standards as a solution to the one-in-five problem? There are two related reasons for this. Firstly, it allowed the Government to sell its policy to the public by evoking a sense of 'moral panic' (see below). Secondly, it gave them the upper hand over schools and teachers in the on-going blame game of who ought to take responsibility for student failure. The first can be seen as an opportunistic response to circumstances in order to attract voters and win an election; the second as a tactical ploy in a longer term strategy to weaken the teacher unions and open the door to greater privatisation of the education sector.

#### *4.1.2 Folk devils, electioneering and the blame game*

By the time the one-in-five figure had bubbled to the surface of National's educational policy platform in 2008, the New Zealand economy was in recession. The National Party took full advantage of the circumstances, on the eve of the 2008 general election, to exploit the one-in-five figure and its crisis message of student failure. Debates over declining standards in literacy and numeracy in times of economic uncertainty are vote-winners "that no prospective government can choose to ignore" (Openshaw & Walshaw, 2010a, p. 168).

There are considerable negative connotations associated with the idea of student failure. According to Hattie there is a significant social cost in failing to raise the performance of the one-in-five.

These bottom 20% are the least mobile, and there is no doubt that more and more public resources will need to be directed to them when they leave school – in crime, unemployment, adult literacy, training programs [sic], despair (e.g., suicide) and many other social problems (Hattie, 2003, p. 4).

Alan Peachey (National MP) adds “delinquent behaviour, chronic welfare dependence, a loss of productive capability in the economy, and an increase in tax-supported welfare benefits” to this grim picture (NZPD, 2005b, p.249) On his first day as Prime Minister, John Key also weighs in, stating that “one in five young New Zealanders do not enjoy the benefits of a good education. Their literacy and numeracy skills are so poor that they have no future” (NZPD, 2008, p.41). The implication is that students who fail at school are more likely to be a burden, as well as a threat, to the rest of society, thus creating a sense of urgency about addressing the perceived one-in-five problem.

This association between the phrase “one-in-five” and subsequent social problems is strengthened by media headlines like: “ One-in-five school kids anti-social” (Hill, 2008) and “One-in-five quit school unqualified” (L. Nichols, 2008), both from Dominion Post, and “One in five on benefit for 10 years” from the Waikato Times (Adams, 2011). The one-in-five can therefore be seen to represent a societal threat, and by deliberately fastening National Standards to this predominantly Māori and Pasifika one-in-five problem, the Government has both exploited and stimulated a sense of moral panic within a recession-hit public in order to garner support for its policy. A moral panic describes the concentration of feeling generated as people react to a perceived threat to their social order. The term was created by Stanley Cohen, author of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, who described those who supposedly threaten the social order as “folk devils”. Cohen describes a moral panic as a response to:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons [that] emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media... Sometimes the subject of the panic passes over and is forgotten... at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy (Cohen, 2002, p. 1).

A February 2010 New Zealand Herald survey showed widespread, popular support for National Standards, with over 70% in favour of the policy (Eames, 2010). National Standards can thus be portrayed as a response to a public attitude which is demanding educational reform, one that is reflecting “the economic and social mood of the electorate” (George, 2012, p. 19).

Not only has the Government taken advantage of the one-in-five figure by stimulating a sense of moral panic, but their National Standards policy has simultaneously placed responsibility for addressing this one-in-five problem squarely and unfairly on the shoulders of schools and teachers. It is well documented that the tail of student underachievement in New Zealand

schools mirrors our society's long tail of poverty (for example Robinson et al., 2011; Snook & O'Neill, 2010). New Zealand schools are characterised as "high performance and low equity" by the OECD, a situation that is most likely due to a combination of out-of-school factors and school-related factors (Robinson et al., 2011, p. 721). The failure or underachievement of some students at school is an extremely complex issue that is fundamentally related to both historical and socio-economic conditions.

It is nearly impossible to improve educational achievement (especially "the long tail of underachievement") without also tackling the social ills (poor housing, poor medical care, poor diet) which accompany poverty (Snook & O'Neill, 2010, p. 20).

The Government has thus evoked the "politics of blame", defined as government attempts "to construct student or institutional 'underperformance' or 'failure' as the clear responsibility of schools and teachers" (Thrupp, 2009, p. 6). Government expectations that students from poor families, who begin school disadvantaged and below the standards in reading, writing and mathematics, will somehow learn at an accelerated rate and catch up to their more advantaged peers, are unrealistic. The Ministry seems to have "ignored the overarching reality that socio-economic factors [are] the strongest predictor of student achievement" (Lee, 2010, p. 24).

If we accept that 20-30% of student achievement can be accounted for by the schools and teachers, then 70-80% is attributable to family/home, socio-economic status, and student circumstances (ibid, , p. 85).

The problem is further compounded by the fact that National Standards is a one-size-fits-all, trickle-down policy, which does not specifically target the tail of underachievement. Indeed, overseas evidence of the effects of standardisation on this "tail" is quite damning:

Standardization reduces the quality and quantity of what is taught and learned in schools...over the long term, standardization creates inequities, widening the gap between the quality of education for poor and minority youth and that of more privileged students (McNeil, 2000, p. 3).

To make things worse, the levels at which the standards have been set for each year group do not seem to have a sound educational basis. For example, the MOE predicts that 93% of Year 3 students are expected to meet the mathematics standard, yet this figure is set to drop to 51% by Year 8 (Hartevelt, 2009a). In other words, 42% of students who are considered 'at' the standard by the end of their third year at school are expected to be below the standard at the end of Year 8. Student failure, it would seem, is part of the fabric of National Standards *by*

*design*. “It is as if the standards have just been ‘plucked out of thin air’ with the percentage rate left to fall where it will” (Clark, 2010, p. 23).

The suggestion that National Standards can address the complex issue of student underachievement must, of necessity, be treated with suspicion. But it doesn’t automatically mean throwing out the baby with the bathwater. If we look past the one-in-five rhetoric and past the dualism of society/family/class versus school/teacher (Clark, 2011), then we can reveal a policy that, when stripped down to its bare legislative form, is still talking about improving schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities. Schools and teachers ought to have high expectations of all their students, and there is no room in schools for deficit thinking, so surely there may be some validity in the claim that National Standards can improve the assessment and reporting capabilities of schools? If so, then some potential may exist for schools who do implement National Standards in good faith to improve student achievement, however modest.

## 4.2 Reporting, assessment and capacity building

Now standards have been introduced into New Zealand schools, leaving many school leaders and teachers wondering whether this is a good or bad idea. How do they link to the *Curriculum*? What possibilities are there for using them as a source of evidence for improving teaching and learning (Timperley & Parr, 2010, p. 10)?

The following section evaluates the MOE claims that National Standards is a policy designed to improve schools’ assessment and reporting capabilities.

### 4.2.1 Reporting to parents

The National Party cites the 2007 ERO report, *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information in Schools*, in claiming that “49% of primary schools were generally ineffective at reporting achievement information to parents and their community” (NZ National Party, n.d.-b, p.1). The ERO report actually states that 39 percent of schools were “partially effective with substantial weaknesses” while 10 percent were identified as “ineffective” (ERO, 2007). This confirms the credibility of the MOE claim and is supported by earlier concerns that parents are not receiving realistic information from teachers about their children’s progress (Hattie & Peddie, 2003). Furthermore, recent research shows that schools’ reporting capabilities are low, with much between-school variability (Koefod, cited in



Robinson et al., 2011). The Government's justification for needing to improve the quality of reporting to parents by adding the following to NAG 2A therefore seems reasonable.

(a) report to students and their parents on the student's progress and achievement in relation to National Standards. Reporting to parents in plain language in writing must be at least twice a year (Ministry of Education, 2012c).

A possible negative consequence of these new reporting requirements is the danger of labelling students, who do not meet the standards, as failures. Teachers must label student achievement as being either "above", "at", "below" or "well below" for each standard, yet there is no requirement that this language be used when reporting to parents. Hipkins states that, through strong school leadership, and through greater involvement of families, the National Standards reporting requirements could actually create an opportunity to "bring learning-to-learn conversations into the open", particularly as learning to learn is one of the New Zealand Curriculum's eight principles (Hipkins, 2010, p. 30).

Even though schools are required to prioritise student achievement in literacy and numeracy for students in years 1-8, they also need "to provide all students in years 1-10 with opportunities to achieve for success in all areas of the National Curriculum" (Ministry of Education, 2012c). Reporting a student's progress and achievement against the standards could be done as a relatively small component of a rich, personalised report that highlights the student's progress across all areas of the curriculum, one that is facilitated by learning-to-learn conversations. Such a "sea change" as Hipkins put it, will not happen overnight.

Having a national standard – and knowing if your child has passed or failed – does not guarantee parents get better, more useful information. What may make a difference are longer parent-teacher and child sessions, at which progress and goals are discussed, as well as the respective contributions of home and school to achieving that. The assessment tools that most schools already use can provide useful data to share with parents but they do need explaining – a grade is not enough (NZCER, 2008, p. 4).

Schools that only report to parents against the National Standards will have failed Hipkins' leadership test and will be guilty of doing themselves what many of these same leaders fear National Standards will do; narrow the curriculum - or worse, label students as failures. Schools can successfully use National Standards to build their reporting capabilities by absorbing its legislative demands into its existing reporting structures. Reporting student achievement to parents against national benchmarks, together with local benchmarks, for example, could avoid student labelling by allowing for local conditions to be contextualised (Robinson & Timperley, 2000).

Of course, if the goal really is to improve schools' reporting capabilities, then why was legislation not passed for plain language reporting of student progress and achievement *in all learning areas*, assessed against the *existing curriculum levels*, which are in effect national benchmarks? Such an approach avoids student labelling as it removes the one-size-fits all standards that National Standards demands students be measured against, yet better supports the spirit of personalised learning embodied in the New Zealand Curriculum. The answer is that developing school's reporting capabilities is not a driver behind this policy.

#### 4.2.2 Assessment

In December 2009, Minister of Education Anne Tolley cited a second ERO report, *Reading and Writing in Years 1 and 2*, as evidence for the need to introduce National Standards. Tolley claimed that "30 per cent are not teaching reading and writing effectively (Tolley, 2009a, p. 1). This claim is not an accurate representation of the data, as the ERO report shows:

In 21 percent of schools the quality of the reading programme was *adequate*, and in the remaining 10 percent it was limited" (my emphasis, Education Review Office, 2009, p. 7).

In 22 percent of schools the teaching of writing was *adequate*, while in 14 percent teachers had limited understanding about effective writing programmes and the quality of their teaching suffered (my emphasis, p. 18).

Minister Tolley could well have stated that "over 85 per cent are teaching reading and writing effectively", a statement equally, if not more defensible than the one she actually makes.

The additional claim based on this 2009 ERO report, is that nearly two thirds of school leaders are not properly monitoring student achievement and progress (Tolley, 2009a). This claim represents an amalgamation of two figures, 28 percent identified as having limited processes in place and 35 percent with poor processes (ERO, 2009). It suggests that these are legitimate concerns, but since the data is not broken down by learning area, it is not clear the extent to which the data relates to students' progress and achievement in numeracy and literacy. Nonetheless, National Standards as a policy response to the problem of monitoring student achievement seems entirely unnecessary. Monitoring student achievement and progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy, is already an expectation of schools. The National Administration Guidelines (NAG 1) require schools to:

(b) through a range of assessment practices, gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated; giving priority first to:

i. student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-8 (Ministry of Education, 2012c, p. 1).

Schools are also required to use assessment data to identify students who are achieving, who are at risk of not achieving, and who have special needs (Ministry of Education, 2012c).

National's claim that "most primary schools are generally ineffective at *using* school-wide information to improve achievement" (my emphasis, New Zealand National Party, n.d.-b, p. 2) cites the March 2007 ERO report *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information in Schools* as evidence. This report states that "less than half the schools, about 40 percent, were effectively using school-wide information to improve student achievement" (Education Review Office, 2007, p. 30). 45% of primary schools were "partially effective with substantial weaknesses" while "12% were not effective" at using school-wide data (p. 31). The ERO report is essentially criticising the *use*, rather than the collection of student achievement data.

When it came to collecting student achievement data, schools were seen to be very effective, but only in in English and mathematics.

Over 90 percent of primary schools were able to demonstrate effectively their students' achievements in the curriculum areas of English and mathematics. However, only a third of primary schools were able to demonstrate their students' achievements in other curriculum areas (Education Review Office, 2007, p. 18).

When it came to demonstrating student progress, English and mathematics were again the frontrunners with over 80% of primary schools demonstrating effectiveness in each of these learning areas. Indeed, "most primary schools did not collect and analyse their students' achievements in curriculum areas other than mathematics and English" (p. 20).

National Standards, in targeting reading, writing and mathematics, focuses on the only two learning areas where schools are already demonstrating effectiveness. National Standards, in demanding that schools measure, collect and report student achievement and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, is essentially a policy that requires schools to do more of what they are already doing well. What National Standards does not address is to how to *use* this information for school improvement.

The inference that can be made from the 2007 ERO report is that schools' evaluative capabilities need improving. Evaluative capability involves looking at the assessment data

and deciding what to do next. It involves “identifying what outcomes for students are desired and necessary, and the type of information needed to work out how to make judgements about attainment and progress” (Timperley & Parr, 2010, p. 31). The question is; does a policy that is primarily about the collection and reporting of student achievement data have the potential to stimulate evaluative capacity building in schools? This is essentially the essence of the Government’s argument: “assess and report in a way that National Standards prescribes, as this will improve your evaluative capabilities and, in so doing, raise student achievement.

### 4.3 Building capacity - the link between prescription and outcome

The National Standards policy expects teachers to use a variety of assessment tools and sources of evidence to make overall teacher judgements about student achievement and progress. It allows schools to choose which tools they use, providing some flexibility in catering for the diversity of students’ learning needs. Making these OTJs is not a straightforward process, as it requires teachers “to act as ‘adaptive experts’ making complex judgements”(Robinson et al., 2011, p. 733). If the National Standards policy as an assessment process is to succeed in building capacity in schools, then teachers will need considerable support. Despite utilising the help available, many schools and teachers continue to face considerable challenges, and require on-going support in: aligning their assessment tools with the standards, building their assessment and reporting capabilities, making OTJs, and moderating their data (Education Review Office, 2012).

Not only are teachers required to make OTJs, but they need to use them formatively, to help inquire into and identify students’ learning needs in order to address the conditions limiting student learning (Timperley & Parr, 2010). Support for schools could include professional learning opportunities to improve teachers’ data literacy, and assistance in making and using reliable OTJs, so that student achievement data can be used as levers for lifting student achievement. This is a considerable challenge, but there is evidence that standards can be used in ways that build this evaluative capacity (Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2010, p. 41). Standards can also be used “for improvement in teaching, curriculum design or development” (ibid, p. 42). Since the NZC already requires teachers to develop their evaluative capabilities (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39) it follows that National Standards can be deemed a stimulus for building this evaluative capacity, in ways that are consistent with the NZC.

National Standards not only expects schools to develop and use quality evidence through the formation and use of OTJs, but also requires schools to communicate this evidence to parents twice yearly, in writing, in plain English. Parents have a right to receive meaningful, trustworthy information about their children's progress and achievement (Crooks, 2009, p. 4), so National Standards can be seen as a means for building schools' capacity to report to parents in ways that promote student learning. Schools that successfully navigate the tricky waters of student labelling can use these reporting requirements as opportunities to build relationships, and encourage greater parental participation in their child's learning. Such reporting also holds schools more accountable to parents for their child's achievement, and this can inevitably place pressure on teachers to not only develop valid and reliable OTJs, but to use them to identify students' next learning steps. As mentioned, this is a complex process. Indeed, "securing confidence in the strength of validity and reliability of those judgements and maximizing the improvement of student achievement are major challenges confronting each school leader" (Flockton, 2012, p. 126).

According to ERO's *Working with National Standards to Promote Students' Progress and Achievement* report, only 22% of schools were "working well with all the requirements of the NS", 59% were "developing processes to work with all the requirements of the NS" and 19% were "not working with all the requirements of NS" (2012, p. 6). The report also found that:

Where schools have the capability and capacity to work with the standards, this is often because they were already well placed in terms of their leaders' capability to use achievement information for improvement and responsive curriculum design (p. 19).

This suggests that National Standards is struggling to build capacity in schools where it is already lacking. These challenges are compounded by the speed at which the standards have been implemented, and the lack of any trial period prior to full implementation. A 2012 Ministry Report (Ward & Thomas, 2012) shows that "principals felt more supported by the Ministry of Education in 2011 than in 2010" even though "more than half still described themselves as minimally supported or unsupported in nearly all aspects" (p. 3). It suggests that National Standards, as a lever for raising student achievement is an extremely ambitious project, with much still to be achieved before it can be considered a success.

By avoiding national testing, the Government is claiming that New Zealand will be able to circumvent many of the negative consequences that have occurred overseas as a result of their respective national testing regimes.

We all know, from overseas experience, that national testing will not achieve a lift in student achievement. We have made sure that National Standards have not gone down this path, and have learned from the mistakes made overseas (Tolley, cited in Crayton-Brown, 2010).

The 2012 *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand* (Santiago, Laveault, Nusche, & MacBeath, 2012) concurs with this view that national testing in primary schools should be avoided and also supports the notion that National Standards can be considered a strategy aimed at building teacher capacity. The policy is seen as an “alternative way to make information about student progress more consistent and comparable” (Santiago et al., 2012, p. 9). It warns that teacher capacity is not yet at a level that can support reliable standards-based reporting. The implications of this lack of readiness, and the Government’s response to the unreliability of the data that schools generate could ultimately determine the future direction of the National Standards policy.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion - the gap between rhetoric and reality**

What we are doing here in New Zealand is very different from what is done in the UK and the USA, where a national test is used and where the system is underpinned by high-stakes testing and assessment for accountability. We are doing neither of those things (Tolley, cited in NZPD, 2009, p. 7425)

The Government's insistence on receiving comparable, annually generated data from all primary schools, threatens to seriously damage the potential for National Standards to build capacity in schools, and fulfil the Government's goal of lifting student achievement. The requirement that school boards report to the MOE, in their annual report, "on the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including by Māori, Pasifika and by gender", as specified by the National Administration Guidelines (NAG 2A), is the key to understanding the real implications of the National Standards policy. The first time schools were obliged to report in this way to the MOE, was May 2012, on 2011 student achievement data. This seemingly innocuous piece of legislation will be revealed as either the Achilles heel of an assessment policy genuinely aimed at building teacher capacity, or the seed of accountability, carefully planted to release league tables, high-stakes testing and performance pay.

### **5.1 League tables**

The National Standards policy has been developed and implemented with haste and without trial. Its reading, writing and mathematics standards assume a one-size-fits-all approach to national expectations for student achievement and have been widely criticised as poorly designed and poorly aligned to the NZC (Clark, 2010; Flockton, 2010). Schools and teachers also face considerable challenges in using teacher judgements in ways that will improve student learning. If developing schools' evaluative capabilities are considered criteria for success, then full implementation in the Ministry's three year timeframe is highly unlikely. Despite these concerns, the potential for this policy to provide more meaningful reporting to parents and to stimulate capacity building in schools still exists, but the MOE will need to adopt a longer term strategy if this potential is to be realised.

This potential is severely weakened by the presence of league tables, and league tables cannot exist unless there is national, comparable, student achievement data available to the media. Since schools' annual reports are in the public domain, the legislative requirements under NAG 2A provide all the media needs to begin ranking schools and constructing league tables. In doing so, it exposes this policy's Achilles heel and threatens to rupture any potential for National Standards to succeed in building capacity.

### *5.1.1 Campbell's law*

Sociologist Donald Campbell made the observation over 30 years ago that

The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor (Campbell, cited in Nichols & Berliner, 2005, p. i).

This principle, known as Campbell's Law, provides an explanation for the corrupting influences that high-stakes testing has had on public education, as experienced overseas. In the context of national testing, Campbell's law predicts that high-stakes judgements about the effectiveness of schools or teachers, based on a single score, not only corrupts and distorts the validity of these scores but also the educational processes behind them (S. L. Nichols & Berliner, 2005). Test scores subsequently replace capacity building and student achievement as the new goal. Nichols and Berliner have extensively researched the impact that Campbell's law has had on public education in the USA, through that country's experience of No Child Left Behind, and argue that it is the high-stakes nature of this testing regime, rather than the tests themselves, that is the corrupting influence (2005). These corrupting effects have manifested themselves in multiple ways, including teacher cheating, teaching to the test, narrowing of the curriculum and declining teacher morale.

There is considerable merit in relying on teachers' professional judgements, using multiple sources of evidence rather than on national tests, to assess student achievement, particularly since such a process has the potential to build teachers' evaluative capabilities. Unfortunately, Campbell's Law does not discriminate between tests and teacher judgements. If National Standards becomes a high-stakes policy, then high-stakes OTJs become the equivalent of high-stakes tests and these OTJs, regardless of how they are derived, become proxies for student achievement. Teachers could then be tempted to coach students to pass the tests that inform these OTJs, whether they are standardised tests such as PATS, e-asTTle, GloSS and STAR tests or whether they are school generated assessment tasks.



Since much of the evidence used in forming the OTJs is to be gathered from classroom observations and interactions, and given that students are required to meet reading, writing and mathematics expectations *independently* (Ministry of Education, 2009a, 2009b), there is considerable scope for teachers to coach students even further, and to take very liberal interpretations of ‘independently’. Hattie points out that New Zealand has one of the lowest between-school variances in the world, “so why create the diversion of a debate about between-school differences, when most of the variance in student achievement is within the individual schools” (Hattie, 2009, p. 9). Research from the RAINS project highlights the case of a school that deliberately lowered its student achievement target against the standards in order to improve its chances of reaching it, should the data go public (Thrupp & Easter, 2012). This kind of ‘game-playing’ only has meaning in a high-stakes environment.

League tables shift the nature of National Standards away from “assessment for learning” to “assessment for accountability”, and the validity of the OTJs, despite having the potential to build teacher capacity start to deteriorate in the face of the unintended consequences of a high-stakes environment. If National Standards is a policy genuinely concerned with capacity building and raising student achievement, then the New Zealand Government would acknowledge these concerns, find alternative means of collecting National Standards data, and give the standards a chance to succeed.

### *5.1.2 Collateral damage*

In April 2009, Education Minister Anne Tolley clarified the Government’s position on league tables by defending the full availability of National Standards data to the media. “We have a society that values freedom of information. Personally, I think the more information that’s out there the better... the best disinfectant is fresh air” (Tolley, cited in Hartevelt, 2009b). She also claimed that the Government were powerless to prevent the media from accessing the data and producing league tables. This came shortly after the submission of an unsolicited policy advice paper to the Ministry warning of the dangers of league tables, particularly for those students in the bottom quartile of student achievement statistics (Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins, & Reid, 2009). It also came six months prior to the publication of the changes to the NAGs that obliged schools to report school-wide National Standards data to the Ministry, and which make league tables possible.

Contrary to Minister Tolley's claims, league tables can most certainly be prevented. New legislation could be passed preventing data from becoming public, as was suggested by the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) (Hartevelt, 2009b). An alternative and more obvious solution would be to simply remove the NAG 2A requirement for schools to report, to the MOE, "the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below National Standards, including by Māori, Pasifika, gender, and by year level". The Ministry could then collect its data through a national sampling process. Such sampling processes have been successfully undertaken in the past by the National Education and Monitoring Project (NEMP) and could now be undertaken by its replacement, the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA). National sampling was actually recommended during the National Standards consultation process in 2009 (Wylie, Hodgen, & Darr, 2009). This seems to have fallen on deaf ears, despite the Minister suggesting otherwise when she said, in May 2009; "just what information is needed and who needs to have access to it is a matter for discussion during the consultation period" (Todd, 2009, p. 1). In August 2010, Minister Tolley claimed that no one had come up with an acceptable solution that would prevent the creation of league tables and added:

Eventually, you have to come to a conclusion that there is no safe way of presenting the data. I have always said that communities are entitled to the information, whether it is good, bad or indifferent (Filipe, 2010, p. 1).

This remarkable statement underlines the Government's National Standards priorities: to obtain comparable, annually generated, national data, freely available to the media, regardless of the educational cost. The harmful consequences of league tables appear to be unavoidable collateral damage.

In 2012 most schools reported their previous year's student achievement data to the MOE in their annual reports, as prescribed by NAG 2A, and in September Fairfax media and the MOE each independently published these National Standards results. Fairfax obtained its data directly and individually from each school, under the Official Information Act (OIA) and published the results in the form of a spread sheet, listing schools in alphabetical order and unranked. They initially requested the data from the MOE in the form an OIA request, but this request was declined (Fairfax Media, 2012). Soon afterwards, the Ministry published the data on its existing Government website, Education Counts, unranked and unlisted, as part of a range of information available on each school. Both Fairfax and the MOE have

accompanied the information with disclaimers warning the public of the dangers of making comparisons between schools. Fairfax's disclaimer says this of the data:

They are not moderated, so one school's "well below" may be another's "at" or "above". There is just no way of knowing - yet - exactly how the standards have been applied across schools (Hartevelt, 2012b, p.1).

The MOE's disclaimer is far more diluted, and avoids any reference to this lack of reliability. It simply advises the public to take care when interpreting the data, as it "represents part of a picture and should be considered alongside other information" (Ministry of Education, 2012b). Despite these disclaimers, headlines such as "How our schools rate" (Carson, 2012), "Parents can now compare schools" (Aldridge, 2012) and "Schools' performance revealed" (Hartevelt & Francis, 2012) announce the arrival of league tables, and with it the beginning of the corruption of the capacity building potential of National Standards.

## 5.2 Accountability

The arrival of the first league table, and the Government's relaxed co-existence with it, reveals the true intention of the legislation under NAG 2A(c). Indeed, National Standards could not exist without this legislation because the data that it generates, the "numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including by Māori, Pasifika and by gender" are an essential goal of the policy implementation process. It represents a powerful means by which the Government can hold schools directly accountable for their performance, against a very narrow, pre-determined set of criteria. The negative consequences of league tables may well be collateral damage, but the league tables themselves are not. They are part of the design. They represent a form of accountability, exercised by parents through the market force of consumer choice. Any expectation that National Standards is a policy designed to build teacher capacity in schools now appears increasingly unrealistic. Capacity building, and developing the reporting, assessment and evaluative capabilities of schools, looks more like a possible by-product of this policy, rather than a goal.

### 5.2.1 *Standards for accountability*

The reporting requirements under NAG 2A provide evidence that the National Standards problematic can be redefined in terms of strengthening educational accountability. Where national standards have been introduced overseas, accountability has been employed as the lever for improving the educational health of a nation, yet this path has resulted in little evidence of gains in student achievement (Hattie, 2009). The New Zealand National Party's 2011 Education in Schools Policy suggests they are intent on walking a similar path:

Parents invest heavily in their children's education, both in cost and emotionally. We need to make sure they are getting a return on their investment. National will strengthen accountability and performance measurement so that parents and students are getting the most from their schools, and the education system is helping lift student achievement (New Zealand National Party, 2011).

Crooks has identified four "accountability pressures" with potential to influence student achievement in New Zealand primary schools (Crooks, 2011, p. 74). The first pressure comes through Education Review Office (ERO) school visits. ERO's role has recently "shifted from an accountability/compliance-oriented approach to an improvement-oriented approach" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 20), so this effectively rules out ERO visits as a means of strengthening accountability.

The second accountability pressure is created through the reporting of student progress and achievement to parents and students. The need for schools to build these reporting capabilities has been discussed above (see Section 4.2.1 above) and, consistent with market policies in education, the Government clearly intends for accountability to parents to be a key driver in their approach to lifting student achievement. In this sense, National Standards can be viewed as having some potential to raise student achievement in an environment that is "supported by mutual accountabilities" between teacher and parents (Robinson & Timperley, 2000, p. 73). The answer as to why National Standards legislation did not extend to all learning areas, and why the existing curriculum levels were not used as national benchmarks, now has an answer. Accountability, not capacity building, is driving the National Standards policy. Having parents hold schools and teachers to account through these new reporting requirements may well be a mutually productive exercise, but by only legislating in reading, writing and mathematics, it also serves as a reminder of the importance placed on these standards, and this importance only escalates as the standards become more high-stakes.

Crooks' third accountability pressure is the requirement that schools report to the MOE the progress they have made against their annual targets. These targets form part of each school's charter, and since 2001 schools have been required to report the variance between their

targets and the school's actual performance, in their annual reports. According to a recent OECD report, "while annual reports are sent to the Ministry of Education for accountability purposes, the potential to use them for system monitoring and evaluation is not exploited" (Santiago et al., 2012, p. 32).

The fourth pressure identified by Crooks arose directly from the implementation of the National Standards policy. The National Standards reporting requirements to the Ministry go some way in responding to the previous OECD observation, as there can be little doubt that they are designed to strengthen the MOE's ability to hold schools' accountable for student achievement. Not only do schools need to report "on the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards" but they are also instructed, through the Education Act, to set annual student achievement targets against the standards in their charters. Performance against these targets will also need to be included in schools annual reports, as part of their analysis of variance. This will allow the Ministry to exploit the data in the annual reports for accountability purposes. It also explains the Government's reluctance to prevent the creation of league tables, as league tables constitute a second, more dangerous means by which schools can be held accountable to parents. This form of accountability is a market driven approach, encouraging competition between schools through parental pressure and public choice in an effort to raise standards.

A further accountability tool in the Government's toolbox is currently working its way through Parliament, in the form of the 2012 Education Amendment Bill. This bill is dominated by "partnership schools" and other provisions, but it also proposes a new clause under section 75 of the Education Act, relating to the function and powers of boards. This new clause reads:

A school's board must perform its functions and exercise its powers in such a way as to *ensure* that every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standard in educational achievement (my emphasis, Education Amendment Bill 2012).

Collectively, these accountability tools represent a form of "steerage at a distance" (Apple, 2001). It is not yet clear exactly by whom or to where the standards vehicle will be steered, but it will not be confined to league tables. A recent comment by Education Minister Hekia Parata foreshadows the wielding of National Standards data as anew accountability tool, by stating that it will be a "definite contributor" to teacher appraisals. In the same article, Parata continues:

Just as in the health service they're accountable for patient outcomes and engineers are accountable for buildings staying up, I most definitely think that student outcomes are a contribution, but the size of that within an overall appraisal system is the sort of discussion we need to be having (Law & Hartevelt, 2012, p. 1).

Four months later, two days after Fairfax published the National Standards data, Parata again suggested that the data could have a role in assessing teachers' performance (Hartevelt, 2012a). The NZEI were quick to respond to the Minister's comment, stating that

It is most disturbing that two days after the publication of inaccurate and 'ropey' National Standards, the Minister is now saying that National Standards could be used as a tool in assessing the performance of teachers (Goulter, cited in "Performance Pay - next step in attack ", 2012).

This comment seems to be an attempt to cast doubt on the validity of using the data for accountability purposes, by questioning the data reliability. There is considerable evidence that the National Standards data is unreliable, as the following section will reveal, but the NZEI's objections have the potential to backfire, because national testing may well be the remedy the Government reaches for to treat this data reliability problem.

### 5.3 National Standards - data reliability and future implications

The complexity involved in making reliable OTJs, the freedom teachers have in selecting evidence of student achievement, and schools' general lack of readiness for the arrival of the new standards will inevitably mean inconsistencies in the way teachers interpret student achievement when forming their professional judgements. There is already evidence emerging of this resulting lack of reliability. The 2011 Ministry of Education report (Ward & Thomas, 2012) analysed data collected from a representative sample of over 100 schools during 2011, the second year of National Standards implementation. It reported that there was considerable variability in teachers' assessment of student work, despite teachers and principals expressing confidence in the consistency of their OTJs.

In writing, accuracy ranged from 3% to 89%, while accuracy in mathematics ranged from 18% to 90%. This finding is a cause for concern as it is these individual judgements that are synthesised to form OTJs. Given this concern, the dependability of the OTJ is also called into question (p. 43).

Similar concerns are evident in the Research, Analysis and Insight into National Standards Project (Thrupp & Easter, 2012), with one school identifying variation of "up to two curriculum levels" (p. 125). Given that students spend on average, two years, progressing

through each curriculum level, this represents a huge level of variability. This lack of accuracy and consistency puts schools' moderation practices under the spotlight.

### *5.3.1 Moderation*

Moderation is a collaborative process where teachers seek to reach agreement on assessing students' work. It is a "form of quality assurance for delivering comparability in evidence-based judgements of student achievement" (Ward, cited in Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2010b, p. 44). ERO have stressed the importance of schools' moderation processes in ensuring consistent, school-wide OTJs (Education Review Office, 2012). According to the 2011 Ministry of Education report (Ward & Thomas, 2012) schools' use of moderation has increased between 2010 and 2011. "Most schools used school-wide moderation processes in writing (83%) and mathematics (90%), while about two thirds of schools (67%) moderated reading OTJs" (p. 1). The reported use of between-school moderation was much lower - 32% of schools collaborated with other schools when moderating writing OTJs, 12% for mathematics and only 10% for reading. In other words, the overwhelming majority of schools are forming OTJs independently of each other. Given that the reliability of schools' OTJs has already been called into question, this strongly suggests that there is significant variation in the consistency of OTJs between schools.

The reliability of the data does not seem to be of concern to the Government. The MOE's disclaimer when they published the first set of National Standards data makes no reference to consistency or reliability. This is in stark contrast to the reliability concerns disclosed by Fairfax media when they published the data. When the data was first provided to the Ministry, it was described by the Prime Minister as "patchy" and "ropey" (Shuttleworth, 2012). The ambiguous nature of these words makes it difficult to interpret whether "patchy" and "ropey" are describing the reliability of the data or the format in which the data was submitted (as graphs, charts, narratives, tables etc.). The Government's response suggests the latter:

It's better for the Government and the sector to agree on a format, but if they can't, they're not going to stop media organisations going to schools for the data. The sector needs to consider what they think will be the most productive way of presenting that data. My sense is that if we could come to a logical way of presenting that data and could give it to media outlets they would be much more likely to use it (Shuttleworth, 2012, p. 1).

In other words, league tables are a *fait accompli*, so the sector might as well focus its energies on finding an agreeable format that will satisfy the media. Education Minister Hekia Parata subsequently moved to address these formatting concerns by stating that from 2013, it would be compulsory for schools to submit their data using ministry-provided templates (Hunt, 2012).

A tacit admission of data reliability concerns came with the Ministry's announcement of the development of a new Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) that aims to improve the consistency of OTJ's "over time". This tool, however, is only expected to be "fully functional in early 2014" (Ministry of Education, 2011b). By this stage schools will be in their fifth year of using the standards. It appears that the Government has seriously underestimated the issues of moderation and data reliability. In February 2010, just as schools were about to use the standards for the first time, Education Minister Anne Tolley was struggling in Parliament to explain how inter-school moderation worked, floundering in the face of questions from Labour's Education Spokesperson, Trevor Mallard (NZPD, 2010). Shortly afterwards, Professor Warwick Elley of the University of Canterbury, criticised the Ministry for failing to grasp the complexity of the moderation issue, calling their advice "naïve" (Elley, 2010). A recent OECD report recommending "stronger support for systematic moderation processes to ensure that OTJs are reliable and nationally consistent" (Santiago et al., 2012, p. 9) is a timely reminder to the Ministry to take the issue seriously. The PaCT moderation tool comes across as an ad hoc response to the data reliability problem, and reflects poorly on the Ministry's planning. If standards are to be linked to improved student learning, then moderation cannot be treated as an optional extra (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2010a).

### *5.3.2 Implementation vs. enactment*

The reason the Government may have overlooked or underestimated concerns over moderation and data reliability could be attributed to its assumption that National Standards implementation is a "linear, generic and uncontested process", where schools are expected to "simply do as they are told and put the intended policy into practice, regardless of circumstances" (Thrupp & Easter, 2012, p.11). The Government's preoccupation with policy implementation is evident in its policy discourse, which is littered with references to



“implementation-speak” (Thrupp & Easter, 2012, p. 11). Anne Tolley’s ministerial website reinforces this ‘implementation preoccupation’ when she states that the main focus of her time as Minister of Education was on “*implementing* the ground-breaking National Standards policy into primary and intermediate schools” (my emphasis, New Zealand National Party, n.d.-a, p. 1). The main focus is apparently not on capacity building or raising student achievement, but on implementation. This focus on “policy imperatives” (Hattie, 2009, p. 2) has left schools largely on their own in interpreting and using the standards.

Emerging evidence suggests multiple interpretations and translations of National Standards within New Zealand schools, as they “‘contest’ or ‘comply’ with National Standards from positions of relative strength or weakness” (Thrupp & Easter, 2012, p. 131) . These may be due to a number of factors; the design of the standards themselves, schools having weak assessment, reporting and evaluative capabilities, ineffective moderation practices, and so on. It can also lead to “game-playing” and shortcuts being taken, in the belief that schools are now operating in a high-stakes environment. This could lead to grade inflation, the tendency for work of equivalent quality to receive better grades over time. In a recent Ministry report:

Large positive shifts were observed for those students rated ‘below’ or ‘well below’ the standards in 2010. For example, approximately 60% of students rated ‘well below’ in 2010 received an improved rating in 2011. Given evidence from the assessment scenarios, and the magnitude of the changes observed, it is most likely the shifts in the data are attributable to teacher inconsistency in making OTJs (Ward & Thomas, 2012, p. 2).

The resulting lack of consistency between schools may well become problematic for the government, particularly if it leads to a lack of public confidence in the standards. An open letter from a group of leading local Education academics to Minister Anne Tolley at the outset of the implementation process warned that

in our view the flaws in the new system are so serious that full implementation of the intended National Standards system over the next three years is unlikely to be successful. It will not achieve intended goals and is likely to lead to dangerous side effects (Thrupp, Hattie, Flockton, & Crooks, 2009).

The assumption here is that the “intended goals” are capacity building and improved student achievement. These goals may not be of immediate concern to the Government if the implementation priorities are in reality re-regulation, control and increased accountability. With accountability driving this policy, the chief criterion that defines successful implementation must be the production and reporting of the standards data to the Ministry. If public concerns over data reliability threaten these priorities, then the Government may well

view these as dangerous and unacceptable side effects of accepting OTJs over national testing.

### *5.3.3 National Standards - what next?*

Public concerns about the reliability of the National Standards data are already being voiced in the media. A New Zealand Herald editorial argues that the variations in the data “have effectively scuttled the whole policy” and declares that parents “are quite justified to query the whole point of National Standards” (“For parents' sake, insist on consistency,” 2009, p. 1). Scuttling the policy is very unlikely as the Government has far too much invested in it, but the Ministry will certainly need to address these reliability concerns. Flockton points out that New Zealand schools have traditionally made a significant investment in an ‘assessment for learning’ approach to teaching and learning, where the focus on assessment validity has superseded the need for reliability.

Strength of reliability may not be so important for day-to-day classroom teaching purposes, but it is of critical importance when assessments are to be used for reporting purposes when the stakes are potentially high (Flockton, 2012, p. 138).

The question of reliability could easily be muted if the Government abandoned its reporting obligations. This would reduce the stakes of National Standards, and schools could focus on developing their evaluative capabilities in an environment that encourages ‘assessment for learning’, as opposed to ‘assessment for accountability’. New Zealand Principals’ Federation president Paul Drummond suggested such an approach could work, keeping the standards results private between parents and schools, with the MOE using a national sampling process to gather its data (Hartevelt, 2012d). This, too, is unlikely to happen, as the data generated by these reporting requirements are the lifeblood of the Government’s policy. If the data were not available to the media, there could be no league tables, and this could well be construed as a back-down by the Government and a significant victory for the teacher unions.

Another possibility is that OTJs will be abandoned as unworkable, and replaced with a national testing regime similar to the NAPLAN programme used in Australia. This will be a tricky decision to make, as the Government has already declared, on numerous occasions, that New Zealand will not go down the national testing path. It could, however, get traction if school-sector concerns over the reliability of the data are re-interpreted by the Government as demands for greater reliability of the kind provided by national tests. For example, when Patrick Walsh, New Zealand Secondary Schools Principals' Association president, expressed

concerns over the negative effects of league tables, he stated: “Our concern is parents may make decisions about the quality of a school based on misleading or even false information” (Walsh, cited in Hamilton-Irvine, 2012, p. 1). Since schools ultimately generate this data, the public may well interpret such comments as teacher ineffectiveness, particularly if media statements like “almost 50 per cent of teachers are incorrectly marking National Standards writing assessments” become more common (“High error rate in National Standards marking”, 2012). Nevertheless, given the volume of water that has gone under the national testing bridge, such an approach seems likely only as a last resort.

A far more probable future outcome will be national testing by stealth. Teachers currently have discretion over which assessment tools they use in determining their OTJs. If the Government insists that teachers include one particular tool in the many they select in forming their teacher judgements, then a form of national testing by stealth will have been imposed on New Zealand primary schools. The MOE’s new Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) is not going to be available to schools until 2014. This tool is taking over two years to develop due to the time consuming “designing, building and testing” processes involved (Hawke, 2012, p. 1). This is clearly an online tool. There already exists an online assessment tool, e-asTTle (electronic assessment Tool for Teaching and learning), that is aligned with the standards and is supported by the MOE. Free seminars are provided by the MOE to support schools in using e-asTTle (Ministry of Education, 2012a). The possibility that e-asTTle testing will become an obligatory part of this new PaCT tool cannot be discounted. This possibility has not been lost on the media either, with the New Zealand Herald pointing out that

PaCT is not expected to be fully functional until 2014 and while it is not supposed to lean too heavily on the results of standardised testing, political pressure may well develop to move in that direction, which would be set [sic] a dangerous path towards a narrowed curriculum (Hartevelt, 2012d, p. 1).

The Ministry’s *National Standards consistency framework development* webpage states that their framework will provide the means “to quantify students’ progress in a meaningful, accurate and nationally consistent way” and “to capture data for national monitoring” (Ministry of Education, 2012d). This Orwellian prospect of an online tool capturing and measuring student achievement data, at an individual level, for the purpose of “national monitoring”, raises not only the spectre of national testing, but also of performance pay. Indeed, PaCT may be a teacher evaluation system *by design*.

The precursor to being able to reward monetarily or in leadership opportunities is to have a really reliable evaluation system and one that has real integrity and regard for it. We're at the very early stages of developing that kind of system (Parata, cited in Hartevelt, 2012c, p. 1).

Such a prospect is an illustration of Ball's "new form of control" (Ball, 2003, p. 216), one which will raise the stakes of National Standards to dizzying new heights.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Between the idea

And the reality

Between the motion

And the act

Falls the Shadow

- From *The Hollow Men*, by T.S. Eliot (1925)

This extract from T. S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' evokes the notion of a gap between the idea of National Standards, and the reality. The publicised aim of this policy is ambitiously stated: to raise student achievement, particularly those represented by the so-called 'one-in-five' currently not succeeding in New Zealand schools. The reality points to the harsh lessons learned overseas, where low socio-economic students are ill-served by high stakes assessment regimes (McNeil, 2000), and where a narrowing of the curriculum further disengages these students from their learning (Hursh, 2008; S. L. Nichols & Berliner, 2005). There is a disjunction, a discursive gap, between the Government's rhetoric and its actions. This gap is amplified by the arrival of so called "partnership schools". If the US experience serves as a guide, then there looms the prospect of well-funded charter schools, existing in stark contrast with local New Zealand public schools; schools of last resort, schools for the poorest and least able.

National Standards, it is claimed, will provide the stimulus to lift schools' assessment and reporting capabilities, which will create the leverage needed to lift student achievement. The reality is that schools need to learn how to *use* the data that National Standards will generate, in order to develop their *evaluative capabilities*. Producing data for reporting purposes may meet the Ministry's implementation goals, but it cannot inspire the capacity building efforts needed to bridge the gap between the idea and the reality. "Implementation-speak" and the

“politics of blame” only serve as distractions. Equity problems will persist unless the Ministry’s “default position of sufficient capacity” is abandoned (Robinson et al., 2011, p. 735). With accountability, not capacity building, driving the National Standards policy, any significant improvements in student outcomes are unlikely.

National Standards may well increase the polarisation between New Zealand’s highest achieving schools and the rest, leading to even more harmful effects on the educational outcomes of those languishing in the tail of underachievement. The application of market forces to the education sector may well lead to a self-reinforcing cycle of polarisation and increasing inequities. If this is the case, then can we predict a lengthening of the ‘tail’, and with it, the death of the ‘one-in-five’ argument as a rationale for future educational policies?

## References

- Absolum, M., Flockton, L., Hattie, J., Hipkins, R., & Reid, I. (2009). *Directions for assessment in New Zealand: Developing student's assessment capabilities*. Retrieved April, 19, 2009 from <http://www.voced.edu.au/word/48678>
- Adams, D. (2011, March 5). One in five on benefit for 10 years, *Waikato Times*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Aldridge, A. (2012, October 1). Parents can now compare schools (+local data), *Bay of Plenty Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.bayofplentytimes.co.nz/news/parents-can-now-compare-schools/1564742/>
- Apple, M. W. (2001). Markets, Standards, Teaching, and Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(3), 182-196.
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. (n.d.). *My School*. Retrieved September 6, 2012, from <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>
- Bacchi, C. (2000). Policy as Discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 21(1), 45-57.
- Ball, S. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *The Australian Journal of Education Studies*, 13(2), 10-17.
- Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215-228.
- Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy: Process, themes and impact*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Berliner, D. C., & Nichols, S. L. (2007). High-stakes testing is putting the nation at risk. *Education Week*, 26(27), 36-48.
- Berry, R. (2006a, May 22). Maharey aims to dispel 'urban myth' of schoolchildren's failure, *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10382899](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10382899)
- Berry, R. (2006b, May 23). Maharey out of line on student failure, says National, *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10383057](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10383057)
- Braun, A., Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Hoskins, K. (2011). Taking context seriously: towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(4), 585-596. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2011.601555
- Bush, G. W. (2001). *No child left behind*: US Department of Education.
- Carson, J. (2012, September 22). How our schools rate, *Waikato Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/news/7715381/How-our-schools-rate>
- Clark, J. (2010). National Standards: Are They Up To Standard? *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 7(1), 15-28.
- Clark, J. (2011). Explaining differences in school achievement: Comment from the neurozone. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 46(2), 89-94.
- Codd, J. (1988). The construction and deconstruction of educational policy documents. *Journal of Education Policy*, 3(3), 235-247.
- Codd, J. (2005). Teachers as 'managed professionals' in the global education industry: the New Zealand experience. *Educational Review*, 57(2), 193-206.
- Cohen, S. (2002). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: Thirtieth Anniversary Edition*. London: Routledge.
- Colebatch, H. K. (1998). *Policy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crayton-Brown, K. (2010, September 21). Info evening or negative campaign? , *The Southland Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/news/4148294/Info-evening-or-negative-campaign>
- Cronin, J., Kingsbury, G. G., McCall, M. S., & Bowe, B. (2005). *The impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on student achievement and growth*: 2005 edition. North West Evaluation Association. Retrieved on May, 2, 2006.

- Crooks, T. (2009). *Towards defining, assessing and reporting against national standards for literacy and numeracy in New Zealand*. University of Otago. Retrieved from <http://www.nzaa.ac.nz/pdfs/NZAA%20National%20Standards.pdf>
- Crooks, T. (2011). Assessment for learning in the accountability era: New Zealand. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37(1), 71-77.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Noguera, P., Cobb, V., & Meier, D. (2007). Evaluating No Child Left Behind. *Nation - New York*, 284(20), 11.
- Dee, T. S., & Jacob, B. (2011). The impact of no Child Left Behind on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30(3), 418-446.
- Department of Education. (1978). *Educational standards in state schools*. Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Education.
- Department of Education. (1988). *Administering for Excellence (The Picot Report)*. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Education (National Standards of Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Bill 2006
- Education (National Standards) Amendment Bill 2008.
- Education Amendment Bill 2012
- Education and Science Committee. (2001). *Me Panui Tatou Katoa - Let's All Read: Report of the Education and Science Committee on the inquiry into the teaching of reading in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand: House of Representatives.
- Education and Science Committee. (2008). *Inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child*. Wellington, New Zealand: House of Representatives.
- Education Review Office. (2005). *Annual Report for the Year Ending 30 June 2005*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office.
- Education Review Office. (2007). *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information in Schools (March 2007)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office.
- Education Review Office. (2009). *Reading and Writing in Years 1 and 2 (December 2009)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office.
- Education Review Office. (2012). *Working with National Standards: Good Practice (June 2012)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office.
- Elley, W. (2005). On the remarkable stability of student achievement standards over time. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 40(1/2), 3.
- Elley, W. (2010). *Twenty fundamental flaws in the national standards policy*. Retrieved 1 September, 2012, from [http://www.nzpf.ac.nz/sites/default/files/20%20Fundamental\\_Flaws\\_NSPolicy%20\\_%20Elley.pdf](http://www.nzpf.ac.nz/sites/default/files/20%20Fundamental_Flaws_NSPolicy%20_%20Elley.pdf)
- English, B. (2005a, October 26). Lifting achievement in our schools, *Scoop*. Retrieved from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0510/S00155.htm>
- English, B. (2005b, November 17). National Education, *Scoop*. Retrieved from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0511/S00229.htm>
- English, B. (2006a, May 22). Maharey tries to cover up failure in schools, *Scoop*. Retrieved from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0605/S00512.htm>
- English, B. (2006b). *National standards for literacy on the way*. Retrieved from <http://www.billenglish.co.nz/archives/75-National-standards-for-literacy-on-the-way.html>
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: the universities. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 133-168.
- Fairfax Media. (2012). *School Report: A timeline*. Retrieved September 24, 2012, from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7708683/School-Report-A-timeline>
- Filipe, K. (2010, August 2). Principals stunned by turnaround on league tables, *The Timaru Herald*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Flockton, L. (2010). *21 Very Serious Problems with the National Standards Policy of the Government, and its System Developed by the Ministry of Education with its Contractors*. Retrieved August, 4, 2012, from [http://www.nzpf.ac.nz/sites/default/files/Very\\_Serious\\_Concerns\\_Flockton.pdf](http://www.nzpf.ac.nz/sites/default/files/Very_Serious_Concerns_Flockton.pdf)
- Flockton, L. (2012). The Shape and Shaping of School Leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand. *School Leadership in the Context of Standards-Based Reform*, 121-146.

- For parents' sake, insist on consistency. (2009, July 6). *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=466&objectid=10817704](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?c_id=466&objectid=10817704)
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Choosing the wrong drivers for whole system reform*. Victoria, Australia: Centre for Strategic Education.
- Gale, T. (1999). Policy trajectories: treading the discursive path of policy analysis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 20(3), 393-407.
- George, R. (2012). National Standards: A New Frontier of Control in Teachers' Work? *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 9(1), 16-26.
- Hamilton-Irvine, G. (2012, August 22). Principals pan release of standards, *The Daily Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.rotoruaadaily.com/news/principals-pan-release-of-standards/1514380/>
- Harlen, W. (2007). *The Quality of Learning: assessment alternatives for primary education*. Retrieved from <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk/gtcni/handle/2428/29272>
- Hartevelt, J. (2009a, November 3). Fear of marking children for life under new standards, *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/3024182/Fear-of-marking-children-for-life-under-new-standards>
- Hartevelt, J. (2009b, April 7). Govt to fast-track school league tables *The Press*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Hartevelt, J. (2012a, September 25). National Standards 'may aid rating of teachers', *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7723197/National-Standards-may-aid-rating-of-teachers>
- Hartevelt, J. (2012b). *Our standards for School Report*. Retrieved September 24, 2012, from <http://schoolreport.stuff.co.nz/index.html>
- Hartevelt, J. (2012c, March 24). Rewards for quality teachers, *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/6629986/Rewards-for-quality-teachers>
- Hartevelt, J. (2012d, September 29). School Report opens up education debate *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/7740308/School-Report-opens-up-education-debate>
- Hartevelt, J., & Francis, C. (2012, September 22). Schools' performance revealed *Nelson Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/7716883/Schools-performance-revealed>
- Hattie, J. (1998). *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools: A Response to the New Zealand Green Paper on Assessment*. Retrieved from [www.education.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz)
- Hattie, J. (2003). *New Zealand Education Snapshot*. Paper presented at the Knowledge Wave 2003 - The Leadership Forum. <https://sue-smith.wikispaces.com/file/view/Hattie+J+NZ+Education+Snapshot.pdf>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Horizons and whirlpools: The well travelled pathway of national standards*. Unpublished paper. Auckland: University of Auckland. Retrieved from <http://www.cognitioninstitute.org/files/docs/horizons-whirlpools-the-well-travelled-pathway-ofnational-standards.pdf>
- Hattie, J., & Peddie, R. (2003). School reports: "Praising with faint damns". *Journal issue* (3).
- Hawke, G. (2012, November 7). National Standards. *Education Gazette*.
- High error rate in national standards marking. (2012, October 3). *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7761584/High-error-rate-in-National-Standards-marking>
- Hill, R. (2008, March 5). One in five schoolkids 'anti-social' *The Dominion Post*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Hipkins, R. (2010). Reflections on Being 'Labelled' by National Standards. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*(3), 27.
- Hunt, E. (2012, September 29). Parata vows better standards reporting *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7745599/Parata-vows-better-standards-reporting>
- Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 493-518.
- Hursh, D. (2008). *High-stakes testing and the decline of teaching and learning: The real crisis in education*: Rowman & Littlefield.



- Jennings, J., & Rentner, D. S. (2006). Ten big effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(2), 110.
- Job, P. (2008). National Testing, League Tables and School Performance Accountability.
- Johnston, G. (2004). *Adult literacy and economic growth*. Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Treasury.
- Key, J. (2007a). *SPEECH: National's Agenda*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnkey.co.nz/archives/129-NEWS-Nationals-Economic-Agenda.html>
- Key, J. (2007b). *SPEECH: National - Setting the agenda*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnkey.co.nz/archives/93-NEWS-Nationals-Economic-Agenda.html>
- Key, J. (2007c). *SPEECH: National - Tough on Crime*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnkey.co.nz/archives/135-NEWS-Nationals-Economic-Agenda.html>
- Key, J. (2007d). *SPEECH: National's Economic Agenda*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnkey.co.nz/archives/105-SPEECH-Nationals-Economic-Agenda.html>
- Key, J. (2008). *Speech from the Throne*. Retrieved from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-throne>
- Key, J. (2010). *National Standards: Lifting Education Standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.national.org.nz/education/>
- Kirsch, I. (2001). The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): Understanding What Was Measured. *Research Report - Educational Testing Service*. Princeton, NJ.
- Klenowski, V., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2010a). Standards-driven reform Years 1–10: Moderation an optional extra? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 37(2), 21-39.
- Klenowski, V., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2010b). Standards, teacher judgement and moderation in contexts of national curriculum and assessment reform. *Assessment Matters*, 2, 107-131.
- Law, T., & Hartevelt, J. (2012, May 17). Bad report card for bigger classes *Stuff.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/6936035/Bad-report-card-for-bigger-classes>
- Leane, G. W. G. (2000). *New Right Economics Colonising Education: A New Zealand Experiment*. Retrieved from <http://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/1544>
- Lee, H. (2010). *The politics, context, and history of National Standards and testing in New Zealand primary schools [PowerPoint slides]*. Retrieved September 14, 2012, from <http://www.nzei.org.nz/nationalstandards/Resources.html>
- Lee, J., & Orfield, F. G. (2006). *Tracking achievement gaps and assessing impact of NCLB on the gaps: An in-depth look into national and state reading and math outcome trends*. Retrieved from [http://www.michiganedusource.org/gomasa/ldr/2006/ldr063006/nclb\\_naep\\_lee%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.michiganedusource.org/gomasa/ldr/2006/ldr063006/nclb_naep_lee%5B1%5D.pdf)
- Lingard, B. (2010). Policy borrowing, policy learning: testing times in Australian schooling. *Critical Studies in Education*, 51(2), 129-147. doi: 10.1080/17508481003731026
- Luke, A. (1997). The Material Effects of the Word: apologies, 'Stolen Children' and public discourse. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(3), 343-368. doi: 10.1080/0159630970180303
- Mansell, W. (2007). *Education by numbers: the tyranny of testing*: London: Politico's Publishing.
- McNeil, L. (2000). *Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing*: New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Ministry of Education. (1999). *Information for better learning*. Retrieved October 2 2012, from [http://intranet.onec.go.th/world\\_ed/englishbooklet.pdf](http://intranet.onec.go.th/world_ed/englishbooklet.pdf)
- Ministry of Education. (2001). *More than words*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2009a). *The New Zealand Curriculum Mathematics Standards for years 1 - 8*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2009b). *The New Zealand Curriculum Reading and Writing Standards for years 1 - 8*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes: New Zealand country background report 2010*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2011a). *Ministry of Education Position Paper: Assessment*. Retrieved August 23, 2012, from

- [http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/MOEAssessmentPositionPaper\\_October11.pdf](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/MOEAssessmentPositionPaper_October11.pdf)
- Ministry of Education. (2011b). *Progress and Consistency tool*. Retrieved October 20, 2012, from <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/News/Progress-and-Consistency-tool>
- Ministry of Education. (2012a). *e-asTTle Writing seminars*. Retrieved October 18, 2012, from <http://e-asttle.tki.org.nz/Whats-new/e-asTTle-Writing-seminars>
- Ministry of Education. (2012b). *Education Counts*. Retrieved October 16, 2012, from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/>
- Ministry of Education. (2012c). *The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)*. Retrieved September 21, 2012, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInNewZealand/EducationLegislation/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx>
- Ministry of Education. (2012d). *National Standards consistency framework development*. Retrieved October 18, 2012, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/Budget/Budget2011/Factsheets2011/NSFrameworkDevelopment.aspx>
- Ministry of Education. (2012e). *National Standards*. Retrieved July 21, 2012, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInitiatives/NationalStandards.aspx>
- Ministry of Education. (2012f). Ngā Whanaketanga Rūmaki Māori Retrieved October 25, 2012, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInitiatives/NgaWhanaketangaRumakiMaori.aspx>
- Mutch, C. (2004). *Educational policy in New Zealand: Who pays the piper*. Paper presented at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.
- New Zealand Educational Institute. (2010). *Background Information on warrant of fitness assessments*. Retrieved September 19, 2012, from [http://www.nzei.org.nz/site/nzeite/files/misc%20documents/WOF\\_Background\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.nzei.org.nz/site/nzeite/files/misc%20documents/WOF_Background_sheet.pdf)
- New Zealand National Party. (2007). *Encouraging Success: Confronting Failure*. Retrieved May 3, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/files/0\\_Key\\_Speech\\_02-04-07.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/files/0_Key_Speech_02-04-07.pdf)
- New Zealand National Party. (2008a). *Education Policy: Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy*. Retrieved July 8, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/files/2008/Education\\_Policy\\_Crusade\\_for\\_Literacy.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/files/2008/Education_Policy_Crusade_for_Literacy.pdf)
- New Zealand National Party. (2008b). *National Standards*. Retrieved July 14, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/files/0\\_0\\_e\\_national\\_standards.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/files/0_0_e_national_standards.pdf)
- New Zealand National Party. (2011). *Education in Schools*. Retrieved September 1, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/PDF\\_General/Education\\_in\\_Schools\\_policy.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/PDF_General/Education_in_Schools_policy.pdf)
- New Zealand National Party. (n.d.-a). *Hon Anne Tolley - Biography*. Retrieved July 31, 2012, from <http://www.national.org.nz/Bio.aspx?Id=272>
- New Zealand National Party. (n.d.-b). *National Standards Policy Q&A*. Retrieved July 25, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/files/0\\_national\\_standards\\_policy\\_qa.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/files/0_national_standards_policy_qa.pdf)
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 595, 2001
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 619, 2004, 14727 – 14728
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 623, 2005a, 18365 – 18428
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 628, 2005b, 249 - 277
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 629, 2006a, 1351-1435
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 630, 2006b, 2599-2677
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 651, 2008, 1 - 108
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 658, 2009, 7409 - 7620
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, (NZPD). Vol. 660, 2010, 8947 - 9034
- Nichols, L. (2006, June 15). One in five schools failing, says ERO chief *The Dominion Post*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Nichols, L. (2008, July 24). One in five quit school unqualified *The Dominion Post*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2005). *The inevitable corruption of indicators and educators through high-stakes testing*: Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Arizona State University Tempe, AZ.

- NZCER. (2008). *NZCER background paper on national standards for literacy and numeracy*. NZCER. Retrieved from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/pdfs/national-standards.pdf>
- Olssen, M., Codd, J. A., & O'Neill, A. M. (2004). *Education policy: Globalization, citizenship and democracy*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Openshaw, R., & Walshaw, M. (2010a). *Are Our Standards Slipping? Debates Over Literacy and Numeracy Standards in New Zealand since 1945*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Openshaw, R., & Walshaw, M. (2010b). Literacy, Numeracy and Political Struggle: The National Standards Initiative in Context. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 45(2), 99.
- Ozga, J. (1999). *Policy research in educational settings: contested terrain*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Ozga, J. (2005). *Models of policy-making and policy learning. Paper presented to the Policy Learning in 14 -19 Education Seminar. Joint seminar of Project Education and Youth Transitions and Nuffield Review*. Nuffield Foundation. London.
- Paine, M. (2012, September 1). Teachers list their gripes, *themercury.com.au*. Retrieved from [http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2012/09/01/357961\\_tasmania-news.html](http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2012/09/01/357961_tasmania-news.html)
- Parker, M. (2012, February 29). League tables based on NAPLAN are nonsense, *theTelegraph*. Retrieved from [http://blogs.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/maralynparker/index.php/dailytelegraph/comments/league\\_tables\\_based\\_on\\_naplan\\_are\\_nonsense/](http://blogs.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/maralynparker/index.php/dailytelegraph/comments/league_tables_based_on_naplan_are_nonsense/)
- Performance Pay - next step in attack (2012, September 25). *Scoop*. Retrieved from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1209/S00185/performance-pay-next-step-in-attack.htm>
- Polesel, J., Dulfer, M. N., & Turnbull, M. (2012). *The Experience of Education: The impacts of high stakes testing on school students and their families*. Retrieved from [http://uws.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/276191/High\\_Stakes\\_Testing\\_Literature\\_Review.pdf](http://uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/276191/High_Stakes_Testing_Literature_Review.pdf)
- Power, S. (2007). Busting schools' 20% failure rate *Manawatu Standard*. Retrieved from Newtext Database
- Ravitch, D. (2011). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*: New York: Basic Books.
- Robinson, V. M. J., McNaughton, S., & Timperley, H. (2011). Building capacity in a self-managing schooling system: the New Zealand experience. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(6), 720-738.
- Robinson, V. M. J., & Timperley, H. (2000). The link between accountability and improvement: The case of reporting to parents. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75(4), 66-89.
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & Joseph, G. O. G. (2005). Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 365-416.
- Santiago, P., Laveault, D., Nusche, D., & MacBeath, J. (2012). *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand 2011*: OECD Publishing.
- Shuttleworth, K. (2012, July 3). Standards data 'too ropey' to show parents yet, *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/kate-shuttleworth/news/article.cfm?a\\_id=780&objectid=10816964](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/kate-shuttleworth/news/article.cfm?a_id=780&objectid=10816964)
- Smith, N. (2003). *Schools of Excellence*. Retrieved August 4, 2012, from [http://www.national.org.nz/files/Schools\\_of\\_excellence.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/files/Schools_of_excellence.pdf)
- Smyth, T. S. (2008). Who Is No Child Left Behind Leaving Behind? *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 81(3), 133-137.
- Snook, I., & O'Neill, J. (2010). Social class and educational achievement: Beyond ideology. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 45(2), 3-18.
- Stobart, G. (2008). *Testing times: The uses and abuses of assessment*: Taylor & Francis.
- Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(4), 433-451.
- Telford, M., & May, S. (2010). *PISA 2009, Our 21st century learner at age 15*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

- Thomas, S. (2002). Contesting education policy in the public sphere: media debates over policies for the Queensland school curriculum. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(2), 187-198.
- Thomson, A. (2006, May 3). MPs to ask why one in five pupils fails, *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10380017](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10380017)
- Thrupp, M. (2001). School-level Education Policy under New Labour and New Zealand Labour: A Comparative Update. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 49(2), 187-212.
- Thrupp, M. (2007). National standards for New Zealand's primary and intermediate school pupils. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 17, 199-218. .
- Thrupp, M. (2009). Teachers, social contexts and the politics of blame. *Queensland Teachers Union Professional Magazine*, 6-12.
- Thrupp, M. (2010). Emerging school-level education policy under National 2008-9. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 19, 30-51.
- Thrupp, M., & Easter, A. (2012). *Research, Analysis and Insight into National Standards (RAINS) Project (First Report)*. Wellington: New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI).
- Thrupp, M., Hattie, J., Flockton, L., & Crooks, T. (2009). *Open letter to the Minister of Education: Warning about the new National Standards system*. Retrieved from [www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0911/S00107.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0911/S00107.htm)
- Timperley, H., & Parr, J. (2010). *Weaving Evidence, Inquiry and Standards to Build Better Schools*. Wellington, NZ: NZCER.
- Todd, R. (2009, May 21). National Standards, *The Press*. Retrieved from Newztext Database
- Tolley, A. (2009a, December 16). *Alarming report shows need for urgent action*. Retrieved from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/alarming-report-shows-need-urgent-action>
- Tolley, A. (2009b). *National Standards information for schools (Letter)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Trevett, C. (2009, December 14). Tolley talks tough in clash with teachers, *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10615353](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10615353)
- Turia, T. (2005, November 16). Speech: The Maori Party, *Scoop*. Retrieved from [KnowledgeBasket Database](http://www.knowledgebasket.org/Database)
- Tymms, P. (2004). Are standards rising in English primary schools? *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(4), 477-494.
- Tymms, P., & Merrell, C. (2007). Standards and quality in English primary schools over time: the national evidence. *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys*, 435.
- Tymms, P., & Merrell, C. (2007). *Standards and Quality in English Primary Schools Over Time: the national evidence (Primary Review Research Survey 4/1)*. University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Cambridge.
- Walker, M., Udy, K., & Pole, N. (1997). *Adult literacy in New Zealand: results from the International Adult Literacy Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Wallis, C., & Sonja, S. (2007). How to Fix No Child Left Behind. *Time Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1625192,00.html>
- Wang, L., Beckett, G. H., & Brown, L. (2006). Controversies of Standardized Assessment in School Accountability Reform: A Critical Synthesis of Multidisciplinary Research Evidence. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 19(4), 305-328.
- Ward, J., & Thomas, G. (2012). *National Standards: School Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Project, 2011 Report to the Ministry of Education*. Dunedin, New Zealand: Maths Technology Ltd.
- Wastney, M. (2012, September 5). PPTA casts doubt on educational failure claim, *NewsWire.co.nz*. Retrieved from <http://www.newswire.co.nz/2012/09/ppta-casts-doubt-on-educational-failure-claim/>
- Whetton, C. (2009). A brief history of a testing time: national curriculum assessment in England 1989-2008. *Educational Research*, 51(2), 137-159.
- Wyatt-Smith, C., & Klenowski, V. (2010). Role and purpose of standards in the context of national curriculum and assessment reform for accountability, improvement and equity in student learning. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 30(3), 37-47.
- Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., & Darr, C. (2009). *National Standards consultation analysis: Report for the Ministry of Education*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.