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# **AN OUTSIDER'S TAKE**

**A CASE STUDY  
OF THE NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
TO THEORIZE THE NEED FOR CHANGE  
TOWARDS A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
ORGANIZATION OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES**

**A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at  
The University of Waikato  
by  
RUFINA FREDERICK**

**The University of Waikato, New Zealand  
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# ABSTRACT

\*

This thesis has set out to theorize the need for change towards a qualifications framework for the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) based on a qualitative case study of the unique experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The main role of the qualifications systems of the OECS is that of sifting, sorting and selecting its citizens into the 'best' and the 'rest' for life chances. To fulfil this summative role, it marginalizes and condemns a large proportion of learners to relative failure, as is substantiated in the less than 5 per cent of the 18 to 30 age group enrolled in higher education.

Driven by the exigencies of a global world such as the discourse of managerialism, the OECS' quest for international competitiveness and economic advantage based on a qualified and skilled workforce makes a compelling case for this research on changing its qualifications system. Notably, however, qualifications are seen as a means to an end and not an end in themselves; and undoubtedly it is the learning that creates the distinction and not the qualifications (Smithers, 1997). Hence, assuring the quality of learning and assessment is part of the role of qualifications frameworks.

Arguing therefore that underlying the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems are two loose groupings of discourses, namely managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment, this thesis undertakes a theoretical exploration of these two discourses. It is demonstrated that both discourses were influential in driving the need for change and the establishment of the NZQA; and that both discourses have tendencies to inform change in the qualifications system of the OECS. Case study findings affirm too, that although the discourses are surgically separated at the theoretical level, they are inextricably linked at the implementation level; and that neither the discourse of managerialism nor the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment in isolation provides a blueprint for informing change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems. Any attempt to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks therefore tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. The dominant discourse which drives the need for change and the nature of the change, however, is that of managerialism derived mainly from scientific management and economic models. The discourse of learning and assessment, as an education discourse, has receded into the background. Consequently, the need for a better balance, between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment than presently exists is suggested.

An empirical outcome is derived through a qualitative case study of the successes and challenges of the NZQA in translating its legislative mandate into practice. Within the epistemology of the social construction of reality and the qualitative interpretive paradigm, grounded theory methodology is used to derive discursive themes. Key themes of the two discourses and the extent to which they manifest in the establishment and the nature of change in the case of the NZQA are investigated. Views of OECS participants regarding the influences and deterrents to change (in the OECS) were also sought to elucidate the theorizing. Multiple methods of document analysis, attachment and the interview were employed to elicit meanings, and crystallize evidence. Altogether 38 participants selected through network (snowballing) sampling provided data for the study.

In theory, the NZQA has fulfilled its legislative mandate. At the implementation level, findings revealed that the NZQA in itself is a learning organization, which is evolving in its role. Changes have had to be made and continue to be made to meet the complexity of the certainty of change, which also encompasses the demands of varied stakeholders – chief

among whom are educationists. The NZQA has made changes. These changes point to a unified system within which there is a 'dual structure' - a national qualifications framework (with eight levels) alongside a Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (with ten levels) - each with different building blocks, namely standards (unit and achievement), and outcomes, respectively.

There are lessons to be drawn from the NZQA experience. In establishing the need for change in the OECS qualifications system, it can be concluded that the reasons for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, a developing sub-region with a population of 500 000, are not very different from the reasons why New Zealand, a developed country with a population of about four million, pursued this end. The New Zealand experience is widely applicable to the OECS, and there are critical aspects from the New Zealand experience which can be adapted to suit any change towards an OECS qualifications framework. Drawing from the experience of the NZQA, and the drivers and deterrents identified in the context of the OECS, an all-inclusive framework appears to offer the best solution for the OECS. While modifications and adaptations are necessary as a consequence of eccentricities of context, one coordinating council with different departments with precise roles is a theoretical and practical strategy for interfacing the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment; and for addressing theoretical issues such as the principles of difference in epistemologies of knowledge. An all-inclusive framework, which takes into consideration vertical and lateral learning, appears to provide the only solution to momentarily avoid potential pitfalls, while allowing for regulation, monitoring, flexibility, portability of qualifications, accreditation and international benchmarking. It has been clearly demonstrated, however, that each assessment approach has its advantages. Therefore, the OECS should utilize a mix of assessment approaches (internal/external; criterion/norm; unit and achievement standards) depending on the purpose of assessment, instead of applying a *carte blanche* approach to all learning and assessment.

Two of the key deterrents in the OECS context were seen as being the lack of political will and resources. As regards qualifications frameworks in general, the major dilemma tends to be the need for levels and comparability of different fields of learning, and the implications of theory such as the epistemologies of knowledge and the arbitrariness in deciding on levels, credits, equivalencies and comparability. These issues have not been identified as being dominant in the critiques of the NZQA (with the exception of NZVCC, 1994). Rather, interview data in the New Zealand context pointed to difficulty by educators in making the paradigm shift to considering demands of the discourse of Managerialism. Also from participants' viewpoints, it was believed that tensions arose because a seamless framework appeared to challenge non-egalitarian principles through the democratization of qualifications, widening access, enhancing participation and providing recognition (certification) for all learning. It was a question of only the 'right' people (doctors, nurses, pilots, for example) should be recognized for their achievements.

This research provides a platform for change in the OECS qualifications system. Future areas of research identified include the need for an investigation into the cost (social and economic) of the present OECS qualifications system. Research is needed into the 'right' mix of assessment approaches (norm/criterion; internal/external; unit standards/achievement standards, for example) in awarding qualifications. Also, in a germane sense of quality, how can qualifications be developed to reflect the changing trends in societies and the new developments in learning and assessment such as Information Communications Technologies and non-site based learning? How can qualifications be indicators of learning to learn, dispositions towards learning and the recognition of collaborative or shared learning? All these developments and trends present new challenges to the traditional conceptualizations of reliability and validity of assessment or what Black (1998) refers to as having "confidence in the results" (p. 37). Such issues are still left unresolved in the development of qualifications frameworks. Research on these issues is needed so as to inform the operational principles of qualifications frameworks such as the way in which qualifications are valued and awarded.

*Then I gathered for myself staves and posts and tie-beams, and handles for each of the tools I knew how to use, and building-timbers and beams and as much as I could carry of the most beautiful woods for each of the structures I knew how to build. I did not come home with a single load without wishing to bring the whole forest with me, if I could have carried it all away; in every tree I saw something that I needed at home. Wherefore I advise each of those who is able, and has many wagons, to direct himself to the same forest where I cut these posts; let him fetch more there for himself, and load his wagons with fair branches so that he can weave many a neat wall and construct many an excellent building, and build a fair town with them, and dwell there pleasantly and at ease ... as I have yet not done...*

King Alfred's Vision of the House of Learning  
<http://www.regia.org/life/houses.htm>

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACTI	Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions
ACEAB	The Association of Commonwealth Examination Accreditation Bodies
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEC	Commission of European Community
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	Eastern Caribbean Currency
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FTAA	Free Trade of the Americas
GATE	The Global Alliance for Transnational Education
GATT	General Agreement on Trade & Tariffs
GCE	General Certificate Examination
GIS	Government Information Service
HRD	Human Resource Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INQAAHE	The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
NVQ-J	The National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Jamaica
MGSS	Ministerial Group on Small States
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NZQA	The New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECS	Organization for Eastern Caribbean States
OERU	OECS Education Reform Unit
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency
ROL	Record of Learning
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SALCC	Sir Arthur Lewis Community College
SAQA	The South Africa Qualifications Authority
SCEBW	School Certificate Examination Board, Wellington
TTNVQ	The Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualifications Framework
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United National Development Project
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
US/USA	United States/United States of America
UWI	University of the West Indies
WTO	World Trade Organization

# Chapter One

\*

## THE BIG PICTURE INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Purpose, Rationale, and Significance

The purpose of this research is threefold. First, it aims to theorize the need for change in the qualifications system of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) towards an OECS qualifications framework. Theorizing, in this sense, means, “conceiving and formulating ideas (concepts) into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 21). The primary role of the present British system, inherited as a result of colonialism, is premised on the ‘sifting’ and ‘sorting’ of citizens for life chances; which has signalled the need for theorizing a new framework. What key factors and arguments drive or deter the need for change in the qualifications systems of the OECS?

Second, this research seeks to undertake a qualitative case study of one such body, namely the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The NZQA has embarked on major and unique restructuring of qualifications in New Zealand. The NZQA is evolving in its role, and therefore this research represents ‘a snapshot in time’. How might this experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) be used to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework? Taking into account the distinctiveness of the socio-political contexts and unparalleled levels of economic development of New Zealand and the OECS, further data collected in the OECS (on the key factors and arguments that drive or deter the need for change in the qualifications systems of the OECS) maximizes the use of the NZQA case study findings.

Third, and at a more theoretical level, this research sets out to explore the central argument which underpins the first two folds of the purpose of this research. This central argument advances the notion that the need for change in national qualifications systems

and the nature of the change are informed by a constellation of discourses. These discourses are rationalized herein as falling into two loose groupings, namely managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is tension.

Yet, to consider the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment as part of the orientation of qualifications frameworks in this research, it must be recognized that they are incomplete in meaning outside of the level of practice; that is, at the level of implementation. At the level of policy implementation, Harrison (2004) posits that there are two possible sources of tension on policy issues. One is on the ends of policy; the other is on the appropriate means to achieve the ends and consequences of the policy. What is not offered in Harrison's (2004) postulate are two main observations: Firstly, it is observed that the two sources of tension that he identifies are not always discrete; and secondly, it is observed that the theoretical underpinnings which inform the ends and the appropriate means to achieve the ends and consequences of the policy are also a site of tension. In this vein, this research argues for the theoretical underpinnings which inform the policy to be considered in juxtaposition with what happens at the level of practice; that is, at the level of implementation. Tying policy implementation to a general understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the policy enables a more adequate consideration of the tensions and complexities at the level of practice.

On account of this assumed nexus of the theory and the practice in this thesis, this research sets out to explore the central argument that the need for change in qualifications systems and the nature of the change are informed by two loose groupings of discourses, namely managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is notable tension. It is further contended that while these discourses might appear to be theoretically contesting, they are not necessarily divergent in the real world. In any national context in the establishment of qualifications<sup>1</sup> frameworks, it is a question of more of one or less of the other – a relative positioning of the discourses. In this research, the need for a better balance than presently exists is suggested.

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<sup>1</sup> A qualification, in this research, is taken to mean an award which recognises that learning has taken place within a time frame, and standards, competencies, knowledge and skills have been attained. It is common practice in the literature to use the term awards, certificates and credentials interchangeably with qualifications (UNESCO, n.d). The same is true in this research.

Discourses in this thesis are thought of as systems of ideas through which “authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions, and aspirations of others ... to achieve the objectives they consider desirable” (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 8). This notion of discourse stems from the work of Michel Foucault, a French philosopher. Foucault’s constant endeavour was to show how ‘systems of ideas’ become systems of power at particular points in our histories (Gibson, 1986; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004; Torrance, 2000). These ideas, according to Foucault (1977), become discourses which construct and regulate human beings, subjecting them to control. Foucault (1977) suggests that such systems of ideas - discourses - “are always inextricably related and that there are always sociological implications” (Olssen *et al.*, 2004; p. 22). As a result, they become “sites of contest, and the dominant discourses governing ... organization[s] and practice of social institutions are under constant challenge” (Weedon, 1987, p. 109).

Foucault used examples such as “the examination” and its resulting qualifications to illustrate that, institutions in societies are produced as part of discourse (Foucault, 1977). According to Foucault (1977), “the examination ... is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to *qualify*, [emphasis added by researcher] to classify and to discipline. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (p. 184). In this “slender technique” of the examination (Foucault, 1977, p. 185), Foucault (1977) argues, disciplinary power becomes “an ‘integrated’ system, linked from inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanisms in which it is practiced ... its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally” (p. 176). As a consequence, the examination is “no longer a monument for future memory, but a document [a certificate] for possible use” (Foucault, 1977, p. 191).

In this research, the attempt to understand the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment, and how they bring institutions such as the NZQA and the OECS qualifications systems into being, is to consider such “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations, which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). It is an attempt to understand how the NZQA and the OECS qualifications systems are defined in their particular contexts, their macro- and microstructures of power, their social conditions, and the ‘realities’ that underlie their

need, their roles, and their effects on such social structures and practices (Olssen *et al.*, 2004). The consideration of the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment and how they inform the orientations of qualifications frameworks in this thesis therefore becomes part of a more general treatise of a wider social, economic and political context.

Within this wider policy context, the purpose of this research resonates with internal as well as external political, economic and social trends, which seem to represent an international convergence and conformity towards reforming public sectors (particularly in Anglophone countries); irrespective of their national ideologies, politics, or power relations (Fitzsimons, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Levin, 2001; Young, 2003a). Observers have claimed that “prolonged economic crises in western capitalism, a crisis fundamentally triggered by falling rates of profit, and hence declining capital accumulation” (Lauder, 1990, p. 3), have given rise to a trend in most countries whereby the quality of education and training has come under scrutiny. Under the aegis of wider public sector reform, education reform (in New Zealand, in particular) has been associated with the introduction of the ‘contestable’ discourse of managerialism to shape its practices (Apple, 2004; Codd, 1999; Easton, 2003; Fitzsimons, 1999a). Within this policy context, there is a generalised government concern to promote quality, accountability, outcomes-oriented approaches, and efficiency in all social fields including education (Apple, 2004; Fitzsimons, 1999a). The meaning of ‘quality’ in education is evolving as a result (Woodhouse, 1997). Woodhouse (2004) explains that the notion of quality “is still developing and changing rapidly as the 21<sup>st</sup> century begins. The 1990s were foreshadowed in 1991 as the decade of quality ... and the 2000s as the decade of international quality” (p. 77). The issue has engaged interchanges among many agencies, governments, higher education initiatives and regional and global organizations since the 1980s (see Basu & Wright, 2003; Beckford, 2002; Brennan, 1997; Cribbin, 2002c; Fitzsimons & Roberts, 1999; Harvey, 1995; Harvey & Green, 1993; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Ratcliff, 2003; Stella, 2004; Strydom & Strydom, 2004; Strydom, Zulu & Murray, 2004; Woodhouse, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004).

As a key mechanism in the quality assurance process, governments have alighted upon change in qualifications systems (Blackmur, 2004; Richardson, 1999; Young, 2003a, 2003b). There is the major assumption that change in qualifications systems towards national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), “represents the key vehicle” (Young, 2003b, p. 5) for

realizing quality in relation to the shifting internal and external economic and social imperatives. Increasingly, there is the belief within countries that, “a society that sets store by rigorous and respected qualifications is one committed to [lifelong] learning, to developing talents of all its citizens and to playing a leading role in the global economy” (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1997, p. 2 in Spours, 2000, p. 113). The NZQA’s operation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as a quality assurance tool, for example, was considered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1993) as being directly associated with the economic policies of the Government of New Zealand. In this respect, Marginson (1993) explains that, “the development of contemporary economies depends crucially on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of their work forces - in short on their human capital” (p. 20). Fitzsimons (1999b) extends her explanation in arguing that “the indicators of skills are qualifications, which according to human capital theory are signifiers of national wealth and can be evaluated through their credit values” (p. 141). Change in qualification systems towards the development of qualifications frameworks is viewed as a way of promoting vertical and horizontal learning to increase the knowledge and technological and skills base of the workforce (see Ensor, 2003; Fitzsimons, 1999a; Hodgson, 2000; Leong & Wong, 2004; Lester, 1995; Young, 2003a, 2003b).

Notably, however, “qualifications, like dollars and cents, are a currency - a means to an end; not the end itself”, and that ideally, “the knowledge, understanding, and skills make the difference, not the qualifications” (Smithers, 1997, p. 80). To borrow from Smithers (1997), it is “a moot point whether qualifications [and qualifications frameworks] are the best way of promoting learning – they can take the eye off the ball of the curriculum and training – but, if it is accepted that they are an important influence, the dilemma has to be faced” (p. 1). In this wider social, economic and political context, this research contends that the inherited linear-track British qualifications structure of the OECS wields a significant influence; and has therefore been identified in this thesis as a problem to be researched.

In the OECS, qualifications have acquired a legitimacy which makes them invaluable both as rhetorical devices and as means of managing the aspirations of individuals and societies (Broadfoot, 2001). In the OECS, unless learners gain qualifications first, they are perpetually debarred from life chances (Furedi, 2001). Qualifications are regarded as “a visible sign of achievement and a passport to progression” (UK, Department for

Education and Employment (DfEE), in Spours, 2000, p. 113). They are at the epicentre of the education system. Moreover, they lie at the heart of the link between the education system and economic demand and social demand; and between livelihood givers and livelihood seekers (Eckstein & Noah, 1992; Little, 2000).

The wider policy context depicted previously, the changing global economic contexts, the rampant effects of economic world orders (neoliberalization, globalization, managerialism, for example) on smaller states; and the changing context of regionalization (OECS, CARICOM, a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and OECS Single Market and Economy) add to the significance of this research. The effects of economic world orders have been copiously contested in the literature (see Angus, 2004; Apple, 2000; Bhagwati, 2004; Bloom, 2004; Dale & Robertson, 1997; Hallak, 2000; Kelsey, 2004; Olssen *et al.*, 2004; Oplatka, 2004; Ritzer, 2004; Spring, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004, for discussions on globalization and education). In this broader socio-economic sagacity, Petras (1997) writes that at “the extreme, socio-economic measures associated with neoliberalism, the vast numbers affected, and the depths of decline in living standards cut across classes, genders, races, class segments, and geographical regions” (p. 80). Kelsey (2002), in particular, argues that “there is no level playing field: the wealthier the player, the more potentially powerful they are” (p.16). Above all, Hartley (2003) underscores the reality that choice is at least enhanced for those who can afford it.

The location of the OECS, its population, the size of its landmass, the insignificance of its internal market and the fact that it is a “price taker rather than a price maker” lead to a vulnerability in the new economic order (Dale & Robertson 1997, p. 209). As a result of this reality, the significance of this research can also be viewed as deriving from a fear of isolation, economic deprivation, increasing educational exports (Peace Lenn, 1994) or as an attempt to “forestall such exclusion” from the trepidation of the volatility of individuals and small nations of the OECS being “left out” (Dale & Robertson, 1997, p. 211).

Debates such as the extent of clarity of the conception of globalization and regionalization for improving education, and its full impact on (non)qualification holders are for another thesis; but to the extent that the typology of the ‘players’ within the global economy includes “those who globalize, those who are globalized and those who are left

out" (Hallak, 2000, p. 25), the shortfalls of the present qualifications system of the OECS are brought into sharp focus. As capital, goods and ideas become more global, and as knowledge, skills, and services become commodities, the awards (certificates/qualifications) which are indicative of educational attainment become indispensable for individual and national economic competitiveness (see Olssen *et al.*, 2004, Wolf, 1996a, 1996b, 2002). Yet, the parity of esteem of the OECS linear qualifications system is that of sifting, and sorting through the recognition of primarily 'academic' achievement. To fulfil its summative role, exclusion of the majority of OECS learners is imminent, as to date the OECS qualifications system is premised on "the belief that only a proportion of people [are] capable of higher learning, and [its role is] to sift and reward those who [are]" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20). It condemns a large proportion of the human resource of the OECS to relative failure, as is substantiated by the less than five per cent of the 18 to 30 age group enrolled in higher education (Beckles, 2004).

My contention in this thesis is that failure to reform the present qualifications system to one which recognizes a wide spectrum of learning, and one that provides for progression in learning "either vertically to more complex and demanding activities or laterally to new and different areas of learning" (Broadfoot, 1996b, p. 196), will daunt many individual and economic visions. The narrow qualifications system of the OECS is itself a major barrier to widening participation and lifelong learning at the end of, and beyond, post-compulsory education and training (15+) (Hodgson, 2000). On this basis, this thesis signals the need for theorizing a new framework for the qualification system of the OECS. In theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework, this thesis also attempts to assess the key factors and arguments that drive or deter the need for change in the qualifications systems of the OECS.

This research is appropriate, considering that the British continue to research and revolutionize the very model that was exported to the OECS (see James, 2000; Jessup, 1991; Lester, 1995; Priestly, 1996; Spours, 2000; The Working Group Report on 14-19 Reform, 2004). Spours (2000) specifies the varied stages of revolution of the British system, beginning in the late eighties:

The review of Vocational Qualifications (...1986) led to the formation of a National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF). The NVQF, based on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) levels, units and outcomes, aimed to support the introduction of NVQs and to convert all existing vocational qualifications into this competence-based model. During this phase of NQF, academic qualifications such as the GCSE and A levels were

part of a separate reform process... A second phase of the NQF began [in] 1991 ...., [with the proposal] that there should be a qualifications framework based on A levels, GNVQs and NVQs. The main motivation for its formation was to find a place for the newly created General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in order to stimulate post-16 participation, while preserving the role of selective A levels ... the triple-track qualification system marked an advance on the previous vocational phase because it sought to embrace different types of qualifications .... By the mid-1990s three qualifications reviews ... signalled an attempt to make the triple track qualifications system more flexible and more aligned so as to reduce poor successful completion rates in advanced level qualifications (Spours, pp. 114-115).

In more recent times, a complete overhaul of curriculum and qualifications for the 14-19 year olds has been recommended for the British (Working Group on 14-19 Reform, 2004).

In its over-two-hundred-page report, the Working Group on the 14-19- Reform posited:

Overall we need a 14-19 framework which is transparent and easily understood, and which recognizes and values achievement at a number of levels and types appropriate to each learner; where those who need it are given headroom because achievement has no ceiling; where everybody can progress to valued qualifications, all of which offer further progression; and where all are able to tailor their educational career path to their needs and aspirations while developing the attributes and skills to succeed as individuals and learners. Above all we need a framework where every learner matters (p. 13).

The goal, according to the Working Group on 14-19 Reform (2004), is to “make the system more transparent and easier to understand by rationalising 14-19 curriculum and qualifications within a diploma framework, where progression routes and the value of qualifications are clear” (p. 3).

In the case of the OECS, however, there is a dearth of research on the need for change in the inherited British qualifications structure. Bray & Steward (1998) provide descriptive analyses of a few Caribbean (Bahamas, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago) examination systems; but not of the OECS. Besides, the writers did not present any research based implications of such systems. Given the legitimate concern by governments of the Caribbean region to strengthen their research capacities (Holmes, 2001) and their ratification of an accreditation policy for the region in 1989 (Poyotte, 2001), this research contends that the present qualification system in the OECS, inherited from the British, is a problem to be faced. Granted, in the Caribbean region, the British O and A levels have been Caribbeanized and are the responsibility of the region’s Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). Arguably, however, the inherited roles and placement of the Caribbean

Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) remain unabated.

On an international scale, this research is also appropriate, owing to Young's (2003a) observation that despite the importance of qualifications frameworks:

this is not a topic that has the highest profile for either academic researchers or policy makers, whose major concerns have tended to be with the more politically sensitive (and high status) issues of schools and universities. In the one case where a vocational framework has been the subject of serious debate - the British NVQs - the critiques have focused on the particular form of the NVQs, not the idea of a single framework. As a result the idea of a single framework, which was first proposed by UK policymakers in the mid-1990s, has created little interest ( p. 224).

According to Young (2003a):

The case of New Zealand ... and in the case of NVQs in the UK and the South African NQF involved the development of a completely new terminology that included such terms as level descriptors and range statements, which had no simple relationship with any previous qualifications. This terminology, common to New Zealand and South Africa, does not refer to any specific learning or qualifications; as a result it remains a mystery to many people. It is not surprising that those who are not familiar with the new language do not feel able to engage in debate, let alone try to theorize the phenomenon of NQFs (p. 224).

Research in this area, therefore, both at the regional and international levels, is necessary and timely in contributing towards this apparent knowledge gap.

In my quest for answers to theorize the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, I am aware that there is no "correct model" (Green, 1994, p. 176); and that by the end of 2004, there were several established systems (Blackmur, 2004). Within the wider Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for example, separate and distinct from the academic qualifications, vocational qualifications frameworks have been established in Jamaica (The Jamaica National Vocational Qualifications framework, NVQ-J), and in Trinidad and Tobago (The Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualifications Framework, TTNVQ) (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2002). Outside the region, established frameworks include The Australian Qualifications Framework, The National Qualifications Framework of Ireland, The South African Qualifications Authority, The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for the Higher Education in the United Kingdom, The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland, and The Scottish Qualifications Framework (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Young, 2003a, 2003b).

But, a distinctive case for study in relation to the OECS is that of New Zealand and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The NZQA (2004a), is a Crown Agency (non-government department), established under the New Zealand Education Amendment Act 1990 (see Appendix A for statutory provisions of the Education Act, as they relate to NZQA). This legislation gives responsibility for the management of qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and training to the NZQA as a regulated legal body. Until March 2001, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was an eight-level unified structure, and the base for coordinating and integrating a coherent, flexible, post-compulsory education and training sector (NZQA, 2004a). The intent and elements of the framework are further explained by Roberts (1997):

The building blocks in the [framework are] 'units of learning' (later to become known as 'unit standards'), each categorized according to their level of difficulty and placed on a single, harmonized qualifications framework ... There would be no distinction between academic and vocational training in the post-secondary educational arena: all qualifications would become part of a 'seamless web' of courses, programmes, certificates and degrees (Roberts, 1997, p. 165)

In 2001, however, the NQF was expanded to ten levels. The ten-level framework is named the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (NZQA, 2001b). The main aim of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications is to ensure that "quality assurance of qualifications is consistently applied; people can compare qualifications; people can make informed choices about which qualification pathway they will pursue" (NZQA, August 2001, p. 2). This new shift allows for a mix of unit standards, achievement standards and, in some cases, a broader outcomes-based approach.

Irrefutably, by the end of the twentieth century, New Zealand had gone further than any other country in an attempt to restructure its qualifications system. Hodgetts (1998) argues that "nowhere else in the world [had] such an all-embracing qualifications watchdog been set up" (p. 10). The move, it is said, "in many ways, was a gigantic leap of faith" (Smithers, 1997, p. 10). It has been contended that "New Zealand's boldness – or perhaps its foolhardiness – has meant that it has become the world's test-bed for this type of qualification system" (Smithers, 1997, p. 2). Arguably, this makes New Zealand

an apposite case to be studied in relation to the OECS and to inform the theorizing in this research. How might the experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) be used to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework?

## 1.2 Central Argument

The central argument of this research advances the notion that the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems are informed by a constellation of discourses. These discourses are rationalized herein as falling into two loose groupings; namely, managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is notable tension.

Of the two groupings, one is derived from the scientific management models drawn mainly from the language of technology and economics (Apple, 2004; Codd, 1995, 1997b, 2003; Fitzsimons, 1999a; Maharey, 2004; Minto, 2004; Robertson, 1999). In this research, neo-liberalism, managerialism, the New Right, New Public Management, Public Choice Theory, The New Economics of Organizations and Human Capital Theory are all considered part of this loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism (Boston *et al.*, 1996). Codd (1999) argues that the primary objective of this discourse is that of achieving a total rationalization of agencies of the State, including educational institutions, to bring them in line with the policy prescriptions of the Free Market Economics and Corporate Managerialism. In this discourse of managerialism, “dominant norms” (Apple, 2004, p. 27) include ‘quantifiable outcomes’, ‘standards’, ‘accountability’, and ‘quality assurance’.

Within this perspective, education is seen as a commodity to be bought and sold; the learner for instance, is viewed as a customer or consumer. In its *Briefing Papers for the Incoming Government*, the NZQA (1993d) identifies five groups of customers. They are (i) government, (ii) industry and professions, (iii) learners, (iv) societies including Iwi<sup>2</sup>, and (v) teachers, researchers: the academic community (NZQA, 1993d). The NZQA (1993d) explains:

Learners are the most direct customers in that they both purchase and consume the service. But they are also a product of the service - or at least their skills, knowledge attitudes and values are. Government is a purchaser and sometimes owner of the service, and also (as a larger employer and the agent for the public good) a purchaser of the product. In order to distinguish

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<sup>2</sup> Maori communities

learners as primary customers from other customers it may be better to view learners as *customer-consumers*; and all other customers as *customer-stakeholders*. The teaching and research community is provides [sic] the service and is therefore in a more complex position than other groups, but it remains a customer to the extent it uses pre-requisite learning. As providers, teachers and researchers are also obvious stakeholders (p. 12).

This elucidation by the NZQA points to Apple's (2004) metaphor of the world as a vast supermarket, in which education is seemingly viewed "as simply one or more products like bread, cars and television" (p. 27). In this thesis, it is assuming that qualifications are the voices of the learning and assessment process. Therefore, in reality, the initial indicators and marketed 'commodity' of this acquisition of the requisite skills and dispositions are the qualifications (certificates). From this perspective of the discourse of managerialism, qualifications frameworks focus on the specification of knowledge and skills in a Taylorist detail that enables each component to be 'measurable' and certifiable.

Internationally, therefore, governments have alighted upon assessment; in particular standards based assessment as a key mechanism in both the learning and accountability processes (Bell & Cowie, 2001b; Broadfoot, 1996a, 1996b; Torrance, 1997). Although country profiles vary (Crooks, 2003), and throughout this research generalizations are made with caution (Crooks, 1999), in many countries including New Zealand, assessment is used not just to provide neutral indicators of performance or for learner transformation, but also in the hope of upgrading the entire education system - curriculum, teaching and academic performance and awards granted (Resnick & Resnick, 1992, p. 56). Resnick & Resnick (1992) posit that in imposing public accountability programmes, of which assessment is chief, it is the intention of State Education Departments and legislatures to influence what is taught and the standards of performance, and by extension what knowledge is recognized and valued by means of certification.

The two loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment are therefore seen as theoretically contesting because the discourse of education theory believes in a contrary proposition to that of managerialism (Apple, 2004). Traditionally, the major emphasis of the discourse of education theory has been in developing minds and characters (Eckstein & Noah 1992; Richmond, 1971), and not on education as a commodity to be bought or sold. The discourse of learning and assessment is viewed as part of this broader humanistic-liberal education tradition,

which has a tendency to view education as a civilizing force in society, and integral to the holistic development of the person (Aloni, 2001). Woodhouse (1998) observes that “the increasing reference to students and others as ‘customers’ of educational institutions can lead to short-term results, and [focus] on today’s customers, whereas ... education must include more distant goals and its customers include future generations as yet unborn” (p. 270). The writer points out that “increasing ‘packaging’ of information into small segments (often merely ‘sound bites’) can lead us to forget that education means changing people and that changing people takes time” (p. 270). Thus, it can be forgotten that education can help create the future (Woodhouse, 1998). In this regard, tension arises as educationists believe that the discourse of managerialism tends to ignore that the main role of education entails:

The general cultivation and empowerment of human beings, in manners that are intellectually and morally appropriate, towards the best and highest life of which they are capable, in three fundamental domains of life; as individuals, actualizing their potentialities and tendencies; as members of society, becoming involved and responsible citizens; and as human beings, enriching and perfecting themselves through active engagement with the collective achievements of human culture (Aloni, 2001, p. 28).

Within this loose grouping of the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment, there is the recognition that learning and certification are not always synonymous. As regards NQFs, the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment emphasizes assessment both for, and of, learning (Crooks, 1988, 2001, 2003); rather than on assessment defined by rigorous standards for accountability and certification.

From the preceding discussion, theoretical tension between the two loose groupings of discourses regarding national qualifications frameworks are encapsulated in what Codd, McAlpine and Poskitt (1995) describe as:

A kind of ‘Janus-policy’ shaped by conflicting political imperatives. Some elements of the policy clearly point towards summative forms of assessment that would increase accountability, improve standards and be used for school comparisons and national monitoring. This would be called the ‘marketization imperative’. Other elements, however, point just as clearly towards formative or diagnostic forms of assessment that would improve the quality of teaching, guide the learning process, and cater for the needs of individual students (pp. 33-34).

While the discourses are seen as contesting by writers such as Codd, McAlpine and Poskitt (1995), Crooks (2003) specifically posits that there is “little point in accountability

processes if they do not have formative effects alongside their summative purposes" (p. 17).

It is argued in this research, therefore, that while the two loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education theory may appear to be contesting in their theoretical orientations, they are not necessarily divergent at the level of policy implementation; that is, at the level of practice. From the perspective of the discourse of managerialism, the world is seen as "intensely competitive economically, and students - as the future workers - must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively" (Apple, 2004, p. 27). Given the "increasing mobility of students, institutions, graduates and employers across national boundaries ... [and] possibilities, difficulties and drawbacks of mutual recognition" (Woodhouse, 2004, p. 86), Broadfoot's (2001) argument holds that if nothing else is certain in this rapidly changing world, the importance of the quality of learning and assessment is universally acknowledged. In this regard, from an education discourse perspective, Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot (2002) postulate that "assessment is probably the most profound influence on what gets learned, when learning occurs and who does the learning" (p. 151). Also, Clarke (1992) asserts that "irrespective of the purposes we might have for assessment, it is through our assessment that we communicate most clearly to students which activities and learning outcomes we value" (p.1). We communicate most clearly what knowledge is recognized and valued by means of certification. Certificates/qualifications therefore become the voices of the learning and assessment process. Any attempt, therefore, to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. In relation to NQFs, the need for a better balance between the discourses than presently exists is suggested.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

This research is supported by a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories referred to as the theoretical framework (Robson 2002; Holliday, 2002). In framing the theoretical framework for this thesis, it was evident that the qualifications systems and frameworks are not based on any one overarching theory. Roberts (1997), for instance, warns that it is not easy to untangle the various threads in the debates over the NZQA. Theoretically, many forces (social, economic, and political among them) converged to set in motion an extraordinary wave of reform in New Zealand, from

which the NZQA evolved (Boston, 1991; Boston *et al.*, 1991, 1996; Dale & Robertson, 1997; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; McCulloch, 1990, 1996; McGee, Moltzen, Oliver & Mitchell, 1993; Roberts, 1997; Robertson, 1999; Scott, 2001; Snook, 1996, 1997; Snook, Adams, Adams, Clark, Codd, Collins, Harker, O'Neill & Pearce; 1999). Some of the 'various threads' are exemplified in the following excerpt:

Establishing a new qualifications system was part of the government's response to concerns about the education and training environment, including a lack of industry training, insufficient training options and career flexibility (particularly for young people), poor information flows and a lack of labour flexibility. The new system was intended to encourage the development of a broader range of vocational qualifications, reduce artificial distinctions between vocational and academic training, and contribute to a situation where industry provided more guidance as to the types of skills and attributes it sought. Inherent in the policy was a desire to move away from a 'time-served' system to one which recognized competencies (Mersi and Smith, 1962:2, released under the Official Information Act in Roberts, 1997, p. 166).

Also, as has been indicated:

Some elements of the policy clearly point towards summative forms of assessment that would increase accountability, improve standards and be used for school comparisons and national monitoring ... Other elements, however, point just as clearly towards formative or diagnostic forms of assessment that would improve the quality of teaching, guide the learning process, and cater for the needs of individual students (Codd, McAlpine & Poskitt, 1995, pp. 33-34).

Owing to these 'various threads' (Roberts, 1997), a post-modern approach is adopted for theorizing in this research project (Giroux, 1995). Conceptually, this research pulls together "various disparate currents" in the literature and uses theoretical ideologies and intersecting epistemologies that are scattered in an unsystematic way in diverse subject matters (Beckett & Hager, 2002, p. 7). Use is made of various social fields such as managerialism (human capital theory, quality assurance, accountability), and education theory of learning (cognitivism, behaviourism, constructivism) and assessment (summative, formative, continuous summative, criterion referenced, norm referenced). This approach is supported by Robson (2002), for example, who argues that theoretical frameworks may come in many different forms. He explains that they may range from elaborate or multivariate conceptualizations and models to simple relationships. They can be partially fragmented or philosophically harmonized. He argues that it may not

even be feasible “to make a symbiotic connection between the research topic and existing theory in many real world studies” (Robson, 2002, p. 62).

The theoretical framework adopted in this thesis makes explicit the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research, and provides a foundation on which to construct and defend its central tenet (Partington, 2002). As has been argued, tying the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems at the level of practice to the general understanding of the epistemological assumptions enables a more adequate consideration of the tensions and complexities that surround qualifications, qualifications and qualifications systems.

#### 1.4 The Proposed Research

The purpose of this research is that of theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework, based on a qualitative case study of the NZQA. The central argument advances the notion that the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems are informed by a constellation of discourses which are rationalized into two loose groupings of managerialism and education theory - between which there is notable tension. The following steps were formulated to steer the research process:

- (i) Analyze the key arguments that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA with which the OECS can identify;
- (ii) Examine the policies and operational principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand;
- (iii) Analyze the successes and the challenges of the NZQA’s experience in translating its legislative mandate, on its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand, into practice;
- (iv) Assess the key factors and arguments which drive/influence or have the potential to deter/impede the reform of a qualifications system in the OECS.

These steps are utilized to answer the prime research question: *How might the experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) be used to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework?*

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

The nine chapters of this thesis reflect a nexus between theory and practice. Wherever applicable, key findings, theories, and matters that inform the research are dealt with at their points of relevance in this thesis. This first chapter has presented the big picture of this research. It has established the purpose of this research, developed the central argument and presented other strands of theoretical underpinnings that may have an impact on this research. Given the varying stages of economic and social development, and the varying political priorities of the OECS and New Zealand a contextual analysis in the second chapter provides the background of the research interest in both the OECS and the New Zealand contexts. A review of research studies conducted on the NZQA forms part of this contextual analysis.

Chapters Three and Four develop the theoretical framework that makes explicit the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research. Chapter Three begins with a review of qualifications. This is followed by a conceptual analysis of qualifications frameworks and an analysis of the major theoretical strands in the discourse of managerialism that underpin this research. Key themes that are given attention include the local and global factors that influence the establishment of qualifications frameworks; the theoretical underpinnings of the NZQA in the context of wider public sector reforms in New Zealand and the concepts of quality, quality assurance and accountability. Based on the themes reviewed, this third chapter concludes with a synthesis of possible sources of tension between the two loose groupings of the discourses (of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment) as advanced in the central argument of this research. In Chapter Four, the education discourses are reviewed - the literatures on matters of learning (cognitivism, behaviourism, constructivism) and assessment (summative, formative, continuous summative, criterion referenced, norm referenced) that have implications for awarding qualifications are reviewed.

In Chapter Five, literatures that inform the research methodology are evaluated. The 'eclectic' framework selected (Burns, 2000) draws on the purpose of educational research, the epistemology of the construction of social reality, the interpretive qualitative research paradigm, and case study and grounded theory methodologies. Grounded theory and case study methodologies allow for the use of multiple sources of data in combination. Accordingly, interview, attachment, questionnaire, and document analysis are utilized in the study. One thematic concern of this chapter is that of reflexivity. Reflexivity

describes my position as a researcher in this thesis. My professional background as an educator, although bracketed (Merriam, 2002), will show that I am not a passive spectator who is disengaged from the research. The epistemology of social construction of reality and the qualitative interpretive paradigm, however, allowed for me to explore and undertake “an analysis of knowledge in everyday life that generates a theory of society as a dialectical process between objective and subjective reality” (Radnor, 2001, p.11).

Guided by the methodological framework, Chapters Six, Seven and Eight are dedicated to the presentation, interpretation and application of findings. In Chapters Six and Seven, case study findings on NZQA are presented. In Chapter Eight, case study findings examine the key factors and arguments that drive or deter the need for change in the OECS qualifications systems from the viewpoints of OECS participants. In Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, the findings are discussed. Limitations are delineated and theorizing is grounded in the lessons drawn from the findings. Implications for future research are also considered in this last chapter.

As a whole, this thesis contributes a piece in the jigsaw puzzle (Bell, supervision notes, 2004) on qualifications frameworks. Theoretically, it amplifies the silent diversity and complexity that surround qualifications, qualifications frameworks and qualifications systems. From a practical perspective (that is, policy learning and borrowing), it provides research-based insights of an ‘inside view’ of the NZQA’s experience from the perspective of NZQA’s employees. This view contributes much to an understanding of how the policy proposals have manifested at level of practice; that is, at the level of policy implementation. This research also provides a platform for change in the OECS qualifications system.

## Chapter Two

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### LOCATING THE RESEARCH INTEREST IN CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is that of theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework, based on a qualitative case study of the NZQA. The central argument advances the notion that a constellation of discourses informs the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems. In this research, these discourses are thought of as falling into two loose groupings, namely managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is notable tension. It is contended, however, that while these discourses are theoretically contesting, they are not necessarily divergent. This second chapter continues to pursue this purpose, and to explore and build on this central argument.

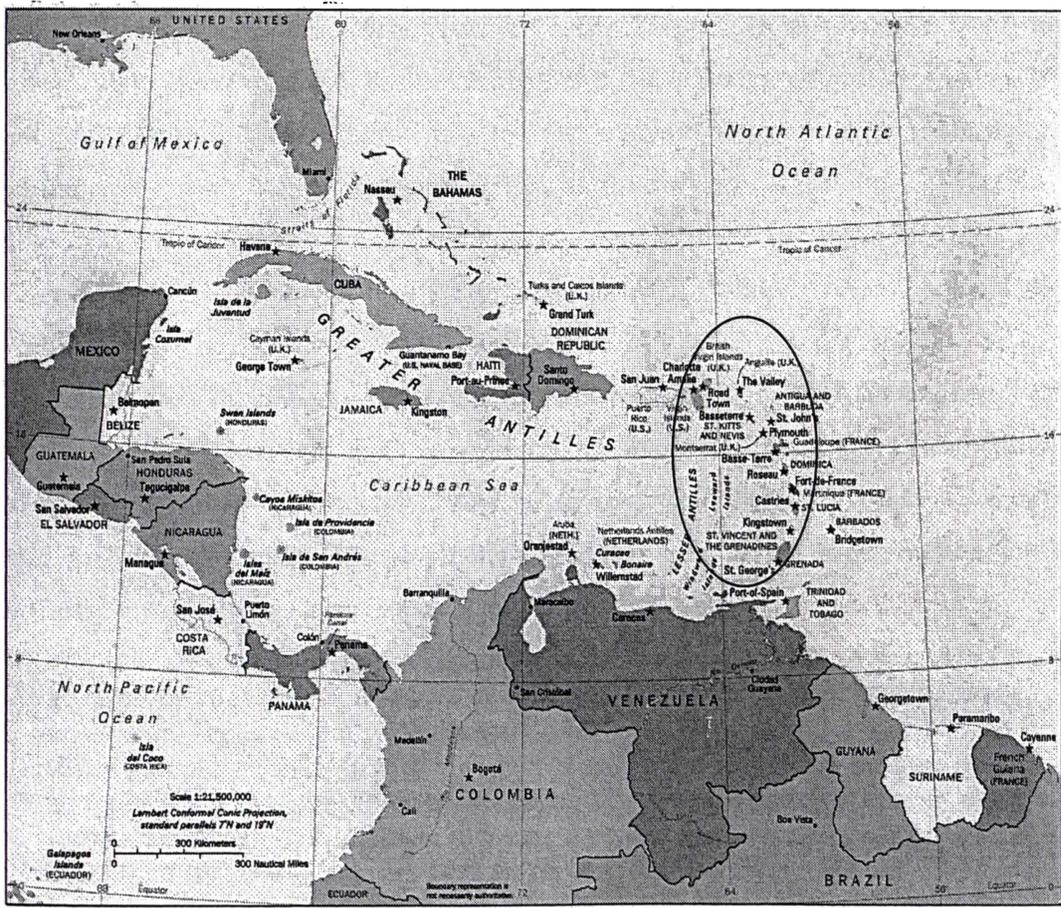
As a preface, the introductory chapter has set out some of the international trends and developed the central argument that underpins this research. Given the unique socio-political contexts of the OECS and New Zealand, this chapter locates the research interest in these contexts. It is argued that qualifications systems are eccentric systems that vary from context to context. As such, they are influenced by the context in which they originate and the context in which they reside. Viewed in this light, New Zealand and the OECS are two regions that are not directly comparable in economic, political, education and social systems. Therefore, rather than attempt to analyze context from those premises, themes and issues on qualifications and their qualifications systems which have arisen in their idiosyncratic circumstances are given attention in this chapter. As has been contended in Chapter One, the lessons for the OECS in this thesis are driven by the impetus that there is a unique experience in the New Zealand context, rather than parallels in their education systems, economics and politics.

This chapter begins with a depiction of the socio-political milieu of the OECS. This is followed by an analysis of the local, regional and international convergence of some themes raised in this research. A thorough deliberation of the research interest is undertaken, before a case is made for studying New Zealand and the NZQA in relation to the OECS. A brief account of the origin of the New Zealand model precedes a review of major findings of some studies that have been conducted on the NZQA. It is the interrelatedness of all these aspects that encapsulates context and gives added meaning to the central tenet of this research.

## 2.2 The Context of the OECS

Politically, and geographically as the map in Figure 2.1 illustrates, countries of the OECS are a part of the Caribbean region.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Map of Central America and the Caribbean\***



In this region, there are striking parallels in the physical landscape, political, demographic, cultural and economic features of individual countries (Jules & Panneflek, 2000). In particular, the countries share an idiosyncratic history that was moulded by three institutions, namely: colonialism, plantation society, and slavery (Beckford, 2001; Clarke, 2001). In an attempt to describe the region's historical (colonial) experiences, Cross (1979) points out that "there can be few regions on earth that have been subject to the vagaries and vicissitudes of European fortunes, conflicts and ambitions [and that] the societies of the present day intimately mirror this history" (p. 3).

This Caribbean 'ecology' has prompted analyses from varied theoretical perspectives by both Caribbean and non-Caribbean scholars (see for example, Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995; Bakewell, 1997; Barrow & Reddock, 2001; Beckford, 2001; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996; Bendure & Friary, 1998; Braithwaite, 2001; Campbell, 1996; Collinson, 1996; Gaspar & Geggus, 1997; Holmes, 2001; Nurse, 2001; Smith, 2001). In their analyses, these scholars have accentuated, with contrasting emphases, the influence of the shackles of slavery, plantation economy, self-liberated freedom, and imported officialdoms on race, social mobility, labour, social stratification; and on bureaucracies such as education (Barrow & Reddock, 2001; Beckford, 2001; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996; Braithwaite, 2001; Craton, 1996; Green, 1996; Marshall, 1996; Smith, 2001). Their analyses converge in their attempts to form linkages among the history, sociology, culture, education, and politics of Caribbean civilisation, and to define who we are as a people (Bacchus, 1996; Beckford, 2001; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996; Braithwaite, 2001; Nurse, 2001; Wallace, 1996; Williams, 1996).

While all the theoretical perspectives of scholars are plausible, this research concurs with Gonsalves' (2001a) assertion that, as a people, the existential condition of the OECS is "not easily definable" (Gonsalves (2001a, p. 2) into neat distinct models. Gonsalves (2001a) captures the distinctiveness of the Caribbean spirit in his experiential assertion that Caribbean people are a special civilization:

We are predominantly an island civilisation occupying a particular geographic space and possessed of a shared history of European conquest, settlement, exploitation, colonialism and empire. We have come to independent nationhood with a core of shared political values adopted and adapted from Western Europe. We share European languages spoken and written with distinct Caribbean nuances, flair and usages. Our seascape and landscape embrace peoples drawn from diverse cultures and lands. Metaphorically we are the songs of the Caribs, the Arawaks, and the Amerindians; we are the rhythm of Africa; the melody of Europe; the chords of Asia; and the home grown lyrics of the Caribbean itself. We in the Caribbean possess a permanence of being which goes beyond energy, will

and creative power; this permanence of being is reflected in part, in that existential condition, not easily definable, but which we know is real, which existential condition is the living soul and spirit of our Caribbean civilisation (Gonsalves, 2001a, p. 2).

The preceding profiles of the Caribbean region (particularly by Cross, 1979; and Gonsalves, 2001a) demonstrate that countries of the Caribbean region are not simply scaled-down versions of larger states, but instead have a collective ecology of their own (Bray & Packer, 1993). What is not captured in this excerpt of Gonsalves' (2001a) speech, however, is the perceptible result of immense dependence on external intellectual and economic sources; insularity, and political and social divisiveness in constituent nations, all of which have had major implications for Caribbean integration and collaborative initiatives. Nevertheless, it is a region with common political, social and education systems, fashioned mainly on European (British) models (Craton, 1996).

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) are two of the post-colonial institutions established in the region to jointly face and combat the handicaps of small market size, economic fragmentation, external dependence and political and social imperatives. These organizations are central in this research, given their collective authority to address ongoing local, and regional transformations and adjustment vis-à-vis global trends. As will be shown later, these are the existing policy frameworks that ratified the resolution which further roused my interest in this research project.

CARICOM is a regional political union and a single market that transcends the barriers of nationalism and sovereignty of fourteen Caribbean countries<sup>1</sup>. It was formed in 1973, when the prospect of Britain joining the EEC in 1970 alerted the islands to their vulnerability to possible disruptions to their preferential trading ties with Britain (Axline, 1996). Population figures in CARICOM range from as low as an approximate of four thousand (Montserrat), to the highest approximate of two million (Jamaica) persons. Some historic joint initiatives, especially in the field of education include the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), established since 1961 and 1979 respectively (OECS, 1990). Other noteworthy developments are the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) to replace the British Privy Council, the OECS Supreme

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<sup>1</sup> These countries are Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, Barbados, Haiti, Antigua, Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Court, the Caribbean Development Bank, and Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) by 2005.

The scope of this thesis, however, falls within the policy parameters of the sub-regional policy making body, namely the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Historically, the OECS was established out of CARICOM (see Table 8.2 in Chapter Eight for OECS countries, populations and sizes of land masses). In 1981, eight years after the formation of CARICOM, nine Eastern Caribbean States of CARICOM formed the OECS as an associate entity within CARICOM. It was established after studies indicated that “most of the benefits derived from integration were flowing to the larger islands at the expense of the smaller” (Axline, 1996, p. 483). Like that of the wider regional body of CARICOM, the main objective of the OECS is to assist its members to respond to multi-faceted challenges by identifying scope for joint co-ordinated action towards education, economic and social advancement, co-operation in economic and foreign policy, developmental strategies and defense matters (OECS, 1999). The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Reform Unit (OERU) was established as a fully staffed, full-time organization to facilitate and co-ordinate joint implementation of education policies and practice (OERU, 2003). A model education bill to serve as a legal framework for education in the OECS and a harmonized Language Arts and Mathematics primary curriculum are some of the on-going initiatives of the OERU.

Gonsalves (2001b) claims that in the earlier years the countries of the OECS and CARICOM were poorer than now; we were less educated than now; we were less technologically advanced than now; [and] we were less politically sophisticated than now” (p. 1). The Caribbean region, however, is now facing the most challenging economic and social times and circumstances in their social and political histories (Anthony, 2003; Girvan, 2002; Louisy, 2003). On the global front, the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) which underscored the “era of global interdependence and interconnectivity” (Olssen *et al.*, 2004, p.1), have exacerbated CARICOM’s exigent economic situation (Anthony, 2003; Louisy, 2003). Equally, the ‘one size fits all’ creed of globalization and its neoliberal principles that, justly or unjustly, pervade countries of insignificant populations, fragmented landmasses and limited material resources, has had its economic and social impact. This creed has made CARICOM and the OECS part of major international protocols - the outcomes of which no country can ignore (Skilbeck, Cornell, Lowe, & Tait, 1994). One of the advocacies of these protocols is that of the

movement of knowledge, skills and services. It is perhaps from this perspective that the Council of the Commonwealth Societies promotes in 2005 an age-old theme - "education - creating opportunity, realizing potential" (Government Information Service (GIS), 14 March, 2005). The World Bank (1999) promotes also:

Education has become more important than ever before in influencing how well individuals, communities, and nations fare ... Education will determine who has the *key* to the treasures the world can furnish (1999, p.1).

Olssen *et al.* (2004) concur that "education policy in the 21st century is the key to global security, sustainability and survival" (p. 1). Internationally, according to Fischman & Gvirtz (2002), such discourses have hyped "a strong educational tone, stressing the importance of higher levels of educational efficiency and quality ... in the delivery of education (p. 501).

The fifteenth annual conference of the Steering Committee of Ministers of Education of CARICOM in 1988 represented a hallmark in the history of the Union, when the Ministers of Education moved from passive acceptance to a formal acknowledgement of the disquiet alluded to by Fischman & Gvirtz (2002) & Olssen *et al.* (2004). Following on from international trends, investment in the development of its human capital, principally through education and training, continues to be a major feature on the agendas of Caribbean governments (OECS, 2002). This concern reflects an unprecedented shift from the political and economic trade preoccupation of the Union to the field of Education; but more significantly, this concern extends the dominant issue of 'quantity' in education to include 'quality' of educational achievement. By way of example, some of these concerns were ratified in a resolution on a policy for a common approach for the accreditation of qualifications in the region. Towards this end, the Steering Committee of Ministers of Education (SCME) of CARICOM in 1988 initiated a study of equivalence of academic credentials, which was extended in 1990 to include all countries in the region (see Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI), 2000; Ashton, 1996; Craft, 1994; Holmes, 2003; Poyotte, 2001).

More than a decade later, the resolution on the common approach to accreditation of qualifications and institutions negotiated at the CARICOM Ministers of Education meeting had not come to fruition, but according to Craft (1994), "there is consensus that once established it will have significant impact on Caribbean education" (p. 21). As of 2000, the notion of quality in education and accreditation of qualifications in the region

was seen as a necessity by the Caribbean region (see ACTI, 2000; Payne, n.d; Poyotte, 2001). Individual countries in the wider region and the sub-region (OECS) have begun to conceptualize strategies and methods by which a common approach can be implemented to attain this policy objective. This research project pursues a broader theoretical and practical dimension of this regional concern.

### 2.3 Local, Regional and International Convergence

CARICOM's and the OECS's shift to consider the quality of education and accreditation of qualifications shows convergence in some aspects, with global and international rhetoric, policy, practices and trends, in the wider economic spheres of several countries (developing and developed). CARICOM's 1988 concern, for example, preceded the affirmations made at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, which Little & Wolf (1996) argued went beyond earlier declarations by emphasizing the achievement of valued outcomes, rather than mere access to education, larger enrolments and increased participation rates.

Quality was one of the legacies of the 1990's (Harvey, 1995; Harvey & Green, 1993; Newton, 2000), and the theme has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (see Castle & Kelley, 2004; Craft, 2004; Dixon & Scott, 2003; Hinaga, 2004; Temple & Billing, 2003; Vroeijenstijn, 2004; Watty, 2003; Woodhouse, 2004). There are now over 120 agencies around the world, which review the quality of education in their respective countries (Shah, 1997; Stella, 2004; Strydom *et al.*, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004).

As has been contended, the establishment of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) is a common strategy adopted by countries (see Allais, 2003; Boudier, 2003; Granville, 2003; Holmes, 2003; Keating, 2003). Progress made in the establishment of NQFs is observable in Scotland (see Blackmur, 2004); in Ireland (Granville, 2003; Raffle, 2003); in Australia (Keating, 2003); in South Africa (Allais, 2003; Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Young, 2003a, 2003b); in Namibia (see Blackmur, 2004); in France (Boudier, 2003) and in New Zealand (Philips, 2003). In recent times, in the British context, Working Group on 14-19 Reform (October, 2004) made major recommendations for:

- A common format for all 14-19 learning programmes which combine the knowledge and skills everybody needs for participation in a full adult life with disciplines chosen by the learner to meet her/his own interests, aptitudes and ambitions; and
- A unified framework of diplomas which: provide a ready-made, easy to

understand guarantee of the level and breadth of attainment achieved by each young person, whatever the nature of his or her programme; offer clear and transparent pathways through the 14-19 phase and progression into further and higher learning, training and employment; are valued by employers and Higher Education; and motivate young people to stay on in learning after the age of 16 (Working Group on 14-19 Reform, October, 2004, p. 3).

New Zealand, however, following from the Scottish, has already ventured in this direction (Barker, 1994; Lee & Lee, 2000b; Phillips, 2003).

These international developments are relevant in this research, as they are likely to have an impact on qualifications systems worldwide (see Angus, 2004; Ball, 1990, for example). Following on from these trends, at the CARICOM level, some national initiatives have been pursued in the area of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In Belize and Guyana, national accreditation systems have been established. Holmes (2003) describes the experiences of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Guyana and St. Lucia. At the tertiary level, Jamaica was first in its establishment of a National Training Agency in the Commonwealth Caribbean, using a five-level framework based on the UK's National Vocational Qualification framework (Holmes, 2003; International Labour Organization, 2002). Barbados and Trinidad followed also, with minor alterations reflecting their national contexts (Holmes, 2003). According to Holmes (2003), the process of developing competency-based qualifications is industry-driven in each of these and in each case training agencies were established to serve as regulatory and co-ordinating bodies on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) issues (see also ILO, 2002). In most of the other countries in the Caribbean region, plans for establishing national accreditation councils are under way (see Poyotte, 2002, for instance). Sangster & Bethel have proposed a qualifications model for the Caribbean region (see Appendix B). The OERU has been engaged in rigorous efforts to present a qualifications framework that addresses the issue of TVET in the OECS (Payne, n.d).

These individual initiatives in CARICOM may be analysed from two perspectives. On the one hand, they may be interpreted as recognition of the need for change in the qualifications system of the wider region and the OECS. Such individual initiatives can also be seen as an attempt to reappraise national qualifications systems to keep abreast with developments in the international/global context (Skilbeck, *et al.*, 1994). On the other hand, however, these country initiatives can also be seen as individualistic, duplicative and isolated, particularly in light of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy in 2005, the movement of labour, services and skills of CARICOM nationals,

and CARICOM's commission of a common accreditation policy and body. Arguably, also, cases of the Jamaica National Vocational Qualifications Framework and the Trinidad and Tobago Vocational Qualifications Framework (modelled after the NVQs and GNVQs) are not regarded as 'mainstream', and seemingly inadvertently perpetuate a divide between TVET and the academics (a divide acquired from the historical experience of the Caribbean). The variations in models and the lack of regional co-ordination therefore point to some implications for a joint regional initiative.

The issue of quality as it relates to qualifications frameworks has also gained momentum in the sphere of the policies of international organizations. The Global Alliance for Transnational Education, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) (see Woodhouse, 1999, 2004), the Association of Commonwealth Examination Accreditation Bodies (ACEAB), the ILO, the EU, the UNESCO, the OECD, and World Bank are international institutions and organizations that have expressed concerns about quality assurance in education through the qualifications granted. The Global Forum on International Quality Assurance was established by UNESCO "to link existing frameworks dealing with international issues of quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications and provide a platform for dialogue between them" (Woodhouse, 2004, p. 81). Woodhouse (2004) also posits that the International Standards Organization (ISO) is attempting "to establish a new standard ISO/IEC 17024, which sets requirements for bodies operating certification systems of persons" (Woodhouse 2004, p. 81).

Notably, although barely sampled, these regional and international examples show convergence in an aspect of policy implementation that pays attention to qualifications and qualifications systems as being significant in the discussion on quality and quality assurance (Stella, 2004; Strydom & Strydom, 2004; Strydom *et al.*, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004). Some of the international examples also demonstrate that increasingly networks are formed that cut across the jurisdiction of agencies and national borders (UNESCO, 2002; Woodhouse, 2004). An analysis of several examples of initiatives (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Namibia, South Africa, Scotland, New Zealand, United Kingdom) also reveals differences in scope (Blackmur, 2004; Green, 1994; Holmes, 2003), methodological procedures, and in the status of operations of the initiatives (Blackmur, 2004; Green, 1994; Holmes, 2000; Scheele, 2004; Stella, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004).

From the foregoing discussion, it stands to reason that there are diverse and complex issues (meanings, methods, reasons, purposes) that surround qualifications and qualifications frameworks (Blackmur, 2004; World Bank 2002); and that while propositions for qualifications frameworks as an element of quality assurance may receive assent in principle at the national and organizational levels, their practical consequences at the international level are seemingly unclear (Skilbeck, *et al.*, 1994). The position taken in this research, however, is that this lack of clarity is not at all daunting, because such international discourses usually precede and predict national and regional educational policy (Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Lim (1999) argues that trends in quality assurance are adopted in developing countries because “it is simply the fashionable thing to do”; but as has been argued in Chapter One, the consideration of these developments and debates in the OECS is an exigency, and not just *à la mode*. As new ideas, developments, and recessions move quickly around the globe, particularly as a result of the inevitability of “global interdependence and interconnectivity” (Olssen *et al.*, 2004, p.1), their impacts are felt by the OECS because of trade, strategic location, international and regional protocols. Arguably, in the OECS, these new developments and trends in the global context are enlightening as they promulgate a reappraisal of micro and macro powers, and the social structures and practices (such as the OECS qualification system) at the local levels.

This case study of the NZQA provides an opportunity for re-appraisal. In effect, Angus (2004) argues that countries emulate each other as they concentrate on similar problems in their explorations of solutions to ameliorate their national situations and circumstances. As a result, there has been a “distinctive movement of ideas, policies, and practices that has emerged among countries” from the last quarter of the twentieth century (Skilbeck *et al.*, 1994, p.2). The practice has been described and explained using concepts such as policy borrowing, policy learning, travelling policies and migrating policy metaphors, among others (see Angus, 2004; Ball, 1998; Dale, 1999; Edwards *et al.*, 1999). Angus (2004) explains that the practice is evidenced in the adoption of policies on accountability, decentralization, curriculum development, autonomy of schools and school effectiveness. In the establishment of qualifications frameworks, countries such as United States, Scotland, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand have imported, borrowed and adapted ideas from each other (Philips, 1998, 2003; Young, 2003a). In some ways, this research utilizes this strategy by case studying the NZQA as a means of

drawing lessons from the successes and challenges of their experience. It is acknowledged, however, that the idea of policy borrowing and learning is symbolic rather than materialistic (acquisitive) (see Vidovich & Slee, 2001). Governments make decisions depending on their resources and needs at the time (Vidovich & Slee, 2001).

## **2.4 Research Interest in the OECS Context**

Allied to CARICOM's commission and trends which show international convergence as exemplified from the preceding discussions, the purpose of this research, which is that of theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework based on a case study of the NZQA, was prompted by the dearth of research on the qualifications systems in the OECS. To date, the overriding purpose of the OECS qualification system (inherited from the British) has been to sift, sort and select students for further education or to certify them for entry into white collar and blue-collar jobs. To fulfil its summative functions, the qualifications system in the OECS seems to be one of exclusion. It condemns a large proportion of its citizens to relative failure because of its parity of esteem - the recognition of primarily 'academic' achievement.

The OECS qualification system resembles what was perceived to be the case in the New Zealand context - "the belief that only a proportion of people [are] capable of higher learning, and the role of [a qualification system is] to sift and reward those who [are]" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20). The OECS system is driven by success in summative assessment, which mainly takes the form of external examinations. As Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 illustrate, access to higher education in the OECS scaffolds from the Common Entrance Examination or placements tests (or 11+ examination), to date.

**Table 2.1: Ages and Modes of Selection to or Placement in Secondary School in OECS Countries**

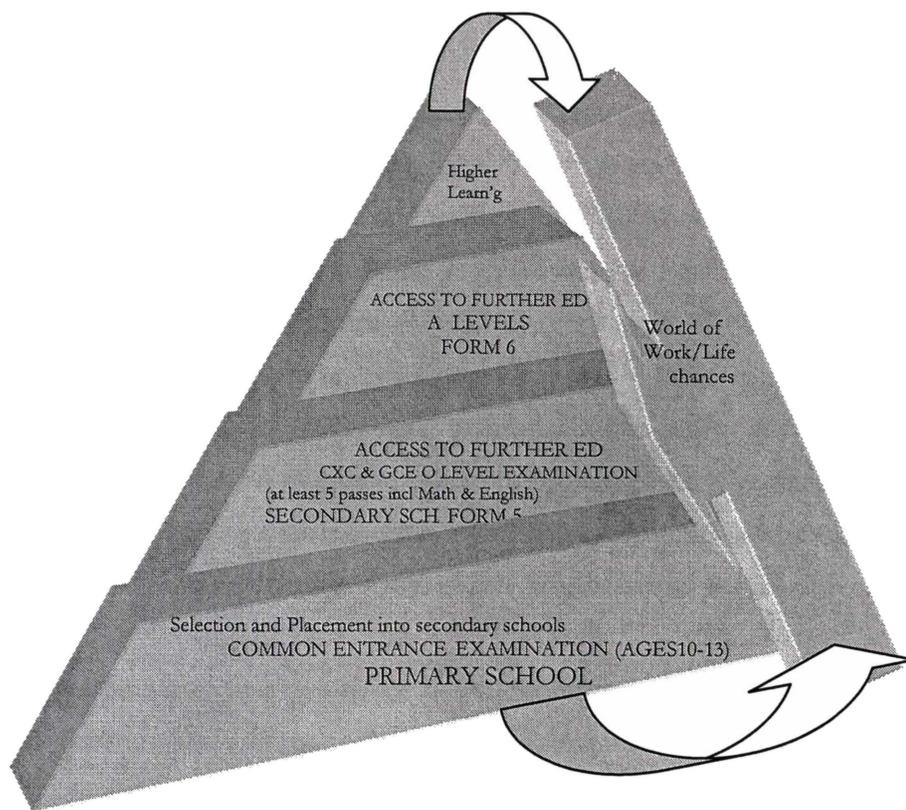
Country	Mode of Selection/ Placement	Age Range	Purpose	Question Types	Pass/ Placement Rate	Re-sits	Teacher Involvement
Anguilla	Test of Standards	11-12	Placement in Bands	M-C, Extended Response, Standardized Reading Test	100%	No	Item Writing Marking
Antigua/ Barbuda	Common Entrance Exam	10.5-12.5	Selection to 5 year secondary	M-C, Extended Response	55% (+25%)	Yes	Item Writing Marking
British Virgin Islands (BVI)	Standard 5 (Grade 6 Exam)	11-14	Placement in streams/ types of secondary schools	M-C, Extended Response	>92%	Yes	Item Writing Marking
Dominica	Common Entrance Exam	10-13	Selection to 5 year secondary	M-C, Extended Response	61%	Yes	Item Writing Marking
Grenada	Common Entrance Exam	11-13+	Selection to 5 year secondary	M-C, Extended Response	40%	Yes	Item Writing Marking
Montserrat	Test of Standards & Performance at Grades 5 & 6	11.5-12.5	Placement in Streams	M-C, Extended Response	100%	No	Item Writing Marking
St Kitts/ Nevis	Test of Standards & Performance at Grades 5 & 6	11-12	Placement in streams	M-C, Extended Response	100%	Yes	Item Writing Marking
St Lucia	Common Entrance Exam	<13	Selection to 5 year secondary	M-C, Extended Response	55%	Yes	Item Writing Marking
St Vincent & The Grenadines	Common Entrance Exam	10.5-13.5	Selection to 5 year secondary	M-C, Extended Response	50% (+25%)	Yes	Item Writing Marking

(Adapted from Harehood, 2002)

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 illustrate that access to life chances begins with transition from primary school to secondary school. Transition from primary to secondary school in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and St Kitts/Nevis is through Grade 6 Tests of Standards, administered for the purpose of placing students in 'bands' or 'streams' (Harewood, 2002). In the five other countries of the OECS, the Common Entrance

Examination or eleven plus examination (inherited from the British), sat by pupils in the age range from 10 - 13 years, is the chief mode of assessment that determines who is selected and assigned to secondary school. Read in ascending order, Figure 2.2 gives an indication of the progression of learners within the education system.

**Figure 2.2:**  
Vertical Progression and Access to Further Education  
In the OECS



As a result of the limited places available at secondary schools, less than sixty per cent of the students are assigned to secondary schools in some five countries in any one year (see Table 2.1). As implied in Figure 2.2 above, the success at examinations and subsequently the attainment of awards serve as evidence of success and/or inclination for vertical progression in the education system.

The process of sifting and sorting begins with the Common Entrance Examination (for ages 11-13) for entry into secondary school. At the end of the five-year secondary school programme, the Caribbean secondary school examinations are written. A Caribbean secondary examination certificate (CSEC) popularly known as the CXC (because it is

administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council - CXC) is awarded. Few students also sit the international O levels (GCSEs).

The CSEC General Proficiency and Technical levels (grades I and II prior to 1998; and grades I to III thereafter) tend to be equivalent to GCSE levels (grades A-C). General passes in five subjects including English A and Mathematics are accepted as basic requirements for entry into the world of work, in both the public service and private sectors, as well as for entry into further education (see Bray & Steward (1998), for further descriptions of examination systems in small states). Passes at the same level are accepted for further education (such as Teachers' Training Colleges), and also as a minimum requirement for entry into sixth form classes to prepare for the GCE A level and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE). The GCE A level and CAPE (at least three passes) are the matriculation requirements of international and regional universities (such as the West Indies (UWI), University of Guyana, University of Technology, and St George's University). Depending on the competition and faculties, regional universities and other tertiary level institutions also accept general proficiency grades of the CSEC or O levels as part or whole fulfilment of entry requirements. Few students make private arrangements to sit the North American Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or a similar examination for entry into North American and British universities.

Figure 2.2 above paints a clear picture of the widening gap perpetuated by the linear qualifications system. The widening gap in the attainment of qualifications, for learners in the OECS, is further evidenced by the data in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2  
The Widening Gap to Attaining Qualifications in the OECS

Enter other tertiary institutions	5%
Pass A [GCE Cambridge] levels	1%
Take A levels	4%
Enter post primary/secondary	43%
Complete primary	97%
Enter primary	100%
*)compounded average of WB statistics	

(World Bank 1992, p. 45)

Table 2.2, when read in ascending order, traces a cohort of students, from the primary intake to the tertiary level, in OECS countries. The table (2.2) chronicles a story that while there is universal primary education, there is an alarmingly widening gap from primary to secondary and even more so to graduation at the secondary level (OECS, 1994, 2002). According to the data in the table, as many as 80% of the age group 15 to 18 years of age are pushed out of the education system without attaining a recognizable and acceptable qualification (OECS, 1994, 2002). One major implication is that the OECS suffers from a substantial proportion of school leavers who have not achieved any form of qualification (OECS, 1994). In Table 2.3 which follows, combined longitudinal data for all the countries of the OECS from 1991 to 2002, provides further verification.

**Table 2.3: Longitudinal Data**  
Tracing the Number of Learners from the 1991/92 Primary Cohort in the OECS  
Who Obtained Qualifications at the End of Secondary School in 2002

<b>Intake</b>	<b>Primary (1991-1992)</b>	<b>Secondary (1997)</b>	<b>Number Writing CSEC CXC (2002)</b>	<b>Number attaining 4+ CSECs (CXC)</b>
Numbers	14, 928	8, 988	8,269	3,794
% Cohort	100.0	60.0	55.4	25.4

*Adapted from OECS Policy Document for TVET, OECS, 1995, p.15,  
 Cited in Payne, n.d, p.3*

The analysed flow of students in Table 2.3 illustrates that of the 8,269 students who qualified to take the coveted CSEC (CXC) examinations, 25.4% received 4 or more CSEC (CXC) subjects at Grades I and II general proficiency. Unvoiced in many economic and social circles is the destiny of the remaining 4,475 students who were in the race to achieve that qualifying goal. This occurrence calls for a reiteration of the question: What is the fate of the vast majority of the 14,928 OECS primary entrants after about 12 years of private and public expenditure in the education system? (OECS, 1994) This group represents a vital part of the human resource of the OECS.

By end of 2004, the situation remained impervious. Professor Hilary Beckles, Principal and Pro Vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies, heralded the predicament at a ceremony held on 18th June 2004 to mark the 23rd OECS anniversary celebration. He lamented that the “18 to 30 age group enrolled in higher education in the OECS amounted to less than five percent - a crisis situation as far as the OECS is concerned” (Beckles, June, 2004).

Other embedded subtleties in the present structure of the qualifications systems of the OECS (as exemplified in Figure 2.2) include the lack of alternatives, coherence and interconnectedness or broadened pathways for learners (Barker, 1995). For the majority of students (as indicated in Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and Figure 2.2), there is hardly a horizontal option for those who complete the secondary school programme but have been unsuccessful at secondary school certificate examinations. There are no regional provisions to facilitate options for qualifications, other than qualifications emanating from the secondary school curriculum. There is no regional or sub-regional arrangement to certify the knowledge and skills of learners who may pursue fields of study other than the CSEC subjects offered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). There is a dearth in the recognition of the great majority of technical and vocational skills acquired outside of formal institutions. This situation affects the 15+ age cohort (an average of about 50% of whom never proceed to secondary school or institutions of higher or further learning). Also, there are few sub-regional and regional systematic arrangements for transferring skills, prior learning, and non-traditional qualifications among learning environments.

The deficiency in recognizing all types of learning systematically as a region or sub-region has forced each 'dot size' nation in the OECS (as indicated in Figure 2.1) to devise and implement its own quality initiatives and qualification systems or to administer foreign examinations:

Within the Caribbean, there is diversity of tertiary institutions which award a wide range of qualifications - certificates, diplomas, associate degrees, and higher degrees. In addition to the local delivery and certification of programs, the institutions also deliver local regional certification; such as CXC programs with extra-regional certification such as Cambridge and London GCE A levels and a variety of external qualifications under the rubric of technical and vocational education (Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI), 2000, p. 57).

The above myriad of systems in the OECS implies a pot-pouri of standards, varied administrative bodies, inconsistencies with equivalence and varied nomenclature for each national certificate or qualification provided by the different institutions and the different countries of the region. Also, within these variants, there are the embedded subtleties, such as barriers to the attainment of all types of qualifications (academic or otherwise, site-based or non-site based), the lack of coherence and interconnectedness and a severe lack of alternative options for learners (Barker, 1995). Beyond their geographical boundaries, transferability of qualifications or parts of qualifications (with

the exception of the 'known' qualifications such as CXC's (CSEC and CAPE), GCSEs, GCE A levels, University qualifications) is subjected to idiosyncratic analyses because they have no reference point (Ashton, 1996; Barker, 1995). The interpretation relies heavily on the idiosyncratic judgement of countries or individual institutions, employees or employers (Ashton, 1996).

Arguably, this narrow pathway leads to exclusion, particularly for learners who may wish to undertake further learning routes that are non-academic or unconventional (non-institutionalized) (Barker, 1995). Learners of the OECS who are not able to make it through this vertical or ladder pathway by succeeding summative assessments (mainly external examinations) are simply deemed 'failures'. As is supported by Tables 2.1 and 2.2, far too many of our Caribbean learners fall in this 'doomed' category - a complete waste of human resource. This constricted vertical or ladder system of recognition also contributes to limitations in the number of credentialed citizens in the OECS. It is therefore not surprising that the OECS policy document on TVET quotes a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) (1994 draft) policy paper that observes acute shortages of technical manpower. The present qualifications system, however, does very little to alleviate this issue of the acute shortages of technical manpower.

This failure to recognize all types of learning may also have serious social, political and economic implications. For example, this research concurs with the viewpoint of Donahue (2000) that "failure, futility and irrelevance are soul-destroying for anyone with the slightest self-regard" (p. 14). It has been observed elsewhere that "where significant numbers of people are shut out ... their potential contribution is lost; the price of that exclusion is suffered most keenly by the individual and her/his family, but the wider community also pays a price" (James, 2000a, p. 135). For the individual nations of the OECS, for the OECS and for CARICOM, this situation calls into question:

What is the wastage factor we can afford? ... It is a strong statement because it hurts. Have you ever thought about wasting people ... and I believe he says it quite deliberately ... I think it is an OECD term surely to condemn someone to wastage ... every individual in a society needs to contribute to that society and if we say we are going to condemn you to wastage, what's the possible contribution in future? ... so there is need to have another way of success that is not a second class success either (Senior New Zealand Public Servant<sup>2</sup>, 2003).

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<sup>2</sup> Name withheld in the interest of confidentiality.

In the case of the OECS, the observations made thus far keep signalling the need for change in the OECS and CARICOM. Given that New Zealand has pursued innovative qualifications reform to address similar issues, it is argued that New Zealand becomes an apposite case to study in relation to the OECS.

## **2.5 Building a Case for Studying the NZQA**

The previous section has attempted to delineate the observations particularly in the OECS context that led to my research interest. In this section, a case is made for studying New Zealand and the NZQA in relation to the OECS.

New Zealand, or Aotearoa which is the Māori name for New Zealand, is a developed country. It is located 2,000 kilometres (960 miles) southeast of Australia in the South Pacific Ocean. The country's total landmass is 269,000 square kilometers (at least ten times that of the OECS). It is a unitary state with a population of approximately 4 million people (New Zealand, 2005), as compared with "the OECS with a population of just over 500, 000 at home with probably thrice that figure overseas" (Gonsalves, 2001b, p. 2). New Zealand is often referred to as a bicultural state with European ethnicity, called Pakeha, and the Māori - the Tangata Whenua (translated as people of the land) or the indigenous people - who occupied the land before the Europeans arrived in 1840 (Diorori, 1991). Increasingly, however, the New Zealand society is being considered multicultural because "about three-quarters of the population are of European origin, predominantly from the British Isles, with the indigenous Maori making up about 15%, people from other Pacific islands about 6% and people of Asian origin about 4%" (Crooks, 2002, p. 237).

The choice of New Zealand's experience as a case study arises out of other main considerations. Although the countries in the OECS do not qualify as developed countries, there are lessons which can be drawn from developed countries such as New Zealand. New Zealand shares characteristics with the Caribbean region, such as a colonial history, a British political model that can be characterised as a democratic society based on parliamentary sovereignty (Theodoulou 2002); an education system that was inherited through colonialization by the British; a small sized population; and cultural diversity (Crooks, 2002), as has been indicated by Gonsalves (2001a) in relation to the OECS. In New Zealand, as well as in the OECS, the institutional structures, for example the public service, the police force, and the education systems are modelled

predominantly after those of the British. New Zealand is classified by the United Nations (2004) Human Development Index among the top 20 countries in the realm of commitment to knowledge. The choice of New Zealand also arose from an opportunity to be an outsider researcher on the inside; as a student of the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand.

There are also striking parallels in the three most common patterns for schooling in New Zealand and the OECS. School attendance is compulsory in New Zealand from ages 6-16. In the case of the OECS, ages range from 5-16. There are variations in the arrangements in the OECS context (OECS, 2002), but any one of these patterns in the New Zealand context is observable in the OECS context:

“Approximately 6 years in primary school, 2 years in intermediate school and up to five years in secondary school;  
Approximately eight years in primary school and up to 5 years in secondary school;  
Approximately 6 years in primary school and up to 7 years in a secondary school that includes 7 and 8, as well as Years 9-13”(Crooks, 2003, pp. 237- 238).

One major difference between New Zealand and the OECS is in the transition from primary to secondary school. Transition from primary to secondary school in New Zealand is uncontrolled. The selection method of transition from primary to secondary school in the OECS was explained in the previous section.

The secondary education certificate has been administered at two proficiency levels (Basic and General) since 1979 as a replacement for the GCSEs in the Caribbean. The CXC is presently promoting the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) to replace the Cambridge and London A Level examinations (Forms 6 and 7). The placement and role of these Caribbean examinations within the vertical qualifications structure remains the same with the GSCE. In New Zealand, the NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) was introduced for years 11 to 13 (Forms 5 to 7 under the old system) of secondary schools over the period 2002 to 2004.

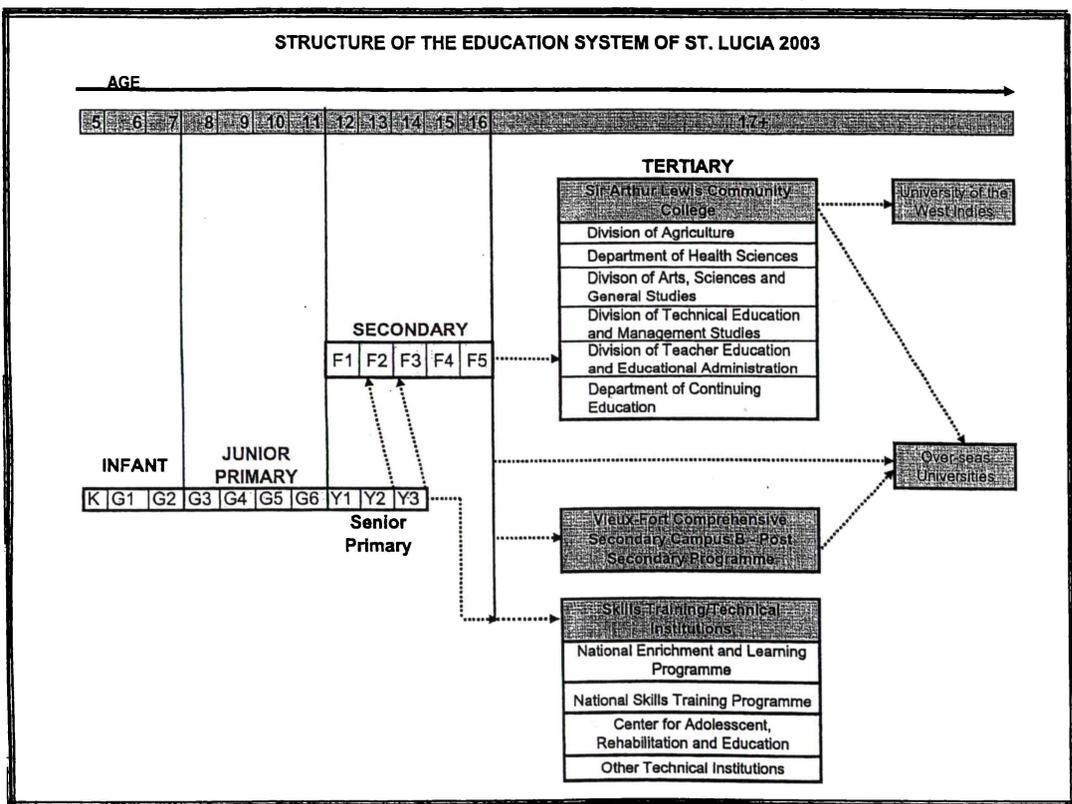
Post-compulsory education and training in New Zealand, as well as in the OECS, is used to describe tertiary education including all aspects of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). This level of education can be pursued at polytechnics, institutes of technology, and at some government training establishments, wānanga (tertiary learning institutions in New Zealand only), colleges of education, high schools and universities,

private training establishments and in the workplace. In the OECS, higher or full degree-level education is offered mainly at universities, but CXC has planned on offering the Associate Degree by 2006. As in New Zealand, however, this level of education can also be pursued through correspondence courses, e-learning, part-time study, community colleges, private training establishments, polytechnics and other education providers.

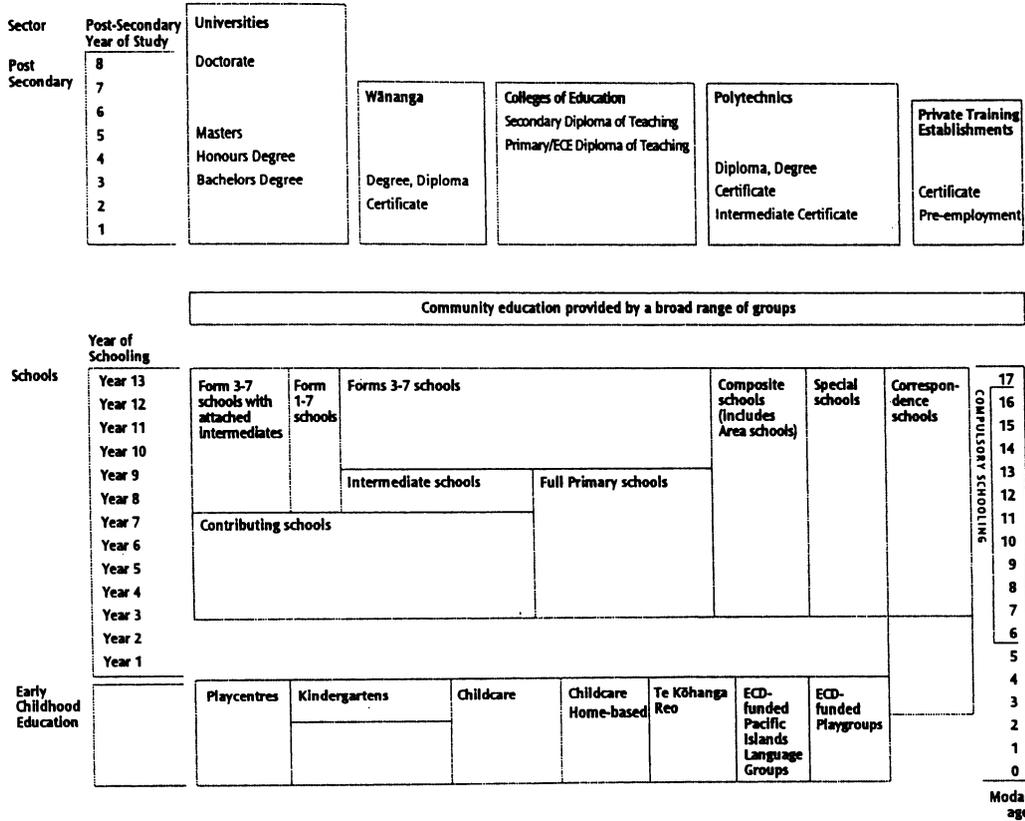
In both the OECS and New Zealand regions, the policy making bodies on education are the Ministries of Education. Under their present legislations in both contexts, the Ministries of Education have the aegis for developing and setting national curriculum objectives including national curricula for schools. New Zealand and the countries of the OECS have national curricula. In New Zealand, boards of trustees act as school governors, and each school develops comprehensive programmes of work. In the case of the OECS, the different countries exhibit varied local arrangements (OECS, 2002).

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 depict a representation of the structure of the education system in the OECS and the structure of education in New Zealand respectively.

**Figure 2.3**  
Representational Education Structure of the OECS  
 (From <http://www.gov.slu.com>)



**Figure 2.4**  
**Education Structure of New Zealand**  
 New Zealand Ministry of Education (n.d.)



The New Zealand experience was also selected to be case studied because the OECS is faced with some of the major challenges that New Zealand appears to have experienced. For instance, writers have shown that in New Zealand the 1990s was a period of major economic restructuring or structural adjustment<sup>3</sup> (Codd, 1990, 1995, 1999; Grace, 1990, 1999; Kelsey, 1995, 2003, 2004; McKenzie, 1999a, 1999b; McKenzie, Lee & Lee, 1996). Codd (1990) points to an internal situation in New Zealand of contemporary social theory of “legitimation crisis”<sup>4</sup>; a situation which he argues came about as a result of “the total failure of interventionist policies to produce any signs of economic growth” (p. 192).

The present qualification system of the OECS can also be compared to a previous situation in New Zealand that writers in New Zealand described as “The Anglo-Saxon disease” (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20), in that only a few students were considered capable of academic achievement. It was postulated that the reform of their qualification system would serve to eradicate this perceived ailment and “that all learning and achievement should be recognized” (Barrowman, 1996, p.20). This was thought to be a critical move in the development of the human resource capacity of New Zealand.

In a bid for answers, New Zealand pursued other alternatives through a series of internal investigations and studies of international models. After a decade of debate (Barker, 1995), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the qualifications policy were introduced in the Education Amendment Act 1990. Further legitimacy for this research is therefore founded in the legal regulation of the NZQA, as reflected in the formal legislated charter.

Moreover, it not implausible to draw inferences from the successes and challenges of the NZQA, since there are many benefits that can be derived from this case study of the New Zealand model (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). In her book, *Policy and Politics in Six Nations*, Theodoulou (2002) explains:

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<sup>3</sup> Structural adjustment according to Skilbeck *et al.*, (1994) means “in effect the reform of the socio-economic structures which inhibit or reduce the capacity of countries to pursue longer-term development goals and to relate to one another in mutually beneficial ways in the international environment of trade and exchange. Education and training are central to any programme of structural adjustment for the very obvious, if sometimes neglected, reason that it is upon the educated and trained capacity of the actors - the people - that the ability to restructure and gain benefits depends” (p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> Codd (1990) points out that “in contemporary social theory legitimation crisis is defined as the tendency of state institutions to lose popular support and sometimes to provoke widespread opposition and resistance” (p. 192).

The main benefit of studying policy comparatively is through assessing one's situation against another, one's own situation can be better understood, including constraints and possible options that might be available ... Many would argue that it is good to learn from the experiences (negative or positive) of others ... comparison of different nations' adopted policies allows us to identify the conditions under which certain policies fail or succeed. Comparative public policy has practical benefits. It allows us to see why a particular policy may work in one nation and why not in another or the conditions that are necessary for policy success ... this does not mean we ignore that nations may differ from each other, but we should be able to judge which policies are adaptable from setting to setting (p .4).

Today, the growing interdependence of nations often forces upon us a comparative framework. Certain problems cross over physical borders, so how one nation deals with a "shared" problem provides examples to other nations when it comes time for them to adopt strategies to deal with the same problem. Next, studying policy comparatively also helps us understand how similar institutions and political processes operate in different settings (p. 4.)

In this regard, Philips (1998) and Piercy (1999) argue that the NZQA itself was a phenomenon strongly influenced by overseas policies in the mid-1980s.

In addition to these factors, for the most part, the research interest in New Zealand was influenced by the fact that at the time this study was conducted, New Zealand had trodden a path more ambitious than that of any other country (Barker, 1995; Hodgetts, 1998; Smithers, 1997). New Zealand has been described as the vanguard of reforming qualifications systems into a unitary framework "as a way of developing a common language to describe learning and achievement in order to assure quality" in education (Holmes, 2003, p. 12). Therefore, one of the assumptions of this research project is guided by the phenomenological assumption that "there is an experience to be shared" (Merriam, 2002, p.7); and that the experience of other countries is accepted as valuable sources of knowledge, once the differentiation in the social, political, economic and historical practices among countries are critically accepted (Theodoulou, 2002).

## **2.6 Nature and Origin of the New Zealand Model**

The New Zealand model is an outcomes based approach, which for almost a decade was marketed mainly as a unit standards based approach (Barker, 1994; NZQA, 1991a, 1991b, 1993a, 1993b). As of 2001, the model encompasses the standards (units and achievement) based, and outcomes based approaches (see NZQA 2001a, 2004a, 2004b). It has been observed that in the New Zealand context, the terms are used synonymously

with “criterion-referencing, competency based, standards based – each implying slight differences in emphasis but all embodying the same idea” (Smithers, 1997, p. 2). In the main, performance is compared with criteria (criterion referenced), and not on the performance of others (norm referenced). A criterion referenced model credits learners for what they can do, in contrast with the practices adopted by the traditional norm referenced models, of crediting learners with what they can do relative to their peers (McKenzie, 1996b; Ministry of Education, 1989; 1997; Priestly, 1996, 1997).

This “yardstick approach to assessment, which goes under a number of names” (Smithers, 1997, p. 2) has implications for assessment (Hood, 1992, 1994b, 1996; Hood *et al.*, 1996; Jessup, 1991; NZQA, 1991a, 1991b, 1993a, 1993b; Peddie & Tuck, 1995; Priestly, 1996; Wolf, 1998). It poses the question of whether the standard or outcome statements have been achieved. The award is therefore based solely on the outcome of assessment (Jessup, 1991).

On the one hand, merits of the approach include “with standards at different levels everyone has a chance to show what they can do ... the higher fliers will emerge by completing more units at a higher level in a shorter time” (Smithers, 1997, p. 2). Smithers (1997) draws the analogy of checking a weight or a measure against a reference held for this purpose. He notes that “once an educational limit has been set there is no limit to the number of people who can successfully achieve it (Smithers, 1997, p. 2). In this reformers’ view, the learner or candidate is supposedly central.

On the other hand, the approach adopted by the NZQA has been critiqued mainly as being reductionist (NZVCC, 1994). It is chastised for its inapplicability to all fields of knowledge (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; NZVCC, 1994). By way of example, it has been argued that the approach is more applicable to technical and vocational fields such as Typewriting, Word Processing, Plumbing, but not to areas such as Philosophy, Psychology, History, and Literature (see also Austin, 1996, 2000; Campbell, 1996; Chamberlain, 1996; Channel & John, 1996; Childs, 1996; Croft, 1993, 1994; Elley, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Falk, 2002; Irwin, *et al.*, 1995, 1997; Milne, 1996; NZVCC, 1994; Priestly, 1996, 1997).

The aforementioned views are regarded as part of the “standards debate” which this research found to be the most enduring debate in the New Zealand model from the

perspective of the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment. The standards based approach still remains the building block of the New Zealand NQF. Therefore, merits and demerits of the model continue to be reviewed within the theoretical framework in Chapter Four (as part of the criterion referenced approach in the discourse of education).

Although the standards (outcomes based) model has become the dominant approach used in New Zealand, Hyland (1994) asserts that its roots go back further. The approach was first used extensively by the United States military, for example in gun training. In the 1970s, the standards based model was experimented with in the context of American teacher education and certification because of concerns for the state of American schools and educational standards. These concerns gave rise to “attacks on the quality of teacher education (and recruits into teaching) which received wide publicity....[and] demands for greater accountability” (Wolf, 1995, p.4). Smithers (1997) elaborates on the approach, and the extent of its success:

Atomisation was, however, the approach of the American competency-based teacher education programme of the 1970s. These programmes generated hundreds and even over a thousand competencies. It was soon apparent the sum of these competencies may not equal the whole teacher. They failed (McGrath, 1996, pp. 5-6).

Following on from the USA’s experience, Scotland and England initiated the approach firstly for providing credit to unemployed school leavers on youth training schemes before it was expanded into a philosophy for reforming the whole education system (Hyland, 1994; Jessup, 1991; Smithers, 1997).

Wolf (1995) concedes that the ideas underlying the English competency based assessment system were originally formulated in the United States. She argued, however, that their influence on English policy was greatly increased by their prior adoption in Scotland. According to Wolf (1995):

The Scots, during the 1980s, carried out a major reform of their secondary education system, including introduction of the ‘National Certificate’, which brought all non-advanced vocational education under a single rubric. The National Certificate embraces large numbers of modules, which can be separately delivered, or combined into qualifications. They are offered in schools or colleges and are developed and accredited by the Scottish Council for Vocational Education (SCOTVEC). They are based on criterion-referenced or competency-based outcome statements. At the same time, the modules remain essentially educational in purpose, designed for young people in full-time schooling, and many of them are relatively traditional in their overt

concern with mathematics, language skills etc. While the English system drew on the Scottish experience for ideas and for individuals with experience in introducing the National Certificate, its ambitions were more far-reaching (p. 8).

New Zealand also drew on the Scottish experience for ideas. The NZQA is a Crown Agency (non-government department) (NZQA, 2004a). As a regulated legal body, the NZQA has responsibility for qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and training (NZQA, 2004a). The NQF was “a modular system, forming a single continuum of qualifications, based on assessment against defined standards, and a flexible system of delivery” (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20). In 2001, however, the NQF was expanded to the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. The main aim of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications is to ensure that “quality assurance of qualifications is consistently applied; people can compare qualifications; people can make informed choices about which qualification pathway they will pursue” (NZQA, 2001a, p. 2).

In summation of the discussion on the nature and origin of the New Zealand model, the analysis tended to ameliorate the major argument in this research, that the need for change in national qualifications systems and the nature of the change in the direction of qualifications frameworks are informed by a constellation of discourses. In a further analysis of the model adopted by the NZQA, the constellation of the discourses that informed the change and the nature of the change in qualifications frameworks, and tensions in their theoretical assertions, are reinforced in the work of many writers (Irwin, 1994; Irwin, *et al.*, 1995; *The Hawke Report*, 1988 for example).

Some writers have pointed to the ‘correctness’ and/or the ‘incorrectness’ of the model of the NZQA (see Codd, 1990, 1995, 1997b; McKenzie, 1997, 1999a, 1999b). Suggestions are such that the NZQA reflects and endeavours to valorize qualities of rationality and a “supermarket model” to education (Barrowman, 1996). Such observations scoff at the principles of the NZQA with comments such as some reported in local newspapers. For example, Barrowman (1996) reports:

This democratic intent was not always appreciated by observers: Wellington newspapers found good copy in the May 1994 unit standards catalogue, which included units in cleaning. ‘Learners completing the unit will be able to clean streets using hand equipment and dispose of the rubbish’ reported the community weekly *City Voice* facetiously. The *Evening Post* ran an editorial on ‘credentials creep’ which it feared, was inconspicuously

permeating all levels of employment, while the *Dominion* likened 'New Zealand's first certificates in office and related business locations cleanerology' to American masters degrees in hamburgerology: Before long the country will be blanketed with upmarket cleaning organisations offering a breathtaking range of specialists in such matters as Estonian velour stain removal' (p. 31).

There are also those who contend that the institutionalization of the NZQA is a means to ensure domination and control (Barrow, 1999; Horsburgh, 1999; Philips, 1998). Writers have also pointed to the failure of the NZQA in meeting its objectives, for example Smithers (1997) concluded that "although it may have had a positive impact in some areas, overall the National Qualifications Framework is plainly not working" (p. 51). In other reports, insights have been provided on the history, policies, and operational procedures of the NZQA (Hamill, 2001; Philips, 2003; Richardson, 1999). A review of major findings of some of these studies conducted on the NZQA follows.

## 2.7 Research Studies on the NZQA

In the previous sections, explanations for the NZQA as an apt choice to be case studied in relation to the OECS and the nature and origin of the New Zealand model were provided. Studies and reports have been conducted and compiled on the NZQA (see Barker, 1994, Hodgetts, 1998; Foulkes, Laking & Kyrke-Smith, 1996) among others). In this section, some major findings on the NZQA and its operational principles and procedures are reviewed.

This review affords a source for crystallization since interview data in the New Zealand context is limited primarily to managers at the NZQA. As explained in Chapter Five, crystallization is the attempt to hone in data from different angles (Neuman, 2003). It is an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the research phenomena, to increase the scope, depth and consistency, to elicit meanings, corroborate and augment evidence (Flick, 2002; Janesick, 2003; Richardson, 2000).

Notably, the review of reports and studies on the NZQA below supports the observation that tension in policy implementation emanates from the ends of policy, the appropriate means to achieve those ends and consequences (successes and challenges) of such policies (Harrison, 2004, p. 23), as well as the epistemological assumptions that inform and shape the ends and the appropriate means and consequences (successes and challenges) of its implementation. In this analysis, however, the ends, means and epistemological assumptions of the policy implementation on the NZQA are not always distinct.

The goal for the NQF was that of “a single comprehensive and integrated structure, which is flexible and responsive, widely and easily accessible and is informed by the labour market requirements and educational requirements” (Hood, Kerr & Perris, 1996, p.1). Irwin, Elley & Hall (1995) have argued, however, that “the framework incorporates serious inconsistencies and tensions, is fundamentally unsound and should be reviewed” (p. 26). Amongst the inconsistencies and tensions, Smithers (1997) identifies NZQA’s attempted use of a unified framework to address uniformly a set of first principles, which should be addressed as distinctive qualifications issues. According to Smithers (1997), these issues include (i) the failure of school qualifications to keep pace with the wider range of abilities and aspirations now represented in the senior secondary schools; (ii) the need to have a first-class system of employment-related qualifications covering both preparation for work and upskilling in work; and (iii) the desirability of opening up tertiary education by allowing degrees to be offered by providers other than universities.

New Zealand Vice Chancellors’ Committee (NZVCC, 1994) had also critiqued the NZQA’s attempted use of a unified framework to address uniformly a set of first principles. NZVCC (1994) described these first principles as (i) the lack of educational soundness because of the premise that learning can be dissected into parts and the sum of the dissected parts equals the capability of whole qualifications, (ii) the notion of one giant authority playing the roles of provider and regulatory body. The NZVCC (1994) also pointed to:

- “the limitations of unit-standard methodology in dealing with academic study
- the difficulty of assigning university qualifications to the levels of the framework;
- the different views of the transferability of generic skills across different subject areas;
- the effectiveness of existing university procedures for dealing with course approvals, accreditation, and quality assurance relating to degree study;
- the logistical difficulties of implementing the NZQA model in the university context;

- the resource implications of implementing the framework” (p. 19).

Other concerns identified by the NZVCC for the lack of support for the framework included:

- Control of the decision-making process covering the right to present a university course;
- The concern that the NQF is too vocational in orientation and therefore not suited to research-based university teaching;
- The belief that standards based assessment and competency downplays the concept of excellence;
- The alleged business or industry orientation of the framework will emphasise short term considerations and not the longer term view held by the university academics;
- Worry that giving government more of a say in the degree structure will produce an emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness and not on quality; and that
- Qualifications cannot be broken down into small unit standards. This ‘atomistic’ approach is seen to be a feature of lower-level qualifications.

(NZVCC, 1994)

Although not entirely discrete, these first principles identified by Smithers (1997) and the NZVCC (1994) point to tension as a result of the ends of policy (a unified national qualifications framework); the appropriate means to achieve those ends and consequences of such policies, namely one giant authority and a standards based approach and, thirdly, the epistemological assumptions that inform and shape the ends and the appropriate means and consequences of its implementation.

Both at the theoretical and implementation levels, the seamless structure of the NQF, which arguably points to the ends, as well as the appropriate means and consequences of the policy, has also been a source of tension. Smithers (1997) attributes the tensions and inconsistencies alluded to by Irwin *et al.*, (1995) and the NZVCC (1994) to one crucial mistake, which was probably to go beyond the recommendation of *The Hawke Report* (1988). *The Hawke Report* (1988) had recommended a qualifications authority to coordinate the work of three distinctive sub-agencies to deal with qualifications in schools, employment and higher education. Like Hawke (1988), Irwin (1994) recommended three broad pathways, which are the academic, technical and vocational. Subsequent developments (see *Learning for Life Two*, 1989), however, supported the NZQA’s creation as a unitary authority. Smithers (1997) describes the difficulties associated with the NQF as seemingly deriving from one wish: “bureaucratic tidiness if nothing else – to run together a number of issues which could be better addressed separately” (p. 63). Irwin

(1994) argued that the “one-size-fits-all” approach or the “all or nothing” approach should be jettisoned in favour of recognizing multiple qualifications systems that communicate with each other in terms of credit recognition. The NZVCC (1994) acquiesced that the intent of the Education Act can best be achieved “through a structure involving a dual framework ... as the most effective and productive way of dealing with the differences of approach and philosophy between the universities and the NZQA and also the most cost effective” (p. 24).

These issues identified above are theorized in Chapter Three as quality assurance, standards based assessment, equivalency, comparability, interfacing work and world, levels, assignment of credits, and epistemologies of knowledge (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2000, 2001; Smithers, 1997; Young, 2003a, 2003b). Given these perceived inconsistencies in these first principles, Smithers (1997) espoused “the uncomfortable message” in his evaluative report, “that there is no alternative to working through a whole range of issues and problems from these first principles” (p. 61). Also, Philips (1998), in his PhD thesis, concluded that the ‘big idea’ and policy importation appeared to have been insufficient to ensure the successful implementation of the original unitary NQF.

Along this same line of argument on the tensions and inconsistencies, among the epistemological assumptions that orient the end of the policy, arguably the most enduring education discourse is that of the standards-based approach to educational assessment. The standards based approach, which remains the building block of the newly fully implemented NCEA (in 2004) and several other qualifications to date, has been and remains one of the main sources of tension. Seemingly, the major source of tension has developed from what is described by Irwin, Elley & Hall (1995) as “procrustean” - that “trying to force all material into one standards-based assessment model ignores the extreme complexity and vast range of knowledge and skills and other attributes to be tested and the many combinations in which they are incorporated into courses and programmes” (p. 27).

The extent of tension on the standards-based approach is underscored in Irwin, Elley & Hall’s (1995, p. 26) recommendation that “a totally new approach” should be adopted. They recommended that the approach used be one that would accept that the purpose of assessment and the nature of what is to be tested should determine the appropriate

assessment methods to be adopted, and not vice versa. According to the writers, a change in this direction would allow careful choices to be made between the various forms of criterion referenced (including standards based) and norm referenced assessment methods and between internal and externally set administered examinations.

Hodgetts (1998), in a Master's thesis, however, examined "the controversy" (tension) that surrounded the NZQA and the NQF and believed that up until then, too great an emphasis had been placed on policy proposals to the detriment of an understanding of practice. In his findings, he reported that the framework had been subject to criticism which was not sufficiently grounded in an analysis of practical operations of the NQF's implementation and use (Hodgetts, 1998). Notably, Hodgetts conducted his study with six staff members of the NZQA.

A formal internal evaluation of the operations and roles of the NZQA conducted by Foulkes *et al.*, (1996) focussed on the ends of policy and the appropriate means used to achieve the ends and consequences of such policies. The epistemological assumptions that informed the policy were also brought into question. Views were also aired on the quality of staff, policy competence of the NZQA, its communication with stakeholders and its internal links between the policy on the NQF and its implementation. By way of example, Foulkes *et al.* (1996) reported that the "expertise" of the NZQA's staff was questioned, mainly in terms of the "contested issue of the relevance of unit standards and their associated assessment philosophies to learning processes" (p. 22). The evaluators, however, stressed that it was not surprising that "those most opposed to the concept of unit standards were those who believed that the Authority's staff were ideologically driven but did not understand the underlying theory and practice of assessment" (Foulkes, *et al.*, 1996, p. 22).

At the implementation level, controversial issues with accreditation and moderation both inside and outside the NZQA were also highlighted in the evaluation of Foulkes, *et al.* (1996). Irwin *et al.* (1995) also attributed the "stresses and strains" within the NQF to "an increasingly elaborate and time-consuming moderation, audit and accreditation systems designed to shore it up" (1995, p.27). Foulkes *et al.* (1996) cited internal issues of disagreement on the purposes of moderation. The unfeasibility of ensuring consistency either within a school or between schools in a system of local assessment was another basic concern. Possible reasons for the unfeasibility of ensuring consistency as identified

by Foulkes *et al.* (1996) in the report included “a lack of faith that unit standards can be appropriately specified and assessed, because of the numbers and calibre of assessors and moderators involved, and the difficulties of socialising such a number of people across the country into a common understanding about assessment” (p. 47). The cost of sustaining accreditation and moderation systems to comply with the framework was also a concern. To Foulkes *et al.* (1996), “these concerns [were] heightened by a lack of confidence in schools about the NZQA as an organization”. This lack of confidence, it was believed, had the potential to “undermine attempts to undertake major tasks like moderation” (Foulkes *et al.*, 1996, p. 47). Amongst these issues, questions were raised about the efficiency of the system, and whether or not there was a better way of doing the job. One of the complications identified was with the training and development role that moderation could play for assessors and the benefits for the Authority (see also Strachan, 1996; Keown, 1996). A major conclusion by Foulkes *et al.* (1996) was the need to balance a credible moderation system with the cost-effective moderation system.

Critiques of the implementation of the NQF are also evidenced in the findings of Mansell (1998), Harold *et al.* (1999), Kunowski (2000), and Strathdee & Hughes (2001). Mansell (1998), for example, analyzed the perceptions of staff and boards in two secondary schools. Her results suggested tensions associated with “the practicalities of implementation of the framework” and in particular “with the method of unit standard assessment” (p. 4).

In spite of Mansell’s (1998) disclosure that her findings pointed to difficulties with “the method of unit standard assessment” (p. 4), her report concentrated on management issues such as “the way the system had been implemented, noting the rate of change, the uncertainty which remained ... the huge workload of staff involved in accreditation and classroom implementation, and inadequacy of resourcing” (p. 15). Mansell (1998) pointed out that some participants viewed the NZQA as “massively understaffed, chaotic, and ill prepared” (p. 4). In her analysis, she pointed out that “the favourable comments which had heralded the implementation of the system were overwhelmingly drowned in the tsunami of [such] concerns” of staff (Mansell, 1998, p. 4). According to Mansell (1998), the results of her study indicated that perceptions of participants in her study were similar to those of some critiques including Elley (1994a, 1995, 1996a) and Peddie (1995).

The lack of effective communication, participation and professional debate on the policy on the NQF was reported in the findings of researchers (for example Mansell (1998) and Harold *et al.* 1999) as one of the sources of difficulties at the implementation level. Harold *et al.*<sup>5</sup> (1999) observed that debates on the NQF occurred “at a level which is relatively remote from the day to day realities of schools” (p. 234). One of the major criticisms, according to Mansell (1998), was “about communication and the difficulty in finding someone to take responsibility for responding” (p. 16). One of the participants in Mansell’s (1998) study claimed that there was “plenty of contact, but the problem is that they have been so hell bound on implementing the change that they didn’t listen ... They didn’t know where it was at for the ordinary teacher. And they were told and told and told, but they didn’t listen” (p. 16).

Kunowski (2000) concurs that there was a lack of research, professional debate and participation, particularly on assessment issues. She explains:

while some subject specialist teachers were later to be involved in designing unit standards, the majority of the teaching force who were the people to put into practice the new plan for the assessment of qualifications was not included in the initial planning and decision making process. Nor was there opportunity for a comprehensive philosophical debate among teaching professionals about assessment issues (p. 68).

Kunowski (2000) argues that among the problems perceived for a new system, many secondary teachers felt that the system had been imposed from above. She alludes to antipathy and tension at the implementation level as a result. Kunowski (2000) pinpoints that “it is perhaps no coincidence that teacher hostility and unease about assessment change has come about since the PPTA was excluded from representation at the highest level of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority”(p.109). Harold *et al.* (1999) suggested that the lack of research and professional debates might have contributed to some of the recurring problems, and “the immense task” of the NZQA in implementing the NQF.

On the subject of the consequences of the NQF, in particular the impact on student learning, the findings of Mansell (1999), Harold *et al.*, (1999) and Kunowski (2000) are reinforced in a study conducted by Strathdee & Hughes (2001). Strathdee & Hughes (2001) drew on data generated from interviews with 23 male senior secondary school students and 34 educators between 1997 and 1999. They indicated that “despite the predictions of the NZQA that the framework would have a major impact on student

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<sup>5</sup> Harold *et al.* (1999), conducted a qualitative study of seven Waikato schools, to provide insights into the cumulative impact of the Post-Picot school reforms. Arguably, the NZQA was part of those reforms

learning ... many students interviewed had only a partial understanding of standards-based assessment under the framework" (p. 161).

Strathdee & Hughes (2001) also analyzed the different views and motivational effects of the NQF held by educators and students. According to the writers, the standards-based assessment appeared not to have motivated students in the manner predicted by the NZQA. The writers claimed that, in contrast, "the educators had a clear understanding of standards-based assessment under the framework ... [and] were also supportive of an egalitarian philosophy which they believed underpinned it" (p. 161).

A comprehensive study, paid for by the NZQA, and conducted by Fitzsimons (1997b) at the school level, also found that tension existed at the level of practice. Fitzsimons (1997b) reported on the first phase of a longitudinal study, of two cohorts of students in seven North Island secondary schools, of the sixth form students' perceptions of the NQF. The study addressed the question: What difference does the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) make for young people? The researcher conducted 49 interviews with sixth form students and 10 teachers from the seven schools. In his analysis of the role and structure of the NQF from the perspective of the NZQA, compared to the responses of the students, Fitzsimons (1997b) concluded that there were many gaps to be addressed.

In his comparison of the ways in which the NQF is designed to impact on the future of students, as against the ways in which students hypothesize about its value for them, Fitzsimons (1997b), like Strathdee & Hughes (2001), reported that for most students the NQF is unimposing. He suggested that there is "a considerable amount of information about the NQF in schools, ... but very little reaches the student ... Students are as yet unable to use the NQF to make rational choices for their future" (p. 40). Like Harold *et al.*, (1999) Fitzsimons (1997b) reported that there was a lack of information about the NQF and its subsequent internalization by students as "knowledge" (Fitzsimons, 1997b, p. 2). Knowledge of hiring procedures of employers was also lacking among students. Fitzsimons (1997b) concluded that "most students thought that examinations, rather than unit standards, would allow employers and tertiary level institutions to identify more accurately what they knew" and they "did not see a correspondence between the unit standards they were assessed on and their future employment plans" (p. 2).

Strathdee & Hughes (2001) also suggested from their research that “the framework is unlikely to improve the labour market position for achieving students” (p. 161). The writers argued that “although an assessment of the validity of this observation must remain a subject for future research”, their results suggested that “the benefits of the framework to disadvantaged learners are not substantial” (p. 161). They also argued that “the educational benefits upon which the framework was sold to the public have not been realized in practice, and are unlikely to be realized in the future” (Strathdee & Hughes, 2001, p. 161).

The preceding review on research conducted on the NZQA attempted to reinforce Young’s (2003a) observation that qualifications frameworks are analyzed either as regulatory instruments in the control of the expansion of the post-compulsory sector or “as instruments of communication that enable learners and employers to be clearer about what qualifications offer, where they lead and how they are located within the overall system” (p. 233).

Some writers, however, attributed some of the tension at the level of practice to the epistemological assumptions of the discourses of managerialism, in particular “the abstract nature of the market and managerial theories currently driving education” (Harold *et al.*, 1999, p. 234). Moss (1990), Harrison (2004), and Harold *et al.*, (1999) ascribe the gap to the emphasis of the discourse of managerialism on ‘ensuring greater efficiency’, and its economic approach in which education is treated as a product or service provided for clients or consumers. This perceived abstraction of managerialism, and its principles of “quantifiable outcomes”, are believed by some educators to be inapplicable to the discourse of educational learning and assessment (Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003). This fundamental belief by educators also gives rise to tension at the level of practice.

Strathdee & Hughes (2001) also point to the epistemological assumptions of the policy as a source of tension - “the framework [having been] designed to promote neoliberal objectives” (p. 161). According to the writers, given this design, one risk is that “the framework will continue to contribute to the creation of educational markets by, for example, providing private training experiences with greater access to the training market” at the expense of benefits to learners (Strathdee & Hughes, 2001, p. 161).

What emerges from this review is that there have been some tensions at the level of practice, some of which stem from the epistemological assumptions of the policy. Ostensibly, the New Zealand Government has had reservations about the progress made towards the consequences of the policy, namely establishing a high quality education and training system for the country (see Lee & Lee, 2000a; Smithers, 1997). Smithers (1997) and Lee & Lee (2000a) attribute the Green Paper of June 1997 and the munificent twelve-week period that was allowed for comment and submission on it to the growing speculation over the direction of the NQF. The extension of the NQF to a broader Register of Quality Assured Qualifications tends to support their observation.

Despite the foregoing arguments, the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC), in 2001 supported a unified framework. With negotiations between the NZVCC and the Qualifications Authority Board, the concern was for degrees and postgraduate qualifications to be registered on the framework. The Ministerial Tertiary Lead Group (TLG) was set up by the Minister of Education to resolve the issues relating to the inclusion of degrees in the National Qualifications Framework. In its report, the TLG concluded that there were real advantages in a single harmonized qualifications framework, and that the New Zealand Qualifications Framework is appropriately constructed to safeguard the concerns and requirements of educators.

The merits of the single framework identified by the Ministerial TLG (1994) included New Zealand's international dependence on its reputation for competence and excellence in education as contrasted with economic physical clout. It was argued that that a single framework would facilitate the growing internationalization of services and emphasis on international standards and monitoring. According to the Ministerial TLG (1994), the framework would further the need of standards, which protects the reputation of New Zealand in providing cutting edge qualifications in the Asia/Pacific region.

In March 2001, the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications was implemented. It was an extension of the NQF. The notion of a unifying concept for coherence was maintained, but recommendations included further development of the framework, a common currency of outcome statements and the development of "a scale of nationally recognized excellence to be integrated into the NQF for school subjects assessed against unit standards" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 24).

In summation of the above review, the central argument that underpins this research was brought to the fore. This is the need for change in qualifications systems and the nature of the change are informed by a constellation of discourses. Many of the reports and findings focussed on the ends, appropriate means and the consequences of the policy such as the unified NQF, the standards based approach to assessment and management issues such as communication, consultation, the huge workload of staff, difficulties with moderation and accreditation, and the lack of impact of the NQF on students.

The inconsequential extent to which the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and educational assessment have been considered in reports or in research conducted in relation to the NZQA was evident. Arguably, there is a dearth of academic research on deeper issues of levels, equivalencies, principles of difference, comparability, epistemologies of knowledge, and allocation of credits in the New Zealand context. There is very little on the NZQA and its impact on the quality of education, and issues of formative and summative effects of assessment as they relate to certification in the New Zealand context. The paucity of research on the epistemological assumptions that orient the policy is evident.

## 2.8 Conclusion

Chapters One and Two have set a background for the research interest and made a case for studying New Zealand's experience, and for theorizing towards an OECS qualifications framework. The two chapters reflected an interplay of the local, regional and global factors that have tendencies to effect change in qualifications systems.

In the case of the OECS, the structure of its qualifications systems signalled some deficiencies, inadequacies and inconsistencies, all of which raised questions about its *raison d'être*. The recurring theme was the need to provide a platform for change in the OECS, which begs the question: How can such change come about? One might suggest that it can be achieved only through a total cataclysm of the entire education system. This research, however, is guided by Hoy's suggestion that in Foucauldian terms "change does not come about by changing the whole at once but only by resisting injustices at the particular points where they manifest themselves" (Hoy, 1986, p. 142). One such point identified as the focal point of this research is the qualifications system of the OECS.

It was acknowledged in this chapter that New Zealand and the OECS are two different regions that are not directly comparable in economic, political, education and social systems. Therefore, rather than attempting to analyze context from those premises, themes and issues on qualifications and their qualifications systems which have arisen in their idiosyncratic contexts were analyzed. Notwithstanding their differences, it has been argued in this chapter that the NZQA is an apt case for informing a similar system in the OECS because there is a worthwhile experience to be shared.

The research studies reviewed on the NZQA contribute to an understanding of the discourses that surround the operations of the NZQA, and point to an apparent tension stemming from the ends and the appropriate means and consequences of the policy on NQFs, as well as the epistemological orientations of the policy. A notable source of tension includes the ends of the policy, namely the unified (seamless) framework. Another has to do with the standards based approach and the extent of the NQF's impact on learning and assessment. The review, however, finds that given the responsibilities of the NZQA and the millions of dollars invested in the entity, there is seemingly a paucity of reports on academic research and evaluation on epistemological assumptions that inform issues such as equivalences, comparability, and the extent of its impact on learning and educational assessment. Moreover, given the reform background that led to the establishment of the NZQA, the review suggests that the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and educational assessment have been vaguely considered in research conducted in relation to the NZQA's establishment, its operational principles and practices.

In concert, the first two chapters begin to sketch the constellation of discourses and the associated tension alluded to in the central argument of this research. Chapters Three and Four will review literature and research that elucidate the interdisciplinary themes raised in these first two chapters and in the central argument of this research.

## Chapter Three

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### QUALIFICATIONS QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS AND THE DISCOURSE OF MANAGERIALISM

#### 3.1 Introduction

The first two chapters surveyed the local, regional and international contexts, and analyzed briefly the various strands of argument that impact on this research. The central thesis was introduced as being that the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems are informed by a range of competing discourses. These discourses are conceptualized herein as falling into two loose groupings, namely managerialism and education – between which there is notable tension. This third chapter advances this central tenet by reviewing some of the theorizing on the assumptions and principles of the discourse of managerialism that impact on this research.

As has been argued in Chapter One, a post-modernist approach to theorizing is adopted (see Giroux, 1995). Such an approach allows for the pulling together of “various disparate currents in various literatures, and [the] use of theoretical ideologies and intersecting epistemologies that are scattered in an unsystematic way in diverse subject matters” (Beckett & Hager, 2002, p. 7). This is a broad approach, but it is plausible (Beckett & Hager, 2002; Giroux, 1995) and applicable to the study of the establishment and practice of the NZQA, and the notion of qualifications frameworks - both of which currently lack one overarching theoretical conceptualization. Accordingly, multi-disciplinary themes which run through the discourses of managerialism are reviewed in subsequent sections. These include:

- The impact of global change, wider public sector reforms and the role of State in education (qualifications) reform;
- The marketization and the commodification of education;

- Human Capital Theory and the vocational-academic divide;
- Conceptualization of quality assurance in education;
- The accountability debate;
- Quality assurance as a process (standards, moderation, accreditation, quality audit).

Notably, some of these themes stir(red) tension at the level of education practice (see Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003, for example). Whenever appropriate in this thesis, sites of tension are identified, but before concluding this chapter a synthesis of the contesting nature of the theoretical assumptions of the two discourses is attempted.

The nucleus of this thesis is qualifications and qualifications frameworks. Therefore, before commencing the review of the aforementioned themes, some perspectives on examinations and qualifications are reviewed. The contested nature of theory as regards qualifications, and how qualifications have developed into a 'legitimate culture', are examined from a spectrum of writings including the work of Foucault (1977), Weber (1968), Dore (1976), Broadfoot (1996) and Wolf (2002). Such a wide spectrum of writings serves as a source of theoretical crystallization. It is argued in this section that the dominant explanation for the emergence of qualifications in the form which they took, both in Britain and her colonies (including OECS and New Zealand), is based on public policy matters of bureaucracies and the issues of meritocracy and equity (equality of opportunity). Subsequent sections of this chapter will demonstrate that although some of this theorizing is still prevalent, changing imperatives are challenging this *raison d'être* of qualifications systems, particularly in the case of the OECS. This review contributes to the elucidation of the central tenet of this research by identifying several of the discourses that inform the need for change in qualifications systems. An analysis of the concept of qualifications frameworks follows this review on qualifications.

### **3.2 Qualifications: Indicators of What?**

Qualifications, qualifications systems and qualifications frameworks are at the core of this research. In this section, literature relevant to this thesis is reviewed in order to gain an understanding of qualifications and qualifications frameworks, their use, and theoretical and practical implications.

Traditionally, education's major emphasis has been in developing minds and characters (Eckstein & Noah 1992; Richmond, 1971). Yet, writers claim that ironically it is summative assessments, especially examinations for selection purposes, which dominate most young people's experience of education (Broadfoot, 1996; Little, 2000; Somerset, 1996). To borrow from Somerset (1996), teachers and other adults – politicians, employers, journalists – may emphasize other purposes; but to the learners themselves, "it is the final measured outcomes of their education and the opportunities which these lead to that really matter" (Somerset, 1996, p. 263). This role of qualifications is clearly discernable in most national contexts, however,

Countries differ widely in how high the educational selection stakes have been raised, and the level at which most selection decisions are taken. In some low income countries, the end of primary schooling is crucial; in a few affluent countries, the major decisions are postponed to as late as the end of a bachelor's degree (Somerset, 1996, p. 263).

Arguably, the difference in national practice does not make the 'stakes' of lesser significance because in any national context qualifications/certificates are an end product with a variety of functions, some of which are sometimes not explicit (Robinson, n.d). In any national context, qualifications/certificates serve, for example, as an indisputable part of providing a publicly-recognizable face to the largely covert world of the curriculum, the teaching and learning process, and an individual's potential and attainment (Eckstein & Noah 1992). They tend to motivate learners, determine learning priorities of students, influence directly what is taught, attest to what has been taught, and assess the quality of learning (Broadfoot, 1996b, 2001; Gipps & Murphy, 1994; Little 1990).

It is perhaps because of this potential that the value of education is reinforced through qualifications/certification; and that their use has expanded and proliferated. Hence, it is contended in this research that because qualifications are only an end product, "the purveyor of such messages" is educational assessment (testing/examinations) (Broadfoot, 2001, p. 104). Arguably therefore, certificates/qualifications remain the 'voices' of the learning and assessment/ examination process.

One prominent function of qualifications in society is to bridge the gap between any learning environment and the real world. Yet, despite their wide use in this respect, writers have argued that very few of the qualifications actually qualify or certify the

holder to do anything (Broadfoot, 1996b; Robinson, n.d; Somerset, 1996). What they do is certify the level of attainment, achievement, or competence that has been successfully completed by their holders (Blackmur, 2004). They may also certify that the holder has undertaken a certain course of learning and has reached a particular standard that qualifies the holder to undertake further courses at a higher level, and/or to follow certain opportunities (Robinson, n.d). The value of qualifications, in terms of currency, is that they form the basis of judgments by those who need to be convinced that the holder is the right person for the job, course, next level of education, or for an opportunity which has arisen (Eckstein & Noah, 1992; Little, 1990, 1996; Somerset, 1996). Qualifications, therefore, are the initial indicators that signal the individual's capabilities, and form a significant part of the dialogue between the applicant and the selector (Eckstein & Noah, 1992; Robinson, n.d.; Somerset, 1996).

It is perhaps in this vein that Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, identified the "examination" and by implication the resulting qualification, as a key source of power in society since the time of the Enlightenment. Foucault (1977) explains:

The examination [and the resulting qualification] is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge. It is the examination which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement, assures great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification ... With it are ritualized those disciplines that may be characterized in a word by saying that they are modality of power for which individual difference is relevant (p. 192).

In contrast with the ceremony in which "status" and "birth" afford privilege, it is the examination, according to Foucault (1977), that "clearly indicates the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality, ... [and] the 'marks' that characterize him and make him a 'case' "(p. 192). As a "case", the individual is held as "a mechanism of objectification" (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). The "examination", and by implication the resulting qualification, "establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (Foucault, 1977, p. 184) - thereby justifying the existence of the examination and its resulting qualification as a selective device.

Foucault (1977) asserts also that the "examination" (and by implication the resulting qualification) tends to be woven into school, pedagogy, and society as a constantly repeated ritual of power. It "is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it, and which increases

its efficiency” (Foucault, 1977, p. 176). Broadfoot (1996b) concurs in arguing that in some societies, this systemic control takes the form of “a powerful state bureaucracy whose activities regulate the process of education through the control of curriculum content, pedagogy and the institutional context” (p. 10). Therefore, as an object of power, the examination (and by implication its resulting qualification):

‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of subjects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, 1977, p. 194).

In this respect, it believed in this thesis that the system plays a double role: it “marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes, but it also punishes and rewards” (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). Those on whom power is exercised can “remain in the shade; they received light only from that was conceded to them or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried” (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). The examination, according to Foucault (1977), is “no longer a monument for future memory, but a document [a certificate] for possible use” - to gain access to life chances (p. 191). It is this discipline which trains individuals; it makes them (Foucault, 1977). Thus, it stands to reason that the micro and macro powers of the examination extend beyond the individual (Broadfoot, 1996b). The individual, as Foucault (1977) argues, “is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ideological representation of society” (p. 194).

One may or may not be inclined to accept the intricacies of Foucault’s structural analysis (Broadfoot, 2001). It might also be debatable whether his theorizing on the examination and resulting qualifications are evidenced in current societal practice. His theoretical ideas, however, are found to be applicable in the OECS context, in light of the research interest delineated in Chapter Two. Foucault’s (1977) assertion, for example, that the examination is yet another innovation of the classical age that the historians of science have left unexplored is relevant in the OECS, in the sense that:

People write the history of experiments ... But who will write the more general history of the ‘examination’ - its rituals, its methods, its characters and their roles, its play of questions and answers, its systems of marking and classification? For in this slender technique are to be found the whole domain of knowledge, a whole type of power (p. 185).

As has been shown in Chapter Two, in the OECS, the British structure of examinations and qualifications, its *raison d’être* and the need for change have been unvoiced. The particular concepts and assumptions of the system, “tend to delimit the arena of debate,

and hence ... preclude other ways of theorizing the assessment experience" for OECS citizens (Broadfoot, 2001, p. 103). Of relevance is Foucault's (1977) postulate that "we are entering the age of the infinite examination and a compulsory objectification" (p. 189). He suggests, and arguably this research pursues the suggestion, that "one should look into the mechanisms of the examination [qualification] ... and a new type of power over bodies" (Foucault, 1977, p. 191).

Foucault (1977) questioned how this "tiny operational schema" had "become so widespread (from ... to pedagogy, ... to the hiring of labour) ... within a single mechanism, power relations that make it possible to extract and constitute knowledge" (Foucault, 1977, p. 185). Such dominance of qualifications, particularly in Western societies, can be explained in terms of the relationship among education, society and the economy. One possible source of explanation rests in the theorizing of writers such as Brown, Halsey, Lauder & Wells (1997). They theorize a tightly woven design which linked government policy, business organizations, families and education. Brown *et al.* (1997) assert that in post-war years, traces of Habermas' economic rationality of unequal rewards dissipated, with emphasis being placed on the development of bureaucracies and technical rationality.

Such developments in Western societies have never ceased to impact on the Caribbean region, through "colonialism, trade, through various kinds of international contact and competition" (Broadfoot, 1996b, p. 29). In this general mode described by Brown *et al.* (1997) the civil service, for example, was exported from Britain to her colonials. It became the main sources of 'white collar' and 'blue collar' employment outside plantations (Black, 1998, 2001; Little & Wolf, 1996).

The fundamentals of these bureaucracies included centralization, hierarchical ordering of roles, a concentration of power at the top of organizations, division of labour, and established rules and regulations (see Cosin, 1972; Giddens & Birdsall, 2001). Hierarchical ordering of roles and division of labour were reinforced in the family (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995). The patriarchal family, for instance, was reproduced through stereotypical roles for males and females (Macionis & Plummer, 1997; Weber, 1968).

These bureaucracies were characterized by Max Weber (one of the founding fathers of sociology, who advocated the study of social occurrences in their historical and international contexts) as being meritocratic, impersonal, rational and objective (see Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000) for more arguments on bureaucracies). In these bureaucracies, the nature of jobs was beginning to change; new positions were evolving and others were being expanded, with a vast number predicated to require more skilled and semi-skilled individuals (Brown, *et al.*, 1997). As a consequence, these bureaucracies depended on getting the most 'talented' or the 'right' people for the 'right' job, regardless of their family status or social circumstances (Collins, 1972). The themes of meritocracy, equity (equality of opportunity), and competition were therefore well established by the nineteenth century (Blackmore, 1988; Wolf, 1995, 2002).

Qualifications attained their place in the rise of bureaucracies as instruments of meritocracy and equity. As the foregoing discussion by Foucault (1977) affirmed, they make each individual "a case" in such bureaucracies. By way of example, writers (Broadfoot & Gipps, 1996; Filer, 2000; Gipps, 1996, 2002) explain that the local examinations were instituted by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in England and her colonies beginning in the 1940s as a mechanism for the selection of 'male clerks for the civil service', since the earlier supply, the upper-class boys, recruited through race, nepotism or sponsorship fell short in numbers. Eggleston (1984) explains the role of qualifications in this regard:

In the predominantly functionalist orientations of sociology at this time the examination was seen as a crucial instrument for the development of the socially mobile society; by demonstrating that examination qualifications increasingly determined the level of entry into the labour market it was believed that the distribution of class, status and power could be influenced by educational strategies designed to increase the opportunities for examination success (p. 20).

Eggleston (1984) asserts, however,

Numerous studies showing correlations between home and community background and examination achievement were not at first seen as casting doubt upon the 'true' selective role of examinations in meritocracy, indeed they gave rise to ever more educational policies designed to increase examination success, particularly amongst the 'socially disadvantaged' (p. 20).

This continued use of examinations and their resulting qualifications, and policies designed to give approval to egalitarian principles (meritocracy and equity), received attention in most societies and education agendas. Examinations and their resulting qualifications (see Black & Wiliam, 1998; Blackmore, 1988; Broadfoot, 1996b; Filer, 2000; Gipps, 1990, 1994) came to assume the following roles:

- They played a selection and allocation function of individuals in the labour market;
- They functioned as assimilation tools of distributive and social justice to which individuals regardless of class, colour or race could aspire and achieve 'common prizes' offered in society;
- They allowed access to life opportunities and facilitated social mobility; and
- They were seen as a means of contributing to foundations of democracy.

When these theoretical assertions are applied to the OECS and perhaps elsewhere, these roles are prevalent. Although studies alluded to by Eggleston (*op. cit.*) might not have been conducted in the context of the OECS, the anecdotal reports are similar. Increasingly, it can be observed in the OECS context that "there are more educational policies designed to increase examination success, particularly amongst the 'socially disadvantaged' " (Eggleston, 1984, p. 2). Qualifications continue to function as an instrument that fills that gap between the individual and society, and the particularistic roles in the family and the universalistic roles of society (Broadfoot, 1996b; Brown *et al.* 1997). The system functions as a selective device for the capable few "cases" (Foucault, 1977) who are deemed worthy to hold the limited positions, not by birth, but based on merit (Hyland, 1994, 1995). As Blackmore (1988) has observed, on several accounts in such contexts, pedagogical concerns are secondary to the administrative need for selectivity and comparability.

The view that qualifications systems function as instruments of meritocracy and equity, however, are along the lines of rationalism or a technical-functionalist perspective (see Eggleston, 1984, for instance). There are also divergent views on qualifications such as those of conflict theorists, who argue that there are distinctions among status group cultures (see Abercrombie, Turner & Hill, 2000; Collins, 1972; Haralambos & Holborn, 1995; Macionis & Plummer, 1997; Sarup, 1982). Conflict theorists suggest that qualifications are used for selection into a dominant elite culture, and they are used to lure lower level employees into an attitude of respect for the dominant culture (Collins,

1972; Haralambos & Holborn, 1995; Macionis & Plummer, 1997; Sarup, 1982). They are of the view that qualifications, through the status of distinction that they foster, reinforce the stratification and the dominant culture in society; and they simply justify, legitimate, and provide stability to a class system (see, for instance, Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In contrast with the functionalist perspective, conflict theorists believe that students at the bottom of the stratification system are destined to fail, while those at the top are destined to succeed, and that no control can be exerted by learners, since their behaviour is largely shaped by external forces (see Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976 for instance).

Davis & Moore (1945) are notable writers who view rewards (qualifications) mainly as a tool of social stratification and as the gatekeeper to respective occupations in society. In their scenario in which societies use qualifications for meritocracy, Davis & Moore (1945) paint a picture in which such societies “hold out rewards to develop the talents and encourage the efforts of everyone” (Macionis & Plummer, 1997, p. 249). In so doing, however, such societies paradoxically promote equality of opportunity, and mandate inequality of rewards (Macionis & Plummer, 1997).

There are also other views of the matter, such as those of the interactionist (action theorists). In this view, the concept of “intentionality and inter-subjective understanding” is central to the acquisition of qualifications (Codd, 1995, p. 154). Interactionists explain that the behaviours of learners are not merely shaped by social forces in their external environment or by a reaction to the directives of the subcultures or the pressures of stratification systems. The actions of learners, according to interactionists (action theorists) are to a large extent guided by goals, meanings, which are constructed through the process of interaction (Codd, 1995).

The interactionist (action theorist) perspective sheds light on some issues that are prevalent in the OECS, and have also been among the debates in New Zealand. One such issue is the unabated ‘nature’ versus ‘nurture’ debate and theories of intelligence; use of which is attributed mainly to psychometric models used in awarding qualifications. (Other views seemingly concur with this interactionist position, including those of the sociocultural view of learning (see Jonassen, 2000; Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991, for examples).

Notwithstanding these competing discourses, arguably the dominant function of qualifications in national contexts is thought to be egalitarian. Wolf (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2002), for instance, contends that credentials are being used as a mechanism to cope with social and distributive issues of limited life chances in every instance.

Filer (2000) argues, however, that there is often a disparity between policy intentions and outcomes. The 'ritual' of earning qualifications, for instance, is a major concern for many societies. Dore (1976), more than two decades ago, traced the underlying causes of the shift in the intentions and drives for this pursuit through the educational histories of England, Japan, Sri Lanka and Kenya. He made the assertion that "more qualification earning is mere qualification earning – ritualistic, tedious, suffused with anxiety and boredom, destructive of curiosity and imagination; in short, anti-educational" (Dore, 1976, p. ix). Dore (1976) attributes this practice to the concept of 'late development'. He argued:

the later development starts (i.e. the later the point in world history that a country starts on a modernization drive) the more widely education certificates are used for occupational selection; the faster the rate of qualification inflation and the more examination-oriented schooling becomes at the expense of genuine education (Dore 1976, p. 72).

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the process of selection to allocate the limited opportunities and life chances was already marked by rigorous preparation for examinations (Eggleston, 1984; Filer, 2000). This practice has given rise to the emergence of the 'credentialed' or 'qualified' or 'certificated' societies. Today, as jobs depend more and more on certificates, degrees and diplomas, writers (see Little, 2000 for example) have continued to argue that education has become more and more a "ritualized process of qualification earning" (Little, 2000 p. 5). Codd (1999) argues that credentials act as a screening device rather than intellectual device; and as such a backwash effect of meritocracy is the "credential inflation" (Codd, 1999), or what Dore (1976) referred to as the "diploma disease".

Dore (1976) also suggested that credential inflation reflects the outcome of a competition and reproduces privilege by raising educational levels demanded for elite occupations. Contrary to Dore's (1976) postulate, this research contends that the credential inflation does not only apply to elite occupations, the late development of nations or even unskilled occupations, for that matter. This contention is supported by the OECD (1989),

in its argument that while there is general agreement that the unemployed need to undergo training, and training needs to be extended to regulate cyclical fluctuations and absorb unemployment, "the thresholds of minimum requirements have continued to rise, affecting even the better qualified" (1989, p. 29). It is believed that in today's changing economic societies, an average worker changes employment at least three times. It stands to reason therefore that in developed and developing countries alike, there are increasing demands for higher education, re-training and cross-training, thereby giving rise to credential inflation at all levels (OECD, 1989). Other possible reasons for credential inflation are provided by Collins (1972):

Higher educational requirements, higher levels of educational credentials offered by individuals competing for positions in organizations, have in turn increased the demand for education by the populace.

The interaction between formal job requirements and informal status cultures has resulted in a spiral in which educational requirements and educational attainments become even higher.

As the struggle for mass educational opportunities enters new phases ... [there is] a further upgrading of educational requirements for employment.

The mobilization of demands by minority groups for mobility opportunities through schooling can only contribute an extension of the [demands for qualifications].

(pp. 193-195)

If there was any doubt about qualifications continuing in the direction of a dominant 'legitimate culture', Wolf (2002) reiterated their dominance by the end of the twentieth century. Wolf (2002) observes in the British context, that "while men with vocational qualifications, such as a City and Guilds craft certificate, earn only a little more than men with no qualifications at all, a clutch of O levels or GCSEs at grade C or above is associated with an income advantage of over a third" (p. 15). According to Wolf (2002) for women:

The picture was the same - or if anything else more so. Not only did women seem to benefit hugely from A levels or degrees ... higher vocational qualifications ... gave them a greater advantage vis-à-vis unqualified women than was the case for the male workforce (p. 15).

Interestingly, while these findings pertain to the British context, Wolf (2002) underscores that "nor is there anything particularly British about it: the same patterns hold for developed countries in Europe, North America and the Pacific Rim" (p. 16). Although not documented, Wolf's (2002) assertions can also be anecdotally validated in the context of the OECS. To support her generalizations, Wolf (2002) analyzed figures of completion

of upper secondary education as a benchmark (and compares them to figures of higher and lower education levels) from Denmark, France, Germany, Spain, Australia and the United States. She concluded that while the size of the gap between the less and the more educated varies from country to country, "the basic pattern is exactly the same: those who leave school without such an upper-secondary qualification earn on average a quarter less than the benchmark group, and those with some university education earn an average of almost two-thirds more" (Wolf, 2002, p. 17). Her findings further revealed:

The more educated you are the more likely you are to be in work, to stay in work, to enjoy stable, long term employment on a permanent contract ... Nonetheless, the favoured position of the educated is confirmed again and again. Compared to graduates, the least qualified have two or three or even four times as high a chance of being jobless ... Not all graduates may find their dreams within a month of leaving university, and not all will be equally in demand. But compared to their contemporaries, not only are their bank balances larger: their work lives are also more pleasant and secure" (Wolf, 2002, pp. 18-19).

In response to her question, "Does education matter?" Wolf postulates that "the lesson for the last century is that for individuals it matters more than ever before in history" (2002, p. 244). Of major relevance to this research is her conclusion: "and not just any education: [but] having the right qualifications, in the right subjects, from the right institutions, is of ever growing importance" (p. 244). She emphasized that fewer and fewer job opportunities are opened to those who are denied or reject that opportunity.

The preceding discourses can be seen with telling impact in the OECS, as nations which have begun their drive towards post-modernization. In the opportunity market, the rampant use of certificates for job allocation and life chances means that higher and higher levels of qualifications are required as matriculation for the most basic jobs. The lack of such qualifications has a direct impact on chances of being recruited for even the most menial tasks.

In the OECS and elsewhere, qualifications have become valuable pieces of property, and their use has therefore grown into a 'legitimate culture'. They have become "a legitimate standard in terms of which employers select employees, and employees compete with each other for promotion opportunities or for raised prestige in their continuing positions" (Collins, 1972, p. 195).

This increased use may possibly be aligned with Foucault's (1977) postulate that "it is the examination [and its resulting qualification] which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement, assures great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification ... and optimum combination of aptitudes ..." (p. 192).

Broadfoot (1996b) elaborates:

This provision of a competition which is apparently open and fair suggests that those who are not successful in achieving their aspirations will accept the rational selection criteria being applied and, hence, their own failure. In so doing they acquiesce not only in their own defeat but the legitimacy of the prevailing social order. To this extent the provision of an apparently fair competition controls the build-up of frustration and resentment among the least privileged (p. 10).

Wolf's findings reaffirm Dore's (1976) assertion on the basic rationality of individuals. Dore (1976) argued that if the pursuit of certificates is the socially legitimate way to improve one's life chances in a society where resources are scarce and income and status differences great, then it is highly rational for individuals and their families to engage in their pursuit. What he questions is whether it is rational for societies to allocate life chances based on educational certificates. Dore's (1976) proposals suggest that the use of qualifications must be tempered if millions of the world's children are to have some chance (Little, 2000). As will be shown in subsequent sections of this chapter, the role of the State in some contexts towards this end is acknowledged in a growing body of literature. The concept of qualifications frameworks is arguably a step in this direction.

The preceding review continues to signal the need for theorizing a new OECs qualifications framework, as its present structure lacks the capacity to deal with the developing roles of qualifications. At a more theoretical level and with regard to the central argument of this research, several issues of interest emerge from the preceding discussion. It is assumed in this research that the various theoretical strands discussed above have an impact on qualifications systems. These theoretical strands point to a constellation of discourses (which have been grouped herein as the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment) that are believed to invariably affect qualifications systems. Moreover, from the preceding discussion, it was observed that the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment appeared to be intertwined throughout. The lack of emphasis on the discourses of learning and assessment was evident.

A review of the concept of qualifications frameworks follows.

### **3.3 The Concept of Qualifications Frameworks**

In the previous section, a broad overview of the contested nature of some of the theorizing on qualifications has been presented. It has been argued that qualifications have developed into a legitimate culture, and have acquired a legitimacy which makes them invaluable “both as a rhetorical device and as a means of managing the aspirations of individuals [and societies]” (Broadfoot, 2001, p. 104). Also, it has been indicated that the ‘legitimate culture’ of qualifications gives rise to a continuous proliferation and expansion of qualifications (Codd, 1995; Dore, 1976), and a plethora of qualifications and administrative agencies.

In this section, it is argued that qualifications frameworks are entities through which the constellation of competing discourses attempts to reach a common ground (balance) in terms of purpose and role of qualifications, both for the individual and society. An analysis of the concept of qualifications frameworks, advocacies and contestations attributed to their emergent role is therefore undertaken. The range of competing discourses that inform the nature of the change in the development of qualifications frameworks continues to be elucidated.

The research, discussion and reviews on the NZQA and the NQF in the New Zealand context analyzed in Chapter Two are broadened in this section with a review of the international literature on qualifications frameworks that have been established in Australia, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, France for example (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Granville, 2003; Leong & Wong, 2004; Raffe, 2003; UNESCO, 2002; Young, 2003a, 2003b, for example). In the review in this section, the concept of qualifications framework is analyzed in an endeavour to obtain a comprehensive view of the concept in this research.

Several accounts of qualifications frameworks point to sharp variations in exactly what is meant by the notion of ‘qualifications framework’, and the senses in which the term ‘framework’ is used. Blackmur (2004), for instance, concludes that the varied perspectives of qualifications frameworks in different countries “cast doubt on whether the term ‘framework’ has the same meaning across all NQF systems” (p. 268). Young (2003a), however, emphasizes that “despite the differences, it is clear that in their reasons for implementing an NQF, all the countries share the same set of broad ideas about its

structure and purpose" (p. 226). Given the varied meanings found in the literature, the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (2003a) definition appears to be inclusive of the varied notions, including that of the NZQA. Thus, a qualifications framework is thought to be a "nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between training and awards" (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2003a, p.1).

Young (2003a) makes a distinction between the "strong" frameworks such as those found in New Zealand and South Africa; and the "weak" frameworks found in Scotland, Ireland and Australia. Part of the explanation for the "weak/strong" distinction lies in the scope of frameworks - partial frameworks relate only to some types of qualifications such as vocational qualifications, while comprehensive frameworks cover all qualifications (Raffe, 2003). Writers (Bouder, 2003; Young, 2003a, 2003b) also distinguish between the outcomes based approaches associated mainly with Anglophone countries (such as New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, and South Africa) and institution-based approaches (as in France and Germany) that rely on developing learning pathways located in specific and institutional, occupational and academic communities, and not on the detailed specification of outcomes. Bouder (2003), who writes from a Francophone context, argues however that recent developments (a law passed in 2002 in France) may bring the French system "close to the Anglo-saxon notion of a national qualifications framework in a sense of creating a superstructure into which all qualifications would have to be squeezed" (p. 356). According to Bouder (2003), the new law fosters parallels with Anglophone nations since it gives "the State a powerful tool to organize the qualifications 'market' " (p. 356).

Proponents of the national qualifications frameworks argue that, in theory, there are intended benefits to be derived from qualifications frameworks for both individual learners and education and training systems (see Barker, 1994, 1995; Brennan, 1997; Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation Transfer System (NICATS) 2000; NZQA 2003a, 2003b; Peddie & Tuck, 1995; SAQA 2003a, 2003b; Spours, 2000; The Working Group Report on 14-19 Reform, 2004). For the individual, qualifications frameworks are proposed as a means of encouraging learning and motivation, creating interconnected paths for progression and facilitating breadth and depth of study (NICATS, 2000; NZQA 2003a, 2003b; SAQA 2003a, 2003b; Spours, 2000; The Working Group Report on 14-19

Reform, 2004). For the education and training system, they are key instruments for developing nationally recognized qualifications, classifying and regulating the qualifications system and instilling trust and confidence in national qualifications. The philosophy of the recognition of all learning and awards is implied, since a prominent role is given not only to vertical progression, but to horizontal progression and credit accumulation (see Hood, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996; Hood, Kerr, Perris, 1996; Spours, 2000). Other potential benefits include assessing the relative (comparative or equivalent) value of qualifications, consistent nomenclature within national contexts, removing age and time barriers, maintaining standards, avoiding duplicity of efforts (which implies efficiency), accommodating new qualifications, modifying existing qualifications and attempting to interface learning and work (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Philips, 2003; Young, 2003a). They give the impression of encouraging economic revitalization through the development of capabilities that target their employability and self-empowerment (James 2000).

Such perceived roles of existing qualifications frameworks support the assumptions that qualifications frameworks are more than just regulatory or classification mechanisms. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (2003a) contends that the framework will “promote transparency as to what education and training qualifications signify about the person that holds them. It will enhance the consistency of qualifications and facilitate a better understanding by all members of the society” (p. 1). In the case of the NZQA, Barker (1994) argues that it is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that “quality assessment and improvement operate throughout the system in the development and approval of qualifications, the accreditation of providers, and the verification of assessment standards” (p. 82). Quality assurance is also alluded to in the assumption that when all qualifications registered on the national qualifications framework have met approval, accreditation and moderation criteria, there is a high possibility that they will be quality assured (Spours, 2000). This goal also implies efficiency in minimizing wastage of resources (Blackmur, 2004).

These potential positives of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), however, have been described as ideals, and their biggest problem is the extent to which these functions can be embodied in practice (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Roberts, 1997; Young, 2003b). Critics (see Barrow, 1999; Blackmur, 2004; Smithers, 1997, for example) see NQFs merely as regulatory, monitoring and control mechanisms (Barrow,

1999) through which authorities attempt to guarantee quality by merely documenting 'what's out there' (Barrow, 1999; Spours, 2000). They are perceived by some educators as "huge tidying up operations" that allocate qualifications to "equivalent homes" (within the NQF) but do not sufficiently address the barriers of existing qualifications systems (Spours, 2000, p. 118).

Blackmur (2004) argues that "all National Qualifications Frameworks can, at a bare minimum, be conceptualized as a set of principles to classify qualifications" (p. 267). Past this minimum, some NQFs are also regulatory devices whereby qualifications must be produced and classified on the basis of prescribed criteria (Blackmur, 2004). The regulatory process is typically designed and administered by statutory bodies (Blackmur, 2004). In the British context, Spours (2000) argues that while themes of standards and improvement of existing qualifications and the promotion of consistency across different qualifications were underscored to secure parity of esteem, the concept of all-inclusive qualifications was based on "the relationship between 'standards' and 'trust' of different qualifications, rather than the accumulation of achievement and transportability of credit for all learners" (p. 122).

These critiques bring overtones of the discourse of managerialism into sharp focus. As has been contended in Chapter One, the establishment of NQFs emerges mainly out of the managerial discourse in its attempt to address perceived deficiencies in existing systems. From this perspective, the educational reforms associated with NQFs were designed for accountability, consumer-orientation and the commodification of existing education systems (Blackmur, 2004; Horsburgh, 1999). Richardson (1999) supports the view that "the development of qualifications systems to underpin the attainment of qualifications was central to the realisation of greater accountability by each provider for the quality of ... programmes" (p. 1). In this regard, the emphasis is placed on costs of this system, value for money, measurable outcomes and the alleged benefits of qualifications frameworks (see also Apple, 2004; Blackmur, 2004; Easton, 2003). These assertions are supported in the New Zealand context by Codd (1999), who also views qualifications frameworks as emanating from a culture of distrust; and Barrow (1999) who describes the qualifications framework from a Foucauldian perspective as a method of controlling. According to Barrow (1999), "the State and the management of an institution maintain a degree of surveillance from a distance that ensures that the requirements of the system are met" (p. 35). Blackmur (2004) agrees with Barrow (1999)

in his juxtaposing of certificating and funding. According to Barrow (1999), “the crucial reward provided by the State to the institution is the ability to certificate students. This generates the funding required for the institution and allows the institution’s management to reward individual academics” (p. 35).

The above analyses of national qualifications frameworks, including New Zealand’s qualifications framework, centre primarily on their establishment either as regulatory instruments in the control of the expansion of the post-compulsory sector or “as instruments of communication that enable learners and employers to be clearer about what qualifications offer, where they lead and how they are located within the overall system” (Young, 2003a, p. 233). There are, however, other pertinent epistemological issues that impact on the role and design of national qualifications frameworks and contribute to the range of competing discourses that inform the establishment and the nature of the change in qualifications frameworks (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995). These issues include interdependence, classification, levels comparability, equivalence and difference, interfacing between learning and working and credits (See Boudier, 2003; Ensor, 2003; Granville, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Raffe, 2003; Young, 2003b). There is also what Young (2003a, 2003b) refers to as building communities of trust. Some of these issues contribute to the range of competing discourses suggested in this thesis.

The notion of interdependence is significant in the establishment of qualifications frameworks. Interdependence entails other national strategies, such as curriculum design and development, human resource strategies and national development plans, which must complement each other (see Horsburgh, 1999; Young, 2003a, 2003b, for example). Although this notion is beyond the scope of this thesis, qualifications frameworks do not exist in vacuity, and therefore must not only take into consideration existing systems, but must work with existing systems if they are to be effectual. Failure to do so might be a potential source of tension.

Another challenge for the notion of qualifications framework stems from the variety of ways in which qualifications can be classified. Blackmur (2004), for instance, explains that “they may be grouped according to discipline in which case the definitions of the disciplines, and the definition of what constitutes a qualification, clearly drive the classification process” (p. 270). He argues that “differences in either or both definitions will produce different classification patterns” (Blackmur, 2004, p. 270). Varied

classification patterns will affect issues such as comparability and equivalence and difference, which qualifications frameworks are attempting to clarify within national contexts. Diverse classification patterns also give rise to variations of interpretations in different contexts, particularly on the international labour market.

Levels on an NQF “supposedly represent different degrees of complexity of the skills, knowledge and so on associated with each qualification” (Blackmur, 2004, pp. 270-271). In the case of New Zealand, Barker (1994) made the point that the all-integrated eight-level framework of the NQF in the New Zealand context “[would] end the binary division created by separate education and training systems, which has led to two different qualifications systems with rigid distinctions between providers, and an enduring perception that the vocational is second class” (p. 83). Ensor (2003) describes this intent in the South African context:

[It] is intended to allow for movement of learners both laterally (from formal education, into training and vice-versa), and vertically (from lower to higher levels of competence). Learners are expected to accumulate credits at different points in education or in training and these will be recognized across different sectors as stepping stones towards further credit accumulation and the achievement of qualifications. Outcomes are the currency that allows for movement to occur vertically and laterally (p. 339).

Proponents of NQF classifications are of the view that qualifications placed on the same NQF level are equivalent in many respects, and that the vocational and academic worlds can be bridged. The notion of levels, comparability, and equivalence within any one academic programme is hardly as problematic (Lester, 1995) as in the arrangement of national qualifications frameworks to mix and match standards from varied disciplines, interface learning and work, bridge the vocational and academic divide, credit independent learning, credit acquired skills in different contexts and different time periods and award prior learning or experiential learning.

There are limitations to the notion of levels on an NQF. It is possible to come up with logical explanations for any number of levels. There is also the possibility of assigning qualifications that have nothing in common to the same levels (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Young 2003a). By way of example, the number of levels in NQFs vary: eight and ten levels in the NQF and Register respectively in New Zealand (Hodgetts, 2001; Philips, 1998, 2003); twelve in Australia; eight in South Africa (Ensor,

2003; Young, 2003b); and twelve in Scotland (Raffe, 2003). Blackmur (2004) elaborates on his observation that examples of such inconsistencies can be multiplied:

In New Zealand, postgraduate diplomas, post-graduate certificates and bachelor's degrees with honours are located on the same level (level 8) but this level unlike the Scottish case does not include masters degrees. Honours degrees, are moreover, and located on level 10 of the Scottish framework whereas ordinary degrees are assigned to level 9. In the AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework], however, both types of degrees are allocated to the same level (8) (pp. 275- 276).

Of concern to end-users of qualifications frameworks is the factor that the variation in levels and allocation of qualifications call to question pertinent issues such as:

If the Scottish authorities assign a post-graduate diploma and a masters degree to the same NQF level, while the New Zealand Authorities assign them to different levels, what is the international labour market to make of this ... these qualifications either belong to the same levels or they do not ... or perhaps despite common titles, a post-graduate diploma in one country is not a post-graduate diploma in another ... or perhaps the definition of a concept of a level in one NQF is not the same as the definition of a level in another (Blackmur, 2004, p. 276).

While there is a problem with such issues, one dilemma for critics of qualifications frameworks is the arbitrariness with which those issues are decided. The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) (2000) draws attention to the fact that "levels cannot be based on any consistent philosophical or psychological principles and that the specification of levels involves "an attempt to incorporate multidimensional concepts ... without theoretical grounding into a simplified form" (p. 22). The Scottish Vocational Qualifications Framework has admitted that broad comparability is all that it can hope for. The arbitrariness and variations in levels have implications for interpretations and meanings in varied contexts, which might explain why the NZQA experts allegedly valued Oxford degrees as "worthless" (NZQA Forum, n.d, p.1).

Another challenge for qualifications frameworks has to do with their credit point system. It is assumed that matters of range and depth of subject matter and discipline make for different qualifications that are assigned different levels and assigned credit points or credits. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), for example, is designed as a single comprehensive framework based on free-standing standards; and also outcomes (in the case of university qualifications). These 'standards' and 'outcomes' carry credits towards nationally recognized qualifications. According to the NZQA (2004a, 2004b),

standards (units or achievement) and outcomes are the building blocks of the New Zealand NQF, and outcomes the building blocks of the Register, and credits are the common currency, for the recognition of attainment. But there are also limitations with the assignment of credits points to qualifications. In the New Zealand context, Fitzsimons (1999b, p.145), identifies sources which clearly underscore the different meanings associated with credits (see also Fitzsimons, 1997b), as follows:

- “a means of students exercising and increasing their consumer choices (NZQA, undated: 9; Hood, 1995:2)
- a means of transferring credits between qualifications and different institutions (NZQA, 1996)
- a credit indicates how long it would take a ‘typical’ learner to complete a unit standard (NZQA, 1996, p.59)
- equating to 10 hours of teacher directed activity (NZQA, 1990, p.19)
- equating to 10 hours of work by the student (NZQA, 1996, p.59)
- not 10 hours of work by the student (NZQA, 1996, p.59)
- an agreed value only (NZQA, 1996, p.59)
- a form of currency NZQA, 1990, p.10)
- a measure of hypothetical average NZQA, 1990, p.19)
- 120 credits equates to one standard training measure for ETSA purchasing (ETSA, 1995)
- one credit equates to 10-12 hours ... The typical learner will complete 120 credits in one-year or two-semester, full time course of study so that 120 credits = 2 semesters full-time study (Tertiary Lead Group 1994:17)
- a measure of the accumulated national human capital with 2.3 million credits ‘earned’ so far (ETSA/NZQA 1996, p. 2)
- as a personal numerical accumulation of the human capital of the student which is taken to be evidence of learning (NZQA, 1996, p. 59)”.  
(pp. 14-15)

These variations add to the reasons why Blackmur (2004) describes the New Zealand system as “problematic” (p. 274), and inconsistent on the score of definitional foundations. According to Blackmur (2004), such variations emphasize that the New Zealand approach has not analyzed the implication of its own definition of credits. He notes too that “it is obvious that the New Zealand approach to credit points means the

same qualification could have as many different credit-point allocations based on the variety of meanings, but each qualification has a unique number of credit points to it" (p. 274). Blackmur (2004) concludes that the New Zealand credit point system in effect "fudges some important issues: one by definitional inadequacy, the other by not pursuing the significance of its own definition to its logical conclusion" (p. 275). Generally, other issues with credit points include:

Credit points may be conceptualized as a currency only to the extent that this is confined to each level of an NQF. A credit point at the level of 8 is not, in other words, the same as a credit point at level 10. One cannot exchange for the other on the basis of parity (Blackmur, 2004, p. 275).

Moreover, qualifications that find themselves at the same level may be assigned different credit points:

The NZQA implies that it may take the average learner longer to be able to demonstrate certain outcomes in some disciplines than in others, for example a three-year bachelor's degree in disciplines of economics and four-year degrees in law, both at level 8 [and an honours bachelor degree in the same discipline at a higher level] (p. 275).

The perceived lack of international comparability on issues such as levels, credits and equivalences also reinforces the argument in Chapter Two that qualifications systems are eccentric systems that vary from context to context. Moreover, the theorizing serves to reinforce that there are advantages for national qualifications frameworks in terms of negotiations in the international context, but they are context-specific structures. Also it was shown that while qualifications frameworks receive assent in principle at the international level, there are national variations which have implications for international interpretations that somehow call to question their practical consequences.

These issues point to confusion even within national qualifications frameworks. On this basis, comparison of credit points on different national qualifications frameworks become difficult for end-users, who are bound to be confused.

There are also challenges posed by the epistemologies of knowledge which are inextricably linked to issues of equivalence, difference and comparability. Writers (Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995; Young, 2003a) contend that there are implications and limitations that are likely to arise from any attempt to combine epistemologies on the basis of a single set of criteria or to ignore the notion that there are boundaries that distinguish different disciplines and types of learning. Ensor (2003) argues that such intent implies the

erosion of three epistemological boundaries that can compromise curriculum. Such boundaries are identified between education and training; between academic and everyday knowledge; and between the different subjects (disciplines). Furthermore, the classification into levels in national frameworks and the building blocks of outcomes (standards) assumes that vocational and academic training are equivalent and comparable, as can be seen at work in qualifications frameworks such as in the New Zealand and South African contexts.

These arrangements of combining epistemologies, according to Ensor (2003), who writes from the South African context, make assumptions about the nature of knowledge and pedagogy. They equate the academic and vocational and draw no distinction between them. Such assumptions, according to critics (Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995) are underpinned by the notion that all knowledge forms are commensurable. In other words, "different forms of knowledge regardless of where they are taught, learned or exchanged, or how they are structured, can be placed in relations of equivalence with each other via the specification of generic competencies or outcomes" (Ensor, 2003, p. 229).

Ensor (2003) who draws from Basil Bernstein's theorizing, argues that knowledge forms are different and are distinctive in the ways in which they are selected and combined and the ways in which they draw upon and sustain, different sets of social relations. Moreover, according to Ensor (2003), while the qualifications framework is presented as providing a seamless route for knowledge to pass from site to site, the framework rests on provision which is separated into two broad sectors, which she suggests are fundamentally different in their symbolic structures and modes of social organization. She emphasizes that lines that distinguish these sectors do not only run vertically, as arguments in favour of integration suggest, but also horizontally.

Such assumptions are analyzed by Lester (1995), who writes in the British context regarding the developments in the national vocational awards offered alongside academic awards within the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). According to Lester (1995), "one of the most contentious issues raised by the pathway is that of comparability between levels" (p. 241). Lester (1995) also makes clear the problem in terms of horizontal and vertical abilities:

The problem takes on a slightly different perspective if academic levels are related to horizontal abilities rather than to either vertical knowledge

accumulation or studies on a linear or lineform-modular programme. Higher education and NVQ levels then become not competing ways of classifying vertical abilities but perpendicular axes against which achievements can be broadly and separately located (p. 245).

Lester argues, therefore, that attempting to make hard-and-fast rules about equivalences between levels is fraught with difficulty. Ensor (2003) concurs in arguing that such moves are laden with problems that hold the potential to impede the promotion of access or opportunity. In this regard, Lester (1995) strongly advises that while academic and vocational traditional can operate within the same programme, there is more to be gained from recognizing and reinforcing the differences between them than by attempting to force uneasy relationships. Lester (1995) also casts doubts on the “validity of creating structural relationships between two systems suggesting it is no more than an exercise in reifying the artificial distinction which fails to consider differences and overlaps between what the awards really represent” (p. 242).

Lester (2001) therefore surmises, and also warns, that despite the development of inclusive/integrative qualifications framework as “a holy grail” in recent years, “to aid understanding and progression and reduce unnecessary duplication in the qualifications market” (p.11). Lester (2001) also argues:

[They can] reduce choice, mitigate against valued but unconventional awards, and create tensions by imposing what are after all artificial notions of level and size. If the notion of level becomes a pervasive feature of the public perception of qualifications, it may also reduce the esteem in which lower-level awards are held, regardless of the fitness of purpose; in turn this has scope to lead to credential inflation both through occupations and professions raising the level of the qualifications they require (cf. Dore) and through individuals chasing awards to achieve a higher position on the qualifications ladder rather than for the intrinsic value of the award or the learning it represents (pp. 11-12).

Along this same line of argument, Blackmur (2004) concluded that,

The availability and quality of information required by labour markets that was provided by educational institutions, furthermore, may have left something that the qualifications classifications and associated regulatory processes that were ostensibly introduced to address any such deficiencies in the decentralized system have, in important respects been self -defeating” (p. 283).

In the main, these writers (Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995; Young, 2003a, 2003b) conclude that contrary to the assumptions of the NQF, both vertical and horizontal differences between types of knowledge are far from arbitrary and rest on fundamental differences.

These critiques are important in this research because “although the overcoming of divisions between academic and everyday knowledge, and between different fields and disciplines may be seen as an attempt to create an integrated system and abolish privilege and inequality, it could undermine the very basis on which knowledge is acquired and produced” (Young, 2003a, p. 234 ). Arguably, however, the decision on how these fundamental differences are applied in practice remains subjective. A major quandary for critics of qualifications frameworks is that there are no hard and fast rules, or formulae, prescription or blueprint to establish levels, equivalence, comparability and number of credits, and that there are no explicit universal descriptors of what is expected at different levels (Lester, 1995, 2001); and none that explain or prescribe how to interface learning and working.

This theorizing is significant in this research. Firstly because writers assert that in some national contexts, qualifications systems have (had) deficiencies (Blackmur, 2004; Lester, 2001). In dealing with these deficiencies, Lester (2001) suggests that overall the shortcomings of NQFs are not sufficient reasons to avoid their development. In their development, however, Blackmur (2004) suggests that “the conceptually weak foundations of the model cannot be so easily be brushed aside and that they are responsible for several major operational problems and difficulties especially in the international context” (p. 271). For example, in bridging the academic-vocational divide (interfacing learning and work), Lester (1995) advises “that there are relationships between the two is not denied but the relationships are presented as individual rather than structural: there is no suggestion that achievement of a particular level in one dimension implies the attainment of any given level in the other” (p. 245). Therefore, the best approach should be to allow candidates’ achievements to be recognized as to what they represent in terms of both occupational and broad intellectual competence, without prejudicing one against the other (Lester, 1995).

Secondly, these arguments on principles of classification, equivalence, difference and levels furnish a foundation for realistic thinking about the design, structure, policy objectives and operational procedures of national qualifications frameworks. As has been contended, the role for qualifications frameworks stem from reforms that are informed by the managerial discourse of measuring outcomes and interfacing learning and work. These theoretical accounts raise questions as to what extent these are considered in the determination of equivalence, comparability, assignment of credit

points, and the epistemologies of knowledge in the development of national qualifications frameworks. Driven by managerialism, the implications of such issues retreat into the background. Any exclusion of these arguments would be to deny the constellation of competing discourses which inevitably interfaces in the establishment of qualifications frameworks.

The issues exemplified above critically support the central tenet of this research that the need for change in qualifications systems and the nature of the change in the establishment of qualifications frameworks are informed by a constellation of competing discourses. The potential benefits of NQFs can be seen in the continuing growth of qualifications into a legitimate culture. NQFs are also thought of as playing vital roles such as regulatory, monitoring and communication roles in changing local and global/international practice and in adapting to new developments in education such as accountability and quality assurance. Consideration, however, ought to be given to the epistemologies of knowledge, principles of equivalencies, comparability and levels and difference in their establishment. Essentially, the theorizing in this section further points to the interfacing of the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment in the discussions on NQFs. The repeated reference to learning and assessment and the lack of a comprehensive discussion on the subject suggests the need for a better balance.

### **3.4 The Role of Qualifications in State Reform**

This section reviews how global, regional and national economic changes, the demands of international competitiveness, and “pressures by social movements for responses to take account of both difference and local needs” (Robertson, 1999, p. 122) have influenced the need for change and the nature of the change in the establishment of qualifications frameworks. Factors behind education reforms world-wide in the past decade show some commonalities which have implications for qualifications reform. Scheele (2004), for example, argues that “despite the great differences in the structuring of quality assurance systems, there is nevertheless substantial convergence” (p. 286).

#### **3.4.1 Concept of the State**

The concept of the State/Government in this thesis is based on the definition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000) “as a set of

institutions governing a particular territory, with the capacity to make laws regulating the conduct of the people within that territory and supported by revenue deriving from taxation" (p. 343). In a democracy, these institutions are produced by the consensual collective actions of individuals "in order to protect their general interests over use of resources and direction of public policy; and to make provisions for the common social goods such as education, defense and protection of property" (Marshall, 1994, p. 635). In the context of the new economic realism (managerialism, neoliberalisation, globalization, etcetera), there are advocacies, opponents and sceptics about the 'powerless state' (see Olssen, *et al.*, 2004 for further current debates on the issue). There are also those who argue that managerialism is a form of governance explained within Foucault's concept of "governmentality" (see Fitzsimons, 1999a, for that matter). This thesis takes a simplified position that the base/concept of qualifications begins at the national and regional levels; albeit these economic world orders.

### 3.4.2 Factors that Influence Qualifications Reform

In this regard, the role of the State in New Zealand and likewise a perceived role for OECS governments in education (and by implication qualifications reform) are therefore not unusual. Levin (2001), for instance, conducted comprehensive research which brings out the increasing role of State in education reform in the context of developed countries (England, New Zealand, the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Manitoba and the US state of Minnesota). In his research, he identifies factors which led to the significant expansion within education, which this thesis contends have had implications for qualifications and qualifications systems. Levin (2001) describes issues of demographics – (for example a significant increase in the number of youth after the Second World War), the link between economics and education, the introduction of human capital theory in the eighties, and the view of education as a salve to address many long-standing social ills such as reducing discrimination and crime.

Based on the work of other writers (such as Edwards & Usher, 2000; Olssen & Matthews, 1997), the issues identified by Levin (2001) are expanded in this research to include other salient factors in emerging literatures ( see Boston, 1991; Dearing, 1997; Snook, 1996, 1997). These influences are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1  
Summary of Worldwide Trends/Factors that  
Influence Education Reform and Have Implications for Qualifications Reform

- 
- Increasing economic integration & trade across the world (globalization/ neoliberalisation/internationalization)
  - The changing structure of the economies and labour markets
  - Resurgence of human capital theory
  - Individual/national/regional competitiveness
  - Changes in public, family and individual finances;
  - Reducing government funding and costs of education to governments
  - New communication and information technologies; proliferation of e-learning; internationalisation of curricula; borderless education, distance and offshore education
  - Increased migration/movement of skills, labour, services, knowledge
  - Widening access and participation; increasing demands; flexibility of learning
  - Demographic patterns and environmental changes
  - Increasing criticism of education as failing to deliver what is required
  - Changes in forms of governance such as collaboration among/participation of multiple stakeholders and increasing community input and more direct involvement in school decision making.
  - Analysis of education as similar to any other service (public vs private good)
  - The rise of commercialization, marketization, open markets and the portrayal of education as a commodity to be traded in the market place, free choice
  - Improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade/ interfacing learning and work
  - Enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills/competencies
  - Control over curriculum content and assessment
  - Increasing emphasis on quality assurance, outcomes (standards), accountability & assessment
  - New learners and modes of learning and new thinking about learning & assessment
  - The need for change is largely cast in technological and economic terms
  - Increased pressures for the education system to meet all these changes
- 

These factors, trends and developments (as summarized in Table 3.1 above) are not entirely discrete entities, and point to the constellation of discourses alluded to in this research. This constellation is conceived of as falling loosely into two groupings as the discourse of managerialism, and the discourse of education. From the table above, it stands to reason that both of these discourses have shaped the way in which education policy, including qualifications, is constructed and the way in which its substance is shaped (Ball, 1990, 1998; Edwards & Usher, 2000; Levin 2001; Olssen, *et al.*, 2004).

Increasingly, these influences, although regarded with “cautious optimism” (Edwards & Usher, 2000, pp. 4-5), are attributed to foremost factors such as neoliberal approaches, managerialism, new institutional economics, performativity, Public Choice Theory, and a resurgence of Human Capital Theory of the 1980s (Olssen, *et al.*, 2004). These discourses,

loosely described as managerialism, emanate from changing imperatives which are drawn mainly from globalization, neoliberalism, and the language of technology (Codd, 2003; Olssen, *et al.*, 2004). These terminologies have varied shades of meaning and technicalities that are beyond this thesis but, as has been contended, they are loosely grouped into the discourse of managerialism, drawn mainly from scientific management models and economics (Fitzsimons, 1999a).

New Zealand's interpretation of the discourses is discussed in the next section. This is necessary as it is contended that the NZQA was established out of these discourses.

### 3.4.3 New Zealand's Interpretation

Following on from Openshaw, Lee & Lee (1993), Hamer (2002) points out that prior to the 1980s, New Zealand was a social democratic welfare state with privately owned enterprises. Most educational services were in public ownership, egalitarianism was the prevailing ethos, and education was administrated by the State. Given worldwide social and economic pressures from the 1970s, however, New Zealand was among developed countries attempting to reshape themselves in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Boston, 1991; Boston, *et al.*, 1991, 1996; Hill, 2000; Kelsey, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002; Robertson, 1999). Radical restructuring was undertaken as a direct consequence of internal and external economic and social pressures.

Writers argue that the reasons for the State's push for education reform in New Zealand, and the new approaches being applied with such enthusiasm, were multiple (see for example Boston, *et al.* 1991, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Hood, 1998; Kelsey, 1995; Levin, 2001, Scott, 2001). Part of the problem, according to Hood (1998), lay in the magnitude of New Zealand's economic problems and the perception amongst policy makers that 'radical surgery' was needed to overcome the growing problems of international indebtedness and economic stagnation. As with many other countries, decisive factors in the New Zealand reform included fiscal imperatives, the basic ideological shift to the political Right and the quest for accountability of the bureaucracy and political executive (Boston, 1991; Boston, *et al.*, 1991, 1996; Scott, 2001; Snook *et al.*, 1999). Another reason was attributed to a group of reform-minded policy analysts in New Zealand (Boston, 1991). This group, according to Boston (1991), was familiar with theoretical literature of the new institutional economics. In this regard, the engine of argument for reform was promoted by two key agencies, namely the Treasury (or finance department), and the State Services

Commission (SSC) (Levin, 2001). Politically, however, Boston, (1991) underscores that these efforts may well have been futile had it not been for the Labour Government's ingenuousness to the Treasury's ideas and its enthusiasm to implement them even in the face of strong political and institutional resistance (see also Boston, *et al.*, 1996).

In what has been described in several terminologies, for example, the New Right philosophy or Economic Rationalization or neoliberalism, New Zealand experienced an application of a new model of governance – managerialism across all levels of the State. Boston (1991) attributes the theoretical underpinnings of the reform to three major sources: "Public Choice Theory", New Economics of organizations including principal-agency theory and transaction-cost analysis" and the "New Public Management" (Boston, 1991). Writers (Fitzsimons, 1997a; 1999a; 1999b; Fitzsimons & Roberts, 1999; Gordon, 1995, 1999) also argue that these theories were influenced by the resurgence of the Human Capital Theory of the 1970s. These market theories underpinned changes in all social areas including education (Boston, 1991; Codd, 1999, 2003; Fitzsimons, 1997a, 1999a, 1999b; Fitzsimons & Roberts, 1999; Gordon, 1995; Olssen & Matthews, 1997; Snook, 1996, 1997; Snook *et al.*, 1999).

The first, Public Choice Theory (PCT), has been referred to by various terms such as the Chicago School, rational choice theory, social choice theory, the economics of politics and the Virginia School. Its original implementation was in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. The central tenet of Public Choice Theory, according to Boston (1991), is that all human behaviour is dominated by self interest – individuals are rational utility maximizers. Another of its principles is that wherever feasible, the services provided by government agencies are privatized and are made as contestable as possible. One such example can be seen in the decoupling of policy formulation and implementation (Boston, 1991b; Hamer, 2002; Scott 2001). This concept of choice is manifested in the description of the framework (the Register) "as a large warehouse or supermarket, 8 shelves high, divided into aisles representing all the different skill groups in New Zealand" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 29). Based on the behavioural perspective of measurable standards/outcomes "every shelf stocks a range of relevant units for that subject at that level" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 29). As regards choice, the model has been described as a supermarket, and the seeker of qualifications as a shopper (Barrowman, 1996).

Following from Public Choice Theory (PCT), of which privatization and choice are key principles, the New Economics of Education includes Agency Theory (AT). Agency Theory rests on the notion that social and political life can be understood as a series of contracts (or agreed relationships) in which one party, referred to as the principal, enters into agreements with another party, referred to as the agent (Boston, 1991; Boston, *et al.*, 1996; Scott, 2001). One major implication of Agency Theory is in the redefinition of relationships among individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions (Boston, 1991; Scott, 2001). In accordance with contract theory, the agent undertakes to perform various tasks on behalf of the principal and in exchange, the principal agrees to reward the agent in a mutually acceptable way. There are varying reasons why a principal may seek out an agent. Possibilities include, "the principal lacks the skills, expertise, or specialized knowledge required to perform a task. Alternatively, the very nature of the task may demand a team effort" (Levin, 2001, 46). In the case of the NZQA, a good deal of Agency Theory, therefore, focuses on the NZQA or its agent monitoring quality assurance systems (moderation, accreditation, auditing) which are in place to ensure that providers comply with previously stated agreements. The NZQA therefore focuses on finding the most satisfactory way of redefining relationships through negotiations and consultations. The NZQA also focuses on writing and monitoring contracts in order to minimize the likelihood of violations resulting from opportunism on the part of the agent, which according to Boston can come about as a result of "shirking, deception, cheating and collusions" (1991, p. 5).

Transaction-cost analysis is also a part of the New Economics. It deals with evaluating the efficiency of alternative governance structures or institutional arrangements, for example, "the efficiency of government services over privatization" (Boston, 1991, p. 8). This efficiency and effectiveness are evaluated particularly in terms of associated costs (cost-benefit analysis). In the institutionalization of the NZQA, it can also be argued that some of these principles of transaction-cost analysis have been and are being applied. Prior to the establishment of NZQA, one assumption for instance, was that the administration of qualifications was not cost-effective because several agencies co-existed simultaneously under different identities (Barker, 1994, 1995; Barrowman, 1996; *The Hawke Report*, 1988; Ministerial Tertiary Lead Group, 1994; *Picot Report*, 1988; *Probine & Fargher*, 1987). Also, as with Public Choice Theory and Agency Theory, Transaction-cost analysis assumes that individuals are essentially self-interested (Boston, 1991; Hamer, 2002). It was assumed that with the NZQA and the NQF, learners would maximize the

opportunities provided by the NQF's ostensibly 'supermarket model' to suit their learning needs (Apple, 2004; Fitzsimons, 1999a). The NZQA (with its NQF and Register) would increase cost-efficiency and accountability by reducing the number of administrative agencies and addressing the perceived falling standards and raising mediocrity (Olssen & Matthews, 1997, p. 16).

The third theory, New Public Management (NPM), was the vehicle for the introduction of the other theoretical strands (Boston, 1991; Boston *et al.* 1991, 1996; Kelsey, 1995; Scott, 2001). This NPM has been characterized as having ushered in the free market economics, the liberalization of domestic market, downsizing of the government, narrowing monetary policy, deregulation of the labour market and fiscal restraints (Hamer 2002; Kelsey, 2003; Lauder, 1990; Robertson, 1999; Scott, 2001). According to Hamer (2002), this new approach "became a guardian against self interest and vested interest groups and signalled a radical shift away from the traditional social and economic philosophies that had previously characterized welfare state" (p. 30). Its central features are attributed to Taylorism, (named after Taylor – the founder of the international scientific management movement) (Boston, 1991). Essentially, then, the central features that have been identified by Boston (1991) as impacting on the institutionalization of the NZQA are identified in this thesis as:

- "An emphasis on management rather than policy, in particular a new stress on management skills in preference to technical or professional skills;
- A shift from the use of input controls and bureaucratic procedures and rules to a reliance on quantifiable output measures and performance targets;
- The devolution of management control coupled with the development of new reporting, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms;
- The disaggregation of large bureaucratic structures into quasi-autonomous agencies, in particular the separation of commercial from non-commercial functions and policy advice from policy implementation;
- A preference for private ownership, contracting out, and contestability in public service provision;
- The imitation of certain private sector management practices such as the use of short-labour contracts, the development of corporate plans, performance agreements and mission statements, the introduction of performance-linked remuneration systems, the development of new management information systems and a greater concern for corporate image;
- A general preference for monetary incentives rather than non-monetary incentives, such as ethics, ethos, and status; and

- A stress on cost-cutting efficiency, and cutback management” (pp. 9-10).

These features were the basis for extending the frontiers of consumerism into all social areas including education, giving rise to the need for quality and quality assurance (Basu & Wright, 2003; Beckford, 2002). Underpinning this New Public Management model is the idea that public and private organizations can be managed in a similar fashion (Hamer, 2002; Scott, 2001; Snook, 1996, 1997). For instance, one of the dominant themes is that education systems should be transforming into systems of market-driven education (Beckford, 2002; Whitty, 2002; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Harrison (2004) explains that “a market arrangement uses competition, choice, the price mechanism, and the profit motive to provide incentives and co-ordinate behaviour” (p. 3). A free market policy requires freedom of entry into and exit from the provision of education services. The same rules apply for all competitors. Marginson (1997), for instance, argues that consumers must be able to choose between autonomous suppliers.

It is in this sense that markets and quasi-markets are created in the education system, so that learners, who are called consumers in market rhetoric, can exit from this type of service, just as they would exit if dissatisfied with an item or service produced in the private sector and sold on the market (Marginson, 1995, 1997). Nuttall (1994) also explains that in this market theory, it is assumed that learners (referred to as consumers) will be able to make informed choices about the services they receive, and producers (usually referred to as training providers) would respond to the decisions of citizens in a way that private producers respond to customers in the market. The notion is that knowledge is not only structured to be economically productive but “it in itself becomes wholly a commodity under market conditions” (Halsey, Lauder, Brown & Wells, 1997, p. 23).

These arguments from the discourse of managerialism are based on what they believe are the distinct advantages that markets have over State regulation. Tension is evident in what several writers (Marginson, 1997; Tooley, 1994; White, 1994; Wringe, 1994) have presented as the limits of the market in relation to education. Writers (White, 1994; Wringe, 1994 for example) argue that in some situations, the unrestricted operation of free market can possibly be unbeneficial; and that market transactions are sometimes beyond the means of some individuals (Wringe, 1994). Writers suggest that in an open

education market, certain activities are inherently detrimental to the public interest or subversive to social institutions. This situation comes about since some individuals are in no position to judge their own needs, or to judge the quality of goods and services on offer (Marginson, 1997; Tooley, 1994; White, 1994; Wringle, 1994). According to Wringle (1994), they are “thus dependent on the commitment of the supplier rather than their own acumen to safeguard their interests” (p. 107). Arguably, qualifications/certification is one such commodity. Regarding offerings and awards, there may be “transactions based on fraud and deception, agreements that interfere with the working of the market mechanism itself” (Wringle, 1994, p. 107). These include the sale of certificates and qualifications “which are grossly disadvantageous to non-beneficiaries” (Wringle, 1994, p. 107). Although the market model is supposed to promote transparency as it relates to consumer choice, Marginson (1997) argues that not all learners are expected to have the perfect foresight to make rational decisions based on perfect knowledge or understanding of the situation as market theory implies. Choice therefore becomes a misnomer for the vast majority of people, since the market cannot sustain equality and freedom to all users (Marginson, 1997). Another set of difficulties has to do with the under-emphasis of education theory itself and the social capital theory. According to Olssen & Matthews (1997), however, the market puts competition and co-operation at loggerheads since a market orientation to social policy such as education establishes individualism and competition ahead of personal development and any community (Olssen & Matthews, 1997).

These theoretical assertions can be applied to qualifications frameworks and reasons for their establishment. In New Zealand’s interpretation, the establishment of the NZQA as a crown agency, for instance, has been described as contradicting free market principles because, in an open market, State intervention in the market is unwarranted (Clark, 1998; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Grace, 1990; Marginson, 1995, 1997; Snook, 1997; Snook *et al.*, 1999). Within this duality of market perspective and state intervention there are some distinct advantages in the establishment of qualifications frameworks. For one, the learner, as a user or purchaser of education as a commodity in a market place, is given the opportunity (access) to make choices from a wide range of options among varied providers (Philips, 1998, 2003). National qualifications frameworks have the advantage of regulating and monitoring the qualifications market to minimize fraud and deception; and yet protect choice for the qualifications seeker (Wringle, 1994). In the open market system, the qualifications framework allows individuals a greater degree of freedom and

control over qualifications while knowing full well that there is State intervention and accountability through a regulated body that has set outcomes based on a results oriented approach (Reay & Wiliam, 2001). All these views have had some influence on education policies, which tend to be mainly economy-led (Fitzsimons, 2004; Olssen, *et al.*, 2004).

Another of the discourses grouped under managerialism is that of the Human Capital theory. Gordon (1995), in the New Zealand context, argues the theories (PCT, AT, NPM) were also influenced by a resurgence of the Human Capital Theory of the 1970s. In other countries as well, several OECD surveys identify human capital development as a crucial issue in economic development (OECD, 1989, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996). Advocates of human capital theory posit that “the most efficient path to national development of any society lies in the improvement of its population that is its human capital” (Fagerlind & Saha 1983, p. 19). The proponents of this view conceive education to be a site of investment in human capital (Marshall, 1995). Human capital theory assumes that “education develops cognitive attributes in individuals; these attributes are carried by those individuals into the workplace, and in the workplace the human capital augments skill and productivity, and thereby creates additional wealth” (Marshall, 1995, p.6). One major part of this debate which is not given attention here is whether education is seen as a private good or a public good (see Clarke, 1998; Grace, 1990, 1998; Marginson, 1997, for example).

When applied to qualifications and qualifications frameworks, Hodgson (2000), for example, posits that the reform of qualifications systems may be viewed as part of “the international human capital debate which uses evidence of broad-ranging economic, demographic, cultural and social change to argue for increasing participation in post-compulsory education and training as a way of increasing the skill-base of the working population” ( p. 52).

The most important trend in the resurgence of human capital theory is an attempt to bridge the gap across the academic and vocational divide, and an attempt to advocate continuous (lifelong) learning (OECD, 1989). One of the NZQA’s legislative tasks, for example, is that of bridging the academic-vocational divide. In the discourse of human capital, there are trends to suggest also that the lines of demarcation are not always obvious. The words ‘skill’, ‘competence’, ‘knowledge’, ‘training’ can be found to have

varied meanings in the literature and in practice. In some instances 'competencies' 'skill', 'training' and 'knowledge' are used synonymously, in "splendid isolation", or compounded with 'multi' 'flexible', 'cross', 'formation', 'transferable', 'generic', 'high-level', 'technological', etcetera (OECD, 1989). In some instances, competencies and skills, for example, are often treated as the prefecture of academics and training. It has been observed in the literature that many countries are implementing broader or more general forms of education which integrate more academic competencies. Also, some forms of vocational education are moving closer to academic or general education, and education and training may have started to converge (Skilbeck, *et al.*, 1994). These concepts are now much regarded as a function of education (Skilbeck, *et al.*, 1994).

One key implication of this review for establishment of qualifications frameworks is how they affect the perceived roles as were previously discussed in the section on qualifications frameworks (see Boudier, 2003; Ensor, 2003; Granville, 2003; Lester, 1995; Raffe, 2003; Young, 2003b). The enduring debate of vocational, academic, and technical perspectives is one of the main sources of tension for qualifications frameworks as they relate to the principles of levels, difference and equivalence, in the epistemologies of knowledge. As regards the nature of the change in qualifications systems, developments such as credit systems, modularity, greater inter-disciplinary initiatives, and equivalencies call for responses in order to meet this component. It therefore stands to reason that in promoting change in qualifications frameworks, and also the nature of the change (to establish equivalencies, difference, transferability, portability, interfacing of work and learning) to meet the demands of the managerial discourse, such competing discourses become a site of possible tension.

### **3.5 Conceptualising Quality Assurance in Education**

It has also been contended that one linchpin towards quality assurance has been the restructuring of qualifications systems and the development of qualifications frameworks (Commonwealth, 2002; Leong & Wong, 2004, Stella, 2004). Brennan (1997) argues that " 'quality' has become pervasive in modern society, almost a totem of postmodernism and mass culture" (p. 2). Its importation into the field of education can be elucidated in terms of the paradigm shift in education and new models and linkages to the discourse of managerialism (in the previous section) that are challenging educationalists to move beyond the parameters and confines of national perspectives towards regional and international issues (Craft, 2004; Harvey & Green, 1993; Peace Lenn,

1994; Schapper & Mayson, 2004). As a consequence, much of the literature on 'quality' and use of the term in education (standards, audits, for example) reflects contemporary management theory as developed in the manufacturing and service industry (Brennan, 1997). Significantly, a lot of this terminology, language, and rhetoric of managerialism have been imported into education (see Apple, 2004; Brennan, 1997; Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003).

The NZQA, for instance, contends that all its responsibilities centre on 'quality' as is directed by the New Zealand Education Amendment Act 1990. From its inception, the organization's preoccupation with quality is underscored in one of its policy documents, *Designing the National Qualifications Framework* (1991). In this document the NZQA (1991a) explains:

Processes will be devolved and *quality* will become the responsibilities of the providers. The Qualifications Authority monitoring or auditing role which ensures that *quality* processes have been followed and *quality* learning outcomes achieved... Underpinning these safeguards will be the national qualifications framework which will provide the essential reference points for the management and audit of *quality* delivery and assessment [Italics added to highlight the word] (p. 8).

In the document, *Briefing Papers for the Incoming Government* (1993d), the NZQA defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs ... in brief, it is the meeting of the requirements of fitness for purpose" (p. 12). According to the NZQA (1993d), "it is customers who define the purpose" (p. 12). In another of its policy documents, the NZQA (1993a) elucidates:

there is a general agreement that quality is present when specified requirements are met. Because requirements rarely remain the same, future requirements also need to be anticipated and met. If quality is the meeting of requirements, then quality can only be measured if these requirements are known and defined. By defining requirements, the standards to be achieved are set" (p. 6).

It has also been found in this research that quality is also frequently alluded to as a global phenomenon (See Basu & Wright, 2003; Beckford, 2002). The NZQA, in its Statement of Intent (2004/2005-2007/2008) and several of its policy documents, makes it clear that it aims to meet global/international quality standards. Basu & Wright (2003), for instance, contend that "competitors are global, standards are world class and organizations that fail to meet world-class performance will soon be found out" (p. 12).

Notwithstanding the apparent global awareness and courses of action taken (such as the International Standards Organization (ISO) 9000 series) to implement quality assurance in education and other fields, the notion of quality has become debatable with several models and perspectives being espoused (Brennan, de Vries, & Williams, 1997; Ratcliff, 2003; Scheele, 2004). According to Pyzdek (2000), more than 400 Total Quality Management (TQM) tools and techniques and awards (including the Malcolm Bridge Award and the European Foundation of Quality) are in existence.

This preponderance of notions of quality and quality assurance approaches is the first major challenge to the interpretation and application of the notion of quality. In the field of management, for instance, Beckford (2002) identifies five key challenges which might also apply in the field of education, namely “economic, social, environmental, service challenge, [and the] problem of quality” (p. 3). A discussion of these challenges is beyond this thesis. A review of the concept of ‘quality’ is of significance, however, because the term is needed to provide an indication of when or how the goal of quality is attained via qualifications frameworks.

One of the problems with the notion of quality is the variance in the definition, interpretation, purpose, targeted reasons for quality assurance and contrasting strategies to accomplish the objectives (Barblan, 1997; Basu & Wright, 2003; Brennan, 1997; Craft, 1994; Donaldson, 1994; Harman, 1994; Harvey & Green, 1993; Green, 1994; Peace Lenn, 1994; Ratcliff, 2003; Strydom, Zulu & Murray, 2004; Woodhouse, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004). In the field of education, Green (1994), in her rationalization of ‘quality’, recognized the theoretical and conceptual gap between the practical dimension and what has been conceptualised as quality in education. She argues that while much has been written about quality in education, “little has been written about the concept itself” (Green, 1994, p. 170). The following quote substantiates this rationalization:

Quality ... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know it even exists? If one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for practical purposes it does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others. Oh but what's the betterness? So round and round you

go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction ... what the hell is quality? What is it? (Pirsig, 1974, p.179).

This excerpt further illustrates what Green (1994) describes as the paradox of having an intuitive understanding of what quality means but difficulty in articulating its meaning. The assertions by Green (1994), Beckford (2002) and Pirsig (1974) support the contention in this thesis that the terms 'quality' and 'quality assurance' feature in the literature as ambiguous concepts, and that the notion of 'quality' consists of a range of definitions, principles, and meanings that are relative to the perspectives held by the proponents (see also Aloni, 2001; Ashton, 1996; Broadfoot, 1996; Donaldson, 1994; Gipps, 1984; L'Ecuyer & Peace Lenn, 1994). It is contended in this research therefore that such variations are bound to intensify implications for any qualifications framework charged with the responsibility for quality and quality assurance roles, and become a site of tension at the level of practice.

Harvey & Green (1993) suggest five key components, in which there are potential overlaps, to deal with quality. Given the inevitability of change in today's societies, these five have been extended to include six in this thesis. Watty (2003, p. 214) summarizes these aspects of quality:

- "Exception: distinctiveness, embodied in excellence, passing a set of minimum standards
- Perfection: zero defects, getting things right the first time (focus on approaches rather than inputs and outputs)
- Fitness for purpose relates to a quality for a purpose
- Value for money: a focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs. A populist notion of quality government
- Transformation: a qualitative change; education is about enhancing the qualities of the learner as opposed to visible quantifiable aspects for the consumer. It includes concepts of enhancing and empowering: going through a process of learning, and not just outcomes".

The sixth dimension used in this thesis is

- Appropriateness of existing practice to changing circumstances as a result of change, expansion and diversity (Brennan, 1997; Craft, 2004; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Peace Lenn, 1994; Scheele, 2004; Stella, 2004; Woodhouse, 2004).

Given all these variations in the notions of quality and these competing discourses which have emphasized the multi-faceted and complex nature of quality and quality assurance,

this thesis contends that these are bound to have ramifications for monitoring at the level of practice. To assist with the thinking on quality, however, in the establishment of qualifications frameworks, these aspects of quality are not an end in themselves, but a qualifications framework is an overarching mechanism which aims at qualitative changes in student learning and transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993; Horsburgh, 1999).

It is surmised in this thesis that the aspects of quality manifest themselves at two main levels in the education system, namely the micro and macro levels (Foucault, 1977; Hoy, 1986; Olssen *et al.*, 2004). Some of the aspects of quality summarized previously are thought of as taking place at the micro level (curriculum, teaching, student learning and assessment). At the macro level, quality is about value for money - a focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs, which is the populist notion of quality government (Watty, 2003). These are demonstrated "by concentrating on matters which are largely management preserves: resources, policies, procedures" (Brennan, 1997, p.4); while at the micro level the concept of quality is about student transformation (Horsburgh, 1999; Woodhouse, 2004) and "student experience and achievement" (Shah, 1997, p. 208).

Shah (1997), for example, asserted that student experience and achievement have made the education discourses "become more visible, more important and more costly to society" (p. 208). One explanation is that given the wave of reform driven by managerialism with principles of accountability and transparency, "education systems in most countries have ceased to be sacrosanct territory" (Lowe, 1995, p. 9). At issue according to Lowe (1995) is that "traditionally, if some students did badly, it was their fault or due to the rules of the game whereby in schools, as in life, there are inevitably winners and losers" (p. 9). In the managerial discourse the notions of quality and quality assurance are seen as ways to monitor, regulate, and control learner and institutional performance (Barrow, 1999; Horsburgh, 1999; Lowe, 1995; see also OECD, 1995).

Thus far, the theorizing on quality reveals several variations on the notion of quality and emphasizes the multi-faceted and complex nature of quality and quality assurance that are bound to have ramifications for monitoring and evaluation at the level of educational practice. It stands to reason that the macro and micro processes suggest that "the context

of implementation is to be differentiated from the context of policy formation" and could possibly be a source of tension (Olssen *et. al*, 2004, p. 23).

### **3.6 The Accountability Debate**

Given the dominant discourse of managerialism, a national qualifications framework becomes the vehicle through which accountability is addressed (Richardson, 1999). Richardson (1999) observes that "the development of quality assurance systems to underpin the attainment of qualifications was central to the realisation of greater accountability by each provider for the quality of ... programmes" (p. 1). One of the reasons for change and the nature of the change in qualifications frameworks can therefore be attributed to a performance culture and 'the accountability movement' in contemporary society derived from managerialism, which clamours for transparency in all sectors of government activity and at all levels – international, regional and local (OECD, 1995; Richardson, 1999).

The establishment of qualifications frameworks, as part of the 'accountability movement' is therefore part of the wider discourse of education. Ranson (2003) defines accountability as "a social practice pursuing particular purposes, defined by distinctive relationships and evaluative procedures"(p. 462). Seemingly, however, there is a trend towards the prevailing market accountability, as an approach imported into the field of education (see Cooper, Fusarelli & Randall, 2004; Kirby & Stetcher, 2004; Macpherson, 1998; Olssen, 2002). Kirby & Stecher (2004), for instance, describe accountability as "the practice of holding educational systems responsible for the quality of their products - students' knowledge, skills, and behaviours" (p.1). Codd (1999) argues that the emphasis on accountability in education discourses has had irresistible appeal to those seeking compliance, control and input-output efficiency (Codd, 1999, 2003). Zepke (2000) also argues that this pressure for accountability becomes part of transparency and the more open working environment, as part of the drive to bring schools into closer partnership with the communities which they serve. Accountability is also seen as "the price of increased autonomy" (Harvey & Newton, 2004, p. 151). From the varying perspectives on the accountability discourse, Bell & Cowie's (2001a, 2001b, 2001c) assertion sums up well the discussion in the literature; that is, accountability has been associated with a multiplicity of functions and roles (such as for professional development and school improvement).

Essentially, the assertions in the literature also corroborate Vidovich & Slee's (2000) postulate that accountability is more complex and contested than the commonsense understanding of answerability or responsibility would suggest. There are questions of accountability to whom, accountability by whom and accountability for what. The answers to the questions - who is accountable for what, and to whom - also depend on why accountability, and how accountability (Nuttall, 1994; Ranson, 2003). It is this interrelatedness that is of concern to this thesis, as it further advances the notion of the range of competing discourses as a site of tension in the underlying reasons for the establishment of qualifications frameworks.

Harvey & Newton (2004), sum up three major reasons for accountability in education which, because of their scope, impact on the establishment of qualifications frameworks. Accountability is needed for budgetary reasons; these are "the cost of massification, the need to account for and prioritize public expenditure" (p. 151). These give rise to the pressure to ensure value for both public and private monies. This is the reason, they argue, that within higher education there is pressure to identify clear lines of accountability within higher education systems. A second aspect of accountability, according to the writers, is to learners; that is, assurance that the programme of study is designed and administered properly. Accountability is necessary to ensure that an appropriate educational experience is both promised and delivered and that service is comparable as it relates to quantity and quality of teaching, study facilities, learning and pastoral support. The writers argue further that evaluations can be used to monitor whether students are getting an acceptable level of service. A third aspect of accountability is that of the generation of public information about the quality of institutions and programmes (Harvey & Newton, 2004). This information might be used for allocation of funding.

The use of qualifications as a means of control over unrestrained growth in education is also attributed to the accountability movement (Barrow, 1999; Harvey & Newton, 2004). New technological forms of delivery, an increasingly unrestricted market, such as the internationalization of curricula, transnational education, extraterritorial provision and collaborative provision (see Craft, 2004, for instance) are all developments that are seemingly out of control (Harvey & Newton, 2004; Zepke, 2000). Arguably, this control aspect of accountability addresses compliance and comparability of standards. It also

addresses attempts to benchmark standards and establish equivalencies (Blackmur, 2004; Scheele, 2004). Qualifications frameworks function as regulatory or monitoring bodies to check that preferences and policies are being acknowledged, complied with and implemented (Blackmur, 2004); possibly with an anticipated outcome of student transformation (NICATS, 2003a, 2003b; NZQA 2004a, 2004b). Harvey & Newton (2004) point out that this control is possible “through financial controls or ministerial decree but increasingly quality monitoring and accreditation are being used to restrict expansion” (p. 151).

In the New Zealand context, however, Codd (1999) links accountability to a “culture of distrust” (p. 45). He contends that “many of the policies that frame and focus their educational practices have been predicated on the assumption that people are motivated by self-interest and therefore cannot be trusted to serve a common good” (p. 45). In this “culture of distrust”, Codd (1999) points out that “in pursuit of greater accountability, government policies have produced systems of managerial surveillance and control that have fostered within educational institutions a culture in which trust is no longer taken to be the foundation of professional ethics” (p. 45). Resnick & Resnick (1992) also support this notion and expand the notion of the culture of distrust as one of the reasons for accountability in schools in the US. They point out that “as schooling became a mass undertaking in which the people involved did not know each other personally, and often mistrusted one another, a need arose for public, non-personal knowledge of how well this vast system was performing” (Resnick & Resnick, 1992 p. 53).

In this accountability question, internationally, governments have alighted upon assessment, and standards based assessment in particular, as a key mechanism in the accountability process (Bell & Cowie, 2001a, 2001b; Broadfoot, 1996a, 1996b; Torrance, 1997; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002). Although their profiles vary (Crooks, 2003), assessment is used not just to provide neutral indicators of performance or for transformation in the learner, but also in the hope of upgrading the entire education system (curriculum, teaching and academic performance) (Resnick & Resnick, 1992, p. 56). According to Resnick & Resnick (1992), in imposing public accountability programmes, of which assessment is chief, it is the intention of State education departments and legislatures to influence what is taught and the standards of performance. The intent is that results should show whether the programme or course is meeting its goals and objectives. Regardless of the form or frequency of assessment,

this power of assessment to influence the behaviours of educationalists is precisely what makes them potent tools as an accountability measure (see Bell & Cowie, 2001a; Blackmore, 1988; Broadfoot, 2001). The wider social context of assessment as an accountability measure implies that assessment influences classroom behaviour as it is perceived that high scores, and by implication numbers certificated, are reflective of the classroom teacher and the school or institution as well (Broadfoot, 1996b; Resnick & Resnick, 1992).

The foregoing arguments on accountability are by no means exhaustive, but implicitly they continue to point to a range of competing discourses alluded to in this thesis, and likely sources of the tension between the discourses of education theory and managerialism. Possible sources of tension around the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications frameworks might stem from the interrelatedness of the questions of accountability for whom, by whom, for what, and why accountability (Ranson, 2003; Vidovich & Slee, 2000). The 'how' of accountability implies a set of relationships within and outside the discourse of education with critical questions in the form of relations between an institution's public responsibility, its educational purpose and its internal mechanisms (Cheong Cheng, 2003). In the discourse of education, there are critical concerns (see Barrow, 1999; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Horsburgh, 1999; Linn, 2002; Nuttall, 1994, for example) as to whether the purposes of accountability are essentially:

- one of control – to safeguard public funds and improve their management and use; or
- to exert control over a growing area of public expenditure; or
- positive and constructive to guide policy, to strengthen arguments for, and direct expenditure on education;

or whether the purposes of accountability are germane in attempting to maintain standards, improve performance of the learner and promulgate student transformation?

Of major concern, which remains to date for educationalists, is that the quality of learning, the process of learning and assessment and the transformation of student learning experience - although inextricably linked in these discourses - appear to be superficial (Blackmur, 2004; Brennan, 1997; Codd, 2003; Crooks, 2003; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Horsburgh, 1999; Schaper & Mayson, 2004; Scheele, 2004). What emerges from this review is the dominance of the discourse of managerialism.

### **3.7 Quality Assurance as a Process: Standards, Accreditation, Moderation, Quality Audit**

The previous section has illustrated that there are many common threads associated with the need for quality and quality assurance; and that similar issues emerge, independently and in different countries (Blackmur, 2004; OECD, 1995; Scheele, 2004; Stella, 2004; Watty, 2003; Woodhouse, 1999, 2004). In this respect their practices embody quality assurance with varied emphases. One can infer, based on analyses undertaken for this thesis that:

Quality assurance may relate to a programme, an institution, or a whole ... education system. In each case, quality assurance is all of those attitudes, objects, actions, and procedures which, through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic [and professional] standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by the programme, institution or system, make this known to the educational community and the public at large ... for the subsequent improvement of the educational entity (Woodhouse, 1992; in Peace Lenn, 1997, p. 127).

When applied to the role of qualifications frameworks in the quality assurance process, specifically in the case of the NZQA, quality is assured through the NQF and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. The building block of the NQF is the standard, and the building block of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications is the outcomes based approach. With these set mechanisms (NQF and Register), quality assurance is pursued through a series of systematic quality checks, during which the NZQA or the monitoring agency ensures that the set criteria are being fulfilled.

Brennan (1997) observed that the debates about quality had recently been extended to address questions of standards. Quality and quality assurance are monitored through a clear setting of standards (affirmed through course approval), registration, accreditation, assessment and the moderation of results and quality audits (NZQA, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b). Minimum standards set by a monitoring or inspecting agency such as the NZQA or its agents have to be attained for a course, programme or qualification to be considered of quality. One key mechanism is that of auditing. Auditing is carried out by the NZQA to check conformity and compliance to the agreed terms by the learning institution. Quality becomes the result of scientific control; it is conformance/compliance to standards/outcomes (Green, 1994; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Idrus, 2003; Jessup, 1991, 1995). There is the inference that "quality is improved if standards are raised" (Green, 1994, p. 170).

The use of standards “draws attention to outcomes” (Brennan, 1997, p.7), which is usually regarded as part of the debate in the quality assurance process. Such outcomes focus upon the characteristics of students rather than on processes of teaching and learning which they experience as learners (Brennan, 1997; Codd, 2003; Harvey & Newton, 2004).

In the case of the NZQA, standards and outcomes are clearly the building blocks of the NQF and the Register, respectively. These standards/outcomes have to be clearly defined for the successful implementation of this approach (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Jessup, 1995; Mitchell, 1995; L’Ecuyer & Peace Lenn, 1994; Priestley, 1999). New Zealand is not the only country that uses the standards-based approach for ensuring quality (see Ellis, 1995; Jessup, 1995; Lowe, 1995; Stanton, 1995; Steadman, 1995, for example). In an OECD (1995), it is demonstrated that from the 1980s, policy makers and practitioners in several countries have been showing unprecedented interest in the setting and evaluation of standards. The United Kingdom (which has occupational standards for National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications), and other countries and organizations also exemplify the use of this approach. This approach is also being used in Australia, England, France, Ontario, and the United States, among other countries (OECD, 1995).

Some of the reasons why the standards based approach was pursued by the New Zealand government have also been identified in the concerns of other governments (OECD, 1995). Some of the concerns that have led to the introduction of the standards-based approach to learning and assessment are revealed in the findings of ten case studies of different countries (among which four were federal and six were unitary states) reported on in 1995 by the OECD. New Zealand was not among those countries case studied.

Based on the OECD case study findings, a first reason for the introduction of the standards based approach to learning and assessment is the ‘high rate of failure’, the perception of under-achievement and “the unpalatable truth” (Lowe, 1995, p. 9) that many school leavers were virtually unemployable for lack of even minimal academic or vocational qualifications. A second reason is a conviction, despite the lack of evidence that standards were dropping. Thirdly, if standards had not fallen, there is the perception that they had failed to keep abreast of new social and labour market

expectations and are not high enough to meet the imperatives of a changing world. Fourthly, the results of the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) and IAEP (International Assessment of Educational Progress) were a shock for some countries. The performance of their students was poor when compared to rival and successful trading countries. Fifthly, according to the OECD, some simply say standards are not high enough (Lowe, 1995). The benefits and limitations of the outcomes (standards) based approach are discussed in Chapter Four as part of the discourse of education (under the criterion-referenced approach).

Another key pillar in the quality assurance process, internationally as well as in the New Zealand context, is accreditation (see Barrow 1999; Scheele, 2004; Woodhouse, 2003, for example). Harvey (2004) describes accreditation as the establishment or reinstatement of the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme (i.e. composite of modules) or module of study. There are several dimensions to accreditation, which may be a potential source of difficulty at the implementation level:

Accreditation may be focussed on inputs, process, or outputs or any combination of these. Programme accreditation tends to focus on inputs such as staffing, programme resources and curricula design and content. Sometimes it addresses the teaching process and the level of student support. Occasionally, programme accreditation explores outcomes such as graduate abilities and employability. In some cases, the medium of delivery might be the key focus, especially when it differs from the norm ... Institutional accreditation tends to focus on the overall infrastructure, especially the physical space, along with the information technology (IT), and library resources and the staffing. It might address this from the point of view of the overall student learning experience. In addition institutional accreditation might focus on financial arrangements and viability, governance and regulation and administrative support. Where an institution offers distance or online learning, the medium of delivery might be a focus of accreditation procedures (Harvey, 2004, pp. 209-210).

The NZQA's (1993a) model adds to these dimensions in its attempts to differentiate among "accreditation of providers", "group accreditation", "general accreditation" and "unit accreditation" (pp. 39-40).

In his comprehensive analysis of methods and mechanisms of accreditation, Harvey (2004) argues that although accreditation is distinct from audit, assessment and external examining, there is a degree of overlap in the object, focus, rationale and methods of these different external processes:

Accreditation involves a set of procedures designed to gather evidence to enable a decision to be made about whether the institutions or programmes should be granted accredited status. The onus is on the applicants to prove their sustainability; that they fulfil minimum criteria. Methods by which this evidence is gathered overlap with methods used in audits, assessments and external examining. The component methods include self-assessments, document analysis, scrutiny of performance, indicators, peer visits, inspections, specially constituted panels, delegated responsibility to internal panels often via proxy entrusted to external examiners or advisors, stakeholder surveys (such as student satisfaction surveys, alumni and employer surveys), direct intervention (such as direct observation of classroom teaching or grading or student work) (p. 211).

Notwithstanding the several dimensions, three other nuances are associated with accreditation:

First accreditation is a process applied to applicant organizations. Second “accreditation” is the label that institutions and programmes may acquire as a result of the accreditation procedures. Third, underpinning the first two, accreditation is an “abstract notion of a formal authorizing power” (Haakstad, 2001, p. 77) ... enacted via official decisions about recognition (the accreditation process). It is this underpinning abstraction that gives accreditation its legitimacy (Harvey, 2004, pp. 211).

Based on the varied notions and nuances of accreditation (which drew on the experiences of academics and managers in Britain, the United States and Canada), Harvey (2004) points out that while accreditation decisions are, or at least should be, based on transparent, agreed predefined standards of criteria, not all accreditation criteria are as transparent as they might be. The main thrust for accreditation is increasingly fuelled by the “new public management ideology” which requires institutions “to demonstrate accountability for public funds”. Failure to meet accreditation standards can result in non-accreditation or “de-accreditation” (Harvey, 2004, p. 210). According to Harvey (2004), “although accreditation involves compliance and direct accountability, its main function is to maintain control of the sector and programmes offered” (p. 210). Therefore, Harvey (2004) argues that “improvement is a spin-off from the accreditation processes, which some agencies emphasize more than others” (p. 210).

Another vital aspect of the quality assurance process that is used to increase validity and reliability is moderation. According to the NZQA (1993d) moderation is “a process for ensuring consistency of assessment with the required standard” (p. 38). Harlen (1994) describes moderation as the “procedures which have been devised in order to reduce

sources of error ... whilst at the same time preserving validity of assessment as required for quality in assessment" (p. 16). The sources of error include "the tasks undertaken by students, the differences in interpretations of marking schemes and the intrusion of irrelevant contextual information of making judgments" (Harlen, 1994, p. 16). An initial categorization of moderation is described by Harlen (1994, p. 16) as:

- (i) Those concerned essentially with adjustment of outcome of assessment to improve fairness for groups and individuals;
- (ii) Those concerned with the process of arriving at fair assessments for groups and individuals, which will in some cases, extend to opportunities to learn as well as to be assessed.

The distinction between (i) and (ii) is classified as the distinction between quality control and quality assurance (Harlen, 1994). In the managerial model, "quality control is the process of weeding out the imperfect product, meaning those which fall outside of tolerance limits" (Harlen, 1994, p. 17). Quality assurance on the other hand, "constantly monitors the steps at arriving at the product and in making sure that all processes are optimally carried out and, theoretically prevents imperfect products" (Harlen, 1994, p. 17). Harlen (1994) argues further that, although useful in the assessment context, there is more interaction between the impact of process and the product, for example "the discussion on possible change to an assessment outcome during a moderation process can have an impact on the process of arriving at future decisions" (p. 17). Other caveats highlighted include "moderation procedures of quality assurance or quality control are used to improve the essentially imperfect process of assessment, but themselves vary in efficiency, and in other important features such as cost" (Harlen, 1994, p. 18).

In the New Zealand context, Strachan (1996) argues that moderation is usually "conceived in terms of its primary purpose: achieving comparability of judgement between two independent assessors" (p. 1). Strachan (1996) is one of the authors who has been instrumental in outlining macro and micro views of how moderation fitted into the New Zealand qualifications framework quality assurance processes. Beyond the primary purpose, potential benefits of moderation according to Strachan (1996) include:

Establishing and raising standards; illuminating a broad range of curriculum objectives; opportunities for continuous improvement, benchmarking and identification of best practice; production of effective resources; professional development for teachers; and optimizing returns from resources invested in moderation (p. 1).

Strachan (1996) argues, however, that the potential of moderation to “provide context for highly effective, on-going professional development, with synergies flowing on to learning, pedagogy, curriculum and assessment” requires investment. The lack of investment can be detrimental. He explains:

And failure to invest will inevitably repeat the past as it results in cost constraints which will inhibit realisation of added value potential. The focus will continue to be on costs rather than benefits, credibility over quality, habit over innovation, fragmentation over integration and synergy. Only if the potential for extended educational benefits is recognised and planned, managed, and funded accordingly can this opportunity be realised (p. 9).

Of significance to the quality assurance process, moderation appears to be limited to the comparability of judgement among assessors. Strachan (1996) underscores, however, that if moderation criteria are restricted to focus on comparability of judgement, potential added-value which can be derived from moderation will be curtailed.

Given the previous review on the discourse of managerialism, it is evident from this review on quality assurance that these principles of the quality assurance process, particularly in the case of the NZQA, are clearly drawn from the discourse of managerialism. Harvey (2004), for instance, concludes that accreditation is yet another layer in the discourse of managerialism which is alongside assessment, quality audit and other forms of standards and output monitoring. He argues that these managerial processes continue to bite into academic autonomy and undermine the skills and experience of educators. Barrow (1999) argues that “such developments simultaneously mobilise and devalue the role of professional, integrity, judgement, and commitment as they are pressed into the service of bureaucratic disciplines” (p. 34). Such positions as held by Harvey (2004) and Barrow (1999) are indicative of an erosion of trust and tension in the policy objectives and the implementation process.

From the foregoing analyses of the themes of quality, accountability and quality assurance, Horsburgh (1999) notes that quality as transformation involves a process of education, which can transform the learning experience through enhancement and empowerment of the student. Student improvement, enhancement and transformation are “reflected in the addition of knowledge and skills. Empowerment is the development of students’ critical ability” (1999, p. 10). It stands to reason that

qualifications frameworks as quality assurance mechanisms therefore hold the potential for student transformation through enhancement, improvement and empowerment.

Writers (see Barrow, 1999; Codd, 2003; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Horsburgh, 1999; Scheele, 2004) suggest, however, that the processes employed (inputs, outputs) and processes for accountability (quality assurance, moderation, compliance, control, auditing, accreditation) have contributed little to the effective transformation of student experience; and that the predominance of accountability and its elements of emphases for quality have little to do with the discourse of the process of education. A study by Horsburgh, who interacted within two undergraduate degree programmes (staff, students and employers) over a two and a half year period in the New Zealand context supports the view that none of the aspects of accountability, as they pertain to higher education in New Zealand, encompass the core activities associated with teaching and learning (Horsburgh, 1999). It stands to reason that the rhetoric of accountability, improvement and student learning, and student transformation have been a secondary feature for most qualifications frameworks. In fact Codd (2003) goes further and points out that “the quality of learning is largely absent from these discourses” (p. 71).

### **3.8 Rapprochement: Potential Sources of Tension**

Thus far in this chapter, at the theoretical level, this review has supported the central thesis in this research that the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems is informed by a range of competing discourses. These discourses are thought of as falling into two loose groupings, namely managerialism and education – between which there is notable tension. This section attempts to provide a rapprochement of the emergent themes from the discourse of managerialism, and how they might influence the level of education practice. Particularly in the New Zealand context, some of the most striking characteristics of reforms which give rise to tensions at the level of practice are identified (for example see Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Schapper & Mayson, 2004).

In the case of New Zealand, Easton (2003) points out that the history of resistance to the reforms in New Zealand is yet to be written. McGee, Moltzen, Oliver, & Mitchell (1993) indicate, however, that immediately after reform implementation, some authors began analyzing the potential ramifications of the model for reforming State education in New Zealand (Codd, 1990, 1995; Grace, 1990; Lauder, 1990; McCulloch, 1990; Minto, 2004;

Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Snook, 1996, 1997; Thrupp, 1999). McGee *et al.* (1993) roughly categorized the critiques of the reforms as falling into two categories. In what the writers admit is a rather simplistic categorization, McGee *et al.* (1993) point out that “the liberal left are writers who have, for some years, drawn attention to inequalities of other issues in education that need remedying” (p. 33); whereas “on the radical New Right side are the views that education should be more competitive and efficient and the role of the State should be diminished” (p. 33). McGee *et al.* (1993) observe, however, that “the reality is much more complex”, and that there are major inconsistencies with the critiques of the “left” and the “right” (p. 33).

Arguably, a first site of tension emanated from the predications made by many writers. Given that many of the “left” and “right” critiques felt that the government reform had not been thoroughly thought through, many of their critiques made predictions about potential ramifications, rather than about the actual nature and effectiveness of the reform, as it was too early to gather data to support and address their scepticisms.

Viewed on a broader scale, however, managerialism, as an imported discourse in the field of education, has been the subject of growing discussion in the field of education (Boston, 1991; Boston, *et al.*, 1991, 1996; Codd, 1999; Harrison, 2004; Kelsey, 1995, 2002). As subsequent analysis will indicate, the discourse of managerialism has been commended for its contribution to debates in education circles on issues such as alternative governance structures, the increasing pace of change and the continuous disruption of a country’s internal environment by external factors, such as protocols of world bodies such GATT and WTO (Basu & Wright, 2003; Fitzsimons, 1999a; Olssen, *et al.*, 2004). On the contrary, however, principles or “dominant norms” (Apple, 2004) of managerialism and the extent of applicability to social fields, of which education is a part, are not uncontested.

This review has been successful in demonstrating thus far that the establishment of qualifications and their quality assurance processes (such as their accountability and outcomes based approaches) have been influenced and shaped by the discourse of managerialism. On the one hand, the discourse of managerialism has advocated new priorities such as its responsiveness to change, enhancing human capital, and accountability. As was discussed previously, in the field of education as it pertains to qualifications frameworks, the discourse of managerialism has given heightened interest

in quality and quality assurance and their aspects of exception, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation, an outcomes based (standards) approach and appropriateness for current practice (Harvey & Green 1993; Scheele, 2004; Watty, 2003). Issues of transparency, value for money, the language of inputs, outputs, and production functions and methods for dealing with budgetary (cost) constraints have also been brought to the fore by the discourses of managerialism (Blackmur, 2004; Scheele, 2004; Watty, 2003).

Grace (1990), for example, argues that this discourse is “a necessary stage in the development of our thinking about education and that, considering the size of education budgets and of their projected increases, the discipline of economic analysis has to be vigorously applied to the education sector” (p. 32). He points out that the language of inputs, outputs, and production functions in education is being introduced into the discourse of education as an analytically more robust way of thinking about education (Grace, 1990, p. 32).

On the other hand, the principles or “dominant norms” (Apple, 2004) of managerialism and their applicability to social fields, of which education is a part, are not uncontested. One major site of tension emanate from instances where some of the principles of managerialism are deemed relevant in the field of education, the policy implications focus on the ‘what’, but the implications of the ‘how’ are often unclear (Basu & Wright, 2003; Easton, 2003). This lack of clarity has implications especially in small jurisdictions such as New Zealand (and the OECS will be no different), where the separation between policy development and implementation is not always possible. Consequently, one ramification has to do with multiple agents serving competing principals. Scott (2001), following from Boston, *et al.* (1996), argues that managerialism copes poorly with situations where agents serve multiple and competing principals. This gives rise to conflict of interests. Education is one field that has multiple interests and stakeholders. This notion of multiple interests and stakeholders seemingly gives rise to tension at the level of practice.

An apparent source of tension lies in the looseness of all the semantics, terminologies and varied strands and meanings and technicalities of terminologies - Neoliberalism, New Right, Public Choice Theory, Transaction Cost Analysis, New Economics of Management, Agency Theory - associated with the discourse of managerialism. Eaton (2003) attributes

some of the tension to inexplicitness of the theory that is being applied to discourse of education and, by implication qualifications frameworks, both as a condition and consequence of these factors. From the foregoing theorizing, it can be surmised that the notions of quality, quality assurance and accountability are clear illustrations of semantic minefields. Their wide-ranging terminologies and looseness in definitional boundaries make them difficult to apply and evaluate in social fields such as education, particularly in light of the multiple stakeholders of these social fields (Boston, 1991, Boston, *et al.*, 1996).

Tension also stems from the concern that managerialism has imposed significant bearings of corporatization and privatization on education programmes, in spite of the acknowledgment that there are significant differences between public and private sectors (see Boston, 1991; Scott, 2001; Snook, 1996). For the most part, the education (school) environment has been made competitive (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). There are also limitations in the application of the supermarket model of consumerism to all social issues. Another example is that the theory's behavioural assumptions and Taylorist details of management by outputs, outcomes, standards or results are sometimes inapplicable to measuring individual educational capacity. Therefore, the failure of the discourse of managerialism to take into account differences between a business and the learning environment (school or educational institution) or between a consumer and a learner suggests tension between the theoretical orientations of the two discourses.

Other sources of tensions stem from the view that the basic structures and operations of the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism have been imposed on the field of education. According to Fiske & Ladd (2000), in the New Zealand context, the reforms (driven by managerialism) have allowed the formation of entirely new structures and introduced new approaches for financing, accountability and managing the State schools. They observed that, in the process, the reforms redefined many of the presuppositions, values and personal and professional relationships on which the state educational system operates (Fiske & Ladd, 2000).

One source of tension for educationists has been the rhetoric and language of managerialism and its focus of outputs. According to Codd (2003), in the New Zealand context, these reforms point to "a profound sanctimonious belief" (p. 71) in notions of accountability, contestability, performance and choice, among others. He observes:

Teachers are constantly being bombarded with a form of a language and related demands that are damaging to the integrity of educational practice (for example, the language of outcomes, outputs, audits, performance indicators – drawn from the domain of economics rather than education) (Codd, 2003, p. 71).

Of interest to principles of qualifications frameworks is Codd's (2003) argument that the dominance of such "an alienating discourse" is evidenced in a prevailing culture of performativity, which emphasizes and values only what can be planned, measured, recorded and reported. The demonstration of excellence (in the classroom and elsewhere) is appraised mainly by the ability to ensure that "all children produce positive learning outcomes" (Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 2003, p. 151).

Further, Easton (2003) contends that education is being estimated in terms of a production function and schools as business models - "in which the data of inputs and outputs ... are pooled ... which, among other things, tells us what is the contribution of each input to the output of the business" (p. 67). Grace's (1990) argument that this is a necessary thinking in education, is accepted by Easton (2003), who admits that "even the most cautious must recognize that economists are not going to leave education alone" (p. 69). His concerns from an economist's viewpoint (which seemingly give rise to tension) include:

What actually is a school's output (to continue to use economists' terminology). If school is a business, what is it producing? Is it a shop selling credentials, like a furniture shop that sells furniture? Are the universities which sell internet degrees the ultimate end of a commercialised education system? Or perhaps they are not selling to them but processing them, like a freezing works. Instead of cows in, beef out, we get students, in graduates out.... (The unspoken point of those newspaper league tables is they enable us to tell where the good students are, and – if we care – send our children to the schools where they will benefit from good colleagues) (Easton, 2003, p. 67).

Despite Grace's (1990, 1998) arguments, therefore, one of the major sources of tension alluded to by Easton (2003) is that the proponents of the discourse of managerialism have ignored the educational discourse and imposed their own. Educators believe that the discourse of managerialism tends to ignore that the main role of education

entails the general cultivation and empowerment of human beings, in manners that are intellectually and morally appropriate, towards the best and highest life of which they are capable, in three fundamental domains of life; as individuals, actualizing their potentialities and tendencies; as members of society, becoming involved and responsible citizens; and as human beings,

enriching and perfecting themselves through active engagement with the collective achievements of human culture (Aloni, 2001, p. 28).

According to Easton (2003), if education were to ignore the socialization role, it seems likely that economic output and, indeed human happiness, would suffer. As has been indicated before, for educators, “qualifications, like dollars and cents, are a currency - a means to an end; not the end itself”, and that ideally, “the knowledge, understanding, and skills make the difference, not the qualifications” (Smithers, 1997, p. 80). This is a perceived limitation in the way in which the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism views qualifications and is attributed solely to the ‘ideological nature’ of the quantifiable and input-output efficiency aspects of discourse of managerialism.

The changing nature of the personal and professional responsibility of educators is another source of tension. Despite the fact that the principles of quality assurance (standards setting, moderation, and accreditation in qualifications frameworks) are conducted mainly by educationists (see Kunowski, 2000), the discourse of managerialism has also attracted the criticism that it has undermined personal responsibility, and professionalism of educators (Easton, 2003; Harker, *et al.*, 2003). Codd (2003) explains:

The imposition of performance-management systems, planning and reporting requirements and other forms of centralizing control has greatly reduced areas in which teachers can exercise professional autonomy. Accountability has been externally imposed in the form of contractual compliance rather than seeing it as professional responsibility. Many teachers feel that they are no longer trusted by policy makers and administrators (p. 73).

According to Codd (2003):

In the current environment, the professional voice of teachers is scarcely heard. Teachers have been largely excluded from the policy-making process. They are seen as self-interested exponents of provider capture. They have lost control of their training and professional development, with externally imposed standards. In the pervasive control of their instrumentalism, teachers are cast in the role of technicians, where they become mere operators concerned with means, but with little responsibility for the ends of education (p. 71).

Writers (Lee & Lee, 2000b; Schapper & Mayson, 2004) have provided further discussion as to exactly how the tension might develop. Schapper & Mayson (2004), for example, elaborate:

Consistent with the principles of scientific management, the move comes from centralised corporate decision makers who have done the thinking, designed the processes, developed the policies and tightly prescribed the boundaries within which the curriculum can now be developed. That is the serious business of knowledge creation is now the privilege of corporate decision makers far removed from teaching contexts, displacing academic staff, the previous custodians of teaching and learning in higher education (p. 197).

In this context, according to the writers, the implication is that academic staff are no longer valued for their intellectual contribution to student learning. The main contribution of academic staff is their ability to deliver pre-packaged education with efficiency and economy (Schapper & Mayson, 2004, p. 197). Lee & Lee (2000b) explain two functions for academic staff:

On the one hand, teachers were viewed as professionals whose educational effectiveness would further be enhanced by data obtained from national testing because only they could establish expectations and identify where improvements were needed. On the other hand [teachers] were reminded that the government viewed national assessment as being part of a much wider suite of policies that were necessary to ensure that young people learn basic skills they will need to achieve their life time objectives (p. 79).

These assumptions of the discourse of managerialism have therefore attracted the criticism by educators that they give insufficient attention to the discourse of education (Aloni, 2001; Alphonse, 1999; Easton, 2003; Hamer, 2002; Strathdee & Hughes, 2001, for example). Writers (Olssen, 1999; Olssen & Matthews, 1997; Robertson, 1999, for example) argue that these theories assume that individuals are rational utility maximizers or that individuals are opportunistic and are motivated by self-interest (Boston, 1991; Boston, *et al.* 1996; Hamer, 2002). In the education discourse, it is assumed that human beings are not always dominated by competitive self-interests (Apple, 2004; Clark, 1998; Grace, 1990, 1998; Marginson, 1997). They are not merely economic beings. They are also political, cultural and moral beings, who inhabit a learning environment. This learning environment is profoundly influenced by values, attitudes, habits, beliefs, aspirations, ideals and ethical standards and motivation of its members (Aloni, 2001; Easton, 2003; Marginson, 1997). These are complex social interactions and economic relationships, which means that categorizing them into standards and measurable outputs based on inputs is a simplistic approach which might be sometimes impossible, misleading and inappropriate (Apple, 2004; Boston, 1991; Easton, 2003; Robertson, 1999). Therefore, despite the fact that the discourse is based on principles of measurable outcomes, and that their rhetoric of theoretical approaches can be readily identified, they

cannot always be quantified in the field of education. In the application of the principles of the discourse of managerialism in the establishment of NQFs, the focus of attention has been on standards based assessment, outcomes based assessment, examination results and qualifications (see Easton, 2003; Harrison, 2004). Limitations of this attention will be discussed in the following chapter. In the application of the principles of managerialism to education, however, the contexts and roles of educationists have not only changed, but have seemingly become more complex, which is undoubtedly a site of tension (Harker, *et al.*, 2003).

Given that the central argument in this thesis is that the need for change in qualifications systems and the nature of the change in the directions of qualifications frameworks is informed by the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism, arguably, the sources of tension identified above might be applicable both at the theoretical and implementation levels of qualifications frameworks. Increasingly, however, a challenge for both the education and managerial discourse are demands such as purchaser demands, institutional demands, inter-institutional demands, pedagogical demands and market demands (Barker (1995, p. 22). Individual and international economic competitiveness through vertical and lateral progression of their human capital was shown to be key national and international concerns (Strydom & Strydom, 2004). While they have been shown to trigger tensions thus far at the theoretical level, at the level of practice, the discourses are not divergent. As an end product, for instance, countries (educationists and managerialists) want graduates who will make a competent workforce, well adapted to the challenges of an economy based on knowledge and on technology; and for people to be able to use their skills beyond their home country (L'Ecuyer & Peace Lenn, 1994). This increase in national, regional, and international mobility of learners and the use of qualifications has grown into a legitimate culture. There is substantial convergence, therefore, in both discourses because promoting quality of education becomes the bottom line (Scheele, 2004; Woodhouse, 2003, 2004). This bottom line tends to drive the establishment of qualifications frameworks.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed extensive literature on qualifications, qualifications frameworks and the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism. Contentious issues from this chapter for qualifications frameworks include arbitrariness in notions of equivalence, principles of levels, the principles of difference and comparability and

allocation of credits, which make their practical consequences particularly at the international level seem unclear (See Blackmur, 2004; Boudier, 2003; Ensor, 2003; Granville, 2003; Lester, 1995; Raffe, 2003; Young, 2003a, 2003b).

In particular, the theorizing in this chapter reinforces the argument that the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism has had a direct impact on change and the nature of change in qualifications systems, particularly in the New Zealand context. Of relevance to the central argument one source of tension is that the discourse of managerialism has imposed its structure and operations procedures (quality assurance, new approaches for financing, accountability) on the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment. Unlike the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment, the principles of managerialism have tended to promote and rely on accountability specifically in terms of results or outputs which are quantifiable. One potential source of tension also lies in the re-definition of many of the presuppositions, values and personal and professional relationships on which the state educational system operates (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). The theorizing on managerialism has also implied that although the discourse of learning and assessment is always alluded to in the discourse of managerialism, the degree of emphasis placed on learning and assessment appears to be superficial; that is, learner transformation is not addressed by the discourse of managerialism with any level of profundity. Seemingly, it is in this vein that Crooks (2003) argues that "there is considerable scope for re-thinking rationales for and forms of accountability processes to make them more intelligent, so that their ultimate effects are to enhance the quality of education" (p. 17).

In effect, what has emerged from this first part of the theoretical framework of this research is the lack of balance between the discourses of managerialism and education theory in terms of informing the need for change in qualifications system, particularly in the New Zealand context. The development of the central tenet of this research continues in the next chapter with a survey of the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment.

## Chapter Four

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### EDUCATION DISCOURSES LINKING LEARNING & ASSESSMENT TO QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, theorizing on qualifications, qualifications frameworks and the discourse of managerialism was presented. New Zealand was among governments such as those of the United States, Australia, Canada and the UK to have linked economic growth with education (Fitzsimons, 1999a). New Zealand, in particular, adapted the managerial model to address its educational concerns (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Harrison, 2004; Kelsey, 2003; Robertson, 1999). It was contended, however, that in this policy context, the advocacy to establish qualifications framework as a means of investing in learning, widening participation, raising standards and assuring quality was placed on the mantras of outcomes and accountability (Ecclestone, 2004; Fitzsimons, 1999a, 1999b; Knight, 2000; Torrance, 1997). Despite the continued reference to learning and assessment in the discourse of managerialism and the course of action to reform qualifications systems as a way of assuring quality in education, there is relatively little discussion about the discourses of learning, assessment practice, and how they relate to qualifications.

This chapter, therefore, complements the previous chapter. It attempts to critically explore educational theorizing on learning and assessment, and their explanatory importance in analyzing the policy objectives and operational procedures of the NZQA and the qualification systems of the OECS. Admittedly, there is a large body of research literature on different aspects of learning; and that the psychological literature is resplendent with theories of cognition, meta-cognition, motivation, learning strategies and techniques. By way of example, Crain (2000) argues that developmentalists of the

like of Aries, Montessori, Rousseau, Locke and Kohlberg share the fundamental theoretical and practical orientation that key developments are directed by inner growth and spontaneous learning – “by biological maturation or by the individual’s own structuring of experience” (Crain, 2000, p. 170). Other writers posit that modern humanistic psychology could address developmentalists’ concerns (Crain, 2000). For instance, humanists such as Maslow have drawn on developmental psychology, while others have drawn on the development of cognition (Crain, 2000). An analysis of all the work of all the theorists who have made copious contributions to the field of learning is for another thesis. In this research, however, the learning paradigms are categorized as *behaviourism*, *cognitivism* and *constructivism* to serve as reference points for comparisons, contrasts and interpretations (Leonard, 2002).

This chapter concentrates on reviewing what is known about learning and assessment that would elucidate its major argument that if qualifications frameworks are to be effective, the focus has to be on the socio-cultural processes of learning and assessment, because qualifications are the ‘voices’ of the learning and assessment process (Broadfoot, 1996b). It begins with theorizing on learning, followed by theorizing on educational assessment, both of which serve as the foundation for the subsequent analysis of the dominant models of learning and educational assessment that underpin qualifications frameworks. In the process, it attempts to review which theory or theories of learning and educational assessment inform qualifications frameworks. This review will subsequently serve to analyze the operational principles and procedures of the NZQA, and to draw insights for informing the theorizing in the directions of a qualifications framework in the OECS.

## 4.2 Learning

Prior to the past two decades, some theorists postulated definitively that “learning occurs whenever one adopts new, or modifies existing behaviour patterns in a way which has some influence on future performance and attitudes” (Child, 1981, p. 81). Others have contended that learning was “an enduring change in an individual that is not heralded by his genetic inheritance” (Bigge, 1982, p. 1). This view regards learning as “a change in insights, behaviour, perception, or motivation or a combination of these; learning always refers to some systematic change in behaviour or behavioural disposition that occurs as a consequence of experience in some specific situation” (Bigge, 1982, pp. 1-2). At the beginning of this century, Pear described ‘learning’ as “a dependency of current

behaviour on the environment as a function of a prior interaction between sensory-motor activity and the environment" (2001, p. 12). In tandem, some writers, (for example, Cataina, 1993; Romberg, 1982) have critiqued the varied elements of emphasis (such as 'behaviour', 'experience', 'relatively permanent', 'change', 'acquisition' 'new knowledge', 'new understanding') in the definitions of learning (Romberg, 1982); while other writers (for example, Cataina, 1993) have concluded simply that because of its very nature there are no satisfactory definitions of learning.

All theorists concede, however, that it is a fact that we learn, we achieve, we attain, and we perform, and qualifications frameworks are being established to monitor and reward such practices. One observation here is that there is no clear differentiation among the terms 'performance', 'educational achievement', and 'educational attainment', and others with the same denotation. In the New Zealand context, throughout the qualifications system, the terms are used interchangeably. The same is true in this research.

#### **4.2.1 Behaviourist View of Learning**

Learning has been so deeply entwined with 'behaviour' that a discussion on one is hardly found without mention of the other. Behaviour analysis is part of the animal learning tradition which was taken as a means of approaching the understanding of the complexity of human learning (Hayes, Blackledge & Barnes-Holmes, 2000). Behaviourism assumes that learning could be decomposed and decontextualized, and development of complexity can always be left for a later stage (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). The 'right' timing is rooted in tiered stages, standards, forms, or grades inherent in the organizational structure of the education systems. Behaviours are manipulated by changing the objectives, standards, rewards, levels of difficulty of tasks in the different grades or stages. At every stage, the value attached to extrinsic motivation is visible through rewards of merits, passes, failures, credits, certification, test grades, feedback, or other incentives. The learning process is seen as the setting of objectives, performance standards, or outcomes which are perceived to be attainable with the teacher dominating planning, objective setting, instruction, and instructional programmes.

In this behaviourist view of learning, assessment considers the observable, quantifiable changes in a learner's behaviour, which are largely seen as being controlled by the environment. Within this behaviourist perceptive of educational assessment, the desired outcomes are stipulated mainly in descriptive terms such as objectives or outcomes,

which are thought to be measurable. Changing the environment (for example responses to the behaviour) is viewed as a way of changing behaviour. The emphasis is on evaluating overt behaviour. Assessment therefore encompasses checking whether stipulations made in the form of objectives or outcomes required by learners are manifested or displayed as “finished products” (Joyce & Weil, 1980; Pear, 2001). The focus is on testing the extent of memorization, retention, or reproduction of information by the learner (Black, 1998; Black & William, 1998b; Crooks, 1988). Consequently, the emphasis is on final judgment, rather than on improvement. The focus is limited as it does not attempt to focus on cognitive and social processes such as creativity, imagination and innovation. As a result, some writers argue that insofar as behaviourism is limited in its capacity to detect beliefs, desires, intentions, experiences, imaginings, attitudes and sentiments, the paradigm presents some limitations as a sole paradigm to guide educational assessment (see Burke, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994). Essentially, assessment from a behaviourist perspective approach reduces assessment to the level of the direct observation and measurement (Griffin, 1997).

#### **4.2.2 Cognitivist View of Learning**

Cognitivists present an alternative view of learning which gives attention to the development of learners’ thinking (Bell, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000; Cook, 2001; Kelly, 1986). A cognitive field-oriented education system does not view a change in behaviour solely as learning. Cognitivists maintain that in our dealing with the world, processes that are not observable in our behaviour can occur (Catainana, 1998). Several theories fall under the educational paradigm of cognitivism, but two frequently cited examples include Piaget’s developmental learning theory and Bruner’s discovery learning theory (Leonard, 2002). Cognitivists such as Piaget and Bruner claimed that interaction with the environment is how learning takes place (Bigge, 1982; Pear, 2001; Swenson, 1980). This view proposes that learning is a process of knowledge construction; that learning is tuned to the situation in which learning takes place. Learning occurs not only by recording information but by interpreting it; that is “instruction must be seen not as direct transfer of knowledge but as an intervention in an ongoing knowledge construction process” (Gipps, 1996, p. 257).

Some limitations have been identified in the cognitive-field psychologists’ view of learning. Crain (2000) argues that Piaget, for instance, did not believe that children’s

thinking is shaped so much by adult teachings or other environmental influences, but rather by maturation of their cognitive functions (p. 114). Limitation to the cognitivist's view is also attributed to failure to take into account the importance of fantasy in children's cognitive growth, and the significance of language and context. Among other criticisms, it is believed that the emotional blocks that may deter progress in learning are ignored by the cognitivist's view (see Joyce & Weil, 1980; Silver, 1999).

For decades, these two prominent families of learning theory - the behaviourist (stimulus-response conditioning theories) and the cognitive family - dominated the literature (Crain, 2000; Danzinger, 1997; Pear 2001). These theories were among some in a series which provided the 'theoretical content' to explain 'learning' and render a theoretical base for the field of education (Danzinger, 1997, p. 102). The principles of behaviourism and cognitivism have sometimes been defended in terms of their scientific, rather than speculative, backgrounds, meaning that they were derived through observation and experimentation on how specific types of interaction with the environment affect behaviour (Pear 2001). The main critique is that the behaviourists and cognitivists do not take into account the social contexts and social aspects of learning. It been argued, therefore, that in the form in which they were presented by their proponents, neither theory is sufficient to account for the complexity of learning (see Illineris, 2002; Jonassen, 2000; Lave, 1991, 1997; Wertsh *et al.*, 1995).

#### **4.2.3 Constructivism, Social Constructivist and Sociocultural Views of Learning**

Constructivism, for example, offers a different perspective on the nature of learning. The constructivist view extends the explanation of how cognitive processes might be attained and facilitated. In the constructivist's view, learning is seen as the modification of the learner's existing ideas; that is, conceptual development (Bell, 1997). Leonard (2002) posits that unlike behaviourism, which emphasizes the effect of the environment on learning, constructivism emphasizes the brain and mind of learning; that is, it takes into account children's own thinking. For constructivists, therefore, "students learn best by actively making sense of new knowledge – making meaning from it and mapping it in to their existing knowledge map/schema" (Gipps, 1996, p. 257). Cook (2001) explains that in the constructivist view, "learners are to be seen as playing an active role in constructing, in some way their own meanings" (p. 7). This view of student learning, which sees students as active constructors of their own world view including school

subject matter, means that the reductionist, atomistic model of assessment has to be expanded (Bell, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000; Bell & Cowie, 2002; Cook, 2001; Gipps, 1996).

Social constructivists, in particular, have re-examined the notion of learning to account for the role of the social aspect (See Salomon, 1997; Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez, 1995, for example). These social and constructive explorations of learning share many ontologies, epistemologies and phenomenologies that have altered our understanding of learning (Jonassen, 2000; Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993, 2000).

Jonassen (2000) postulates that contemporary theories of social constructivism detail at least three fundamental changes. To begin with, contemporary theories of social constructivism retained the constructivist notion that learning is no longer seen as knowledge reception, but rather learning is now viewed as meaning making. This explanation of meaning making resolves around the conflict between the known and the unknown – which results naturally “from a puzzlement, perturbation, expectation, violations, curiosity, or cognitive dissonance” (2000, p. 2). The epistemological revolution in this case is the “the rejection of dualistic beliefs that mind and body are separate phenomena” (p. 2).

Secondly, Jonassen (2000) explains that while cognitive and behavioural theorists concentrate on the individual as the agent of learning in terms of storage, application and retrieval of information and the comparative nature of knowledge, contemporary sociocultural theorists concentrate on the social cooperative nature of the meaning-making process. They argue that just as the physical world is shared by all of us, so is the meaning that we make from it. Learning, from this perspective, is dialogue, a process of internal as well as social negotiation (Jonassen, 2000).

The final assumption that Jonassen (2000) proposes relates to the locus of meaning making. Social constructivists reject the belief that knowledge resides only in the head. They posit that knowledge and cognitive activity are distributed among the culture and history of their existence and are mediated by the tools that learners use. Therefore, the social constructivists argue that there are several areas in which knowledge can be found, including the discourse among individuals, the social relationships within the social or biological systems in which they work, or a body of expressions to which they contribute.

The tools - theories, models, technologies, and methods that learners use - also become part of the locus of meaning making.

From the viewpoint of social constructivists, learning always occurs in some kind of social or socio-cultural system that must be considered (Broadfoot & Pollard, 2002; Gipps, 2002). One such view is that of Lave & Wenger's (1991) interpretive view and situated learning. Lave & Wenger (1991) note that for years, theorists have analysed the individual, internal business of cognitive processing, representations, memory and problem solving. In their "cognition plus" view, social factors become conditions whose effects on individual cognition are also explored. Lave & Wenger (1991) also situate learning in the social practices of the lived-in world. The notion of the apprentice observing the 'community of practice' is a central characteristic of a situated learning model. Apprenticeship, which takes different forms in different contexts, provides the opportunity for apprentices to see communities in practice in their complexity and to gain a broader view of what the tasks are about in context (see Canning & Lang, 2004; Chitty, 1991; Hager & Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Merrill, 2003; Rogoff, 1995, for such issues). Claims of merits and demerits of apprenticeship are for another thesis, but have been found to vary in the literature (see Chitty, 1991; Hyland & Merrill, 2003, Lave & Wenger, 1991, for further debates).

For qualifications frameworks, the social constructivist's view of learning presents some challenges for assessment because the dimensions discussed in socio-cultural theory are not discrete attributes (Cook, 2001). Broadfoot (2001) points out that "social constructivism, of which integrated learning theory is a variant, suggests that learning is a messy business which is influenced in idiosyncratic ways for any given individual by the complex mixture of understanding, beliefs and attitudes which is the product of past learning experience" (p. 100). Such a view, according to Broadfoot (2001), "is simply not compatible with any uni-dimensional or even fixed notions of ability which have for so long informed educational thinking and practice" (p. 100). Therefore, while an expansion to include the social constructivism view of learning is seen as necessary in the development of qualifications frameworks, these new perspectives on learning seemingly present onerous challenges for assessment theory and awarding learning - most of which are still left unanswered.

#### 4.2.4 Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence theories are also found to be an important debate with respect to learning and awarding learning. Briefly, Gardner (1983) posits that very little attention was paid to the underlying theory of intelligence, and different abilities were tapped and all fed into or reflected in the 'nature' versus 'nurture' debate and channelled in a single 'general' intelligence. Gipps (1990) argues that the 'nature' over 'nurture' perspective remained the view of choice, though a minority had been opened to the idea that different students exhibit different forms of intelligence. From the results of a massive survey, Gardner (1983) illustrated, however, the existence of at least seven different mental faculties or intelligences. According to Gardner, these involved language; logical-mathematical analysis; spatial representation; musical analysis, and two forms of personal understanding (interpersonal knowledge and intrapersonal knowledge).

Of implication to this research is Gardner's conclusion that most formal testing (whatever the area that is being tested) engages primarily the linguistic and logical mathematical faculties. He notes that if one has high linguistic and logical mathematical intelligences, one is likely to do well in school and in formal testing. The impact, according to Gardner, is that "poor endowment or learning in one or both of these intelligences is likely to result in poor test scores" (Gardner, 1983, p. 85).

Such findings have implications for qualifications frameworks and their *modus operandi* - their assessment practices of what is assessed and how to tap into these varied intelligences. These multiple intelligences are thought of as influencing present views of assessment. The problems with assessing multiple intelligences are mitigated through a series of formative assessment, internal assessment, continuous summative assessment and the teacher's professional role in these varied types of assessment. The present trends are such that, unlike traditional methods of assessment (which were informed by psychometrics for reliability, validity, and norm-referenced practices); internal assessments (which are authentic) have the potential to take into account multiple intelligences that are difficult to measure through external examinations. These new trends, according to writers such as Broadfoot (2001) and Black (1998), have implications for the traditional notions of reliability and validity of results.

#### **4.2.5 Motivation**

Another factor that relates to qualifications is the great deal of attention given to the effect of assessment as a motivational factor on learning (see Broadfoot, 1996b, 2001; Crooks, 1988, 1988b, 2003). In the main, “educational psychologists and researchers distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (see Kellaghan *et al.*, 1996). Hidi & Harackiewicz (2000), however, concluded that the “dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is unhelpful and that it is time to seek “optimal combinations” (p. 176). Crooks (2003) therefore argues that “a key issue seems to be achieving a good balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation”(p. 6). Ideally, motivation cannot be related solely to learning, assessment and qualifications frameworks, but must be considered within the concept of interdependence (Young, 2003a), and the whole social context in which learning and assessment take place (Jonassen, 2000; Lave, 1991). Of paramount importance in the development of qualifications frameworks is the creation of a learning atmosphere/climate that is conducive to participation (Harlen & Crick, 2003; Silver, 1999). Of implication therefore is that this atmosphere must have the structures in place that signal to learners that their efforts will be valued and judged fairly.

This limited theorizing on learning, intelligence and motivation adds to the constellation of discourses that forms the education spectrum. Of relevance to this thesis, and a major concern to be addressed in the literature, is the extent to which, and how, these theories are considered in the development of qualifications frameworks, or by the discourses of managerialism as they inform social programmes such as those of education. Also of concern is the extent to which these learning theories are considered and affect the award of qualifications if qualifications are presumed to be the voices of learning and assessment process.

#### **4.3 The Dominant View of Learning in Qualifications Frameworks**

Given the preceding theorizing on learning, this section attempts to understand and review which of these aspects of learning underlie the establishment of qualifications frameworks. Hyland (1994), for instance, argues that there is no denying or disputing the fact that the New Zealand model (fashioned after the Scottish model, both in design and implementation) is based on and informed by behaviourist learning theory. Philips (1998) supports Hyland’s (1994) view in arguing that as a “behaviourist device” (p. 246), the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework would allow the NZQA to redefine what was deemed as important knowledge and skills and levels of achievement, by

prescribing the content and parts of qualifications and appropriate standards of performance.

Although behaviourist thinking is believed to form the foundation of qualifications frameworks, it has been consistently critiqued for more than three decades (Dann, 2002; Hager & Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Hyland & Merrill, 2003). Among the several critiques, the behaviourist view has been critiqued as being too mechanistic and reductionist (Swenson, 1980). Other critiques include:

(i) The behaviourist view of learning is seen as downplaying creativity and the innovativeness of learners. From this behaviourist perspective, the learner is viewed as a passive respondent to stimuli (Biggs, 1998). The learner is seen as an individual to be moulded by the environmental stimuli, in which case, the teacher, facilitator or instructor is seen as controlling the teaching-learning process. Knowledge is inculcated by guiding, showing, telling, directing, teaching, arranging, manipulating (Biggs, 1982) and rewarding, punishing, indoctrinating or coercing the activities of the learner to achieve results (see Burke, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994, for further debates on the outcomes based approach). Some of these attributes are seen as inhibiting learning. Therefore, in as much as the behaviourist approach has been proven to be useful in stipulating outcomes, it is believed that there is the potential in some cases for creativity, imagination and innovation to be downplayed and narrowed by rewarding, punishing, indoctrinating or coercing the activities of learners; and by the covert demands made on classrooms, by stipulating and teaching towards results or outcomes (NZVCC, 1994).

(ii) The behaviourist model requires that performance criteria set parameters for learning, and that performance be judged against those parameters (see Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994). This approach has led critics to question whether all the aims, goals and objectives of education can be stipulated in narrowly set parameters, since learning entails numerous conscious and unconscious objectives (Biggs, 1998; Dembo, 1991). Dembo (1991), for instance, argues that to set parameters and slice learning up into concrete overt goals, standards, or outcomes may take all the dynamism out of it.

(iii) Furthermore, the behaviourist model assumes that learning can be decomposed and decontextualized (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). De-contextualization

assumes that each component of complex skill is fixed, and that it will take the same form no matter where it is used. Hyland (1994) makes the point, however, that the interpretation of human behaviour is meaningless without indications of the context of learning. Resnick & Resnick (1992) shed light in this respect with the decomposability metaphor which likens thought to building a simple machine by creating constituent parts. They argue that given the appropriateness of design, such a machine will function when the constituent parts are assembled. When this metaphor is applied to some fields of learning, the teaching of constituent parts will undoubtedly be appropriate to certain domains (computation in mathematics, for instance). For other domains, which require thinking skills dependent on complex knowledge (for example understanding a written passage, writing a composition, solving a mathematics problem), the model falls short since, arguably, breaking them down into constituent parts fails to capture the whole (Irwin, 1994; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995, 1997). The Gestalists, for instance, argue that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This decomposability assumption makes ineffective the view "that complicated skills and competencies owe their complexity not just to the number of components they engage but also to the interactions among the components ... Complex competencies cannot just be defined by listing all of their components" (Resnick & Resnick, 1992, p. 43). The behaviourist model is therefore considered atomistic, individualistic and unable to cover all types of learning (see Irwin *et al.*, 1995; NZVCC, 1994).

(iv) Another criticism is that the behaviourist view as the foundation of qualifications frameworks focuses on demonstrable changes in the student, and not on the process of the meaning-making or construction of content (see Burke, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994). The NZVCC (1994), for instance, presents arguments on the minimalist and impoverished conception of human thought by the behaviourist approach, and its failure to account adequately for key aspects of human reasoning and understanding. Griffin (1997) also argues that behaviourism, in its approach, misses some intangible aspects of human aesthetics when all measurable outcomes have been achieved. As a result, some writers argue that insofar as behaviourism is silent on aspects of thinking and understanding (such as beliefs, desires, intentions, experiences, imaginings, attitudes and sentiments), it is inadequate as an educational theory in itself (see Burke, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994). Griffin (1997) concludes that there are some parts of learning that

cannot be observed or measured and that the approach reduces education to the level of direct observation and measurement.

(v) The behaviourist perspective has also been critiqued for its effects on motivation, in particular for placing emphasis mainly on extrinsic rewards at the expense of intrinsic rewards (Harlen & Crick, 2003). Besides, behaviourists emphasize immediate, frequent rewarding - this has been seen to be difficult and often inconsistent in classroom practice (Dann, 2002; Joyce & Weil, 1980). Dann (2002) makes the point that this behaviourist perspective assumes that if a curriculum is structured properly and the appropriate reinforcement (extrinsic reward) is offered by teachers, learning will proceed irrespective of motivation, interests or personal consideration of the pupils. Arguably, one such reward is the qualification, credential or certificate. Intrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation, however, have been found to be significant aspects in student growth and student autonomy and independence (see Harlen & Crick, 2003; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Kellaghan *et al.*, 1996, for example).

Thus far, the theorizing on the behaviourist view of learning suggests that behaviourism falls short in providing explanations for all kinds of learning, and in taking into account the complexity of learning. Essentially, it is believed that the behaviourist view fails to take into account the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values or commitments that may not be overtly displayed in behaviour, and which may be related to the uniqueness of people, their socio-cultural milieu, and personal backgrounds (Bigge, 1982; Joyce & Weil, 1980; Swenson, 1980).

Proponents of the behaviourist view of learning argue, however, that the practical applications of the principles of behaviourism present distinct advantages to education and training (see Burke, 1994; Ecclestone, 2004; Ellis, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994, for further debates on the outcomes-based model). The theory has its strengths in that the stipulation of purpose (outcomes/competencies) is productive for all concerned in the teaching-learning situation (Ecclestone, 2004). With outcomes set, the leverage of external control can be given to the individual who can shape his/her own learning (Joyce & Weil, 1980). For assessment purposes, Gipps (1998) argues that the how of learning cannot be separated from the what of learning. She points out:

The construct tested is crucial. We need to encourage clearer articulation of the constructs on which assessment is based, so that the construct

validity may be examined by both the test takers and users ... We certainly need to define the context of an assessment task and the underlying constructs to make sure they reflect what is taught (p. 10).

It is believed that without the formulation of clear criteria one cannot accomplish much (see Burke, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Gipps, 1998; Hyland, 1994, 1995; Jessup, 1991, 1994; Mitchell, 1994; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002).

From the preceding theorizing on learning and assessment, it can be surmised that the theoretical underpinnings of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework are informed by the behaviourist perspective of learning and assessment in that the framework is based on:

Clearly specified learning outcomes which explain what the learner knows and can do; quality assurance - to ensure that providers and assessors can deliver what they say they can; defined levels and credits - to provide a basis to increase flexibility and portability for learners (Hood, Kerr & Perris, 1996, p. 1)

With such a focus, it is clearly a model that draws upon the behaviourist view of learning (Hyland, 1995). It can be inferred further that the recent theorizing on learning and assessment and awarding of qualifications was not key in the development of the National Qualifications Framework in New Zealand.

#### **4.4 Assessment Issues for Awarding Qualifications**

This section explores assessment issues for awarding qualifications, and attempts to review their relevance to qualifications and qualifications frameworks. The theorizing also serves as the foundation for subsequent analysis of the dominant models of educational assessment that underpin qualifications frameworks.

Filer (2000) argues that assessment processes and their educational and social outcomes are analyzable as products of nations' histories, cultures and shifting political imperatives. Black (1998) also points out that assessment systems cannot be seen as technical structures which can be optimized through objective and rational analysis. He argues that they are deeply embedded in the social mores, values, beliefs and assumptions of their countries. Codd (1995) reiterates that the power and knowledge embedded within assessment have been historically generated and socially constructed. Therefore, a core assumption of this theoretical dimension is that a country's socio-historical, cultural and educational processes and products can inform the need for

change and the more general conception of the functions of assessment (Filer, 2000), particularly in the case of OECS. Hence, Grace (1985) argues for:

The need to locate assessment and evaluation principles and procedures in relation to wider structural, economic and political frameworks; the need to recognize conflicts and contradictions of their dual character and the need to clarify the historically changing nature of these principles and procedures (1985, pp. 3-4).

Recent theorizing on learning and assessment presents a theoretical dimension that corresponds with the sociocultural view of learning (see Broadfoot, 1992, 2001, 2002; Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Filer, 2000; Gipps, 2002). As has been suggested, however, this recent trend does not underpin the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. This recent theorizing suggests that the need for change in qualifications systems and the perceived roles of assessment within such frameworks cannot be understood independently of broader developments in society over time (Broadfoot & Black, 2004; Codd, 1995).

Drawing from this recent theorizing, an adequate review of qualifications systems which award qualifications through educational assessment (testing, examinations, for example) has to consider educational assessment practice in relation to the wider societal and indeed intersocietal forces acting upon it (Grace, 1985) in a bid to obtaining an understanding of how our assessment system carries out its primary functions (Blackmore, 1988). A brief analysis reveals that this dimension can be articulated in both the New Zealand and OECS contexts. Examinations were introduced to European countries *en masse* in the nineteenth century (Black, 1998; Black & William, 1998a; Eggleston, 1984; Gipps, 1984; Little, 1990); and by extension their colonies, including New Zealand and the OECS (Little, 1990, 2001). As has been shown in Chapter Three, with the export of the bureaucracies of ministries of government and the public service from Britain, the examinations system in New Zealand and the OECS was presumed to fulfil the egalitarian functions of equity and selection, as they did in China and England (Black, 1998; Broadfoot, 1996b; Eggleston, 1984; Filer, 2000; Little & Wolf, 2000).

An epigrammatic appraisal of the assessment system in the OECS indicates that some British examinations which are still being offered in the OECS include the 11plus (common entrance examination), London and Cambridge O and A levels, Royal Society of Arts Examinations, the City and Guilds examinations, and other university examinations (see Black, 1998, for a full description of examinations in the British context that are also administered in the Caribbean). The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)

is a regional organization, which instituted the Caribbean Secondary Examinations Certificate (CSEC) in 1979. The CSEC is sat by all OECS countries. In recent years, the CXC has been promoting the CAPE (Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) to replace the A levels, with less success. The CXC has also planned on introducing an associate degree by 2006. Arguably, however, *the raison d'être* of the qualifications structure of the OECS mimics the old British structure.

The examination (qualification) system in the OECS is a 'gatekeeper' which attempts to reinforce what Broadfoot (1996b) describes as the neutrality and rationality of bureaucratic organization and the meritocracy in recruitment procedures. An observation made elsewhere by Blackmore's (1988) is seemingly applicable to the OECS; in that, the OECS system is based first on the principle of competitiveness between individuals (which is implicit in the concept of meritocracy); second on the control of pupils and teachers and finally on the public display of technical competence in the form of educational certificates. In the OECS, the recruitment (entrance to the next level) function continues to be central. The pedagogical function (in terms of supplying information to either teacher or employer), although extremely significant, is underemphasized (Blackmore, 1988).

In comparison to the West, Broadfoot (2001), provides an apt description of assessment practices, issues and constraints in developing countries such as the OECS:

Assessment problems facing developing countries are more akin to those which originally gave rise in the West to the current assessment orthodoxy during the nineteenth century than they are to the assessment problems which post-industrial countries now face. The measurement paradigm in assessment was developed, as we have seen as a specific response to the pressing need for a trustworthy and widely acceptable means of rationing educational opportunity according to some idea of 'merit'. Despite the inevitable technical limitations of any such device, the advent of a measure of professionalism and technical expertise to assist in the whole important business of deciding life chances was, on the whole a step forward. And it is no doubt for this reason that the examination and testing industry is one of the most lasting legacies of colonial influence. Indeed it has now developed into one of the most successful international industries, which, like Coca-Cola, touches the life of almost everyone on the planet. Activity on this scale implies many entrenched interests, as well as a good deal of inertia and sheer impossibility of even conceiving of forms of educational provision which have not been shaped by the discourse of measurement (p. 101).

Scrutinized in this light, there are possible reasons why the OECS assessment (examination) systems remain "one of the most lasting legacies of colonial influence" (p.

101). Although hardly documented in the OECS context, possible reasons are summarized and compiled in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1  
Issues which Impact on the Roles of Assessment in the OECS

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The inadequacy of secondary school places because of the lack of universal secondary school education in many of the OECS countries;

A history of only academic knowledge being cherished and, by implication, examined and certificated;

Insufficient number of tertiary education places;

Changing nature of jobs (from agriculture to service, for example, tourism and technological based industries), meaning a shift has had to be made in the selection of skilled personnel;

Vast shortage of jobs enduring and endemic in societies;

Limited foreign investments that could create jobs as a result of high wages and taxes;

High unemployment, particularly among school leavers and the youth;

Restructuring of public services (job freezes);

Limited natural resources impeding self-employment;

Social aspects - 'managed intimacy' (everybody knows everybody in every country because of smallness of populations);

Perceived moulds of nepotism, favouritism and even corruption (Eckstein & Noah, 1992) in the allocation of scarce opportunities.

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In the OECS and the wider Caribbean region, examinations (testing, assessment) for selection purposes dominate most young people's experience of education (Eckstein & Noah, 1992; Somerset, 1996). While the system is viewed as having tremendous advantages in the OECS, there are disadvantages. Educational institutions (primary schools, secondary schools, universities, among others) in the OECS become places for intensive work, with the examinations and qualifications the main obsessions (Eckstein & Noah, 1992; World Bank, 2003). The assertion that, in awarding academic certificates, examinations are accepted as a politically and ethically defensible way of deciding which learners to reward and which to deny reinforces the hegemonic view that assessment both identifies and perpetuates the social hierarchy, as much through the exclusion of certain social groups from particular social positions as through selection and allocation

(Blackmore, 1988; Broadfoot, 1996b; Eggleston, 1984; Little, 1990). Assessment has therefore acquired the dominant role as a predictor of one's life performance.

One potential disadvantage is illustrated in Gipps' (1994) argument that with very few opportunities for school leavers and adolescents, these individuals "could see for themselves that a few qualifications could no longer guarantee employment, then the threat of exams [is] no longer sufficient to secure effort" (p. 42). Within this perspective, Gipps (1994) posits, why should students continue to work at something in which they have little interest, when the reward is taken away? Broadfoot's (1996b) rationalization, however, points to the thinking behind such a system:

The internalisation of pupils of such assessments results in time in the very clear differences of behaviour and motivation characterizing those labelled as 'bright' and marked out for success and those 'less able' pupils destined for failure ...[This process] is highly effective in limiting the frustration that would be endemic in those education systems in which there are a large number of pupils aspiring for limited opportunities (p. 5).

In the context of the OECS, Little's (2000) reiteration of Dore's argument holds that "in the ex-colonies the patterns of the modern sector were set by the colonial administration ... [and] have tended to persist beyond independence" (p. 72). This past, however, has paved the way for the bureaucratic frame that is dominating assessment in the OECS well into the twenty-first century.

From the foregoing theorizing, it stands to reason that any attempt to change the OECS' qualifications system and the functions of assessment which grew out of that past needs to be understood in that light. Arguably, historical mores, smallness of size of the OECS' populations and the socio-economic capacities and factors outlined in Table 4.1 have driven most of the debate of the pros and cons of assessment, and have led to a conclusion in which nothing much is concluded, other than the observation that the present role of the examination structure is a necessary evil in the OECS (Broadfoot, 1996b; Little, 2002; Richmond, 1971). As small developing countries, a Catch-22 for the OECS lies in whether to maintain its educational assessment practices as "a politically and ethically defensible way of deciding which [learners] to reward and which to deny" (Eckstein & Noah, 1992, p.5); in allocating the small number of opportunities; or whether it should adopt new practices in awarding certification that would increase the competitiveness of its citizens in the wider global environment, knowing full well that

qualifications are the initial indicators of skills and knowledge in such an environment. Conversely, can the OECS governments risk this democratisation with the possibility of increased expectations of awardees to social allocations (jobs, positions, scholarships) in the local context. The limitations in the political, social and economic discourses come into spotlight.

The international/global changes that influence social, educational and economic developments (discussed particularly in Chapter Three) point to the need for change. Such global/international changes call to question for how long, and to what extent, will the selection and sorting roles of assessment (examinations) continue to dominate? How long will these social and historical constructions of assessment continue to determine the life chances of learners in the OECS, while they compete on the global scale with learners from other cultures with different assessment practices and *modus operandi* for awarding qualifications? Change is imminent.

Unlike in the OECS where very little is written about assessment (Trotman, 1999), much has been written about assessment practices in the New Zealand. Lee & Lee (1998) for instance provide a critical comprehensive review of assessment practice in New Zealand for a period of more than sixty-four years, starting with the 1877 Education Act, which launched the system of standards, to the reintroduction of standards testing in 1998. Several other writers have written on assessment in the New Zealand context and the change process to the current criterion referencing approach (see for example Bell, 1997; Bell & Cowie, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Carr *et al.*, 2000; Codd, McAlpine & Poskitt, 1995; Crooks, 1988, 1999, 2002 2003; Gilmore, 1998; Hawe, 1995; Hill, 1997, 1999, 2000; Lee & Lee, 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Lennox, 1995; McKenzie, 1997, and others ). Hood (1991, 1995, 1996) and Peddie (1995) have all been advocates and supporters of change in traditional norm referenced assessment practices in the New Zealand system.

Interestingly, from their writings, the multi-faceted use and power of assessment is also evident. The New Zealand Ministry of Education points out the multi-faceted use of educational assessment in the New Zealand context:

The primary purpose of school-based assessment is to improve students' learning and the quality of learning programmes. Other purposes of assessment include providing feedback to parents and students, awarding qualifications at the senior secondary school level, and monitoring overall educational standards. Assessment also identifies learning needs so that resources can be effectively targeted (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 24).

The societal and inter-societal forces are alluded to by Crooks (2002) in an assertion that mirrors the social implications of assessment in the OECS context. He explains:

In the final years of secondary school, where national examination results are available, some newspapers have published tables comparing the results for different schools in their region. Often these comparisons have taken no account of different school circumstances, such as the socio-economic resources of the families of the children attending each school, but in some cases more selective comparisons groups have been chosen (2002, pp. 245-246).

The preceding conceptions delineate pertinent societal and inter-societal factors that form the educational assessment complex, and that have implications for change and the nature of change in qualifications systems. Arguably, failure to view these conceptions as part of the assessment complex tends to weaken explanations of qualifications frameworks and the capacity of educational processes to provide explanations which confront the reality of educational assessment in awarding qualifications. These conceptions are therefore used in making explanatory connections to the educational purposes which follow.

#### **4.5 Assessment: Purposes**

Among the several classifications of the educational purposes of assessment some include diagnostic, formative, continuous summative, summative, dynamic and evaluative (Crooks, 1988, 2002; McCallum, Gipps, Brown & McAlister, 1995; Glover & Thomas, 1999; James, 2000; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Raikes & Harding, 2003; Solomon, 2002; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002). As has been contended by several writers, the social, political and economic perspective of educational assessment cannot be downplayed (Bell & Cowie, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Black, 1995, 1998; Black & William, 1998a; Crooks, 1988; Harlen, 1998). Little (1990), for instance, presents a comprehensive model of assessment, as summarized in Table 4.2, which integrates the educational and the social.

Table 4.2: The Roles of Assessment  
by Seven Levels of Analysis (Little, 1990, p.18)

Levels of analysis	Facilitative	Inhibitive
Individual student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-motivates learning</li> <li>-reinforces learning goals</li> <li>-opens access to good life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-alienates the learner from process and enjoyment of learning</li> <li>-inhibits the development of the 'use value' of knowledge</li> <li>-failure reduces self-esteem</li> </ul>
Individual student and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-confirms high status of family</li> <li>- confers new status on family</li> <li>- sets boundaries for legitimate knowledge</li> <li>-defines relations between the teacher and the student</li> <li>-provide teachers and students with feedback on performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-inhibits social relations, leading to shame, social disgrace, suicide, murder</li> <li>-restricts learning to that which is assessed</li> </ul>
Social, Political, Economic, Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-reinforces/creates group identities</li> <li>-assists lower social groups to achieve social mobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-inhibits greater equality; legitimates inequalities of income prestige status</li> </ul>
National society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-certifies competency and qualifies for educational/occupational group membership</li> <li>-reinforces national unity</li> <li>-promotes economic growth</li> <li>-enables comparability between schools, and facilitates accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-inhibits mass interests in capitalists societies</li> </ul>
Regional society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-promotes mobility of persons between countries in same region</li> </ul>	
International society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-promotes global mobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inhibits equality between poor and rich countries; legitimizes power of international elites and leads to continued dependence.</li> </ul>

Little's model portrays educational assessment as a dynamic interplay between the educational and the social. Levels of analysis, for whom or what assessment is playing out its role, and what precisely assessment is thought to be "promoting or preventing, crippling or creating, facilitating or inhibiting" are emphasized (1990, p. 21).

Little's model is a pivotal point in this research as it affirms the main argument in that while the epistemological assumptions of the discourses of managerialism and education theory are contesting in their theoretical orientations, one can hardly be severed from the other at the level of practice (see Broadfoot, 1996b, 2002, 2003; Codd, 1995; Filer, 2000; Stobart, 2003, 2004, for example). Her model clearly demonstrates that educational

assessment has come to acquire several different roles and has come to perform several different functions internationally.

More than a decade after Little's postulate, Bell & Cowie (2001b) continued to reinforce the multiple purposes of assessment in New Zealand and elsewhere internationally. In their theorizing on educational assessment, in addition to existing roles of assessment, the writers also incorporate the vital elements of accountability and quality as compounding the dynamics of assessment. They argue:

In New Zealand and elsewhere internationally, this trend towards using educational assessments for accountability purposes in addition to the existing purposes, has highlighted the multiple purposes for assessment. These multiple purposes can include auditing of schools, national monitoring, school leaver documentation, awarding of national qualifications, appraisal of teachers, curriculum evaluation and the improvement of teaching and learning" (Bell & Cowie, 2001b, p. 2).

Drawing from Little (1990) and Bell & Cowie (2001), and from the international literature, a summary of the multiple purposes of assessment that arguably lead to tensions for the operational procedures of any national qualifications framework include (1) systemic control (2) public accountability (3) programme and institutional auditing/evaluation, (4) pedagogical aid (5) instructional management/monitoring and surveillance (6) learner-teacher (de)motivation (7) sifting, sorting, selection, placement and (8) grading and certification (see Allal, 2002; Bell, 2000; Berlak, 2000; Black, 1998a; Black & William, 2003; Buchanan, 2000; Carr *et. al.*, 2000; Crooks, 1988, 2002; Hill, 2000, 2002; Katz, 2002; Meadmore, 1995; Sadler, 2002). There are trends towards the attempted use of assessment to improve educational standards (Hill, 2000; Knight, 2000; Resnick & Resnick, 1992), reduce the frustrations of youth and enhance national competitiveness within the global economy (see for instance, The Working Group on 14-19 Reform, 2004, in the British context). There is also a move towards the once narrowly defined practice of quantitative results of testing and examinations to an "assessment culture" and to one of quality (Broadfoot, 1996b, 2003). It is contended in this research that these multiple roles have implications for the establishment and operational procedures for any qualifications framework.

The manifold purposes, however, do not eclipse the accepting influence of educational assessment on learning and awarding of learning. Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot (2002) postulate "assessment is probably the most profound influence on what gets learned,

when learning occurs and who does the learning" (p. 151). Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot (2002) suggest strongly that "getting classroom assessment right is perhaps even more important than pedagogical issues or curriculum content for it is assessment that influences fundamentally a pupil's attitude to learning" (p. 151). Beyond the classroom, the value of assessment is emphasized in Broadfoot and Black's (2004) observation that "much assessment now penetrates every aspect of social, public and political life, bringing with it both intended and unintended consequences" (p. 4).

Assuming that assessment plays a critical role in the awarding of certificates/qualifications as provision of accurate information about a learner's abilities, it is contended in this research that aspects of educational debates on assessment that would inform the operational principles and procedures of qualifications frameworks would include:

- Assessment for summative and formative purposes, including continuous (summative) assessment
- norm referenced and criterion referenced frames (outcomes based, competency based, standards based, achievement based)
- Summative purposes including high stakes, low stakes and internal and external assessment
- validity and reliability

These issues are given further consideration in the sections which follow.

#### **4.5.1 Assessment for Summative and Formative Purposes**

Two of the main cultures of assessment in education are the assessment of learning (summative/external) and assessment for learning (formative/internal/classroom) (Black, 1998; Crooks, 2002; Harlen, 1998; Lambert & Lines, 2000; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002). Several writers differentiate between these two main cultures (see Black 2001; Black & William, 1998a, 1998b, 2003; Dann, 2002; Lambert & Lines, 2000). Crooks (2002), for example, makes a clear distinction between the two:

Assessment of learning (often described as summative assessment) aims to provide a well-founded, clear and up-to-date picture of a student's current capabilities or attitudes, progress over time or further growth needs and potential (p. 241),

and

Assessment for learning (often described as formative assessment) is focused on enhancing student development or teacher and student rather than a planned formal event ... Assessment for learning is an integral part in

classroom life and appears to have more affinity to good teaching practice than to good summative assessment (p. 241).

Crooks' (2002) distinction between summative and formative assessment is theoretically clear cut. Given the discourses of managerialism, his distinction is undoubtedly from an educational theory perspective. Also, given previous theorizing on learning and assessment, although it appears to be straightforward, such distinctions in themselves are implicit in the broadening purposes of assessment. Such theoretical distinctions have led educationalists to infer whether there should be distinct and discrete boundaries between "assessment of learning" - for the purposes of grading, reporting, certification, raising standards, accountability, and quality assurance which apparently calls for different priorities, new procedures and a new commitment - and that of "assessment for learning", which apparently has its own defined and established procedures. For some writers, the two are theoretically distinct and the boundaries are clear cut; while for others, the boundaries are indeterminable in terms of the use of information collected (Bell & Cowie, 2001b; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003; Harlen, 1998; Sadler, 1998, for arguments on formative assessment). In the real world and of significance to qualifications frameworks, particularly in developing countries like the OECS, pragmatism is inevitable - it is not the descriptions of kinds of assessment or the varied classifications that matter, but rather the purpose; that is, the use to which information arising out of educational assessment is put (Black, 2000a, 2001; Black & William, 1998a, 1998b; Black & Broadfoot, 2004; Broadfoot, 2001, 2002; Stobart, 2003, 2004).

In this research, it is contended that certification continues to be one of the dominant uses to which assessment information is put in today's societies (Wolf, 2002, in Chapter Three). For this enduring use, the growing debates in policy priorities on assessment information in this research include:

- the extent to which any assessment task can serve both formative and summative functions; that is, the extent to which the information collected for formative assessment can be used later for summative (certification for instance) purposes;
- the roles of internal and external assessment; and
- the role of continuous assessment in the process.

#### 4.5.2 Formative Assessment

International trends indicate that formative assessment is becoming a focus for policy documents on educational assessment and in the professional development of teachers (Bell & Cowie, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). It is often described as:

An integral part of the teaching and learning process. It is used to provide the student with feedback to enhance learning and to help the teacher understand students' learning. It helps build a picture of students' progress, and informs decisions about the next steps in teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 8).

Bell & Cowie (2001b) trace the development of formative assessment:

One of the trends in educational assessment that has put the spotlight on formative assessment is the development of more valid assessment procedures. In the 1970s and 80s, there was much criticisms of the validity of summative assessment used in educational assessment, and in particular, of the limitations of the validity of external testing and examinations ... this included criticisms of validity of assessment tasks such as multiple choice questions, and criticisms of norm referenced assessments such as those of national qualifications (p. 1).

According to Bell & Cowie (2001b), there was also criticism of the impact of high stakes, standardized testing on school learning, which highlighted the need the need to:

- Assess a wide range of learning outcomes, such as performance of investigation skills and multiple forms of intelligence;
- Use a wider range of assessment tasks (other than multiple choice tests, questions requiring short answers and essay questions), for example portfolios and performance based assessment; and
- Integrate assessment with the curriculum and to assess in more authentic contexts.

(Bell & Cowie, 2001b, p. 2)

Also, given the discourse of managerialism in this research, Bell & Cowie's (2001b) argument that assessment for formative purposes was grounded in three cornerstones of the accountability process is important. The writers describe these three cornerstones as "a prescribed set of standards, an auditing and monitoring process to ascertain if the standards have been attained, and a way of raising standards if low standards have been indicated in the audits" (Bell & Cowie, 2001b, p. 3). Bell & Cowie observed that as these recommendations could not be achieved through external examinations or

standardized testing alone, assessment by teachers (also called internal assessment) has been seen as a way forward (Bell & Cowie, 2001b).

Formative assessment is therefore advocated as a suitable measure to deal with the increasing purpose for which assessment is undertaken. The conclusion reached by many educationists is that formative assessment is an aspect of school and classroom assessment and evaluation, most critical to improving learning (for example, Bell, 2000; Bell & Cowie, 2001b, 2002; Hattie & Jaeger, 1998; Sadler, 1998; Torrance & Pryor, 1995). Black & William (1998b), for example, argue:

There is a strong body of evidence that formative assessment is an essential feature of classroom work and that development of it can raise standards. We know of no other way of raising standards for which such a strong *prima facie* case can be made on the basis of such large learning gains (p. 19).

Nevertheless, formative assessment is overshadowed by summative assessment in several contexts (Black *et al.*, 2003; Harlen, 1998; Sadler, 1998), including in the OECS (Trotman, 1999). Notwithstanding its novelty, one source of difficulty lies in the vagueness of the definability of formative assessment. Like other terminologies in assessment, the term formative assessment does not enjoy a widely recognized and agreed upon meaning in the literature (Harlen, 1998; Sadler, 1998). Internal assessment and continuous summative assessment are also called formative assessment. Harlen (1998) argues that confusion over its terminology begins in the fact that it has to be undertaken by teachers and therefore the perception that it is “teacher assessment” (p. 10). In this regard, calls for accuracy in teachers’ judgements have “transmitted an official message that reliable summative assessment is of paramount importance” (Harlen, 1998, p. 10). This is communicated and confirmed in teachers’ minds, according to Harlen (1998), by the government producing media reports, press releases (league tables of schools in England and Wales) on measures of pupil achievement (Harlen, 1998).

Seemingly, this heavy emphasis on accuracy in teachers’ judgements has affected the widespread use of formative assessment in the classroom by teachers. Black *et al.* (2003) also indicate that “evidence of surveys of teacher practice shows that formative assessment is not at present a strong feature of classroom work” (p. 2). At the level of practice, therefore, much of the classroom assessment takes the form of a series of short summative tests called continuous summative assessment, rather than being an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Black *et al.*, 2003).

the perceived shortage of use of formative assessment is also attributed to a lack of a research base by Black (1998). According to Black, "formative assessment has not been studied for summative and accountability purposes, to anything like the same extent for the classroom context, where they will raise different and equally difficult problems" (1998, p. 54).

In some cases, it is believed that teachers simply lack the training, experience and expertise that give them the 'know how' for implementation at the level of practice (see Fitzsimons, 1997b; Pennycuick, 1990). This finding is significant in this research as the trend in awarding qualifications, particularly in the New Zealand context, is such that teachers are given more professional responsibility for assessment tasks.

#### **4.5.3 Continuous Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment is assessment carried out at the end of a learning period. Pennycuick (1990) has observed, however, a significant international trend towards continuous summative assessment. He argues that many developing countries, with a variety of political ideologies, have introduced continuous assessment to operate in parallel with external (summative) examinations at secondary level.

Bell & Cowie (2001) define continuous summative assessment as the "assessment of student learning which is recorded over an extended period of time, aggregated and reported to the student and others at some later date" (p. 8). In his review of the situation on continuous assessment in a range of countries of differing size, wealth, and geographical location (such as Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland and the Australian State of Queensland), Pennycuick (1990) identified links in the reasons why the continuous assessment had been introduced. These included: (1) one-off, formal examinations are not a good test of pupil achievement, (2) to integrate curriculum pedagogy and assessment, (3) to serve a broader range of assessment functions, and in particular to emphasize formative functions.

In all the countries considered by Pennycuick (1990), the introduction of continuous assessment has had two major effects: "first, assessment leading to secondary students' final results has been spread over a period between one and three years. Second, a substantial element of the assessment had become school based" (p. 111). He notes,

however, that the introduction of continuous assessment was not without its share of practical and technical problems, including:

- (i) Lack of clarity of communications infrastructure;
  - (ii) Teachers' lack of experience and expertise in CA;
  - (iii) Increased workload for teachers;
  - (iv) There may be an overload on pupils undertaking projects/course work in several subjects simultaneously; and
  - (v) Sources of unreliability in continuous assessment including "administrative mistakes, teacher or assessor bias, conscious and unconscious and doubtful originality of work (i.e collusion or cheating)" (p. 116).
- (vi) Lack of comparability between classes, within schools and between schools.

Another implication, not highlighted by Pennycuick (1990), is the requirement of the collection of sufficient and appropriate evidence on which to base a judgment about achievement against the relevant national standard (see also Keown, 1996). For the development of qualifications frameworks, some uncertainties for continuous summative assessment, for which there are no hard and fast rules include:

how many separate assessments have to be recorded for the aggregated mark or grade to be reliable and valid; how best to store the multiple documentation; how to aggregate the marks or grades; the problems with reducing many assessment results into one grade ... whether all achievement objectives ... have to be assessed and how often (Bell & Cowie, 2001b, p. 2).

The pros and cons identified by Pennycuick (1990) in his observations regarding continuous assessment indicate that any consideration for the introduction of continuous assessment as part of the operational policies of qualifications frameworks (particularly in the case of the OECS) must consider both advantages and disadvantages.

#### **4.5.4 Summative (Internal and External Assessment)**

Assessment for summative purposes can also be internal or external. Internal assessment, in its most general sense, can be taken to mean "a system under which wholly or in part, teachers are made responsible for assessing the achievements of their pupils" (New Zealand School Certificate Examination Board Wellington (SCEBW), 1972, p.1). Advantages of internal assessment identified include:

- Assessment is based on results over a period of time rather than a one-shot examination (SCEBW, 1972);

- “Desirable skills and qualities (e.g practical skills, oral skills, work habits, attitude, adaptability and inventiveness) which are difficult to measure by external examination could be taken into account” (SCEBW, 1972, p.1);
- “A powerful cause of a sense of failure in the minds of many young people would be removed along with the external examination” (SCEBW, 1972, p.1);
- Flexibility of programmes to suit needs of students, particularly for top and bottom range (SCEBW, 1972);
- Relief of steady build up of tension and emotional instability prior or during examinations (SCEBW, 1972).

Internal assessment, however, has also been thought of as yielding disadvantages, which some developed countries like New Zealand have transcended. In the case of developing countries such as the OECS, some of these impending issues include:

- Possible loss of motivation on the part of both teachers and learners because of a direct obvious goal;
- Little protection for learners against teachers who use subjective personal issues to form judgements;
- Exposure of teachers and learners to dissatisfaction from parents/general public who are dissatisfied with judgements;
- An additional system of recourse for dissatisfied learners and their parents;
- Comparability of standards within and between schools;
- Consistency of standards between and within schools;
- Dealing with public questions and perceptions on the reliability and validity of internal assessment as replacements for external examinations.

(SCEBW, 1972)

Elley (1988) also points to lessons from overseas which indicate that “internal assessments made without some control over standards frequently result in rapid grade inflation, obvious discrepancies in standards between schools, and strong pressures to return to the traditionally “safe” system of external examinations” (p. 1). In this regard, he reminded readers of Terrence’s insistence that “we must have moderation in all things” (Elley, 1988, p. 1).

Traditionally, summative assessment has taken the form of external tests and examinations. In fact, one source of many of the tensions experienced in educational assessment (specifically on the issue of when are formative, continuous summative or summative assessments more appropriate for use) has been found to be the dichotomy between 'high-stakes' and 'low-stakes assessment' (see Black, 1998; Somerset, 1996; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002, for example). This is because:

Low stakes have only minor consequences ... High stakes examinations, on the other hand, have major consequences. Pupils' performance in high-stakes examinations directly affects their chances of being recruited for the most desirable opportunities in further education, training or employment; and hence have substantial impact on their long-term life chances" (Somerset, 1996, p. 268).

In high stakes assessment, summative assessment has been seen to have several advantages. Some of these are summarized and condensed below from the work of Crooks (1988); Eggleston (1984); Elley & Livingstone (1972); Gipps (1994); Mathews (1985); and Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot (2002) among others.

- Some teachers prefer the role of classroom teacher rather than that of passing judgment for life chances;
- Many teachers prefer summative/external examinations because they are not trained to, and are unable to set and mark, summative assessment tasks that are comprehensive and reliable (see Fitzsimons, 1997b, for instance). Fewer still are able to relate their pupils' results with a comparable degree of accuracy to other pupils;
- For some reason, teachers have not been trusted by the general public or politicians, resulting in more confidence in summative (high stakes) assessment as being valid and reliable;
- Extrinsic awards (qualifications/certificates) are offered to learners;
- Intrinsic rewards: preparation is considered an exercise of discipline and self control; success is correspondingly rewarding;
- High stakes summative assessment purports to ensure justice and fairness by employing a minimum level of competence in examining (scaling) marking procedures;
- Summative assessment has set national criteria against which all candidates can be measured and graded. Similar yardsticks are set for matriculations, for job entries or entries to institutions of higher learning. The grades/qualifications can also be used when applicants migrate to other jurisdictions, regionally or internationally;
- Summative assessment provides an unprejudiced and autonomous official system for recourse, specifically in instances of uncertainties about a learner's

ability, and also serves in the interests of the school when faced with disapproval from those who disagree with the results of teacher assessment;

- Summative assessment serves the purpose of the externalisation of reliable information on learning (Broadfoot, 1996b). Such information, according to Broadfoot (1996b), is used in some instances as the foundation on which the quality of pupils, teachers and institutions, and even the education system as a whole, can be judged.

Several writers, however, argue that summative assessments (usually high stakes assessments), which invariably take the form of external tests and examinations, are known to have some deleterious effects on individuals, curriculum and pedagogy (see Crooks, 1988, 2002; Elley & Livingstone, 1972; Gipps, 1990, 1994, among others). These are briefly summarized as:

- The potential of summative assessment to nurture two types of learning - the 'deep and meaningful' versus the 'surface' learning - is questionable. The latter may involve passive acceptance of information without a true grasp of its meaning whereas the former is characterized by an ability to apply learning to novel or challenging tasks (see Harlen & Crick, 2003);
- Performance of schools and individuals has been a subject of discussion at national and community levels, and in the media, rather than aiming for feedback and improvement in performance;
- In terms of the curriculum, high stakes assessment has the capacity to limit what is taught. Teachers teach to test and, though the examinations are curriculum based, a topic that is not going to be tested is never taught;
- Syllabus coverage, arguably as a means of accountability for what has been taught, appears to be one of the issues in all types of assessment. Teachers are perceived as speeding up topics and moving on to the next, irrespective of pupils' grasp of the work in hand. Hence, the quality of pupils' learning is believed to be compromised;
- The failure rate is usually high, and is usually blamed on the assessment system;
- Failure to obtain the right person for the right job, lack of proficiencies by so-called certified persons, and even unemployment are usually associated with the deficiencies in the assessment system because of its inability to match formal qualifications with the skills that learners possess when they leave the system;
- Historically, the data sometimes entail(ed) the results of one-shot examinations, with their inherent characteristics of statistical validity, reliability, measurability and predictability. A common criticism is that some summative assessments fall short of both validity and reliability;
- Summative assessment is usually reported in one letter grades (A, B, C for example) or one number grades (I, II, III, IV for example), percentages, or profiled into bands. These numerical assignments, marks or grades awarded are often

quite meaningless and do not provide much information of students' abilities. Also tasks assigned to profiles, grades and numbers do not fit into these narrow descriptions. Therefore, the reporting of the results are not always accurate indicators or explanations of performance or ability to the end-users.

- The prejudicial aspects of high stakes assessment may stereotype students - They may be labelled as having certain levels of ability (Gipps, 1994);
- Summative assessment (examinations and tests) give rise to a competitive culture, which can encourage cheating;
- Summative assessment is "usually divorced from classroom situation" (Broadfoot, 1996b, p. 2);
- In general, far too much cramming or rote memorization is necessary in order to pass, and it has been found that excessive memorization does not help with continuous learning and the development of life skills;
- The majority of tasks are limited to paper and pencil tests. The fun in learning, the creativity, innovation, application and experimentation with knowledge are believed to be lost in the process;
- Students' self-esteem and self-concept are sometimes shattered (Somerset, 1996). By way of example of that occurrence in the Caribbean region, a World Bank survey conducted in 2002 describes the common entrance examination (11 plus examination), as the most shattering experience for the youth of the region. On average, for the less than 50% who are 'successful' overall, the effect is different but almost as deleterious (World Bank, 2003).

One of the major considerations in the establishment of qualifications frameworks for the OECS is that one-off, formal summative assessment is a poor measure to test pupil achievement, integrate curriculum pedagogy and assessment and to serve the broader range of raising standards, accountability and quality assurance functions as previously discussed. Also, particularly in the OECS, since summative (external) assessments have become the main arbiter of future educational life's choices, society tends to treat the results as the main object of education rather than a useful but imperfect indicator of achievement (Gipps, 1990). The value of education is equated with passing examinations for life-threatening reasons such as economic and individual empowerment (Broadfoot, 1996b, 2002, 2003; Eggleston, 1984; Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002).

#### **4.5.5 Norm Referenced Assessment versus Criterion Referenced**

Another dichotomy that is considered to be of concern to any qualifications framework is that of norm referenced and criterion referenced based approaches. Norm referenced assessment originates mainly from the psychometric tradition, and relates to grading an

individual's performance in relation to that of his/her peers; that is, in terms of relative performance rather than absolute performance (Gipps, 1984, 1990).

Criterion referencing, however, lays down specific learning objectives, criteria, specifications, performance standards, learning outcomes and specific competencies (knowledge and skills) which the learner must achieve (Leonard, 2002; McNaughton, 1990). Wood (1986) in Little (1986) cites Glaser's (1963) paper on criterion referenced testing (CRT) as a watershed in the development of educational assessment, and a separation from psychometric theory of norm referencing.

McNaughton (1990) discusses some advantages of criterion-referenced assessment in the New Zealand and British contexts. He notes that once criteria are spelt out, trialed and provided, they have the educational advantage over grades and marks that are not criterion-related (McNaughton, 1990). Reasons provided are that "pre-specified criteria ought to make examining and testing processes more valid and reliable insofar as they provide precise guidance for examiners and assessment task developers" (McNaughton, 1990, p. 122). A profile of achievements can be compiled for students, teachers and parents of students. Accomplishments of these profiles can be motivational and celebratory, particularly for students who "have nothing to celebrate and nothing to strive for under a system tied to norm-referenced system" (p. 122).

Lester (1995) points out that while the gradual move is towards outcomes and criteria in qualifications as a prerequisite for making systems more flexible and learner centred, "criterion referencing suffers from its own set of problems" (see Lester, 1995, pp. 243-244). One of these has been identified by Lester (1995) as an inverse relationship between validity and reliability. Lester's argument holds if the criteria set act as a ceiling to what is achieved and if they discourage unplanned and individualized outcomes. He also finds that one problem stems from an existing unsound belief that meaningful criteria can be devised that are completely reliable and which can avoid significant assessor judgment (see Lester, 1995). Other concerns expressed include the aberration that pre-specified criteria lend themselves more to an instructional mode than to an educational interactive model of teaching (Lennox, 1995; McNaughton, 1990). In a specific context, McNaughton (1990) also points to the sharp decline of teachers' enthusiasm for criterion referenced curriculum development and assessment when their professional judgments on criteria were superseded by a standardized list of pre-specified criteria.

Another problem thought to be associated with criterion referencing and norm referencing has to do with the lack of clear boundaries between the two. Croll (1996) argues that in educational practice, while norm referenced and criterion referenced assessment usually represent contrasting and even opposing approaches to educational assessment, the distinction is not clear cut. In norm referenced assessment, an individual's performance is judged in relation to the performance of his or her peers (Crooks, 2002). Croll (1996) observes that norm referencing does not have to be related to a normal curve or to the idea of normal distribution of achievements. He emphasizes that whenever a test is reported or interpreted with reference to the achievement of others, norm referencing is taking place. Croll (1996) construes criterion referenced testing as "involving constructing assessment procedures which relate an individual's results not to the results of others but to whether or not they meet a pre-determined, independent criterion" (p. 268). He notes that "in education, criterion-referenced tests are intended to establish whether or not someone has particular knowledge or competence, not in relation to how they stand with relation to other people with regard to these" (Croll, 1996, p. 268). In explaining the blurred distinction, Croll (1996) argues that "clearly norm referenced tests cannot be compiled without reference to educational criteria ... Conversely, just as norm referenced tests must always take account of educational criteria, so criterion referenced assessment must in practice take account of performance of children" (p. 269).

From the foregoing, McNaughton's (1990) observation comes to the fore - that "research in Scotland, and the experience of working parties in England, in Australia, in New Zealand and in the USA all suggest that criterion-related assessment is not necessarily a panacea for all of the problems of norm-referenced assessment and examining" (p. 122).

#### **4.5.6 Criterion Referenced-based Approach in New Zealand**

In the New Zealand context, the norm referenced national assessment for national qualifications has been replaced by criterion referenced assessment. Crooks (2002) elucidates, "until about 15 years ago formal assessment and reporting in New Zealand schools was predominantly norm-referenced, emphasizing the relative performance of different students. Arguments for criterion referencing or 'standards-based assessment'

(as it is commonly called in New Zealand) ... gained ground steadily over the intervening years)" (p. 241). Quite the opposite to the former norm referenced assessment system in New Zealand, which was believed to be about setting beforehand the quota of people who are to pass or fail (Lennox, 1995) and using the "normal distribution ... to scatter learners widely so that the best could score 100% and the worst almost nothing (NZQA, 1992c, p. 22), the NZQA introduced a new approach towards assessment through the NQF. Fitzsimons (1997b) argues that the approach is "aimed at developing and maintaining a fair assessment system which measures achievement against clearly stated standards" (p. 19). Lennox (1995) concurs with the explanation that credit on the national qualifications framework represents achievement of outcomes that are expressed in unit standards. Instead of scoring student work and comparing students with each other, performances are judged against agreed standards for specified learning outcomes (NZQA, 1992c).

The NZQA had set out on a course in which candidates were rated as either achieving or not achieving a standard. Over time, the model combines outcomes-based assessment (for whole qualifications) and achievement based assessment (achieved, not achieved, credit and excellence). Although the NZQA has made adjustments with the newly implemented Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, the use of unit and achievement standards remain central to its model (NZQA, 2001). For example, the NZQA (2001a) in its description of qualifications components, courses, and unit standards, advises:

quality assurance bodies will require that courses and parts of qualifications will be required to have outcome statements. These outcome statements are required to be publicly available in an appropriate way. In the case of unit standards and components of national qualifications (such as achievement standards) public availability must occur through national registration" (p. 6).

It has been found in this research that this notion of assessment based on standards - a "yardstick approach to assessment" (Smithers, 1997, p. 2) - is used by the NZQA as being synonymous with "criterion-referencing, competency based, standards-based, [achievement-based, outcomes based] assessment - each implying slight differences in emphasis but all embodying the same idea" (Smithers, 1997, p. 2). This approach to assessment, according to Jessup (1991), poses the question of whether the standard, achievement or outcome statements have been achieved or not. The award is therefore based solely on the outcome of assessment (Ecclestone, 2004; Jessup, 1991).

By adopting a criterion-based assessment approach, Lennox (1995) argues that two novel aspects were implemented through the NQF, which are “a reliance on internal assessment and standards based assessment” (p. 3). Both aspects of the approach, according to Lennox (1995) “represent significant departure” from the previous practice (p. 3). By way of example, in schools, teachers assess students and their decisions become results that contribute to qualifications. “Such a direct relationship between teacher assessment and national certification”, according to Lennox (1995), “has never before existed in New Zealand” (p. 3).

Reasons for the introduction of the standards in New Zealand and internationally have been presented in Chapter Three. The shift to criterion-referenced assessment in New Zealand, however, has not been uncomplicated (see for instance Elley, 1988, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1997). According to Lennox (1995), there was the general impression that the NQF was taking schools into the unknown and the unsought (p. 3). Lennox (1995) claimed that “for many teachers assessment against standards is a mystery” (p. 3) His claims were also reported by Fitzsimons (1997b). Other concerns identified by Lennox (1995) included:

Indecision and political edicts regarding the role of external examinations ... Predictably, sectors of the community that have experienced success in the traditional assessment and qualifications culture have tended to oppose the reforms or at least to promote more conservative alternatives and those connected with histories of educational failure have embraced new reforms (p. 2).

Lennox (1995) laments that reactions have generally fulfilled the predictions of change analysts: initial enthusiasm for the broad concept of a new regime turned to resistance as implementation details became known, and work load issues arose. Now, however, many stakeholders are in the next stage, and are accepting the inevitability of the reform. Teachers, in particular, are believed to be grappling with the aspects of implementation (Education Forum 2000; Fitzsimons, 1997b).

#### **4.6 The Standards Debate**

The foregoing review has established that criterion referenced assessment is central to the New Zealand model. Griffin (1997) argues “the shift from a content orientated curriculum to an outcomes focus has several interpretations among educators, education systems and practitioners” (p. 1). His argument is illustrative in New Zealand’s interpretation. Arguably, the most enduring debate from an education discourse

perspective that surrounds the criterion referenced approach to assessment in the New Zealand context is that of the use of standards based approach to assessment. The discussion which follows, on the use of the standards based approach to assessment, is structured in terms of definition of the standards, standards setting, standard setters, reporting the standards, comparability of standards, applicability to all fields of learning and suitability to high stakes assessment.

#### **4.6.1 Definition of the Standards and Confusing Terminology**

The NZQA defines unit standards as nationally registered element/outcome statements and performance criteria and administrative functions (2004a). According to the NZQA (1992c), the term unit standards based assessment means “when the measurement or outcome is assessed, in other words, “analyzed” against some fixed criterion or level of achievement known as a “standard”. A whole set of standards may be involved” (p. 22). The NZQA (1992c) explains also that, in the NQF, achievement based assessment refers to “assessment in which a number of progressively more demanding standards are used; and in which all learner achievement is reported, usually in the form of a letter or number grade” (p. 26). With unit standards, there are no gradations - one attains a standard or does not attain the standard. Within achievement based standards, there are gradations - students are given varied grades, namely, excellence, merit, achieved, and not achieved. The NZQA also employs a more general outcomes based approach in awarding qualifications; in which case, rather than having unit standards (the building block of the NQF) as its base, the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications has outcomes as its building block. Learning outcomes are described by the NZQA (2001a) as statements about:

What the whole qualification represents in terms of the application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; and (p. 4)

The components of the qualification which, in their combination make up the wholeness of the qualification (p. 4).

Despite the NZQA’s attempts to differentiate among standards and outcomes from its own definitions, it is clear that the NZQA defines standards as outcomes. One observation thus far is the lack of clarity in the definability of standards in the New Zealand context. This is not only a concern in the New Zealand context. Ten case studies reported on by OECD support the concern that national interpretations differed considerably in their explicit and implicit definitions of educational standards (Lowe,

1995, p. 8). For example, while Ontario was involved with establishing criterion- or outcome-referenced standards, they cautioned that the word standards was confusing because of the different meanings attributed to it. In the United States, Baker & Linn (1995) reported that “in practice, the term performance standard has a loose definition, perhaps assigning different content standards to age ranges, but stopping well before qualitative and quantitative standards have been articulated” (p. 203). In Sweden, the term standards was “difficult to translate in an idiomatic way” (Lowe, 1995, p. 11). Given the apparent variations in the meaning of standards (see Black, 1998), it can therefore be concluded that one site of tension with the standards based approach lies in the clarity of definition of standards, particularly in light of the argument of some writers that the effectiveness of the standards is relative to the clarity of definition (Foulkes, *et al.*, 1996; Jessup, 1991; NZVCC, 1994; Priestley, 1996, 1997, 1999).

#### **4.6.2 Standards Setting**

Standards setting is considered to be the process of deriving the criteria that specify expectations for learners (Lowe, 1995). In the case of the NZQA (2004c):

Standards are drafted by expert groups (engineers standards, geographers for geography standards and so on). The draft standards are then circulated to stakeholders for comment and contribution. Once standards are agreed to and registered, they are subject to review by stakeholders and experts on a regular basis. This allows for standards to be refined and updated over time (p.1).

The NZQA was criticized in the earlier days for developing standards in isolation from the curriculum (McKenzie, 1999). The standards setting process, however, appeared to be “the most problematic topic” (Lowe, 1995, p. 12), as revealed by lack of commonality in the scope and type of information supplied in the ten case studies conducted by the OECD (see Baker & Linn, 1995; Coolahan, 1995; Graham, 1995; Michel, 1995; Ruddock, 1995, for case studies of standards setting in various countries). Interestingly, the OECD was unable to derive a synthesis of the meaning of the standards setting process because of the vast dissimilarity in practices among the ten countries. In New Zealand, however, the NZQA (1993d) posits that, “in practice the academic operational and management independence of institutions is also encouraged by separating clearly setting of standards from the development of curriculum” (p. 9). In the findings of the OECD, the Australian case was presented as having overarching significance: “the best standard setting occurs when curriculum and psychometric considerations are married” (McGaw, 1995, p. 46).

### 4.6.3 Standards Setters

Of interest to this research is the question of who sets the standards. There appears to be some similarity in terms of the core group of people who set the standards in the New Zealand context and elsewhere (Lowe, 1995). According to Lowe (1995), standard setters include “experienced teachers, school principals, university faculty, research specialists, professional educationists, inspectors where they exist, and representatives of the world of work, especially where vocational and technological studies are concerned” (p. 15). In the case of the NZQA, various groups are responsible for the standards setting process; for example, Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) develop standards and national qualifications for specific industries and professions - they are responsible for about two-thirds of the standards on the framework (NZQA, 2004c). Also Maori Qualifications Services are responsible for qualifications and standards in the field of Maori, while NZQA’s National Qualifications Services develop, maintain and promote unit standards and national qualifications that are not the responsibility of an ITO or the Maori Qualifications Services (NZQA, 2004c). In the case of the achievement standards, the Secondary Education Team in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Group of the Ministry of Education co-ordinates the development of achievement standards, assessment resources, and provides teacher professional development in these areas (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2004). Carter, Gibbs, Gibson, Glogau, Orpe (2001) note that “to design and develop achievement standards, subject specialists were brought together in groupings recognized as learning areas” (p. 13). Within each learning area, the developers are separated into subject specific groupings (Carter, *et al.*, 2001). The method used by New Zealand coincides with international methods described by the OECD (1995). In the OECD (1995) report, Lowe (1995) explains that the criteria for selection of standard setters are that they should represent a wide range of interest groups and be both proven experts and objective.

### 4.6.4 Reporting the Standards

Reporting the standards is a major aspect of assessment for summative purposes, and also assessment for accountability purposes. Concerns in the literature, in this respect, show aspects of convergence (See Class Forum, 2000; Elley, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). The findings of the ten case studies by the OECD indicated a general level of frustration with the need to record highly detailed information about students’ achievements as they relate to the standards. In the case of New Zealand, Fitzsimons (1997b) and Mansell

(1998), for example, have reported that the workload involved in the mandated reporting of aggregated student information for every outcome seems to mitigate against its widespread acceptance and the potential benefit or otherwise to the classroom teacher (see also Elliott, 1996; Elley, 1996a, 1996b; Falk, 2002; Harker, Gibbs, Ryan, Weir & Adams, 2003; Hill, 2000). Reporting the standards has wide implications for consistency in reporting formats, capacity of computer databases, the use of technology, and training of educators, specifically in areas such as reporting and use of technologies.

#### **4.6.5 Comparability of Standards**

With respect to the multiple uses of assessment information such as for summative purposes and accountability purposes, another source of difficulty has been identified as the permanence and comparability of the standards. According to Woodhouse (1999), the value of standards is short-lived because of the effects of time on standards, curriculum and teaching methods. Black (1998) also argues that assessment methods with time make even a simple comparison of standards achieved over, say, ten years “almost impossible” (see Black, 1998, pp. 146-147, for further arguments on the comparison of standards). Notwithstanding comparability, there is also the implication that the establishment of minimum threshold levels would be expensive and therefore funding, development and updating the standards are costly undertakings (Black, 1998).

#### **4.6.6 Applicability to All Fields of Learning**

As to the applicability of the standards based approach to all fields of learning, a common view in the literature, for instance by Elley (1995), is that standards are incapable of representing traditionally “widely accepted goals of education” (p. 79). The writer believes that the standards have not been able to represent:

the ability to write fluently on a wide range of topics, to read critically texts of different genres, to draw inferences about characters motives, to devise strategy to solve numeric problems, to detect hidden assumptions in an advertisement, to speak clearly to an audience, to interpret historical documents (Elley, 1995, p. 78).

In the application of the standards in the New Zealand context, Elley (1995) identified at least three sources of difficulty with the standards: (1) the statements which describe the standards; (2) the context within which the assessment is made; and (3) the type of question formulated. He argued further that most curriculum standards included in the NZQA documents are either relative statements (more fluent, increasing accuracy, a

wider range of facts) or vague (can understand x, can understand appropriate strategies). One implication emphasized by Elley (1995) is that questions can be set at many different levels of difficulty which are ostensibly measuring the same quality.

There are also some interesting developments on the use of standards based assessment reported at the level of practice in the New Zealand context. Fitzsimons (1997b) identified difficulties such as the inability of teachers to put the new information on the standards based approach into practice, the volume of written tests in relation to other possible new assessment tasks, overload of work by teachers, increased recording and assessment, lack of integration of assessment with curriculum and relatively little recognition of change in the culture of schools that would be required to ensure success of assessment (Fitzsimons, 1997b).

#### **4.6.7 Suitability for High Stakes Assessment**

Elley (1995) critiques standards-based assessment in the New Zealand context as being highly suspect when the results count for high stakes. He casts doubts on the capacity of standards to function adequately, “whether for earning a qualification, moving on to new phases of learning, being selected for limited entry courses, winning scholarships, gaining new jobs, attracting special needs funds” (Elley, 1995, p. 78). Although beyond the scope of this research, the scholarship debacle in the New Zealand context in 2005 (see Appendix F) is seemingly one example of such ongoing debates. Two key employees of the NZQA had resigned as of May 16, 2005 seemingly over the scholarship debacle.

#### **4.6.8 Merits of Standards Based Approach**

In spite of the shortcomings of the standards based approach, some of the opponents as well as other writers agree that there are merits to be derived from the use of the standards based approach (see Barker, 1995; Lennox, 1996; Smithers, 1997; OECD, 1995). Some writers (see Elley, 1995; Peddie & Tuck, 1995, for example) also posit that the standards based approach provides the language that sets clear criteria that is free from bias for assessment. For instance, the NZQA points out:

People are provided with clear information about standards, assessment events and procedures, assessment is free of gender, ethnic or other biases, people with special needs are appropriately accommodated, people have opportunities to undertake further assessment if required standards are not met, and people have access to appeal procedures (NZQA, n.d, p. 14).

Roberts (1997) concurs:

Students cannot be expected to complete an assessment task with confidence if they are unsure of exactly what is demanded of them, and what counts as strengths and weaknesses in a submitted piece of work ... The absence of clear criteria for assessment - whether this pertains to student work, promotions, job applications, or anything else undertaken in a competitive environment - increases the possibility of unjust and unjustifiable decisions being made. While a lack of clarity might, in some instances, grant employers and others in position of power greater licence to make decisions as they see fit, such a principle is unlikely to find support on either ethical or educational grounds in a national qualification system (p. 168).

Irwin, Elley & Hall (1995) also concluded that there are a number of positive aspects about standards, despite the number of concerns that they had identified previously. In applauding the current pendulum swing towards standards based assessment at all levels of the education system, positive aspects identified by the writers included:

- The potential for considerable flexibility in packaging outcome objectives (essentially what standards are) to meet the needs of learners;
- The requirement that providers be much clearer about course and programme outcomes;
- Potential for improvement to cross-crediting and credit transfer arrangements through greater clarity about course and programme outcomes;
- The potential for recognizing prior learning; and
- The potential for teacher development arising from involvement in the moderation processes.

The principles and concerns of managerialism are also prominent in the merits put forward for the use of the standards based approach. In the British context, for instance, Naismith 1990 (in Gipps, 1990) explained that in the absence of standards, pupils and teachers have no alternative but to establish their own, which are often too low. He explains:

Standards will ... provide the public with a means of measuring the effectiveness of the education system ... Standards will enable administrators to target budgets where improvements are needed. [Also] ... if no one knows how curriculum and universal standards would guarantee equality of opportunity to the pupil .... [how would] accountability to parents and the public, intellectual rigour to the problem of learning and enable the education service to be managed in ways which relate financial output to education output? (Naismith, in Gipps, 1990, p. 27).

From the perspective of nations, Lowe (1995) identifies four main aims of government that invoke the need for setting and achieving high standards:

- “to ensure that the national workforce is skilled and versatile against the background of continuing structural adjustment of national economies and labour markets and of intensifying international competitiveness in the global economy;
- to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training provision during a prolonged period of budgetary constraints. Value for money has become a watch word with its implications for strict auditing of learning outcomes and quality control;
- to monitor educational progress in a systematic fashion. The devolution in many countries increases the necessity of ensuring equitable inputs and outcomes across a country;
- to put an end to school failure and, in particular, the propensity of many socially disadvantaged young people to leave school without qualifications. This implies closing the gap between what the curriculum prescribes and what students actually learn”.

(Lowe, 1995, p. 11)

These aims appear to encapsulate the central argument in this research that the two loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education theory tend to inform the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems.

#### **4.7 Validity & Reliability Issues**

Fundamental components for all educational assessment, which are beyond extensive discussion in this thesis, include validity and reliability (Bell & Cowie, 1996; Black & William, 1998a, 1998b; Boyle & Christie, 1996; Gielen, Dochy & Dierick, 2003; Gipps, 1984, 1990, 1994; Messick, 1989; Stobart & Gipps, 1997, for example). According to Popham (2003), validity is at the apex of all measurement concepts. Reliability and, assessment bias or error, are other much talked about measurement concepts (see Messick, 1989; Popham, 2003; Stobart & Gipps, 1997, for definitions). Stobart & Gipps (1997) contend that “whenever assessment is high stakes ... the emphasis shifts to the reliability and comparability of qualifications” (p. 92).

One of the major challenges for the traditional psychometric measurements of validity and reliability, however, stems from the new trends in assessment, new thinkings on learning and new modes and strategies of learning and assessment (see Carr & Claxton, 2002; Johnson & Kress, 2003; Ridgway & McCusker, 2003, for example). In some

instances, the new modes are sometimes referred to as alternative assessment, authentic assessment, direct assessment or performance based assessment (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997, for example). Other trends identified include the move towards the once narrowly defined practice of quantitative results of 'testing' and 'examinations' to an 'assessment culture' and, to one of quality (Broadfoot, 1996b, 2003).

All these developments and trends present new challenges to the traditional conceptualizations of reliability and validity of assessment. Broadfoot (2001) explains that the traditional conceptions of validity and reliability of assessment are not compatible:

with the knowledge and skills that will be needed by tomorrow's citizens. Just a shift in employment patterns provoked the emphasis on measurement for the purposes of selection with which we have become familiar over the last hundred years, so advances in technology and management practices are now prompting employers to call for educational systems in developed countries which equip workers of tomorrow with transferable skills, a high level of adaptability and, above all, the commitment to go on learning (p. 100).

This research concurs with the position of Black, who refers to these processes simply as "confidence in the results" (1998, p. 37). Any assessment where there is little confidence in accuracy of results is futile. The higher the stakes, the more important it becomes that "the validity and reliability of an assessment procedure command confidence" (Brooks, 2002, p. 176). For any qualifications framework, therefore, the challenge for educational assessment is to ensure that there is confidence in the results of assessment (both formative and summative, criterion referenced and norm referenced, internal and external, and or high or low stakes) and by implication in the qualifications awarded.

#### **4.8 Critical Assessment Issues for the OECS**

The foregoing theorizing on educational assessment has raised some critical issues for the OECS context. In the OECS, educational assessment is usually associated with high stakes tests and examinations (such as final grading and certificating). The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) has a policy in which school based assessment (SBA) in some subject areas contributes to a percentage of the final marks required for summative assessment (certification). The bulk of the marks, however, are derived from external examinations. In certificating individuals, summative assessment continues to dominate thinking and practice.

On a broader scale, however, assessment invariably takes the form of continuous summative, final projects, external tests and examinations. Summative assessment is also the primary form of assessment used in certificating. One of the main purposes of this summative assessment is externalisation of information that learning has taken place (Broadfoot, 1996b). Broadfoot's (1996b) assertion holds, that for 'insiders' such formalized judgements provide useful standards to measure their own progress, be they pupils, teachers or administrators, but for 'outsiders', she argues:

The information generated by summative evaluation can provide an apparently rational basis for discriminating between individuals when there is need to select. Such information is also the basis of accountability in the sense that it provides judgements to be made on the quality of education being offered (pp. 5-6).

As Broadfoot (1996b) argues, the role of summative assessment (external examinations) is just as much about judging the quality of schools and other education institutions as it is about judging the potential and performance of individuals (Broadfoot, 1996b). Such information is the foundation on which the quality of pupils, teachers, institutions - and even the education system as a whole - is judged (Broadfoot, 1996b). Given the conclusion reached by many educationists, that formative assessment is the aspect of school and classroom assessment and evaluation most critical to improving learning and raising standards (for example, Bell, 1993, 2000; Hattie & Jaeger 1998; Sadler, 1998; Torrance & Pryor 1995), one dilemma for any qualifications framework in the OECS becomes the extent to which formative assessment, if recorded, should count towards summative gains. Some uncertainties, for which there are no hard and fast rules, encompass:

How many separate assessments have to be recorded for the aggregated mark or grade to be reliable and valid; how best to store the multiple documentation; how to aggregate the marks or grades; the problems with reducing many assessment results into one grade ... whether all achievement objectives ... have to be assessed and how often (Bell & Cowie, 2001b, p. 2).

These issues engage the need to build a comprehensive picture of students' overall achievement by presenting in a structured way a set of assessment results which were designed to serve formative purposes, but combining them for summative purposes (such as certificating, placement at higher level institutions, awarding final scholarships). One unresolved issue is: Should summative assessments (external or otherwise) that occur at the end of a phase of learning shed light on the educational history (formative assessment tasks) of the learner?

From the foregoing conceptions in the theoretical analysis, there are perceived advantages (such as improving learning and raising standards) in making available assessment data collected for formative purposes, for use towards summative purposes. Some cynics argue, however, that formative assessment attempts to focus precisely on the 'grey areas' in between that summative assessment (for certification) sets out to avoid (Sadler, 1998). Formative assessment is student-referenced, and judgments are usually made by pupils and teachers about the next steps (Harlen, 1998). Thus, the formative mode of assessment allows for teachers to plan individual pupil's curriculum and inform each pupil and others of progress made (Brown, assessment debate, 1990, p. 39). Formative assessment is of real value as a wider range of assessment techniques can be employed to assess outcomes (laboratory, research and oral skills for example) which cannot be assessed through external assessments. Moreover, the stress, anxiety, and assessment on limited range of learning targets (as in a one-off examination) are avoided.

Bell & Cowie (2001b), however, expressed gross concern for the confidentiality and potential harm of the information provided for formative purposes. If students are encouraged to take risks within the learning process and to be honest and open in their self-assessment, there needs to be clear and pre-arranged agreement about the possible summative uses of the information. Some other issues with direct relevance to the OECS are contained in the culture of distrust (Codd, 1999). In the OECS in particular, politicians and other end-users have never trusted the judgement of teachers for accuracy and robustness. There is also the issue of the extent of acceptance of this professional responsibility by teachers themselves. To what extent do individual teachers in the OECS want to take responsibility for summative assessment? There are also implications deriving from the socio-cultural context - to what extent do politicians and parents or the general public want teachers to be given the responsibility for summative assessment?

Given the pros and cons of continuous summative assessment, two main issues are of significance for the notion of qualifications frameworks: "(1) Whether the introduction of internal assessment is desirable, and if so (2) whether it should (a) replace external examinations, (b) operate in parallel with, but separate from, external examinations or (c) form a component of students' final results, together with external examination results" (Pennycook, 1990, pp. 116-117).

A major implication for the OECS would be the ascendancy and acceptance of the changing roles of assessment to fulfil the broadening roles. Given the factors identified in Table 4.1, for instance, "it may be that the superiority of the summative over the formative is not inevitable" (Gipps, 1990, p. 98). For although the international trends indicate "moves to undermine the grip of the external examinations would potentially yield great benefits" (Lambert & Lines, 2000, p. 205), it can be contended that for individuals in the OECS such moves are unlikely to acquiescence until "fundamental consideration of a number of basic assumptions is undertaken" (Lambert & Lines, 2000, p. 205). In spite of the international trends, Black (1998) cautions, if changes are pursued in isolation, they can give rise to tensions among the education roles of assessment, the managerial roles of assessment and its multiple stakeholders:

A strong drive for accountability can undermine good practices for certification, for example requiring a uniformity of habits change and by emphasizing reliability at the expense of validity. Policies focussed on the accountability and certification functions which pay no heed to their effect on classroom learning will inevitably damage formative assessment. The different purposes, pursued in isolation, pull in contrary directions, not at least because they involve debate between those whose interests are bureaucratic, those caring for the professional status and conditions of teachers, and those whose concerns are centred on the strengthening of the pupil (p. 155).

Of major interest to this research and for the OECS is Black's (1998) counsel that "optimum results are hard to find", but must be pursued (p. 155).

The emphasis is shifted to a criterion referenced interpretation of assessments that indicate progress in terms of outcomes on learning continua (Griffin, 1997). In spite of Croll's (1996) valid observation that there are overlaps between the two, generally criterion referenced testing refers to performance that is compared with a standard (criterion) and not the performance of others (norm referencing) (Barker, 1995; Crooks, 2002; Gipps, 1994; Smithers, 1997). Jessup (1991) also illustrates that "the overall model stands or falls" on how effectively competence and attainment can be stated (p. 134). While for some writers (see Priestley, 1996; 1997), the attainment of rectitude in the definability of the standards has been a tall order, Jessup (1991) laments that "if we cannot [define the standards], it raises fundamental issues for education and training, irrespective of the model used" (p. 134). According to the Jessup (1991), "if you cannot say what you require, how can you develop it [then] how do you know when you have achieved it?" (p. 134) Of significance in theorizing change in the OECS qualifications systems is Smithers' argument. Smithers (1997), one of the opponents of a *carte blanche*

standards approach, contends that assuming that change is what is sought after, “it seems perfectly reasonable to want to set out what a learner should be able to do at the end of a period of learning that he or she could not do before” (p. 39). The advantage is that this shift provides the opportunity for every learner to demonstrate his/her individual strengths (Smithers, 1997). Also, the use of this approach seemingly provides clarification and makes explicit the standards which have been achieved when a qualification is awarded (Lennox, 1995).

This chapter has illustrated the multiple uses of educational processes of learning and assessment to provide support in addressing the reality of changing societies. Theoretical tensions are likely to stem from the apparent lack of definitional boundaries in assessment terminologies, the multiple and changing uses of assessment, and the apparent lack of clarity in the concept and role of assessment in fulfilling the principles of managerialism.

The link between qualifications and assessment and learning, as has been attempted to be made in this chapter, is exemplified in Broadfoot and Black’s (2004) postulate that:

Assessment serves as a communicative device between the world of education and the wider society. This spectrum of communication ranges from the most informal of exchanges to the extremely formal, spanning everything from school reports to high stakes public examinations to job interviews to national monitoring” (p. 9).

In this light, the writers underscore a major theme in this chapter that “the common factor being the use of assessment data of one kind or another as a publicly acceptable code of quality” (Broadfoot & Black, 2004, p. 9).

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The theoretical framework of this research, as developed in Chapters Three and Four, has established a broad context of the loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and those of learning and educational assessment and their contesting theoretical perspectives in the process. Collectively, the theorizing in the two chapters delineates pertinent societal and inter-societal factors that form the educational assessment complex and, by implication, the qualifications complex.

Given the broader context of the role of qualifications in State reform, and the discourse of managerialism, particularly in the New Zealand context, the theoretical framework

points to a view in which, in the real world, assessment practices, and by implication, the awarding of qualifications through assessment, and the role of qualifications frameworks have not developed in a vacuum: they have developed in response to the particular needs and requirements of societies at particular points in time (Black, 1998; Broadfoot, 1984; Codd, 1995; Dore, 1976; Foucault, 1977; Gipps, 1990). From the theoretical framework (Chapters Three and Four) it is evident that the discourses of managerialism have only compounded the multiple use of educational processes of learning and assessment and its potential in addressing the reality of changing societies.

Of implication for establishing the need for change in the OECS qualifications system is that the social, political and economic perspective of educational assessment cannot be downplayed (Bell & Cowie, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Black, 1995, 1998, 2001; Black & William, 1998a; Crooks, 1988, 2002; Harlen, 1998). The current trend in assessment is seemingly one of change, variation and the multi-faceted use of assessment. In this vein, the theoretical framework has emphasized the requirements and needs of a changing society.

These changes draw attention to:

The different orientation of the the learner, a different relationship between the pupil and the assessor, an acknowledgement that context, pupils motivation and the characteristics of the task will affect the performance (the demonstration of the competence on a particular occasion or under particular circumstances) as distinct from the competence (the ability to perform), and the different notions of quality (Bell, 2003, pp. 1-2).

Arguably, the NZQA and its principles of standards and outcomes based assessment was a product of that realization (see Ministry of Education, 1999; Probine-Fargher, 1987, for instance).

In conducting the reviews on both the managerial and education discourses, however, it was clear that in the theoretical analyses of writers, the two loose groupings of discourses are presented as distinct entities which are contesting as a result of their theoretical orientations. In an evaluation of the theoretical framework, it is apparent that there is a missing dimension in linking of all these conceptions. There is also a tendency to view the varied roles and classifications of the roles of the two discourses in informing qualifications frameworks as distinct and discrete entities. Also, despite the significance of the loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism in the New Zealand context, research dimensions of interplay of both discourses and how they have influenced the operational procedures and practices of the NZQA have been left for the most part

unexplored. It is as a result of this seemingly gaping void that the central argument in this thesis is pursued.

The theoretical framework that illuminates critical theorizing and research at the level of practice in this study has been discussed in Chapters Three and Four. The discrete theoretical functions and underpinnings of the two loose groupings of the discourses in the literature (as demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis) do not inhibit the dynamic exploration in this research of their functions at the level of practice; that is at the level of implementation. It is in this vein that the theoretical framework will be used to elucidate what happens at the level of implementation. The theoretical framework will be used to research the changes attempted in the New Zealand qualifications system. It will be used to critically analyze the key arguments that led to the NZQA and the challenges and successes of the NZQA in endeavouring to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework. In the research process, the following steps will be pursued:

- (i) Analyze the key arguments that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA with which the OECS can identify;
- (ii) Examine the policies and operational principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand;
- (iii) Analyze the successes and the challenges of the NZQA's experience in translating its legislative mandate, on its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand, into practice;
- (iv) Assess the factors and key arguments which drive/influence or have the potential to deter/impede the reform of a qualifications system in the OECS.

The next chapter presents an analysis of the methodological theories and perspectives that were reviewed for the conduct of this research.

## Chapter Five

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### METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

#### 5.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework in the previous chapters made explicit the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research and provided a foundation on which to construct and defend the central thesis of this research (Partington, 2002; Robson, 2002). It is with the theoretical underpinnings of the two discourses in mind that the research question is pursued: To what extent, and how might the need for change and directions towards an OECS qualifications framework be theorized from the successes and challenges of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)?

A gamut of philosophical and theoretical perspectives, with a range of convergent as well as divergent approaches that utilize different research methodologies, and have the probability of producing varied outcomes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Merriam, 2002; Miller & Crabtree, 2004; Yates, 2004), were reviewed to find out their applicability to the research process. As has been indicated previously (Chapters One and Four), this research intends to:

- (i) Analyze the key arguments that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA with which the OECS can identify;
- (ii) Examine the policies and operational principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand;
- (iii) Analyze the successes and the challenges of the NZQA's experience in translating its legislative mandate, on its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand, into practice;
- (iv) Assess the factors and key arguments which drive/influence or have the potential to deter/impede the reform of a qualifications system in the OECS.

This chapter explains the conduct of the research and the strategies employed to interpret findings and derive conclusions. Attempting to operate from a clean slate in this research would be an impossible task. Therefore, my position as a researcher, called reflexivity - although "bracketed" - is explained (Merriam, 2002). Also triangulation and crystallization are given some attention with regard to the problematic issues of reliability and validity of the eventual findings and conclusions of this qualitative research (Janesick 2003; Richardson, 2000).

Blaikie's (2000) tenet provides a launching pad for the discussion on the methodological framework. According to Blaikie (2000), methodological choice characterizes for the researcher how research should or does proceed. It considers "how theories are generated and tested - what kind of logic is used ... what criteria a theory has to satisfy ... and how it relates to a particular research problem and how it can be tested" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8). The researcher therefore concerns herself with "what can be known about, how it is considered that this might be known, and how she might go about finding out what she believes can be known" (Cowie, 2000, p. 61).

The methodological framework in this research is guided by a combination of two models, namely, Crotty (1998) and Denzin & Lincoln (2002, 2003a). Despite a few points of variance, the two models complement each other well to provide clarity, solidity and depth to the methodological framework for the study. In his model, Crotty (1998) advances the use of four major questions whereas Denzin & Lincoln (2002, 2003a) propose a five-phase procedure, as illustrated in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 respectively.

Table 5.1: Crotty’s Research Questions

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What methods do we propose to use?
What methodology governs the choice and use of methods?
What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?
(Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

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Table 5.2: Denzin & Lincoln’s Five-Phase Model

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Phase 1	The Researcher as a Multi-cultural Subject Research Traditions Ethics and Politics of the Research
Phase 2	Theoretical Paradigm and Perspectives Interpretivism, Social Construction of Reality
Phase 3	Research Strategies Grounded Theory Case Study
Phase 4	Methods of Data Collection and Analysis Interviewing Attachment Document Analysis Educators’ Forums Questionnaire
Phase 5	The Art, Practices and Politics of Interpretation and Presentation Criteria for Judging Adequacy Applied Research

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(Adapted from Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; also 2003a p. 32)

From these two models, the eclectic framework (Burns, 2000), which was selected, draws on the purpose of educational research, the qualitative interpretive research paradigm, the epistemology of the social construction of reality, and case study and grounded theory methodologies. Grounded theory and case study methodologies allow for the use of multiple methods in combination. The elements in the methodological framework are summarized in Figure 5.1. The delineation of each element follows in subsequent sections.

Figure 5.1: Overview of the Methodological Framework

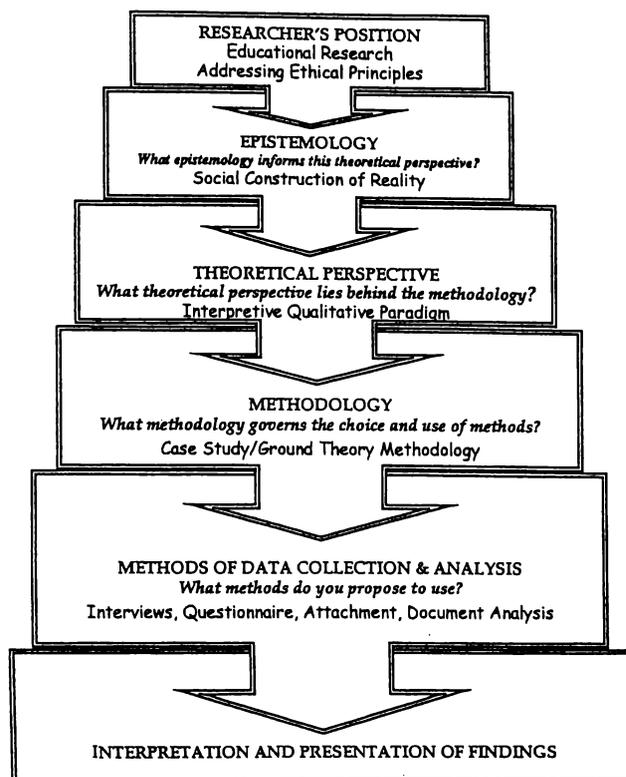


Figure and Content Adapted from Crotty, 1998, p. 4 and  
Denzin & Lincoln 2003, p. 31

## 5.2 The Researcher's Position

This phase shows “the depth and complexity of the traditional and applied qualitative perspectives into which a socially situated research enters” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p. 19). The objective of this research is primarily, but not exclusively, an education entity. As an educationist who is part of the social milieu of education, the researcher undertakes a critical analysis of the challenges and successes of the NZQA, with the goal of informing “the social and institutional structures [CARICOM, OECS], policy makers, educational institutions which provide frameworks” for action on the qualifications system (Bassey, 1999, p.39). This research therefore amounts to practical activity “aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions [in the OECS] in order to improve educational action” (Bassey, 1999, p. 39). A critical stance is taken from a researcher who is socially situated within the educational research tradition (Burr, 2003).

This research was guided by an analysis of the meaning of educational research as an umbrella activity. Carr & Kemmis (1986) contend that to talk of education research is to indicate the distinctive purpose for which this kind of research is conducted and which its declared intention to serve, and the testing ground for educational research, is “its capacity to resolve educational problems and improve educational practice” (p. 108). Freebody (2003) concurs that educational research “employs empirical inquiry to test out

theoretical ideas that inform practice” (p. 20). Bassey (1999) also believes that educational research is “aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action” (p. 39). Denzin & Lincoln (2003a) suggest that in this phase, the researcher must also confront the ethics and politics of the research because, “today researchers struggle to develop situational and transsituational ethics that apply to ... the research act and its human to human relationships” (p. 31). Having already clarified my position as being located within the education research tradition, the ethical principles of this research follow.

### **5.3 Ethical Principles**

In this research, ethics concerns itself with formulating codes and principles of moral behaviour in research practice (May, 2001). Denzin & Lincoln (2003b) suggest that several proposals for new ethical criteria have emerged in the past; and while the standard criteria promulgated appear to stand outside of scientific inquiry, “the new criteria are quite simply embedded inside the entire enquiry process: rigour considerations, validity issues, methodological choices, standards toward research participants, and representational forms” (p. 10). In this regard, the researcher is writing her or his own rules for relationships with participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b). Participants are defined in this research as persons who provided data in one form or another.

The ethical decisions in this study were framed based on “respect for democracy, respect for truth, and respect for persons” (Bassey, 1999, p. 73). These principles were encapsulated in (1) obtaining voluntary informed consent, (2) ensuring confidentiality by protecting the individuality of participants, (3) the protection of subjects from harm, (4) reciprocity, and fair and balanced reporting. They served as the pivot of the ethical principles in this research in the consideration of measures such as access to data, participants, and procedures for the conduct of the study (Burgess, 1989).

#### **5.3.1 Obtaining Voluntary Informed Consent**

From the beginning, ethical approval and co-operation for conducting the research were secured from the relevant authorities. Approval was sought from the relevant authorities mainly to rally hierarchical support for the conduct of the study, and for permission to be allowed free access to all participants who were in some way accountable to those authorities. In so doing, my goals and interests were made known and clarified with the relevant authorities. In the OECS, for example, the Government of St. Lucia was notified

of the purpose and nature of the study through official correspondence via the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports (MEHRDYS) in St Lucia. The Permanent Secretary, in turn, initiated formal contact with other OECS countries, organizations and participants. In New Zealand, the initial contact, ethical approval and support as well as permission for free access to participants from the NZQA were made, with thesis supervisors' support, through the CEO of the NZQA.

In my appeal for their voluntary participation, prospective participants were provided with a thorough description of the nature of the study, research aims, the use of the findings, the extent of participants' involvement and the potential sources of harm that might have arisen during the process (see Appendix C for samples of informed consent form and letters). Communication (for clarification and verification of issues) was maintained at all times through electronic mail, ordinary mail, telephone lines and facsimile.

The implication of these arrangements for the research process would undoubtedly pivot largely around the ethical principles such as frank and open discussions with participants at all levels and in all countries. In the OECS, as an insider, such rapport had been built through professional and social networks and with the endorsement and formal approval by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education in St Lucia. As an outsider in New Zealand, that rapport had to be developed through my thesis supervisors, an inside contact at the NZQA, veracity and explicit information on the goals of the research. In my appeal for co-operation, the aim of the research was clearly identified as a genuine Caribbean concern as well as for the purpose of scholarship. In both contexts (OECS and New Zealand), all prospective participants assented with confirmation and zeal to assist with my research.

The notion of informed consent was explained to participants verbally, in writing and in very simple language. Samples of informed consent form and letters are provided in Appendix C. A careful explanation of the nature of the study was provided both informally and formally, before seeking their affirmation for participation and permission for recording and transcribing interviews. Signatures of participants were sought as evidence of informed consent. Although having consented to the demands of the research, participants were given the option to decline to respond to any question and leave the research at any time prior to the analysis of data, without apprehensiveness or offence.

### 5.3.2 Ensuring Confidentiality

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of all data collected (see Appendix C for samples of informed consent form and letters). Information was provided on who would have access to the data and how long it would be stored. They were informed that data from tapes and transcripts accumulated during the study would be password secured on computers and otherwise locked away by the researcher for a five-year period as stipulated by the University of Waikato. Anonymity was extended to all types of reporting including verbal reporting of information obtained from attachments, but without compromising the veracity of the data (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). For maintaining confidentiality in reporting the data, arbitrary numbers were assigned to the interviewees (see Appendix D for profile of interviewees). Interview data was reported using a code such as (1, #3). This code (1, #3) represents an index number for the interviewee (1) and a page number (#3) of the transcript.

### 5.3.3 The Protection of Participants from Harm

Anonymity and arbitrary coding of the interviewee would offer protection against adverse reactions including any unforeseen embarrassment or unforeseen risk that may arise out of the study. Anonymity offers a safeguard to the participants from any person(s) who may want to use the results of this research in personal or political ways or in other ways unintended by this research. Participants were informed, however, that given the nature of the study, their roles were significant in the analyses of findings. Their roles would be described by specific identifiers, for example, NZQA Manager or NZQA interviewee or participant, Education Officer, Deputy Registrar, or Ministry of Education official. Participants were also informed that there is a risk that anonymity may not protect their identities since it is possible that they may be identified in the data through unique combinations of their characteristics, roles, positions, the sectors, sizes of organization, and the types of institution with which they are involved.

### 5.3.4 Reciprocity, and Fair and Balanced Reporting

Where appropriate, and prior to data analyses, participants were given the opportunity to view and confirm their responses. This measure was taken in an attempt to ensure that findings were presented fairly and professionally. As a means of reciprocity also, participants were fully acknowledged without jeopardizing confidentiality. Copies of the thesis would be available at strategic locations (libraries, for instance) for access by participants as a means of providing reciprocity.

In the process, I have conformed to the university's guidelines, but ultimately the ethical decisions resided with me as the researcher (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). My responsibility to participants and potential risks were declared from the outset. Participants had a voice in adjusting and adapting our relationship. They were given opportunities to make decisions about their participation and omission of questions. Research with participants in this study, therefore, was more like having a "relationship" rather than having "a contract" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 51) or performing an experiment.

#### **5.4 Epistemology: The Theoretical Orientation of this Research**

Following on from Crotty's question on the epistemology that informs the perspective of this research, this section of the thesis examines the philosophical assumptions that led to the theoretical orientation of this research. This research utilizes the epistemology of "the social construction of reality" (Radnor, 2001, p.11). The social construction of reality paradigm is drawn from the notion that "everyday life, revolves around persons interpreting and making decisions about how to act based on their own experiences and their interpretation of the experience and the behaviour of others" (Radnor, 2001, p. 4).

The epistemology of the social construction of reality is employed to clarify how interpretations and understandings are formulated, implemented and given meaning to lived situations (Radnor, 2001). In this sense, the interpretation endeavours to elucidate underlying meanings. According to Radnor (2001), the process of clarification illuminates the everyday theories people have, and this helps the process of broadening practitioners' knowledge base, which aids a deeper understanding of both action and social contexts. Radnor (2001) explains that the social construction of reality paradigm therefore rests on the premise that "an analysis of knowledge in everyday life ... generates a theory of society as a dialectical process between objective and subjective reality" (Radnor, 2001, p.11). Arguably such a view is based both on the premises of constructivism and constructionism paradigms that "they are all constructions" (Crotty, 1998, p. 16); and that "all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

The NZQA and the OECS qualifications systems exist within social contexts. In the case study of the applicability of the NZQA to the OECS context, this theoretical orientation is

approached and utilized, particularly from the perspectives of participants within the social arenas. Therefore, to render the qualifications worlds of OECS and the NZQA intelligible in this research is to focus upon the social construction of reality in the ways in which participants interpret them. In this research, there is an awareness that “everyone has their own view on what they perceive reality to be” (Radnor, 2001, p. 21). With such a view, therefore,

there has to be a particular relationship going on between the researcher and the people that are being researched. The respondents are approached by the researcher as equal partner, with respect, because the interpreters task is to make sense of their world, to understand it, to see what meaning is imbued in that situation by the people who are part of it (Radnor, 2001, p. 21).

From the interactions between participants and myself as the researcher, meanings are constructed and interpreted (p. 22). Therefore, from the social construction of reality paradigm, “meaning cannot be described simply as objective. By the same token, it cannot be described simply as subjective”. Guided by the theoretical perspective of social construction of reality in this study, “objectivity and subjectivity [are] ... brought together and held together indissolubly” (Crotty, 1998, p. 44).

The way in which the theoretical approach and epistemological assumptions described in this section inform this research is also reflected in the kinds of interview questions that are asked to generate different accounts of social phenomena (Burr, 2003). Why was the NZQA institutionalized? What gave rise to the NZQA? Why is such reform needed in the OECS context? What can we learn from the successes and challenges of the NZQA?

The ‘reality’ of the answers to those questions could not be seen as a “fixed and stable entity” but as types of entities that “might be discerned only through an analysis of multiple forms of understanding” (Burns, 2000, p. 12) within a set frame of reference. From the social construction of reality paradigm’s standpoint, it was my discernment that the ‘reality’ (Burns, 2000, p. 12) would evolve from constructions of the participants’ interpretations of the social contexts. Constructions of the interpretations and discernment of meanings by the individual participants, as negotiated around the NZQA’s contextual situations, would have to be central to the research process (Pavolich, 1999, p. 1). My constructions would be both objective and subjective representations formed from those participants, settings, events, processes (contexts), within the NZQA and OECS contexts (Pavolich, 1999, p. 1).

### 5.5 Theoretical Perspective: Qualitative Interpretive Paradigm

Guided by the social construction of reality paradigm, the interpretive qualitative paradigm was adopted in this study. According to Merriam (2002), the interpretive qualitative paradigm “exemplifies all the characteristics of qualitative research, ... that is the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, [and] this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument” (p. 6).

Writers have contrasted the qualitative and quantitative paradigms on several dimensions. Some have argued for (i) the incommensurability of the two paradigms (Patton, 2002); (ii) the dichotomous nature of the paradigms (Glaser and Strauss, 1967); (iii) their integrative nature (Creswell, 2002); (iv) their complementary nature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin (1998); (v) their theoretical and conceptual combinations (Crotty, 1998); and (vi) for the paradigms to be viewed as a continuum (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Each belief has had, or has its followers. For instance, more than thirty years ago, Glaser & Strauss (1967) took the position that “there is no fundamental clash” between the purposes and capacities of qualitative and quantitative methods or data. They believed that each form of data “is useful for both verification and generation of theory [and] that “primacy depends only on the circumstances of research, on interests and training of the researcher, and on the kinds of material he needs for his theory” (1967, p.19). More recently, Denzin & Lincoln (2000) argued that the two paradigms can be viewed “as a continuum, with rigorous design principles on one end and emergent, less well-structured directives on the other” (p. xii). Patton (2002) and Creswell (1994) have advocated that researchers can mix both research methods and research strategies even within a single project; while Crotty (1998) observes that “certainly if it suits their purposes, any of the theoretical perspectives could make use of any of the methodologies, and any of the methodologies could make use of any of the methods” (p. 12).

Allegiance to a particular stance on these issues is established early mainly as a result of training, but there are cases where researchers have shifted their own philosophical positions substantially on these issues (Crossely & Vulliamy, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as is evidenced by my experience. Prior to undertaking this study, my allegiance leaned towards the quantitative method as a result of my previous training in Research Methods. The dominant stance in research during my training included positivism, quantitative, and scientific, among others. In conducting research, the researcher had to adopt an “objective” position as one who “collects facts about the social world and then builds up

an explanation of social life by arranging such facts in a chain of causality" to provide generalizations (Finch, 1986, p. 7 in Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997, p. 4). In effect, the testing of theory/scientific hypotheses, the use of statistical procedures and analysis, and the quest for truth were the fundamental principles which had to be upheld. Objective reality had to be captured at the levels of data collection and description. Of noteworthiness is the notion that the researcher had to be separate from what was being researched (Denzin, 1989).

My allegiance, however, was challenged by the realisation that the theorizing of an OECS qualifications system was not scientific nor could it be arranged in a 'chain of causality' or by 'the generalizations of law'. The focus of this study, therefore, is not on testing an objective 'truth' found within scientific inquiry. From a paradigm of the social construction of reality, the focus on the interpretive qualitative paradigm is that of taking a critical stance on 'truth' as the social actors (participants) perceive it in their social world (Pavolich, 1999), through an amicable relationship between the researcher and the researched. Multiple perspectives that are not readily quantifiable were required in the process. Notwithstanding the characteristic of scholarly research, the study also had to be practical, beneficial, and utilizable to scholars, governments, organizations, and educators. The rhetoric in reporting allows for all stakeholders and shareholders to relate to and comprehend the findings. Given all these issues, the quantitative method relied on the "hard science paradigm would not deliver" (Haynes, 1998). In keeping with the epistemological stance taken, therefore, the starting point of the approach is the social construction of reality which the individuals attach to the NZQA's activities and environment (Flick, 1998, 2002).

This study of the policies, procedures and operations of the NZQA was thought to be grounded in intensive subjective meanings, rather than extensive investigations of relationships between specified scientific variables and hypotheses testing (Creswell, 2002). The interpretive qualitative paradigm was therefore deemed suitable to investigate those meanings; and was thus considered a more appropriate theoretical perspective in this research project. As a direct consequence, my stance as a researcher is epitomized in the following elements of the interpretive qualitative research paradigm: phenomenology, ontology, axiology and the use of rhetoric in reporting (Best & Kahn 1998; Burns 2000; Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2000; Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). For these reasons, the underlying assumptions of the basic interpretive qualitative approach as they relate to the purpose and nature of this study are presented briefly.

Merriam postulated that phenomenology and symbolic interactionism are two concepts of basic interpretive qualitative research (2002, p. 37). Symbolic interaction centres on “interpretations but within the larger context of the larger society” (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). Its weight is on “putting oneself in the place of the other and seeing things from the perspective of others” (Crotty, 1998, p. 76). It means that people would be interpreting their everyday experiences with the NZQA from their perspectives of what that means to them. On the other hand, Merriam (2002) claims that what phenomenology considers is “the subjective aspects of people’s behaviour”. Phenomenology is based on the belief that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience ... The experiences of different people are bracketed, analysed and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2002, p.7). Guided by Merriam’s assertion, from the phenomenological and symbolic interactionist assumptions of conducting interpretive qualitative inquiry, I ought to be interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they conduct their world, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2002, p. 38).

Drawing from the epistemology of the social construction of reality, the viewpoint taken in this study and on the ontological issue of ‘what is real’, the NZQA’s experience will be characterized as a process of interpretation (Blaikie 2000). In this research it is accepted that there is no ‘single objective reality’ that can be reliably and objectively measured. Multiple realities which are both objective and subjective exist in the epistemology of the study, and these are functions of personal interaction and perceptions (Merriam, 1988, p.17).

This has axiological implications for the study (Creswell, 2002; Geelan, 2003; Gray, 2004; Merriam, 1988). On this question, reflexivity - the relationship of the researcher to that being researched - the ‘outside view’ or the ‘distant researcher’ was deemed inappropriate for this study because its preoccupation is with meaning (Louisy, 1998; Crossley & Vulliamy, 1998). Partington (2002, p. 140) argued that “a misconception which hampers grounded theorists is that they are somehow expected to put aside all their experiences, preconceptions and knowledge of existing theory”; but attempting to operate from ‘a clean slate’ would be an impossible task (see Louisy, 1998, for arguments on insider and outsider research). As a researcher, I was an educator in the social milieu with special knowledge of the OECS context. As “a primary instrument” (Merriam, 2002, p.19), my role therefore was to locate myself in the research and to discern, describe and explain phenomena through the eyes of those participants. It was

primarily an awareness of the manner in which the researcher as an individual with a personal background has an impact on the research process (Merriam, 2002). This awareness was my critical reflection on the relationship between theory and the data.

The manner in which the research was conducted, my role as a researcher and the roles of the participants of the study, the selection of data gathering techniques, and the organization and interpretation of data, and findings hinged on the epistemology of the social construction of reality, and the qualitative research paradigm (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994).

Critics have outlined what they see as the caveats of the qualitative paradigm. Criticisms can be divided into two types according to Carr & Kemmis (1986 p. 94). On the one hand, there are positivist-inspired objections to the foundations of interpretive theory. That is, the inability of the interpretive approach to produce wide-ranging generalizations, or to provide objective standards for verifying or refuting theoretical accounts. The second kind of criticisms are those which accept that social reality is constructed out of a plurality of subjective meanings and thus bias and prejudice may be found in the data. Also, the inductive part of qualitative research has been termed 'soft', because descriptions are not easily quantifiable and represented statistically. Stake (1995, 2000) also identifies the less convincing arguments for the use of the qualitative approach. They centre on the more frequent production of new puzzles rather than solutions to old ones, the slow and tendentious contributions to disciplined science, substantial ethical risks associated with the methods and the exorbitant cost in time and money during the process.

Some of those very claims are refuted, as the "intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is given, and that subjectivity is not seen as failing or needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Moreover, the very nature of this study makes the 'soft' rich description pertinent to unfolding the myriad of meanings that may emanate from the direct experiences of participants. The rhetoric of the research will also differ from the technical language (tests of significance, Chi square, for example) of the quantitative methodology. The use of the first person will be very much a part of the reporting of this study (Creswell, 2002). While there were no widely agreed-upon protocols that put subjective misunderstandings to a rigid test, concern for validation is demonstrated through the use of crystallization (Richardson, 1994; 2000) or triangulation that approximates in purpose

those of the quantitative fields (Stake, 2000). Besides, time and money are genuine concerns for any type of research, be it quantitative or qualitative.

Despite these unpersuasive issues, the interpretive qualitative approach was a preferred choice, since the essence of the paradigm is that "all research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.19). Informed by the epistemology of the social construction of reality, the approach focuses on multiple objective and subjective realities that complement each other well (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-schaw, 2000). According to Merriam (2002), a central characteristic of the approach is that "individuals construct reality in interaction in their social worlds" (p. 37). The interpretive qualitative view takes into consideration "feelings and concerns as one important means by which situations are disambiguated and given structure" (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). Yet it is conceded that "each reality of the existing world represents a different reality from each other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 19). In order to theorize an OECS qualifications system based on direct experiences of the NZQA, in quintessence for both the OECS and New Zealand contexts, the participants as well as other issues need interpretations; a respect and curiosity for culturally different perceptions of phenomena; and empathic representation of local settings, all blending within the epistemology of the social construction of reality (Stake, 2000, p. 444).

In this research, to accomplish this blend within the epistemology of the social construction of reality, the technique of crystallization (triangulation) is used to hone in on data from different angles (Neuman, 2003). It is an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the research phenomena and to increase the scope, depth and consistency in methodological procedures and to elicit meanings (Flick, 2002). The technique is also used to corroborate and augment evidence (Flick, 2002; Sherman & Webb, 1988; Yates, 2004; Yin, 1994, 1998, 2003). This is the heart of this qualitative research's validity (Fetterman, 1998). According to Davidson & Tolich (2003), it is not so different from the way in which people try to reassure themselves of things in real life. In this research, crystallization is pursued through the use of a combination of different methodologies (case study and grounded theory), analyses of different methods (interviews, document analysis, questionnaires) and different theoretical perspectives and disciplines to research the several domains in which the case is embedded (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, 2003a; Janesick, 2003). Additionally, this research is triangulated through the substantial number of participants interviewed and the numerous documents analysed in an attempt to discern the truth among multiple perspectives.

## 5.6 Methodology: Case Study and Grounded Theory Methodologies

With the researcher's position within the research tradition clarified, the ethical principles established and the theoretical perspective espoused, the third phase of the research process discusses what methodologies govern the choice and use of methods.

The NZQA (policies, principles, procedures, institutionalization and the extent of their applicability to the OECS) was case studied and an adapted version of grounded theory methodology was used to generate substantive theory. These two methodologies connect the theoretical paradigms of the epistemology of the social construction of reality, and basic interpretive qualitative approach to the methods used (interviews, attachments, educators' forums, document analysis) for generating data. In practice, the design decisions were made throughout the study – at the end as well as the beginning. Throughout the research, the propositions were gradually filtered and reformulated, and the research strategy readjusted as the field work progressed (Sherman & Webb, 1988). As Janesick (2003) describes

The qualitative research design has an elastic quality much like the elasticity of a dancer's spine. Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, qualitative design is adapted, changed, and redesigned as the study proceeds due to the social realities of doing research among and with the living" (p. 73).

### 5.6.1 The Case Study

The case study methodology was also chosen because of the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked. It was the most appropriate strategy for answering the research questions because it is a study of singularity (Stake, 2000) "which has the ability to deal with contextual conditions, and the reality of many social phenomena" (Yin, 1998, p.236). Notwithstanding the more than thirty participants used in this study and the range of questions used in the data collection instruments, the research remains based on a bounded system – the case of the NZQA.

The generic term 'case study' has a range of meanings (Bassegy, 1999; Yin 2003); but several writers have advanced definitions that are congruent with the conceptual nature of this type of study and with the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm. Merriam (2002), for instance, notes that the case study "is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community" (p. 8). Yin (2003) defines the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context ..." and that "... it relies on

multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and ... benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 13). Bassey (1999) explains that "case study is a study of a singularity ... to explore significant features of the case and to put forward interpretations of what is observed" (p. 47). Along the same line of contention, Stake (1995, 2000) conceptualizes the case as something that functions, meaning something alive, operational or in action.

While all these conceptualizations of the case were used to inform this research, of major significance to the study was Merriam's view that "the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterizes the case study". The case study of the NZQA as a unit of analysis in this study is "one particular programme (a bounded system), selected because it was typical, unique, experimental or highly successful" (Merriam, 2002, p. 8).

Case study methodology has also been used in view of its special features or characteristics that are essential to the conduct of this study (Bassey, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 2002; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). The characteristics and the terminology vary from writer to writer but they can perhaps be condensed into the terms particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive (Merriam, 1988); all of which are also in keeping with the interpretive qualitative mode of inquiry. Merriam (1988) explains that "particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon" (p.11). Case studies concentrate on particular groups of people, confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation (Merriam, 1988). The outcome is "a rich, 'thick' description". Heuristic implies that the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study is illuminated since new meanings that reinforce the reader's experience, or confirm what is known, can be brought into the study (Merriam, 1988, p. 11).

The case study, however, has been considered with 'disdain', 'suspicion' and even 'hostility', mainly because of concerns of lack of consensus in terms of method or methodology, rigor, reliability, generalizability and validity, subjective bias, time consumption and information overload or simply because their general characteristics remain poorly understood and their potential underdeveloped (see Bassey, 1999; Burns, 2000; Yin, 1994, 2003).

Another caveat of the case study methodology that I found was the plethora of terms that are used to categorize case studies serve to confound case study researchers. Writers advocate the importance of making a distinction between types of case study (Bassey, 1995, 1999; Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1988, 2002; Stake, 1995, 2000; Yin, 1998, 2000, 2003). This distinction, writers note, must be determined because the type of case study has implications for methods and procedures to employ. There is a complexity in making such a determination, with no fewer than twenty-one different types, kinds, styles and categories of case studies in the literature. The proposal to condense some types was mired by Bassey's comments. He reasons that:

Perhaps Stake's intrinsic case study is closely related to Parlett and Hamilton's 'illuminative evaluation' while these are poles apart from Yin's concept of evaluative case study ... But to draw such comparisons is a dangerous game, for I cannot be sure that I have correctly elicited what these writers have meant by the terms they have used and, dare I say it, neither can we be sure that these writers themselves had clear, unambiguous concepts in their minds and managed to express them coherently (Bassey, 1999, p. 35 ).

Other caveats of case study methodology have been documented, including the notion that the apparent simplicity of method could also be deceptive, and for effective use, "the researcher must be thoroughly familiar with existing theoretical knowledge of the field of inquiry and skilful in isolating the significant issues from many that are irrelevant. Best & Kahn (1998) warn that there is a tendency to select because of their spectacular nature rather than their significance.

Another critique by writers is that subjective bias is a constant threat to objective data-gathering and analysis. Other writers, mainly positivists, also claim that the results are not easily generalizable except by an intuitive judgement that 'this case' is similar to 'that case'. The researcher in a case has to be selective but his or her selectivity is not normally open to the checks which can be applied in rigorously systematic inquiries and one cannot tell how the observer's perception has affected the conclusions reached (Nisbet & Watt, 1978).

In spite of these seemingly negative aspects, the purpose of the case is not to represent the world but to represent the case (Yin 1998, 2003). The utility of case research is that it brings "expert knowledge to bear on phenomena studied, to round up all relevant data, to examine rival interpretations and to ponder and probe the degree to which findings have implication elsewhere" (Yin, 1998). Consequently "seen from different world views

and in different situations, the same case is different" (Stake, 1998, p. 449). Moreover in this thesis, which researches the experiences of NZQA to inform the practices of the OECS:

The real business of case study is particularization and not generalization. A particular case is taken and we come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness of the case and on understanding the case itself (Stake, 1995, p. 8).

In the realm of the positivistic approach, generalizability was taken to mean truth and statistical representation but, according to Bassey (1999), the "fuzzy generalization" (p. 12) is a possibility. This "fuzzy generalization", according to Bassey (*op. cit.*), arises from studies of singularities and typically doubts the likelihood or unlikelihood that what was found in the singularity will be found in similar situations elsewhere, given that it is a qualitative measure.

Case study methodology has been used with some measure of success in the development of research in several fields, such as: social work, policy, public administration, law, medicine, psychology, political science, sociology, management and education (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Yates, 2004; Yin, 2004). It is documented that case studies have made a considerable contribution to the field of education and that the strategy is suitable for extending the knowledge base of the field (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2000; Yin 2004). It has been argued that the specificity of focus often makes it "an especially good design for practical and critical problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practice" (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). In this research, theory building becomes an iterative procedure where it derives from the study of the case of the NZQA at the level of practice (Pavolvich, 1999).

### 5.6.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is used in this research to analyse the findings of the research and to theorize a qualifications system for the OECS based on the New Zealand experience. The central aim of grounded theory is to generate theory from data collected during the study (Charmaz, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004).

Grounded theory was first presented to the research community in 1967 by originators Glaser and Strauss. They explained how theory could be developed through building properties and categories and through a constant comparative analysis (Bartlett & Payne,

1997). Subsequent to the original development of grounded theory, the original guidelines have been modified by the two originators in different and separate publications (e.g., Glaser 1978, 1992, 1994; Strauss & Corbin 1994, 1997, 1998). Divergences and convergences in the two versions are evident.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the two versions, there is a core of procedures which define grounded theory as a methodology, but differences exist in the methods suggested by the subsequent versions (Bartlett & Payne, 1997). In spite of Glaser's (1992) reference to his approach as emergent and Strauss' approach as 'forced', both versions concur that grounded theory aims to generate theory from data. In this research, case study methodology allows theory to be grounded in the detailed study of the NZQA. Theory is generated mainly through the researcher getting 'close' to the data. Theory building becomes an iterative procedure where it is inductively and deductively derived from the study of the case of the NZQA (Pavolvich, 1999). The constant comparative analysis method and the interplay between data and theory (theory is systematically worked in combination with the data during the course of the research) are the corpus of both versions, and are discussed with respect to (1) theoretical sensitivity, (2) theoretical sampling, (3) the inductive-deductive nature of the data and (4) substantive versus formal theory. Each of these is discussed succinctly below:

In this research, Straussian grounded theory is followed in terms of theoretical sampling and the movement between the inductive and deductive nature of the research, as well as his methods of theoretical sensitivity, mainly because of the practicality of his method. My adaptation of parts of the versions is supported by writers, for instance by Bartlett & Payne (1997), who posit that "the legitimacy of adopting only parts of the grounded theory method, or any method for that matter, must ultimately rest on the justifications put forward by individual researchers" (p. 182).

#### 5.2.6.1 Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the awareness, understanding and use of theorizings in the literature in the conduct of the research. Theoretical sensitivity is a key point for both Glaser and Strauss, but the two are at variance on the question of the use and pacing of the literature, and the extent of use of personal and professional experience as sources for theoretical sensitivity. In the original form of grounded theory methodology, the

literature, theory or facts on the area under study was ignored, "in order to assure that the emergence of categories would not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas". Glaser & Strauss' (1967) original position was that research should avoid presuppositions; and that a researcher should go out into the field without having reviewed existing literature for fear of contamination of concepts generated from the data. They also feared that the data would be forced in the wrong direction if one is too imbued with concepts from the literature. According to Glaser (1992) such an approach "maximises the avoidance of pre-empting, preconceived concepts which may easily detract" (p.31) from the research findings.

For practical reasons in this thesis, however, such as (1) thesis proposal writing which include a succinct literature review in the field of study, (2) preparation of an ethics statement as stipulated by the University of Waikato, (3) delineating the scope and parameters of the research, (4) setting time frames, (5) obtaining consent from participants and providing them with general questions which would be asked of them, and (6) budgeting costs for time spent in the field along with other practical considerations, Glaser's version of grounded theory was not possible. Strauss & Corbin's (1998) version, which sees theoretical sensitivity as "having insight to and being able to give meaning to the events and happenings in the data" (p. 47) was therefore employed. Strauss & Corbin (1998) posit that:

Literature can be used as an analytic tool if we are careful to think about it in theoretical terms. Used in this way the literature can provide a rich source of events to stimulate thinking about the properties and for asking conceptual questions. It can furnish initial ideas to be used for theoretical sampling (p. 38).

Strauss & Corbin (1998) see the technical and non-technical literature as a stimulus for the research problem for which reading the literature on a subject might provide novel insights. Based on this premise, the thesis drew on the literature for some aspects of theorizing the data.

Another source of theoretical sensitivity used in this research is the researcher's practical and professional experience. Paradoxically, Strauss & Corbin posit that our personal and professional experience, "can provide a source of theoretical sensitivity in that they make us aware of the sort of assumptions which we may hold" (Bartlett & Payne 1997, p.186; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.47). This "professional experience frequently leads to judgement and some feature of the profession or its practice is less than effective, efficient,

human or equitable. So it is believed that a good research study might help to correct the situation” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.38). They caution that while “professional experience can easily block perception, it can also enable the researcher to move into an area more quickly because he or she does not have to spend time gaining familiarity with the surroundings or events” ( p.47). This area, however, is also a point of divergence for the originators of grounded theory, as Glaser does not support that point of view, in stating that personal experience can also serve to biased data analysis.

### Experience of the Researcher

My experience, knowledge and interests as a practising educator provided further theoretical sensitivity. My professional experience was an invaluable source of information to scaffold, refine and comprehend the intricacies and complexities that surround the ‘problem’ (as identified in Chapter Two) with which the OECS is faced amid international quality assurance practices. The international trends and regional educational initiatives in quality assurance in education and my professional encounters of having served at both the management and classroom levels of the St. Lucia Education System for more than two decades led to a growing interest and appraisal of the issue of quality assurance in different education systems. This was taken into consideration in the theorizing in this research.

Incrementally, I have amassed experience in the capacities of an untrained teacher, trained teacher (St. Lucia Teachers’ College), a graduate teacher (University of the West Indies) and a postgraduate teacher (OISE, University of Toronto), before being promoted to the position of Education Officer with responsibility for Testing and Measurement in the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports. Following my Master’s programme, I completed certificate programmes in Public Administration and Education Management. Subsequently, I was promoted to Assistant Registrar of Examinations in the Educational Evaluation and Examinations Unit. Prior to the pursuit of my doctoral studies, I acted as the Head of the Department (Registrar of Examinations), a post which is charged with the responsibilities of the management of the department as well as the development of national examinations; administration of all local, regional and international examinations; marking of all local examinations; certification of national examinations; analyses of national and regional examination results; the provision of feedback to all stakeholders; and the placement of students at all levels in secondary schools, evaluation of curriculum and appraisal of programmes.

The fortuity of attending consultations with the higher echelon of the Ministry (Minister, Permanent Secretary, Chief Education Officer, among others) and that of attending local, regional and international seminars, conferences, district and school meetings on matters of education has provided me with concrete experience of policy formulation and implementation. Knowledge has been accrued from regional and international education tours (Caribbean, Brazil, Germany, Scotland, Bristol, and presently studying in New Zealand); the object of which was to inform the decision and policy-making processes, with the view to implementing 'best practices' from those countries. I have also benefited from the opportunity afforded to me to design and implement professional development activities, training workshops and seminars on assessment issues for parents, teachers, principals, education officers, other shareholders and stakeholders. The challenge of developing local examinations, administering and analysing local and regional examination results and providing feedback to stakeholders has equipped me with knowledge of performance norms both locally and regionally.

On the question of the use of my personal and professional experience being used as theoretical sensitivity, I am in agreement with Dey (1993) that the issue now is not "whether to use existing knowledge but how?" He advises that

The first is always to compare what one thinks one sees to what one sees at the property or dimensional level because this enables the analyst to use experience without putting the experience itself into the data. The second is that it is not the researcher's perception or perspective that matters but rather how research participants see events or happenings" (1993, p. 63).

Considering this preceding statement, the phenomenological assumption of the basic interpretive qualitative research will be used to "step back from and bracket assumptions in order to maintain an attitude of scepticism towards anything which is not directly suggested by the data themselves and avoid and prevent rushing past diamonds in the rough when examining the data" (Bartlett & Payne, 1997, p. 286).

#### 5.6.2.2 Theoretical Sampling

Another core principle of grounded theory methodology that was used in this research is theoretical sampling. According to the originators, theoretical sampling is

the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it develops. The principle is that theory is emergent and directs the additional data collection process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.45).

Charmaz (2003a) contends that theoretical sampling is done “for the purpose of developing your emerging theory, not for representation of a population or increasing the generalizability of your results” (p. 104). According to Strauss and Corbin, at the beginning of the study, there are a number of sampling matters that the researcher must consider: (1) a site or group to study; (2) the types of data to be used; (3) how long an area should be studied; and (4) decisions regarding the number of sites and observations, and/or interviews depend on available resources, research goals, and researcher’s time, schedule and energy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

There is a difference in how sampling in theory-building differs from the more traditional or conventional forms of sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In quantitative forms of research, “sampling is based on selecting a portion of a population to represent the entire population to which one wants to generalize” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 214). In contrast, since this thesis is qualitative, what matters is “the representativeness of concepts and how concepts vary dimensionally” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 214). Therefore, in this research, I am looking for events and incidents that are indicative of phenomena. I am not counting individuals per se. Rather than the number in the sample, multiple examples of these events, incidents, and categories may be found in the attachments and in each interview or document.

In the search for these events and incidents, participants had to be selected. Participants of this study (also called interviewees and respondents) are those individuals whose views were elicited on key issues (through interviews, questionnaires, attachments) during the research process (Flick, 2002). Participants had to be “of theoretical purpose and relevance ... for furthering the development of emerging categories” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 48) and they must have had some knowledge of the domain being studied. Several strategies with the same general principles were applied.

Participants were therefore selected using nonprobabilistic purposive sampling and network sampling techniques. These are effective strategies because of the purpose of the study, its conceptual context, and the feasibility of data collection and analyses. In keeping with grounded theory and case study methodologies, nonprobabilistic purposive sampling is based on the assumption that “one wants to discover, understand and gain insight; therefore one needs a sample from which one can learn the most”

(Maxwell 1998, p. 87). It is a strategy “in which particular settings, persons or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 87). Purposive sampling is the same as what Goetz & LeCompte called criterion-based sampling. It required the establishment of criteria bases, or standards necessary for participants to be included in the investigation and a sample that matches these criteria is found (Merriam, 1988). In “network sampling” (Schumacher *et al.*, 1997, p. 383), also called “snowball sampling” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p.79) - a profile of the attributes sought was developed by the researcher and participants were asked “to suggest others who fit the profile or have the attribute” (Schumacher *et al.*, 1997, p. 383). Creswell (2002) noted that in snowball sampling, the researcher asks participants to identify others to become members of the sample. In this approach, to a great extent, referrals assisted the researcher in obtaining a purposive sample. Successive participants or groups were “named by a preceding group or individual” (Schumacher *et al.*, 1997, p.383). Nominations for possible inclusion in the sample were made by my supervisors, professors, professionals and educationalists. In the selection of participants, these methods had advantages but they also had the potential disadvantage of eliminating unknown individuals (Creswell, 2002). Another disadvantage is inadvertent bias on the part of the referrers.

Glaser (1992) critiques this use of sampling as advocated by Strauss & Corbin (1998). He calls their approach to sampling just as conventional as traditional methods. In a limited data collection period and timeframe to complete the thesis, an adaptation of Strauss & Corbin’s (1998) proposition in theoretical sampling was more appropriate to this research. I needed to start with a research question and a site and a group. I concurred with Strauss & Corbin’s (1998) advocacy that “theoretical sampling should be worked out carefully rather than letting it occur haphazardly, the latter of which can lead the analyst to unproductive paths and away from the focus of the study” (p. 202). Decisions may be modified according to the evolving of theory.

### 5.6.2.3 Inductive-Deductive Nature of Grounded Theory

A third principle of the adapted version of grounded theory methodology stems from the inductive-deductive nature of the methodology. In his explanation, Glaser emphasizes that deduction in grounded theory “is used minimally and closely in order to derive, from emergent codes, conceptual guides as to where to go next” (1992, p. 102). Strauss

and Corbin (1998), however, are more open to the movement between the inductive and deductive nature of research:

Whenever we conceptualize data or hypothesis, we are interpreting to some degree. To us an interpretation is a form of deduction. We are deducing what is going on in the data but also based on our reading of the data along with our assumptions about life, the literature that we carry in our heads, and the discussions that we have with colleagues...In fact there is an interplay between induction and deduction (p. 137).

Strauss & Corbin's (1998) version emphasizes that the continuous selection of the next "slice of data" in data collection and analysis is critical. According to them:

Theoretical comparisons based on what one knows [can come] either from experience or from the literature...Once sensitive to what he or she is looking for, the analyst begins to build a list of properties and dimensions from the actual data, validated and extended through further analysis and data collection (Strauss & Corbin's, 1998, p. 137).

Strauss & Corbin's (1998) adaptation of the movement between induction and deduction was used in the research process. The application of the movement between induction and deduction involved noting the relevancies of concepts in the literature and comparing, applying and evaluating the relations among the theory that surrounds the NZQA vis-à-vis the findings of the data collection process.

The constant comparative method represents a core principle in grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). Charmaz (2000) explains:

The constant comparative method of grounded theory means (a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences), (b) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and (e) comparing a category with other categories (p. 515).

As the originators advocated, the main categories are considered at a state of 'theoretical saturation'. Theoretical saturation of a category occurs "when in coding and analysing both no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge as one goes through the full extent of the data" (Glaser, 1978, p. 53). Glaser & Strauss (1967) also explain that this occurs when no additional data are being found to further develop properties of the category. The core category becomes a vehicle for interpretation. In coding the data, the major goal is "to use a method that facilitates high sortability and flexibility" (Glaser, 1978, p. 71).

In this thesis, it is around that core category that the development of theory evolves. It is the core category that links pieces of the data and forms the basis for evolution of the substantive theory of a qualification system for the region based on the New Zealand experience. Ultimately, the main phases in constant comparative analysis method that were applied in the thesis include (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 105):

- Break down the data themes, chunks, segments, finding relationships/ links and noting them;
- Compare incidents which are applicable to each category;
- Integrating categories by merging similar chunks, themes, segments;
- Delimit theory; that is, attempt to develop concepts and links;
- Theoretical sampling; that is, to choose relevant theoretical data to develop themes and categories; and
- Writing up the study.

These five steps were iterated until the theoretical categories emerging from the data were of sufficient scope to 'work' for the substantive area chosen. Theory becomes "molecular" in structure rather than "causal or linear" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

#### 5.6.2.4 Substantive Theory and Formal Theory

Grounded theory methodology is capable of generating formal and substantive theory. Merriam (2002) notes that substantive theory is distinguished from grand or formal theory. The aim of the research is to build substantive theory about the applicability of the NZQA's principles to the OECS based on their quality assurance role in education, but not to build formal theory of the NZQA or qualifications frameworks or quality assurance per se. Substantive theories are those developed to explain one specific area of empirical inquiry, whereas formal theories apply to more general areas of inquiry (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2002). After careful scrutiny of the implications for the study, the following corpus of grounded theory methodology was applied throughout this research.

**Table 5.3 Aspects of Grounded Theory  
Applied in This Research (Adapted from Bartlett & Payne, 1997)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Theoretical sensitivity	An understanding and use of the literature and personal knowledge
Collect and analyze data	Making sense of data through social interaction Getting to the sources of data/findings meanings, attachment, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires
Transcribe data	Production of full transcriptions of data
Build/develop analytic categories	Review, examine, code data and transcripts
Constant comparative analysis	Match themes/chunks/segments against each other
Theoretical integration	Link core categories/themes to other subsidiary themes that have been developed
Grounding the theory	Return to data and validate core themes/categories against actual segments of texts
Filling in the gaps	Filling any missing detail by the further collection and analysis of relevant data

Despite the logical order, the listings do not follow each other in a linear path (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The originators in 1967 noted that the process of data collection, analysis and coding go on simultaneously to the fullest extent possible. In their subsequent presentations, Glaser (1978) particularly points out that “as one moves forward, one constantly goes back to the previous steps” (p.16); and similarly Strauss & Corbin (1998) write that “the essential procedures for discovering, verifying and formulating ... theory ... are in operation through the research project and ... [they] go in close relationship to each other, in quick sequence and often simultaneously” (p. 23). These principles are clearly applied in the study.

## **5.7 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

Bryman (2004) points out while a case study is often referred to as a method, a case study entails the detailed exploration of a specific case, which could be a community, organization or person. But once this case has been identified, a research method or methods are needed to collect the data. Methods are defined as actual techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question (Blaikie, 1993). Patton (2002) notes that “the implication of thinking about purpose and audience in designing studies is that methods are dependent on context, and that there are no “rigid rules to prescribe what data to gather to investigate a particular interest or

problem and there is no recipe or formula in making methods decisions" (p. 12). Given that one of the methodologies that informs this research is that the grounded theory methodology, in selecting the kind of data for use in the current study, consideration was given to the notion that:

While [the researcher] may use one technique of data collection primarily, theoretical sampling for saturation of a category allows for a multifaceted investigation, in which there are no limits to the techniques of data collection, the way they are used or the types of data required (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 65).

Data were collected primarily through document analysis, an attachment at the NZQA, interview, questionnaire and educators' forum. It must be emphasized, however, that rather than being "tied in a linear or cyclic sequence" the data collection methods formed "an integrated and interacting whole" (Maxwell, 1998, p.71) and may sometimes have occurred concurrently.

The first phase of the research ran from approximately from December 2002 to January 2003. In this period, data collection was primarily for developing the necessary theoretical sensitivity. It was a period for document analysis, meetings with thesis supervisors, writing and submission of the research proposal, establishing ethical principles, selecting the prospective sites and groups (participants) for the study and making arrangements for the conduct of the research.

Once approval was obtained from the University of Waikato Post Graduate Studies Committee and School of Education Ethics Committee, and consent received from prospective participants, the second phase January 2003 to October 2003 was spent collecting data.

Thus, an attachment at the NZQA's national headquarters was procured for February 2003, with the help of my thesis supervisors and a contact person within the NZQA. The attachment facilitated the opportunity to (i) conduct initial and subsequent interviews with key personnel, (ii) access documents, (iii) observe some of the operations of the NZQA, and (iv) to have informal discussions about the operations of the NZQA.

The second part of the data collection phase involved collecting and analysing data on the OECS, from March 2003 to October 2003. This created the opportunity for me to (i) conduct initial and subsequent interviews with key personnel, (ii) access documents, and

(iii) attend some two OECS education forums. The information gathered was used to corroborate information from other sources. Each method used is explained in detail below.

### 5.7.1 Analyses of Documents, Artefacts and Archival Records

The term 'document' refers to "the broad range of written symbolic records as well as any available materials and data" (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993, p. 99); whereas physical artefacts refer to "technological devices (e.g. computer printouts and disks)" (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993, p. 99; Yin, 1998, p. 247). Archival records in the form of service and organizational records, organizational charts, lists, surveys done by others, and other data files (Yin, 1998, p. 247) served as necessary sources. In some instances, the technical and non-technical literature was also referred to as documents in the study.

For document analysis, data were collected through the analyses of documents, artefacts and archival records. Data were also abstracted from journals, books, policy statements, letters, memoranda, the plethora of reports that rise to the NZQA (for instance, *The Hawke Report*, 1988; *The Green Paper*, 1986; *Learning and Achieving*, 1986; *Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions*, 1989; *The Picot Report*, 1988; *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987), *communiqués* and reports of the NZQA and other international quality systems, Ministries of Education, Caribbean Education strategic plans, brochures, minutes of meetings, investigative reports; administrative documents including progress reports, formal studies or evaluations of NZQA, public documents, newspaper clippings, other articles appearing in the media, or other data previously collected. These multiple sources were used for theoretical sensitivity in the first instance and throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Most documents were produced for a specific purpose and a specific audience (other than for this case study). These conditions had to be fully appreciated in order to interpret the usefulness of any records used (Yin, 1994, p. 84). Of significance was Best & Kahn's (1998) admonition that when using documentary sources, one should consider that data appearing in print are not necessarily trustworthy. As a result, documents used in the research were subjected to careful types of criticism. Not only was the authenticity of the documents important, but the validity of their contents was crucial. It was therefore my obligation (as is that of all researchers) to establish the trustworthiness of the data drawn from documentary sources (Best & Kahn, 1998).

In keeping with Strauss & Corbin's (1998) assertion, document analysis serves two main purposes, namely theoretical sensitivity and theoretical sampling. Document analysis was used to (i) examine social, historical and political perspectives of the research problem; (ii) develop research procedures - writing of thesis proposal, selection of samples for the study; (iii) generate content, derive concepts and build dimensions, properties and categories; (iv) generate other data for purposes of comparative analyses; and (v) to make checks for internal consistency by seeking key events, establishing patterns and inferring significance. This sensitivity was used to elicit meanings, corroborate and augment evidence from other sources, and gain insights relevant to the research problem and kept in mind for comparative fields. The goal was to match incoming data against the insights. The concepts generated were more 'sensitizing' than 'definitive'. They served more to open the mind and to avoid going into the field with an "empty head" (Dey, 1993, p. 4).

### 5.7.2 Attachment

Writers advocate that behaviour is better observed in context and in its natural setting; hence the attachment at the NZQA was conceptualized. An attachment, as it relates to this study, may be described as the researcher spending time at the physical site in personal contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising, eliciting and documenting meanings of occurring events (Stake, 1995). There were two attachments from the period February to September, namely one at the NZQA during the month of February 2003 and one in the OECS region for a six month period in that same year. The essence of the attachments was to collect information in context with a commitment to understanding the issues involved, from the standpoint of individual participants (Barister *et al.*, 1994). The NZQA attachment created the opportunity to (i) conduct initial and subsequent interviews with key personnel; (ii) access documents; and (iii) observe some of the operations of the NZQA. The information gathered was used to corroborate information from other sources. The OECS attachment provided opportunities to collect information from various offices (OERU headquarters) and attend meetings and educators' forums where financially viable. It was during the attachment at the NZQA that the interviews were conducted with NZQA managers.

### 5.7.3 Interviews

Robson (2002) notes that grounded theory is particularly useful in new applied areas where there is a lack of theory and concepts to explain what is going on. Morse (1994) points out that for this reason the interview is a primary source of data in grounded theory methodology. Thus, to triangulate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2003a) or crystallize (Richardson, 2000) the themes and issues found in document analysis, and to continue pursuing the objectives of the study, the interviews were used on a one-to-one basis (Banister *et al.*, 1994, p. 50). A total of 38 interviews were conducted for this study. The interviews were conducted in two locations, namely the OECS and New Zealand. Through interviews, participants' "thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings, and perspectives" were probed (Wellington, 2000, p. 71). Their "versions of their account of situations which they may have lived or taught through: his - or her - story" (Wellington, 2000 p. 71) can be taken into account with a view to constructing a full understanding of what exists or existed for that participant (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p.125). Verification, clarification and/or alteration take place during the process (Travers, 2001; Wengraf, 2001). As Kvale (1999) explains, the interview aims at "understand[ing] the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences and to uncover their lived world" (p. 1). Hence, the interview has been regarded in this study as "a conversation with a purpose" (Bingman & Moore, 1959, in Banister *et al.*, 1994, p. 52; Webb & Webb in Burgess, 1982, p.107, cited in Merriam, 1988, p.73; Dexter in Erlandson *et al.*, 1993, p. 85). It follows that the aim of the interview is not to establish some sort of inherent 'truth' (Travers, 2003). As has been contended by the theoretical perspective adapted in this research that is, the epistemology of the social construction of reality and the basic interpretive qualitative paradigm, there are 'multiple realities' in social situations (Crotty 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002).

In this research, the semi-structured interview technique was utilized. The semi-structured interview schedules used in this research follow.

Table 5.4  
NZQA Interview Schedule

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What is your understanding of the terms quality and quality assurance?  
How does the NZQA undertake quality assurance of qualifications?

What gave rise to the NZQA?

What is the role of the NZQA? Has the role of the NZQA changed over the years; and if yes, what has given rise to the change?

How does the NZQA view itself in terms of an educational role? For instance, it has been argued that the NZQA plays an economic role, but my interest is, how does NZQA play an educational role?

What theories guide the operational principles and practices of the NZQA?  
How does the NZQA balance aspects of managerialism, such as its market driven goals, with enhancing learning?

What are the success stories of the NZQA? What are the challenges that the NZQA faces in the implementation of its principles and policies?

How has the NZQA impacted on the quality of education in New Zealand?  
How do you know that NZQA has had an impact on the quality of education in NZ? How is that impact measured? Who measures that impact?

In the late 1980s there was the concern of preparing the human resource in New Zealand to meet the demands of the technological age and to give New Zealand a competitive edge. How has NZQA contributed to attaining that goal?

What exactly is the purpose of the framework? How were the levels, conceptualized? Was there a rationale for them? How were they determined?

One of the goals for reforming the qualifications system was to bridge the academic and training/vocational divide. How successful has the NZQA been in bridging the academic and training divide?

Why unit standards in the first place? Were there alternatives available? What are the merits and challenges in using unit standards?

There is the concern that when you began it was unit standards. With unit standards you either achieved the standard, or you do not. Now, with achievement-based standards, you can attain excellence, merit, or credit within the standard. Is this change contradictory to the original idea? Why the change?

Criticisms and concerns of the NZQA include a proliferation of credits and standards, redundancy in unit standards, very few qualifications, and huge workloads for teachers in the case of the NCEA, and lack of training for teachers in the use standards and implementation of the NCEA. What are your opinions of these criticisms? Do you think those criticisms are justified? Why or why not?

The traditional method is either you passed or you failed. The current practice is either you achieved the standard or you don't achieve the standard. What's the difference?

How do you fill the gap when the standards have not been attained? What intervention strategies or support systems are there to help learners who have not achieved the standard?

How are New Zealand standards and outcomes benchmarked internationally?

Do you think that the operational costs of running the NZQA are justified and beneficial?

Can the NZQA justify its current existence? Is there any need for the NZQA in the present education system in New Zealand?

If you were to start the NZQA all over again, what would you retain, and what would you jettison? What advice can you give to a country wanting to follow in a similar direction?

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Table 5.5  
Interview and Questionnaire Schedule - OECS

- 
- What is your understanding of the phrase 'quality assurance in education'?
- How is the quality of education formally measured/evaluated in (i) your country, (ii) OECS?
- In 1988, CARICOM Ministers of Education took the decision that Caribbean Accreditation Council be established. In your opinion how can such a system best be set up?
- As a region, is there need to reform our qualifications system? Why or why not?
- What factors, key issues, key structures/ institutions or key arguments would **influence or facilitate** change in the qualifications in the OECS: Educational, social, cultural, economic, political, geographical or otherwise?
- What factors/ key arguments, institutions, and major challenges would **impede/deter** change (Educational, social, cultural, economic, political, geographical or otherwise)?
- How can (i) CARICOM, (ii) OECS propel change/development of a qualifications framework?
- What role can other existing institutions (ACTI, UWI) play in the process?
- If such a body were to be developed, what role should CXC play?
- Your final, or any other thoughts on the issue, which you believe are important, but I did not mention.
- 

The semi-structured interview schedules above were used to guide the general questioning during interviews (see Charmaz, 2003a, 2003b; Fontana & Frey, 2003). The approach allowed for the answers to be constructed by the respondents. In each case the participants were encouraged to discuss broad question areas, for instance "How is the quality of education measured or assessed in the OECS?" or "Why was the NZQA developed?" or "What gave rise to the NZQA?" Probes used were based on the responses and issues, and on the respondents' initiatives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This semi-structure provided considerable latitude to pursue broad areas and offered the participants a chance to shape their responses and, by extension, the content of the interview (Mason, 2002; Miller & Crabtree, 2004). Questions were asked and answers were prompted whenever necessary, which elicited reformulations of responses if they were needed (Banister *et al.*, 1994; Johnson, 2002; Scott & Usher, 1999).

Debates have often centred on which approach is more effective, but in this study the semi-structured approach presented a clear advantage (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000): the use of a semi-structured approach facilitated a constant comparative method of analysis of data across

participants. The approach also provided the opportunity for participants to elucidate their responses during the interview. It was possible to respond to, clarify and follow up issues raised by interviewees, including the ones that had not been anticipated (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). Particularly, questions were able to be tailored to the comments of participants and did not follow a rigid framework (van Krammen & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). There was added flexibility, since the opportunity was created for the researcher to frame and reframe the questions to facilitate comprehension and interpretation by individual interviewees as the need arose (Warren, 2002; Wilson & Goodall, 1991). Through the use of hints, prompts, and rephrasing questions, the semi-structured interview became a flexible research tool and made for a fruitful data collection experience (Scott & Usher, 1999).

While insights and fresh information emerged during the interviews, the researcher welcomed divergent viewpoints and pieces of information that seemed unconnected (Yin, 2003). Issues that were given consideration before the conduct of the interview in this study included poorly constructed questions, inaccuracies in responses due to problems with recall and reflexivity and the high cost and time-consuming nature of the interview. Pilot-testing, discussing questions with thesis supervisors, the use of multiple sources of evidence and the opportunity for participants to confirm their responses were some steps taken to mitigate the disadvantages of the interview, but nothing prepared me for the willingness of some interviewees to continue on for three hours, giving rise to at least 40 pages of transcript data.

#### 5.7.4 Questionnaires

For participants who were unable to be interviewed, data was collected via the questionnaire. At an international quality assurance meeting held in the CARICOM country of Barbados in May 2003, at which Professor Patricia Broadfoot was the keynote speaker, several questionnaires were distributed to participants. The questionnaire required participants to respond to the questions (from the interview schedule) in writing. While it was an approximation of the semi-structured interview schedule, it was qualitatively different because of the physical distance between the researcher and the respondent (Sarantakos, 1998; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Unfortunately, return rates were low, despite the constant appeal by the chairperson to assist with the research. Out of a total of 80 questionnaires distributed, less than 20 were returned. Some persons who promised to post them or e-mail responses never did.

In contrast to the interview, therefore, there was an interactive nature that questionnaires lack, since there was no clarification or exchange (Fetterman, 1998). Hence, it was difficult to know whether there was a shared common understanding about the meaning of the questions (Bouma, 2000; Burns, 2001; Cohen, Morrison & Manion 2001; Sarankatos, 1998). Despite these caveats, questionnaires were an efficient and ... "realistic way of taking the pulses ... of people" who could not have been met (Fetterman, 1997, p. 486). Questionnaires, therefore, provided an additional method of obtaining the views of persons who were unable to meet with the researcher for interviews or meet with the researcher during attachments, but had agreed to participate in the research.

### **5.7.5 Educators' Forums**

Another source used for developing theoretical sensitivity was educators' forums. These provided the added advantage of meeting, observing, listening and participating with various groups who may not have been interviewed on a one-to-one basis to obtain their input. Two major forums were attended: The OECS Ministers of Education Meeting (held on July 28, 2003 at the Sandals Grande Hotel in St Lucia) and an OERU regional workshop on the development and reporting of qualitative indicators on school functioning (held 16-18 June 2003 at the Glencastle Hotel in St Lucia). These forums allowed the researcher to obtain the views of practitioners in the target population. They were inexpensive ways to reach several participants and gain useful insights into their perspectives.

### **5.7.6 The Sample in this Research**

From the New Zealand context, twelve interviewees: ten individuals from the NZQA, a ministry official and a representative of the NVCC - provided data for the study. These interviews were conducted in January 2003, during an attachment of the researcher to the NZQA Headquarters in Wellington. Interview data were obtained from a total of 26 OECS participants from various social fields and with wide ranging experience, all of whom willingly gave at least one hour for interviews. One of the participants, for instance, now serves as the Governor-General in one country but has also served as a school teacher, lecturer and principal of a community college. Other interviewees from the OECS for the study were selected from among policy makers, planners in Ministries of Education, other government ministries and non-governmental organizations. At least ten of those persons had served as principals of primary or secondary schools. In total, 38 interviewees provided data for this study, in addition to the questionnaire data obtained. As a result of the poor response rate of the questionnaires, the questionnaire

data were used mainly for theoretical sensitivity. Profiles of interviewees are provided in Appendix D.

## 5.8 Interpretation and Presentation of Findings

The procedures for analysis of basic interpretive qualitative research have not been stipulated definitively in the literature. Data were coded, and methods of data analysis were sought on the basis of the general acceptance in the literature that there was no best system of analysis (Janesick, 2003, 2004). Writers have yet to refute Miles and Huberman's (1984, 1994) claims that "there are no canons, decisions, rules, algorithms or even any agreed upon heuristics in qualitative research to indicate whether findings are robust" (p. 230).

Miles & Huberman (1984) emphasize, however, that qualitative analysis needs to be documented as a process, particularly for purposes of "auditing any specific analysis" (p. 12). They designed the model that I used to analyse the data in this thesis. Their model suggests that analysis be represented as "three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification" (1984, p. 21; 1994, p.12). According to Miles & Huberman (1984, 1994), the three procedures are cyclical and iterative, rather than linear in nature. The generation of theory as a process requires that all three operations be done together as much as possible. This recommendation of Miles & Huberman's (1984) is in keeping with grounded theory methodology to the extent that Glaser & Strauss (1967) also documented a similar view that "joint collection, coding and analysis of data is the underlying operation [of generating theory]" (p. 43). According to Glaser & Strauss (1967), data collection and analysis "should blur and intertwine continually, from the beginning of an investigation to its end" (p. 43). Thus far this has been the approach adopted in this study. The three procedures suggested by Miles & Huberman (1984, 1994) were applied to this research below.

### 5.8.1 Data Reduction

The first stream of data mining utilized in this research was done using data reduction. In this first stream, I summarized and extracted discursive themes from data, portioned and formed clusters as recommended by Miles & Huberman (1984, 1994). The process entailed some comparative analysis as recommended by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978). Also, interviews were transcribed. From the questionnaires, document analysis and interviews, the raw data was selected, transformed and focussed by

simplifying and abstracting. Data reduction continued until there was theoretical saturation; that is, new themes or ideas failed to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **5.8.2 Data Display**

Data display is the second major flow used in this thesis (Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994). Data display was used with the aim of organizing information in a condensed and directly accessible form. As with data reduction, “the creation and use of data is not something separate from analysis, it is part of the analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Major quotations for use in the presentation of data were highlighted (Charmaz, 2003a).

### **5.8.3 Conclusion Drawing and Verification**

Conclusion drawing and verification as recommended by Miles & Huberman (1984) refers to the process Glaser & Strauss (1967) describe as ‘grounding’ the data and filling the gaps. From the beginning and throughout the research, partly attributed to being theoretically sensitized, decisions were made about what issues mean, factors, patterns, categories and possible explanations. Like Strauss & Corbin (1988) and Dey (1993), Miles & Huberman (1984) assert that the competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and scepticism, inchoate at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded. Conclusions were continuously verified as the researcher proceeded with research; during which, tentative conclusions become “increasingly explicit and grounded” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 22) from the analysis of meanings.

### **5.8.4 Evaluating the Data: Trustworthiness**

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest that “the interpretive practice of making sense of one’s findings is both artistic and political” (p. 23). In this light, Miles & Huberman (1984, p. 22) recommend that the meanings emerging from the data be tested for their plausibility. Despite these recommendations, the problem of how to evaluate qualitative research persists. In fact, few alternatives have been discussed in the literature (Flick, 1998).

In the literature, I found that researchers had gone their separate ways to increase the reliability and interpretations of findings (Flick, 1998). One point of dissent stems from the use of the classical quantitative methods of testing for reliability and validity in qualitative research. Some writers have even argued that these concepts are not applicable to qualitative research (see for example, Bassey, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 2004;

Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). Bassey (1999), for instance, argued that these concepts are problematic in qualitative case study research. He argued that “a case study is a study of singularity which is chosen because of its interest to the researcher (or the researcher’s sponsor) ... It is not chosen as a ‘typical’ example in the sense that typicality is empirically demonstrated, and so issues of external validity are not meaningful” (Bassey, 1999, p. 75).

As it pertains to the social construction of reality and the qualitative interpretive perspectives adopted in this research, I was guided by Denzin & Lincoln (2000, 2003a, 2003b), Flick (1998, 2003), Janesick (2003) and Richardson (2000) among other writers who advocate that, in qualitative research, validation is the social construction of knowledge by which we evaluate the trustworthiness of reported observations, interpretations, and generalizations. Flick (1998) proposed that “the question of the validity of qualitative research turns into the question of how far the researcher’s constructions are grounded in the constructions of those whom he or she has studied ... and how far this grounding is transparent for others to see” (p. 225). To increase the credibility of qualitative research, Denzin & Lincoln (2000) promote trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Merriam (2002), following on from Denzin & Lincoln (2000), advocates triangulation, peer examination, investigator’s position and an audit trail as criteria.

In this research I applied these suggestions through the thresholds of crystallization and triangulation. The triangulation process, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), reflects “an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 5). This notion of triangulation, however, is being revisited in the literature (Janesick, 2003; Richardson, 2000). Richardson (1994, 2000) argues that, from a post-modernist perspective, triangulation assumes a fixed point or object that can be triangulated, and therefore postmodern research, we do not triangulate; we crystallise. Of applicability to this research is Richardson’s (1994) notion that “a crystal combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (p. 522). In this regard, Janesick (2003) argues that “what we see when we view a crystal, for example depends on how we view it, how we hold it up to the light or not” (p. 67). According to Richardson (1994), therefore, crystallization “provides us with a deepened complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of a topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know” (p. 522). Merriam (2002) adds, however, from an interpretive perspective, “triangulation remains a principal strategy to ensure validity and reliability” (p. 26).

Based on the arguments presented by both writers, crystallisation is used. It is used to represent the combination of different methodologies and methods, study groups, local and temporal settings, and different theoretical perspectives in dealing with a phenomenon (Flick, 1998). Major methods of crystallization utilized in the conduct of this study to increase the trustworthiness of this research include:

*Data crystallization:* the use of a variety of data sources in a study;

*Theory crystallization:* the use of multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret a single set of data;

*Methodological crystallization:* the use of more than one method in this research; and

*Interdisciplinary crystallization:* the use of more than one discipline in this research.

(Janesick, 2003; Richardson, 1994, 2000)

Multiple sources of evidence, theories and methods were used to address a broad range of issues but principally “to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the different contexts of the study” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 495). These varied sources were used to develop convergent as well as divergent lines of enquiry (Fetterman, 1998). Another strategy was that of using different questions, different sources and different methods to focus on equivalent sets of data (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993). Following on is Richardson’s (1994) idea that crystallisation offers a better lens through which to view qualitative research methodologies and their components. This research also spans a broad range of subjects including managerialism, politics, sociology, economics and education to inform the research process and extend my understanding of the notion of qualitative assurance and the main thesis of this research (Janesick, 2003, 2004). Issues that had to be taken into consideration concerned the inter-relationship among the social, economic and political; and between local and global spheres of government activity (Codd, Gordon & Harker, 1997; Olssen *et al.*, 2004). The combination of multiple methods, empirical data and multiple perspectives in the study was employed as a strategy that “adds rigor, breadth and depth” to the study (Flick, 1998, p. 231). All of these considerations helped to crystallise a ‘coherent and often cogent picture’ of what was happening and what elements and conditions were critical for the trustworthiness of the research (Janesick, 2003; Richardson, 1994, 2000).

## 5.9 Conclusion

This chapter explored the theoretical and methodological assumptions of, and their practical applications to, this study within which the research question and objectives are being explored (Creswell, 2002). Essentially, this chapter has endorsed the themes that

“the dichotomy between theory and practice is an artificial one” (Neuman, 2000, p.61); that “the research process is not divorced from theory” (Kitchin & Tate, 2000, p.1) and that “research methods and social theories are inextricably intertwined” (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p.6).

It was argued that reality is a consequence of negotiated interpretations and meanings brought by individuals, none of which is more ‘true’ or ‘fact-like’ than another. Consequently, rather than employing mainly “a deductive form of logic wherein theories and hypotheses are tested in a cause-and-effect order in a context-free environment” (Cresswell, 1994, p.7), the epistemology of the social construction reality was adapted. The basic interpretive qualitative paradigm and an adapted version of grounded theory methodology, where both deductive and inductive logic lead to discursive themes, are employed to case study the NZQA and the extent of applicability of its principles and operations to the OECS. These themes help establish the trustworthiness of the data in theorizing towards an OECS qualifications framework. All the phases in the data collection and analysis of findings, key events, and patterns help crystallize a coherent and often cogent picture of what is happening in the NZQA.

The next chapters report on the findings which address the major question: *How might the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework be theorized based on the experiences of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)?* In Chapters Six and Seven, my analytical investigations based on these objectives are presented. Chapters Six and Seven present data from the New Zealand experience, and Chapter Eight focuses on findings from the OECS sub-region. The findings reported are based on the following steps which have been identified in Chapters One, Two and at the beginning of this chapter:

- (i) An analysis of the key arguments that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA with which the OECS can identify;
- (ii) An examination of the policies and operational principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand;
- (iii) An analysis of the successes and the challenges of the NZQA’s experience in translating its legislative mandate, on its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand, into practice;
- (iv) An assessment of the factors and key arguments which drive/influence or have the potential to deter/impede the reform of a qualifications system in the OECS.

## Chapter Six

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### THE CASE OF THE NZQA ORIGINS, ADOPTION, POLICIES AND OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

#### 6.1 Introduction

In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, the analytical results of the steps in this research are presented. Chapters Six and Seven present data from the New Zealand experience, and Chapter Eight focuses on findings from the OECS. Given the unique socio-political factors of New Zealand and the OECS, these three chapters complement each other well. The analysis in these three chapters is also a way of exploring the loosely grouped discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment. Of critical concern in this research is the extent to which these discourses might have played a major role in the change and the nature of the change in the qualifications system of New Zealand and how they might impact on change in the qualifications system of the OECS.

The analysis of the NZQA data is divided into two chapters. In Chapter Six, data was drawn mainly from content analysis of documentary evidence, although whenever necessary reference is made to data from interviews. In Chapter Seven, interview data from the NZQA personnel is analyzed. Documentary evidence means anything written, visual or spoken that serves as a medium for information (Gray, 2004; Krippendorff, 2004). Document/content analysis is used as the technique for gathering and analyzing the content of those texts (Neuman, 2003).

This sixth chapter begins to address the research question. In particular it analyzes the key arguments/factors that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA, with which the OECS can relate. The presentation and interpretation of data begins with the factors and arguments that influenced origins, adoption and establishment and NZQA.

## 6.2 Origins, Adoption and Establishment of the NZQA

Openshaw (1995), following on from Shuker (1987), contends that from 1877 up until the late 1980s the education system of New Zealand remained structurally unaltered. According to Openshaw (1995), by the 1940s there was already a post-primary education “settlement” in New Zealand, which “for close on fifty years, was a central factor in shaping the lives of several generations” (p. 7). In concomitance with other writers, he posits that one of the central concerns of this education settlement was that education should be contributing and boosting the social and economic development of the nation – a theme reported by writers (see McKenzie, Lee & Lee, 1996; Openshaw, 1995; Shuker, 1987, for example) to have been used to justify development of education policy as far back as in 1877.

Olssen & Matthews (1997) argue that, to a certain extent, the basic premises of this settlement were characteristic of ideologies of social democracy and liberalism and reflected the combined philosophies of Welfarism and Keynesian models. Both the conservative and liberal advocates accepted the fundamental principle “that anyone with ability, particularly if it is combined with effort can succeed” (Shuker, 1987, p. 285). Therefore, there is a body of opinion which suggests that the principles of the settlement were supported by the ‘Left’ because of the egalitarian principles of Welfarism; and by the ‘Right’ because of pledges of meritocracy based on equal opportunities and worker productivity in the economy (see Boston *et al*, 1991, 1996; McGee, Moltzen, & Oliver, 1993; Olssen & Matthews, 1997).

The essence of the education settlement policy is broadly captured in a statement declared by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, the Right Honourable Peter Fraser of the First Labour Government:

Every person, whatever his academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he lives in town or country, has a right as a citizen to a free education of a kind for which he is best fitted to the fullest extent of his powers (Beeby, 1992, p.124 ).

This theme of equality of opportunity and meritocracy was facilitated through the school system, which catered for differential provisions and offerings (Beeby, 1992; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Shuker, 1987). For some, meritocratic ideology was manifested in the system’s apparent successes (Shuker, 1987, p. 192); whereas for others, post-primary education in New Zealand appeared to be marginalizing substantial numbers of students,

including those of the working class, girls, and Maori (Beeby, 1992; Harrison, 2004; Hood, 1998; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Shuker, 1987). For policy makers, however, though the system was not perfect, it created an acceptable balance between academic elitism and equality of opportunity; and between national priorities and individual aspiration (Shuker, 1987).

Interestingly, however, the statement (previously quoted above) written by Beeby (the then Chief Education Officer) for Education Minister Fraser was later described by Beeby himself as “an overarching myth that was to span New Zealand for the next quarter century” (Beeby, 1992, p. 124). Other writers have concurred with Beeby. Openshaw (1995), for example, expressed that this was the most “ubiquitous educational myth for New Zealanders in the post-war years”(p. 131). Shuker (1987) also reiterated that “Fraser’s statement has served as the mythic underpinning of the New Zealand education system, an encapsulation of the egalitarian ideology which dominates it” (p. 129). Other writers (see Codd, Gordon & Harker, 1997; Lauder, 1990; Olssen & Matthews, 1997) accede, however, that the then Minister’s statement formed the benchmark for contemporary education policy. It is believed that the statement gave rise to a ‘catch phrase’- equality of opportunity - that committed successive governments to a vigorous quest for strategies and programmes in education to accommodate all New Zealanders (Olssen & Matthews, 1997).

It is against this brief backdrop that the context of change in the New Zealand experience is analyzed.

### **6.2.1 Context of Change**

In a socio-economic review of New Zealand, Hood (1998) declared that in 1962, New Zealand enjoyed one of the highest standards of living, and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the world. Despite the susceptibility of New Zealand’s economy to fluctuating export prices, high living standards had come to be expected (Hood, 1998; Openshaw, 1995; Shuker, 1987). The then Muldoon political administration had operated mainly within a ‘walled’ regulated economy that was protected by tariffs and subsidies (Hood, 1998). Hood (1998), for example, points to an almost guaranteed high standard of living, given the secured United Kingdom market for a limited variety of New Zealand’s primary produce. Within this phase of protectionism, economic prosperity and stability, education spending, relative to GDP, doubled between 1950 and 1979 (Openshaw, 1995).

The continuation of support for education would come to be dependent on these fairly positive economic and political circumstances (Openshaw, 1995).

Openshaw (1990) argued that the Currie Report (1962) provided the first signal that the post-primary education settlement was not meeting its needs. He notes, however, that more attention was drawn to education in the 1970's. This attention was paid to education as a direct result of economic decline fuelled by slow economic growth caused by factors such as inflation on imports and increased oil prices (Hood, 1998; Openshaw, 1995; Philips, 2003). This recession affected internal economies the world over. In particular, New Zealand's economic decline was attributed to its over reliance on agricultural products - trading of which was affected by slow growths in overseas demands and inflation on imports. Further economic decline was attributed to the restricted access and loss of preferential trade agreement with one of its largest markets - Britain. Then, Britain was about to become part of the newly formed European Economic Community (EEC). A major effect in New Zealand, from 1975 onwards, was "a huge fiscal deficit, financed by overseas borrowing" (Openshaw, 1995, p. 102).

Given these changing economic fortunes, there appeared to be major concerns for New Zealand's economic competitiveness on the world market and the country's ability to compete with world leaders in manufacturing and in services both overseas and within its own borders. International standards and monitoring were beginning to be key concerns of agreements such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the General Agreement in Trade Services. These agreements were rapidly internationalising several activities (*The Hawke Report*, 1988; *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1988).

Internally, there was mounting internal and external debt and other social concerns (Philips, 1998; Smithers, 1997). Unemployment figures had soared from approximately 3,000 in 1975 to 50,000 in 1985 (Openshaw, 1995), in a population of approximately 3 million.

One consequence was the "consistent international pressure applied on New Zealand to conform to the new current of economic thinking by institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)" (Olssen & Matthews, 1997, p. 12). Openshaw (1995) reports that the increasingly constrained balance of payments prompted domestic and trade-related policy responses from successive governments, especially from 1984

onwards. One implication was that, the proportion of government education expenditure began to plummet<sup>1</sup> (Hood, 1998).

Openshaw (1995) following on from Beeby (1992) observed that the fragility of the post-primary education settlement became even more striking in this less favourable socio-economic and political environment. In what he referred to as a situation of “legitimation crisis”, Codd (1990) argued that, for more than a decade, as “the problem of youth unemployment worsened, as race and gender inequalities became more politicised, and [as] the crime rate and other signs of social unrest increased, the education system was subjected to more and more public criticism” (p. 192). McCulloch (1990) also posited the economic instability “threatened overall standards and cast more doubt upon New Zealand’s education system” (p. 56). In addition to the external and internal economic pressures, writers attribute the diminishing public faith over a 20-year period (1970s to 1990s) to the discernment that ‘the myth’ of egalitarian principles had not been able to foster continuous economic growth (Codd, 1999; Openshaw, 1995).

### 6.2.2 Questioning the Purpose of Education

In this less than favourable socio-economic environment, questions were raised about the purpose of the education system. Increasingly, educational professionals, various marginalized groups, academics, parents and politicians voiced uncertainty about the purposes of the education system (Beeby, 1992; Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993). A Ministry of Education official who participated in this study recounts the difficulty that was experienced in articulating the purpose of the education system. According to the participant:

Ministers were asking us to define what was coming out of all of that and we just couldn’t because the system was so diverse (36, #2).

The relevance of the education system as a provider of differentiated labour workforce and its capability to provide training and the appropriate credentials for youth to function adequately in society were some of the concerns raised (Codd, 1990; Codd, Gordon & Harker, 1997; Thrupp, 1999). One lingering perception was that education was an apparent perpetrator of social injustices of race, class, and gender inequalities for disadvantaged groups; specifically of women and the Maori (Beeby, 1992; Codd, 1990;

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<sup>1</sup> The 1960s had seen a continuous growth in the educational expenditure from “11.2 per cent of net in 1961 to 16.2 per cent by 1971 (Openshaw, 1995, p. 102)

Codd, *et al.*, 1997; Hood, 1998; Nash, 2000; Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Shuker, 1987).

The main culprit was believed to be the qualifications/examinations system (see Hood, 1998; Piercy, 1999). The system was regarded by some as elitist, as it restricted access to schools, limited participation and involvement in education and constrained the career paths of New Zealand citizens (see *The Learning & Achieving*, 1986; *Picot Report*, 1988; *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987). Beeby (1992), Fiske & Ladd (2000) and Harrison (2004) describe a situation in which the children of working-class and those of Maori and Pacific Island families were much less likely to leave with good school qualifications than those from the middle-class, and of European origin.

From all indications, education became the scapegoat - it was seen as the underlying problem. The education system was being linked with the escalating social problems and the perceived inadequacies of the economy (Beeby, 1992; Codd, 1995; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Hood, 1998; McKenzie, Lee & Lee, 1997; Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Philips, 2003). Among the remedies offered was a proposal that a high value-added economy depended crucially on the skills of the workforce (Smithers, 1997); and that if the citizens and nationals were credentialed and acquired high technological skills, New Zealand would become competitive in the global market place (*Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987). This was believed to be one of the proposals that forged a link among “unemployment, education, credentialism and the job market” (Shuker, 1987, p. 129). Gaining credentials for the job market remained the primary focus in the minds of the public (Olssen & Matthews, 1987). In this regard, Olssen & Matthews (1997) argue that, in the secondary school system, senior school examinations tended to dominate the curriculum.

### 6.2.3 Political Influences

As economic performance declined, public faith in education also dwindled. Pressure from all sectors including the media mounted. The campaign agendas of political parties focussed increasingly on education (see Beeby, 1992; Boston, 1991; Maharey, 2004, for example). The declining socio-economic conditions, along with arguments of ‘falling standards’, rising mediocrity and the discrediting of education as a public good, buttressed the incoming Labour Government’s criticisms of the education policies and practices of the then Muldoon Administration (Government) (Boston, 1991; Boston *et al.*,

1996; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Harrison, 2004; Scott, 2001). The mounting criticisms of education provided the impetus for the incoming Labour government to introduce its ideology of Managerialism or New Public Management – a treasury led model to reform education (Boston, 1991; Boston *et. al.*, 1996; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Fitzsimons, 1999a, 199b; Harrison, 2004).

This impetus from government was not a novel occurrence, as writers (Harrison, 2004; Kelsey, 1997; Levin, 2001) have suggested that education reform is usually influenced by the economic policies of the government of the day (UK - Thatcher; USA - Reagan; New Zealand - Roger Douglas, for example). It is believed that the policies of these governments shared similar aspects (Boston, *et al.*, 1996). For those governments of the day, the goal was:

To curtail the role of the state in the economy; the commitment to monetary and fiscal discipline; the emphasis on controlling inflation as the primary objective of macro-economic policy; the quest for efficiency, consistency and predictability; the shift in emphasis from demand management to supply side measures; the reliance on market forces and the desire to make markets work better; and the regular endorsement of TINA (there is no alternative) (Boston 1987, p. 150 in Olssen & Matthews, 1997, p. 16).

In New Zealand, the reform of education policies was particularly influenced by the wider national economic policies undertaken by the Labour government (Boston, *et al.*, 1996; Scott, 2001). In this wider public sector reform, State education underwent the most extensive administrative organization for more than a century (Middleton, Codd & Jones, 1990). A participant in this research, from the New Zealand context, recounts:

At the time of the government reforms in 1989, we had huge change! A huge atomic explosion in the whole government infrastructure! (36, #2).

#### **6.2.4 Signposts of the NZQA: Investigative Reports and Consultations**

The NZQA evolved out of this climate of change as depicted in the foregoing observations. The establishment of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was found to be both incremental (evolutionary) and radical (revolutionary) (Barrowman, 1996). On the one hand, its establishment has been described (see Barrowman, 1996; Hodgetts, 1998; Philips, 2003 for example) as a radical product of the 'sweeping changes' occurring in the wider institutional and national contexts of public sector in New Zealand at the dawn of the 1990s. On the other hand, in the spirit of wider public sector reform and the mounting criticisms of the education system, the government launched a series of investigations of

the education system (Barrowman, 1996). From this perspective, the establishment of the NZQA has been described as gestational or incremental, originating from the results and recommendations of a plethora of investigative reports that focussed on compulsory education and training; that is, education and training beyond the age of 16 (Barrowman, 1996; Hamill, 2001; Hodgetts, 1998; Roberts, 1997).

A comprehensive analysis of all the reports is beyond the scope of this thesis, but there is general agreement in the literature and among the NZQA participants on which of the reports were the signposts of the establishment of the NZQA. These include:

*Learning and Achieving*

Learning and achieving: second report of the Committee of Inquiry into Curriculum, Assessment, and Qualifications in Forms 5 to 7, Wellington, NZ. (1986) (Known as *Learning and Achieving*).

*The Green Paper*

(Draft) Green paper on the New Zealand vocational education and training system and institutional arrangements in the labour market (1986) (Known as *the Green Paper*).

*The Probine-Fargher Report*

The report of a ministerial working party: the management, funding and organization of continuing education and training. Wellington, N.Z. (1987) (Known as *The Probine-Fargher Report*).

*The Picot Report*

Administering for excellence: effective administration in education of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration. Wellington, N.Z.: The Taskforce (1988) (Known as the *Picot Report* or *Administering Excellence*).

*The Hawke Report*

Report on post-compulsory education and training in New Zealand prepared for the Cabinet Social Equity Committee. Wellington, NZ: Office of the Associate Minister of Education, 1988 (Known as the *Hawke Report*).

*Tomorrow's Schools*

Tomorrow's schools: the reform of education administration in New Zealand. Wellington, N.Z. : Dept. of Education, 1989. (Known as *Learning for Life One*).

*Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions (1989).*

*Achievement 2001*

Qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education, New Zealand Qualifications Authority (1998) (Known as *Achievement 2001*).

I therefore focus below on an analysis of specific findings and recommendations of these critical reports that might have led to the institutionalization, operations and policies of

the NZQA. Although not discussed in any particular detail, mention is also made on occasions of other reports which crystallize the point of discussion; for example, mention is sometimes made of:

*Tomorrow's Standards*

Report of the Ministerial Working Party on Assessment for Better Learning. Ministry of Education, Wellington NZ, Learning Media, 1990 (Known as *Tomorrow's Standards*).

*The National Qualifications Framework of the Future (October 1999) White Paper*. Published on behalf of the Government of New Zealand by the Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand (Known as *the White Paper*).

*Learning and Achieving* (1986) placed emphasis on the learner, assessment and qualifications in years 11-13; and on partnerships and a collaborative approach to learning and decision-making in education. Given the rate of technological and economic change in society, the report promoted lifelong learning (see also *The White Paper, 1999*, for arguments on lifelong learning). Lifelong learning was a concern internationally at the time (see Tuijnman, 2002, for instance).

In a detailed description, *Learning and Achieving* emphasized the outmoded nature of curriculum, assessment and certification systems "to meet social changes, technological changes, and changes in the economy" (p. 22). This investigative report specifically recognized that change was always taking place - syllabuses had been altered, new subjects added, and examinations modified but nevertheless the:

system of assessment and certificates was set up in the 1940s. At that time the School Certificate examination became the established award in the third year of secondary school, an endorsed school certificate and university entrance found their place in the fourth year, and higher school certificate and the entrance scholarships examination completed the system in the fifth and final year. University bursaries was introduced in 1966, and Sixth form Certificate in 1968 both in an attempt to meet the needs of a changing population (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, p. 33).

One major recommendation of *Learning and Achieving* was that fundamental structural changes were needed in the curriculum and in the assessment system to take into account changing social and economic imperatives. Other recommendations that would later give rise to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) fifteen years later (in 2001) included:

The [then] school certificate be progressively modified and replaced by a Fifth Form Certificate; sixth form certificate remaining the sole qualification in that year; a seventh form certificate as the sole national award at this level ... replace the university Bursary and Scholarship exams and Higher School Certificate (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, pp. 15-16).

Development of a national certificate, which shall be available to every student at the point of leaving school (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, pp. 15-16).

The traditional psychometric norm-referencing assessment, which was the core of assessment practice in New Zealand at the time, was also a focus in the report (also see Crooks, 1988, 1999, 2002; Lennox, 1995; see also *Tomorrow's Standards*, 1990; *Assessment for Better Learning*, 1989). *Learning and Achieving* (1990) recommended a shift from norm referenced assessment (whereby students' achievement is rated against the performance of others) towards achievement based assessment (Hood, 1991; Fitzsimons, 1997b). It has been observed in this thesis that this recommendation would later become a core policy in the standards/outcomes based approach of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as well as a key policy in the conceptualisation of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (see Hood, *et al.*, 1996; *Tomorrow's Standards* (1990), *Learning and Achieving* (1986)).

*Learning and Achieving* (1986) also pointed out the relatively poor level of achievement in the national assessment among Maori students. The report also reproved the then curriculum "for failing to take into account adequately the Maori perspectives on learning and assessment" (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, p. 34). Of concern according to the report was "the fact that 62% of Maori school leavers, compared with an average of 33 per cent for all students, leave school without any formal national acknowledgement of their advancement" (*Ibid*, p. 34). This large proportion of students, particularly Maori and Pacific Island students, leaving school with no qualification after years of being schooled was described as "unacceptable" (*Ibid*, p. 34). In this same line of argument, a case was made for the special needs of other groups thought to be challenged and disadvantaged by the system:

There is clear evidence that women still do not play an equal role in society" (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, p. 35).

These include students from other ethnic groups, adult learners, students in rural areas, students from backgrounds of economic hardships, and those with exceptionally high ability (*Ibid*, p. 36).

Recommendations were made regarding fundamental structural changes in curriculum and assessment to "ensure that Maori students [and other special needs and disadvantaged groups] achieve a greater level of success, so that they leave school proud of their accomplishments" (*Ibid*, p. 8).

*Learning and Achieving* (1986) also highlighted the changing value of qualifications. According to the report, employment was available up until the mid 1970s for those leaving school without formal qualifications. Intense competition for employment and the sharp focus on the level of the qualifications of the job seeker had since created difficulties for those without qualifications. Higher level qualifications were being demanded by those involved in the selection of employees, “probably more as screening instruments than as indicators of individual capacity and otherwise” (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, p. 25).

A body of opinion suggests that findings of *Learning and Achieving* were accepted by the political *Left*. The *Right*, however, challenged the report for its liberal and costly recommendations (Barrowman, 1996). Also, from the onset, there were other groups with concerns about the practicality of the proposals (see McGee, *et al.*, 1993; Olssen & Matthews, 1997; Roberts, 1997). Barrowman (1996) claims that in spite of the disparate positions on *Learning and Achieving* (1986), the then Minister of Education accepted the review in its entirety.

In its reading of the report, however, the Treasury debated the narrow assumptions of the report. Treasury’s concerns were based on the relationship between education and the economy, and issues of management and consumer choice (Philips, 1998). As a result (and prior to then upcoming general elections), the Minister of Finance announced a task force to review education administration and to report directly to the Ministers of Finance, Education and State services. ‘Supermarket magnate’- Brian Picot was to head task force (Barrowman, 1996; Hill, 2000; Hodgetts, 1998).

Shortly after *Learning and Achieving*, *The Green paper* (1986) was jointly produced by the Department of Education and the Labour Department. The inveterate arguments of a highly skilled labour force for an increasingly competitive world economy and the development of a culture of life long learning, as pointed out in *Learning and Achieving* (1986), were reiterated in *The Green Paper* (1986). Just as in *Learning and Achieving* (1986) *The Green Paper* (1986) emphasized the outmoded nature of the qualifications system and the need for qualifications to be based on a national certification system; that is, criterion based rather than norm referenced, the need for recognition of prior learning and horizontal and vertical pathways for learners through cross crediting. The report continued to promulgate the need for accessibility, flexibility, transferability, and

portability of learning. Other recommendations of *The Green Paper* included changing the administrative structure of education. The recommendations for change in *The Green Paper* (such as the recognition of prior learning and horizontal and vertical pathways for learners through cross crediting) were being made “within an area that was regarded as notoriously territorial” (Barrowman, 1996, p. 3), meaning that each sector guarded the operations within its jurisdictions. The recommendations in *The Green Paper* reflected a number of essential components of the Scottish Vocational Council (SCOTVEC) and other developments related to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) used in England (Philips, 1998, 2003; Piercy, 1999). The recommendations of all the reports would have implications for the then education structure.

Following hard on the heels of *The Green Paper* (1986) came the *Probine-Fargher Report* of 31 March, 1987. Much like *Learning and Achieving*, and *The Green Paper* (1986), the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987) described the determinants for change, such as the new economic order, the internationalization of trade, the pace of technological change and the emerging dominance and performance of New Zealand’s Asian counterparts. The *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987) also paid attention to the centralized and interventionist management style of the Department of Education. As with other reports, the need for coherent and integrated education structure was reiterated. There was more scope for ‘federal arrangements’ between universities and the polytechnic sector, according to the *Probine-Fargher Report*. Approximately 46 recommendations for quality assurance in education were suggested in the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987), some of which had direct implications for the formation of the NZQA; in particular recommendations for:

A national validation authority... to maintain standards by validation, moderation and examination of courses and qualifications (except those in the universities);

A more flexible system of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning to link all sectors including universities and teachers’ colleges;

A more co-operative approach ... in the delivery of education and training, between universities and the technical institutes.

As in previous reports, the education discourse of lifelong learning was a major issue in the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987). Specifically, the Report made clear that:

It is no longer useful to educate each individual once only during their early years of life as a preparation for their contribution to society. Change is far too rapid and too far-reaching for that attitude to persist. Labour market demand can change rapidly from scarcity to surplus, and vice-versa, and the changes can take place faster than education and training institutions can respond (p. 9).

The *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987) continued:

Learning must become an ongoing process, sandwiched between periods of application of that learning to practical problem solving. Part of that educational process must be handled directly by organizations themselves, and part by educational bodies acting in harmony with the changing needs of society (p. 9).

In line with the discourse of managerialism that was about to take hold of wider public sector reform, however, the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987) suggested that education be managed using a corporate management model. The recommended model in the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987) coincided with emergent themes of the Labour government's policies on wider State sector reforms.

The *Picot Report* followed the *Probine-Fargher Report* (1987). Interview data in this study (for example, 27,#10; 29,#5) confirmed that the *Picot Report* had more to do with the institutionalization of the NZQA than any other report. The *Picot Report*, released in April 1988, (but in August was followed by the report *Tomorrow's Schools*) reinforced some of the major strands of argument presented in previous reports. By way of example, like other reports, *Picot's* team pointed to an education system that took shape through "a haphazard collection of administrative arrangements" which were unsuited to the rapidly changing late 20<sup>th</sup> Century (1988, p. 22). The administrative weaknesses identified were broadly grouped as the overcentralization of decision making; the complexity of the education system; the lack of information and choice for learners; the lack of effective management practices and the feeling of powerlessness by New Zealanders (*Picot Report*, 1988, p. 22). The high failure rate particularly of Maori students was again underscored in *The Picot Report* (1988).

In its 20 recommendations for post compulsory education and training, the *Picot Report* (1988) proposed radical change for the education system, since in its view "no mere tinkering" would be effective (p. 41). The loose grouping of the discourse of managerialism was also evident in the managerial principles suggested for effective implementation. For example, one recommendation was that "education centres be encouraged in order to provide a source of supply of education services – but that learning institutions be free to choose whether to purchase services from these centres and elsewhere" (*The Picot Report*, 1988, p.44). The *Picot Report* (1988) also recommended that responsibilities be given to individual schools for finance, management and maintenance, while maintaining accountability to the government through a negotiated charter (see also

Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Harrison, 2004). The devolution model suggested by *The Picot Report* (1988) would soon be described as shifting the locus of responsibility from the community to the enhancement of State control through the charter of funding (see Codd, 1995; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Harrison, 2004). The conclusions and recommendations of all the reports appeared to forecast that change in the education sector was inevitable.

In contrast with the aim of other reports, the *Hawke Report* (1988) which followed did not involve obtaining the opinion of interest groups. Its purpose was a meta-analysis of all previous reports to make recommendations for implementation of change in Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET).

Key arguments and recommendations expressed in the earlier reports were confirmed in *The Hawke Report* (1988). Significant recommendations that formed the basis of establishment of the NZQA included the eradication of the distinctions between education and training. In particular, the *Hawke Report* recommended:

The establishment of a National Education Qualifications Agency (NEQA). The NEQA would be a small body of part-time members, and would be essentially a co-ordinating body for three distinct sub-agencies:

- i. The NVQB (the National Vocational Qualifications Board)
- ii. A secondary education qualifications board (SEQB) for qualifications in secondary schools
- iii. The National Academic Awards Board (NAAB) for degree level courses

(The *Hawke Report*, 1988, p. 54).

*The Hawke Report* (1988) also recommended that:

The NQEA should be distinct from providers of educational services, and from the Ministry of Education ... It would not be concerned with curriculum development, (although no doubt the advice of its officials would often be sought by people seeking to fill educational or training gaps, especially those who are not educational professionals (p. 54).

*The Hawke Report* (1988) continues that the “principal concern of the NEQA and its boards would be with the outcome of educational services” (p. 55). Another recommendation was that there be increased course choices for secondary school students and a mechanism for undertaking some courses in institutions other than the school (*The Hawke Report*, 1988, p. 54).

Other reports did not address the issues of degrees. *The Hawke Report* (1988), however, acknowledged the distinctive character of the universities, but denounced the exclusive

rights of universities to offer degrees. According to *The Hawke Report* (1988), “there is still in universities and elsewhere a conception of PCET in terms of vertical hierarchy of school, polytechnics and universities but it is clearly inappropriate “ (p. 92). The *Hawke Report* pointed out that “universities have a general reputation for being exclusive ... but it is often exaggerated” (p. 92). The report pointed out that “universities share the same functions with other PCET institutions” (p. 93). Of significance to the roles and operations of the NZQA, the *Hawke Report* (1988) strongly suggested that “overlaps should be built on, and there should be no attempt to preserve particular kinds of activities for one group of institutions ... degrees need not be confined to universities” (p. 93).

Following the *Hawke Report*, a second policy document, *Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions*, was released in 1989. *Learning for Life Two* dealt with the major themes of previous reports including those of the *Hawke Report* (1988). The perceived high failure rate in the education system was a major cause for concern in *Learning for Life Two*.

Essentially, the reports had attributed the perceived failure rate and inadequacies of the education system in meeting the needs of the New Zealand society to several factors including:

- Fragmentation of the system into various unconnected sectors which often do not recognize the achievements and contributions that each has to offer;

- Duplication of courses and services offered by different publicly funded institutions within a given area – often resulting in unfilled places, a misuse of resources, and insufficient places for courses that are in demand;

- A lack of coherent information throughout much of the system, which frustrates choice;

- Sectoral infighting and a lack of overall priorities;

- Lack of accountability in many areas of operations especially in research;

- The slowness of the system to respond to changing technological developments;

- A substantial under-representation of students from lower socio-economic status groups; and

- Insufficient sensitivity to the needs of ethnic groups, the socioeconomically disadvantaged and women.

(see the *Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987, p. 9, for a detailed list of factors)

The reports emphasized the need for standards, and the more systematic classification of standards, and alluded to a collaborative strategy in “the government’s intention to approach all areas of post-compulsory education and training as a single policy continuum” (*Learning for Life Two, 1989, p. 7*).

### 6.2.5 Establishment of a Qualifications Authority

A major recommendation coming out of these reports was the need for a qualifications agency. The *Picot Report* (1988) and *Hawke Report* (1988) both suggested the formation of a National Education Qualifications Agency (NEQA). They recommended that the National Education Qualifications Agency (NEQA) “be essentially a co-ordinating body for three distinct sub-agencies ... for vocational qualifications ... qualifications in secondary schools ... and national academic ... degree level courses” (*The Hawke Report, 1988, p. 54*). There was a difference in implementation details, however, in that Hawke saw the NEQA as co-ordinating three boards, with each board validating qualifications in secondary, vocational and higher education, respectively. The working party established to develop the *Hawke Report*, however, recommended that the NEQA be implemented as a single structure.

The government endorsed the establishment of the National Education Qualifications Agency (NEQA) as *The Hawke Report* (1988) had recommended; but interviewee data confirmed by documentary evidence (see NZQA, 1991d, for instance) indicated that getting legislation drafted and through Parliament took several months (also see Barrowman, 1996). According to Barrowman (1996), the legislation faced a stormy passage partially because of its contesting nature which was coupled with its weak drafting. Legitimacy for the NEQA was acquired when the Education Bill was introduced into Parliament in March 1990. The NEQA, as was proposed in the *Hawke Report* (1988), had been operational for several months and its governing board had already met a few times (Barrowman, 1996). When the governing legislation was passed, however, it was called the NZQA (Hodgetts, 1998; NZQA, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, 1996b).

Given the climate of change and the combined concerns of the investigate reports, Roberts (1997) conjures the comprehensive intent for the NZQA:

The intention was that the new system should be as flexible as possible, with recognition of prior learning and new competencies achieved ... The ‘building blocks’ in the system would be ‘units of learning’ (later to become known as ‘unit standards’) each categorized according to their level of

difficulty and placed on a single, harmonized qualifications framework ... There would be no distinction between academic and vocational training in the post-secondary educational arena: all qualifications would become part of a 'seamless web' of courses, programmes, certificates and degrees. The NZQA proposed that students be assessed on the basis of their measured achievements in meeting pre-specified outcomes. In taking this 'standards-based route', the NZQA made a decisive move away from earlier 'norm-referenced' systems of assessment (where one student's achievement is determined by comparison with others). The new system was designed to maximise 'transferability' of existing knowledge to fresh but related challenges, of skills from one domain to another, and of qualifications within and between different institutions (p. 165-166).

A National Qualifications Framework was developed with eight levels, ranging from national certificates at the lower levels to higher degrees at upper levels (*Ibid*, p. 166).

Thus far, there are some lessons for the OECS: The NZQA emanated out of the suggestions and recommendations of several investigative reports. Legitimacy was acquired through the Education Amendment Act 1990. Arguably, the NZQA was established primarily as way of dealing with the climate of change in New Zealand. From the preceding concerns identified in the climate of change, the major proponents of the new system (for example, *The Hawke Report, 1988; The Picot Report, 1988; and The Probin-Fargher Report, 1987*) suggested that change in the education sector, particularly in the qualifications system, would ameliorate social conditions and increase the individual and national economic competitiveness of New Zealand. Seemingly, a change in the outmoded curriculum and assessment/examinations and certification systems of New Zealand would reduce the failure rate in the education system. A change would increase integration and coordination, minimize overlaps, reduce redundancies in qualifications and improve standards, the quality of learning and assessment and the quality of qualifications. Essentially, the proponents of the change hoped that a new system would create pathways for learners - facilitate access, relevance, coherence, portability, flexibility, transferability of learning, parts of qualifications, and whole qualifications - principles which were found wanting in the old system.

### 6.3 The NZQA in 2005: Policies and Operational Principles

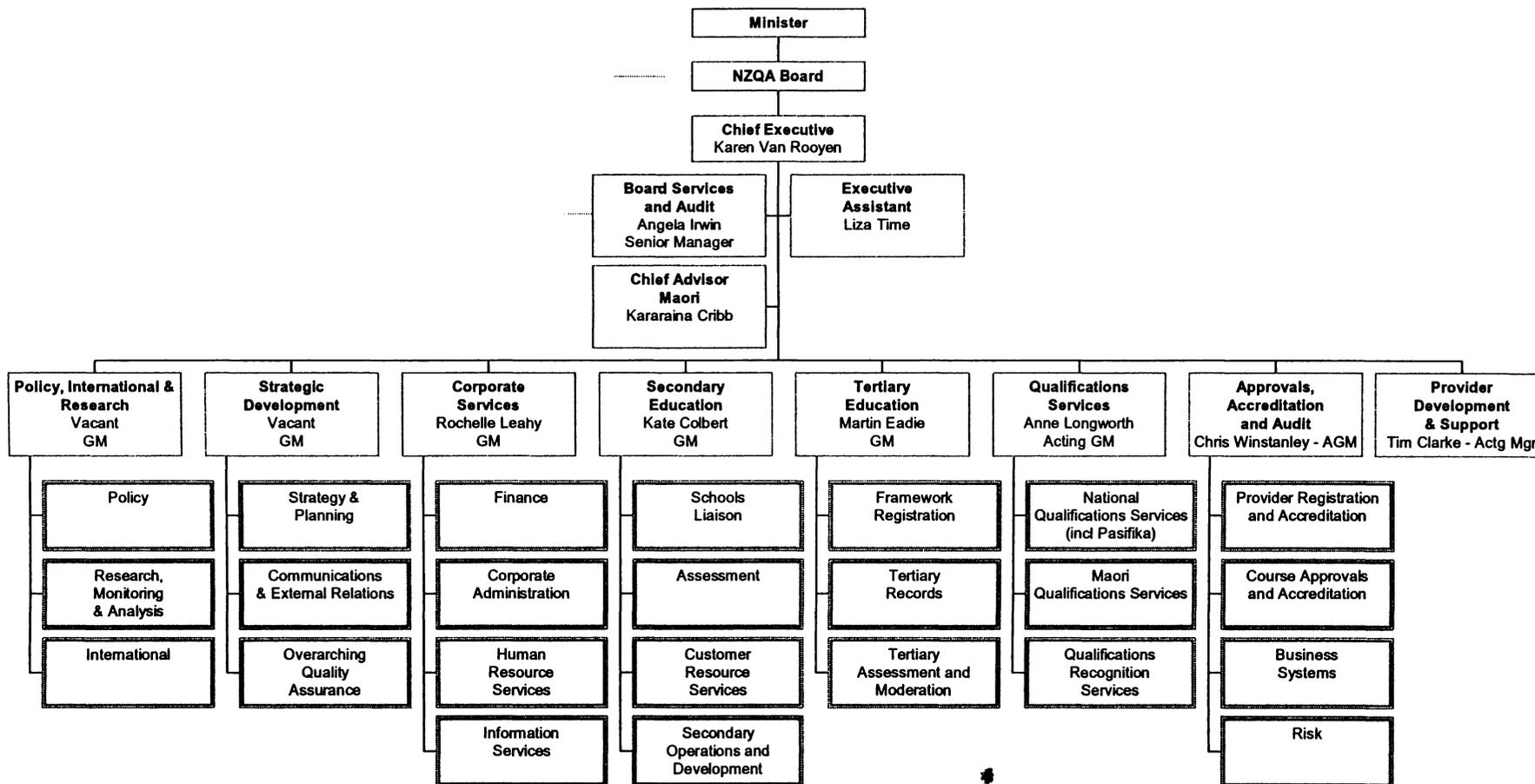
This section reports on findings of the second step in the research process, which was to analyze the operational policies and principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education. It continues with the content analysis from documentary evidence. This step provides a

general overview of the NZQA. This overview contributes to an understanding of the operational procedures and policies of the NZQA. Although much of the data was collected during the attachment at NZQA in 2003, for currency at the time of submission, and crystallization (triangulation), much of the data was updated from documentary evidence, particularly from NZQA's comprehensive Internet website (see [nzqa.govt.nz](http://nzqa.govt.nz)).

### **6.3.1 Governance**

In its publications (NZQA, 1991b, 1993d, 1994, 2001a, for example) the NZQA's explains that it is a Crown Agency (non-government department) established and given legitimacy by the Education Amendment Act 1990. In April 2005, the NZQA announced that over the years it had delivered a widening range of services to an increasing number of New Zealanders (NZQA, 2005a). According to the NZQA, in order to continue to offer the best support possible for service delivery, it made a number of key changes to its organizational structure. Among those changes, one of the new groups established was a "policy and research, comprising three business units" (NZQA, 2005a, p. 1). These three business groups were announced as (i) policy (ii) research, monitoring and analysis (a shift from the secondary education group and (iii) international" (NZQA, 2005a, p.1). The organizational structure of the NZQA as of 2005 is provided in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1**  
**NZQA Organisational Chart**  
**At Group and Business Unit Levels**



9 March 2005

A board, appointed by the Minister of Education, governs the NZQA. The board of the NZQA was first established in July 1990 from the former ten-member NEQA of 1989 (Barrowman, 1996). Like the NEQA board of 1989, the NZQA (2005b) reports that the Board membership as of 2004 represents industry, community and education interests. The NZQA is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Education, who has the responsibility for education in New Zealand (NZQA, 2005b). Hamill (2001) reports that “total permanent staffing of NZQA has grown from 160 people in 1998 to 240 in 2001” (p. 15). In 2005, the NZQA reported that it employed approximately 280 staff, but it also contracts thousands of examiners, moderators, markers and supervisors (NZQA, 2005f). The intent of the NZQA is symbolized in its corporate logo of a stylised figure of Leonardo de Vinci’s Universal Man, “mounting the steps of education and training to embrace new horizon” (Barrowman, 1996, p. 16).

### **6.3.2 Legislative Power of the NZQA**

The NZQA in its publications (Statement of Intent 2004/2005 to 2007/2008; Annual Report 2003/2004 for example) affirms that the extant legislation that governs its operational principles relates to its responsibilities at the various levels such as governmental and educational organizations. This legislation gives legitimacy and responsibility for the management of qualifications in New Zealand to the NZQA (see Appendix A). Guided by this legislation, as a regulated legal body, the NZQA is required by the 1990 Education Amendment Act (See Appendix A for the provisions in the Education Act that relates to the NZQA) to develop a framework for national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-compulsory education and training (PCET) in which:

- (i) “All qualifications (including pre-vocational courses provided under the Access training Scheme) have a purpose and relationship to each other that students and public can understand; and
- (ii) There is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved” (Education Amendment Act, 1990, 253 (c).

### **6.3.3 Roles and Functions of the NZQA**

The “role of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority is to provide national and international leadership in the area of quality assured qualifications” (2005f p. 1) To date, the NZQA’s roles were documented as to:

- “provide an overarching quality assurance role in the tertiary sector

- develop and quality assure national qualifications that are of strategic importance to the economic and social development of New Zealand and that are not the responsibility of industry training organisations:
  - National Qualifications Services
  - Maori Qualifications Services
  - Framework Registration
- administer the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- register private training establishments and quality assure qualifications offered by private providers and wananga - see Approvals, Accreditation and Audit
- provide dedicated support to wananga and Māori private training establishments - see Māori Provider Development and Support Services
- establish the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications
- administer the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and other school, trade and vocational assessment
- evaluate overseas qualifications for immigration and employment purposes - see Qualifications Evaluation Service
- provide information and support to countries wishing to establish or review qualifications frameworks or education related quality assurance systems” (NZQA, 2005f, p.1).

All these roles and functions stipulated by the NZQA are intended to fulfil one of its central purposes, that of “ensuring the quality of provision” (1993d). The NZQA attempts to ensure the quality of delivery of standards and qualifications on the framework and on the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. In its earlier publications, the NZQA (1993d) defined ‘quality’ as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (p. 4). This notion of quality is summed up by the NZQA (1993d) as “the meeting of requirements or achieving fitness for purpose” (p. 4).

Given the span of the roles detailed above, for the OECS, interdependence is necessary for successful accomplishment. As was discussed in Chapter Three, interdependence entails links with other national systems and organizations. Interdependence also entails collaboration with other national strategies, such as curriculum design and development, human resource strategies and national development plans, which must complement each other (see Horsburgh, 1999; Young, 2003a, 2003b, for example). It can be surmised that

successful implementation and accomplishment are dependent on the nature of collaboration and linkages of such supporting and related structures.

## **6.4 Operational Structures**

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications are critical mechanisms which assist with the roles detailed above. In its Annual Report (2003/2004) the Board Chair's Foreword reads:

Coherent, flexible and responsive structures for qualifications underpin the Government's agendas for the entire sector. The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provide the platform for partnership among educators, industry, community and government agencies, all with the aim of enhancing quality and learner participation (p. 3).

In the NZQA's 2004/2005 to 2007/2008 Statement of Intent, a previous Chair of the New Zealand Qualification Authority explains:

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is the Crown Entity responsible for establishing and maintaining an explicit and consistent approach to the recognition of both academic and vocational qualifications. There are two aspects of this demanding task: the National Qualifications Framework (the NQF and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register). Policies and procedures are now in place for ensuring that both the NQF and the Register are not only working effectively and efficiently, but are also fully integrated (p. 2).

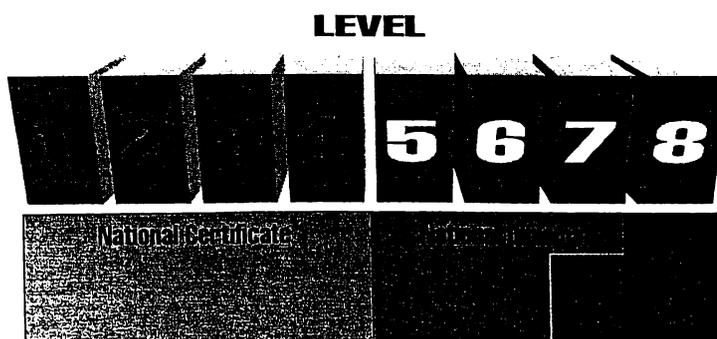
Discussions on each aspect namely, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (The Register) follow.

### **6.4.1 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**

Up until March 2001, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), was the qualifications framework of New Zealand (NZQA, 2001a). The NQF, according to the NZQA (2004a), is the base for co-ordinating and integrating a coherent, flexible, post-compulsory education and training sector. Theoretically, the intent was for the NQF to end the traditional binary division of academic and vocational education that seemingly existed in New Zealand's education system (Barker, 1994; Hodgetts, 1998; Philips, 2003).

The NQF comprised eight levels, as illustrated in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 The New Zealand Eight-Level National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Descriptors



(NZQA, 1991a, p.26)

Figure 6.2 and the descriptors of the levels indicate that the NQF provides an eight level structure on which each level arbitrarily represents the progressively more complex or difficult outcomes required of learners (NZQA, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d; 1992b, 1993a). The NZQA (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1992b, 1993a, 1993c, 2001a, 2004a) describes the building blocks of the framework as unit and achievement standards. Standards are autonomous and “they may or may not be combined to make up a specific qualification” (NZQA, 1991a, p. 12). The main rationale for the standards emanated from the need for a system that facilitated the key principles of flexibility, portability and transferability of qualifications and parts of qualifications to accommodate the differing needs of individual users (employers, professions, trades, providers and learners).

NZQA’s publications (NZQA, 1991b, 1992b, 1993a) detail that originally on the NQF, Level 1 (the lowest level) equated to School Certificate (a national certificate which was attained at the end of year 11), while Level 8 (the highest level) covered post-graduate study. Levels 5 to 7 included post-school qualifications and covered a range of learning from pre-employment level to diplomas and degrees. Levels 5 and 6 included diplomas, trade certificates and other post-school certificates excluding degrees. Initial degrees started at Level 7 and other masters and doctoral degrees were placed at level 8. The aim was to establish levels based on rational, occupational and educational patterns that relate both to existing national qualifications and overseas structures (NZQA, 1991a, 1993b, 1993d).

The eight-level framework attempted to encompass academic and vocational training from senior secondary school to postgraduate degrees within one system (NZQA, 1991b,

1991c, 1992b, 1993a, 1993c, 1993d, 2004a). As it relates to this eight level framework, however, in its briefing papers to the incoming Government the NZQA (1993d) reported that:

The universities continue[d] to uphold the view that their qualifications are outside of the Framework. Some progress has been made ... However, unless this issue is resolved, New Zealand will be in danger of entrenching the dual academic-vocational system, with its barriers to credit transfer and inbuilt perceptions of first and second class qualifications. Legislative amendment appears necessary to indicate that degrees are national qualifications and consequently part of the Framework (p. 7).

The conception and implementation of the NQF have been critiqued from the inception of the NZQA (see *The Green Paper*, 1997; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Ministry of Education, 1999; NZVCC, 1994; NZQA, 1991c). Among the critiques identified in this research, the most enduring ones have emanated from the building blocks of the unit standards based approach of the NQF - the seamless qualifications system in the attempt to bridge the vocational and academic divide (NZVCC, 1994), the number of levels on the framework (NZVCC, 1994) and some of its quality assurance procedures such as moderation (Keown, 1996; Strachan, 1996). By way of examples, given the building blocks were the unit standards meant that all qualifications had to be 'atomized' into unit standards to be registered on the NQF (NZVCC, 1994). For more than a decade, the eight-level framework was also thought to be narrow, and inadequate to represent gradations in the difficulty levels of some degrees (see NZVCC, 1994, for instance). There was also concern by the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (NZPPTA) about the pass/fail model of unit standards for awarding school certificates (see Philips 2003).

The Tertiary Lead Group (TLG) was set up by the Minister of Education to resolve those issues. Interestingly, in its report, the TLG emphasized that there were genuine advantages in a single harmonized qualifications framework. After extensive consultation with the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC), the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand (APNZ) and the Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand, in March 2001 the Board of the NZQA agreed to expand the NQF to the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, known as 'The Register' and here onwards referred to as The Register (NZQA, 2001a).

#### 6.4.2 The Register of Quality Assured Qualifications

The main aim of the Register is to ensure that “quality assurance of qualifications is consistently applied; people can compare qualifications; people can make informed choices about which qualification pathway they will pursue” (NZQA, 2001a, p. 2). The Register is also expected to facilitate the compilation of a comprehensive list of all quality assured qualifications. This list is expected to “enhance New Zealand’s capacity to benchmark qualifications internationally” (2001a, p.2). Other key purposes of the Register include:

- “To clearly identify all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand;
- To ensure that all qualifications have a purpose and relation to each other that students and the public can understand;
- To maintain and enhance learners’ ability to transfer credit by establishment of a common system of credit; and
- To enhance and build on the international recognition of New Zealand Qualifications”

(NZQA, 2001a, p. 2)

A comparison of the purposes for the Register as outlined above and those for the NQF indicates that some of the purposes correspond with the original purposes of the National Qualifications Framework. In both cases, levels depend on the complexity of learning. They do not equate to years spent learning but reflect the content of the qualification (NZQA, 2001a, 2004b). Other corresponding purposes include classification, provision of information (creation of pathways), regulation (control and compliance) and comparability (locally and internationally).

In contrast with the NQF, however, the eight levels of the Register have expanded to include two additional levels. As demonstrated below, the Register has ten levels - Level 1 is the least complex, and 10 the most.

**Figure 6.3:**  
**Ten Level Framework (The Register of Quality Assured Qualifications)**  
**Titles and Levels**

<b>10</b>	<b>Doctorates</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Masters</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelors with Honours</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Diplomas</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Diplomas</b>
<b>5</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Certificates</b>
<b>3</b>	
<b>2</b>	
<b>1</b>	

(NZQA, 2001a, p. 3)

Descriptors of these levels and credit values can be found in Appendix E.

The expansion of levels from eight to ten is one difference between the NQF and the Register. Another major difference from the initial NQF is that of the building blocks of the Register. Originally, all qualifications had to be written exclusively in unit standards to be registered on the NQF (NZQA, 1991a, 1993a). On the Register, however, whole qualifications cannot be 'broken down' or 'atomized' into unit standards (NZQA, 2001a, 2004b). Rather than having standards (the official building block of the NQF), the Register caters for the registration of whole qualifications only. These whole qualifications can only be included on the Register with accompanying learning outcomes (and not standards) (2001a, 2004b). Learning outcomes are described by the NZQA (2001a) in the following ways:

What the whole qualification represents in terms of the application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; and

The components of the qualification which, in their combination, make up the wholeness of the qualification" ( p. 6).

The NZQA (2001a) reports that the Register database holds the following information:

- "the title of the qualification;
- the level at which the qualification is registered;
- the outcome statement attached to the qualification;
- the credit requirements of the qualification;
- the subject classification;
- qualification developer/provider details" ( p. 2).

The NZQA (2001a) reports that “qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) will, by definition, be included on the Register” (p.2). Therefore, the NQF, which comprises unit and achievement standards, continues to be a key subset of the Register, with benefits for learners in terms of transferability, flexibility and portability of unit and achievement standards and not necessarily whole qualifications.

## 6.5 Quality Assurance and Other Services

The NZQA has a quality role to ensure that quality assurance and improvement operate from secondary to post compulsory education and training (NZQA, 2004a). As has been indicated in Chapter Three, in the document, *Briefing Papers for the Incoming Government*, the NZQA (1993d) quotes “ISO 8402 (3.1)” (p. 12) in its statement that “Quality is defined by the Authority as *the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs... in brief, it is the meeting of the requirements of fitness for purpose*” (NZQA, 1993d, p. 12). In its 2005 online glossary, the NZQA quality is not defined per se (see Appendix G for a snapshot of glossary definitions that pertain to quality issues).

From the NZQA’s perspective, quality assurance focuses on the quality of standards, learning outcomes recognised through qualifications and on the systems and processes that support quality delivery of education. These requirements have funding implications for educational institutions (NZQA, 2004a). Only those qualifications and providers that are quality assured by a delegated quality approval body are eligible for financial assistance from Government (NZQA, 2004a, 2005c, 2005f).

The quality assurance process undertaken by the NZQA suggests multidimensionality. By way of example, the NZQA points to the central and important role of accreditation, but it is not seen as sufficient in itself to safeguard the quality of the awards granted (NZQA, 2004a). Therefore, other systems (such as standard setting, moderation and auditing) are viewed as being equally important for both quality assurance and improvement (NZQA, 2005c). The NZQA registers private education providers and recommends the approval of training establishments to the Minister of Education (NZQA 2005c). It accredits and audits educational institutions and other registered learning establishments that offer approved courses for awarding credits and registered qualifications (2005c, 2005f). It also accredits Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) to

register workplace assessors (2005c, 2005f). Specific processes that have been identified by the NZQA (2005f) in its pursuit for quality assured qualifications are:

- (i) Registration and Approval of private training establishments and Registration of standards/qualifications;
- (ii) Accreditation (ensuring that the provider has the capacity for delivery);
- (iii) Moderation (ensuring consistency of delivery between providers);
- (iv) Audit (an independent evaluation of the whole system).

Each is discussed in turn.

#### **6.5.1 Registration and Approval of Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and of the Standards/Qualifications**

Registration is described as the process which ensures that training establishments meet fundamental standards of delivery that safeguard their clients (NZQA, 2005c). It is the first step towards accreditation of training establishments for eligibility of programme offerings on the NQF and the Register, or to offer courses outside of those frameworks (2005c, 2005f).

For registration of the standards, two significant pieces of information are required:

- The nationally registered outcome statements (elements), standards, and assessment criteria;
  - Delivery details – details of proposed teaching and learning approaches, context and content, resources and range – the number of assessments.
- (NZQA, 2004a; 2005c)

#### **6.5.2 Accreditation**

The accreditation process involves evaluating a provider's capacity to deliver the unit standards either singly or as a combination of units (NZQA, 1993a, 1993c, 2005c). Only an accredited provider is able to offer units and qualifications which are registered on the framework or Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (NZQA, 2004a, 2005c). There are options available for accreditation depending on the choices made by the national standards body. Accreditation is required for any Private Training Establishment (PTE) that wishes to:

- Offer programmes leading to National Certificates or National Diplomas;

- Receive Training Opportunities Programme Funding from the Education and Training support agency;
- Enable its students to receive allowances from the Ministry of Education;
- Enrol foreign students in courses of three months or longer.

The NZQA (2005c) reports that a provider's quality management system should describe all policies and procedures used to deliver the education and training activities that they offer and should entail:

- "governance;
- recruitment, management and development of its people;
- physical and learning resources;
- supply of information, entry and support to learners;
- design, development, delivery and review of its education and training programmes;
- systems of assessment and moderation;
- reporting on learning achievement;
- research, where degree programmes are offered" (pp. 2-3).

There are three categories of accreditation for which a provider may apply:

(a) Unit accreditation

Involves an evaluation of the capacity of a provider to deliver the standards contained in a single unit.

(b) Group accreditation

Involves evaluating the provider's capacity to deliver the standards contained within a number of named units.

(c) General accreditation

Recognizes a provider's capacity to deliver all national units within the NQF. Consideration for general accreditation takes place after endorsement has been received from all user groups and there is confirmation of evidence of quality delivery as indicated by the audit process.

The NZQA (2005c) advises that “to maintain registration and accreditation, providers must have goals and objectives that are appropriate and measurable. Provider must be largely achieving those goals and be able to assure NZQA that it will continue to achieve them” (p. 2).

### 6.5.3 Moderation

According to the NZQA, moderation is a vital aspect of the quality management process (1991b, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 2004a, 2005d). External moderation is described by the NZQA (1996c) as “a process that helps to ensure consistency of judgments” (p. 60). Moderation systems ensure that “all assessment decisions made across all accredited providers are consistent” (p. 1). According to the NZQA (1996c) “the judgments made by assessors in different providers must be comparable” (p. 60). The NZQA (2005d) describes the purpose of moderation of assessment as ensuring that:

- “Assessments are consistent with the national standard;
- Assessments are fair and valid; and
- Assessments are making consistent judgments about student or candidate performance” (p. 1).

Moderation of educational assessment, however, does not examine what is taught or how the material is taught (Keown, 1996). Moderation ensures that educational assessment undertaken at a national level is valid, fair, and meets national standards (NZQA, 2003b, 2004a). The NZQA (1996c) reports that “moderation can occur at three stages: before, during and after assessment” (p. 60). Moderation techniques can include the use of exemplars; that is, various forms of common assessment activities, test banks, assessor training, panel meetings, visits by moderators, cluster meetings or exchanges of views by other means (NZQA, 2003d).

### 6.5.4 Quality Audit

Auditing is carried out by the NZQA to check that a learning institution conforms to and complies with the agreed terms as stipulated by the NZQA (2005c). The NZQA (2005c) undertakes quality audits “to confirm ongoing registration and accreditation, and to determine the length of time before the next audit” (p. 3). According to the NZQA (2005c) “providers [are] generally ... given periods of one, two, or three years between audits, depending on the results of the audit or other information known about the provider” (p. 3). Another level of auditing is an evaluation of each of the processes followed in

approving providers to teach degrees (NZQA, 2004a). In addition to the external quality audits, the NZQA (2005c) advocates internal quality management. Internal systems ensure that all assessors comply with the required standard and that there is consistency in assessment. As part of the internal quality management, providers are required to undertake continuous evaluations of their policies and procedures (NZQA, 2005c). For external confidence, however, independent auditing is carried out by the NZQA or its delegated agent(s) (NZQA, 2004a).

### 6.5.5 Other Services Offered by the NZQA

The NZQA, in its Statement of Intent (2004/2005 to 2006/2007) as well as in its Annual Report 2003/2004, gave an account of other services, that contribute to the quality assurance process and fall within its ambit. These services include the maintenance, continuing development and improvement in the NQF and Register, maintenance of the record of learning, maintenance of databases, maintenance of the Authority's website, and evaluating/benchmarking the equivalences of overseas qualifications.

By way of example, one such service is the maintenance of the Record of Learning (2005g). The Record of Learning (ROL), formerly known as The Record of Education and Training, is the baseline record of individual achievements of learners who are "hooked" on the framework (2005g). According to the NZQA (2005g), "every learner gaining credits on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) receives a Record of Learning (ROL) that lists all unit standard and achievement standard credits, National Certificates and National Diplomas achieved in the previous year" (p. 1). It is a central computer database of student records maintained by the NZQA. The providers and learners pay a fee in advance to the NZQA, following which they are provided with the learner's identification number. From then, the provider informs the NZQA of any credits attained by the learner, and the NZQA updates the learner's records. The main purpose of the ROL is to store the data needed on each learner and to facilitate the transfer, accumulation and evaluation of the learner's credits.

Regarding school certificates and examinations, the dissemination of school level results is also one of the services undertaken by the NZQA. Efficient dispatch of results appears to be one of the problems faced. During the dissemination of the NCEA results in 2003, media reports indicated that the NZQA's website crashed, as it was unable to sustain the number of hits by students who were seeking their results. The NZQA attempted to

improve its efficiency by resorting to the dispatch of the 2004 results via post offices to complement electronic services.

## 6.6 Collaboration with Existing Agencies

In conducting its role, the NZQA describes an obligation to consult and work with other agencies on matters concerning education and training (NZQA, 2001a, 2005h). Other organizations with which the NZQA has had to collaborate include:

- Ministry of Education (MoE)

The MoE has the responsibility for the national curriculum documents (1993d). The NZQA has to work closely with the MoE on all school and school curriculum matters, particularly in the development of the NCEA (2004a).

- Education Review Office (ERO)

The NZQA reports that the Education Review Office (ERO) is another organization with which the NZQA has established links. The role of the ERO is to review and report on the extent to which early childhood centres and primary and secondary schools are achieving the educational objectives set out in their charters. The ERO carries out reviews of individual schools and national evaluations of education issues and is accountable to the Minister of Education (NZQA, 2001a, 2001b). Yet, all schools wishing to be awarded credit on the NQF must be accredited by NZQA (NZQA 2001b). Given that, there is duplication of some elements of the National education guidelines with which all schools are required to comply, and some of the NZQAs accreditation criteria; schools are automatically considered to comply with some elements of the NZQA's criteria when accreditation for conventional school subjects is being considered. The ERO also carries out the onsite visit work (accompanied where required by representatives of relevant industry groups) when a school is applying for accreditation to award credit in areas of the framework which are outside the conventional school subjects (NZQA, 1991d; 1995).

- The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC)

The NZQA reports that it works closely with the NZVCC. The NZVCC provides quality assurance for university qualifications through the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) (NZQA, 2001a). This Committee oversees inter-university course approval and moderation procedures, provides advice and comment on academic

developments, encourages the coherent and balanced development of curricula and facilitates cross-crediting between qualifications. There is a five stage process utilized by the NZQA to achieve quality in degrees: (i) Registration of Private Training Establishments (PTEs), (ii) Course approval, (iii) Course accreditation (iv) Monitoring and (v) Auditing.

- Standard Setting Bodies

According to the NZQA (2004c), standard setting bodies are either Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) as defined by the Industry Training Organization Act of 1992 or National Standards Bodies as defined by the NZQA. A role of the standards setting bodies is the pursuit of nationally consistent standards, which include criteria and a procedure for registered assessors (NZQA, 2004a). This is achieved by agreeing in consultation with NZQA to the quality management systems which provide for the national consistency of standards (NZQA, 1992b).

The Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) have a significant partnership role with New Zealand Polytechnics Programmes Committee (NZPPC) and NZQA on matters of accreditation (NZQA, 2001a). ITOs (i) set industry skills standards (ii) provide industry representatives to participate in the accreditation assessment, and (iii) gain accreditation to register assessors.

- Other Agencies (see [nzqa.govt.nz](http://nzqa.govt.nz))

The NZQA (2001a) reports that in addition to other agencies which were launched such as a careers advice and information service and the Education Training Support Agency (ETSA), whose role has to do with funding and support of vocational training), the NZQA is also expected to work closely with:

- “the Committee on University Academic Programmes of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, [which] approves all university qualifications” (NZQA, 2001a, p. 5).
- “the New Zealand Polytechnics Programmes Committee of the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand, [which] approves polytechnic Bachelors Degrees, as well as sub-degree, graduate certificates and diplomas, under delegated authority from NZQA” (NZQA, 2001a, p. 5).
- “the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC) of the Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand, [which] approves

sub-degree qualifications under delegated authority from NZQA" (NZQA, 2001a, p.5).

- "The New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) established by NZVCC, carries out university academic quality audits, drawing on both New Zealand and international experts. NZVCC and NZQA use common criteria for the approval and accreditation of degrees" (NZQA.govt.nz).

To undertake its quality assurance processes, the NZQA (2004a) has also had to delegate authority for the approval and accreditation of polytechnics and institute of technology courses below degree level to the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand (APNZ) and its Polytechnic Programmes Committee. Similarly, authority for the approval and accreditation of colleges of education courses below degree level has been delegated to the Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand (ACENZ) and its Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC) (NZQA, 2001a). In this regard, these organizations have been entrusted responsibility for the development and approval of qualifications, the accreditation of providers, and the verification of assessment standards.

For the purposes of consistency and comparability, one of NZQA's (1993c, 2004a) stipulations is that the elements of the process used by these organizations for offering degrees must be consistent with other accreditation processes used by the Authority. These include document analysis by a quality assurance specialist or analyst, peer panel visits and evaluation, evaluating documentation, facility and course evaluation, and a draft report prepared by the panel chair and NZQA analyst, before acceptance by NZQA the board for the approval and accreditation of the degree.

## **6.7 Funding of Services**

The NZQA is "a Crown entity defined by the Public Finance Act 1989" (NZQA, Annual Report, 2003/2004, p. 20). Revenue is derived "through provision of outputs to the Crown, for services to third parties and interest on its deposits" (*op. cit.*). The NZQA's Statement of Intent 2004/2005 to 2007/2008 and its Annual Report (2003/2004) specify that the NZQA incurs major costs in consultation, training, trials, assessment guides, publications, maintaining of a website and communication of issues. Interview data (for instance 31, #22, 29) report also that in some of these instances, costs are almost impossible to recover. This might be because they are quite 'people intensive' activities

(see also Foulkes *et al.*, 1996; see also NZQA Annual Report 2002/2003 for a full financial report).

### 6.8 Reforming School Qualifications

One major operational policy of the NZQA (associated with quality assurance of education) is that of reforming school qualifications in New Zealand (NZQA, 1994, 2001b). Towards this end, the pioneering of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in 2001 was an initiative undertaken by the NZQA (see NZQA 2001b, 2003a, 2003b). In this new initiative, the old School Certificate that was previously administered at the end of Year 11 was replaced with new school certificates (NCEA) at the school level in years 11 to 13 of schooling (NZQA, 2001b).

Until the end of 2001, secondary school students were able to achieve four national awards: School Certificate (usually Year 11), Sixth Form Certificate (Year 12), Higher School Certificate (Year 13), and University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships (Year 13) (Education Forum, 2000). Between 2002 and 2004, the NCEA incrementally replaced those school qualifications. Students are able to attain the NCEA, which is achievement based, at three levels (Levels 1, 2 and 3) by pursuing an extensive range of courses and subjects, both within and beyond the traditional school (Ministry of Education, 1999b). Learners are now able to attain NCEA credits at different levels and do not have to complete NCEA Level 1 in any individual subject before moving to Level 2 or Level 3 (Education Forum, 2000; Ministry of Education, 1999; NZQA, 2001b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). The NCEAs are presently the main qualifications for 16-19 year olds.

As was indicated previously, the reform of school qualifications was recommended by the investigative reports of the late eighties and early nineties (see *Learning and Achieving*, 1986 for example). Essentially, as regards the outmoded certification/qualifications and assessment system, the reports recommended that compulsory schooling provides a broad general education and that a new school certificate should focus on:

The student's general educational achievement over the first three years of secondary schooling. While it should take into account the needs of employers and tertiary education, it should be driven by them. It follows that employment training for under-fifteens should be limited to the general preparation for the world of work, with the emphasis on generic skills useful for more than one type of job (NZQA, 1991a, p. 28).

The decision to establish the NCEA was announced at the end of 1998 as part of the report entitled *Achievement 2001* (NZQA, 1998). Like previous investigative reports of the 1980s, *Achievement 2001* (NZQA, 1998) highlighted the shortcomings of the past system, including the notion that “areas of learning that are vital to the development of a knowledge economy [had] not been able to be recognized for end of school qualifications” (NZQA, 1998, p. 33). The Ministry of Education (1999) further explains the reason for the change to the new NCEAs:

The decision ... [is an] important step towards recognizing a wider range of abilities and achievements, and improving choice and flexibility for students. In the past areas of learning that are vital to the development of a knowledge economy, such as technology, have not been able to be recognized for end of school qualifications. They will be able to be recognized in future as part of the National Certificates in Educational Achievement ... From 2001, senior secondary students will be studying towards a new, unified system of national qualifications (p. 33).

The NCEAs make up levels 1, 2, and 3 of the NQF and the Register and are attained in years 11, 12 and 13 of senior schooling. The NCEAs attempt to recognize a wide range of learning in senior secondary school and beyond school. According to the NZQA (2003a):

The NCEA is only one of 900 qualifications on the NQF... [Learners] can choose from a wide range of qualifications available to [them] at secondary school including specialist qualifications in childcare, sport, tourism, computing, electrical engineering, food processing and business management. Some qualifications [learners] can complete at school... Others [learners] can start at school and finish in the workplace or at a tertiary provider (p. 2).

This incorporation of the NCEA on the NQF and the Register is in keeping with NZQA’s legislative mandate to bring all qualifications within one framework (NZQA, 1991a, 1991b, 1993d, 1994). This inclusion is geared towards bridging the world of school with the world of work, and bridging the academic and vocation training divide. Schools and other providers are able to offer courses that package different combinations of achievement standards and unit standards (NZQA, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b).

One of the two forms of assessment for the NCEAs is achievement-based standards (Ministry of Education, 1999; NZQA, 2001b, 2002b). These achievement-based standards are guided by the National Curriculum of New Zealand (NZQA, 2001b, 2002b). A second form of assessment - unit standards assessment in non-conventional subjects (from the NQF) - also contributes to the NCEA (2003a, 2003b). Both the achievement standards and

unit standards lead to credits at levels 1, 2, and 3 of the National Qualifications Framework as well as the Register (NZQA, 2001b, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b).

Learners are able to attain NCEA credits at different levels and will not have to complete NCEA level 1 in any individual subject before moving to Level 2 or level 3 in that particular subject (NZQA, 1998, p. 34). This is a measure that would firstly facilitate early or late school leavers, and secondly encourage learners to move at their own pace (NZQA, 2003a).

The currency for the achievement standards and unit standards is the credits (NZQA, 1992a, 2001a, 2003a, 2003b). The Ministry of Education (1999) explains that “to generate credit for achievement in school curriculum subjects there will be a mix of internal and external assessment using ‘achievement’ standards” (p. 33). For unit standards, assessment is internal and against standards set for specific subjects and for vocational and training learning areas (NZQA, 2001b). There are no grades or marks for unit standards (Education Forum, 2000). Results for unit standards are reported on a pass/fail basis (that is, credit awarded based on whether the standard has been achieved or not). For achievement standards, however, there are gradations (excellence, merit, achieved and not achieved), and some of the educational assessment must be external in the form of examinations (NZQA, 2004a). According to NZQA (2004a), the new system provides employers with clearer information as to what students have achieved across a wider range of subjects and skills (see also Ministry of Education, 1999; NZQA, 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b).

This combination of unit standards, achievement standards and credits provides a legitimate assessment system that is seemingly geared towards relevance, coherence and articulation with industry, training and higher education. This combination also allows for the recognition of a wider range of abilities and achievements, and improving choice, access, flexibility, portability and transferability of parts or whole qualifications. It is anticipated that these principles would facilitate the progression of learners in the New Zealand society and beyond (NZQA, 1998, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b). Learners are able to study towards the NCEA in school or with other education providers (Ministry of Education, 1999; NZQA, 1998, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b). There is added flexibility for students about the choice of subjects studied and the qualifications they work towards (Ministry of Education, 1999; NZQA, 1998, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b). As has been indicated, “the NCEA is

only one of 900 qualifications on the NQF" (NZQA, 2003a, p. 2). Learners can choose from secondary school qualifications and can complete at school, or they can start at school and finish in the workplace or at a tertiary provider (NZQA, 2003a). (See Black (2002) for a full report on the proposals for the development for the NCEA).

Admittedly, the changes made to certificates awarded at the secondary school level address a number of concerns that had been identified in previous reports previously mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. These concerns included the outmoded curriculum, norm referenced assessment, creating pathways for learners, helping to bridge the vocational and academic divide and other perceived shortcomings of the old system of certificate and assessment. The Ministry of Education (1999) anticipated that the new system would address some concerns of the old system such as:

A number of concerns held by students, parents and teachers in secondary schools ...[which] has proved confusing and onerous for teachers, ... some have felt that the unit standards have not adequately recognized or rewarded excellence. There have also been concerns that the combination of examination-based awards and unit standards in schools has resulted in an unequal 'two-tier' system (p. 34).

The Ministry of Education (1999) therefore anticipated that:

[The new certificates would] reduce the teacher workload associated with dual assessment, acknowledge merit and excellence, and give recognition to unit standards. The new system will also provide employers with clearer information as to what students have achieved across wider range of subjects and skills. In addition, the new changes link in well with changes to post-school qualifications ... (p. 34)

The New Zealand experience has shown that the shift has not been uncomplicated. Some concerns of the past (see Black, 2002, Education Forum 2000; Lee & Lee, 2001a; Philips, 2003) appear to be lingering. One such concern was expressed in the mid-nineties by Lennox (1995) - that here was the general impression that the NQF was taking schools into the unknown and the unsought (p. 3). His claims that "for many teachers assessment against standards is a mystery" (p. 3) are also supported by Fitzsimons (1997b).

Other challenges for the NCEA surround the 'atomization of learning', criterion-referenced versus norm-referenced assessment, and external and internal assessments in such high stakes examinations (see for example Black, 2002; Education Forum, 2000; Lee & Lee, 2000a). Also the mix of unit standards and achievement standards seemed

confusing to some teachers and end-users (Fitzsimons, 1997b; Philips, 2003). Concern still exists over whether the combination of examination-based awards and unit standards in schools has resulted in an unequal two-tier system (Fitzsimons, 1997b; Ministry of Education, 1999). In an earlier report on one major study on implementation of the NQF and its standards-based assessment approach in the New Zealand context, Fitzsimons (1997b) had noted the evidence indicated that the dual assessment of unit standards and achievement standards had “caused major problems for teachers interviewed and also caused aggressive response from several students” (p. 43).

Philips (2003) following on from Fitzsimons (1997b) also reported concerns that students were of the opinion that teachers were overloaded with work; and teachers confirmed that much of the work comprised increased recording and assessment. Fitzsimons (1997b) suggested research into the barriers to implementation of the NQF by teachers, and a better integration of assessment with curriculum. Evidence, according to Fitzsimons (1997b), showed “relatively little cultural change in schools that would be required to ensure that success of assessment, and a lack of practices that would ensure sufficiency of evidence”(p. 33).

There are also concerns over moderation with the NCEA. Difficulties with moderation, however, have long been an issue (see Campbell, 1995; Coutts & McAlpine, 1996; Fitzsimons, 1997b; Haskell, 1995; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Keown, 1996). The integrity and credibility of internal assessment processes of schools and the possibility of providing adequate audit levels have been a concern for many critics. These concerns were brought to the fore by the media again in July 2004 (See Appendix F for newspaper clippings covering such issues). Investigations by ERO, NZQA and the Ministry of Education into the integrity of the standards and internal assessment has led to a body of opinion that there are implications for the vulnerability of internal assessments for continuous summative assessments, the level of responsibilities entrusted to schools and school principals, and the adequacy of quality auditing.

The design of the NCEA, the number of levels in the NCEA and the amount of internally assessed standards and implications for their manageability sparked a series of protest actions, particularly by the secondary teachers' union and the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (NZPPTA). Seemingly, their concerns had little to do with the change to the new system. The NZPPTA, apparently, welcomed the change (Philips,

2003). Their concerns had to do with the “reliability, validity and manageability of standards-based assessment” (Philips, 2003, p. 295; see Philips, 2003, also for further concerns).

Concerns, particularly from the NZQA’s viewpoint, have had to do with assessment in three consecutive years (Years 11-13), particularly for students who had planned on remaining in school (38, #19-20). To have three years of consecutive assessment, according to the NZQA interview data (38, #19-20) was a decision taken by the Ministry of Education. The three consecutive years of assessment gave rise to numerous internal assessment tasks and tremendous pressure for individual students, parents, and the workload of teachers over the three-year period. According to one participant:

It’s gonna fall over. Kids are going to be real stressed out. You should have seen how stressed [name withheld] was this year even though only half of what she did was done through exams ... We say they won’t be disadvantaged but there is no doubt in the first round of anything you are the guinea pigs but we are the guinea pigs too because we devise the system and we don’t know exactly how its gonna work (27, #41).

Two major issues arise out of the interview data above, namely the sufficiency of assessment and the amount of assessment. Seemingly this points to a major concern of the NZQA (1996 - *A Guide to Learning and Assessment*) that “most of the concerns about standards-based assessments come down to sufficiency” (p. 55). Sufficiency, according to Barker (1995), is “the collection of a suitable range of evidence” (p. 29). A suitable range and collection of evidence is necessary “to ensure that the assessment evidence gathered is sufficient to give the assessor confidence that the learner has met all the requirements” (Fitzsimons 1997b, p. 31). Arguably, these issues have implications for moderation of assessment tasks, costs, and implications of manageability for the NZQA and its personnel. They also present challenges to school staff, students and parents.

In January 2005, one problem appeared to be the complexity and technicality of individual and school reports on the NCEA. Media reports (New Zealand Herald, January 13, 2005 for instance), allege that parents may feel that they need a degree to understand the results of their children (see Appendix F for newspaper clipping and an explanation of how to interpret the NCEA results). The NZQA (see Appendix F), however, maintains that the apparent complexity is because a lot more information is provided. The NZQA (see 2002c; 2003b, for example) maintains that they have distributed explanatory documents to employers (see also NZQA, 2001b, 2002c, 2003a, 2003b and also

[www.ncea.govt.nz](http://www.ncea.govt.nz) for the wide range of information disseminated on the NCEA). One source of explanation for the difficulty experienced with interpretation is seemingly due to the novelty in the reporting and the vast amount of information provided to end-users.

The NZQA, after experimenting with electronic results in 2003, resorted to the 'old fashioned mode' of disseminating the 2004 results via the post as well as the electronic method to ensure timely dissemination. The NZQA's processes also became the subject of intense media scrutiny for "the risk of errors, whether they are spelling mistakes or misplaced pages" (Foulkes *et. al.*, 1996, p. 43 - p. 44), or botching up results (a glimpse of other concerns can be seen in Appendix F).

From the NZQA's (2005e) perspective, "2004 presented its biggest logistical challenge yet - to organize 130,000 students, 114 exam sessions, and three million exam papers during a three week-period" (p. 1). In a report entitled *What some teachers and students thought of the exams*, the NZQA (2005f) indicates that overall "feedback from teachers and candidates about last year's exams was generally positive with most teachers commenting that the exams were set appropriately, except for a few standards" (p. 1). The NZQA (2005f) also reported that "overall candidates reported a positive exam experience. A third of candidates were studying a combination of levels and, overall candidates entered for an equal number of internal and external standards" (p. 1). The NZQA also points out that, "twenty one percent of all candidates had withdrawn from a standard after they had entered it" (p. 1). They cited "heavy workload, lack of time to complete assessments and difficulty of standards as reasons" (p. 1). The Group Manager NCEA reported that "it was a big success" (p. 1) and "it had gone as smoothly as [they had] hoped" (p. 1).

## 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has pointed to key factors and arguments that led to the establishment of the NZQA, and their effects on shaping the operational principles of the NZQA. The findings in this first part of the chapter have affirmed that, at a theoretical level, an analysis of findings depicts that the discourses of education and managerialism were inextricably linked in the arguments that gave rise to the NZQA. The socio-economic conditions starting from the 1970s called into question the role and quality of education. Moreover, amidst wider public sector reforms, education and systematic recognition of awards became a site of contention for successive governments.

In the education discourses, the administration of qualifications, high failure rate in the system, an outdated curriculum, assessment and certification/qualifications systems were given particular attention in the reports. The concern for the change in the qualifications system was also linked to the changing economic times, and the perceived inability of New Zealand to compete on the world markets with its trading counterparts. All the reports pointed to the need for a change in the system to one that would raise standards and improve the quality of education, and the systematic recognition and certification of learners' efforts. Arguably, major emphasis was placed on the outcomes of the system - certification/qualifications.

What emerges from the above discussion has been seen throughout this chapter - neither of the two discourses in isolation provides a blueprint for change in qualifications systems. In the debates on the need for change in the New Zealand qualifications system, the discourses converge on issues of raising standards, the need for quality and systematic recognition of learners' efforts.

From the documentary evidence and analysis, it is apparent that the NQF and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (of which the implementation of the new NCEA was a subset) have addressed concerns such as:

- Norm referenced and criterion referenced approaches to assessment;
- Internal and external assessment;
- The vocational and academic divide - key principles of relevance, access, portability, flexibility, coherence, articulation with other systems and progression of learners.

From the New Zealand experience, however, several issues that were identified in the literature come to the fore. In summation of some of these issues, McNaughton's (1990) observation is seemingly applicable - that "research in Scotland, and the experience of working parties in England, in Australia, in New Zealand and in the USA all suggest that criterion-related assessment is not necessarily a panacea for all of the problems of norm-referenced assessment and examining" (p. 122).

Design, number of levels of NCEA, the amount of internally assessed standards and the dual assessments (achievement and unit standards) have posed concerns and cost implications in terms of design, moderations, databases and the demand for credits on the framework (NZQA Statement of Intent 2004/2005 to 2007 to 2008; Annual Report,

2003/2004). Implications for manageability of standards-based assessment by educators in terms of recognition of excellence, workloads and integration of assessment with curriculum are some concerns (see Black 2002; Lee & Lee 2000a; Philips, 2003, for example).

Arguably, Lennox's (1995) observation that sectors of the community "that have experienced success in the traditional assessment and qualifications culture have tended to oppose the reforms or at least to promote more conservative alternatives and those connected with histories of educational failure have embraced new reforms" (p. 2) still lingers. According to Lennox (1995) reactions have generally fulfilled the predictions of change analysts. Initial enthusiasm for the broad concept of a new regime turned to resistance as implementation details became known, and work load issues arose (Lennox, 1995). It must be reiterated, however, that many stakeholders are now in the next stage, and are accepting the inevitability of the reform. Teachers, and employers, in particular, are believed to be grappling with the aspects of implementation (see Philips, 2003).

Hodgetts (1998) contends, however, that the controversy that surrounded the NZQA and the NQF has been as a result of the immense emphasis that had been placed on policy proposals, much to the detriment of an understanding of practice. Following from Hodgetts' (1998) contention, therefore, having focused on policy proposals and policy context of the NZQA, Chapter Seven, which follows, attempts to understand the NZQA from the inside. Interview data, which were obtained during my attachment at the NZQA in the month of January 2003, is presented and analyzed.

## Chapter Seven

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### THE CASE OF THE NZQA DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

#### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is that of theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework based on a qualitative case study of the NZQA, by way of an exploration of the discourses of managerialism and education theory. The analysis and theory generation in this chapter continue to pursue this purpose and explore and build on the central argument in this research. As has been argued in Chapter One, the discourses of managerialism and education theory as part of the orientation of qualifications frameworks are incomplete in meaning outside of the level of practice; that is, at the level of implementation. In this regard, Chapter Six has reported successfully on two major steps undertaken in the research process namely (i) an analysis of the factors and key arguments that gave rise to the establishment of the NZQA, and (ii) an analysis of the operational principles of the NZQA as regards its qualifications role in New Zealand.

This chapter reports on the third step in the research process. The report on this third step has developed against the backdrop of steps (i) and (ii), in which mainly documentary evidence was analyzed. This chapter takes an 'inside view' of the NZQA. This view from within is provided mainly through the eyes of twelve New Zealand participants: ten officials from the NZQA, a Ministry of Education official and a representative of the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC). As has been indicated in Chapter Five, participants are the individuals who provided interview data in this research. The terms participants and interviewees are used interchangeably in this research. Passage, extract, quote, quotation and excerpt are also used synonymously in this report. Interviews were conducted in January 2003, during an attachment at the NZQA Headquarters in Wellington (see Chapter Five for a discussion of the

methodology in full). For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in reporting the data, arbitrary numbers were assigned to the interviewees. Interview data is reported using a systematic index coding such as (1, #3). An index coding (1, #3) provides an arbitrary number, that is 1, to represent the interviewee, and the page number of the transcript on which the extract can be found. Having clarified these issues, the discussion continues with emergent themes from the data.

## **7.2 Major Themes**

By way of introduction of the emergent themes from interview data, the journey followed thus far by NZQA, as reminisced by participants, is encapsulated in the following excerpts:

The NZQA has had some pretty hard times ... It has had six and seven chief executives and probably for the same number of years, it has been under pressure ... It is pitiful ... In 1998/99, it was very close to within weeks of being closed down ... Legislation was drafted to take NZQA out of existence mainly because of the threat that NZQA poses to institutions and structures that existed ... The changes that you bring in will be highly resisted by a number of people who are quite comfortable with the roles that they originally had ... There was some confusion over the new pathway of learning ... The new pathway was an advantage for some, but for others it was just change ... And also NZQA annoyed some people ... It called itself the 'Authority', and it acted as the 'Authority' and that's hard ... because as a change agent, it has had to push out some boundaries ... and I don't know that it always did that in the best way, ... but the fact that the NZQA still exists means that it has played its role reasonably well ... One reason is because it has achieved some of that change in some areas ... but it has moved from being so much of a radical change agent to some more measured change ... but also the NZQA has drifted in its purpose over the years (31, #3-4).

I think there was a lot of jealousy and envy and doubt and annoyance that the NZQA was going to be set up ... and I always worry about other countries which are going to set up qualifications agencies ... if they have to go through the hell that we went through ... especially ... the universities or even other agencies you know ... To some extent we were doing new and exciting stuff as well ... We were being a bit purist about it ... but we were thinking things through in a way that had not been done before ... So I know people at the Ministry of Education who despised NZQA initially and suspected us .... We were seen as quite small, lean and don't report directly to the Minister ... we report to the board and we had a little bit more of an approach that was not fair about us ... Don't forget we were a product of the 1990s ... when we had the liberal market-driven Labour government changing the way things work (29, #12-13).

I think one of the things that NZQA didn't do over the years ... was to justify its existence (31, #6).

The preceding excerpts encapsulate the journey that has been followed by the NZQA at the level of practice, and represent the gist of this chapter - case study findings on the successes and challenges of the NZQA. Interview data (supported by relevant official documents) revealed nine emergent themes, as summarized in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1  
Major Emergent Themes in NZQA Interview Data

- 
- Climate of Change
  - Dominant Theories/Paradigms
  - Development of the Framework: Policy Borrowing and Consultation
  - A Seamless Framework and its Goals
    - Bridging the Academic and Vocational Divide
    - The Notion of Unit Standards, Achievement Standards, Outcomes
    - Recognition of Prior Learning
    - Quality Assurance
    - Raising Educational Standards
  - Impact on Quality of Education at the National Level
  - Overlapping Policy Roles, Linkages and Relationships with Stakeholders
  - The NZQA's Legislative Charter
  - Financing (Size and Cost of the NQF)
  - Justification of the NZQA's existence
- 

The themes are not discrete entities. Thus, rather than analyze the 'successes' and 'challenges' in categorical sections, the style of organization in this chapter is such that both the successes and challenges are presented and discussed under each emergent qualitative theme. This style of analysis and interpretation of data creates a sense of balance to each theme. Also, although logical ordering (first, second, third), is used in organizing themes in this presentation and interpretation, the themes "blur and intertwine continually" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p.43); and appear to be iterative, rather than linear in nature. Moreover, the analysis indicates that the two discourses were not always decipherable as discrete entities in the views of participants. This continuous blurring of the data as evidenced in the extracts and analyses below appears to support the central argument of this research, that a constellation of discourses inform the need for change in qualifications systems; and that the two loose groupings of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment are theoretically contesting; they are not necessarily divergent at the level of practice.

### 7.2.1 Climate of Change

One emergent theme in the interview data, which relates to the successes and challenges of the NZQA is that of a climate of change. As has been discussed in Chapters One, Three, and Six, education reform in New Zealand and elsewhere throughout the nineties had been considerably influenced by internal and external exigencies. These exigencies are captured in the views of participants in the theme, climate of change. Documentary evidence (see *The Hawke Report*, 1988; *The Green Paper*, 1986; *Learning and Achieving*, 1986; *Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions*, 1989; *The Picot Report*, 1988; and *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987) has supported that, in New Zealand's interpretation of that climate of change, qualifications reform was one of the bifurcates. In the analysis of interview data, this theme, climate of change, emerged from the following interview questions: What gave rise to the NZQA? Has the role of the NZQA changed over the years; and if yes, what has given rise to the change?

The reasons offered by the twelve participants in this research were reflective of this climate of change. The social, economic and educational environment appeared to be a major factor in the establishment of the NZQA, as recounted by one interviewee:

At the time of the Government reforms ... we had a huge boom! A huge atomic explosion in the whole Government economic infrastructure ... all sorts of things in the early '80s ... there was a move to rationalize the whole work that was going on ... particularly in post-school qualifications area ... We had a number of tertiary institutions, polytechnics, universities ... but we had an awful number of vocational and training agencies and apprenticeships and all sorts of things going on ... We had a huge lack of integration, huge lack of understanding ... no clarity about what was really coming out of those ... from a formal government perspective ... I know you asked me to define quality ... but the Ministers were asked to define what is coming out of all of that and they couldn't ... because the system was so diverse ... I think the users of some of the qualifications were relatively unhappy ... so these trends and roundabouts ... were re-adjusted. Anyway with all of that ... as part of the reorganization that was happening in education and other sectors ... the government decided that it was going to set up 'the Authority' (36, #2).

This excerpt above provides an indication of the range of factors that this climate of change encompassed, such as the inability to identify outputs of the education system, diversity in education, the plethora of educational institutions, the dissatisfaction among end-users of qualifications, restructuring of the wider public sector in New Zealand and the lack of control and regulation of qualifications in New Zealand.

From the education perspective, however, one factor in the establishment of the NZQA was perceived by nine of the twelve interviewees as that of barriers that prevented learners and prospective learners, including Maori and Pacific Islanders, from accomplishing their learning goals. This is elucidated in the response of one interviewee:

Very much it was the sense that we had left, right and centre vocational boards, or university systems, or secondary systems ... with very little movement between them (27, # 16).

[These] whole lot of bodies in the academic, technical vocational and trades area in New Zealand ... had built-in barriers ... only so many students could get into their courses ... they had to achieve certain marks and if they missed out on one thing ... they would not be allowed in ... or if they had qualifications in one trade area, they would not be allowed to transfer most of that learning to another qualification ... they would have had to go back to start at scratch (27, # 16).

This description of “left, right and centre vocational boards, or university systems, or secondary systems with very little movement between them” (27, #16) is in keeping with findings from documentary evidence (*The Hawke Report, 1988; The Picot Report, 1988; The Probine-Fargher Report, 1987; for example*). In this climate of change, there was “a political desire to break down the monolithic department structures to promote learning goals” (29, #4), as emphasized by this interviewee:

It is most important to understand that time of the reorganization of government agencies in the 1990s ... and the Labour government’s desire to remove provider capture and break down the monolithic department structures to promote learning goals ... At that stage they set up the Education Review Office ... Skills NZ ... Industry Training Funding and so on and the NZQA ... I think if we’d been set up under a different political set of philosophies, we might not have been separated ... and this is probably a fortunate accident that we were separated (29, #4).

The political set of philosophies (29, #14), and this reorganization of government agencies in the 1990s referred to above, surfaced in the views of all twelve interviewees - that change emanated from this wider-sector reorganization and was driven by the loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism. After traversing the literature for Chapter Three, the researcher found that there were implications for any organization established within this new mode of thinking (Boston, 1991; Boston *et al.*, 1996; Kelsey, 2003; Lauder, 1990; Scott, 2001).

It is believed that the New Zealand government’s move in this climate of change was to rationalize qualifications and “bring some consistency of approach” (37, #4), to the qualifications system in New Zealand. Within this climate of change the New Zealand

government took it upon the State to put structures in place to ensure that qualifications were controlled, regulated and monitored (*Learning for Life Two: Policy Issues, 1989*, for instance). As one interviewee expressed:

And that was why the NZQA was set up ... With some forward thinking ... essentially that these things should be brought together ... especially in a country the size of New Zealand ... The role of NZQA at the time of starting was very much like being a change agent ... There were all these existing systems, and the NZQA was set up to try and bring some consistency of approach (37, #4).

These views present some overtones of the principles of the discourses of managerialism that have been presented in Chapter Three. Philips (1998) sheds further theoretical and practical light on the significance of “a consistency in approach” (37, #4), within this climate of change:

The degree of control was required because according to a neo-liberal of market competition, firstly, anyone in theory could be a provider of qualifications as long as they met certain specified outcomes – and the NQF was a mechanism for defining these outcomes – and secondly, as a rational, self-interested chooser (an ‘economic man’) a seeker of qualifications could choose to obtain them from a provider. This scenario effectively downgraded existing institutions providing qualifications because there would be no necessity for a potential qualifications seeker to go to any of them as parts of a qualification could be stitched together from different institutions (Philips, 1998, p. 246).

Thus far, the political and economic context appears to have been influential in the need for change. One participant continues to explain how the politics and economics in that climate of change, shaped the operations of the NZQA:

[The NZQA is] a government agency ... everything we do is shaped politically, ... and everything we do and everything we refer to is couched in that context ... so for example, we are an agent of the Crown ... and the government of the day ... we are directed and must observe the directions of the government...to point out to the consequences of the actions they take... We’ve been a change agency... that is the governments have changed... and we have changed ... Politically and economically, the role of NZQA is a critical one ... shaping all others ... So in other words ... a fruitful educated workforce ... that’s an economic issue .... Pragmatically we are driven by the economics and politics of the country (33, #5).

It was apparent that in this climate of change, the dominant theoretical underpinnings that led to the conception of the NZQA were political and economic with education theory of learning and assessment as a codicil (Codd, 2003). In particular, according to one Ministry official (36, #2), in this climate of change, the questions that were being raised about the education system were motivated by the input-output efficiency, specifically, “what was coming out of the education system?” (36, #2).

### 7.2.2 Dominant Theories/Paradigms

The second emergent theme in the interview data was that of the dominant theories or theoretical underpinnings that underlie the operational principles and practices of the NZQA. This theme emanated from the following interview questions: What theories or theoretical principles guide the operational principles and practices of the NZQA? How does the NZQA balance its managerial goals with enhancing learning?

Five interviewees linked the theoretical orientations of the operational principles of the NZQA to the discourse of learning and educational assessment. Their views are exemplified in the extracts that follow:

I don't know about theories ... but certainly philosophies. There were a lot of philosophies in setting up the organization ... and these philosophies ... were tied up with the need for better assessment ... and recognition for people's learning ... no matter where it took place ... Prior to that ... the system here was based pretty much on the old English system ... the pass and fail ... You either passed or you failed ... and a certain portion failed ... It was the sorting mechanism that the British system used ... So I supposed one of the philosophies behind setting up the Authority ... was to re-look at all that ... to rethink what was in the best interest of New Zealand ... the learners and peoples of New Zealand ... and to look at different ways of recognizing competence ... and enabling competence to be recognized ... when it was proven to be that ... as opposed to just a percentage cohort going through any one year (28, #3).

The authority was set up on the basis of learning for life and learning ... and as a way to encompass all learning ... not just academic or not just vocational or whatever ... and that was part of the original basic philosophy ... that all learning should be able to be certificated and recognized ... but at least recognized ... if not certificated ... and so those philosophies haven't changed (28, #3).

Another participant stated:

The underpinnings of what we're doing ... are that any assessment should lead to better learning ... otherwise there is no point in doing it ... I mean in some ways there is a lot written about it ... the terminology used is formative assessment ... or assessment for the learner ...and what has frightened me in the past is ... there has been a divorce between assessment for learning and assessment for qualifications purposes ... This sort of assessment we're doing ... is to bring the two together ... so that your qualifications are part of your learning pathways for the future ... that's what underpins [our processes and systems] (32, #3).

The foregoing excerpts seemingly support the centripetal argument in this thesis that the loose grouping of the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment

inform(ed) the establishment of qualifications frameworks. The references to education theory of learning, lifelong learning and assessment, however, were also juxtaposed and sometimes intertwined with some of the factors which have been previously discussed as emanating from the previous theme, the climate of change. An indication is provided in this participant's viewpoint:

You would have to say ... to a large extent in the first five years of NZQA in 1995 ... most of the policies and procedures were laid down for the NZQA during that period ... the framework and unit standards and outcomes ... The learning for life that's old enough ... I know that means different things to different people ... Another key aspect was anyone could learn at any age ... and that is another strong one ... I think it was very strongly driven by quality management systems approach ... not any particular one ... In terms of management ... it is between hierarchical and flat structures (35, #7-8).

Another interviewee gave a similar view:

The other important underpinning ... was that the slogan almost to mortem ... was lifelong learning ... and most of the agencies in New Zealand ... were not able to span the whole of the sector ... or the whole of learners' lives ... even the Ministry of Education had almost nothing to do with universities, for example ... and we were set up in a way that was separate from all of those ... the ERO has to do with schools ... But there needed to be a fresh organization ... one that did not have an alliance with any one of the sectors (29, #5).

These excerpts point to issues of management, educational assessment, lifelong learning, accountability, and perhaps the 'culture of distrust' which Codd (1999) associated with trends in accountability as referred to in Chapter Three (see Codd, 1999; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Young, 2003a).

Interviewees also made reference to lifelong learning as reported above (35, #7-8; 29, #5, for example). There was the suggestion of the inability of the then New Zealand education system to span the lives of learners stems, to a certain extent, from international pressure. Elsewhere internationally, at the time, lifelong learning was a topic of discussion in the educational and economic contexts (see Tuijman, 2002). According to Tuijman (2002), worldwide, recurrent education and lifelong education were proposed because of the economic growth and the oil crises of the 1970s. The previous chapter has articulated that New Zealand was one of the countries affected by the oil crises of the 1970s (Hood, 1998; Openshaw, 1995; Shuker, 1987). In keeping with loose grouping of the discourses of managerialism, Tuijman (2002) asserts that the issue of lifelong learning was one of the choices that was open to governments internationally

in “promoting labour flexibility and improving the knowledge and skills and competencies of the labour force, as part of the broader strategy for realizing lifelong learning” in the climate of change (Tuijman, 2002, p. 7). The move, Tuijman (2002) expounds, was in keeping with UNESCO’s vision (based on a humanistic tradition) of equitable distribution of educational opportunities that would lead to positive social and individual benefits (see also Cribbin, 2002a). Tuijman (2002) contends, however, that in recurrent education it was considered more utilitarian “with instrumental overtones since it was tied closely to the World Bank” (p. 8).

In New Zealand’s interpretation, lifelong learning was taken further through the attempt to acknowledge the acquisition of learner achievements in a more systematic way. Based on the views of interviewees above (35, #7-8; 29, #5), it can be inferred that this was one of the reasons for the establishment of the NZQA and a seamless national qualifications framework.

Thus far, in the analysis of interview data, two major themes have been presented, namely (1) the climate of change, and (2) the dominant theories and paradigms that underpin the operational principles of the NZQA. From these two themes - educational assessment, lifelong learning, accountability, trust, the need for outcomes, regulation, monitoring, and a consistency in approach - have emerged as shaping the establishment and operational principles of the NZQA. Arguably, these may be assigned to any one of the two loose groupings (of managerialism, and education theory of learning and educational assessment) identified in this research as informing the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems. The intertwining of these themes continues to suggest that while these discourses may appear to be theoretically contesting, at the level of practice as demonstrated in the views of participants, they are not necessarily divergent.

### **7.2.3 Development of the Framework: Policy Borrowing and Consultation**

A third theme derived from the interview data is that of the development of a seamless education system, by way of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Interview questions that gave rise to this theme included: How was the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) developed? How had the strategy of an NQF come to be adopted by the NZQA?

In the adoption and development of a seamless education system by way of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), some of what transpired was recalled by long-serving staff members of the NZQA, for example:

A lot of background work had gone on ... There was a lot of reading ... a lot of literature searching ... lots of discussions particularly with the Scottish people ... Earlier on ... we had discussions with the Australians as well (28, #6).

There was a lot of consultation in New Zealand ... We had two huge consultation exercises ... which were organized by the Authority when it was first set up ... There were discussions on the levels, the fields and subfields ... We compared them with other categorizations and other systems outside of New Zealand ... and ended up with the one that we now use (37, #1).

The views of these participants point to policy borrowing from overseas sources as well as research conducted on existing systems. The influence of the British, the European Community and Australians has been documented by the NZQA (see NZQA, 1991, p. 12). The influence of the Scottish model, in particular, has also been acknowledged (1992d). One interviewee recollected:

The Director of SCOTVEC (Scottish Vocational Educational Council) came to New Zealand in 1987 ... He was funded to New Zealand, either late 1986 or early 1987 ... While in New Zealand ... he gave a number of seminars around the country ... These seminars were organized by the Department's officials (27, #9).

The needs of New Zealand were considered in relation to the accomplishments of the Scots, and the Scottish model seemingly offered some solutions to New Zealand's burgeoning concerns, according to nine participants - one of whom, elucidates:

There was a need to establish levels ... that related both to overseas structures and to existing national qualifications ... There was also a need to ensure that the levels were based logically on occupational and educational patterns ... As a result ... the Scottish system was embraced because it was a modular system based on credits and assessment criteria (27, #9-10).

This interviewee continued:

[The Scottish Director] claimed that [the Scottish model] had resolved a lot of the problems around senior secondary school qualifications .... We were trying to face those very issues then .... One of the major problems was that we had an elite group of students ... who were going through schools ... and were doing very very well ... but we had 25 to 50% who were leaving ... with absolutely nothing (27, #9-10).

In hindsight, the interviewee (27, #9) contended that while, at the time, the Scottish model appeared to offer a better a chance to a lot of those students who were not succeeding in the existing system, subsequently an alternative view was that,

while the Scottish Director had talked about how the SCOTVEC model had actually resolved a lot of the problems, as we were to find out later ... this was not the case (27, #9).

The foregoing recollections of participants provide an indication of the significance of imported ideas and developments and the roles that they have played, as well as an indication of the challenges in the formulation and implementation of the objective policies of the NZQA (see Piercy, 1999; Phillips, 1998, 2003, for example).

Public consultation embarked upon in the development of the NQF was also part of this third emergent theme - the development of the NQF. In addition to participants' recollections (37, #1; 27, #9-10; 28, #6), documentary evidence (*Towards a National Qualifications Framework: General Principles and Directions*, 1990; *Designing the Framework: A Discussion Document about Restructuring National Qualifications*, 1991; *An Introduction to the Framework*, 1991; *A Future with Standards*, 1993) provides an indication of the nature of consultation and the extent of consultation by the NZQA undertaken over a two-year period, in the design and establishment of the framework. One participant stated:

My work for the last 12 years ... has to do with the framework ... and so I was involved in a lot of the early development consultation groups ... I think that's really important because it wasn't arbitrary ... and nothing happened in an arbitrary way ... but in the end you got to make a decision ... so like the team ... I was involved in the harmony ... lots of thinking ... really ... we're thinking about a kind of currency ... we're thinking about it being one ... But in the end someone makes a call and you go with it ... (33, #5).

The consultation and discussion document, *Towards a National Qualifications Framework: General Principles and Directions* (1990), for example, was a booklet widely distributed to consult the general public on two options. The first option reflected a conventional view of education and training which proposed separating the framework by education sectors, each with its distinct award (NZQA, 1990). The second option, however, proposed "a single, six-level National Certificate that would replace all current school, vocational and other awards below degree level" (NZQA, 1990, p.7). Documentary evidence (*An Introduction to the Framework*, 1991; *A Future with Standards*, 1993) points to two years of consultation, during which thousands of responses were received and the second option was preferred over the first option. The National Qualifications

Framework was formally launched with a release of the publication of *An Introduction to the Framework* (1991), which briefly outlined the essential features of the new design. A *Future with Standards* (1993) followed, in which the aims of the framework were reiterated. The publications of the NZQA (*An Introduction to the Framework*, 1991; *A Future with Standards*, 1993) document that the NZQA was in receipt of thousands of responses to its earliest consultation documents. According to documentary evidence from the NZQA (1992a):

Business, government, unions, private and education providers, polytechnics, schools and community groups contributed to more than 1600 submissions in response to an initial discussion document put forward by the Qualifications Authority in mid-1991. In addition to these submissions, Qualifications Authority Staff spoke at 350 meetings around the country, explaining the document and seeking feedback (p. 4).

NZQA interviewees (27, #9-10; 33, #5; 28, #6, for example) also recalled widespread consultation in setting up the NQF. One interviewee recounts:

There was participation and consultation among groups ... groups such as the Department of Education and Labour ... the Treasury ... a wide range of other government departments and ministries ... industry ... numerous people in education ... and the general public (33, #5).

In spite of this seemingly extensive consultation, Lennox (1995, p. 2), in his Master's research paper, expressed that "the NZQA has been criticized for its handling of the change process. He points out that the NZQA has often been accused of insufficient consultation and poor communication" (see also Mansell, *op. cit.*, in Chapter Two). Lennox (1995), cites one British observer who commented that "the low level of debate indulged in by academics indicate[d] that they [had] not taken the trouble to investigate the concept before passing judgment" (p. 2). To a certain extent, the observer's comments are validated by Hodgetts (2000) in his Masters dissertation that the controversy that surrounded the NZQA and the NQF was as a result of the immense emphasis that had been placed on policy proposals, much to the detriment of an understanding of practice. This sentiment appears to be supported also by McGee, Moltzen, Oliver & Mitchell (1993) in Chapter Three with their assertion that many of the critics made calculations of the potential ramifications of not having thought through the reforms adequately, rather than on the actual nature and effectiveness of the reform. It is apparent that one source of the challenges faced by the NZQA in the consultation process has had to do with the complexity of the qualifications environment as indicated by

multifaceted interests and stakeholders, including the public and private sectors (see Boston *et al.*, 1991; Kelsey, 1997; 2003; Robertson, 1999, for examples).

In the final analysis, documentary evidence (for example *Developing the National Qualifications Framework*, 1991) suggests that the unitary framework was preferred.

According to the NZQA (1991c):

Responses both to *Designing the Framework* and *Towards a National Qualifications Framework* indicated strong support for a coherent scheme of nationally recognized qualifications ...

Asked if the proposed framework would establish a useful relationship between nationally recognized qualifications, a high proportion of respondents agreed, although those from the university and colleges of education sectors were less supportive (p 8).

In the final analysis, a unified framework was the preferred option. The final design was “a modular system, forming a single continuum of qualifications, based on assessment against defined standards, and a flexible system of delivery” (NZQA, 1996, p. 20).

In summation of this third theme, it can be surmised that in the development of the seamless national qualifications framework, three major strategies were used by the NZQA, namely (1) policy borrowing, policy learning and research were conducted in which there were comparisons with similar frameworks prior to the design and implementation of the NQF, (2) consultation on the proposed options, and (3) consultancies by overseas experts to New Zealand. These three strategies used in developing the framework were believed to provide credible and valid solutions to providing a consistency in approach (Philips, 1998, 2003). As was shown in Chapter Two, policy learning and borrowing is not an unconventional approach to inter-national research (see Theodoulou, 2000, for instance). In terms of challenges that the policy borrowing and learning presented, there were hints of dissatisfaction with the Scottish model and the extent of resolutions of the challenges encountered in the New Zealand context. While this raises questions about the importation of policies from one context to another, Philips (1998), in his study “*The NZQA, Switchmen of History*”, concluded that this strategy of policy borrowing gave New Zealand a deliberate advantage in the successful formulation of its national qualifications framework, in particular. Also, the reviews in Chapters Two and Three and in this chapter have shown that New Zealand has adapted and extended the Scottish model to an all-inclusive framework. The model adopted by New Zealand had not been tried and tested in any country. It can be

surmised, therefore, that if there were problems, the Scottish model would not have had the answers.

As has been indicated in the previous chapter and perhaps indicative of the challenges that lay ahead for the NZQA, adjustments have had to be made to the NQF, in that the building block of unit standards has had to be reconsidered and the descriptors of levels changed and expanded to the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. From interview data, supported by NZQA's publications (2005), however, a seamless qualifications system has been maintained (33, #5).

#### **7.2.4 A Seamless Framework and its Goals**

A fourth emergent theme in the interview data was that of a seamless national qualifications framework and its goals. Interview questions which gave rise to this theme included: What is the purpose of the NQF? What is the rationale for the NQF?

All interviewees spoke of the purpose of the NQF, as being directed by the NZQA's legislative charter. At the level of practice, however, there appeared to be differing priorities for the NQF, which arguably have brought about contradictions, dissonance and dissenting perspectives. One participant rationalized the successes and challenges associated with the intent of the NQF, which also point to the tension alluded to in the central argument of this research:

So there are all these debates going on ... and I guess ... to be fair ... the NZQA thought that they were developing a system ... that would really allow a lot more transparency ... around the content of qualifications ... It would allow people to get credits ... for quite clearly demarcated bits of learning ... it would allow them to transfer from one qualification to another much more easily ... but all those things which were ideals or principles were masked ... when you came back to the curriculum... What is it that they should be learning or doing in our society? ... It's not just stuff that should be recognized in a qualification ... or necessarily in a unit standard approach to qualifications ... I think all of this leads to a notion that we should have a broadened qualifications framework ... so I talk about it as a unitary framework ... Unitary ... because it is trying to pull everything into the one framework (27, #21-22).

The above view points to the intent of the NZQA, but also to challenges that the NZQA faced. His view appears to highlight a source of tension between the loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education theory. The broader humanistic-liberal education tradition has a tendency to view education as a civilizing force in society, and

integral to the holistic development of the person (Aloni, 2001). In the discourse of education, there is the recognition that learning and certification are not always synonymous.

The challenges identified by the interviewee also embody some of the generic challenges in Chapter Three, namely credits, levels, equivalencies, and epistemologies of knowledge, which have been shown to confound the development of national qualifications frameworks at the international level (see Blackmur, 2003; Easnor, 2003; NZVCC, 1994; Young 2003a, 2003b).

These concerns have also been raised by the NZVCC (1994). Research conducted on the NZQA (some of which was reviewed at the end of Chapter Two) and interview data suggest, however, that these issues have not been the dominant critiques of the NZQA. Rather, a seamless framework appeared to challenge egalitarian principles, democratization of qualifications, widening access and enhancing participation, recognition of all learning, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

There were a lot of comments ... when the system was first proposed that we were dumbing down education ... The old traditional exams were the best way to recognize ability ... particularly to recognize the ability of the brightest students ... and that excellence couldn't be recognized except through these traditional exams (28, #17).

There was concern that only some types of learning should be recognized ... and so they were asking ... why were we recognizing certain areas of learning that did not need recognition? ... They described some areas of learning as a waste of time ... For example they questioned why should cleaners have a qualification? ... And NZQA responded ... Why should lawyers have qualifications and why shouldn't cleaners have their competencies recognized? ... Why shouldn't skiing instructors have their competencies recognized? ... We responded also that they're competent people and they have competencies in their field ... just the same as doctors, nurses, teachers and everybody else (28, #17-18).

Some talked about proliferation ... But when they talk(ed) about proliferation ... their arguments remain the same ... it is a concern that people other than the 'right' people should not have access to qualifications ... To the critics ... lawyers or dentists should have qualifications but not the taxi drivers ... This is still their argument about proliferation ... For NZQA this type of proliferation was not an issue at all ... if they want recognition and have met the standards ... then it is appropriate for them to have the qualifications (31, #28).

One of the concerns of interviewees (and perhaps one of the biggest challenges for NQF) is that the NQF was originally conceived as being for low level learners, or applicable only to low rated learners. To date, interviewees emphasized that the NQF continues to be seen by some sectors in New Zealand as being applicable only to industry and workplace training and assessment:

As we developed the framework, and industry and assessment became far more interested than anybody else ... then the framework was seen as something that was applicable to industry mainly ... It was seen as suitable to low level learning ... It was not seen as suitable for higher learning ... In the late '90s, the NZQA was seen mainly ... as an organization that was okay at running school exams ... and developing a framework that was mainly vocational (29, #5).

A lot of the criticism of the NZQA's approach was that it was suitable to vocational areas of learning ... simple things ... but it was not at all appropriate to more professional bodies of knowledge ... Some of that's not true ... I think some of that was from institutions trying to keep the doors locked ... and making it very hard to get in there (27, #14-15).

One interviewee linked all these challenges with the framework to the shift in the traditional meaning and role of qualifications:

I think the whole meaning of qualifications and the recognition of learning ... is not well understood by people ... and I think there is a couple of reasons for that ... I think it is the whole historical reason associated with qualifications ... and also it has been a massive change in the role of qualifications outside of institutions ... so for example, largely ... our secondary, tertiary and university education system has been a sifting device to sift out those that were going to go on for further learning ... and that was reasonably appropriate ... because people left school say at 15 or 16 years of age with or without the qualification ... without it they moved into one job ... that job didn't change that much over time ... and so there was no need for a qualification to recognize the changes within that organization. This has clearly changed (31, #4).

All interviewees of the NZQA emphasized that the NQF is the core policy and practice of the NZQA's being, and the major success was that,

there is unification and not proliferation ... the NQF has made provisions for the nomenclature of qualifications to be consistent ... and simplified through common definitions and terms ... The NQF indicates in broad terms at which level of the Framework a particular qualification is located ... and which others are of a similar levels (31, #28).

At the time that the interviews were being conducted, all twelve participants informed me that the NQF was well under way (at March 2001) to officially becoming embedded

in the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. One participant contended, however, that the Register was to maintain the original mandate of the NQF:

Well, the Register is going to be interesting ... This is a new effort by some really important key players to try and bring the mandate to fruition ... that we should be one currency ... that's all there is ... it's not about universities must work in this way ... but it's about saying we would expect that learners are able to move around ... that all learning is recognized ... and that there must be accountability ... The problem is ... we often start to feel that the universities see themselves ... as somehow graced in some way that the other parts in the sector are not ... and they don't necessarily behave in ways that confirm that ... and I could say the same with some of the polytechnics as well (33, #5).

From all accounts there was initial success with the implementation of the Register - the new development in the establishment of the Register appears to be healing old wounds:

The Register was instrumental in bringing everybody together ... It really became clear that NZQA has a role ... that is clearly broader than vocational and school qualifications ... so it was the chief executive's view of the world that he quietly imposed himself in an acceptable way for NZQA as an institution ... to almost summon the universities and polytechnics and workplace industries to come together ... and to talk about the Qualifications Register ... that sold the view of the NZQA ... as an institution that saw itself as having its own overarching influence (29, #6).

As has been indicated, adjustments have had to be made to the NQF - the building block of unit standards has had to be reconsidered, and the descriptors of levels changed, and expanded. Interviewees saw this as neither concession nor retraction. This arrangement was seen by interviewees as "a good compromise" (28, #15). The Register makes provisions only for whole qualifications, but the NQF within the register provides the added facility of 'stitching' unit/achievement standards together to form whole qualifications. To date, the NZQA still makes reference to the NQF (see NZQA Annual Report, 2003/2004, p. 3, for instance).

In the interview data, there were other significant aspects that emerged from this fourth theme - a seamless qualifications system and its goals - namely:

- Bridging the Academic and Vocational Divide;
- The Notion of Unit standards, Achievement Standards and Outcomes;
- Recognition of all Learning;
- Quality Assurance; and
- Raising Educational Standards.

Each is subsequently discussed.

#### 7.2.4.1 Bridging the Academic and Vocational Divide

As part of the fourth emergent theme – a seamless qualifications system - one of the key goals for the NQF was that of establishing a consistent approach to the recognition of qualifications in academic and vocational areas, as reiterated by this participant:

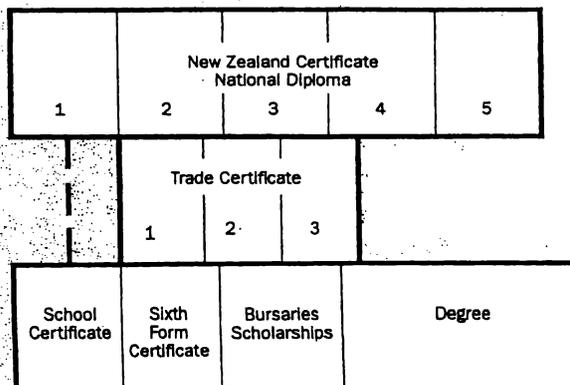
One of the reasons for setting up NZQA was indeed ... and it is in the legislation ... to bridge the academic and vocational divide ... to enhance the human capital ... It was to give New Zealanders an edge in a competitive global market ... It was to give more students more choice ... and a better chance to gain qualifications than we had before (33, #1).

To another:

The authority was set up on the basis of learning for life ... and to encompass all learning ... not just academic or not just vocational or whatever ... and that was part of the original basic philosophy ... that all learning should be able to be certificated and recognized ... but at least recognized if not certificated ... and so those philosophies haven't changed (28, #3).

To consider this intent, Figure 7.1 obtained from *Designing the Framework* (1991, p. 13) paints the picture of the then qualifications system of New Zealand, prior to the development of the NQF.

**Figure 7.1**  
**Qualifications Structure of New Zealand Prior to the Development of the NQF**



The examinations detailed above were offered and administered by different administrative agencies.

One of the interview questions asked to participants was, whether this legislative mandate to bridge the gap between the academic and vocational divide had been accomplished at the level of practice. In response to this question, extracts from interviewee transcripts below exemplify some mixed feelings. On the one hand, about a half of the interviewees believed that progress had been made:

The bringing in of school learning ... such as the traditional academic subjects ... the English, the math, the sciences, the histories, the geographies ... alongside the non-traditional subjects ... the tourism, the horticulture ... There is such a range of subjects now ... The bringing in of all those subjects into the framework began to complete the true picture of the merging of the academic, the vocational ... and I suppose the ridiculousness of having an artificial academic divide (28, #15).

This interviewee was also optimistic that “the next development of the Register [would] help to complete that real picture” (28, #15). In her view, “once the university programmes had taken their place on the Register, the jigsaw puzzle would really be filled” (28, #15).

On the other hand, other interviewees (38, #17; 33, #5; 31, #26), acceded that while progress had been made between educational institutions and industry, there was still a conceivable gap:

There are conversations going on between the two now ... There is learning in the work place ... Industry still finds tertiary organizations hard to talk to ... Quite often educational organizations are not listening ... I am not really talking about universities here ... I am talking about professional bodies ... We have extremely deep examples that show that there is still a gap (38, #17).

Yes and no, not entirely ... it has worked substantially ... but not entirely because of the universities’ resistance ... If the universities hadn’t resisted ... it could have worked. The Register is the new solution to that ... supposedly (33, #5).

There was also perception by one interviewee that it actually deepened the divide, for example:

From one aspect, you could say it actually deepened the divide ... For example, and I think that was a natural consequence ... when a lot of the vocational qualifications were appraised to unit standards ... all the long

standing arrangements of vocational articulation programmes were broken ... This actually deepened the divide (31, #26).

From the perspective of the twelve interviewees, the bridging the two worlds through a unified framework appears to have been a major challenge at the level of practice. In particular, the policy objectives to establish the NZQA and the NQF were questioned on a number of grounds with the most 'vehement' objection as it relates to policy coming from the Ministry of Education (36, #19). All participants emphasized that their biggest challenge had to do with universities in New Zealand, as they never accepted the eight-level framework. According to one participant, "if the relationship between the Ministry and NZQA were slightly estranged then the relationship between NZQA and the universities has been dreadful, I think it is fair to say" (36, #19).

For more than a decade, the NZVCC (1994) expressed some fundamental differences with the ends of the policy, as well as the appropriate means to accomplish the ends and consequences of the policy. The NZVCC concerns reflected those identified in the literature in Chapter Three, such as interfacing work and world through the 'reductionist' standards based approach, equivalencies, levels, assignment of credits and epistemologies of knowledge (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Smithers, 1997; Young, 2003a, Young, 2003b).

There is an apparent resistance to some of the principles of the discourses of managerialism in some of the critiques the NZVCC. This resistance is inferred in the concerns of the NZVCC (1994), which included:

- Control of the decision-making process covering the right to present a university course;
- The alleged business or industry orientation of the framework will emphasize short term considerations and not the longer term view held by the university academics; and
- Worry that giving government more of a say in the degree structure will produce an emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness and not on quality.

For more than a decade, the NZVCC acquiesced that the intent of the Education Act can best be achieved "through a structure involving a dual framework ... as the most effective and productive way of dealing with the differences of approach and philosophy between the universities and the NZQA and also the most cost effective" (1994, p. 24). The NZVCC's (1994) stance on the selected means to accomplish the ends of the policy

that is a unified national framework concurs with Hawke's (1988) original suggestion. Hawke had headed one of the evaluative teams commissioned by the New Zealand government. As has been indicated in Chapter Six, in his report Hawke (1988) had suggested:

- i. The NVQB (the National Vocational Qualifications Board)
- ii. A secondary education qualifications board (SEQB) for qualifications in secondary schools
- iii. The National Academic Awards Board (NAAB) for degree level courses

(The *Hawke Report*, 1988, p. 54).

Contrary to Hawke's suggestion, the NZQA (formerly known as the NEQA), was established as an all-inclusive organization with a seamless approach to qualifications that had implications for the epistemologies of knowledge, levels, equivalences and assignment of credits. The NZQA's establishment was viewed as an all-powerful monopolistic, regulatory, control and monitoring qualifications authority (see Barrow, 1999; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Foulkes *et al.*, 1996; Horsburgh, 1999; Philips, 1998, 2003; Smithers, 1997), which would now define what counted as 'knowledge' and have sole responsibility for qualifications in New Zealand.

In theory, the bridging of the academic and vocational worlds appears to have been successful, particularly because of the institutionalization of the NQF as a result of formal legislative charter, supporting policy objectives (standards-based assessment) and operational procedures (moderation and accreditation) of the NZQA. Major challenges from NZVCC's standpoint that appeared to be genuine concerns in the literature in Chapter Three included the epistemologies of knowledge, the 'atomistic, 'reductionist approach to learning, interfacing work and world through the standards-based approach, equivalencies, arbitrary levels and the arbitrary assignment of credits (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Smithers, 1997; Young, 2003a, Young, 2003b).

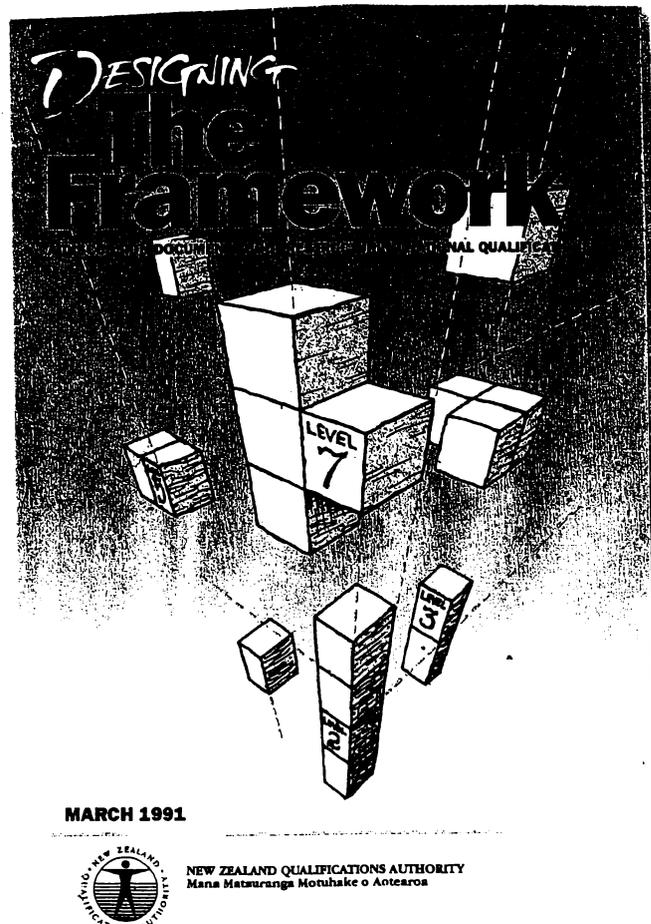
#### 7.2.4.2 The notion of Unit Standards, Achievement Standards, Outcomes

A second aspect of the fourth emergent theme - a seamless qualifications system and its goals - was that of the building block of the unified framework, the standards and the standards-based approach to assessment. The NQF was designed as a unitary framework based on self-supporting 'units' or 'modules' defined as "a unit of study built

around specific, measurable competencies” (NZQA, 1990, p. 9). These unit standards would carry credits towards nationally recognized qualifications. Interview questions and probes included: Why unit standards? Were there alternatives available? What are the merits and challenges in using unit standards? When the NZQA first began it was unit standards, and with unit standards you either achieve the standard, or you do not. Now, with achievement-based standards, you can attain excellence, merit, or credit within the standard. Is this change contradictory to the original idea? Why the change?

In the consideration of this key goal for the framework, the front cover of the discussion document entitled *Designing the Framework* (1991), paints a clear picture.

Figure 7.2  
Cover of the Consultation Booklet *Designing The Framework*



And this was what it was, for more than a decade. Although the standards debate is not unique to New Zealand (see all OECD, 1995, for ten case studies for instance), there are specificities that relate to New Zealand. The notion of standards has been and continues to be one of the major controversial policies of the NZQA (see Irwin, 1994; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Lee & Lee, 2001; NZVCC, 1994; Peddie & Tuck, 1995; Smithers, 1997, for

example). Arguably, in the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment, the standards approach to assessment is the most enduring debate.

When asked why standards, one interviewee placed the standards within the context of a criterion-based or outcomes-oriented approach that he explained, was the theoretical underpinning of the NQF. His explanation, as of those of the publications of the NZQA (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993a, 2004a), entailed a broadened use of the notion of unit standards based as a more outcomes oriented approach:

The concept of the framework was that you would have an outcomes based recognition system ... It wasn't the inputs of learning ... it wasn't the curriculum ... it wasn't what you taught ... it was the outcome that you specified ... and that outcome was documented ... We happened to call the documentation of the outcome a unit standard ... and it's within a particular framework (31, #8).

The interview data above suggests that the intent of the NZQA might have been to use an outcomes-based approach, but numerous publications of the NZQA, including the diagram at the beginning of this section (Figure 7.2) specify unit standards as the building blocks.

Albeit the interchanges made when referring to outcomes, standards, criterion referenced approaches, there were other issues discussed. One long-serving member pointed to the limitations with the initial technology used to record the standards:

That's the only way to do it mainly because of the technology ... we wrote a computer programme with macrons in it ... which is a data base that accepts unit standards in one format ... We wanted to change the format of the unit standards for a number of years ... but haven't been able to because of our database system which we are presently changing ... say for example achievement standards are not held in the same data base ... It's clumsy ... We've got ourselves tied up in the technology problem (31, #8-9).

Other issues included alternatives to unit standards, how the standards provided a link between the academic and the vocational worlds and costs. One participant, for example, noted:

There are always alternatives ... and achievement standards ... what we have for the school system (NCEA) is an alternative ... In fact they are better ... better than unit standards ... and a bit of a hybrid between the old world and the new world ... but honestly they are much more expensive to deliver ... but there are all sorts of alternatives ... unit standards are there because they are standards-based ... and we are focusing on a standards-based approach ... whether it be criterion-based or whatever else you might call it ... I think the reason it has been so successful is that it links back to industry

... In your job interview people are focusing on 'what can that person do in that situation' ... and that's exactly what the standards based assessment does ... it provides evidence on what that person can do ... (38, #4).

When asked what were the merits and challenges of the standards based approach, all interviewees emphasized that there were successes associated with the use of standards in the New Zealand context. One of the major successes, according to interview data (31, #8-11; 32, #5-6; 33, #11), was that the process of standards setting had forced the clarification of 'fuzziness' of learning goals as a result of the dialogue was taking place among educators or experts. This view is illustrated by the following passages:

One of the key merits of the standards ... is the debates that take place on what should be the standard ... the debates to document across a series of experts or people ... on exactly what the outcome of learning is ... Surprisingly many of the experts realize that they have been running programmes ... and they do not have a clue as to what the learning outcomes are ... or should be (31, #9-10).

Probably one of the best things that comes out of writing unit standards ... is that it forces people to talk to each other ... It forces people to really, really question ... why are we teaching and learning things? (33, #11).

As soon as you end up with a system of professional dialogue around the standard ... then you end up improving all the teaching, learning and assessment that's going on ... It's been one of the really very best things about the development of standards ... it is people sitting down and talking about what they're teaching ... why they're teaching and does it make sense? ... (32, #5-6).

There is always the recognition aspect ... but the major aspect is that when people know the purpose of learning, and the outcomes of learning, ... and you are very clear about when they will and when they won't get recognition ... when they know they will get recognition... it is incredible the learning that happens ... I think a lot of people who have failed in our education system ... have been failed by the system ... [they] had been very unclear about why they were learning ... What was the point of the learning? What was the purpose? With unit standards ... I know from the past, from practical experience ... time and time again ... people who have failed the system ... you clearly explain to them what is it you need to do ... if you want to get the standard ... There are no ranks ... there's no ranking against anybody else ... it is not set against the failure of other people ... [learners] know why ... and will know what they have ... and the evidence that is required ... and they will present it (#31, 10-11).

Notwithstanding these substantial successes with unit standards that had been experienced by the NZQA from the standpoint of the interviewees, there were some challenges faced at the level of practice. One of the challenges appears to be with the

'reductionist' approach or the 'atomization' of learning as perceived particularly by the higher education sectors which, according to this interviewee, had persisted up until interview time:

There has been criticism from the very beginning ... and the major criticism earlier on came from the higher education sectors...Those criticisms revolved around the atomizing learning ... There were concerns that learning was being divided into small parts ... and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts ... and so those were the various criticisms ... and they are still going ... in many cases (28, #4).

Another interviewee also stressed that the atomization of learning and the epistemologies of knowledge had presented challenges:

I think NZQA started off thinking that all qualifications could be designed with the same basic building block ... which was the unit standard... so that went fine for a few months ... and then the universities (because NZQA convened committees with all of the different sectors) said ... we don't think having such tiny components as the basis of degrees is going to work ... We do a lot of things in our courses ... where knowledge has to be synthesized ... and there is a lot of synergies between the different bits of what we do... and so if described in that kind of atomistic way ... we're going to be focusing in our teaching on those little bits ... and not the overall picture ... and how do you really assess a good project ... for example how do you define that in unit standards ... when there are so many different dimensions to it ... And I think that the resistance came from a fundamental belief ... that the epistemological basis of the unit standards was flawed ... that it seemed to assume that you could divide all knowledge out into little wee bits ... and assess them separately ... when in fact there's been a lot of work done to show that in some areas of learning ... that is not the most appropriate way to go (27, #11).

These challenges identified above are seen as extenuating in National Qualifications Frameworks as discussed in the international literature (Chapter Three) particularly from the point of view of writers such as Blackmur (2004), Easnor (2003), Young (2003a, 2003b) and the NZVCC (1994).

A second major challenge with the notion of standards in the New Zealand context that has also been identified in the international literature has to do with definability of the standards - exactly what is the standard, or a common understanding of unit standards - which according to one interviewee "embod[ied] all the various facets of risks and challenges" (28, #4):

Mostly the criticisms are due to a lack of understanding of what a unit standard is ... and the thought that a unit standard equates with a module of learning (28, # 4).

One of the difficulties with the whole concept of unit standards is that certain people believe the standards are the framework ... people see them as the most obvious part of the framework ... The reason I say this is ... there are some people even within NZQA during the 1990s that sold unit standards as the framework ... Unit standards are not the framework (31, #8).

Throughout, interview data suggested that as an organization, the NZQA appears to be meaning different things in the application and use of the standards.

In addition to the lack of definability, a third challenge with the standards-based approach appears to be with the implementation and application of the standards at level of practice, as extensively illustrated by this interviewee:

I'll tell you the main problem in implementing the NCEA is exactly what I have been talking about ... is teachers not understanding standards based assessment ... We have had to talk quite a lot about teachers applying it ... For instance, there is a history achievement standard called 'investigate'. Basically it is a research project where they investigate the stuff for a period ... and the achievement standard talks about a number of different things ... collecting data ... doing the investigation, approaches, etcetera ... but right at the end ... it says something like describe your sources or list your sources ... Now you have that standard describe your sources logically ... or list your sources logically ...

The interviewee continued to explain the implications for assessment:

Teachers then say ... we will have an assessment task ... We have developed assessment tasks ... and put them on the website ... because they said they didn't know how to assess ... and the assessment task, not really a task ... but an opportunity ... they have difficulty in understanding that you can assess within learning sometimes ... but they do it within their own teaching ... but I don't think they can apply it to national qualifications ... so the assessment task has an assessment schedule ... along side it ... but what we hear now is that in assessing the task... is that some teachers have said that you're not getting excellence in this task ... because you have developed a bibliography ... but you have listed them by title ... not author, and the traditional conventional way to do this is ... if you haven't put a comma in the publication ... you can't get excellence...

According to the interviewee:

This is an example of teachers not applying the standard ... but applying some other expectation of it ... that might be a very good thing for kids to learn ... if you are being honest ... but it is not something that is required of 15 year olds ... to show that they have reached the standard ... This example ... demonstrated the sort of problem ... that was there either because of them not understanding the difference between the task and the standard ... or they being determined that they were going to bypass the standard ... So we would have parents writing to us ...and we would have to send them a copy

of the standard ... and tell them get back to their schools ... and say to the schools ... 'Listen I deserve that standard ... because it doesn't say on the standard that I must have a bibliography by author' ... So when you talk about difficulties in implementing the NCEA ... it was this narrow ... constrained understanding of how you assess a task ... and about collecting evidence about a student (29, #21-22).

Correspondingly, a fourth challenge from the perspective of another interviewee was that of a dilemma with the extent of specificity with which the standards can be written, for example:

If you specify the standards too much ... then teachers don't have the opportunity to actually make the programme suitable for the children ... You are limiting the experiences that may be available for them ... If you have very broad ... very open standards ... then you have more difficulties in actually getting consistency in assessment ... which may or may not matter ... [and] which matters more or less at different levels of the curriculum (32, #5-6).

The extent of specificity with which the standards could be written was therefore believed to be both a disadvantage and an advantage.

The fifth challenge at the level of practice was that the standards were being used as a teaching prescription. One interviewee elaborated on such use:

The biggest challenge of using unit standards is to shift peoples' understanding of what they are ... that they are simply a tool for assessment ... and not a teaching prescription ... not an assessment prescription ... they provide the outcomes ... but not the prescription ... They're not course guidelines ... they're not teaching material for students ... For many years people have seen unit standards as driving what they do (33, #3-4).

The interviewee continued to explain, however, that:

One of the issues has been ... we may be able to provide and hold a meeting just to meet our universities and colleges of education ... about what they were primarily presented ... and what the unit standard was ... because they are holding on to concepts that are ten years old (33, #3-4).

While the challenges associated with the unit standard according to one interviewee emanated from lack of definability and misconception, this interviewee identified a sixth challenge as lack of communication, and the failure by the NZQA to clarify the concept of unit standards. He spelled it out:

This may partly be due to the fact that the NZQA did not get the concept out clearly out to people ... The unit standard is exactly what it says it is ... It is a standard for a specific part of learning ... It has not necessarily any

correlation whatsoever with how that learning is being delivered ... and that that concept of that separation of delivery from standard ... I think the notion of standards was misunderstood certainly from earlier on ... and probably still to a certain extent ... and that is probably the biggest area of concern ... and embodies all the various facets of risks and challenges (28, #4).

This assertion is in keeping with NZQA's (1993d) pronouncement that "in practice, the academic, operational and management independence of institutions is also encouraged" (p. 9). According to the NZQA (1993d), *Section 161(c) and (d) the Academic Freedom/Institutional Autonomy Sections* ensures "the freedom of the institution and its staff ... to teach and assess students in a manner they consider best promotes learning" (p. 9).

A seventh challenge appeared to be that of sufficiency of the number of standards to represent a course or programme, and 'the chicken and egg' account of the development, meaning what would be the point of conception of a course or programme in relation to the standards. This participant sums up the argument:

Do you take five unit standards and build a course around them ... or do you build a course and say okay which unit standards will suit the course? ... and I think this is the main challenge (29, #8).

Eighthly, there were challenges associated with management of the standards including volume, expansion, currency, duplications, redundancies and costs. One interviewee made clear that,

the more that goes on in the framework ... I suppose, the more learning that is recognized ... the more that needs to be on the framework ... So by its very nature, it tends to expand ... The flip side of that is keeping it up to date ... preventing duplications ... lack of use of some of the standards ... redundancies ... the costs ... because one of the basic philosophies is that people didn't need to repeat learning that they had already received recognition for (35, #7).

Finally, there was a challenge with benchmarking the standards, at the international level. In its corporate plans (2002/2003 to 2007/2008) and on its website (2004a), the NZQA alludes to internationally benchmarked standards (NZQA 2003c). One participant also noted:

We know that our framework has been analyzed ... and is leading to developments in other parts of the world (33, #5).

When interviewees were asked how the New Zealand standards are benchmarked internationally, the following responses provide an indication of the extent of success by the NZQA:

Not particularly well at the moment ... We've recognized this ... and we are trying to do something about it ... The new NCEA was aligned with that which are of course achievement standards and not unit standards ... There would be benchmarking with Australian systems ... The work that we're doing with the Commonwealth at the moment ... and some of the prior work has been looking probably more at benchmarking systems than individual standards ... There has been a certain amount of benchmarking going on in industry ... mostly in Australia for trade reasons and for workforce reasons ... as opposed to government organizations (28, #5).

I think there is more work to be done in terms of international benchmarking ... I think that we do have some, in terms of quality assurance and audit against standards, we do have quite a lot of contact with commonwealth countries (37, #3).

Despite the challenges and criticisms of the standards, interview data alluded to new developments towards the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, which would seemingly take into consideration some of challenges. It is anticipated that the Register would solve these epistemological issues such as the 'atomization' of learning, management issues of volume of standards, redundancies, equivalencies and duplications, for example, interviewees pointed out:

The whole school curriculum with all the so-called traditional academic subjects ... were going to be described in terms of unit standards, and you either pass it or you met the criteria or you didn't ... And people thought that's **not** how you really describe a lot of learning ... like in mastering the skills of writing a history essay ... and doing the research ... You can have people who don't do bits very well ... and others who do all the bits really well ... but they are still meeting the requirements really well ... and so you should be able to recognize those different levels of achievement ... and so there was a lot of discussion and arguments about it right through the 1990s until NCEA was finally confirmed ... and I think universities kind of stayed out of the qualifications framework for that reason (27, #13-14).

The framework now, of course, has moved on ... We are now talking about the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications ... that encompasses qualifications that are not necessarily written in unit standards format (33, #3).

I think we now have what's called the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications ... and there are others here who will tell you more about it ... but basically you can register whole qualifications ... and they do not have to be in the unit standards format (27, #14).

In March 2001, the Register began making provisions for a broader outcomes based approach. Reference is still made to both mechanisms in the NZQA's publications (see NZQA's Statement of Intent, 2002/2003 to 2007/2008, p. 2; Annual Report, 2003/2004, p.3, for example). With this new arrangement, the NZQA conceded to a mix of unit standards, achievement standards and outcomes. Also, in this new arrangement, the levels on the framework increased in number from eight to ten (NZQA, 2001a).

Interestingly, however, the notion of standards was kept as the building block of some qualifications, including the newly implemented National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The NZQA (2005b) reports that "there are more than 18, 000 registered unit standards and 800 national certificates and diplomas covering almost every area of work and learning" (p. 1). The excerpt below encapsulates the rationale for maintaining the standards:

Standards were important in the establishment of NZQA ... and the qualifications framework ... They are to monitor the rate of acquisition of qualifications by Pasifika and Maori students in particular, and more and more we've got the Asians ... I think one of our rationales for maintaining the standards based approach was to have a better way to recognize what people who traditionally didn't get qualifications could actually do ... In a way ... by giving them credit ... you were helping to acknowledge their role or place in the economy ... and helping to raise the standard ... which is our national psyche thing (27,#48-49).

Another advantage was seemingly that the unit standards facilitated access. By way of example, the unit standard can be a 'stand alone' attainment in itself when a whole qualification is not required. This participant sheds light on this advantage:

If you go to a food shop or takeaway shop you might very likely see a food handling certificate on the wall ... it's not a national certificate but there are two unit standards in food handling ... and the Health Department's requirements ... are that people who are dealing with food must have these unit standards ... They haven't got qualifications (29, #26).

A further analysis of the rationale for the mix of unit standards, achievement standards and an outcomes based approach shows that the 'mix' had come about as a result of public pressure to consider the general use of the term standards, the need for the recognition of excellence and to move from the perceived *carte blanche* approach of the atomization of learning. (see Blackmur, 2004; Education Forum, 2000; Lee & Lee, 2001; Philips, 2003; NZVCC, 1994; Smithers, 1997, for insights into the public pressure on the NZQA to change from the sole unit standards based approach).

There was also the issue of cost implications, for example, in evaluating the framework, the NZVCC (1994) had argued that there were exorbitant costs involved in the conversion all programmes to standards (see also Laking *et al.*, 1996). What would be done with all those 18, 000 unit standards (NZQA, 2005b) which had been developed at exorbitant costs if they were jettisoned? Also, the standards formed the building block of numerous qualifications in the New Zealand industry and training context. It was therefore critical to keep the standards and the NQF as a sub-set of the Register.

Another major reason for maintaining the standards had to do with the building bloc of the Register. Only whole qualifications can be included on the Register. What would happen to the 'stand alone' attainments explained by one of the interviewees (29, #26)? This implies that the registration of only whole qualifications on the Register would present some difficulties in adhering to the fundamental original principles of the NZQA, which according to the NZQA (1991a, p. 5) were:

- *Improved information about the purposes of qualifications and how they relate to each other.*  
They contribute a number of qualifications, thus giving students and employees *greater flexibility* to gain qualifications and raise their skill levels;
- *A closer relationship between the needs of industry and qualification development.* One of the most important achievements of National Qualifications to date has been to involve industry more closely in the process of developing the qualifications and standards relevant to them;
- *A Choice of pathways (portability and transferability) to achieve qualifications goals.*  
The National Qualifications Framework has also supported learning by enabling some people to enter and re-enter education and training, to change learning settings (such as between on-the-job training and institution-based education), and continue their learning in different places. Portability and transferability are facilitated mainly through unit standards. They allow for credit transfer between courses and learning establishments;
- *Recognition of a wider range of educational achievement and prior learning.*  
The use of standards has contributed to the recognition of a broader range of educational achievement than was previously the case. This has been done by assessing a great number of skills, making educational standards more explicit;
- *Provision of clear assessment criteria.*  
It is an assessment system which measures performance against specific criteria.

Arguably, the operational principles of the NZQA (such as monitoring, control and compliance, as presented in Chapter Six) are facilitated through clear stipulation of the standards. The standards are tools that facilitate policy principles of the NZQA, such as

access, choice, portability and flexibility. Credits are the currency of the completed standards, the outcomes, or whole qualifications earned (see Appendix K for credit values). The credit system was also devised for facilitating access, flexibility, transferability and portability of credits to institutions, providers, and jobs. The standards-based approach with its credit values represents one way in which learners can map pathways towards their choice of qualifications. Learners can identify the unit standards/achievement standards (or both) that form the basis of those qualifications, as well as the core standards required for specialization (NZQA, 2004a).

Although in the theoretical framework of this thesis, Blackmur (2004) has expressed his qualms about credits, including the arbitrariness with which they are assigned, their varied values on different frameworks, and their lack of comparability in the international labour market, statistics from the NZQA indicate that internally the NZQA has been successful with some of the arrangements that enable learners to transfer credits from one educational institution to another and to transfer from secondary school to the world of work or to an educational institution, transfer credits from one industry to another, particularly within New Zealand. Interview data above, for instance (28, #5; 37, #3), indicated that while New Zealand qualifications are accepted overseas, apart from across the Tasman, not much has been done by the NZQA in terms of international benchmarking of the standards.

In summation of the discussion on the standards based approach, generally, some of the challenges identified in the interviewee data reverberate with the international literature (see OECD, 1995) in terms of variations in definability. Other advantages and difficulties with the use of the standards have been analyzed in Chapter Four. These include the flexibility of the standards in meeting learners' needs; clarity on requirements of programmes for learners and employees; improvement in cross-crediting, transfer and portability of learning arrangements; recognition of prior learning; teacher development and involvement in the process (moderation, for example); monitoring learning progress, improved quality and efficiency and accountability; raising educational standards, and perceived failure rate among groups. Challenges include definability of the standards, standard setting, reporting the standards, applicability for high stakes assessment because of lack of variation in test scores, and the applicability of the standards to all fields of learning (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; and Education Forum, 2000, for examples).

There appears to be a problem also with the application of the standards in terms of a teaching prescription at the classroom level, in the New Zealand context.

#### 7.2.4.3 Recognition of Prior Learning

A third aspect of the fourth emergent theme - a seamless qualifications system and its goals - a third of the key goals for the framework was that of the recognition of prior learning. Notwithstanding issues of epistemologies of knowledge and comparability and issues of equivalencies identified in the literature, this theme is an epitome of success, rather than that of a challenge at the level of practice for the NZQA.

As part of the merits of the standards-based approach and the NQF, about ten out of the twelve interviewees expressed satisfaction with the accomplishments of using the NQF and the standards-based approach to facilitate the recognition of work-based learning, experiential learning, competence and qualifications gained overseas. One interviewee detailed a case which typifies how the framework has worked, and continues to work, in this regard:

We ran some projects with some unemployed people a few years ago and interviewed them ... We asked them about what they had done before and if they would like to be assessed ... One woman who was unemployed ... and had been for a year or two explained that all that she had done had been within old people's homes ... We looked at the national certificate in 'Care for the Elderly' and the competencies involved ... and took her to one of the polytechnics for someone else to assess her ... She had all of the competencies except for one standard and that was in First Aid ... She had never been taught formally how to do First Aid ... so we taught her First Aid ... and she got the certificate without any training at an institution ... So we have provided the structure ... and the infrastructure in which different industries, different occupations have been known to establish competencies (29, #25-26).

This excerpt captures the potential of the framework to recognize institutional as well as non-institutional learning. It also underscores how duplication in training was averted through recognition of learning (Roberts, 1997). These are clear advantages, which are supported in the views of Roberts (1997). Roberts (1997) argues that having to complete full programmes to attain formal qualifications in an area in which one has extensive knowledge (perhaps from years of practice and or informal study) wastes resources, denies value of experience and frustrates learners who might otherwise proceed at a speed appropriate to their abilities. Roberts (1997) contends that without this formal arrangement for recognizing prior experience and learning by the NZQA, many who

might make a genuine contribution to knowledge and education life in New Zealand, and perhaps elsewhere, are likely to remain unacknowledged and unrewarded.

The recognition of prior learning can therefore be thought of as having social, economic and financial benefits. Arguably, these benefits are promulgated by discourse of managerialism in principles such as cost-transaction, cost benefit, and efficiency, among others. But at no time during interviews did any of the participants link the recognition of prior learning to quality, quality assurance, or difficulties associated with the epistemologies of knowledge, levels, equivalencies and credits assigned that had been identified in the literature in Chapter Three. In Chapter Three, the value in the recognition of prior learning is supported, provided that consideration is given to issues such as the epistemologies of knowledge, comparability, equivalences and levels (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester 1995; Scheele, 2004; Smithers 1997; Young, 2003a, 2003b, for example). Perhaps it was also in this light that proponents and evaluators of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework had advocated different streams of careers, technical-vocational and academic (see Hawke, 1988; NZVCC, 1994; Smithers 1997 for examples of the arguments that surround their view of separate qualification tracks).

#### 7.2.4.4 Quality Assurance

A fourth aspect of the fourth emergent theme - a seamless qualifications system - was that of the notion of quality and quality assurance. Given that one of the buzz words of the NZQA in all its publications was that of quality, one of the interview questions asked of participants was: What is your understanding of the terms quality and quality assurance?

There were several variations and some fuzziness in the interpretations of the term quality by all NZQA interviewees, as represented in the following excerpt:

I know your initial question was how do I define quality ... It is a whole lot of things ... it is how you define what is important ... the credit for what's important ... or what people are involved in implementing and reaching those things ... what assessment procedures they use ... it's what checks they make against each other ... against themselves ... and between institutions ... and as they begin to be really rigorous and transparent and open about all of that ... and I mean that's one of the problems when you have several hundred providers all doing their own thing ... they don't want someone else to come and criticize and critique them ... which is more friendly than criticize ... but they might take it as criticism ... so I think the government set about consciously building frameworks and structures that would try to get around

these personalized rules and institutionalize problems ... and it has taken many many years (27, #7).

The notion of quality espoused above reflects principles of the discourse of managerialism as accountability, regulation, monitoring, checks and balances and consistency in approach (Barrow 1999; Horsburgh, 1999). It also alludes to the 'culture of distrust', which was a main concern for Codd (1999; 2003) and Resnick & Resnick (1992), as mentioned in Chapter Three.

In an effort to characterize quality and quality assurance, another interviewee attempted to give details of some of the indispensable issues and inextricable links between their quality assurance role and that of the political process:

When you talk about quality assurance ... the first thing they will talk about would be quality assurance is the provision of education ... This is a very small aspect of the framework ... One of the things is that you have to deliver for the Minister ... The difficulty is what is the next question ... was there added value to it? ... One of things you have to map out ... is what is a deliverable now ... and what the Minister wants ... and what the minister wants is some success ... but this year's success is not going to be next year's success ... You are building something that is transient (31, #17).

What emerges from the excerpts above is the multi-dimensionality of quality and quality assurance. This multi-dimensionality of quality and quality assurance, in relation to the operational principles of the NZQA, appeared to be one of the challenges. As one participant stated:

I think NZQA was that vehicle ... that infrastructure ... that would be used for post-compulsory and tertiary qualifications and ... that embroils all the things ... How you define the standards ... and how you register the providers ... credit providers ... attest to the quality of the standards ... review of standards ... and so on ... and the other side of the coin you have the Ministry allocating funding to providers ... so they wanted to know the providers were good ... and they were actually doing what they say they would do ... and were going to do it to an appropriate quality ... (27, #7).

The excerpts above are illustrative of the variations expressed by participants as to what they believed was meant by quality. Seemingly, one reason for the variation is that the NZQA as an organization in 2005 makes explicit its quality assurance processes (see Appendix G for a snapshot of glossary definitions that point to quality assurance), but has not unequivocally stated what it means by quality (see Barrow 1999, for instance). The NZQA, in 1993(d), defined quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a

product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. In brief, it is the meeting of requirements or achieving fitness for purpose" (p. 7). This broad definition might be an apparent explanation for the employees' differentiated interpretation of quality. A more perceptible source of explanation, however, is inherent in the term quality itself as was illustrated in Chapter Three (see Harvey & Green, 1993; Green, 1994; Pirsig, 1974), that the terms 'quality' and 'quality assurance' feature in the literature as ambiguous concepts and that the notion of 'quality' consists of a range of definitions, principles, and meanings that are relative to the perspectives held by the proponents (See Aloni, 200; Ashton, 1996; Broadfoot, 1996b; Donaldson, 1994; Gipps, 1994; L'Ecuyer & Peace Lenn, 1994). The meanings attributed to quality by the NZQA managers also illustrate what Green (1994) has described (referred to in Chapter Three) as the paradox of having an intuitive understanding of what quality means but the difficulty encountered in articulating its meaning (Green, 1994).

In spite of the variation in the interpretations, participants were asked, how does the NZQA undertake quality assurance of qualifications? Participants explained how the NZQA had been successful in its quality assurance roles. One interviewee, in particular, illuminated the process:

Quality assurance is triangulated ... In a sense, the intervention happens automatically ... If you set up nationally agreed standards and you document them carefully and you make them publicly available, that's the first leg ... So the first leg is setting and documenting the standards ... The second leg is the accreditation ... and that's the quality assurance of the provider ... not the course but the provider - or is it? ... And thirdly, there is moderation ... Moderation means ... are all providers or assessors using the unit standards, and assessing the standards in the same way ... or are they not? (29, #9).

The scale and scope of the overarching quality role of the NZQA appeared to be a challenge:

It's quite a big role ... We've probably got three quite different roles ... The first is in our role as the overarching quality agency. It is our responsibility to set the standards and criteria ... the delegated bodies and the universities then use their own procedures to follow ... but then the criteria are set and presented by the Authority ... and so that is one clear role in quality ... (28, #8-9).

We have another clear role in quality in that we audit the delegated bodies ... to ensure that they are performing their jobs in a quality way using our criteria ... and so we have a whole range of roles that are associated with the overarching quality role ... We then have our own operational quality assurance role ... where we go out and audit the quality of standards of the

delivery of education to learners in the private training establishments and the government establishments ... We also have a role in the approval and accreditation of non-university degrees ... we are going through a transition phase, in that delegation will be implemented ... so that's our operational quality role (28, #8-9).

Then the third area is our development and support role ... We keep that separate from our operational quality auditing role ... and we have a role currently in helping the development and support of private training establishments ... particularly the Maori training establishments and the Pacific ... we have a development role in qualifications and standards in areas where there is no direct industry responsibility ... and a whole variety of other areas where there is no industry body to take the responsibility ... and we quite overtly keep those roles separate (28, #8-9).

The outcomes or the results of the process was characteristic of the quality assurance process, according to one interviewee:

Qualifications are a measure ... and they are the toll by which the curriculum and other things get delivered ... Our quality assurance process is where a person puts together the development of course and programme and delivery of it ... in the end it is how you measure that and ... what they have achieved along the way (38, #7).

The quotations above support the documentary evidence in Chapter Six that the means and ends of quality and quality assurance are conducted by the NZQA through a series of systematic quality checks such as registration, accreditation, assessment and the moderation of results and quality audits.

The challenges associated with the processes of moderation and accreditation were not mentioned regarding the issues identified in other research studies that have been conducted in the New Zealand context on moderation, accreditation and audit (see Barrow, 1999; Horsburgh, 1999; Keown, 1996). Participants did not emphasize the problems identified in the theoretical framework by Harlen (1994), Harvey (2004) and Scheele (2004), for example, in the theoretical framework of this research.

Interview data, however, emphasized the scale and scope of the role of the NZQA (28, #8-9). The magnitude of the role of the NZQA is supported by documentary evidence. According to the NZQA (2000), "in total, nearly 850,000 exam and accompanying papers are produced, made up of around 11 million A4 pages. If placed end-to-end, the papers would nearly reach from [New Zealand] to Australia and back" (p. 34). At a glance in 2000, the NZQA was responsible for:

- 50 secondary examinations
- 128 tertiary examinations
- School Certificate - 63 000 candidates
- University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships - 27 000 candidates
- Trade Certificate and Advanced Vocational Awards - 9 000 candidates
- Papers to be marked - 310 000
- Markers, examiners and moderators - 1 500
- Supervisors - 3 500
- Overseas exams centres - usually more than 50.

(NZQA, 2000, QA News, 34)

With the full implementation of the NCEA from 2004, the magnitude of the task has increased. As has been indicated from the NZQA's (2005e) perspective, "2004 presented its biggest logistical challenge yet - to organize 130,000 students, 114 exam sessions, and three million exam papers during a three week-period" (p. 1). The stresses and strains on the human resource of the Authority is one major challenge.

Another area of challenge was that of the clarity of meanings of terms used at the implementation level; terms such as accreditation and moderation. By way of illustration, one interviewee stated:

We have some debates about these issues ... does this accreditation refer to the provider or the assessor? ... We are not really sure whether we accredit a provider to assess the unit standard or are we accrediting their course ... Are we accrediting the teaching and learning or are we accrediting the assessor ... So we go to an organization and say have you got the capacity to become an assessor? ... Have you got the skills and knowledge and the staffing (qualified and trained) to become an assessor? ... I don't think we are quite clear on that (29, #9).

Another expressed concern for the implications of lack of clear meanings of the terminologies used:

but one of the problems is that we used the existing terms that have different meanings ... Well, if you the same word as a term that has a different meaning you risk creating even more confusion and there isn't a simple answer to that question ... I have been here [for x amount of time] ... I still do not know a lot of key concepts ... I am still not absolutely certain what accreditation means ... Like is it accreditation of a course, or is it accreditation of a provider? I don't know what the differences are ... I think the risk is when you have terms that are the same ... like levels and

achievement would actually mean different things ... I think if you are thinking of introducing a system, you would have to think carefully about the terms - provider, a lot of people don't like the term provider but it is quite simple really. It just means someone who provides courses and programmes, I think (27, #54).

The varied meanings have implications for consistency in the processes of moderation and accreditation which have been expressed in the theoretical framework (see Harlen, 1994; Harvey, 2004; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1994).

#### 7.2.4.5 Raising Educational Standards

A fifth aspect of the fourth emergent theme - a seamless qualifications system and its goals - was that of raising educational standards, particularly that of minimizing failure among specific groups of students. These were some of the reasons suggested for the establishment of the NZQA, in the documentary evidence (see *The Hawke Report*, 1988; *The Green Paper*, 1986; *Learning and Achieving*, 1986; *Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions*, 1989; *The Picot Report*, 1988; and *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987) as well as in the responses of participants. One participant commented on the flexibility of the framework in this respect:

The framework is an incredible tool under which some of the groups get an education ... whether it is by gender or age ... and you can see that in our statistics ... It is a tool that can be used with cultural or gender bias ... but is largely bias free ... You can say it isn't the whole concept of the recognition of learning a waste in culture ... but you can also say yes, institutional recognition of learning is largely a waste in culture ... but most cultures have recognition status of either craftsmen or older people ... or just knowledge ... The framework makes provisions for them (31, #18).

One interviewee emphasized, however, that despite the establishment of the framework, it is still the case that the Maori or whatever label you want to call them ... experience difficulty ... Pakeha are still as far ahead as they ever were (27, #49).

This participant's observation is supported by Harrison (2004), who notes that despite measures, "Maori students do relatively poorly on tests of educational achievement and in senior school examinations" (p. 106). Harrison (2004) claims that "the Education Review Office constantly produces evaluations that make it unequivocally clear that in both kura kaupapa Maori and mainstream schools, the quality and outcomes of Maori children's education are below the level that should be tolerated" (p. 106). This implies that the

situation of Maori learners revealed in earlier investigative reports (in Chapter Six) has not petered out.

Taking into account interview data supporting the view that one of the apparent reasons for the establishment of the NZQA was to minimize the perceived failure rate and raise educational standards, interviewees were asked about NZQA's strategies to raise the performance of learners who had not met the required standards. Interview questions used to explore this issue included: How do you fill the gap when the standards have not been attained? What intervention strategies or support systems are there to help learners who have not achieved the standard? The general response was that this was not the role of the NZQA, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Not our job. We are not a provider ... So if I am an institution ... or an accredited organization and I have some learners that don't meet the standards ... I will start the course again and provide some more support learning ... That also depends how the institutions deal with failure by learners to meet the standard ... It is up to the institution ... So for example, if this happens at the polytechnic, you might be doing a one-year programme ... but you might be given three opportunities to meet the standard ... If you fail ... you start it again ... From the NZQA's point of view ... we just accept the results (31, #11).

We have no role in intervention. The Ministry of Education has the educational development role ... And I don't see a particular problem in that (32, #7).

We tend not to provide advice and support if you're talking about intervention ... Industry training organizations tend to do it ... They often tend to do it through providing assistance with training and resources manuals ... sometimes to make money ... but also to add certain things (29, #9).

These responses point to an outcomes, results oriented approach that has been adopted by the NZQA, in which the processes are not significant. The responses are also in keeping with the observation made by Harker, *et al.*, (2003) that the demonstration of excellence in the classroom is appraised mainly by the ability to ensure that "all children produce positive learning outcomes" (p. 151; see also Codd's (2003). One potential source of tension in this regard, according to Codd (2003), is that this prevailing culture of performativity emphasizes and values only what can be planned, measured, recorded and reported.

In summation of the fourth theme – a seamless framework and its goals - some key goals for the seamless framework were identified. These included (i) Bridging the academic and vocational divide (ii) The introduction of standards based assessment, (iii) Recognition of all learning, (iv) Quality assurance, (v) Raising educational standards and minimizing failure. There appeared to be theoretical success in placing all the qualifications within one framework, but there were mixed feelings about success in bridging the academic-vocational divide, raising educational standards, and minimizing failure. There was major success, however, with the recognition of prior learning, and the increased flexibility in gaining qualifications through the pathways created by the NZQA. There was also major success in supporting the expansion of a number and range of providers through its approval and accreditation roles. In terms of major challenges, the analysis above suggests that the use of a unified framework comprising solely unit standards by the NZQA as one panacea for all cures was a major challenge that persisted for more than a decade. In the New Zealand context, interview data presented above distinctly show that generally persons in the higher education sector in New Zealand did not accept the NQF (see NZVCC, 1994; Philips, 2003). Faced with unrelenting criticism over time, the NZQA has had to make some major adjustments to shift from the sole use of unit standards to include a mix of achievement standards and, a broader outcomes based approach and an expansion of the levels from eight to ten (Blackmur, 2004; McKenzie, 1999; NZVCC, 1994; NZQA, 2001; Philips, 2003). The standards were kept particular for access, portability, transferability, relevance, coherence and articulation of parts and whole qualifications. Arguably, however, a seamless qualifications system with a dual structure - the NQF and the Register - was maintained.

### **7.2.5 Impact on the Quality of Education at the National Level**

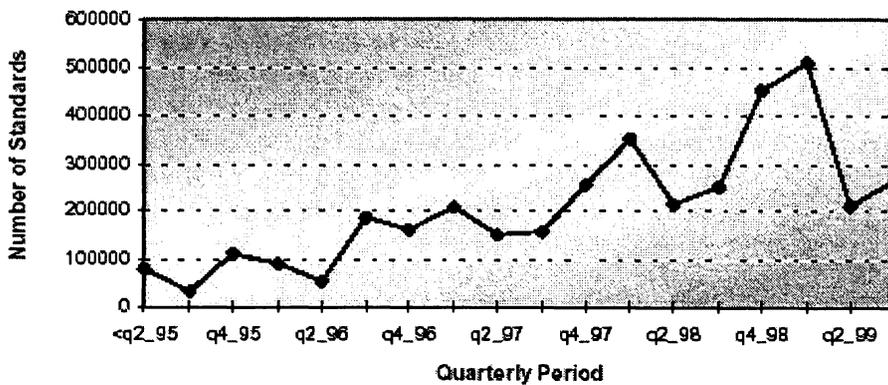
A fifth emergent theme in the interview data, which relates to the successes and challenges of the NZQA was that of the impact on quality of education at the national level. This theme emanated from the following interview questions: How has the NZQA impacted on the quality of education in New Zealand? How do you know that NZQA has had an impact on the quality of education in NZ? How is that impact measured? Who measures that impact?

One participant indicated that impact was not measured per se, but other measures were being taken into consideration:

We don't measure impact particularly well ... but some of the measures that we have in place are useful measures ... We do measure the number of qualifications awarded ... We measure the number of learners registered who have records of learning with us ... The graphs clearly show an increase in learners registered ... They clearly show the increase in qualifications and standards obtained over the years ... But the fact that we do de-register providers ... or that providers failed to get registered in the first place, shows that without that registration process or audit process in place ... there would be shoddy providers out there (28, #12).

This excerpt highlights the quality assurance roles of the NZQA. The increases alluded to are also supported by statistical data, which overwhelmingly demonstrate the numbers of learners “hooked” on the framework. Figures 7.3 and 7.4 illustrate this.

**Figure 7.3**  
Number of Standards Received Per Quarter 1995-1999



(NZQA, 1999, p. 5)

**Figure 7.4**  
Comparison of NOF Registration Figures  
Sept 2002 and January 2000

	<b>30 SEPT 2002</b>	<b>1 JAN 2000</b>
Total learners registered	784 996	475 661
Total credits recorded	32 478 091	14 080 752
National Qualifications Awarded	93 784	31 983
Māori learners registered	150 752	91 858
Credits recorded for Māori learners	5 948 670	2 479 011
Qualifications awarded to Māori learners	16 499	5 318
Pacific Island learners registered	55 055	34 493
Credits recorded to Pacific Island learners	2 012 465	821 959
Qualifications awarded to Pacific Island learners	5 598	1 898

(NZQA, 2002a, pp.1-2)

Other participants (38, #12; 29, #25; 32, #9-10; 38, #16) pointed out that these increased figures showed by the graphs, tables, and statistics represented an improvement in the quality in the education system in New Zealand.

Improvement in the quality of education was also apparent in the anecdotal comments and feedback received from the industries, as stated by one interviewee:

Not particularly well as far as measurement goes ... but because of the strong involvement of industry in our work we get pretty strong feedback from them ... This feedback is not measured quantifiably ... We can also tell how many people got qualifications ... and what they are and what type ... but we know that it is quite hard to put down quality in practice ... For society, it gets back to how relevant is what the student is learning and that is a challenge (38, #12).

According to one participant, the difficulty with measuring quality was as a result of the centralization of the role of qualifications with the NZQA and the increases in student participation:

The qualifications framework replaced a whole mixture of local qualifications ... so I guess it is quite difficult to prove ... We can say several thousand people with more now than in 1990 ... but that was because in 1990 we were merging the national qualifications ... We have in our statistics charted the growth in participation. However, I don't think it is being structured properly to track changes (29, #25).

Although the changes could not be tracked, based on the participant's perspective the replacement of the mixture of qualifications and the growth in qualifications suggested expansion and increase flexibility in gaining qualifications through the pathways created by the NZQA. One interviewee noted that although data collection takes place, the actual use to which the data is put was questionable:

We collect all that information but on the whole it is meaningless ... We have not had a substantial research programme at all ... We are hugely rich in data and hugely poor in the analysis of that data ... Anecdotally, we could have all sorts of things and we certainly come to some things and say this is fantastic (32, #9-10).

Another interviewee attempted therefore to show the need for improvement in the quality assurance processes of the NZQA:

At the moment, we're moving to a stage where there isn't enough high pass rates ... there isn't enough examples of qualifications being achieved along the way ... and they won't be quality assured ... and they won't get any funding ... Now that might be quite harsh but it has to be cushioned against ... Are they providing enough support for the student? Are they providing enough support for ongoing learning and changing their programmes and learning? (38, #16).

The excerpts above illustrate that with regard to improvement in the quality of education and the impact of the NZQA on the quality of education in New Zealand there were undoubtedly overwhelming increases in the statistics of the numbers of credits, units standards and learners “hooked” on the framework. Although there was evidence of growth in qualifications as a result of expansion of qualifications and pathways created by the NZQA, there was vagueness and uncertainty as to whether the NZQA had made a qualitative impact on the quality of education in New Zealand. Essentially, quantity was equated with quality. The responses on how the impact on the quality of education in New Zealand is measured can be summed up in the statement of one of the interviewees: “not particularly well as far as measurement of impact goes” (38, #12).

Drawing from the theoretical framework in this research, this problem of attempting to ascertain the contribution of the NZQA to the quality of education in New Zealand can be attributed to the looseness of all the terminologies and varied strands and meanings of terminologies and principles of the discourses of managerialism. Quality assurance can be cited as one such example. Moreover, despite the fact that the discourse is based on principles of measurable outcomes, and that their rhetoric of theoretical approaches can be readily identified, measuring quality outside of the statistics is a challenge for the NZQA. Chapter Three indicated that the discourse of managerialism has imposed significant bearings of corporatization and privatization on education programmes - in spite of the fact that there are significant differences between public and private sectors specifically in terms of what there is to be measured based on input-output efficiency (Boston, 1991). The fact that the use of the term ‘quality’ in its application to NQFs does not take into account the difference between a business and the learning environment (school or educational institution) might be one of the possible reasons for the NZQA’s problem (see Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003, for example). Consequently, as a result of its emphasis on an outcomes orientation, the NZQA has focused on examination results and the numbers of standards on the framework, credits and qualifications (see Easton, 2003; Harrison, 2004).

#### **7.2.6 Overlapping Policy Roles, Linkages and Relationships with Stakeholders**

A sixth emergent theme in the interview data that relates to the successes and challenges of the NZQA was that of overlapping policy roles, linkages and relationships with existing organizations. As shown in the previous chapter, there were several organizations with which the NZQA has had to work closely. Some of these include the

ERO, the NZVCC and the Ministry of Education. The relevant interview question asked was: The NZQA has several linkages and relationships with various stakeholders. How do these relationships support or hinder the role of the NZQA?

One challenge has had to do with the policy roles of the NZQA and those of existing organizations, in particular the Ministry of Education. There are also challenges posed by the lack of definition of roles of newly formed organizations and their new management roles and the working relationships among individuals, as illustrated in the views of the following participants:

We had our education reform in the late '80s ... Before that, we had the Department of Education doing everything ... Roles of the bigger department were now severed ... We had NZQA doing qualifications ... early childhood development unit ... and Parent Advocacy Council (that didn't last very long) ... Skill New Zealand ... Specialist Education Services ... Suddenly they were all competing with each other ... They were trying to work out how best to get their policies and programmes into place ... But all the time ... the Ministry had control of the funding and control of the policy regulation and also the legal arrangements ... All other institutions, and a lot of what the NZQA was doing, had to be channeled through the Ministry ... So although the NZQA had their own Minister's approval ... approval also had to come from the senior officials of the Ministry of Education ... So there was quite a lot of frustration (27, #2-3).

According to another participant:

During the '90s, the NZQA was formed out of staff from the Department of Education ... At the time, the Department of Education was written out of legislation and the Ministry of Education was formed ... and NZQA was formed ... but also another agency was formed - Skill NZ ... which took staff from the Ministry of Education and from the Department of Labour ... and Skills NZ recognized it was the body to recognize the Industry Training Organizations and deal with second chance learning, youth training, the apprenticeship system ... I think the formation of Skills NZ as a recognition body of industry training organizations and as a funding of Industry Training Organizations actually worked quite well, so that having a separate agency ... NZQA receives the unit standards and qualifications from the industry training organizations ... but the funding of the Industry Training Organizations is through Skills NZ (29, #19-20).

Interviewees attempted to explain how the decoupling of policy formulation with that of policy implementation has posed some challenges:

The policy implementation process was set by Government following the *Learning for Life* papers ... This was the initial policy and they were translated

through to the Education Act ... The ongoing policy role in some ways is not NZQA's ... It's the Ministry of Education's ... But by the fact of its very existence, the NZQA needs at least an operational policy role ... Who monitors it? A board ... The board clearly has the monitoring role for the organization ... and its policies have to be approved by the board (28, #7).

Another interviewee explained:

I think basically part of the debate was about who determines policy for the curriculum in the 1990s ... and unit standards for school subjects ... The NZQA was of the view that it had a mandate to develop unit standards across the system ... The Ministry of Education said no! ... The Ministry of Education's role is to determine national policy for the curriculum ... Therefore, the NZQA cannot say what are unit standards without the agreement of the Ministry or Ministry officials ... NZQA cannot set unit standards without taking into account the New Zealand curriculum ... And there was quite a bit of confusion around that (27, #34).

One participant put it this way:

I think the difficulty in the arrangement overall was there was a confusion between policy and implementation ... not necessarily a confusion between those ... but it resulted in confusion ... If you looked at the structure ... the Ministry argued that they were the policy maker ... and NZQA and Skills NZ were the implementation arms ... so, for example, as a member of the ... organization in 1988 ... I would be trying to work with government agencies over policy development ... and I would approach Skills NZ and say ... look we need to look at this policy here ... and they would say ... we're not a policy agency go and talk to the Ministry ... and we would go and talk to the Ministry ... and they would say ... why don't you go and talk to Skills NZ because it sounds like it is their area of business ... and it was quite difficult to get people from the agencies to look at it together (29, #19-20).

Overlapping roles of existing agencies also appeared to have presented a major challenge for collaboration and teamwork to date. One participant continued to give an indication of some of the existing challenges:

We have a number of agencies ... Each one supposedly has its own different role ... However, as with all agencies there are potential overlaps ... In some cases ... it is very difficult to define and interface roles ... It is complicated in New Zealand ... It became even more so with the setting up of this body called the NZQA ... The NZQA and the other agencies have to try and work out where the interface is between their roles ... We try and work in tandem ... And to be honest ... We have been trying even harder in the last couple of years ... We have been trying to work in tandem with ... to work in collaboration with ... in co-operation with these agencies ... We have been attempting to build relationships with all of these other agencies (28, #8).

Interviewees pointed out that, at the policy level, major challenges came from the Ministry of Education, who thought that the NZQA had no jurisdiction over policy making and that they (the Ministry) were the major policy making body on Education.

Endorsement of the tension came from a Ministry of Education official:

A very interesting dynamic has arisen ... and if you worked at NZQA at some time ... you would probably recognize a certain amount of suspicion and antagonism towards you ... Maybe these are the wrong words. There is differentiation of the NZQA from the Ministry ... We're a government department. We're working to the Minister and we're working for the tax payers ... The employers of the NZQA don't work to the government at all ... The NZQA is a distant government agent and they work for the board ... The Authority! ... That in itself has produced some interesting outcomes.

In the school sector in particular ... we went through quite a bit of upset in the heyday early '90s, mid '90s ... because as an agency without any direct engagement ... the NZQA wanted to make policy around qualifications ... which it was not entitled or able to do ... So the schools ended up in quite a confused state ... I think we have had a bit of progress on that since ... and quite a better understanding ... This is perhaps one of the reasons why, when the NCEA was to be introduced as a new qualification ... the Government moved that the Ministry should run the introduction ... This was partly to get around the tension ... The NZQA does not have the legal regulatory power to make policy on education (36, #3).

According to one interviewee, the conflicting roles often resulted in situations that led to dissatisfaction by the NZQA, as exemplified by one interviewee:

So it is like we're on the continuum of policy, from this end to that end ... little 'p' and capital 'P' ... Where do you actually draw the line? ... Is operational policy, policy ... or is it just being operational ... For example, at the same time in our section, we now have to implement the exams, so that is operations ... That has nothing to do with policy ... but every time we put a letter or circular out to schools we are making decisions about what they should be doing ... so we are making policy decisions ... But the actual overall policy to have an NCEA was largely the work of the Ministry and all their advisors ... Some NZQA people went over there to work on it so it was actually a joint thing. But talking about policy ... where do you draw the line? (27, #34).

Although the examples seem to be of the past, dissonance at the level of practice appeared to be an ongoing challenge, and was being deliberated by the NZQA (38, #2; 38,#8).

Although the overlapping roles of existing agencies were particularly challenging, interviewees believed that the problem has been about people and relationships more

than anything, as well as the expertise of the NZQA in policy making, negotiation and implementation. For example:

There has been a history of problems because of [the decoupling of policy making and policy implementation]... but I think it has been about people and relationships more than anything ... and I have been involved in a number of different government departments ... where operation and implementation is separate from policy... and have not had problems (38, #7-8).

Another participant attempted to explain further:

Some of the people had worked together and were split into the three agencies ... and certainly there was some rivalry among the agencies ... I think one of the fundamental things was probably not those structures ... and that has changed considerably over the last few years ... I think there is a much more cooperative working relationship between the agencies ... I think overarchingly, I don't know that the structure was a real issue ... what I see happening was that there was not an articulation across a whole number of government agencies and other government policies ... and whether it was the fault of the public servants in the structure ... or ministers in government ... but it was one of the difficulties that a lot of Industry Training Organizations faced ... so when you were dealing with a government agency that was part of your industry's compliance structure ... time and time again they had no knowledge of the tertiary education structure ... or who to turn to (29, #20).

According to this interviewee:

For example, throughout [negotiations], the establishment of the Register depended a little too much on individual personalities ... and whether several general managers and chief executives could make contact with general managers in other places ... I think also the fact that the government has set up agencies with their own targets ... Skills New Zealand for example, they have their targets ... we have our targets ... and someone else has their targets ... and this can slow you down if you spend too much time talking across even simple things ... like I can read a publication from one of these agencies and it refers to national qualifications but it doesn't refer to the framework ... it doesn't refer to NZQA ... partly because it is to promote Skills New Zealand and the work it is doing ... We really ought to be producing joint publications (29, #13).

The tension might have been more than policy making, as illustrated in the views of this participant:

I know people at the Ministry of Education who despised NZQA initially ... and suspected us ... We were seen as quite small and lean ... We don't report directly to the Minister ... we report to the board ... and they thought that we had a little bit more of an approach that was not fair about us ... Don't forget we were a product of the 1990s, when we had the liberal market-driven labour government changing the way things work ... this too was a problem (29, #13).

The expertise of the NZQA in policy making was clearly an issue and was being addressed according to this participant:

I think the key to it is yes, the Ministry of Education has the main role ...but we have a role as well. Therefore what actually happens is that ... in the last twelve months ... [the NZQA has] developed quite a strong policy arm ... and I am very clear that that policy arm is very important ... I have had quite an internal debate about that because they thought that their operational people had enough experience to deal with policy ... but quite frankly you can't talk to policy people in the government sector ... if you do not have those skills ... The two don't talk ... and they're talking past each other ... and it is a complete waste of time ... but I am also clear that the MOE is responsible for formulating policy ... but we need to have a strong enough arm to be able to articulate back to them (38, #7-8).

The same interviewee articulated some of the implications that were imminent with the lack of communication among the existing agencies and organizations:

Some of our issues and concerns ... about the operationalization of the policy and vice versa ... to ensure that that happens so therefore there isn't a clear separation... because you can choose to implement something that can be adverse to the policy ... and I could actively do that by the way I implement something ... instead I was to choose to do that ... or vice versa ... or you can implement something that's counter to the policy ... so the aim is, we need to be working and talking together on that ... and [the manager] who heads that policy area comes from the Ministry of Education ... and there are some top level policy people in this organization ... and I think that's the answer ... I have worked before in ... and there was a policy in ... and we didn't not have any policy ability ... type people who can't talk to policy people and it was just a disaster without the ability to talk (38, #7-8).

In terms of acceptance of the principles and policies of the NZQA, major opposition also came from the universities. One interviewee in particular, noted that "the major rock that was outside the framework was the universities" (28, #13). This assertion points to the significance of the tension, which is also validated in the length of time (more than one decade) that it took the universities and the NZQA to reach a common ground. In the reasons offered for the 'rough patch' and opposition to the policies and principles of the NZQA, according to one interviewee, educators had failed to make a paradigm shift to embrace the principles of management. From her standpoint:

The culture of education is a challenge ... Education does a lot of talking around ... and not a lot of doing. The biggest challenge is putting operational type systems behind education type people ... They don't like to deal with that accountability, transparency, ... reaching it and sorting it ... Our operational people have a high status among corporate people ... because of the respect for their skills. Our operational employees are given

low respect from education ... Educationists see education as the most important thing ... and that management stuff is not so important ... If you don't have the managerial principles to keep education, then forget about it ... particularly with the speed with which we've been moving (38, #9).

She felt that the tension might have stemmed from the 'aloofness' and 'lack of pragmatism of the academics', particularly the universities:

Well, the academics like to think that they are different category ... and that's always going to create tension in society if this is the way the academics think ... I have lots of conversations with the universities ... They find me difficult to deal with because I am pragmatic ... and I don't have a doctorate ... From their perspective, I need a doctorate to be able to convince people ... but with due respect I have a high respect for the research background that goes with degrees and doctorates ... I have a high respect for the culture and the learning that goes on at that level ... It is very important ... But if we only deal with that level because (often is the case) ... they have got the most ability to be articulate and be heard ... then we have got a problem with our society (38, # 18).

The interviewee went further and linked the academic failure of many in New Zealand to the perpetuation of the gap between academics and non-academics, which the interviewee claimed had been created by the education system itself. One of the examples provided was the challenge in merging of the two worlds:

And I think that's exactly where New Zealand has been at ... because of the way our system is set up ... and so many failed because they often did not have the mechanisms by which to be heard ... It is challenging to make those things come together ... but unless we do that ... they're going to constantly have that gap (38, #18).

This 'history of problems' with clear policy guidelines and communication among the various agencies, as expressed in the quotations above, are supported by documentary evidence. In a study conducted by Foulkes *et al.* (1996) for example, most of the findings centred on the policy output of the NZQA. From the views of participants, these problems have not disappeared. The following conclusions of the evaluators, Foulkes *et al.* (1996), came to the fore:

1. The relationship between the Authority's advisory role and its own significant statutory responsibilities: The authority's duty to act independently on many aspects of its work inevitably means that it will make decisions which may have significant policy implications. It is a difficult balancing act;
2. The respective roles of the Board and the Authority staff: the formality is that the Board is responsible for policy advice to the Minister. However the day to day reality is that the board staff will be consulted directly by the Minister and officials from other agencies on policy issues; the result is that the Board has

sometimes felt itself excluded from issues which it believed it should have had the power to decide ... and the staff sometimes find it difficult to keep the Board fully informed;

3. The place of the NZQA in the government's consultative process is a closely related question: the formal responsibilities of staff to the board may conflict with the need to be able to negotiate and commit to specific policy positions in discussing with other agencies;
4. The relative roles of the authority and other education agencies and particularly the Ministry of Education: there seems little dissent from the view that the Ministry should have a central role in the development of the government's education and training policy; for various reasons the Ministry has not taken full charge of overall strategy and has frequently clashed with the Authority over responsibility for advice on the development of the NQF in specific areas such as in schools or tertiary institutions.

(pp. 20- 21)

In summation of this theme - the overlapping policy roles, linkages and relationships with stakeholders - all the interviewees described 'the rough patch' suffered by the NZQA as emanating from relationships with existing organizations, structures and arrangements. Up to the point of data collection, all interviewees supported the view that that the situation had improved but there were ongoing issues to be redressed, and the new acting chief executive had dedicated time to doing so. Based on the literature viewed in Chapter Three on the discourse of managerialism, this contested nature of policy making is not uncommon in the discourse of managerialism. As was discussed, one of the principles of Public Choice Theory is that, wherever feasible, the services provided by government agencies are privatized and are made as contestable as possible (Boston, 1991). As was shown in Chapter Three, one such example can be seen in the decoupling of policy formulation and implementation (Boston *et al.*, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Scott 2001). Thus, it is not unusual that in the case of the NZQA policy advice for education rests with the Ministry of Education, and responsibility for some qualifications rest with the NZQA. In the discussion, the discourse of education theory of learning and assessment had not been given precedence by interviewees. As has been indicate in Chapter Six, in 2005, the NZQA announced that it "had made a number of key changes to its organizational structure" (see NZQA 2005a, p. 1). Among those changes, one of the new groups established was a "policy and research, comprising three business units" (NZQA, 2005a, p. 1). These three business groups were announced as (i) policy (ii) research, monitoring and analysis (a shift from the secondary education group) and (iii) international" (NZQA, 2005a, p.1; see Figure 6.1 in Chapter Six also).

### 7.2.7 The NZQA's Legislative Charter

A seventh emergent theme in the interview data that relates to the successes and challenges of the NZQA was that of its legislative charter. Interview data reflected the sentiment that the "NZQA's legislation is quite good in a number of places" (31, #41). The legislation (the aspects of which relate to the NZQA are shown in Appendix A) makes provisions for:

- (i) All qualifications (including pre-vocational courses provided under the Access training Scheme) have a purpose and relationship to each other that students and public can understand; and
- (ii) There is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved (Education Amendment Act 1990: Section 253 (c)).

As has been discussed in the first part of this chapter, in theory the structures of the NQF and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications facilitate the connection between national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-compulsory education and training. This connection is facilitated through the mix of achievement standards, unit standards and a broader outcomes based approach.

There have been challenges with the legislation. To begin with, one interviewee attributed the 'false start of lack of clarity of roles for existing organizations' to loopholes in the legislation. It was thought that the legislation allowed for varied interpretations, for example:

The legislation refers to NZQA's overarching role to set up a framework of qualifications ... It talks about the Vice Chancellors "in lieu of NZQA" ... In my time here, the various chief executives have read that line "in lieu of NZQA" in different ways ... One chief executive thought that it meant that the Vice Chancellors' Committee has complete autonomy over national universities ... Another thought that the Vice Chancellors' Committee had to act almost under the umbrella of policy that the NZQA sets up ... I think two to three years ago ... one of the chief executives with a university background ... and highly critical from all the sectors ... simply said the NZQA is the overarching body ... And that he would bring all the institutions together ... We got to meet the Vice Chancellors' Committee and the people in the Ministry ... He wanted to make things clear that NZQA has overarching responsibility for qualifications ... But we did not start out with this view (29, #5).

Another challenge with the legislation had to do with the conflicting terminologies used in the legislation to guide the policies and operational procedures of the NZQA. As

indicated in several excerpts below, interviewees expressed the opinion that the definitions of terms and terminologies in the legislation were simply problematic:

One major problem is with terms used in the legislation... For example, the words course, qualification, award, training, education, programme, training programme are all used interchangeably ... that is reflective of the legislation. It is confusing as to what some of those words mean ... One of our concerns ... that is missing in our legislation which is a real problem for us at the moment ... is the definition of the areas such as qualification, award, course, programme, competency, etcetera (31, #39-40).

... the legislation defines a qualification, as a course ... and defines a course as in a course of study leading to a qualification ... I think something like that ... Useless isn't it? ... We've never been quite clear ... it seems to me ... as to whether we are quality assuring courses or qualifications (29, #1).

The ramifications of conflicting legislation were of major concern. For example one participant claimed,

well if you the same word with different meanings, you risk creating even more confusion and it isn't a simple matter (29, #1).

Another challenge was that the new piece of legislation to establish the NZQA had conflicted with existing pieces of legislation. This conflict in pieces of legislation, according to the interviewee, gave rise to years and years of tension. He elucidated:

... when the Qualifications Authority was formed, there was a number of conflicting pieces of legislation ... For example, we conflicted with the qualification certification roles of a number of other legislative bodies ... That created five or six years of tension between those ... A new piece of legislation was brought in ... and others had not changed ... When a new legislation is brought in ... who knows what numbers of pieces of legislation it will interfere with? (31, #43-44).

Other difficulties had to do with the inconsistencies in the legislation, for instance,

we've got a number of phrases ... that are not consistent with the intent of the Act ... or the object of the Act ... But the Act allows the NZQA to put in place the policies and procedures ... On the other hand ... anything that is specified in our legislation ... overrides the ability to specify other things ... so the fact that there is legislation in some areas like course accreditation ... course approval or the award of qualifications ... doesn't preclude the fact that there is nothing written about moderation (31, #41).

Moderation is one of the key operational policies and practices of the NZQA through which quality is attained, but according to the NZQA participant (31, #41), there is no mention of moderation in the legislation.

While the Education Act allows the NZQA to put in place policies and procedures, one challenge was that of the lack of empowerment for the NZQA to take corrective action (31, #41). This was another factor identified as a key component missing in the legislation, as illustrated in this passage:

One of the difficulties ... in our legislation is that it is very clear on our ability to accredit an organization for course approval ... What is unclear in our legislation is the ability to remove the accreditation ... So on the one hand, you say nobody can do it unless they are accredited ... but then the legislation was silent on having that power to remove accreditation ... Again it doesn't need to be specific in the legislation as to what the power is ... but I think you need authority to exercise some of those powers (31, #41).

In summation of the seventh theme - The NZQA's Legislative Charter - the interpretation of the legislation by different parties was identified as one of the challenges that gave rise to difficulty at the level of practice. Its interpretation depended too much on individual personalities, and whether several general managers and chief executives could make contact with other agencies and general managers in other places. Also, the variations in terminologies, the inconsistencies with other pieces of legislation and the lack of empowerment provided the NZQA to take corrective measures were key challenges expressed presented by the legislation. These problems with the legislation were key factors that challenged the operational principles and procedures of the NZQA at the level of practice.

### **7.2.8 Financing (Size and Cost of the NQF)**

An eighth emergent theme in the interview data relating to the successes and challenges of the NZQA was that of financing the NZQA. The government's contribution the administrative costs of the NZQA is more than fifty million New Zealand dollars annually (NZQA, 2000). The interview question asked was: Do you think that the operational costs of running the NZQA are justified and beneficial?

According to interview data (31,#23), the public perception was that the NQF was seen as one of New Zealand's fastest growing industries. At the early stages of the interview process, my first interviewees referred me to one senior interviewee, whom they were confident was more poised to respond to cost concerns. This interviewee declared:

I think that one of the things which incur major costs with building a framework ... is that it is based on a quality management system ... that is ... you build it ... and you review and audit it ... this is ongoing and ongoing ... So during the early '90s ... government put millions and millions

of dollars into the establishment of unit standards ... qualifications ... the framework ... and establishing the NZQA ... then there was a sense around the mid '90s of ... 'haven't we built this thing yet? ... We must have built it ... and we want to stop paying' (31, #23).

The interviewee, however, illustrated a few ways in which the NZQA attracts income:

When NZQA started that was pretty much 100% government funding and then we moved to a combination of provider charges and learner charges (31, #22).

There's government purchase and user charges ... and so it is a combination of the two ... The user charges are split mainly into two ... when the results are reported to us ... somebody ... whether it is the learner or the provider or the company ... pays us for every credit that is reported to us ... and these payments amount now to lots of million dollars worth of income ... because there are several million credits (31, #22).

In terms of the recognition, registration of private training establishments and the accreditation of those organizations ... polytechnics as well ... that's on the user charge ... so the provider is paying that charge ... and then there is government purchase around the registration process of the standards ... policy and the different experts of NZQA's operations (31, #22).

In terms of the difficulties associated with financing, he cogitated:

How you structure that ongoing maintenance cost ... whether it is through government purchase ... whether it is through a tax ... or whether it is through user charges ... I think that that combination of user charges and taxes is probably the most efficient way of maintaining it (31, #22-23).

He concluded by indicating that cost incurred was definitely one of the concerns of the NZQA, despite its capability of becoming autonomous:

The issue for NZQA within this is a combination of user charge and tax. If NZQA has to keep reviewing ... is it doing it in the most effective and efficient way? Is it crippling (creeping) into a bureaucratic process ... where it is taking lots of money ... and there is no improvement or returns from that ... We have very strong relationships with a number of stakeholders ... who maintain those criticisms (31, #22-23).

Another interviewee attempted to balance the arguments of cost with maintaining quality as a nation:

Our unit standards and qualifications and quality assurance thing that we have developed in New Zealand ... is better than most ... and I think it is going to pay off for us as a country in the end ... but a lot of people might say... because it is a bigger base ... do you need it to that level ... so there

is expensive funding issues ... and so there's counter arguments to it and I think as time goes on it will pay off (38, #6).

Cost, size and implementation remained principal worries of the NZQA (NZQA, 2005). Documentary evidence in a study conducted in 1996 gave some indication of the costs incurred by the NZQA and on the NQF:

- Government's policy for support of the authority and the framework - government's share in the ongoing costs of framework maintenance, (particularly dissemination of technical information, training, reactive advice, consultation and problem resolution;
- Corporate headquarters with staff overheads;
- The rate of development of units standards;
- The NCEA written as the future of school examinations;
- Redundancy in the unit standards;
- The cost of moderation examinations and assessment of unit standards;
- Policies of charging for examination candidacy and credits on the framework; and
- The policy output makes a substantial contribution to overheads at present because of the government purchase.

(Foulkes *et al.*, 1996)

An analysis of recent strategic documents of the NZQA (for example NZQA Annual Report 2002/2003; NZQA Statement of Intent 2002/2003 to 2007/2008) indicate that such concerns appear to be continuing challenges as they relate to funding of the NZQA.

### **7.2.9 Justification of the NZQA's Existence**

A ninth emergent theme in the interview data that relates to the successes and challenges of the NZQA was that of justification of existence of the NZQA. Thus far, the findings of this study suggest that the role of the NZQA has not been without its share of challenges, and that some adjustments have to be made in administrative practice and implementation to accommodate those challenges. As a result, participants were asked whether the NZQA was able to justify its existence.

In an attention grabbing response and a major finding of this study - all twelve participants, not only support(ed), but justify(ied) the need for a centralized agency or a unifying concept for coordinating or assuring the quality of national qualifications in New Zealand. Excerpts below provide an indication of their arguments:

I think there is need for the original mandate ... New Zealand is a small isolated economy ... and you will have the same issues in the OECS... as we have here ... that is very much dependent on external relations ... You can't afford to have a situation where our qualifications are subject to any kind of question ... We really do need some kind of body that can ensure our qualifications are up to scratch ( 36, #4).

More importantly ... there are a number of national goals and strategies ... where NZQA is quite a key tool for those strategies ... and some of those are about economic strategies and foundation skills and industry training ... so there are a number of areas (31, #6).

There is a need for a body to perform the functions that the NZQA performs ... I think the special place of the NZQA is the independent role of performing its functions (28, #2).

The central role of the NZQA actually ... is to enable learning by having a qualifications framework that recognizes all achievement ... As an organization which is there to facilitate and enable that recognition of achievement ... it is actually absolutely vital in moving on ... and getting a shared view of learning ... The NZQA ensures that the qualifications and the delivery of those qualifications ... are highest quality against the standards that we have (32, #1-2).

NZQA can justify its existence in two ways ... If you don't have a national qualifications framework ... then you don't have a national database of results ... If you're going to ever set up quality criteria then you have a central-based organization that doesn't necessarily deal with the quality assurance itself ... but monitors that quality assurance ... I think for those two reasons the NZQA can justify its existence (29, #7).

For about five participants, however, it was time for the NZQA to re-focus its role. One participant, in particular, expressed the vision of a future role as an overarching quality assurance body rather than that of a provider of qualifications as stated below:

I see the future role of the NZQA more in terms of the overarching quality assurance and the leadership in terms of quality assurance ... rather than some of what we're actually doing. I see that they've developed the framework ... they've developed Register ... We have developed the processes for quality assurance and it may be well timed to start delegating those and to move on ... to a more overarching role (37, #1).

All NZQA participants saw the NZQA as successful in its qualifications role, despite the challenges that the organization has faced at the level of practice. Interview data (37, #2; 27, #51-51) pointed out that the NZQA is evolving in its role in an ever-changing world. In this respect, some participants explained the inevitability of the NZQA's challenges and that, given the changing times, the NZQA will have to continue to make adjustments. They explained:

NZQA is continually changing ... I think at that stage now ...we're starting to create the change ourselves ... in terms of developing strategies that are flexible ... I think that's also part of evolution of an organization, I think ... this will develop members ... In the past I think change has come ... now ... credibility in terms of policies begins (37, #2).

The NZQA is still trying to fulfill its original mandate ... The Act set out a very big task for NZQA ... and it began in 1990 ... and what are we now, January 2003? We are still developing qualifications and registering unit standards ... the processes around that ... It has taken twelve years to get a new qualification into the school system ... and not just NZQA's fault ... When you're bringing in new practices ... you have resistance ... you've got to look at creative ways to cement them ... So I think NZQA's mandate was a massive one ... and there will always be need for an organization like NZQA ... and it will keep growing in an evolutionary fashion ... It will never have its mandate fulfilled ... because it really works at the interface between secondary education ... which is becoming more and more universal in the upper levels ... and tertiary or further working and training areas ... and those are the areas ... that I think governments are realizing ... that they've got to put the resources ... and the funding ... and the quality controls ... [The NZQA] will continue to have a role (27, #51-52).

According to another participant:

Because NZQA has not existed that long ... and so while we are often criticized for being bureaucratic ... in fact in many instances we are not overly bureaucratic ... Every year there are changes made to our practices in response to the political climate, political drivers, client feedback, results and issues ... and when I say it is evolving we don't take five years to make changes ... things can happen in six months, quite quickly ... And there are positives and negatives around that ... we sometimes have a lack of stability in appearance to our clients ... I think we have the school sector that is very vocal. It has tended to dominate the practice of NZQA for some time ... That role is starting to change ... Right now of course, the NCEA has made this huge political focus in what we do in that area ... and it is fair to say this has caused a setback on the resources of the Authority ... The government tertiary policies are going to remain and the policies for the work force remain ... at least two to three years, we will have to change even more (33, #2).

An outside view stated that "The Authority!", and that "had in itself produced some interesting outcomes" (36,#3). He explained that the intent had grown out of proportion:

Basically the concept was to appoint a Board ...which would bring about some form of rationalization ... between all the different providers of qualifications ... and establish some form of quality assurance process ... and equivalence process ... but out of that Board ... grew a huge organizational infrastructure (36, #3).

Throughout the discussion, there has been no indication that the qualifications role of the NZQA was unacceptable. There has been little emphasis on the theories of learning and assessment. Rather, the theoretical nature of the discourse of managerialism that informs the establishment of the NZQA was thought to be competing with the views of educators. Reasons for this appear not to be different from those discussed in Chapter Three - one of the principles of Public Choice Theory is that, wherever feasible, the services provided by government agencies are privatized and are made as contestable as possible (Boston, *et al.*, 1991, 1996). Another such example can be seen in the decoupling of policy formulation and implementation (Boston *et al.*, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Scott 2001). Essentially, NZQA appraises mainly by the ability to ensure that “all children produce positive learning outcomes” (Harker, *et al.*, 2003, p. 151). One potential source of tension is that quality emphasizes and values only what can be measured, recorded and reported (Codd, 2003).

### 7.3 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide a view from the inside the NZQA. It has identified some of the successes, challenges and pressures, mainly from interview data. These were discussed under nine emergent themes, namely:

- Climate of Change
- Dominant Theories/Paradigms
- Development of the Framework: Policy Borrowing and Consultation
- A Seamless Framework and its Goals
  - Bridging the Academic and Vocational Divide
  - The Notion of Unit Standards, Achievement Standards, Outcomes
  - Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Quality Assurance
  - Raising Educational Standards
- Impact on Quality of Education at the National Level
- Overlapping Policy Roles, Linkages and Relationships with Stakeholders
- The NZQA’s Legislative Charter
- Financing (Size and Cost of the NQF)
- Justification of the NZQA’s Existence

The analysis of the themes in this chapter revealed that the NZQA has experienced some measure of success and major challenges within all its policies and operational procedures; and that the NZQA’s experience is applicable in theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework. One of the pillars for theorizing

In this climate of change, the legislative charter provided legitimacy for the NZQA to direct the change in the New Zealand qualifications system. Notwithstanding the findings in this chapter that there are some challenges associated with the legislation, one major facilitator of success is perhaps that the legislative charter has been the anchor to set the pace for change. In pursuit of its legislative charter, the mandate the NZQA embarked on comprised (i) Policy importation and learning - borrowing credible solutions or ideas from overseas and (ii) Developing a seamless national qualifications framework with the standards (outcomes) at its core. This standards-based approach has been shown to be the most enduring challenge.

There are other lessons for the OECS in the level of responsiveness shown by the New Zealand government in its attempt to provide a competitive edge for New Zealand citizens. One main lesson for the OECS was New Zealand's recognition of the need for an updated assessment and certification - one that moved away from the sifting and sorting role and one that not only recognized, but as far as possible certified, a wide spectrum of learning. Of significance to the OECS is that the move by the New Zealand government to change to an NQF has been a major attempt to enhance access, increase participation rates, and recognize all learning, thereby facilitating vertical and horizontal progression. The change towards an NQF was an effort to remove the elitism that surrounded education. Given the results of the investigative reports, it was an attempt to raise educational standards, improve the quality of education in New Zealand, and implement a paradigm shift in assessment practice. In this regard, the major challenge in the redefinition of relationships is thought to be the overlapping roles of existing organizations, the interdependence of existing sectors, decoupling policy formulation with implementation and the strained interpersonal relations among key stakeholders, who have the responsibility for existing agencies.

In theory, the NZQA has attained its legislative mandate through the structures of the NQF and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. These structures have allowed the NZQA to successfully make the connection between national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and education and training. This connection is a move towards access, articulation with existing structures and relevance to societal needs. The NQF and its standards (outcomes) based approach and allocation of credits allow for key principles of portability, transferability, and flexibility of qualifications and parts of qualifications.

of credits allow for key principles of portability, transferability, and flexibility of qualifications and parts of qualifications.

In the exploration of the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment, overlaps were noticeable and emphasized that the discourses are not divergent, but they intertwine at the level of practice. Despite the inextricable links, an analysis of the above excerpts affirm that the dominant rhetoric used in the delivery of education services by the NZQA, and the nature of the change to establish the NZQA, are reflective of the discourse of managerialism, but also attempts to provide some measure of control within the market theory. The rhetoric and language throughout interviews included 'audit', 'measure', 'providers', 'end-users' 'operational quality role', 'outcomes', 'value for money', 'value added', 'delegated bodies', 'approval', 'agency', 'regulation', 'control' and 'monitoring', among others. These references have been visible in the NZQA's array of policy documents, publications and strategic documents (see [nzqa.govt.nz/publications](http://nzqa.govt.nz/publications)). In its corporate and strategic plans, the NZQA, as a new economic management organization referred to its vision, a mission statement, and several policy outcomes for successful implementation of its policies. This rhetoric is indicative of the principles and of Managerialism and quality management which usually underpin business, private and manufacturing. This rhetoric and principles make no distinction between public and private organizations and the extended consumerism to all social services including education (Boston, *et al.*, 1991, 1996; Easton, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Scott, 2001). This widespread application and use of the rhetoric by the NZQA is regarded in the field of education as 'alienating discourse' (Codd, 2003), and has further fuelled the allegation that insufficient attention is being given to the discourse of education and student learning (see for example, Alphonse, 1999; Codd, 2003; Easton, 2003; Hamer, 2002; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Horsburgh, 1999; Mansell, 1998; Scheele, 2004; Strathdee & Hughes, 2001, among others). Moreover, given that one of the mandates of the NZQA as indicated in documentary evidence (*Learning and Achieving*, 1986, for instance) was to improve standards and the quality of education, the inability of the NZQA to respond to the extent of impact on the quality of education in New Zealand suggests a paucity of information in this area.

While the discourses of managerialism are partitioned in the literature and are ideologically opposed, at the level of practice they appeared to be inextricably linked, and sometimes even obscured in the interview data. Education theory of learning and assessment was underemphasized. Essentially what the findings demonstrate is that *in*

*the real world, they are inextricably linked.* In any national context, it is a question of more of one, or less of the other – a relative positioning of the discourses. Based on the theoretical analyses, it can be concluded that no one learning theory or assessment theory and practice would be appropriate to drive any qualifications framework. Any attempt to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. The need for a better balance, between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment than presently exists continues to surface.

As has been indicated, adjustments have had to be made to the NQF, in that the building block of unit standards has had to be reconsidered, and the descriptors of levels changed and expanded to the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. This reinforces the idea that the NZQA is evolving in its role, and has faced, is facing, and will continue to face challenges, such as overlapping roles and the inter-relations among professionals.

Essentially, however, this chapter has demonstrated that the tensions in the theoretical underpinnings and challenges for the NZQA as a State agency resulted mainly from the fact that the establishment of the NZQA was not from a monolithic discourse with unitary influences, but rather from a constellation of discourses which are embedded in a network of disciplines and power relations. This origin in itself gives rise to cooperation as well as contradictions, tensions, successes and challenges at the implementation level. The analysis in this chapter supports further that such an experience is justified to inform the directions towards a qualifications framework for the OECS. Given the issues highlighted in Chapter Two of this thesis, the New Zealand experience is for the most part, applicable to the OECS.

# Chapter Eight

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## THE CASE OF THE OECS

### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is that of theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework. This chapter continues to address the main research question in this thesis, namely, how might the experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) be used to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework? It has been contended that NZQA has embarked on major and unique restructuring of qualifications in New Zealand, which makes it an apposite case to inform the theorizing in this research. Chapters Six and Seven reported successfully on three major steps undertaken in the qualitative case study of the NZQA, namely:

- (i) An analysis of the key arguments that influenced the institutionalization of the NZQA with which the OECS can identify;
- (ii) An examination of the major policies and operational principles of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in relation to its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand;
- (iii) An analysis of the successes and the challenges of the NZQA's experience in translating its legislative mandate, on its qualifications role in post-compulsory education in New Zealand, into practice;

Taking into account the distinctiveness of the socio-political and economic contexts of New Zealand and the OECS, this chapter moves beyond the experiences of the NZQA and presents data from the OECS context in a bid to maximize the use of the NZQA case study findings presented in the last two chapters. Findings are presented and interpreted on the fourth step in the research process:

- (iv) An assessment of the key factors and arguments which drive/influence or have the potential to deter/impede the reform of a qualifications system in the OECS.

Guided by the social construction of reality paradigm as discussed in Chapter Five, qualitative data on this step in the research process was derived mainly from interview data obtained from a total of 26 participants from various social fields and with wide ranging experience, all of whom consented and gave at least one hour for each interview. While the interview is the primary source of data in this chapter, as has been discussed in Chapter Five, this study's validity is strengthened through triangulation/crystallization. In keeping with grounded theory methodology and comparative analysis, and as was done in the past two chapters, findings in this chapter are reported under emergent themes. These themes are organized under the two major sections, namely Drivers, and Inhibitors/Deterrents. It must be emphasized, however, that there are clear overlaps in the categorization of the themes. Thus, lines of demarcation in the presentation, interpretation and discussion of data are not always discrete.

## 8.2 Drivers of Change in the Qualifications System of the OECS

From interview data, seven emergent themes were identified as key factors and arguments that drive the need to change the qualifications system in the OECS, as summarized in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Key Factors and Arguments that Drive the Need for Change in the Qualifications System of the OECS

- 
- International/Global Factors
  - Vulnerabilities of Smallness of Size and Landmass and Populations
  - Regional Integration
  - Migration - Movement of Knowledge, Skills and Services
  - Expansion of the Education Market - Marketization & Commodification of Education
  - Economies, Labour Market and Changing Workforce
  - Education Factors
    - Outmoded Assessment/Qualifications Systems
    - Lifelong Learning, Changing Learner Populations and Modes of Learning
    - Vocational/Academic Divide
    - Present Qualifications System as an Inhibitor of Life Chances
- 

Each is presented and interpreted in turn.

### 8.2.1 International/Global Factors

The first emergent theme that drives the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS was that of international and global influences. Major interview questions asked included: Is there a need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS; and if yes, why change? What factors influence the need for change?

All 26 interviewees linked their concerns to the advent of regional and world systems that seem to convey a sense of global standards and services. The excerpts below from interview data allude to some of those concerns:

In the external environment, there are some main factors, for example, globalization, regionalization, competition and readiness ... The main issue for us now is individualism and competitiveness (18, #4).

With all this talk of globalization and regionalization ... the call must be couched in the whole human resource development drive of the OECS ... The whole issue of global markets ... the whole issue of technological advancement, the whole issue of free movement of people within EU, WTO, FTAA, CARICOM, CSME, and the OECS ... I mean the calls now are to facilitate free movement but it's not just about free movement ... Right now it is about giving our people competitive advantages, to allow access to employment and opportunities globally ... You're not just talking about the movement of bodies ... you are talking about movement of labour, skills and services, and so on (14, #6).

The effects of globalization and regionalization are rampant ... We are somewhat disadvantaged as a sub-region ... As smaller islands, we are faced with tremendous economic and social challenges that force us to take a look at how we equip our citizens to become competitive ... Whether we want to or not, changes to our qualifications system are inevitable (9, #4).

As exemplified above, interviewees' responses on the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS were firmly anchored in concerns for economic globalization and its ramifications for small States like the OECS. Concern was voiced for the changing times, and the current pace of change in the OECS and its ability to deal with those changes. A previous President of the Chamber of Commerce expressed:

I think [we] need to get up and smell the coffee ... and really realize that life is not stagnant and things change ... and as things change ... we need to make that change ... One of those changes that is required is to make our training relevant to the present day needs, and design qualifications to suit those changes ... Our institutions are still preparing people for the situation that existed ten/fifteen years ago ... and we have not moved beyond that yet ... and when I hear lecturers come and make presentations ... I sometimes smile because I think that we are really not ready yet ... I do not think that they appreciate the impact of globalization, the impact of WTO,

the impact of FTAA, the new EU regime ... the upcoming CSME, and what these mean for small economies like ourselves ... even more so now that the region is aspiring to move more into a service area (off-shore banking, call centres for example) ... we need to gear our training towards that ... because we must synchronize what we teach ... and the training we give to our young people to suit the needs of our region ... Unless we do that we are spinning a top in mud (2, #5-6).

There was uneasiness about other manifestations of the changing context in which the OECS operates. The lack of readiness of the learners of the OECS was seen as having potential implications if the present qualifications systems were to remain intact, as clarified by this interviewee:

By the way ... we have FTAA now ... The reform needs to take into account that it is now a global village or a global market place. Just as we say in business ... that every business is supposed to strive to be internationally competitive ... to me every student should be prepared to be internationally competitive ... because right now ... when GATT, FTAA, WTO really sink in ... our students will not be competing for jobs just against other students in St. Lucia or within CARICOM ... even when we have the Caribbean Single Market and Economy ... they will be competing for jobs with folks way across the Atlantic on the other side of the world ... in Asia, Africa, in China ... wherever it may be ... and therefore not only our education system ... but our qualification system needs to take into account these changes ... and to prepare our youngsters to be internationally competitive ... and that to me is the key (2, #4).

A previous permanent secretary concurred:

The other aspect ... the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is coming rapidly on us ... Free Trade Area of the Americas ... World Trade Organization ... and in effect the whole impact of globalization ... We now have to simultaneously prepare our students in a multipurpose kind of way ... so that when students graduate ... they don't only have the traditional academic qualifications required to move in any career path that they have chosen ... but they should also be certain ... just as in the case of the NVQs ... there are certain competencies that can be certified ... which would then enable them to fit into a particular vocation or find adequate employment in the world of work (22, #3).

The inevitable effects and impacts of globalization were also major sources of concern, as is illustrated in the views of the following interviewees:

What is happening now ... budgetary constraints, are trying times for our economies ... with all the recessions ... the economic might of the bigger countries ... it's going to make it more difficult for national entities and small states to even stay on top of what is happening ... hence the need for change ... and the strategy should be sub-regional (6, #4).

World developments and trends are some of the major challenges that we face ... perhaps because of the lack of resources ... small states in their particular circumstances would be forgotten in the broader scheme of things ... and in the end we would go back where we were before ... where we were subject to the requirements and needs of the bigger countries ... for this reason pooling our resources to make the change is vital (24, #4).

When decisions are taken on the global market ... it does not matter if we are small ... The decisions are going to be taken ... whether CARICOM with its CSME, or OECS jumps in or not ... and the decisions are going to affect all of us ... It is inevitable ... we have to move with the rest of the world or be left behind (21, #6).

Seemingly, from the above excerpts there is an aura of apprehension about the level of qualifications of OECS learners and the capacity of the existing qualification system to equip learners in this changing environment, as is further exemplified below:

Undoubtedly, I believe what is going to happen with globalization, neoliberalization and so on ... and now CSME ... in a sense that is going to be such a shock to many of our small OECS countries and small economies ... The people who are really going to benefit from the integration of economies ... will be the large multi-corporations and the external entities ... that have the capital base to really make use of that that single market space ... and the possibilities for Caribbean entrepreneurship when this happens will be really, really damaged initially (22, #5).

The concerns of the participants as demonstrated in the excerpts above could perhaps best be interpreted and explained in Castells (2000) notion that the new economy, which is a dimension of economic globalization, is “informational, global and networked” (Castells, 2000, p. 10). Such a context is characterized by the increasing levels of international competition, instantaneous trade transactions and flows of capital, the shrinking time lag from patent to product and the increasing range of products and services on offer to consumers (Hartley, 2003). They can be further elucidated with Little’s (2002) assertion:

In the economic arena [the manifestations] include stateless financial markets; the rising proportion of global trade, and investment in developing countries accounted for by transnational corporations; and the growth of international finance capital. In the political arena they include a decline in state sovereignty; the reduced control of national governments .... In the cultural arena the manifestations include a convergence of lifestyle and consumer aspirations among the better off, and widespread distribution of images, information and values (Little, 2002, pp. 299-300).

In such a context, the global and regional influences as a key factor that drives the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, as identified in the views of participants above, appears to be realistic. As has been argued elsewhere in this thesis, the effects of global changes on smaller and even larger states have been copiously contested in the literature. Kelsey has argued that “there is no level playing field: the wealthier the player, the more potentially powerful they are” (2002, p. 16). And above all, choice is enhanced, at least for those who can afford it (Hartley, 2003). Interview data on this key factor as a driver for change are summed up using the words of one participant:

Global development and change are in the main ... the external impetus. Because of the intensified and the inevitable contact with the rest of the world ... it is of most importance for us to give our learners more choice ... but they must be able to show proof that they have succeeded at the choices that they have pursued (4, #5).

### 8.2.2 Vulnerabilities of Smallness of Size, Landmass and Populations

A second theme as a key factor that drives the need for change in the qualification system of the OECS, as derived from interview data, was that of the vulnerabilities of size, landmass and populations of the OECS. All interviewees made reference to the physical attributes of smallness of landmasses and populations, a major factor that should drive the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, and thus to be undertaken as a sub-region, rather than by individual nations. From the perspective of OECS participants, the characteristic of ‘smallness’ of individual countries of the OECS was seen as a major disadvantage, particularly in light of global changes. Table 8.2 paints a picture of sizes of populations and landmasses of the member countries of the OECS.

Table 8.2: OECS States, Landmasses and Sizes of Populations

Member COUNTRY	LANDMASS Sq km/sq m	POPULATION* As of 2001
Anguilla		11 430
Antigua & Barbuda	280/110 160/60	66 970
British Virgin Islands	153/59	20 812
Dominica	750/290	70 786
Grenada	344.5/133	89 227
Montserrat	102/39.5	
St Kitts/ Nevis	168.4/65.1 93.2/36	38 756
St. Lucia	616/238	158 178
St Vincent & The Grenadines	344/133 45.3/16.7	115 942

These small landmasses and populations give rise to disadvantageous positions, which can lead possibly to vulnerability of its citizens. As a consequence, such characteristics should serve as a driver for change as indicated in the views of the following participants:

I mean, at a time when there's so much talk about globalization ... and then you know we're small and vulnerable ... therefore we must reform our system to give our citizens a competitive edge (#23, 8).

I think the OECS by the mere fact that we are smaller ... makes our peoples and us as nations very vulnerable ... particularly if the majority are seen [as individual countries] and doomed as failures (16, #5).

We are small ... we do not have minerals ... we do not have material wealth ... all we have is our human resources ... we therefore need to reform our qualification system to harness this important resource (20, #2).

Indeed, the OECS is classified as comprising small states. In classifying countries as small states, population is usually the main criterion, but common alternative or supplementary indicators are area and size of economy (Bray, 1993, p. xx). By virtue of their small populations (less than 500,000 persons); land areas (less than 500sq k) and by GNP (Bray & Packer, 1993) these countries of the region have therefore been classified among 'small states'.

Bray & Packer underscore interviewees' observations that "epithets abound to extol the virtues of smallness" (1993, p.3). Smallness may be described as "beautiful, manageable, and personal". "Conversely", the writers contend that "smallness may be described as vulnerable, uneconomic and dependent" (Bray & Parker, 1993, p.3). It is not surprising that the interviewees who have traveled extensively and lived in some of the smallest states in the world have experienced the exhilaration and wrench of both sets of epithets but, more so the wrench of vulnerability, 'uneconomic-ness', defencelessness, and dependence.

Of implication also is that smallness does not imply that the sub-regional states are "simply scaled-down versions of larger states" (Bray and Packer, 1993, xiv). Instead, they "have ecology of their own" (Bray and Packer, 1993, xiv). It is this ecology that has major implications for the current practice of awarding qualifications in the OECS. One implication is that the OECS, as developing countries, has been forced to ration opportunities (see Broadfoot, 2001). Drawing from the New Zealand experience, there are lessons that within this changing climate - and integration of markets, stateless

conditions and bleeding territorial borders - the OECS will be forced to examine its current 'sifting' and 'sorting' practices if it wants to increase its level of competitiveness.

### **8.2.3 Regional Integration**

A third emergent theme as a factor that drives the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS was that of regional integration. All interviewees (for example 14, #6; 9, #4; 2, #4, 5-6; 18, #4; 21, #6; 23, #3, previously quoted) pointed to the formation of an economic union by 2005 as a major driver for the reformation of the OECS's qualifications system. One participant attempted to explain the implications of a single market:

A single market is a space within which goods and services, people, capital and technology flow freely ... The restrictions if any are few... Within the OECS, it will involve, so far as market transactions are concerned, the complete removal of technical, physical, and fiscal barriers (26, #3).

The implication is that the movement of services, capital or people from one country to another would be no different from moving them across parish or district borders of the country itself (Caricom, n.d.). One interviewee spoke about the inevitability of the reform of our qualifications system to meet the protocols of these regional initiatives:

Well if we're looking at 2006 ... the formation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy ... we must give the issue of credentials attention ... it is an imperative ... It is not an option any more ... it is an imperative ... We talk about CARICOM ... the globalized market ... free movement of persons in 2006 ... I don't think we have to think whether we have to go that way ... Do we have a choice? ... To me, I don't see the choice (14, #5).

Interviewees, however, evoked the violent and divisive history, individualistic political sovereignty and power of individual nation states, individual flags and economic systems as major barriers. For about ten interviewees, geographical and economic fragmentation appeared to be a concern. For the remaining sixteen, factors such as a divisive history, individualistic political sovereignty and power of individual nation states, individual flags and economic systems as major barriers were acknowledged, but were surmountable, and the choice to remain fragmented was not an option. For example:

I think the OECS by the mere fact that we are smaller makes us very vulnerable and so we have no choice ... we have recognized that ... basically we see the need to pool our resources together ... so that will be a very good forum to start the discussion and begin (18, #3).

We all share a common political agenda ... We are all democratic countries ... We have the OECS ... Although, the territories are standing physically on their own ... this is not an impediment ... Essentially the OECS territories ... at least in education ... and other spheres of economic activity ... have been collaborating for a number of years ... The qualifications aspect ... I guess would lend itself to some level of collaboration ... One has to now discern the various areas of activities involved in that process and see where best the resources can be allocated ... or if it is possible a country may have ... as a result its own national initiatives ... developed a level of competence in that area ... but essentially it has to be a collaborative endeavour ... a unified effort ... The education systems in the OECS are basically harmonized ... and that has been achieved through the OECS reform initiatives ... and there is a scope for collaboration (14, #3).

On our own as individual nations ... I know we will not be able to accomplish much. What we need to do is to collaborate with our regional partners, OECS partners ... and see how best we can utilize the limited resources that we have in terms of human resource base to come up with a strategy that can best address our needs when it comes to quality assurance ... Such a system would require stakeholders to come on board ... to examine the policies that are currently in existence ... in terms of qualifications, quality assurance, standards ... and see how those can be revised ... so that we can accommodate a new paradigm ... a new system that would be effective ... that would be viable ... that would withstand criticism and accomplish its objectives (19, #1).

Most definitely ... at the OECS level there is need for work in that area ... We have for almost ten years been working hard to reform the education system ... to bring about some level of organization within the OECS ... It just stands to reason that if we have an education system so much harmonized ... one would want to ensure that there is some harmonization ... in terms of the measurement of the outputs of the system too ... and that what is understood in one country is basically the same as others (14, #7).

At the subregional level ... there are more possibilities ... A subregional accreditation authority is possible in the OECS ... even though the ideal conditions for a real effective regional authority are not present (22, #6).

As has been shown in Chapter Two, the OECS was formed in 1981 because of marginalization by larger countries (Axline, 1996). At their Tenth Conference in Grand Anse, Grenada, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) affirmed their target to intensify the integration process and reinforce the Caribbean Community in all its dimensions. The Heads, at that time, determined that the region would work towards the establishment of a single market and economy (CSME) by August 2005 as one characteristic of its response to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization. At the 34th meeting of the OECS Heads of Government held in Dominica in July 2001, the Heads took a decision to intensify economic integration by creating an economic union. The 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Authority held in

Anguilla at the end January 2002 ratified the main elements of an economic union implementation project prepared by the secretariat:

The rationale for the establishment of an economic union is anchored in the acceptance of the fact that ... the development challenges the micro-states of the OECS face as a result of globalization and trade liberalization ... can only be effectively addressed through the creation of a single economic space which facilitates the free movement of people, goods, services and capital ... and as a result the economic diversification and growth ... greater export competitiveness and ... more employment and human resource development (Caricom, 2002).

The people of the OECS, however, have become more and more aware of this reality after 21 years of regional integration:

With respect to freedom of movement it was agreed at the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting that the six independent nation states along with Montserrat would enact the requisite legislation on 12 March 2002 and that citizens of the participating countries, except prohibited immigrants shall be allowed to enter and remain in these countries for a period of six months ... Acceptable travel documents which have been agreed for use by the OECS nationals are valid Drivers' Licenses, social security cards, and voters' registration cards with photographs, and which are valid at the time of entry. A simplified immigration form will be adopted to facilitate travel under the initiative. A common passport will be adopted on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 but will not be issued to economic citizens within the OECS (<http://www.oecs/union.htm> 5/12/2003).

The emergent theme of the data above is that as mere 'dots' on the world map (see Figure 2.1, Map of the Caribbean and Central America in Chapter Two) with no physical resources, small landmasses and populations, the governments and peoples of the region have themselves realized that there is an urgency to integrate and unite. They are well aware that countries fifty times larger than their populations and landmasses are uniting with each other (from Britain joining the EEC, the formation of the EU, the WTO, FTAA, to name a few). If for nothing else, this integration is needed to have a voice, and to adopt economies of scale to equip learners with adequate qualifications as one means of enhancing competitiveness amidst the global tide. Drawing from the New Zealand experience in terms of economic and social vulnerabilities as presented in Chapter Six, there are lessons for the OECS in terms of the need to reform its qualifications system.

#### **8.2.4 Migration - Movement of Knowledge, Skills and Services**

A fourth emergent theme from interview data, as a key factor that drives the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, was that of migration and movement of knowledge, skills and services of OECS citizens. All interviewees emphasized migration as a driver for change because they believed that it was one of the most venerated protocols or commissions of regionalization and globalization. The issue of qualifications featured highly, as highlighted by the perspectives of the following interviewees:

We are looking at globalization and regionalization ... and we are opening up to integration with specific regulations within these protocols ... These mean that persons are free to move ... and look for jobs globally and regionally - overseas ... I think it is important to have this regional thrust to accommodate that movement ... These have implications for the human resource/capital needs and certified competencies (20, #2).

The sub-region is moving towards a common passport and free movement of peoples ... That process can only be facilitated by a standardized or harmonized qualifications system. Curricular would have to be harmonized as well ... and so the pooling of resources in this area. I suppose in the final analysis, we would have a more unified OECS (12, #3-4).

If we take globalization and regional integration, WTO, GATT, CSME, seriously ... we will notice that one of the principles is that of free movement - free movement implies transfer of skills and standards and also adherence to standards ... It also implies portability and transferability of competencies, certificates, qualifications and training (14, #4-5).

The emphasis on migration as a key factor to drive the need for change and the nature of change in the qualification system of the OECS is novel, but the issue of migration is not novel to the OECS. Historically, movement is deep-seated in the histories of Caribbean people, initiated by the hauling of slaves from diverse West African societies and their shipment via the vast transatlantic slave trade from West Africa to Europe, beginning more than five hundred years ago (Yelvington, 2000). Yelvington (2000) argues that "rather than the beginning of something new, these global processes can be traced to when the Caribbean became the site of Europe's first industries, starting in the sixteenth century" (p.70). One Minister of Education pointed to the turn of developments:

Our predecessors ... our grandparents ... for instance ... traveled and worked in London and were part of that industrial age ... They also worked in Panama, Florida, Curacao, and several other countries ... By and large ... with regional unity ... you will find this movement continuing ... There will be movement of peoples to and from the islands ... Especially

right now ... right now ... there are already steps taken so that people will be able to travel freely to the islands and work without work permits ... There is also a change ... a difference today ... because these persons who traveled were mainly labourers ... They did not need any specific skills ... They worked on the rails ... on the boats ... in cane fields ... I think this difference will be a strong case for having the qualifications reform (26, #2-3).

The concern by participants for migration as a driver of change can be further substantiated, and interpreted using Yelvington's (2000) analysis. According to Yelvington (2000), at the beginning of the twentieth century, perhaps 150,000 Caribbeans migrated to Central America to work on the U.S. Panama Canal and for U.S. fruit companies. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of workers went from Jamaica, Haiti, and the OECS islands to Cuba and the Dominican Republic as cane cutters. Others headed to the oil industry in Curacao, Aruba, and Venezuela. Sizeable Caribbean communities were formed in New York, Boston, and Miami. After World War II, West Indians were recruited to work in the United Kingdom. According to Yelvington (2000), innumerable studies show Caribbean immigrant groups growing in Paris, Amsterdam, Toronto, and in the United States, where their numbers are growing.

Understandably, the concern for people with no qualifications and their viability was as key in the minds of participants as migration in the changing regional and global context, as illustrated in the views of these participants:

I spoke about the portability of the qualifications ... It is important with the CSME that is being proposed. It is important also that there is a common understanding really of qualifications ... and that persons are not unduly disadvantaged or advantaged when they move from one country to another because of the lack of understanding of what it is that they are coming with ... so that certainly a regional agency with responsibilities for qualifications would facilitate that common understanding ... and the development and evaluation of skills in that initiative (14, #4-5).

People who don't have O levels or A level certificates or degrees can say that they are masons or carpenters in their home countries ... But when people move ... you are looking for the proof of what capacity they are bringing with them ... what competencies are they bringing with them? The proof is the first thing that we look for – that is the qualification (16, #5).

In this world, one cannot talk without bringing in the global arena ... and so it is no point sitting and calling yourself an economic migrant ... or even a refugee with no qualifications ... because even though you are accepted, you will have to compete with several individuals (24, #3).

Such concerns are justified as the difference in the new economic realism, and migration is the changing nature of economies and economic policies, and the changing policies of the developed countries on migration. For example, in the OECS, 2002 was a year when heads of government scheduled special conferences to address the issue of the extraordinary missions of the United States and Britain to recruit qualified personnel from the OECS. Britain and USA launched special recruitment programmes to recruit qualified nurses and teachers; as well as secondary and post-secondary school graduates, for their militaries. OECS governments organized the conferences in an attempt to stop the occurrence, but as a result of better compensatory packages, many accepted the offers. This practice has also brought to light the extent of individual competitiveness of the 'qualified'.

From the interview data and from the literature, therefore, in this changing economic context, there appears to be three main factors that are having implications on the reform of the qualifications system in the OECS in terms of migration:

- i. A larger proportion of migration is now by highly qualified and skilled people;
- ii. A great amount of the cost of migrants' education would have been met by public funds;
- iii. Changes in immigration laws are now inclined to control inflows of unskilled labour and unqualified workers in support of highly qualified workers, in contrast to the greater freedom of movement of unskilled and unqualified workers in the nineteenth century.

The excerpts above conjure up concerns, particularly for the underqualified citizens of OECS, given the protocols of continual movement of people and their knowledge, services and skills across borders. The effects of having less than 5% graduates in higher education have implications such as poverty, marginalization, prostitution, crime, low self-esteem, drug-use and trafficking and teenage pregnancy for the majority (World Bank, 2003).

### **8.2.5 Expansion of the Education Market, Marketization & Commodification of Education**

A fifth emergent theme as a key factor that drives the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS was that of the thrust in the marketization of education and distance education programmes, which were thought to be facilitated by

new technologies of electronic learning (e-learning), via satellite, and their effects on holders or non-holders of qualifications. Some of the concerns of participants are illustrated below:

I believe that the influx of distance educators into the region and all of these fly-by-night degrees that are being offered ... reinforce that increasingly Caribbean countries have a war on their hands ... They're not sure how to deal with the issue at the rate at which qualifications are being assimilated by people within the region ... A quality assurance system is needed to value them ... and more importantly to assess the impact of these qualifications on the OECS market (22, #7).

There is a phenomenal pace at which events are moving ... With these global/regional developments ... many, many courses are being offered locally, regionally and online, on the internet ... With everybody taking courses left, right and centre ... it is so difficult for a national unit to keep track of what is happening ... unless they are well endowed with certain kinds of resources (4, #7).

The expansion of demand for and supply of qualifications coming from all this globalization and this talk of global village ... the proliferation of offerings from various schools, colleges, institutions and countries ... some genuine ... some bogus ... are also some of the reasons why the issue of quality assurance and accreditation in education is now being discussed at the regional level ... This is the reason why issues of monitoring, accreditation, and regulation ... and several other issues have emerged at our ministerial meetings (25, #7).

Other reasons expressed in interview data are encapsulated in the views of this participant:

I think also in the context of the single market ... we have free movement of labour and capital and labour and skills ... so there will be a need to establish some sort of equivalencies ... and again you have much more fluidity in the labour market ... and so there will be an even bigger challenge to accredit qualifications ... to decide what is of value and what is not of value ... and to recognize and to decide on what is recognizable and acceptable (23, #10).

There was concern for the positioning of the OECS in terms of its increasing potential to be a market for regional and international education programmes and to deal with the entrance of new training providers in the qualifications market. For example, one participant observed:

We have had several situations where we have had to look at qualifications offered all over the world ... and to do our own comparison ... our own assessment ... and see where these persons fit into our systems ... What sort of programmes ... what subjects that person should or should not do based on their prerequisite skills ... and we found that a bit tickling ... it is sensitive ...

and a bit stressful ... mainly because there is no formal system in place in the OECS ... (8, #1).

We have had to liaise with other training agencies all over the world ... because we find that persons are coming in with qualifications or training providers that want to set up agencies or institutions ... that are offering overseas qualifications ... so you find that we there is need for a coordinating body to find the information (8, #1).

There are also numerous requests from some educational institutions and schools wanting to offer programmes ... How do we know if they are authentic? ... How do we know that they are complying with the standards of Ministries of Education and Training Departments? (4, #8).

One Education Officer who had participated in several meetings at the OECS level expressed:

There are so many institutions operating in the OECS ... We have to start monitoring ... We've begun to put in place a set of requirements that some of these institutions would need, licensing, fees to be paid and so on ... and we need to do more than that ... We need to go in and accredit some of those institutions and ensure that they are keeping with some of the standards ... and that they are keeping with some the requirements and the pre-requisites ... and that when a student goes in there he/she is getting value for money ... because a lot of these programs are very expensive (1, #11).

To another interviewee:

In the context of the single market ... we have free movement of labour and capital and labour and skills ... so there will be a need to establish some sort of equivalencies (23, #10).

Reference was also made to the technological developments, the notion of international standards and their impact on qualifications:

Take for example ... with technological developments ... how do you assess at the national level ... let us say you have a number of people who want to stay in their bedrooms literally ... and attain a first degree in Anthropology ... through virtual education ... What capacity does a national body have to assess the validity and the authenticity of such a program? ... I believe we are better poised at the regional or sub-regional level ... with a well endowed body to do that sort of work with a group of specialized people ... We, for example, get a number of people (and I understand it is happening in a number of other countries) ... who come in and they tell you well, I attended ... and here I have a Masters degree ... and we simply don't have the resources on the ground, to track this information down ... and find out what type of programs these schools have, and so on ... We don't have the capacity to monitor whether this is a valid masters programme, and so on and so forth ... This is even more prevalent with increasing technology, globalization and commodification of education and all those new developments (4, #7-8).

As you know, there is, move towards internationalization ... or if you want to call it globalization of criteria ... I think that when people are doing studies of any kind ... you want to ensure that the courses that you're doing have some sort of value and meet some sort of standard ... that the courses are recognized on the market internationally ... that you can leave that course and apply it in the world of work or in the market place and you can benefit because it would be recognized anywhere in the world ... So that the whole question of certification and the question of accreditation is to ensure that they are recognized not only in the institution that you attended ... but in other institutions whether they be national, regional or international ... and so I think this is very important (26, #1).

As we talk about qualifications and qualifications framework ... the issue that it raises would be the issue of portability or transferability of the qualification and the lack of choice for many of our nationals ... What do they bring with them to the market? ... Educational qualifications facilitate economic growth rate ... This is what we use to meet labour market needs to assess workers' professional experience and their social prospects (16, #6).

These views are in keeping with Skilbeck *et. al.*'s (1994) postulate that this new 'education era' is characterized not only by a recognition of the need for what the OECD referred to as 'high quality of education and training for all', but it is an issue that necessarily encompasses:

Comparability and transparency of credentialed knowledge and skills across national boundaries assume greater importance than ever before ... Globally, the spread and transferability of industrial and commercial organizations to the moves to establish agreed rules of the game in the international market and trade are among the factors leading to a reappraisal of education structures (p.10).

Regional protocols such as the economic unions of the OECS, CARICOM, and the CSME (Caribbean Single Market and Economy) have implications for the expansion of the markets and the demand for and supply of qualifications. The increasing educational opportunities on offer internationally (see for example Craft, 2004; Strydom *et. al.*, 2004) promote and present a vast educationally competitive, socially and more attractive alternative for learners or buyers (see Tertiary Lead Group (TLG), 1994). They also have the potential to give rise to a proliferation of offerings from all sorts of institutions and countries. As the Tertiary Lead Group (1994) of New Zealand argued, the market is a discerning one, and failure to meet its expectations, to assess equivalencies of qualifications, to regulate, monitor and control the qualifications operations, would not be the interests of New Zealand. The same can be argued for the OECS.

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that interviewees were seemingly in agreement with the need for a relevant qualifications structure to interact with local educational institutions and with regional and international agencies to meet the grim realities and 'reactivity' to the covenants of the free movement of skills and peoples of OECS, CARICOM, WTO, GATT, EU and others. One key factor that drives the need for change in the qualification system of the OECS therefore is this apparent inevitability of the OECS having to be allied with this new economic realism of marketization and commodification of education. Theoretically, the dominant group of discourse that drives the need for change in the OECS appears to be that of managerialism. Views of interviewees indicate that qualifications must be reformed to parallel those changes.

### 8.2.6 Economies, Labour Market and Changing Workforce

A sixth emergent theme as a factor in the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS appears to be rooted in issues of the dwindling local economies and the changing nature of the labour market. There are increasing pressures on OECS countries to diversify their economies in the 21st century (Anthony, 2003; Girvan, 2002). Changes taking place will not merely be redeployment within the labour market, but a basic restructuring and redefinition of the workforce, as indicated by this participant:

Agriculture, from the days of plantation economy, employed a greater percentage of the labour force ... and these people had no qualifications ... and they did not need any ... Now that the banana industry has been on the decline ... we have made attempts at diversification ... for example we have gone into tourism ... manufacturing, like garment factories ... food processing ... offshore banking ... call centres ... to reduce unemployment ... and to develop our local economies ... But there is still unemployment ... there is still unemployment among our youth ... and among the many factors that cause the unemployment ... are low banana production and widespread migration from agriculture (26, #1).

By way of example, it was reported in 2005 that for St Lucia (one of banana producers in the OECS) banana production plummeted from 220 tonnes to a mere 35 tonnes (*St Lucian Star*, March, 2005). A criticism of the Caribbean region in general has been the over-reliance on one primary economic activity in any given period (Girvan, 2002). In the case of the OECS, this is evident in the dependence of the OECS on the banana and tourism industries. Girvan (2002) identifies this lack of diversity as one of the major weaknesses of the region's economic base. This lack of diversity, according to Girvan (2002) has had major implications for economies, in light of the changing nature of

societies. One politician attempted to put the ramifications of such practice into perspective:

The nature of knowledge and skills is rapidly changing ... but if you realize our qualification system has not moved an inch ... When Agriculture was our main economic base ... we offered qualifications in Agriculture ... Tourism took over, and there is hardly any qualification to match that change ... The new craze is for technology ... you know information communication technologies ... and we are still offering typewriting as a subject ... Also, when during my time it was said that people would change their work or jobs ... maybe once or twice ... but now they tell you to prepare yourselves to change your job three to five times ... and hence we need now to develop a kind of people who are multiskilled and multitalented and multilingual ... More and more people are turning to education in order to make that change ... So you know there is need for the qualifications to match these changes (26, #1-2).

A former Cabinet Secretary, and presently coordinator of a regional training organization, expressed:

In the new millennium ... the economies of the OECS are still wrestling to attain stability ... Although diversification is important ... we are still grappling with issues of public sector reform ... what should be done with public service reform ... liberalization and neoliberalisation ... all these were accelerated in the 1990s ... With the 911 occurrence and threats of more so-called terrorist acts ... the OECS economies are in even more difficulties ... for instance, our tourism sector as a major foreign exchange earner is experiencing some tough times (5, # 5).

The challenges faced by the OECS economies are detailed in the views of this participant:

The labour market in the entire Caribbean is vulnerable to lay-offs ... because of new automated data processing ... ATM machines ... other information communication technologies ... All these reduce employment ... We also have a reduction in governments' spending because of tighter fiscal measures ... as a result of the continuation of monetarist policies as a pillar for funding (26, #2).

The dwindling economies, the nature of labour markets and changing workforce was one of the principal themes coming out of the interviews. One participant, a former school principal and Director of Gender Affairs, expressed:

The implications are obvious ... With no unemployment benefit, welfare or dole ... in any Caribbean country ... there is a high rise in crime, teenage pregnancy, indiscipline, frustration, lowering of self esteem and personal confidence ... lowering of aspirations ... and a significant change in lifestyles ... But you have an increase in the number of women and youth ... So many of our women are attending part time classes ... and full time university ... All these issues raise questions of participation and access in higher education ... the shift from school to work are issues ...

Many might not see it my way ... but these issues raise the general question about the emphasis on only an academic system of qualifications (12, #2-3).

The impact of these developments, characterized by increased uncertainty and fluctuation in the labour market, points to an implication of the likelihood of change in the composition of the labour force. There is the issue of the replacement or displacement of several people (who previously relied on manual labour and worked in the banana industry) by technology and this will continue in the trend in new job creation. Views of participants indicate that qualifications must be reformed to parallel those changes.

In addition, the buzz phrase 'human capital' was mentioned by some of the interviewees, for example:

We are giving education and training a lot of attention in our budgets ... We are concerned about our human capital meeting labour market demands ... As governments, we are changing our policies and you will see this on our policy agendas ... Over the years, we have had some government and international donor (World Bank) led reform ... With the aid of this external funding, for example the European Union Fund and DFID ... we are increasing our programmes in the realm of tertiary, post-compulsory education, specifically Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (4, #4).

Our greatest resource in the OECS is our people ... or in economic terms, our human capital ... This is the foundation of our economies ... The changing nature of society demands that we address our human capital by ensuring that we have multiskilled, cross-trained and flexible employees ... But a major issue has to do with the limited educational or career path channeled by our present qualification system ... and the like and I think for a developing sub-region that has acknowledged that its greatest resource is its people ... that approach seriously needs to be reviewed (14, #1).

According to one minister:

The obligations of regional and international charters manifest themselves through intense competition for employment opportunities ... requiring not only academic learning ... but also training and skilling ... It is there that the weaknesses of our human capital come into full view ... If these are not addressed to provide the skills and the training ... it will give rise to both the unemployment and underemployment of Caribbean people (6, #4).

As in New Zealand (Chapter Six), the interview data above are reflective of the faith in education as a salve for economic problems ( see also Wolf, 2002). They can also be tied

in with the social capital theory and the older “macro human capital dimension in education policy” (Henry *et. al.*, 2001). As has been discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter Three, the human capital theory assumes that “education develops cognitive attributes in individuals. These attributes are carried by those individuals into the workplace; and in the workplace the human capital augments skill and productivity, and thereby creates additional wealth” (Marshall, 1995, p.6). In this vein, the governments of the OECS have attempted to introduce, through policy formulation and implementation, a host of reform initiatives in their formal education systems. The value is evidenced in the amounts of funds allocated in national and sub-regional budgets to fulfill the detailed education plans that ultimately set goals for economic success. As in New Zealand (see Chapter Six), in OECS governments’ annual budget plans and presentations, (as well as in their contracts of faith or manifestos designed to attract votes), the quality of education and training systems is often targeted with promises such as using education to re-engineer traditional sectors, to facilitate the growth of more modern sectors of the economies, and to address personal development of citizens.

This trend can be explained using research conducted by Wolf (2002). In her research, Wolf (2002) points out that “politician’s faith in education is fuelled by a set of clichés about the nature of the twenty-first century world: globalized, competitive, experiencing ever faster rates of technical change” (p. xi). The move by politicians to place education at the centre of their policy plans concurs with the findings of Wolf (2002), who draws on her many years of experience as a government analyst, a researcher, a consultant and an academic observer of education policy. According to Wolf (2002), in this world, it seems, education is to be a precondition of economic success, and indeed survival, to an even greater degree than in the past century. Although Wolf (2002) concludes that the links between education and growth are far less direct than politicians suppose, she underscores that whether or not education is financially good for their country, the past half century teaches that it is certainly good for the educated. The more education an individual acquires, the higher the individual’s income is likely to be, and the more likely that the individual acquires employment.

Several countries have regarded the reform of their qualifications system as a key element of quality assurance for boosting human capital and as an export commodity.

Lessons can be drawn from the New Zealand experience in the reasons for establishing the NZQA:

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

Holmes (2003) argues that a flexible qualifications framework may help small states develop the generalists they need, and to increase the ability of people to respond to labour market opportunities, through reskilling. As in the case of the NZQA, a qualifications framework may facilitate "more horizontal movement between courses of study and occupations" (Holmes, 2003, p. 8). The New Zealand experience is applicable in this regard in theorizing towards an OECS qualifications framework.

### 8.2.7 Education Factors

A seventh emergent theme is clustered around some key aspects of education theory of learning and assessment. Aspects of this theme include the practice of assessment/examinations as key in measuring quality in the OECS, the outmoded assessment/qualifications system in the region, lifelong learning, changing learners, vocational versus academic fields of learning, and the qualifications system as an inhibitor of life chances.

The importance afforded to assessment/examinations can be seen in the responses of all 26 interviewees. When asked how the quality of education was assessed, or how the quality of education was measured, the responses focused on assessment and examinations, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

If you are looking at quality at the school level ... at the primary level, I would think that we use our examinations to determine quality ... we have the tests of standards ... we have the common entrance ... I think those are the measurements that we use at the local level ... For the secondary schools ... we have the CXC which is a standard measurement across the OECS and the Caribbean ... so basically we are into examinations to measure the quality of outputs of the education system (21, #1).

Only by examinations as far as I am concerned ... there isn't any other measure of quality assurance or accountability measure ... other than examinations (7, #1).

The only method I know now that measures quality ... and makes the education actors responsible ... is the examinations system ... This is one way we can judge the standards and it means that the public accepts (10, #1).

... In St. Lucia and the OECS, and even at the level of CARICOM ... we do put a lot of emphasis on qualification and examination ... and I don't know to what extent we put our energies towards other aspects of quality assurance in the delivery of education services ... to improve our educational services (24, #1).

Quality of education to a large extent has been based on academics, schools, teachers and institutions ... being able to churn out students with high academic performance ... then that is considered to be quality ... There is the general absence of the other elements such as social development skills .... There is also the absence of sports and co-curricula activities ... As a result, we have a system that is very imbalanced ... one which is purely geared to academic results (18, #1).

I think we're still locked in the traditional paradigm ... People just look at the most critical examinations like common entrance, CXC or A levels and so on ... The graduates of those who handed down the system to us ... do not have only the option of the traditional academic qualifications ... they have GNVQs, NVQs, SVQs and a whole range to choose from ... so that there are certain competencies that are certified ... which would then enable them to fit into a particular vocation or find adequate employment in the world of work ... we are just locked into a restrictive mould (22, #2).

One of the mechanisms ... indeed perhaps the most important mechanism in our countries ... is assessment ... it's the assessment, the evaluation, the examination, the testing of the students on the basis of what was taught that they should have acquired (23, #1).

In our case ... we believe that there has been some improvement in quality as manifested in the national examinations ... which is an important mechanism in the OECS ... The examination mechanism is the main one for us (25, #1).

As shown in Chapter Two, this is not only the case in the OECS. Internationally, assessment has been seen as a mechanism to improve educational standards and to enhance competitiveness of nations (Bell & Cowie, 2001b; Resnick & Resnick, 1992). For example, in Britain, the government's emphasis has been that a new national assessment framework will help to raise standards by setting publicly accessible standards; and measuring whether or not they have been met (Gipps, 1990; 1994; Resnick & Resnick,

1992). This view also supports Bell & Cowie's (2001) postulate that assessment has acquired multiple roles in addition to its existing roles (see Chapter Four). It is indisputable that assessment/examination is the main mechanism through which social and economic rewards, including qualifications, are awarded to learners. The results of these examinations are the main form of accountability, quality assurance, regulation and control in the OECS. One interviewee sums up the power of assessment/examinations in the OECS:

The yardstick by which the quality of education and accountability is measured is the success in examinations ... and I speak of the type of examination that either kills you ... sends you down ... or sends you up - the common entrance examination, the CXC, are crucial ones, but don't underestimate the A levels ... and other tertiary levels examinations. Absolutely ... it is examinations ... examinations ... and more examinations ... learners are filtered all the way to the top (17, #2).

#### 8.2.7.1 Outmoded Assessment/Qualifications System

An aspect of the theme - education factors - was that a factor in the need for change was the outmoded nature of the assessment/ qualifications system in the OECS. One interviewee elucidated:

I think there is a need to look at the exams system again ... but even the modality by which our traditional exams are administered needs to change ... I think we need to recognize that a one-shot exam is not even an adequate indicator what a student's academic ability is and ... because of degree inflation and so on ... parents now are so paranoid even for a simple thing like common entrance ... So what one needs to do really is to ensure that the traditional exams are reformed in ways that take a broader account of the students' real ability ... It is to learn how to learn that is important ... so in that context of change we need ... the use of continuous assessment and a component as a contributing factor to what is the final traditional score such as project assignment that would challenge students to think, to research, to apply the knowledge ... We have to get out of the traditional mould (22, #3-4).

As has been indicated in Chapters One and Two, the British exported not only their education models to the OECS but also their examinations system. Like that of the British system, the examination system of the region also attempted to emphasize the neutrality and rationality of bureaucratic organization and of recruitment procedures based on merit (Broadfoot, 1996b). Interviewees attempted to elucidate the perceived need for change:

Our system ... because of how and the reason that it was inherited ... slants towards more people failing ... and it does not deal with people's strengths ... as much as their weaknesses ... and so you either have attained or you have not attained ... you either passed or you failed ... but if we are going

to look at it in the broader sense of measuring and assessing ... assessing in the broader sense ... we need to look at system ... where the assessment approaches have been tried ... then adapt it to our particular circumstances ... this is a good strategy (24, #2).

It is well known, for example, that the A level system is really geared to a certain clientele ... if you want to put it that way - people who intend pursuing higher academic degrees ... but we want to climb the ladder ... if you want to call it the pyramid ... only a small percentage of the school cohort attends that level ... The question is ... how does one sort out, or measure or evaluate the performance of the majority? ... I think there is definitely need for reform ... The public has been calling for it ... and educators and policy makers have also called for it ... The only problem is that we don't seem to have been able to actually tackle it ... Particularly, everybody has been talking about continuous assessment ... so that is one issue ... In the case of adults ... there is increased emphasis on continuous and life long learning ... But what are we doing about these issues? (24, #1-2).

Let us say you are attending the 'A' level college ... you have to wait for two long years ... at the end of which you write only one external examination ... I believe it is unfair to the students ... and it is taking us away from reality ... Even now, Cambridge is thinking of modules for the A levels ... so that you don't write an A level at the end of two years ... but you get credits every semester (17, #5).

The factors which drive the need for change were elucidated with several illustrations of the deficiencies of the system in catering for all types of learning, its emphasis on academics and the lack of options for learners, for example:

There has been a lot of talk about the present level of assessment ... which does not adequately measure the ability of candidates to fit into our society ... and I am afraid that if we continue to measure the quality of education by examinations ... we are going to fail in this modern day and age ... I think there is a need to have a broader type of assessment ... not only on examination results ... not only on academic performance, but also in terms of the values that you inculcate ... the attitudes towards, work, and a whole set of competencies in all respects ... There must be a merger of these to have a well rounded individual ... There are many people in society who did attend secondary school ... and they are successful ... They are contributing immensely to society (17, #2).

There is need to reform because I do not think that the system is catering for to the individual needs of every child ... everybody is going in one direction ... CXC's generally ... There is need to consider skills based qualifications so that we don't only consider the academic ... There is need for a lot of reform in terms of certification, qualifications/ examinations that students have access to presently ... even in terms of the CXC examinations and A levels ... not all children want to go that route ... at the moment we do not have ... but there should be ... other programmes that encourage the children so that they would go for the other areas that are more in synch with the society's

demands for skilled labour ... and rather than having everybody wanting to be lawyers, engineers, and doctors and so on ... So we need to look at the needs of our society and reform our qualifications in terms of what are the OECS demands for certain skills ... so at the end of the day ... persons would be satisfied ... that he or she has had choice and would have acquired a mix with academic qualifications as well as the training for that career ... or that vocation ... or for higher learning (13, #2).

We must have acceptance of the technicians, of the entrepreneurs, of the value of the human worth of each individual ... each citizen... not too many of our students are guided into careers after they pass examinations ... and I think we need to have specific career paths to lead them into proficiencies .... where they feel skilled and competent ... therefore we need to look at our present examination system ... we really need to focus on alternative assessment techniques ... on assignment in the work place ... on assessment by people on the job ... we need to look at portfolio assessment ... and really really, really get away from another certificate on the wall that shows competent people who meet specific academic standards ... agreeable not only by the education system ... but by the workplace ... therefore the focus needs to be not so much on certificates ... but we really need to look at the outcomes ... the outputs of an education system that meet the demands of the society (3, #1-2).

We have a moral and indeed a political responsibility as politicians ... With such a commitment ... we can make sure that we have people within the ambit of the educational system ... we have to make sure that the program is diversified enough ... and they bring in the particular types of education including special education to address this ... So we need to look at different ways of assessment ...so even though the thrust is towards the majority of the students and they are assessed ... we also have to look at other ways of assessing the students ... How, for example, do we measure an outstanding sports student who put in an average of four hours per day on the soccer field ... and that person could have put those hours in his Maths and English? (4, #34).

There is no doubt ... our assessment system excludes some persons ... Absolutely, there is no question that there is need to look at a system that embraces everyone ... You will not have all lawyers ... you will not have all doctors ... some people are gifted ... technical and vocational training which is very important including the visual and performing arts because we must seek to develop our culture ... we must seek to develop, assess and certify ... all those skills ... at the moment we fall short ... We are now living in a technological and a knowledge driven world ... and we must decide how we would acknowledge the skills and choose values and competence within it to be worthwhile and productive citizens (26, #2).

As has been shown in the theoretical framework (Chapter Four), assessment practice in the OECS must be understood in relation to the wider societal and indeed inter societal forces acting upon it (Grace, 1985). Approaches to student assessment/ examinations in the sub-region continue to be socially constructed to help make the existing societal

arrangements and distribution of power legitimate (Blackmore, 1988). That the qualification system remains today a site of struggle in the Eastern Caribbean stems from what has been referred to in the literature as the dual problem of 'socialization' and 'selection' (see for example, Broadfoot, 1996b, 2001; Brown *et al.*, 1997; Gipps, 1994). Meritocratic competition has been a means of legitimating occupational and social inequalities because the notion of meritocracy is based on the idea of giving everyone an equal chance to be unequal (Brown *et al.*, 1997). Examination/ Assessment (examinations) in the sub-region has been fulfilling these functions.

#### 8.2.7.2 Lifelong Learning, Changing Learner Populations and Modes of Learning

As a direct impact of all the global and regional developments and orientations towards boosting human capital, widening participation and dealing with the certainty of change, a traceable slogan 'lifelong learning' or a 'culture of learning' appears to be developing in the OECS:

We talk about lifelong learning ... we also mean all types of streams ... the stream that will take you up to the university level ... but there are the other types of learning ... given the type of educational facilities we now encourage all kinds of skills development centres ... we have trade centres ... There is the idea of off-shore learning ... home schooling ... self-learning ... distance learning ... online learning ... and so on ... we do have to come with approaches and different strategies ... to measure and to assess or evaluate these types of learning .... in order to award qualifications (24, #2).

Often in the responses of interviewees, the issues of lifelong learning, assessment and qualifications were intertwined:

I think that one of the things too for assessment ... the means and modes of assessment ... is also how we package knowledge for delivery in our educational system ... but I believe we have to get far more modular in our approach to the knowledge packages that we deliver ... so that when time is a critical factor ... this is one way in which we can take the issue of lifelong learning on board ... That would enrich ... that would open up tremendous possibilities for trans-disciplinary work ... and cross-disciplinary action ... and so on and will make learning more exciting ... give a greater sense of achievement to students ... in order to complete a programme ... but you're not looking down a tunnel five years ahead of you ... you will be just be looking back at your accomplishments (22, #4-5).

The need to assess prior learning was mentioned by one of the participants:

There is a need to find new ways to assess achievement and performance ... There is also the idea of experiential learning ... and that I think it is very important in our new era of continuous learning and training ... and re-engineering ... so we have to find ways of assessing this learning ... and the skills that one has achieved through experiential learning ... because even in

our society there are people who can do certain jobs ... but the way we have classified them in our structures ... we ask for particular types of qualifications ... and if they don't have it ... then they don't have it ... they don't qualify ... but there are other things that they can do that we do not certify ... so yes ... there is need for some sort of reform ... some sort of change ... possibly multi-faceted and multi-leveled ... Such changes must come up with different ways of measuring and assessing performance (24, #2).

A Minister of Education linked lifelong learning to the changing nature of society to individuals having to change jobs or professions at least three times in this new era:

We are now living in a technological world ... a knowledge driven world ... we must be so inclined if we are to be considered worth while and productive citizens ... We know that the Caribbean person in the 21st century must have a good grounding in communication and technology ... and therefore we have to make sure that we give our people those skills so that they can meet the challenges of the century ... Also, when during my time it was said that people would change their work maybe once or twice ... but now they tell you to prepare yourselves to change your job three to five times ... and hence we need now to develop the kind of people who are multi skilled and multitalented and multilingual ... More and more people are turning to education in order to make that change ... So you know there is need for the qualifications system to match those changes (26, # 2).

His comments are manifested in the demand for education in the OECS, particularly at the higher education levels. Individual and societal expectations of the benefits and rewards to be gained from education continue to soar. These typically include higher income, social mobility and enhanced social status, from the individual's point of view, but increased productivity and competence or standards from the organizational and societal standpoint. Continued support by government of national policies based on education, is based on the perceived contribution of education and these changing imperatives (Wolf, 2002). These views have implications for the reform of any qualifications system to match these changing needs of societies.

### 8.2.7.3 Vocational-Academic Divide

As was the case in New Zealand, bridging the long-standing traditional divide between academic and training was one of the major themes emanating from the data. It was regarded as one of the factors that can inhibit the reform of a system because of traditional practices and acceptance, for example:

I think this slavery, this colonialism has left more than [a] cultural [legacy] ... It has left us with ingrained divisiveness and mentalities ... In education

... we are dealing with mentalities and attitudes ... as to what is valuable ... as to what is important ... and I think too many of our parents still have this mentality ... where we're trying to mould our children into the civil service that came out of England ... and want our children to be in that mould of the middle management, the upper management and other professions (3, #3).

With such a system operating in this new economic realism, however, the disadvantage of Eastern Caribbean learners immediately comes to the fore, and therefore the fact that the majority of learners were disadvantaged by the divide, made it a driver for change, for example one participant explained:

Our people are placed at a serious disadvantage ... because of our practice of recognizing mainly the so-called academics ... I believe there is need to reform the qualification system ... because I don't think academic qualifications should be the ultimate decider of opportunities ... and there are so many opportunities out there ... and this is not even measured within the system ... and in this regard, I am saying that academic qualifications should be viewed at an equal level with other areas of assessment ... and in that case there would be need for mechanisms to review the qualifications system ... in terms of areas that have been neglected for almost time immemorial ... and nobody has ever seen that as relevant ... and now is the time to bring it up to forefront ... and make it parallel with academics ... we need the academics ... because the academics in my view is the base to do the other things ... but at the same time we must measure it equally with the other areas (18, #2).

An ex-vice principal and Deputy Chief Education Officer attempted to put the academic and vocational divide in context:

One important thing for sure is that we have to ask ourselves a serious question ... qualifications for what? Why is there a need to certify our citizens in the first place? ... The answers that come to the fore are ... There is of course the issue of matriculations for further studies ... and that is very important ... We can say definitely that there is also the issue of accessing employment opportunities on the job market ... Therefore, this in itself might lead to another branch of proposals for qualifications ... It might be the case where you need to marry the two ... to create a blend of the two ... Nevertheless, what is important to me is that we examine the dynamics of society ... where our people are heading ... what are the scope and prospects that are available ... and therefore how do people prepare themselves for those opportunities? ... You would probably have to look at all the different sectors of the country ... be it persons in school ... as well as persons who are out of school ... What are the opportunities that are available for those persons? ... How do they access those opportunities? ....

It is also important that we do not leave any particular sector or social group out of the whole phenomena ... and therefore persons who may have some physical or mental challenge should also be on board ... so therefore we

must attempt to make the qualifications system as comprehensive as possible (14, #2-3).

He also pointed to what he saw as the apparent problem of our present system:

Our present system tries to fit everybody into the same pigeon hole ... This is not what we need now ... Learners are different ... We want a system broad enough of course with the full understanding by all concerned ... of what are the values ... and what are the accompanying skills and competencies that we can recognize within it (14, # 3).

He continued:

My concern is one of widening scope of our qualifications system ... Some persons are definitely not catered for ... How do I discern mechanics or carpenters ... which one needs more supervision ... which one can work independently ... which one is better at diesel engines and so on? ... They can go down to the nuts and bolts of it ... but the basic thing is about something that reflects it ... that reflects the capability of the individual concerned ... and will be a true guide to any employer or institution recruiting ... as to what this person is really capable of ... Most definitely at the OECS level, there is need for work in that area (14, #8).

The views of participants as indicated above can be interpreted from a historical perspective of the Caribbean. Historically, CARICOM education systems were imported models from Britain. This divide can be traced back to colonialism and slavery, when slave owners in the Caribbean deemed slavery and education of slaves as incompatible, so laws were passed prohibiting the education of slaves. Slave owners perceived the plantations as “voracious consumers of unskilled labour” (Campbell, 1996, p. 262), and that literacy had the inestimable advantage of increasing mobility, providing opportunities for wealth creation and affluence, changing occupational structure and creating avenues for a revolutionary process (Campbell, 1996). Slave owners and wealthy planters, aware of the benefits that can be derived from education, sent their children to school abroad, mainly to Britain and sometimes British North America. But, following the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the termination of the apprenticeship period in 1838, formal education for ex-slaves was introduced with the main impetus coming from England – “from the swell of British Philanthropy, Protestant missionary zeal and from a conscience-aroused government” (Campbell, 1996, p. 262).

Through time, education throughout the Caribbean came to consist of three types: education abroad based on private initiative; education within the respective countries in exclusive schools designed for local whites who fell short of the resources for a foreign

education; and education for the elite group of nonwhites. Academic education was associated with elitism, while vocational education was associated with the underprivileged. If one was perceived as not being academically suited, then he/she was assigned as an apprentice in a workshop.

Findings indicate that this vocational and academic divide is entrenched in the history of the education systems of the OECS, and by implication in its qualifications system.

According to one Chief Education Officer:

I think it takes a change of culture ... a change of political and social direction ... a change of mentality ... a change of attitudes ... we have to get out of the colonial mould ... and our orientation to examination and degrees ... and look more at skill and certification of skills ... and also the acceptance of what is important in the OECS and CARICOM as a whole ... what should be important is that we have skills and qualifications ... to meet the human resource needs of the region ... rather than just producing academics (3, #1).

#### 8.2.7.4 Present Qualification System as an Inhibitor of Life Chances

One interviewee who had spent more than thirty years in the education system illustrates the effects of our present system. She worked as a schoolteacher, a secondary school teacher and a secondary school principal, and now holds another position in a Ministry other than Education. She lamented:

With our present certificating system ... too many people are left out ... Too many people are failing ... It does not cater for the majority of persons ... I believe in order to have a more equitable system ... we should offer qualifications to people at other levels ... for example, at the technical vocational level ... we don't have ... apart from City and Guilds which students write at the post-secondary level and they must have CXC's to get there ... there isn't anything else ... There isn't anything available for students who do not necessarily make it to the Cambridge or London A levels ... or to the Caribbean advanced level proficiency ... so we probably need to look a little more closely at those ... but even before that ... before they get to the tertiary level ... what about those at the secondary school? ... Because a lot of these students are not going to go beyond that ... I think there is need for us to recognize their efforts through a variety of qualifications ... Give them options ... The CXC doesn't adequately cater for all their talents ... Although I believe it is the intent of the CXC to provide the basic proficiency ... for those students going out into the field of work ... That has not been successful ... and so students leave very poorly qualified ... Also a large percentage of students have talents from the fifth form and beyond ... and there are no other qualifications for them to pursue after that level (12, #1-2).

Other interviewees shared their sentiments:

What is the value of our present qualifications? ... What assurance do we give to the majority of our children? ... Our present qualifications system must take on other issues, like values, behaviours, and so on ... Will the qualifications system be able to tap these other non-measurable things we have out there – such as values and skills, and so on? ... What do you prefer? ... Do you prefer to have children with ten CXC's with no manners ... or children who can contribute to your economic development, moral fabric of your society and they can be trainable ... This qualification system must never see itself in isolation... It is not in isolation ... It must contribute to the total and sustainable development of your country (10, #4).

When you look at what is happening out there in the world ... people continue to look and pursue their educational abilities ... to find ways and means of survival in communities ... We really need to revisit how we assess persons and how we get people into a particular field or area ... because at the end of the day we want to ensure that our society is actually moving in a direction that allows each individual to make a contribution ... not just a minority ... because we may be developing ... but are our people developing in the direction that we want them to develop? (19, #4).

The restrictive pathways and options available for OECS, interviewees were explicitly challenged:

Let us begin with the A levels or CAPE ... Do students have any other formal options other than A Levels or CAPE? ... We may find that we have students who want to continue on this academic route ... but we have others who go there and they waste two years ... Did they have to do A levels? ... Couldn't they have had the choice to pursue other forms of certification in relation to the route that they want to take? (11, #1-2).

So in effect this whole qualifications system affects the masses ... not just the minority at the top who are moving on ... regardless of what is going on at the bottom ... We need to look seriously at the masses that are struggling to move on ... because they are hampered by our qualifications system (19, #3).

Another interviewee commented on what she thought was the injustice of the system:

So what I am seeing is that we have done a great injustice to the masses of our people ... by just looking very, very narrowly at pure academic qualifications ... There are lots of persons who can do extremely very well ... We have a lot of cases even within the Ministry of Education who may not have the degrees ... but they perform extremely well in their work orientation and outputs ... I have Ms [name withheld] in my unit ... She is fantastic ... but she has been at the bottom there ... she has been trapped down there ... just because she does not have CXC's ... The poor child is suffering down there ... There is no other type of certification to assess her office skills (21, #2).

One interviewee clearly characterized what he believed should be the goal of a qualifications system. He notes:

I think for a developing region that has acknowledged that its greatest resource is its people ... our qualifications system needs to reflect this acknowledgement ... Everybody at some stage has some level of competence ... and that is a measure ... and if you are talking about developing your human resource ... that competence at whatever form ... whatever stage it is ... its embryonic or advanced developing stage and so on ... one should be able to measure and make some statement about that competence ... That competence should be understood by the person himself or herself ... by the employer ... by an institution of further learning ... or even by other countries that the person may travel to ... but I do believe that we need to look seriously at that ... and importantly of course is the fact that it should be understood by one and all ... what are the certificates saying about what is being measured or what is being assessed? ... But as it stands now ... our certification system has only catered for measuring academic competence (14, #1-2).

Change in the region's qualifications system, from the eyes of interviewees, is seen as a direct strategy for enhancing the labour market chances of new entrants into the job market, or those of other employees made redundant in the wake of interdependence of economic crises.

### 8.3 Deterrents of Change in the Qualifications System of the OECS

Interviewees also highlighted ten other factors that they saw as challenges which can deter or inhibit the establishment of a qualifications framework as summarized in Table 8.3 as follows.

Table 8.3  
Key Factors and Arguments that Deter the Need for Change  
in the Qualifications System of the OECS

- 
- Historical Fragmentation and Geographical Dislocation
  - Varied Levels of Economic and Political Advancements
  - Economic Realities and Effects of International Aid (Resource Transfers)
  - Resources
  - Resistance to Change
  - Concern for Collaboration, Communication and Stakeholder Participation
  - Policy and Legislative Framework
  - External Factors
  - Political Leadership/Political Will
- 

Each factor is given attention in subsequent sections.

### 8.3.1 Historical Fragmentation and Geographical Dislocation

One theme that emerged as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications system was that of historical fragmentation and geographical dislocation. All interviewees (for example 14, #6; 9, #4; 2, #4, 5-6; 18, #4; 21, #6; 23, #3, previously quoted) pointed to the formation of an economic union by 2005 as a major driver for the reformation of the OECS's qualifications system, but were cognizant of the geographical fragmentation, historical divisiveness and varied levels of economic advancement as having the potential to hinder such an initiative. Some ten interviewees presented factors such as historical notions of nationalism and fragmentation, geographical dislocation and varied levels of economic advancement as hindrances. These interviewees attempted to focus on the deeper history of slavery, colonialism and divisiveness as inhibitions. For example:

Let's not forget our history ... The OECS is a good starting point because the CARICOM has all this diversity in who is small and who is large ... the values of currencies ... the levels of economic development and everything else that individual countries boast about ... This history has fostered nationalism and this history ... although it may help ... has caused more division than unity (18, #3).

Another key issue is that within the OECS ... we're so similar ... yet we're so far apart (1, #8).

In the OECS ...there is supposed to be some common ground or some common direction ... but in effect each country sees about itself and by virtue of its geographical boundaries ... and that each country tries to pursue its own agenda and own direction (19, #3).

Unfortunately I am not very optimistic about an accreditation body for CARICOM ... because I believe the region is still too fragmented to even think of it as a region ... What we have is a collection of national entities ... that are still going under the fiction of sovereignty in different directions ... At the subregional level there are more possibilities ... At the OECS level that work is being done systematically (22, #5).

The initiatives to the unite the region and sub-region is a real reason ... But, one of the major difficulties is the whole issue of our history, our nationalism and failed regional integration ... It's difficult because we have spent so many years building national pride ... and that national pride is not within a bloc of countries ... but it is within individual entities where we stand by our flag and our national anthems ... and we look for symbolic representation that makes us stand out or compete with each other ... We are in the world of competition ... and because of the competitive environment ... we must unite ... it is very difficult to get different nations of the OECS to come together to pursue a common goal ... but somebody must start it ... The difficulty is getting all the politicians from different countries to come into play ... this is where politicians can stall the whole the process (18, #4).

An aspect of this geographical fragmentation, as another important contributory factor is the varied levels of advancements. There was concern by interviews of the different levels of development in education in the individual countries and that and those who perceive themselves as being more progressive might not be patient enough to work along with others. Also the economic principles of competition and individualism, advocated by neoliberalism, have the ability to undermine the efforts of OECS undertakings. Some participants shown concern about:

Countries being at different stages of development ... countries not being prepared to move as quickly as each other (9, #4).

We are in the world of competition and because of the competitive environment ... it is very difficult to get different nations to come together to pursue a common goal unless it happens that somebody must start it ... We are so small compared to the major trading blocs ... that are being formed around us ... We're going to have to move together as one sub-region or as a region otherwise we will sink as individual small states (18, #4).

I was saying that in relation to the factors that would infringe and facilitate the harmonizing of our educational systems... is the divisiveness... us not working more closely together ... that is we need the desire to come together ... that is the most important thing (4, #4).

The excerpts above hint at factors that have the ability to deter the need for change in the qualification system of the OECS. Such issues are reinforced in the analyses of scholars of sociology and history as the region being characterized by a proliferation of mini-states, with forceful individual identities and interests and strong democratic traditions and political systems, cast in the Westminster parliamentary mould.

The concerns of participants illuminated in the above examples are not far-fetched and cannot be underestimated, as these have been some of the major contributors to failure of regional initiatives (see Axline, 1996). In the period of European colonization, measures were taken to integrate colonies for purposes of administrative efficiency, but a series of wars of imperial orders to capture individual countries for capitalist interests only served to add to racial divisiveness and economic fragmentation (Beckles & Shepherd, 1996). In later years, following the example of the European Economic Community (EEC), however, the need for the Caribbean countries to organize ourselves into a regional integrative movement became paramount. In 1959, the Caribbean countries ventured toward the establishment of such an organization with the formation of the West Indies Federation. The organization, which was formed "under the auspices of the British was

doomed from the start by nationalistic tendencies ... and the lack of taxation privileges" (Wallace, 1996, p. 467). The organization failed miserably when Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, carried away by the sizes of their populations (two of the largest populations and landmasses in the region) attained individual independence from Britain in 1962 and withdrew. Nonetheless, a few institutions and units, such as the University of the West Indies, the West Indies Cricket Team that were organized under the "short-lived federation" (Wallace, 1996) are still in existence.

In the late 1960s, there was still a call by visionaries for integration of the region, but the thought was still decried. Attention this time, was focused on creating an atmosphere conducive to overcoming the handicaps of small market size, economic fragmentation and external dependence. With much apprehension, in July 1965, CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Association) was established by some countries, and in 1968 the remaining countries bought into the idea. Although free trade was established, CARIFTA did not provide for the free movement of labour and capital or the coordination of agricultural, industrial, defense, and foreign policies. As in New Zealand, the prospect of Britain joining the EEC in 1970, alerted the islands to their "vulnerability to possible disruptions in their preferential trading ties with Britain" (Axline, 1996, p. 476). The outcries were such that the creation of solely a free trade area was insufficient and non-beneficial to members within a region with other major social and political needs.

These concerns led CARIFTA members to sign the Treaty of Chaguaramas, replacing the CARIFTA structure with CARICOM in 1973. As has been shown in Chapter Two, the OECS was formed in 1981 because of marginalization by larger countries (Axline, 1996). Therefore, for some interviewees, geographical fragmentation, nationalism, the individual national flags and individual national anthems were symbolic of individualism of the past, and that the OECS has made major strides in building solidarity in these areas (14, #6; 9, #4; 2, #4, 5-6; 18, #4; 21, #6; 23, #3, for example).

### **8.3.2 Several Administrative Agencies and Regional Efforts**

A second emergent theme as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications is that of several administrative agencies and regional efforts. From the early days of historical struggles, the autonomy of the colonies in governance was limited to British representative assemblies (Beckford, 2001; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996). Beckles & Shepherd (1996) point out that in later years, that to aid administration and control, the British adopted a system of direct administration of Crown Colony

Government, in which British-appointed governors wielded nearly autocratic power. The direct implication is in the several administrative bodies and arrangements to award qualifications in the region, as indicated in the following:

Like I said ... at the various levels ... it is done differently ... At the primary level, you are aware that the Ministries have tried to set some standard examinations probably the most common is the Common Entrance Examination ... which assumes that students should obtain a certain level of performance by 11+ and that is regional but still national ... Even where they have replaced the common entrance examination ... where there is full secondary education ... there is still some standard examination or readiness test ... to ensure that there is some consistency in terms of assimilation of the curriculum ... but primarily at that level is ensuring that you have a common core curriculum ... and that is being done and the examinations reflect that (16, #1).

At the secondary level ... we have the CXC that has replaced the O Level. Again it is a regional external examination ... but there are checks and balances being put in place to ensure that ... for example, the school based assessment ... an example of which work has to be done with the teachers, the school, the administration to ensure right across that consistency takes place ... We have had instances where breach of that has been recognized because the system works ... At the college level ... lots of colleges are doing university based exams ... Again, the interaction between these institutions and these universities ensures in terms of staff qualifications ... programmes delivery ... and in fact all the examinations are set by the university to ensure that their standards are maintained (16, #1-2).

At the OECS level, three technocrats from OERU pointed to regional and sub-regional efforts which are presently being undertaken, for example:

You see again ... the prevailing argument is that we have to work along the existing qualifications structure and framework ... CARICOM has spoken about an accreditation council ... You have efforts in Barbados, in Trinidad and in Jamaica ... What we have done is to develop an approach that has been taken by HEART Jamaica ... in introducing the competency based certification for occupational skills ... and we have had a technical committee through CARICOM ... looking at the framework for vocational qualifications ... The academic qualifications framework will continue to exist ... and people understand it because they have been using it for quite a while ... One of ACTI's first jobs was the development of an accreditation framework ... Sangster and Bethel's framework has been the focus (16, #6).

According to one participant:

We have several other institutions that operate outside of the formal institutions ... that discuss formal schooling ... and they too need to be brought under some kind of umbrella ... and we need to and I hate to say regulate ... but manage some of the processes that go on out there ... in ensuring that whatever comes out of whatever they are doing again ... is also reflective of what the nation needs and what the student needs (1, #11).

One participant expressed the implications of individual efforts as hindrances, which led to major duplication of projects and a waste in human resource allocation and financial wastage, as follows:

Well ... we're duplicating resources ... we're trying to compete with each other instead of complementing each other ... and therefore, instead of trying to match each other's teacher training colleges or technical colleges and paying tutors and lecturers and setting up a lab for three or four students ... we could be setting up specialties in different islands and exchanging our students ... By changing our qualifications system this sort of movement can be accommodated (3, #3-4).

In effect, geographic fragmentation, nationalism and fragmentation, geographical dislocation and varied levels of economic advancement were seen as deterrents to change. It is also well documented that slavery (and indenture) left the legacy of divided loyalties, ethnic and class competition and wide disparities in wealth and access to resources. Today, this legacy imprints all aspects of Caribbean society, economics, and politics and idiosyncratic systems modeled after European systems (Bacchus, 1996; Beckford, 2001; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996; Braithwaite, 2001; Ferguson, 1996; Hall, 1996; Nurse, 2001; Turner, 2001; Wallace, 1996; Williams, 1996; Yelvington, 2000). Both prior to, and following independence of nations, attempts at political federation and economic integration have simultaneously ensued and foundered. Despite OECS unity, participants were well aware that these factors may deter the process.

### **8.3.3 Economic Realities and Effects of International Aid**

A third theme that emerged as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications system was that of economic realities and the effects of international aid (sometimes referred to as resource transfers in the literature) from developed countries. The handicaps that abound small States such as the OECS - divisiveness, rivalry, smallness, limited exports, major foreign debts, rising balance of payments, huge fiscal deficits, fragmented and dispersed landmasses, threats of natural disasters, lack of physical and human resource capacity, migration, rising unemployment and rise in crime, particularly among the youth were visible throughout interview data (Ditcher, 2003). Ditcher (2003) argues that some of these factors have led to external dependence on grants, aid, and financial loans. A retired Deputy Permanent Secretary revealed his experience with the superpowers:

What comes to mind immediately is those world powers ... those world organizations which provide funding, either in the form of grants or loans

would want to maintain their supremacy ... When aid is given, they want us to implement *their* ideas of reform (17, #4).

This view is in keeping with implications of support for the donor country. The major implication of this reliance is the adoption of the external/foreign policies (such as reform and structural adjustment, performance by standards) of the financial institutions.

They will want to control us ... and I see this as a pretty good argument for their not wanting to give us the kind of support that we need ... I share the view ... perhaps not a common view ... that those superpowers, they want to control us ... and whatever, for example look at the World Bank and when I was deputy permanent secretary ... I attended most of their meetings ... and those persons from the World Bank really wanted their ideas dominate ... to infiltrate us ... They always want to impose their ideas on us... it is always their models of reform that they want us to adopt ... they are subtle ... they are powerful ... and from my experience ... they can impede change (17, #4).

The OECS has relied on powerful institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the European Union Fund (EU) and the World Bank (WB) for resource transfers. The OECS has also relied on the external economies of developed countries (Western, and in recent times Arabic (Libya, Kuwait) and Asian countries (China, Japan, Taiwan) for instance). The sub-region's reliance on outside sources is accompanied by implications of support for the donor country; or adoption of the external/foreign policies (such as reform and structural adjustment, performance by standards) of the financial institutions (Ditcher, 2003). This reliance on external resource transfers has had implications for internal initiatives. The focus of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, on the field of education is intended to create education services that are more sensitive to the needs of the consumer, and in which providers are more accountable for performance. One participant explained:

I think that it is ironic that in Dominica, for example ... the vision for inclusion and recognition of all types of abilities is written everywhere in the reform initiatives sponsored by the World Bank ... In our education sector plan ... and in our corporate plan ... you hear of quality ... you hear of accountability ... you hear of improving standards ... and so on ... yet you see absolutely very little being done to ensure that these things are actually achieved ... attained or sustained ... and you always question ... you know was it imposed on us? ... or did we just do that because you know it was the thing to do, or are we really serious? (1, #7).

A substantial part of the theoretical argument for reform in education in the sub-region has been couched in rhetoric similar to that which guided Western reforms in Western societies (for instance, from the administrations of Thatcher in the case of the United Kingdom, and that of Regan in America), much of which has filtered down as a result of

international aid or development assistance or resource transfers, and from the milieu of radical reform in public sector management. As has been discussed in Chapter Three, these reforms reflect discourses of accountability, regulation and monitoring of performance and service through results, outcomes and performance. The emphasis is on the management of people, resources and programmes compared to the administration of activities, procedures and regulations (Alphonse, 1999). For a planning officer in particular, with such influences, this period in time would be an opportune moment for change in the OECS because:

All the OECS countries are into this wave of reform to enhance quality ... improve standards, accountability and transparency ... I think too sweeping the region ... is the whole issue of competency based assessment ... and other forms of assessment that are coming into being ... so there seems to be this focus on assessment and qualifications at this time ... and it does seem to be an opportune time to ensure that there is proper structure for dovetailing initiatives (14, #4).

Since in the reform of education ... there are the issues of reforming assessment methodology and procedures and so on ... It seems a good time to look at the whole issue of reforming our qualifications system (14, #4).

To a retired Deputy Permanent Secretary, the lack of resource transfers from these organizations can also be a major impediment, as these organizations can facilitate change in the qualifications system of the OECS. He was of the opinion that,

obviously, the region is not rich ... We have to depend on the international bodies like them [world bank, IMF] ... so we will have to convince those funding agencies of the need to develop our own regional system ... let them buy into it ... and if they do ... they would be able to render support to it ... If they do not buy into it then ... I am not too sure that the OECS on its own would have the resources to finance qualifications reform (17, #3).

#### **8.3.4 Resources**

A fourth theme that emerged as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications system was that of resources. All participants emphasized that such a project would be hampered or influenced by the allocation and availability of resources. In particular, financial, technological, and human resources were highlighted as key factors for successful implementation and sustainability of any change in the qualifications system of the OECS. The excerpts below provide an indication of the emphasis that was placed on the resource factor:

There will be resource challenges, financial, and human resource and personnel ... because it will be the entire qualification system ... Of course

finance is always a factor because if we are going to go that route we have to obtain the technology, information systems and networking ... so the communication system is very critical (21, #4).

Resources will be the major factor ... To get this institution established ... there is going to be need for a lot of consultation with people from different agencies ... This will take time ... this will take human resources, and financial resources ... money in particular (5, #6).

I think resources are a critical one ... In many educational systems while there is recognition of what the problem is ... and what ought to be the solution ... there is an absence of resources financial or otherwise ... and the capacity to care for the process (4, #6).

The human resource factor is important ... When you implement a system like that you will need a lot of verifiers ... external persons ... persons who are committed ... Locally we may not be able to get human resource capacity in all the areas ... but on a sub-regional basis we will be able to get the persons ... and you know, of course ... our own local situation here ... we have to ensure that things are done objectively and fairly and so on ... Other factors would be not having the capacity in terms of technology and finance (7, #2).

Resources will be a factor ... to provide the best facilities out there with regards to physical plant ... training, resources, providing the best teachers and training ... highly qualified and skilful with modern techniques and cutting edge technology ... and getting a highly motivated teaching force ... adequate pay and good conditions of service ... resources to get the full co-operation from the community and parents and other stakeholders and the private sector (18, #1).

There is a big debate on that ... and it's sort of the question of cost ... The debate on whether we should have national systems or regional or sub-regional ones ... at our ministerial meetings, this is the major debate that's taking place ... I believe that we would have to go in a regional... or subregional ... one with satellites ... that is particular units or individuals assigned responsibility at the national level ... That what is happening ... the phenomenal pace at which events are moving ... internationally it is so difficult ... it is just difficult for a national unit to keep track of what is happening... unless this nation is well endowed with certain kinds of resources (4, #7).

There is no support funding for that kind of work ... and the key constraint is finding the resources to get these important things done (16, #7).

Suggestions to deal with the resource factor included:

The issue of individual economies will definitely have an effect ... but as a sub-regional level we can pool resources in terms of material needed for the entity ... We could pool our experts in that area ... and the costs could be shared ... (22, #6).

Finance is always an issue ... but government has found a way to fund all sorts of things ... still, although sources are drying up ... funding will be available that governments can tap into ... and education is a priority for all of our governments ... the lion's share of the national budgets goes to education ... and I realize resources will be an issue ... but this should not impede the start (12, #4).

Overall, it was implied that the reform of the qualification system could not be brought to fruition without the necessary resources. The lack of these, according to participants, would be a major handicap to the successful implementation. The suggestion was that the key would be to obtain initial external funding and to draw up a sustainability plan for the project. The current trends of budget cuts in education as well as in other social sectors, cannot be overlooked. The necessary human resource development is critical as shown in the case of the NZQA in Chapter Six. Change in the qualifications system would require technical staff, as it underscores co-ordination, policies, procedures, human resource development programmes and adequate training with opportunities for advancement.

### **8.3.5 Resistance to Change**

A fifth theme that emerged as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications system was that of resistance to change, as can be seen in the views of two interviewees:

The general apathy people have towards anything new ... They say that we have been doing that a long time so why change? ... They say it is more work so that would be the attitude of some persons ... Who would be involved in it ... so we have to understand if it is extra ... it is a major change ... Change should not be asking people to do more with less ... There are also the challenges ... resource challenges, financial, and human resource and personnel ... because if you have to have a body as a dedicated unit somewhere ... I can foresee these as major challenges that we would face (24, #4).

One participant cautioned:

As with anything else in the Caribbean ... there are always skeptics to development ... For example when we were starting CXC, Caribbean Examinations Council ... there were skeptics who always believed that the British system was the best ... and we should not move away from it ... You can see the same thing with the Caribbean Court of Justice ... so one of the impeding factors is certainly the traditionalists ... who don't believe that we should be responding to change ... and that we should not be moving to set up our own institutions ... They question the value of our own institutions ... In other words ... we're talking decolonization ... but a lot of

people still do not believe that we should be decolonized, you know ... This is the major factor that is going to impede us (5, #5).

The literature in management is replete with reasons why there might be resistance to change among people. In this case, participants' comments on this resistance to change can also be linked to the notion that the Eastern Caribbean's qualification system are linked to a broader socio-historical context (Filer, 2000).

### 8.3.6 Concern for Collaboration, Communication and Stakeholder Participation

A sixth theme that emerged as a deterrent to the need for change in the OECS qualifications system was a concern for major consultation, collaboration and involvement of stakeholders. The lack of major consultation and collaboration with stakeholders could have an impact on the degree of acceptance and success of any change in the qualifications system of the OECS, as argued by the following interviewees:

To get this institution established ... there is going to be need for a lot of consultation with people from different agencies ... This will take time ... This will take resources, financial resources in particular (5, #6).

With education nowadays people are interested ... but also more involved in education ... so nowadays when one is looking at education, one is talking about the stakeholders ... we need to look at not just the Ministries of Education ... we need to look at the institutions or the schools themselves ... the private sector ... the student themselves ... parents and the general public ... because unless they are brought on board ... and they understand what you are trying to do ... a lot of the intentions would probably come to naught ... so I think that process has started in St Lucia and I think it is so throughout the OECS ... that process of consultation with the stakeholders has started and it needs to be continued ... The public needs to be made aware ... when you're talking about quality assurance ... they need to understand and appreciate the need for quality ... the need for excellence ... when you talk about changing the qualifications structure, they need to understand the rationale ... the reasons ... the significance, the benefits ... and the part that they need to play to assure that the change is successful ... and it is not just the cabinet of ministers, or the ministry ... or the body which is given the responsibility that would do that ... but everyone ... We have to find ways of bringing them in ... so that they can make whatever contributions ... we have to do what it takes to get everyone on board ... (24, # 3).

This theme of consultation and stakeholder participation was a dominant one, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

At the OECS, I think we have the private sector bodies ... like the CEIC that require people ... These are all the employer federations, organizations who will say these are the kinds of knowledge skills that we require ... so there has to be some interfacing with the Ministries of Education ... with the Employers' Federations ... with tertiary education bodies ... with the universities ... to come up with the kind of system that is required for persons be educated and awarded ... the teachers must have their say... they will also have to be properly trained to deal with whatever knowledge and skills that are required if there is a change ... and then of course the accreditation comes in ... Institutions must meet the resource requirements ... and governments in terms of whatever support mechanisms have to be put in place (5, #3-4).

We must have national dialogue on the proposals ... before implementation takes place ... Once that dialogue is completed ... and the outcome confirmed ... implementation can start ... One of the potential problems from past experience ... I would note ... is the lack of proper dialogue ... and secondly, the lack of implementation of the decisions taken after dialogue ... and if these two areas are worked upon we should be well on our way (2, #9).

The Director of Caribbean Education emphasized the need for the involvement of teachers:

in that case that process would need to start from the base ... a lot of work needs to be done from the base where the community and the teachers and the actors on the ground would be the ones to agitate and support the change ... and the top will respond ... but if it has to come from the top ... then they will have all kinds of barriers ... and find all sorts of reasons why it could not work ... but if the change is initiated from the base ... particularly from the teachers, from the students, from the parents, from community persons, the private sectors ... in fact, the end-users who have not been satisfied ... and they call for the change ... then they can put pressure on the political directorate .... and the political directorate will respond (18, #6).

my concern is that it should be a very dynamic institution working very, very closely with the local agencies ... and in a sense working through them as much as possible ... and seeking all ways to add value to the process that the local governments embark on (14, #5).

There must be consultation ... joint collaborative efforts ... a number of other things ... You have institutions that exist would facilitate that ... you have the reform unit which is set up specifically to drive these sort of things ... So either existing institutions would help to facilitate or new ones will be created to drive the process forward ... and I think these are some of the facilitating or debilitating factors ... the institutions that help to fuel the process ... in some cases there may not be institutions to facilitate them and when that happens you have to create them as in the case of the OERU (4, #4).

According to Rudman (2000), communication is a major means by which we may get acceptance of new policies, suggestions for different methods or products, and seek and gain co-operation of other people. Communication and participation are key elements in the field of management. Rudman (2000) points out that effective communication is at the heart of successful performance - for organizations, work groups and individuals. Communication has been described as the lifeblood of organizations, and the lubricant that keeps the various parts of an organization working smoothly. The writer notes, however, "it is often tempting to blame the whole range of organizational problems and upsets on poor communication. It is equally tempting to see "better communication as a panacea for the ills of both the organization and its management" (Rudman, 2000, p. 561). Some of the major barriers to communication have been identified as language use (the language of the majority versus the official language), no feedback, wrong medium, distractions, information overload, poor listening, assumptions and conclusions, cultural differences, long communication lines, distance, status differences, and filtering (Rudman, 2000).

### **8.3.7 Policy and Legislation**

A seventh emergent theme as a driver of the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS was that of policymaking and legislation. Some participants linked the issue to the broader notion of legislation and policy formulation in the entire government machinery:

[This] would have implications for the legislation of countries ... It would have implications for policy in education and these are processes that take a long time to materialize ... from the initial stage that we may have the vision of a structure included in the judicial legislative system ... then it may stay on the shelf for a long time until the appropriate legislation has been passed ... There will be need for the whole reform which is harmonizing the education process ... and that would require, within the OECS, that would need a collective common legislation to govern that ... and the local legislation has to be modified to respond to that regional legislation ... and knowing that some of the OECS countries have just implemented the Education Act ... and some have just completed the revision of their legislative Acts ... and putting policies in place ... then it will be a real challenge to implement areas that have serious implications (18, # 5-6).

To one participant, the political fragmentation and physical dislocation of landmasses were not the source of the problem; rather, he identified the problem as the absence of 'the functionary' and 'slow pace of regional movement' to make "things happen":

The issue of a sub-regional entity has been discussed at the OECS level ... really it is a problem ... maybe one of the things that the regional integration movement has lacked ... whether at the broader CARICOM level or the OECS level ... is probably the functionary that will take the thing and make them happen ... thrust it upon the political directorate of these islands ... let's go ... we need to go with this thing ... There tend to be the pious declarations ... when we have the regional meetings ... and maybe then some hesitant bureaucrats ... regional bureaucrats in the end ... they will push a thing as hard or fast as their political directorate pushes them ... and if they're not pushing me I am not bothering ... and too many of these regional initiatives have gotten caught at that level ... because what you have spoken about the subregional mechanism has also been discussed. It has probably come up every time we have OECS Ministers of Education meeting or whatever ... but it has not moved beyond the idea being discussed (15, #7).

As a consequence, this participant felt that, there was not any actual impediment or deterrent as much as the slow pace the regional movement ... I doubt if one can realistically cite a particular factor ... and say ... there is this deterrent that has prevented the thing from happening ... or there is this major impediment that has stood in the way (15, #8).

He argued:

I think it is just a problem of translating ... the making of the declaration to the actualization of the product of these declarations ... I think that this is really where it lies ... and I think the movement at the national level in terms of various countries doing their own thing ... and moving towards that own national accreditation mechanisms ... probably has not helped in and of itself to push the urgency of a regional or sub-regional mechanism (15, #8).

This participant's view is also in keeping with Theodoulou's (2000) argument that policy makers act as the guardians of the public interest. They also understand what is best for the public but refer very little to the public itself.

The issue of reform of the sub-regional qualifications can also come from policy advice provided to politicians by key policy makers who are civil servants. This policy advice could lead to the procurement of grants and aid to fund projects. This also links back to the expertise in preparation of project proposals for funding. Timeliness of submissions, clarity of goals and potentiality of projects are salient to acceptance and success.

As in New Zealand, in the OECS, the government treasury (which is part of the bureaucratic machinery of the civil service) is a mechanism that has a powerful influence on the financing of the policy initiatives. Theodoulou (2000), for example, argues that one cannot underestimate the influence of the civil service on policy formation and implementation, in particular the power of the treasury through its control of departmental spending. According to Theodoulou (2000) such control essentially means the treasury can and does influence every other ministry's policy proposals. A most striking case in point is New Zealand and its Treasury-led model, which had implications for qualifications reform in the country, particularly as it relates to funding imperatives.

### **8.3.8 External Factors**

An eighth theme which emerged as an external factor holding the potential to deter or impede the process was acceptability by the global, external or international market:

The thing which can impede is the acceptance by the global market ... How will people outside look at it? ... You don't only have to look at it locally ... The wider market must accept it ... once you can buy in there and show the relevance of it ... Also, we have a cultural bias ... people believe what comes from outside is much better than what's local ... although CXC has helped to minimize that to a great extent (10, #3).

Ensuring that the education that we are delivering is of the standard that sits on a competitive level ... whether at the local, at the regional, but specially at the international level ... and this is critical at this point in time because there are two developments ... one at the regional level with the services across borders within the Caribbean itself and .... we also have the WTO now advocating other movement of services ... and we in St. Lucia and in the OECS... It is not a choice really ... we just have to get on the bandwagon and ensure that the education that we are delivering is of quality ... and the standard of accreditation is on the same level of theirs ... It is about ensuring that all forms of qualifications can compete out there on the global market (21, #1).

I think there is also an external impetus ... in that because of the intensified contact with the rest of the world ... it is of most importance for us to have our education and in a sense our certification articulated with what is happening extra-regionally ... that is to say ... somebody who has a particular certificate ... that person must have some assurance that the certificate reflects a certain quality to allow him or her to be accepted in institutions outside of the region ... or on jobs outside of the region .... So I think there is also an external impetus that will drive the process, so there are two broad sets of factors ... the factors which are internal to the region ... and those which are external to the region, but broadly speaking, those are some (4, #5).

The excerpts above demonstrate concern for the international market. The acceptability from the international market was emphasized as a factor that could either facilitate or hinder the reformation of the OECS qualifications system, from the viewpoint of participants.

### **3.3.9 Political Leadership/Political Will**

The ninth emergent theme seen as a deterrent was that of lack of political will and leadership. Political will was underscored as the most important factor that could either facilitate or hinder the reformation of the sub-regional qualifications system, according to participants. Participants from the private sector as well as participants of even the highest echelon of Ministries and government organizations placed emphasis on the theme. The following participants argued that:

The bigger picture is the political will and commitment (7, #4).

Another issue for me I think is the will of the policy makers ... I don't want to call them politicians ... because I think too often we in this country, we're driven by politics ... I think the policy makers whoever they may ... need to have the will power to change the qualification system of the OECS ... they must say yes ... this is what has to be done ... this is what we need to do ... Yet nobody seems to think that we have the guts to do it. Look, you are undertaking this important piece of research ... we write papers we go in discussions we do all kind of things ... and yet people are scared ... that if I do it then I'm going to lose political office ... if I do it I'm going to be out of favour ... the unions are going to take to the street and protest ... and so on ... and that itself is another issue ... I think decision makers or policy makers must have the political will and rope in labour unions ... and work together ... I think ... too many times we have not worked with each other ... Many of the answers come down to leadership, vision, practicality, and in some cases greater personal humility about how solutions are best arrived at (1, #6-7).

I think the political will on the part of the leaders ... on the part of the administrators of the systems ... might be the biggest impediment because the OECS are at different levels of development in education ... and those who perceive themselves as being more progressive might not be patient enough to work along with others ... and usually the political will is what makes or breaks any movement ...

Well ... the factor which will most impede the reform of our qualification system is the lack of political will (10, #2).

Some participants linked the possibility of impediment to the political party system of the OECS. Historically, in the countries, two main political parties exchange power. The

dominance of two-party political systems undermines third parties, performance in general elections, which are held every five years. The voter imperative was seen by participants as being a deterrent to change:

Politicians have their own agendas for political reasons ... certain politicians may see that this kind of happening will not be giving them the kind of political authority ... that they would like to have to make political mileage ... and it will be reducing the power that they now have ... In some of the countries ... politicians still want to wield power to say who should get opportunities at local colleges ... so you might find that they might not have the political will to make the change ... or they might put up resistance to an idea like that ... so they can retain power ... then we have 'intellectual masturbation' in the region ... you know the issue of 'better man tells' (18, #4).

I think, in my opinion the most critical factor is the political will ... so that is to say the desire and even more than the desire ... the driving ambition ... should we say collectively of the various nation states reflected in their Prime Ministers and Ministers ... but also in the people ... that is desire to come together ... that is the most important thing ... because once you have that ... there is commonality ... a certain unified focus in terms of where we want to go ... there will always be some difference in the detail ... but the major thrust of unification would be there (4, #4).

So the political will to drive the process forward of harmonizing the OECS, the sub-region in education is to me the most critical factor. But there are other facilitating things such as the institutions that help to fuel the process ... But by and large it has to have a political impetus from the highest level ... and as you know ... we are at a stage of hysteria now ... the process is being accelerated and hence we can expect a faster pace to the reform and the harmonization of the education systems in the OECS and within that framework of quality assurance (4, #5).

The preceding excerpts indicate that the elected politicians who served as Ministers of Education and highest policy makers did not perceive there to be any problem of this kind. This is reflected in their perspectives differ from those of participants. Their views were in dissonance with the views 'on the ground'. According to one Minister of Education:

Maybe there just needs to be a resolve of 'let's make this thing happen' ... but the resolve has to come from the political directorate in the region or sub-region ... or whether it has to come from the educational technicians themselves ... Somewhere along the line the push has to come ... and I think once it comes ... we have enough personnel within the region and some of the very organizations ... that you have named have enough capacity within themselves to make it happen (15, #7).

An educator concurred:

Of course, politically, if the political directorate may buy in ... that is always a plus ... but we can't always wait on the politicians to understand it ... The technocrats and professionals have to be able to sell it to them (10, #3).

In summation of the factors that deter or inhibit the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, major deterrents were identified as political will, resistance to change, the potential lack of consultation and collaboration and resource allocations. The comments made on the politics, legislative and policy making processes and the role of educators, technicians and professionals in influencing the process were identified as significant, and if not taken seriously could be major deterrents to change. All concurred, however, that the capacity of the OECS to provide a competitive edge for its citizens seemed to be hampered by its outmoded qualifications system.

#### **8.4 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter has reported on the key factors and arguments that drive and deter the need to change the qualifications system in the OECS. Results indicate that that one of the major factors is the climate of change and shifting global imperatives from which 'smallness' has not exempted the OECS. There were several parallels with the case of New Zealand (see Chapter Six in particular). By way of example, external factors, such as neoliberalism, globalization, new marketization, competition and individualism have extended the frontiers of consumerism into all social areas, including education, dominated interview data. Other factors identified in light of the climate of change were migration and the free movement of skills, services and peoples (Little, 2000), which have contributed to (i) changes in the composition, control and locus of employment; (ii) the skill requirement of modern sector jobs and livelihoods; and (iii) life chances and social mobility more generally. In this climate of change, Wolf's (2002) assertion holds that, realistically, those with qualifications are worth more than those without. These factors also have implications for access, portability, transferability and relevance of parts of, or whole, qualifications. These factors also have implications for a proliferation of offerings from varied institutions and organizations. These proliferations have implications for standards, transparency, accountability, quality assurance, monitoring and control (OECD, 1999). Findings point to factors such as the need for enhancement of human capital through a qualifications system that recognizes these changes. The NZQA experience is widely applicable in this regard.

As in the case of New Zealand discussed in the past two chapters, interview data revealed that the region is ill-prepared for regional and international social and economic developments. Historical factors of divisiveness, geographical boundaries, a narrow education path and an outmoded examination/ assessment/qualification system that recognizes only some types of learning are seen as major inhibitors. As the mantra of lifelong learning and changing modes and roles of assessment pervades societies of all sizes, populations and levels of economic development, a closer look at the present system, as suggested by participants, affirmed a major theme of this thesis.

Internally, it was thought that in light of the climate of change, the outmoded qualifications and assessment system of the OECS that recognized one type of learning and is based on a sifting and sorting role presented challenges as an inhibitor of life chances. Therefore, the disadvantageous position of the learners of the sub-region as a result of our present system was seen as a driver for reform. Findings also indicate that smallness of size of landmasses and populations and the influences of resource transfers, external aid and imposition of adherence to foreign policy were also seen as inhibiting factors.

As in the results of the NZQA case study findings, debates on education being a vehicle of national economic and social development whether they are conceptualized within managerialism or other terminology (globalization, regionalization or nationalization), are interfaced with discourses on education. This discourse continues to renew interest in the role of education and nature of the relationships among the politics, education and the economy. As was the case in the New Zealand context, this relationship was seen as being polygamous in the OECS context - in that the economy and education both have several partners and collaborators. In the need for change in qualifications system, the dominant discourses for change were that of the economic and political. The findings point to the notion that the reform of the qualifications framework of the OECS cannot be separated from the loose grouping of the discourses of education (Blackmore, 1988). The discourses of assessment, learner transformation, intervention and learning processes, however, were not emphasized in interview data. As in the case of New Zealand, the main concern appears to be the outputs of the system - what is coming out of the education system in this changing environment?

It is in this light that it is also argued that while the two loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education theory may appear to be theoretically contesting on the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems, they are not necessarily divergent at the level of practice. In the real world, they are inextricably linked. In any national context, it is a question of more of one, or less of the other – a relative positioning of the discourses. Based on the theoretical analyses, it can be concluded that no one learning theory or assessment theory and practice would be appropriate to drive any qualifications framework. Any attempt to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. The need for a better balance between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment than presently exists is suggested.

The factors identified provide a foundation for theorizing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework.

## Chapter Nine

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### CONCLUSION THEORIZING TOWARDS AN OECS QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

#### 9.1 Introduction

The introduction and first chapter of this thesis presented the purpose of this research as being threefold: On one dimension, this research reported on the case study findings of the successes and challenges of the New Zealand experience as perceived by the NZQA participants. At a second level, it was about using case study findings to theorize the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework. At a third and more theoretical level, this thesis has explored the central argument that the need for change in national qualifications systems and the nature of the change are informed by a constellation of discourses. These discourses have been rationalized throughout this thesis as falling into two loose groupings, namely managerialism, and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is notable tension.

In this Chapter, the key themes derived from the three dimensions of this research are revisited to make links among the data, theorize the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, and to argue for changes taking a particular direction. The main lessons from New Zealand (about how to establish an OECS qualifications framework of the most effective type) are elucidated. In particular, a clear quality role comprising the validity and reliability of assessments for awarding qualifications is discussed. In theorizing towards an OECS qualifications framework issues cogitated include the overall design of the framework (a unitary framework versus a linkage of distinct components), internal assessment, criterion and norm based assessments, and standards based assessment. The practical implications, areas for further research, points of interest if the research were to start afresh, and the limitations of this research, precede the conclusion.

## 9.2 Theorizing the Need for an OECS Qualifications Framework

This thesis has attempted to theorize the need for change in the qualifications system of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) towards an OECS qualifications framework based on a qualitative case study of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). For the most part, the literature supported Young's (2003a) assertion that "despite the differences, it is clear that in their reasons for implementing an NQF, all the countries share the same set of broad ideas about its structure and purpose" (p. 226). In this research, it can be concluded that reasons for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, a developing sub-region with a population of 500,000, are not very different from the reasons why New Zealand, a developed country with a population of about four million, pursued this end. As was the case in New Zealand (see for example Boston, et al., 1991, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Hood, 1998; Levin, 2001), the reasons for qualifications reform in the OECS were found to be multiple.

Theoretically and practically, the establishment of an OECS qualifications framework can be viewed as "an 'integrated' system, linked from inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanisms in which it is practiced" (Foucault, 1977, p. 176). Such changing economic contexts were shown to have definitely influenced qualifications reform in the case of New Zealand. For the OECS, some of the major reasons for a qualifications framework emanate also from the pressures of the changing economic contexts worldwide.

As indicated in Chapter Eight, major economic restructuring can be attributed to the responses of leaders of the countries to the ascendancy of world systems such as neoliberalism, managerialism, globalization, trade liberalization (and their advocacies of WTO, GATT, FTAA) and their implications for micro-states such as the OECS. As a characteristic response to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, for instance, the CARICOM Heads of Government (at their 34th meeting held in Dominica in July 2001) took a decision to intensify economic integration through the establishment of a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) by August 2005. The 35th meeting of the Authority held in Anguilla at the end January 2002 ratified the main elements of this economic union implementation project prepared by the Secretariat:

The rationale for the establishment of an economic union is anchored in the acceptance of the fact that ... the development challenges the micro-states of the OECS face as a result of globalization and trade liberalization ... can only be effectively addressed through the creation of a single economic space which facilitates the free movement of

people, goods, services and capital ... and as a result the economic diversification and growth ... greater export competitiveness and ... more employment and human resource development (Caricom, 2002).

One implication of the global and regional market principles is that of migration and the movement of skills, knowledge, labour and services. In this movement, credentials become critical for selection of students into the job market. Therefore, in this changing economic context, qualifications have acquired a legitimacy which makes them invaluable both as a rhetorical device and as a means of managing the aspirations of individuals and economic visions of OECS nations (see Chapters Two and Eight). They are used primarily as screening devices, and as indicators of competency or intellectual capacity. They have also become a measure for livelihood givers and livelihood seekers who want knowledge, skills and, by extension, certificates that are portable, accessible, flexible and relevant at the time of need (Little, 2000).

In this climate of change therefore, there is need for a qualifications framework in which all qualifications have a purpose and relationship to each other that every OECS citizen can understand (NZ Statutes, 1989). A qualifications framework is needed in the context of existing arrangements for collaboration in linking national and regional efforts. It can be used to bring about legitimacy, coherence, order and shape to certificates, programmes and qualifications and parts of qualifications which to date remain and might otherwise remain incoherent and disconnected in the region. Further, there would be need for a qualifications framework to determine relevance, verify international and regional equivalency, for accreditation, and for mere recognition of competencies already achieved (prior learning). Essentially, a qualifications framework can serve as an instrument of classification or communication that enables "learners and employers to be clearer about what qualifications offer, where they lead and how they are located within the overall system" (Young, 2003a, p. 233); thus providing a map for all end users.

The advocacies of world systems (globalization, trade liberalization, neoliberalism), and the new Caribbean Single Market and Economy arrangements (with their free market policies, individualism, and competition) have extended the frontiers of consumerism into all social areas including Education. Both the global and regional neoliberal/market principles inevitably give rise to the commodification of education and educational services (proliferation of offerings, new technological forms of delivery), and an increasingly unrestricted market including the internationalization of curricula, trans-national education, extraterritorial provision, offshore education, and collaborative

provision of education; and by implication, the expansion of the post-compulsory sector. In light of these new world (and regional) systems, a qualifications framework is needed for quality and quality assurance, monitoring, control and as a regulatory device to facilitate the changing economic context. It is needed to provide an indispensable grounding for the establishment of policies and criteria for registration, validation and accreditation of institutions, and endorsement of programmes that lead to certification.

In addition to being challenged by the discourse of managerialism in the advocacies of world systems such as neoliberalism and globalization -WTO, GATT, FTAA, CSME, among others (see Kelsey, 2004; Olssen *et. al*, 2004, for discussions on these world orders), as in New Zealand, one major reason for a qualifications framework has to do with the development of human capital. There is need for a qualifications framework to monitor career, occupation and training organizations, and developments in their field, and to regularly research and advise on the review of the qualifications in post-school education and training. An OECS qualifications framework is essential for the promotion, development and expansion of parts of qualifications and qualifications that are relevant, flexible and coherent to meet national and regional needs (including the public and private sector needs).

In the OECS, the lack of options is viewed as a high failure rate. This perceived high failure rate affects the economic outlook. As Marginson (1993) explains, “the development of contemporary economies depends crucially on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of their work forces - in short on their human capital” (p. 20). To reiterate, Fitzsimons (1999b) has argued that “the indicators of skills are qualifications, which according to human capital theory, are signifiers of national wealth and can be evaluated through their credit values” (p. 141). Results in this research point to questions about the extent of preparedness of the majority of individual citizens of the OECS sub-region, when the overriding purpose of its qualification system (inherited from the British) continues to be that of certifying a select few.

Viewed in this light, the development of our human capital/human resource of the OECS is being affected. In order to improve the knowledge and skill base of the human resources of the OECS, there is a requisite to reduce the seemingly high failure rates of learners and to narrow the widening gap of learners who do not attain acceptable levels of qualifications. There is also the question of ameliorating the low participation rates of citizens in further education (because they have been ‘weeded out’ by the examination

system). More so, there is a dire need to increase the options for recognizing the competencies of the 15+ age group after they have failed to make it through the formal vertical structure of the present system. Expansion is needed in the qualifications for the 15+ age group in a bid to enhance the economic competitiveness of individuals, nations and the sub-region. As in the case of New Zealand, a qualifications framework has the capacity to create successful partnerships with industries, improve worker skills, recognize competencies already achieved by workers, expand qualifications, and minimize the academic and vocational divide by creating the conditions for the transition between school (academic) and the world of work.

Another major reason for changing the present qualifications system therefore, has to do with the short comings of the qualifications system itself. The OECS system is one of exclusion, as to date it is premised on “the belief that only a proportion of people [are] capable of higher learning, and [its role is] to sift and reward those who [are]” (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20). To fulfil its role, it marginalizes and condemns a large proportion of the human resource of the OECS to relative failure, as is substantiated by the less than five per cent of the 18 to 30 age group enrolled in higher education (Beckles, 2004). Within the system, there are in-built barriers such as the recognition of only limited learning fields; limited access; the lack of flexibility, portability and transferability of learning. There is also the lack of recognition of all learning and recognition of the competencies already achieved.

Because of its tendency to marginalize learners, the social effects of exclusion are rampant (World Bank, 2003). Internally:

[CARICOM and the OECS are] currently facing a dangerous cocktail of economic crisis ... rising crime, and a generation of increasingly alienated and frustrated young men and women. In response, small states are investing a high proportion of their public expenditure in the development of their human resources and seeking to diversify their economies ... Due to their limited resources and high skills needs, the development [and reform] of post secondary education [and resulting qualifications] is perhaps especially important (Holmes, 2003, p13).

While the qualifications system continues to sift and sort, the perceived failure rate and the burden of underachievement are not evenly distributed. The present qualifications system is viewed as promoting ‘elitism’. For some there is no sense of purpose. The lack of sense of belongingness and values, low self esteem, high crime rate, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse among youth are some of the repercussions (World Bank,

2003). As in New Zealand, the OECS findings favour a new framework which would increase access, widen participation, increase access and promote social justice.

In summation, drawing from NZQA and OECS case study findings in this research, the need for change in the OECS can be thought of as being propelled by the following:

- The outmoded *modus operandi* of the OECS qualifications system in sifting, sorting and selecting learners;
- Narrow qualifications structure – perceived obstacles/barriers to movement from one qualification to another; the need to maximize access, flexibility and portability between different sectors of education;
- The need for recognition and certification of a wide spectrum of learning in a context in which qualifications/certificates have developed into a legitimate culture;
- To provide options; widen participation and choice to those who have traditionally not participated in education and training;
- The promotion of “greater social justice, equity and inclusion” (Hodgson, 2000, p. 52). Need for self-esteem, a sense of self worth, belongingness;
- The need for relevance of qualifications and parts of qualifications in the changing economy (knowledge based/serviced based industries);
- The advocacy of lifelong (continuous) learning; the changing occupational spectrum in an individual’s life span; the need for continuous learning and (re)skilling and (re)training; and the need for a qualifications system to facilitate those changes;
- Transparency to end-users as to what qualifications signify and what learners have to achieve or have achieved;
- The need for quality assurance, accountability, regulation, classification and monitoring;
- The need to address consistency in nomenclature;
- Classify qualifications within one framework and chart pathways for learner through horizontal and vertical progression;
- Act as a lever for change for emerging qualifications to gain reputation and recognition;
- Monitor and regulate the development of qualifications, by approving, accrediting institutions and programmes;
- Research and ensure that appropriate assessment strategies are adapted where possible;

- Maintain a national database of registered and listed qualifications (credits) and their articulation with other qualifications; and a record of learning for learners.

In establishing the need for an OECS qualifications framework, the New Zealand experience suggests that the sifting, sorting and selection *modus operandi* of the qualifications systems of the OECS is itself a major barrier to meeting the above listing of demands. In an endeavour to meet those various demands, the present OECS qualifications system needs to be reformed to one which recognizes a wide spectrum of learning; and one that provides for progression in learning “either vertically to more complex and demanding activities or laterally to new and different areas of learning” (Broadfoot, 1996b, p. 196). Through a qualifications framework, new thinkings on learning and assessment can be accommodated and applied - the recognition of multiple intelligences and competencies; and sites and modes of learning and the changing nature of the learner (Bell & Cowie, 2001b; Broadfoot, 2002; Claxton, 2002; Carr, McGee, Jones, McKinley, et al., 2000). It holds the potential to dispel perception that the traditional psychometric measurements of norm referencing and its qualifications culture are sacrosanct. As in the case of New Zealand, a qualifications framework may be used to introduce new developments on learning and assessment: criterion referenced assessment, internal assessment, and school based assessment; and to inform how best the new developments in learning and educational assessment can be used to provide a better indication and recognition of what learners have acquired. Notably, such a framework would deviate from the inherited British vertical system, as well as from the present psychometric ‘testing’ view to a broader concept of educational assessment.

Major deterrents identified in case study findings of the OECS in Chapter Eight included the inherent wider social, political, and geographical contexts within which any suggested reform would have to be implemented. Factors that hold the potential to deter change were identified as historical strife, geographical dislocation, the lack of resources, the individual political agendas and the varying levels of economic and social advancements of individual OECS countries. Findings also point to pressures from international funding agencies (World Bank, IMF for example) and the imposition of external policies for conformity to their ideologies as to what is best for the education system of the OECS. There was also the likelihood of resistance by OECS citizens and ‘elites’ who hold the traditional views that post-compulsory education and training is only for a select few, and that summative assessment (mainly in the form of external

examinations) is the best approach for the process (see Lennox, 1995; Peddie & Tuck, 1995, for similar arguments in the New Zealand context). Given both the NZQA and OECS case study findings, however, it is concluded that in establishing the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework, the factors which drive the need for the reorientation of the sub-regional qualifications system outweigh the deterrents and the impediments.

Theoretically, the key arguments for an OECS qualifications framework tend to support the central tenet in this research. The political and economic climate driven by the ascent of managerialism appears to be the dominant discourse that informs the need and nature of change in both the New Zealand and OECS contexts. While it is clear from the findings of this research that major arguments are drawn from the discourses of management and economics, the discourses of education theory of learning and assessment and managerialism have not polarized, nor were they viewed as discrete entities (as portrayed in the literature in Chapters Three and Four) in the responses of participants. These discourses were evidenced in the idea of promoting access to qualifications as a means of upskilling the OECS populations in order to maximise or 'fit in' with the development of the inevitable globalized, neoliberal, complex, technological economies. As in New Zealand (Chapters Six and Seven), OECS participants saw the need for a qualifications framework as a strategy in the development of individual and national capacity, sustainable development and individual and economic competitiveness (see Chapter Eight). These drivers of change are also in keeping with what the OECD sees as the "third wave of reform within the history of modern western education" (Fitzsimons, 1999b, p. 141). This third wave, according to Fitzsimons (1999b), "is the idea of mass participation in tertiary education as a way of upskilling their populations" (p. 141). The two previous waves identified by (Fitzsimons, 1999b) that have also affected the OECS were the moves towards primary education at the end of the nineteenth century and the development of secondary education in the mid-twentieth century.

Arguably, this need for change forces convergence between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment. Drawing from Foucault's (1977) notion of discourse, seemingly, this dominant discourse of managerialism has applied and continues to apply pressure for the change in the learning and assessment and certification systems. In the case of New Zealand, this dominant discourse has become a site of contest (Codd, 1999, for instance).

Generally, as in New Zealand, in the OECS context the present framework was viewed as an inhibitor of life chances and in contradiction to changes taking place in Economics and Education. In a changing economic and social context, Wolf's conclusion (in Chapter Three) is found to be applicable: Does education matter - "not just any education: [but] having the right qualifications, in the right subjects, from the right institutions, is of ever growing importance" (Wolf, 2002, p. 244). As in New Zealand, such concerns in the OECS context call to question the 'exclusiveness' of qualifications and affirm the need for change towards an OECS qualifications framework.

The reasons for change continue to demonstrate that any attempt to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. The need for a better balance between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment than presently exists is suggested.

### **9.3 Main Lessons From the NZQA**

The New Zealand experience is widely applicable to the OECS, and there are critical aspects from the New Zealand experience which can be adapted to suit any change towards an OECS qualifications framework. This section draws on accounts of the previous chapters to provide conclusions to the overall purpose of this research: How might the experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) be used to theorize towards an OECS qualifications framework? The lessons for the OECS from the New Zealand experience are organized along the following (i) Pragmatic Reasons for Change (ii) Clear Purpose and Quality Assurance Role (iii) Legitimacy Through Legislative Support (iv) Overall Design of the Framework (v) Operating Structures of the Framework (Register and NQF) and Key Elements of the Framework (vi) Managing Relationships With Existing Organizations (vii) Suggested Type of Framework Most Effective for the OECS based on the lessons from the New Zealand experience.

#### **9.3.1 Pragmatic Reasons for the Framework**

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework was established for pragmatic reasons to meet societal demands (Hodgetts, 1998). As previously discussed, these pragmatic reasons present clear lessons as to why the OECS should establish a qualifications framework. By way of summary, if the origins of the NZQA are analyzed, it was a

climate of change both internal and external to New Zealand in terms of social, economics and politics – a climate of change which the OECS is presently experiencing.

It has clearly been demonstrated (in Chapter Six) that in New Zealand, the 1990s was a period of major economic restructuring or structural adjustment (Chapter Six; see also Codd, 1990, 1995, 1999; Grace, 1990, 1999; Kelsey, 1995, 2003; McKenzie, 1999a, 1999b; McKenzie, Lee & Lee, 1996). Part of the problem, according to Hood (1998), lay in the magnitude of New Zealand's economic problems and the perception among policy makers that 'radical surgery' was needed to overcome the growing problems of international indebtedness and economic stagnation. As with some other countries, influential factors in the New Zealand reform included fiscal imperatives, the basic ideological shift to the political Right and the quest for accountability of the bureaucracy and political executive (Boston, 1991; Boston, et al., 1991, 1996; Scott, 2001; Snook et al., 1999). Another reason was attributed to a group of reform-minded policy analysts in New Zealand (Boston, 1991). This group, according to Boston (1991), was familiar with theoretical literature of the new institutional economics. In what has been described in several terminologies (for example, the New Right philosophy or Economic Rationalization), New Zealand experienced an application of a new model of governance – managerialism – across all levels of the State (Fitzsimons, 1999b). Coupled with New Zealand's experience the application of a new model of governance – managerialism (with its outcomes based approach) – across all levels of the State (Boston, 1991; Fitzsimons, 1999b), there was a resurgence in the human capital theory and the ascent of neoliberalism (free market policies and bleeding territorial boundaries) worldwide.

In this political and economic climate of change, education became the scapegoat. The education system was linked with escalating social problems and the perceived inadequacies of the economy (Beeby, 1992; Codd, 1995; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Hood, 1998; McKenzie, Lee & Lee, 1997; Openshaw, 1995; Openshaw, Lee & Lee, 1993; Philips, 2003). From an education discourse perspective, the outdated curriculum, assessment and certification system and the perceived high failure rate in the education system were highlighted as major concerns. The "declining educational standards, issues of curriculum development, teacher incompetence, illiteracy, and numerous other problems and deficiencies were attributed to the education system" (Codd, 1990, p.192- 193).

The 'main problem' in the New Zealand education system was believed to be the qualifications/examinations system (Chapter Six). One third of the employees of New

Zealand had no qualifications (OECD, 1993), youth unemployment rose and credentials became critical for selecting students for the labour market. Some writers (McKenzie, *et al.*, 1996; Openshaw, 1995) argued that in New Zealand up until 1975, students leaving school without formal qualifications obtained employment without much difficulty, but intense competition for later employment made the level of qualifications for employment purposes crucial. Seemingly, there was a high rate of failure, particularly among specific groups who did not attain acceptable levels of qualifications (Harrison, 2004; *Learning & Achieving*, 1986; *Tomorrow's Schools*, 1989). School leaving qualifications at higher levels became increasingly significant for selection and recruitment or as screening instruments, rather than as indicators of individual capacity and otherwise (Codd, 1995; Dore, 1976; *Learning & Achieving*, 1986; *The White Paper*, 1999). Gaining credentials for the job market remained the prime focus in the minds of the public. According to Olssen & Matthews (1997), in the secondary school system, senior school examinations tended to dominate the curriculum. (See Figure 2.2, and Tables 2.2 and 2.3 in Chapter Two for the OECS' situation).

Moreover, there was an array of qualifications, parts of qualifications and validating agencies which were disparate, incoherent and disconnected. There was incoherence, duplication, overlaps, redundancies, inefficiencies and major confusion for learners (*The Hawke Report*, 1988; *The Picot Report*, 1988; *The Probine-Fargher Report*, 1987)

Investigative reports commissioned by the New Zealand government (*The Hawke Report*, (1988); *The Green Paper* (1986); *Learning and Achieving*, (1986), *Learning for Life Two: Policy decisions* (1989); *The Picot Report* (1988); *The Probine-Fargher Report* (1987)) attributed failure in the education system to several factors. In the main, there were concerns in the reports that the education system was not in tune with changing trends because of the deficiencies that were believed to exist in the school curriculum and outdated certification systems. Other concerns included the inability of the education system to deal with the changing nature of society, such as the changing nature of work, pressures to be internationally competitive, the rapid development of new technologies, a resurgence in the human capital theory and the ascent of neoliberalism worldwide (see Chapter Six).

All investigative reports commissioned by the governments suggested change in the qualifications system of New Zealand. To "overcome the situation in which so many young people leave school disaffected and with no formal qualification" (*The Picot Report*,

1988; p. viii), *Picot* recommended the establishment of one State validation authority to validate all non-degree courses and to increase the co-ordination between secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The Education and Labour Departments recommended a National Vocational Qualifications Board (NVQB). *Hawke* (1988) recommended the establishment of a National Education Qualifications Authority with three distinct boards – a NVQB, a School Qualifications Board and an Academic Qualifications Board.

When the NZQA case study findings are applied in establishing the need for change in the OECS' qualifications system, the OECS can relate to the key arguments, events and factors which purportedly gave rise to radical reform in the qualifications system of New Zealand (see *Anthony*, 2003; *Girvan*, 2002; *Louisy*, 2003). A significant lesson for the OECS is that of attempting to establish a qualifications framework for pragmatic reasons.

### 9.3.2 Clear Purpose and Precise Role Including Quality Role

What would be the purpose and role of an OECS qualifications framework? In traversing the literature, distinctions have been made among what is meant by the notion of 'a qualifications framework' and the senses in which the term 'framework' is used and the purpose and role for a qualifications framework (Chapter Three). Another lesson from the New Zealand experience, therefore, is the need for a precise role for a qualifications framework. Findings demonstrated that key challenges for the NZQA involved issues such as confused terminologies, duplication of roles, and decoupling formulation from policy implementation. A clear purpose and precise role will provide definability for the framework (*Bardach*, 2000). Definability means definitive policy with delineation of terminologies for clarity and consistency. An initial stage of the process would therefore be to establish definite parameters for all relevant concepts in order to minimize confusion. A clear purpose and precise role would assist with delineating policy to support the role of the framework.

To identify a clear purpose and precise role for an OECS framework, two sources can be used, firstly, the New Zealand Education Amendment Act (1990: Section 253c). The Act states that:

"All qualifications (including pre-vocational courses provided under the Access training Scheme) [to] have a purpose and relationship to each other that students and public can understand; and

a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved (Education Amendment Act, 1990: Section 253 (c))."

Secondly, the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (2003a) definition (see next paragraph) can be used in theorizing due to its inclusivity and, its close approximation to the legislative Charter of the NZQA (see Appendix A). These two sources define a clear role for an OECS qualifications framework.

#### 9.3.2.1 Quality Role for a National Qualifications Framework

Drawing from the above named sources, qualifications framework for the OECS may be thought of as a "nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between training and awards" (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2003a, p.1). This definition implies therefore that, firstly, a Qualifications Framework for the OECS must have political support. Secondly, it must command public confidence; and, thirdly, if qualifications (certificates) are assumed to be voices of the learning and assessment process (see Crooks, 1988), learning and assessment ought to be at the core of any qualifications framework (Chapter Four). As a major consequence, any qualifications framework for the OECS must be built on all the good principles of assessment in order to recognize achievement and define achievements in relation to each other. As indicated previously, the OECS qualifications framework can be viewed as regulatory and monitoring instrument in the control of the expansion of the post-compulsory sector or as an instrument of communication or classification (Young, 2003a). Past this minimum, however, one significant role for an OECS qualifications framework can be that of assuring the quality of qualifications.

#### 9.3.2.2 Validity and Reliability

Primarily, qualifications and parts of qualifications are awarded through assessment. Assessment may be defined as the systematic gathering of evidence of student learning to make decisions on educational matters such as awarding qualifications or parts of qualifications. These decisions are made on the assumption that the evidence gathered is valid and reliable. This research concurs with Black who refers to these processes simply "as confidence in the results" (1998, p. 37). The higher the stakes, the more important it becomes that "the validity and reliability of an assessment procedure command confidence" (Brooks, 2002, p. 176). Any assessment where there is little confidence in the accuracy of results is futile. A clear quality assurance role for an OECS qualifications framework is that of ensuring validity and reliability of assessments.

As shown in Chapter Six, major issues arise in this research for validity and reliability of assessments. One such issue is that of the sufficiency of assessment and the amount of assessment. Seemingly this points to a major concern of the NZQA (1996 - *A Guide to Learning and Assessment*) that “most of the concerns about standards-based assessments come down to sufficiency” (p. 55). Sufficiency, according to Barker (1995), is “the collection of a suitable range of evidence” (p. 29). A suitable range and collection of evidence is necessary “to ensure that the assessment evidence gathered is sufficient to give the assessor confidence that the learner has met all the requirements” (Fitzsimons 1997b, p. 31). Also, a foremost threat to validity is that of lack of clear definitions of the standards to enable assessors to make clear judgments; whereas with reliability, the major threat is seen as inter-rater and intra-rater reliability. Seemingly, the leading problem (in Scotland, Queensland and New Zealand), which affects the reliability of the results appears to be inaccuracy and the inconsistencies in assessors’ judgements.

For any qualifications framework, it is concluded that the challenge for educational assessment is to ensure that there is confidence in the results of assessment (both formative and summative, criterion referenced and norm referenced, internal and external, and or high or low stakes) and by implication in the qualifications awarded. Reliability and validity are therefore indispensable quality assurance processes for an OECS qualifications framework.

Arguably, these issues have implications for moderation of assessment tasks. Moderation is one of the techniques used to ensure consistency and comparability of results. Implications for the OECS therefore would be (i) to bring “the work of different pupils in different schools, assessed by different people upon different patterns of assessment, ... into relationship with standards that are more widely based” (Hale, 1974, p. 186); and (ii) “aligning standards with internal assessment” (Daugherty, 1994, p. 104). Based on the New Zealand context, combinations of these two are critical for the OECS. Harlen (1994) and Strachan’s (1994, 1995) views that moderation should encompass all activities that help to ensure consistent interpretation and application and certification of the standards/outcomes are particularly helpful.

While moderation was underscored as one of the quality assurance policies, interview data from the New Zealand context did not emphasize the moderation procedures undertaken by the NZQA or any caveats with moderation. In theorizing change towards an OECS qualifications system, however, the caveats of moderation (consistency and

comparability of results, human resource expertise, costs, feasibility, consistency, sufficiency and manageability (workloads of teachers) of the system) which were highlighted in Chapter Three must be considered (Foulkes, *et al.*, 1996; Harlen, 1994; Keown, 1996; Strachan, 1995, 1996, for example).

### 9.3.2.3 Further Quality Assurance and Quality Control Procedures

Further attempts to establish validity and reliability of assessments and assessment results by an OECS qualifications framework can be made through quality control and quality assurance procedures (in Chapter Three). In the managerial model, "quality control is the process of weeding out the imperfect product, meaning those which fall outside of tolerance limits" (Harlen, 1994, p. 17). Quality assurance on the other hand, "constantly monitors the steps at arriving at the product and in making sure that all processes are optimally carried out and, theoretically prevents imperfect products" (Harlen, 1994, p. 17). These definitions have implications for what happens before, and during and after assessments respectively.

Lessons from the case of the NZQA indicate that quality assurance is triangulated - the first leg is that of setting the standards. The two other legs are pursued through a series of systematic quality checks of accreditation and moderation. In spite of the fact that quality audits were not emphasized by the NZQA, documentary evidence (see NZQA, 1993a, for instance) has shown that quality audits are also a delegated feature of the NZQA's quality assurance process (see Meade & Woodhouse (2000) for an account of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the New Zealand Academic Audit). Quality audits are significant as they provide a source of constant review.

In the triangulated process of quality assurance as described in the NZQA case study findings (Chapters Six and Seven), standards and outcomes are the first building blocks of the NZQA's strategy to quality assurance. These standards/outcomes are firstly pre-defined (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Jessup, 1995; L'Ecuyer & Peace Lenn, 1994; Mitchell, 1995; Priestley, 1999). New Zealand is not the only country that uses the standards based approach for ensuring quality (see Ellis, 1995; Jessup, 1995; Lowe, 1995; Stanton, 1995; Steadman, 1995, for example).

As discussed previously, a vital aspect of the quality assurance process is moderation. The NZQA (1993a, 2004a) views moderation as a process to ensure consistency and comparability of assessment with the required standard.

Accreditation was also a key part of the quality assurance triangle. As in the literature (see Harvey, 2004; Scheele, 2004; Woodhouse, 2003), there were several dimensions and interpretations to accreditation among NZQA participants. In Chapter Three the theoretical framework pointed to accreditation as focussing on inputs, and/or process, or outputs, or any combination of these. The NZQA's (1993a) model adds to these dimensions in its attempts to differentiate among "accreditation of providers", "group accreditation", "general accreditation" and "unit accreditation" (pp. 39-40). Although not fully extrapolated in this research, these variations cannot be brushed aside by the OECS as they are potential sources of difficulty at the implementation level (Harvey, 2004; Scheele, 2004; Woodhouse, 2003). Essentially, the OECS would have to establish common understanding of the term accreditation.

One basic assumption in establishing the NZQA was that it was expected to raise standards and the quality of education and qualifications (see *The Hawke Report*, 1988, for instance). Results suggest that the NZQA is inclined towards accepting its documentation of the operational policies of standards setting, moderation, accreditation and auditing as connoting quality assurance and raising the standards of education in New Zealand. One major assumption is that there is quality as long as an institution has gone through these processes.

One lesson for the OECS in terms of quality and quality assurance is that while the NQF, the Register and the quality assurance mechanisms (of standards setting, moderation and accreditation) can transform the learning experience through enhancement and empowerment of the learner, one view in the New Zealand context is that these mechanisms emphasize monitoring, regulation and control of institutional performance; rather than learner improvement, enhancement and transformation (Barrow, 1999; Horsburgh, 1999). In theorizing a quality assurance role for an OECS qualifications framework, it is suggested in this research that there ought to be clear procedures for ensuring that learner improvement and transformation are the main goals; and that such goals are not just "potential spin-offs of those processes" (Harvey, 2004, p. 210).

In summation, the OECS qualifications framework can be viewed as regulatory and monitoring instrument in the control of the expansion of the post-compulsory sector or as an instrument of communication or classification (Young, 2003a). Past this minimum, one of the key roles of an OECS qualifications framework can be that of quality control and quality assurance.

### 9.3.3 Legality

Success in the New Zealand experience is due largely to the status of the NZQA as a Crown agency and its protection by formal legislative charter. One lesson for the OECS is that theoretically this Crown agency with legislative support utilized a unitary framework to survive and to control, monitor and regulate the award of qualifications by educational institutions. In theory, the agencies that award qualifications are accountable to the State through the NZQA (Barrow, 1999).

The legislation (the aspects of which relate to the NZQA are shown in Appendix A) makes provisions for a clear role and purpose of a national qualification framework. One lesson for the OECS is that there are challenges with the legislation: The interpretation of the legislation by different parties was identified as one challenge that gives rise to obscurity at the level of practice. Its interpretation depended too much on individual personalities and on whether several general managers and chief executives could make contact with other heads of agencies, and managers in other places. Variations in terminologies, inconsistencies with other pieces of legislation and the lack of empowerment for the NZQA to take corrective measures were other challenges expressed by NZQA participants. Such lessons with the legislation were shown to impede the operational principles and procedures of the NZQA at the level of practice.

In the then climate of change, however, the legislative charter provided legitimacy for the NZQA to direct the change in the New Zealand qualifications system. Notwithstanding the findings that there are some challenges associated with the legislation (Chapter Seven), one major facilitator of success is the legislative charter. It has been the anchor that has set the pace for the change.

### 9.3.4 Overall Design of the National Qualifications Framework

One major lesson for the OECS is that of the overall design of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. In its bid to fulfil its legislative mandate of creating a flexible system for gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved (NZ Statutes, 1989), the nature of the change in the qualifications framework for New Zealand resulted in a supposedly unified national qualifications framework (NQF). This all inclusive system has the goal of organizing all qualifications, both academic and vocational learning, in one structure. It utilizes an outcomes based /criterion referenced based approach to assessment. It also emphasizes internal assessment. The currency for the achievement standards, unit standards and qualifications is the credits (NZQA,

1992a, 2001a, 2003a, 2003b). Through this all inclusive framework it is hoped that the quality of post compulsory education and training will be maintained.

Unit standards and qualifications are given credit values on the NQF and the Register, respectively. These credit values allow for a flexible system of delivery, transferability, portability and flexibility and the progression of learners. It is the credit system that also allows for the flexibility in gaining qualifications. Instead of studying on one site or at one institution, learners can gain credits from a number of providers who offer the units required for a qualification. This is documented on what NZQA calls the Record of Learning (ROL). Credits are important in the recognition of competencies already achieved or for prior learning. They can be acquired for informal learning and can be transferred to formal learning, thus avoiding duplication (Roberts, 1997).

Theoretically, the intent was for the NQF to end the traditional binary division of academic and vocational education that seemingly existed in New Zealand's education system (Barker, 1994; Hodgetts, 1998; Philips, 2003). To a certain extent this has been achieved through portability, flexibility and transferability of units. The most important lesson for the OECS is that this arrangement does not prejudice academic against vocational learning.

Up until March 2001, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was the sole qualifications framework of New Zealand (NZQA, 2001a). The National Qualifications Framework has eight levels. Underlying the National Qualifications Framework is the postulation that qualifications can be built on standards defined *a priori*. Therefore, on this eight-level national qualifications framework, a qualification is not registered as a single body of knowledge. Each qualification on this eight-level framework has to be registered as a set of sound interrelated and coherent unit standards.

This all-inclusive framework, which initially began as a National qualifications framework comprising eight levels, has since then been extended to ten levels. The ten level framework is called the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and operates from senior secondary school through to post-graduate degrees and diplomas. The expansion of levels from eight to ten is one difference between the NQF and the Register. Another major difference from the initial NQF is that of the building blocks of the Register. Originally, all qualifications had to be written exclusively in unit standards to be registered on the NQF (NZQA, 1991a, 1993a). On the Register, however, whole

qualifications cannot be 'broken down' or 'atomized' into unit standards (NZQA, 2001a, 2004b). Rather than having standards (the official building block of the NQF), the Register caters for the registration of whole qualifications only. These whole qualifications can only be included on the Register with accompanying learning outcomes (and not standards) (2001a, 2004b). The NZQA (2001a) reports that "qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) will, by definition, be included on the Register" (p.2). Therefore, the NQF, which comprises unit and achievement standards, continues to be a key subset of the Register, with benefits for learners in terms of transferability, flexibility and portability of unit and achievement standards and not necessarily whole qualifications.

The conception and implementation of the NQF have been critiqued from the inception of the NZQA (see *The Green Paper*, 1997; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; Ministry of Education, 1999; NZVCC, 1994; NZQA, 1991c). Among the critiques identified in this research, the most enduring ones have emanated from the building blocks of the unit standards based approach of the NQF - the seamless qualifications system in the attempt to bridge the vocational and academic divide (NZVCC, 1994), the number of levels on the framework (NZVCC, 1994) and some of its quality assurance procedures such as moderation (Keown, 1996; Strachan, 1996). Documentary evidence in the form of investigative reports of the late eighties, for example *The Hawke Report* (1988), had recommended three separate bodies.

Lester (2001) advises, however, that overall the critiques of NZQF are not sufficient reasons to avoid their development. Blackmur (2004) on the other hand contends, that "the conceptually weak foundations of the model cannot be so easily be brushed aside and that they are responsible for several major operational problems and difficulties especially in the international context" (p. 271).

Conceptual issues for the NZQA include the *carte blanche* approach taken to all learning and assessment. Initially, the NZQA attempted to apply one prescription; that of, the unit standards based approach to all learning and assessment. The NZQA came up against unrelenting criticism of its 'across the board' unit standards approach. The approach was viewed as 'an atomistic, 'reductionist', and fragmented approach to learning that had failed to address teaching and learning of multi-dimensional or higher order critical skills. It was an approach that was deemed particularly applicable to, and appropriate for, vocational and industry training.

For the OECS, one major lesson is that seemingly the new arrangement with the Register has made an adjustment to several of the criticisms of the atomization of learning. In theory, the structures of the Register and the NQF allow for the mix of achievement standards, unit standards and a broader outcomes based approach. The Register makes provisions only for whole qualifications, but the NQF within the Register provides the added facility of 'stitching' and combining unit/achievement standards together to form whole qualifications.

One lesson for the OECS stems from the credit based system in New Zealand. The assignment of credits has also been a concern (see Blackmur, 2004; Fitzsimons, 1997b). In the theoretical framework in Chapter Three, Blackmur's (2004) concerns included the arbitrariness with which they are assigned, their varied values on different frameworks, and their lack of comparability in the international labour market (see also Fitzsimons, 1997b). In the New Zealand context, however, success has been experienced. The use of credits facilitates that flexibility of obtaining parts or whole qualifications. The allocation of credits allows for the connection between school qualifications (NCEA) and post-secondary education and training. Statistics (in Appendix H) support the findings in this research that internally the NZQA has been successful with some of the arrangements which enable learners to transfer credits from one educational institution to another, transfer from secondary school to the world of work or to an educational institution, or transfer credits from one industry within New Zealand to another. Interview data indicated, however, that while New Zealand qualifications are accepted overseas, apart from across the Tasman, not much had been done by the NZQA in terms of international benchmarking of the credit values and standards.

The above concerns and others (see for example NZVCC, 1994; Smithers, 1997) on the all-inclusive framework in the New Zealand context embody some of the generic challenges that confound the development of national qualifications frameworks at the international level, namely interfacing work and world through equivalencies between different fields and disciplines, levels, assignment of credits and epistemologies of knowledge, the new thinkings on learning (social constructivists' view of learning, for example), and particularly that of overcoming of divisions between academic and training (see Blackmur, 2004; Ensor, 2003; Lester, 1995, 2001; Smithers, 1997; Young, 2003a, 2003b).

In spite of these intellectual debates, the application of the theoretical principles at the level of practice remains engagingly subjective as has been evidenced in the ongoing

challenges faced by the NZQA in this respect. In making recommendations for the OECS for an all inclusive framework, the major quandary in establishing the nature of the change remains: There are no hard and fast rules, or formulae, prescription or blueprint to establish levels, equivalence, comparability and number of credits, and there are no explicit universal descriptors of what is expected at different levels (Lester, 1995, 2001); and none that explain or prescribe how to interface learning and working. For example, in bridging the academic-vocational divide (interfacing learning and work), Lester (1995) advises “that there are relationships between the two is not denied but the relationships are presented as individual rather than structural: there is no suggestion that achievement of a particular level in one dimension implies the attainment of any given level in the other” (p. 245). As a result, the best approach should be to allow candidates’ achievements to be recognized as to what they represent in terms of both occupational and broad intellectual competence, without prejudicing one against the other (Lester, 1995). The all-inclusive framework of New Zealand is an epitome of this suggestion.

The theoretical issues (epistemologies of knowledge) have not been identified as being dominant in the critiques of the NZQA (with the exception of NZVCC, 1994). Rather, interview data in the New Zealand context, pointed to difficulty by educators in making the paradigm shift to considering management issues. From participants’ viewpoints, it was also believed that tensions arose because a seamless framework appeared to promote the democratization of qualifications, widening access and enhancing participation through the recognition of all learning; and not only the ‘right’ people (doctors, nurses, pilots, for example) being recognized for attainments (Chapter Seven).

Two of the major elements of design by the NZQA have had to do with the introduction of criterion referenced based assessment and internal assessment. Such approaches if utilized by the OECS would (i) eliminate barriers such as the assessment of only limited subjects, disciplines and knowledge and skills; (ii) address the expansion of qualifications in the 15+ age group where assessments have been traditionally designed for selection; and (iii) support and promote both horizontal and vertical progression. These types of assessments have allowed the NZQA to successfully make the connection between national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and education and training. The NQF, the standards (outcomes) based approach and allocation of credits facilitate key principles of portability, transferability, and flexibility of qualifications and parts of qualifications. These strategies assist with movement towards access, articulation with existing structures and relevance to societal needs.

From the New Zealand experience, however, several issues that were identified in the literature come to the fore including the inadequacy of one approach such as internal assessment and criterion referenced-based approach to solve the problem of educational standards. Challenges include definition of the standards, standards setting, standard setters, reporting the standards, comparability of standards, applicability to all fields of learning, and suitability to high stakes assessment. In particular, the New Zealand experience demonstrates that there are varied interpretations of the standards among participants. The NZQA's attempt to use only one approach across the board seemingly gave rise to tension for more than a decade (see for instance NZVCC, 1994). The wide variability in annual results of assessments is also attributed to the lack of clear definitions of the standards. Given the advantages and disadvantages of different types of assessment, the OECS should attempt to create a balance by adapting the best arguments (see Chapter Four) for each type of assessment.

The NZQA has attained its legislative mandate through the structures of the NQF and the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. One major lesson for the OECS is that, in theory, the NQF in the New Zealand context is the base for co-ordinating and integrating a coherent, flexible, post-compulsory education and training sector (NZQA, 2004a).

### **9.3.5 Record of Learning**

One of the critical lessons for the OECS is the maintenance of the Record of Learning for learners (2005g). The Record of Learning (ROL), formerly known as The Record of Education and Training, is the baseline record of individual achievements of learners who are "hooked" on the framework (2005g). According to the NZQA (2005g), "every learner gaining credits on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) receives a Record of Learning (ROL) that lists all unit standard and achievement standard credits, National Certificates and National Diplomas achieved in the previous year" (p. 1). It is a central computer database of student records maintained by the NZQA. The providers and learners pay a fee in advance to the NZQA, following which they are provided with the learner's identification number. From then, the provider informs the NZQA of any credits attained by the learner, and the NZQA updates the learner's records. There are no such central data bases for individual learners in the OECS. In this present climate of change in the region, the OECS is in dire need of such a system to accumulate the data needed on each learner and to facilitate the transfer and evaluation of the learners' credits.

### 9.3.6 Managing Existing Relationships: Need for Consultation

One lesson unrelated to the structure of the framework was that of managing existing relationships. It was a climate of change with contesting political and apolitical agendas and multiple stakeholder demands. All these agendas and demands were seemingly at odds in the implementation process. In Chapter Six, it was demonstrated that the NZQA has had to work closely with several organizations. Managing relations with educationists in particular has been predominantly challenging for the NZQA primarily because of the path adopted (unified framework and standards based approach). Other issues included the overlapping roles of existing organizations and the decoupling of policy formulation and implementation (Boston *et al.*, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Scott 2001). The NZQA has had to continuously readjust its relationships with existing organizations.

For the OECS, the New Zealand experience reverberates the need for elaborate consultation and collaboration. On the one hand in the New Zealand context, the (re)definition of relationships particularly with the education sector, the perceived lack of acceptance of critique by the NZQA, and the perceived lack of collaboration, consultation, and participation by key stakeholders have been found to be some of the most challenging areas for the NZQA in this research. On the other hand, the community partnership with training providers, schools and other educational institutions including universities certainly reflects a new philosophy of partnership for change in qualifications systems, and linkages between qualifications agencies and the contexts in which they operate.

Blackmur (2004), for example, attributes one of the sources of the challenges of the NZQA to that of ignoring the qualifications arrangements that had pre-existed. Drawing from the New Zealand experience, consultation and collaboration are salient. These are salient because the New Zealand experience has shown that the acknowledgement of interdependence of the various sectors of society is a critical aspect (see Chapter Seven). The OECS must put in place a well thought out communication plan that acknowledges existing arrangements, inputs from various sectors, and allows (braces) for divergent viewpoints from the varied sectors in societies. It can be inferred also from the New Zealand experience that adequate structures are needed to address critique. In terms of improvability, any organization charged with the responsibility for qualifications reform in the OECS or elsewhere must have the capacity to facilitate unavoidable changes (Bardach, 2000).

One recommendation for the OECS, therefore, is to begin by considering all existing arrangements (for example, the work done towards the accreditation council of the region (ACTI, 2000), the Sangster-Bethel Model (see Appendix B), the TTNQF, and the NQF-J). The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) has been in existence since 1979, but its role is limited to school (secondary level and advanced level) examinations despite its announcement to award Associate Degrees from 2006. The Council has both the foundation - such as the technical expertise, staff, information technologies and the financial and policy-level support of CARICOM and OECS to play such a role. Moreover, governments from all countries contribute to the CXC. This suggested role would have implications for its expansion and further structural development. Expanding the role of CXC to provide expert advice and service in terms of curriculum assessment and certification from school to post-school qualifications is suggested. This would ensure that education theory and the role of educators and education theory, such as the technical aspects of learning and assessment, are not undermined. The direction towards a qualifications framework should build on the current structure, as well as incorporate missing elements for transferability, portability and access, and the recognition of a wide spectrum of learning.

#### 9.4 Towards a Qualifications Framework for the OECS

The key themes are co-opted to provide directions towards a qualifications framework for the OECS. The significance of the two discourses, namely managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment, is examined in terms of the findings in this research.

Findings indicated that to meet its legislative mandate, the NZQA embarked on (i) investigative reports of the education system in New Zealand; (ii) Policy Borrowing and Learning (overseas expertise) - research and borrowing credible solutions or ideas from overseas (Percy, 1999; Philips, 1999); (iii) Establishment of the NZQA, as a management body; (iv) Legislative support; and (v) Developing a seamless qualifications framework. Other lessons from the New Zealand model that the OECS should adapt include:

- All qualifications have a purpose and relationship with each other therefore disconnected parts are connected, incoherence is minimized, duplication is avoided, and pathways are created for learners;

- Registration/accreditation/audit processes (knowing what's out there and what's going on out there);
- A criterion based focus (assessed against criteria defined a priori);
- A modular structure based on unit standards (this is what allows for portability, flexibility in learning and recognition of prior learning), cross crediting among providers;
- Recognition of a wide spectrum of learning outcomes;
- Democratisation, access, widen participation of learners;
- Promotion of life long learning;
- Clear criteria for assessment;
- Performance of students compared against criteria instead of against peers;
- Increased recognition of skills of workers;
- Attempts at bridging the academic vocational divide thus avoiding any prejudice of one against another;
- An aspect of internal assessment;
- Record of Learning, which is a national database of student records updated annually;
- Partnership with industry;
- Wide choice range for learners;
- Increasing the recognition of learner skills therefore empowering them to be competitive;
- Viewing learning and assessment through alternative lenses to that of traditional notions.

#### **9.4.1 Overall Design of an OECS Qualifications Framework- Should it Be Unitary?**

Case study results indicate that despite the general critiques of qualifications frameworks (see Blackmur, 2004, for instance) and those of the NZQA such as the New Zealand structure emerged out of “bureaucratic tidiness” and is a regulatory and control mechanism (Barrow, 1999; Blackmur, 2004; Smithers, 1997), the New Zealand experience shows that in theory, an all-inclusive qualifications framework should be the first step towards changing the qualifications system of the OECS. Guided by formal legislative charter, one framework for the OECS can be thought of as a set of principles to classify and regulate qualifications on the basis of clear criteria. Past this minimum, one co-ordinating body has the potential to minimize duplication, reduce fragmentation, bring sub-bodies and organizations together, and forge consistency in pursuing a common goal of changing the qualifications system of the OECS. The key lesson from the New

Zealand experience is that through an all-inclusive qualifications system, the OECS can confer value on all learning. The successful acquisition of this learning can be supported and attested not only through formal policy on what is assessed, the purpose of assessment and how it can be assessed, but principally through a systematic framework for recognition.

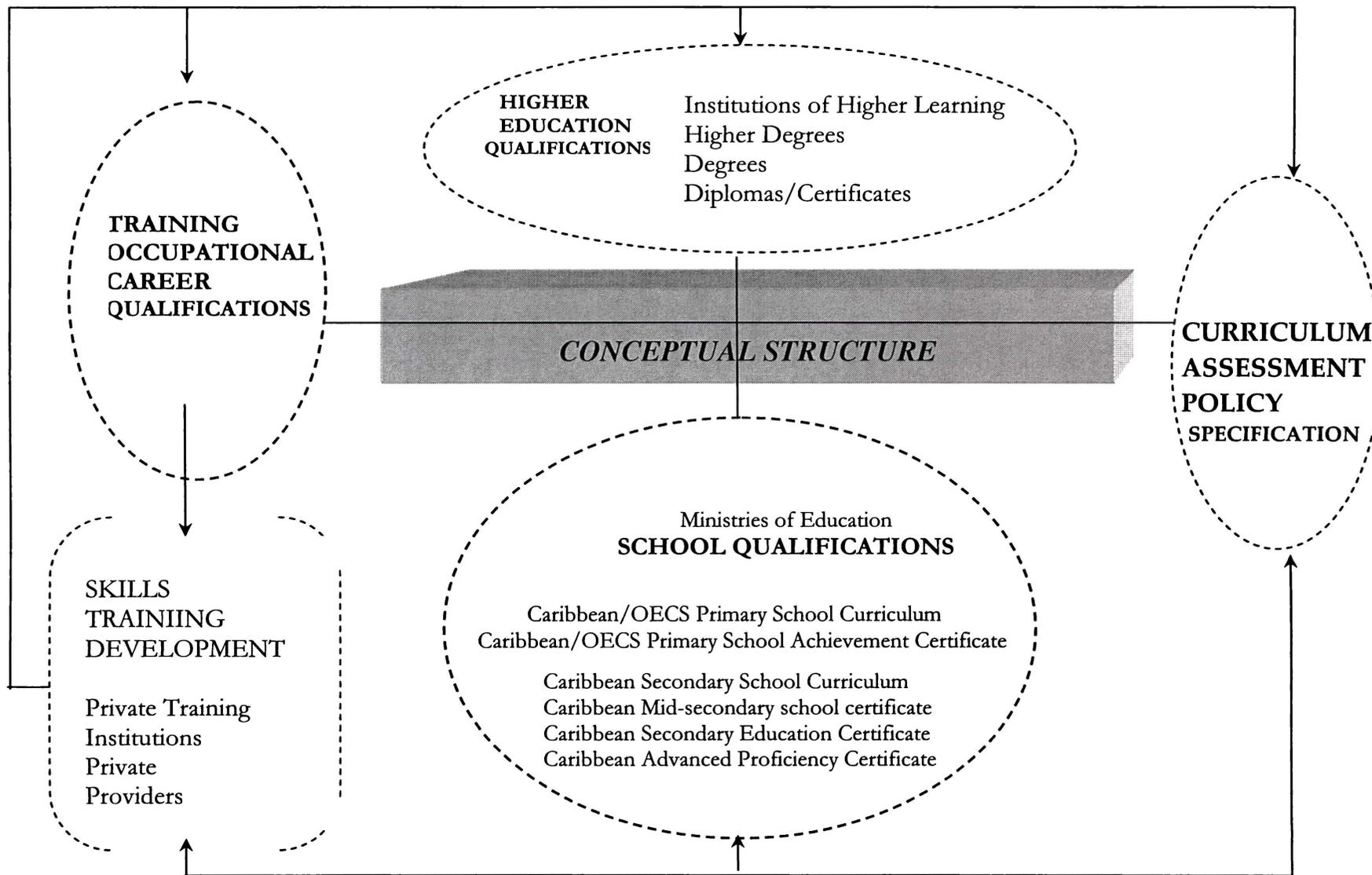
While modifications, alterations, and adaptations to the NZQA model are necessary as a result of historical and local context and resource considerations, an all-inclusive framework, managed by a co-ordinating council of different boards with precise roles, is an applicable organizational strategy towards an OECS qualifications framework. A good starting point for the OECS has already been shown to be the recent (2001) changes made by the NZQA. This start has to be extended to include a mix of (i) norm referenced and criterion referenced approaches to assessment; (ii) internal and external assessment; and (iii) unit standards, achievement standards, and a broader outcomes-based approach.

As a foundation to the creation of the suggested balance between the managerial and education discourses (throughout this thesis), a core deviation from the New Zealand model is recommended. Drawing from the merits in the theorizing of many writers (see for example Hawke, 1988; Irwin, 1994; NZVCC, 1994; Smithers, 1997), an OECS all-inclusive qualifications framework should be managed by an umbrella organization (called a co-ordinating council) made up of four separate boards/departments. Each board/department would have responsibilities for:

- (i) School qualifications;
- (ii) Higher education qualifications;
- (iii) Training, occupational and career qualifications; and
- (iv) Curriculum/assessment policy specification.

Some overlaps are immediately noticeable, for example between higher education and occupational and career qualifications. This suggested co-ordinating council should be linked together on matters of joint interest; for example occupational qualifications in schools and awards can be shared between industry and tertiary institutions (Hawke, 1988; Irwin, 1994; Smithers, 1997). How these arrangements might come together is illustrated in Figure 9.1 – A Conceptual Structure.

**Figure 9.1**  
**Proposed Conceptual Structure to Link Boards/Departments in the OECS**



This arrangement of four entities (as a council) under the ambit of one small executive (with perhaps five members) within one overarching organization is suggested as an attempt to address the critical issues of learning and assessment, epistemologies of knowledge and principles of difference, credits, levels, equivalence, comparability, and assessment policy. Given the 'arbitrary' nature of some of these issues (as revealed in the literature), the major advantage of such an arrangement is that each individual board would have the capacity and varied levels of expertise and experience in its specific epistemological areas to bring about a semblance of 'soundness' of levels and equivalences.

#### 9.4.2 What Role Should Internal Assessment Play in Assessment for Qualifications?

In Chapter Three, Internal assessment has been shown to have several advantages including:

- Assessment is based on results over a period of time rather than a one-shot examination (SCEBW, 1972);
- "Desirable skills and qualities (e.g practical skills, oral skills, work habits, attitude, adaptability and inventiveness) which are difficult to measure by external examination could be taken into account" (SCEBW, 1972, p.1);
- "A powerful cause of a sense of failure in the minds of many young people would be removed along with the external examination" (SCEBW, 1972, p.1);
- Relief of steady build up of tension and emotional instability prior or during examinations (SCEBW, 1972).

Internal assessment, however, has also been thought of as yielding disadvantages, which some developed countries like New Zealand are experiencing. In the case of developing countries such as the OECS, some of these impending issues include:

- Comparability of standards within and between schools and between cohorts;
- Consistency of standards between and within schools;
- Dealing with public questions and perceptions on the reliability and validity of internal assessment as replacements for external examinations.  
(SCEBW, 1972)

Elley (1988) also points to lessons which indicate that "internal assessments made without some control over standards frequently result in rapid grade inflation, obvious

discrepancies in standards between schools, and strong pressures to return to the traditionally “safe” system of external examinations” (Elley, 1988, p. 1). One implication has already been shown to be that “we must have moderation in all things” (Elley, 1988, p. 1).

It has been clearly demonstrated (in Chapter Four) that each approach has its advantages. The OECS must therefore take advantage of the merits of all the systems and come up with the best of both of the worlds of internal and external assessments rather than employ a *carte blanche* approach of internal assessment.

### 9.4.3 Should it Be Criterion Referenced or Norm Referenced?

Another dichotomy that is considered to be of concern to any qualifications framework is that of norm referenced and criterion referenced based approaches. Norm referenced assessment originates mainly from the psychometric tradition, and relates to grading an individual’s performance in relation to that of his/her peers; that is, in terms of relative performance rather than absolute performance (Gipps, 1984, 1990). In line with the bell curve, norm referenced tests are designed to produce set proportions of high, medium and low scorers (Little, 1996). Criterion referencing, however, lays down specific learning objectives, criteria, specifications, performance standards, learning outcomes and specific competencies (knowledge and skills) which the learner must achieve (Leonard, 2002; McNaughton, 1990). Wood (1986) in Little (1986) cites Glaser’s (1963) paper on criterion referenced testing (CRT) as a watershed in the development of educational assessment, and a separation from psychometric theory of norm referencing.

The shift to criterion-referenced assessment in New Zealand, however, has not been uncomplicated (see for instance Elley, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1997). As has been shown in Chapter Four, while the gradual move is towards outcomes and criteria in qualifications as a prerequisite for making systems more flexible and learner centred, “criterion referencing suffers from its own set of problems” (see Lester, 1995, pp. 243-244). Some of these have been identified as an inverse relationship between validity and reliability; they act as a ceiling to what is achieved; and they discourage unplanned and individualized outcomes (Lester, 1995). It has also been found that one problem stems from an existing unsound belief that meaningful criteria can be devised that are completely reliable and which can avoid significant assessor judgment (see Lester, 1995). Other concerns expressed include the aberration that pre-specified criteria lend themselves more to an instructional mode than to an educational interactive model of

teaching (Lennox, 1995; McNaughton, 1990). There was also the notion that there tends to be a sharp decline of teachers' enthusiasm for criterion referenced curriculum development and assessment when their professional judgments on criteria were superseded by a standardized list of pre-specified criteria (see Codd, 2003; McNaughton, 1990).

Given the advantages and disadvantages of both types of assessment, one major lesson from the challenges faced by the NZQA is that the OECS must not to appear to be "procrustean" (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995, p. 27) and attempt to assess all subjects and qualifications using only the criterion referenced approach. Some subjects and qualifications (for example, the scholarship examination in New Zealand) might be better tested using the norm-referenced approach. A sound balance between norm referenced and criterion referenced based assessments is needed.

#### 9.4.4 Should it Be Standards Based?

The dominant discourse from an education theory perspective in the New Zealand context was that of the standards based approach to assessment. The NZQA had set out on a course of solely standards based assessment but, over time, the model combines standards based assessment, outcomes-based assessment and achievement based assessment.

Of significance to the OECS is that the standards based to assessment deviates from psychometric testing/examinations approach that emphasizes norm referencing based on the relative performance among peers (Crooks, 2002). The emphasis is shifted to a criterion referenced interpretation of assessments that indicate progress in terms of outcomes on learning continua (Griffin, 1997). In spite of Croll's (1996) valid observation that there are overlaps between the two, generally criterion referenced testing refers to performance that is compared with a standard (criterion) and not the performance of others (norm referencing) (Barker, 1995; Crooks, 2002; Gipps, 1994; Smithers, 1997). Jessup (1991) also illustrates that "the overall model stands or falls" on how effectively competence and attainment can be stated (p. 134). While for some writers (see Priestley, 1996; 1997), the attainment of rectitude in the definability of the standards has been a tall order, Jessup (1991) laments that "if we cannot [define the standards], it raises fundamental issues for education and training, irrespective of the model used" (p. 134). According to the Jessup (1991), "if you cannot say what you require, how can you develop it [then] how do you know when you have achieved it?" (p. 134) Of

significance in theorizing change in the OECS qualifications systems is Smithers' (1997) argument. Smithers (1997), one of the opponents of this all or nothing standards based approach, contends that assuming that change is what is sought after, "it seems perfectly reasonable to want to set out what a learner should be able to do at the end of a period of learning that he or she could not do before" (p. 39). The advantage is that this shift provides the opportunity for every learner to demonstrate his/her individual strengths (Smithers, 1997). Also, the use of this approach seemingly provides clarification and makes explicit the standards which have been achieved when a qualification is awarded (Lennox, 1995).

There are clear advantages to using the standards based assessment. In the New Zealand context, the standards based approach to assessment facilitates key policy principles of the NZQA of portability, recognition of prior learning, transferability, flexibility, attempting to bridge the academic and vocational divide. Credits are the currency of the completed standards, the outcomes, or whole qualifications earned (see Appendix K for credit values). The standards-based approach with its credit values represents one way in which learners can map pathways towards their choice of qualifications. Learners can identify the unit standards/achievement standards (or both) that form the basis of those qualifications, as well as the core standards required for specialization (NZQA, 2004a). Advantages of stand alone units identified by the NZQA also appear to lean towards the discourse of managerialism. Advantages provided included social and economic factors such as the accommodation of efficiency and cost effectiveness for example prior learning is accommodated without repetition and duplication of learning, and assessment of knowledge and skills that have been previously attained.

In the theoretical framework of this thesis, Blackmur (2004) and others have expressed their qualms about credits, including the arbitrariness with which they are assigned, their varied values on different frameworks, and their lack of comparability in the international labour market. Statistics from the NZQA indicate, however, that within New Zealand, the NZQA has been successful with some of the arrangements that enable learners to transfer credits from one educational institution to another, to transfer from secondary school to the world of work, from one site of learning to another, and from one industry to another.

In summation of the discussion on the standards based approach (Chapters Three and Four), generally, some of the challenges identified in the interviewee data reverberate

with the international literature (see OECD, 1995) in terms of variations in definability. This lack of definability has had a major effect on the consistency and comparability of results. Other advantages and difficulties with the use of the standards have been analyzed in Chapter Four. Advantages include the flexibility of the standards in meeting learners' needs; clarity on requirements of programmes for learners and employees; improvement in cross-crediting; transfer and portability of learning arrangements; recognition of prior learning; teacher development and involvement in the process (moderation, for example); monitoring learning progress; improved quality and efficiency and accountability; raising educational standards; and reducing the perceived failure rate among groups. Challenges include definability of the standards; standard setting; reporting the standards; applicability for high stakes assessment because of lack of variability in test scores; and the applicability of the standards to all fields of learning (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995; and Education Forum, 2000, for examples). There appears to be a problem also with the application of the standards as a teaching prescription at the classroom level in the New Zealand context.

Again, one major lesson from the challenges faced by the NZQA is that the OECS must not to appear to be "procrustean", and should note that "trying to force all material into one standards-based assessment model ignores the extreme complexity and vast range of knowledge and skills and other attributes to be tested and the many combinations in which they are incorporated into courses and programmes" (Irwin, Elley & Hall, 1995, p. 27). Therefore, given the advantages and disadvantages of norm referenced based assessment and evidence that "research in Scotland, and the experience of working parties in England, in Australia, in New Zealand and in the USA all suggest that criterion-related assessment is not necessarily a panacea for all of the problems of norm-referenced assessment and examining" (McNaughton, 1990, p. 122); and also that New Zealand is still grappling with its *carte blanche* approach to each concept - a major lesson emanating from the design is to create a right mix in the following:

- Norm referenced and criterion referenced approaches to assessment;
- Internal and external assessment;
- Unit standards, achievement standards, and a broader outcomes-based approach.

It has been clearly demonstrated (in Chapter Four) that each approach has its advantages. The OECS must extrapolate the good out of all the systems and come up with of the best combinations of assessment rather than employ a *carte blanche* approach

to assessment. A good starting point for the OECS might be drawn from the recent (2001) changes made by the NZQA: a merger or mix of the building blocks of the original NQF – standards based assessment, the inclusion of achievement based assessment and the broader outcomes based approach of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.

## 9.5 Practical Implications

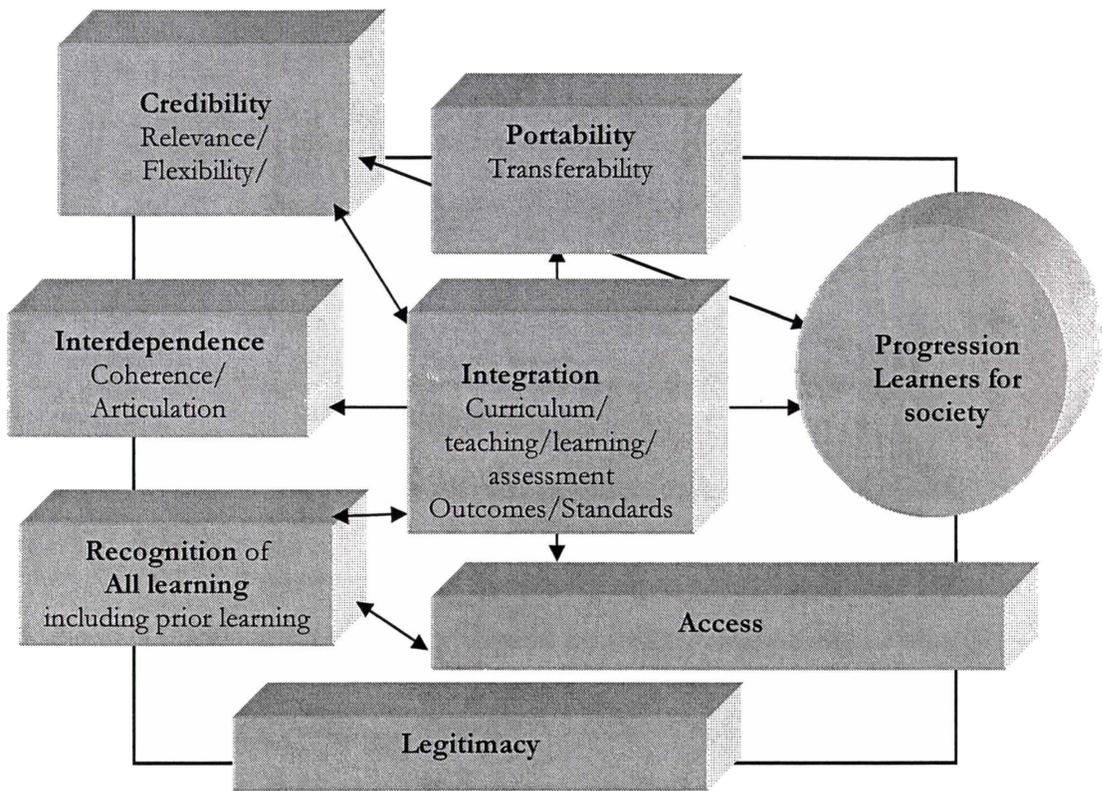
As a direct result of these case study findings in both the New Zealand and OECS contexts, an array of implications has come to the fore. This section elaborates on a few practical implications (among the vast array of possible implications) for the establishment of an OECS qualifications framework. These include key principles for an OECS qualifications framework, practical criteria (definability, legality, political acceptance, robustness, and improvability) (Bardach, 2000). Also, given the argument in this thesis that assessment is at the core of any qualifications framework and is a powerful tool for change in the OECS qualifications system, critical assessment issues are raised. Resource implications (Black, 1998) are also considered.

### 9.5.1 Key Principles

The first set of implications has been identified as key principles. The primary role of the present British system, inherited as a result of colonialism, is premised on the ‘sifting’ and ‘sorting’ of citizens for life chances. It has been contended that a new qualifications framework for the OECS needs to recognize a wider spectrum of learning - one that provides for progression in learning “either vertically to more complex and demanding activities or laterally to new and different areas of learning” (Broadfoot, 1996b, p. 196). On this basis, consideration must be given to some key principles for a new qualifications framework.

As a starting point, some of these key principles have been found in the international literature on qualifications frameworks (Chapter Three), and have been found to reverberate throughout the NZQA’s experience. These principles are thought of as having implications for the shift from the sifting and sorting practice of the OECS to one of inclusion. It is therefore proposed that these key principles be considered for the OECS. Figure 9.2, which follows, attempts to bring these key principles together.

**Figure 9.2:**  
**Key Principles for Consideration -**  
**Towards an OECS Qualifications Framework**



(Idea taken from Bellis, 1998)

Although these key principles are vivid in the findings of this research and in operational principles and procedures of the NZQA, the NZQA does not provide definitions for these key principles per se. It has also been found that these principles are not always mutually exclusive. Following on from an adaptation of the work of Bellis (1998), Table 9.1 (which follows) provides summarized statements of these key principles and how they might work in an OECS qualifications framework.

Table 9.1  
Summarized Statements of Key Principles

Creating pathways and guidance for learners	and	Clear structures that would link learning goals and needs and allow for progress of levels via “different combinations of the components of the delivery system”.
Portability, Transferability		Allow for credits, qualifications and parts or components of qualifications to be moved from one learning environment to another.
Legitimacy		Legality to co-ordinate all regional qualifications and stakeholders to ensure transparency, participation, collaboration and meaningful input.
Credibility		Ability to achieve its agreed upon goals and aims.
Access		Open to learners and prospective learners in a manner that will facilitate progression.
Coherence and Articulation		Create linkages with existing national regional and international systems and Allow for movement among existing education and training systems.
Recognition of prior learning		Cater for formal, nonformal, informal learning, experiential learning and experience.
Outcomes/standards		Express outcomes and standards, based on framework policies.
Integration/ Interdependence		As Foucault (1977) has shown, qualifications are linked from inside to the economy (top bottom and bottom up relationships) as part of the social and economic milieu. As a consequence an integrated milieu - consistent with national and regional development priorities is required.
Relevance and flexibility		These principles take into consideration national industry and training, the individual, and to the changing needs of society ( for example new technologies).
Progression of Learners		Framework should cater for learners to advance through levels and society via different combinations and levels of difficulty.

(Adapted from Bellis, 1998)

### 9.5.2 Political Acceptance, Definability, Legality, Robustness and Improvability

A second set of implications has been identified as that of practical criteria (Bardach, 2000). Bardach (2000) refers to practical criteria in terms of policy adoption and policy implementation processes. The main ones that he proposes are political acceptance, definability, legality, robustness under conditions of administrative implementation and improvability (Bardach, 2000, p .24). In the following sections, the issue of practical criteria as proposed by Bardach (2000) is examined as having implications for the establishment of an OECS qualifications system.

#### 9.5.2.1 Political Acceptance

Drawing from the theoretical framework (Chapter Three), the successes of the NZQA (Chapters Six and Seven) and factors identified in the OECS case study findings (Chapter Eight), the need for political will/acceptability was clearly evidenced. Particularly in the case of the OECS, the findings emphasized that the major factors that can deter or drive the need for change as being political acceptability, political support, and political will. Bardach (2000) agrees that a feasible policy must be politically acceptable, or at least it should not be totally unacceptable (p. 24). Political unacceptability is a combination of two things: “too much opposition (which may be wide or intense or both) and/or too little support (which may be sufficiently broad or insufficiently intense or both)” (p. 24). In the New Zealand context, Boston (1991) stresses that politically, efforts such as institutionalization of the NZQA, might well have been futile had it not been for Labour’s ingenuousness to the Treasury’s ideas and its enthusiasm to implement them even in the face of strong political and institutional resistance.

#### 9.5.2.2 Definability

The second of Bardach’s (2000) practical criteria is that of definability. Definability, in this sense, means definitive policy with delineation of terminologies for clarity and consistency. Findings demonstrated that key challenges for the NZQA involved issues such as confused terminologies, conflicting pieces of legislation, duplication of roles, and decoupling formulation from policy implementation. Of implication is that a clear policy to support criteria must be delineated, beginning with a necessary communication plan and a consultative process.

#### 9.5.2.3 Legality

The third of Bardach’s (2000) criteria is that of legality. Legality provides a basis for legitimacy. As was shown with the NZQA, such an organization must have legitimacy, which has to be initiated by appropriate legislation. A feasible policy must “not violate constitutional, statutory or common law rights” (Bardach, 2000, p. 24). For this reason, legislation on qualifications must not be seen as conflicting with Constitutions.

Locally and regionally, any suggested change in the qualifications structure of the OECS would have implications for clarification of purpose of existence, roles, processes, and for reforming legislation that govern existing practices. Legislation would be required to address potential links between national, regional and international certification and

qualification systems. Legislation would also be required to legitimize the expansion, development, co-ordination and the synchronization of all qualifications as well as the work of various bodies and organizations that deal with curriculum and training and certification in the Caribbean. A co-ordinated regional effort would also have implications for reworking all qualifications systems within the nations and creating networks with international systems for international acceptance particularly with the increased protocols of regional and international governments and organizations. All these processes require lucid legislation, policy guidelines, and collaboration of all stakeholders.

#### 9.5.2.4 Robustness and Improvability

Case study findings point to the NZQA as a learning organization which is evolving in its role. This supports Bardach's (2000) call for robustness and improvability. Bardach (2000) warns that policy ideas that sound great in theory often fail under conditions of actual implementation because of the lack of these two characteristics. He argues that the implementation process has a life of its own, and that a policy alternative should be robust enough so that even if the implementation process does not go very smoothly, the policy outcomes would still be satisfactory. It took the NZQA more than a decade to realize that the universities would not yield to unit standards. In this regard, any organization charged with qualifications reform in the OECS must be empowered with the resources to be (i) robust, (ii) to improve, (iii) to address critique, and (iv) to address local, regional and global changes as they develop.

#### 9.5.3 Critical Assessment Issues

A third set of implications has been identified as critical assessment issues. Although Crooks (1988) is circumspect about his generalizations, from his extensive review he reinforces the power of assessment:

Classroom evaluation affects students in many ways. For instance it guides their judgement on what is important to learn, affects their motivation and self-perceptions of competence, structures their approaches to and timing of personal study (e.g., spaced practice), consolidates learning, and affects the development of enduring learning strategies and skills. It appears to be one of the most potent forces influencing education (p. 467).

Qualifications (certificates) are assumed to be the voices of the learning and assessment process alluded to in the above by Crooks (1988). Looked at in this way, learning and assessment ought to be at the core of any qualifications framework (Chapter Four).

### 9.5.3.1 Changing Roles of Assessment

There are several issues which deserve consideration in this world of change. Crooks' (1988) review also reinforces the sociocultural view of learning, and that the development of assessment options is not just a technical matter of instrument design (Chittiden, 1991). Given that classroom assessment "appears to be one of the most potent forces influencing education" (Crooks, 1988, p. 467), any reform towards an OECS qualifications framework has implications for appropriate assessment practices, and the need to reconsider the overall plan and purposes of educational assessment as well as specific procedures. How does assessment fit into the overall development plans of the OECS? How does classroom assessment tie in with qualification? What sort of assessment information do we need to award the credential or the certificate or the qualification? How often? And what do students, teachers, parents and the general public actually learn and need to know from assessment efforts? In creating the balance, it is suggested (for both the New Zealand and OECS contexts) that qualifications frameworks have to consider those issues.

The new developments in assessment have implications for any qualifications framework. These developments include the multiple purposes of assessment, the considerable changes and increases in firstly, the range of qualities assessed; secondly, in the contexts in which that assessment takes place; thirdly, the rise of descriptive assessment; and fourthly, the devolution of responsibilities for assessment (Brown, 1990). Other themes to be considered include how new trends and developments in learning and assessment affect qualifications and qualifications frameworks; the notion of validity and reliability; considerations of the manner in which qualifications (through assessment) can reflect the learner's ability to meet the changing requirements of the work force; and how new modes and the new understandings of multiple modes of communication, multiple media and technologies can affect assessment, and by implication qualifications and qualifications frameworks (Johnson & Kress, 2003). These have implications for qualifications reform in the OECS as well as for the NZQA.

It appears that present qualifications systems, including the NZQA, have had limited interest and success in addressing these changes. One trend is greater use of performance based assessment approaches (through internal assessment); a second is the use of criterion referenced assessment (or standards based or competency based assessments); a third has been the use of formative and continuous summative assessments including the use of portfolios; and a fourth has been the increasing use of

various reporting strategies such as profiles. These are trends which have implications for the recognition of broad ranging abilities, qualities and achievements. These trends also have major implications for qualifications reform and for future research to investigate ways to assess, recognize the value of, and award collaborative and other new perspectives on learning and assessment.

#### 9.5.3.2 Validity and Reliability

Crooks, Kane & Cohen (1996) argue that “validity is the most important quality of an assessment, but its evaluation is often neglected” (p. 265). Given the wider acceptance of the need for internal assessment and the inconsistency in assessors’ judgments, the lack of clear definition for the standards-based approach, the multiple-use and changing concepts of education and qualifications, it can be argued that validity and reliability are put in the spotlight. By way of example, the multiple-purpose and changing concepts of learning and assessment have implications for “reflect[ing] different ideological commitments, and one of the most salient features of the movement has been the recognition that assessment, as part of education, must be about promoting learning opportunities, rather than about sorting people into social roles for society” (Black, 2001, p.80). As Broadfoot (2001) argues, “advances in technology and management practices are now prompting employers to call for educational systems in developed countries which equip workers of tomorrow with transferable skills, a high level of adaptability and, above all, the commitment to go on learning” (p. 100). Other trends identified include the move towards the once narrowly defined practice of quantitative results of ‘testing’ and ‘examinations’ to an ‘assessment culture’ and to one of quality (Broadfoot, 1996b, 2002). All these developments and trends present new challenges to the traditional conceptualizations of reliability and validity of assessment or what Black (1998) refers to as having “confidence in the results” (p. 37). One major implication is therefore, how can confidence in the results be established as assessment practices change in an attempt to match the varying demands and new developments in changing societies? Present qualifications systems, including the NZQA, have had limited success in addressing this change.

The shift to authentic or performance based assessment or competency based or criterion referenced assessment, and the increasing use of varied reporting strategies including the use of profiles and portfolios, are identifiable trends at the primary, secondary and university levels. These are trends which have implications for the recognition and award of broad ranging abilities, qualities and attainment. These trends also have major

implications for qualifications reform and for future research to investigate ways to assess, recognize the value of, and award collaborative and other new perspectives on learning and assessment.

#### **9.5.4 Resource Implications**

Based on the findings in this research, a fourth set of implications has been identified as resource implications. The notion of resources was identified as a key impediment in the OECS findings, and to a certain extent in the New Zealand context. In particular, the findings indicate that one of the major implications for the establishment of a qualifications framework in the OECS and New Zealand is that of the availability and use of resources (human, technological, finance, institutional strengthening, teacher education and professional development in education). Black's (1998) contention, that the certification purpose of assessment raises three issues for human and financial resources, is applicable to any qualifications reform. These three issues include purpose, what are the costs involved, and who and what are involved.

##### **9.5.4.1 Purpose**

The first issue raised by Black (1998) that has major practical implications for the establishment of a qualifications framework is a question of purpose - What would be the purpose of an OECS qualifications framework? Black's contention was supported by one of the participants in this research, who emphasized that the OECS "needs a clear purpose and that's important" (38, #21). Having a clear purpose has been identified as one of the major lessons from the NZQA. Based on case study findings, however, one implication is that of minimizing the roles of such an organization in order to achieve a clear definition of purpose. Some of the goals, principles and procedures of the NZQA can be modified to be kept within the auspices of one organization. A clear purpose can set evaluative parameters and avoid duplication of tasks undertaken by other institutions and organizations (for example, CXC, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training and Development, Ministry of Planning). Suggestions for major goals for an OECS qualifications council, based on the magnitude of the task of the NZQA, are made in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2Suggested Goals for an OECS Qualifications Framework


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(i)	Collaborate and consult in the context of existing arrangements to link national and regional efforts;
(ii)	Classify qualifications within one framework, develop common currencies and chart pathways for learner, through horizontal and vertical progression;
(iii)	Act as a lever for change for emerging qualifications to gain reputation and recognition;
(iv)	Monitor and regulate the development of qualifications by approving, validating, accrediting and evaluating institutions and programmes;
(v)	Monitor career, occupation and training organizations, and developments in their fields and regularly research and advise on the review of the qualifications in post-school education and training in order to shape and expand qualifications which might otherwise remain incoherent and disconnected with education, society, politics and economics;
(vi)	Research and ensure that appropriate assessment strategies are adapted where possible, to ensure the extent of validity (confidence in the results) of the varied forms of assessment;
(vii)	Maintain a national database of registered and listed qualifications, parts of qualifications, (credits) and their articulation with other qualifications; and the records of learning for learners.

(Adapted from Smithers, 1997; TLG, 1994).

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To avoid tension and excessive costs, challenges and tension (see Irwin, 1994; Smithers, 1997; NZVCC, 1994), a suggested starting point is to consider a few of the critical questions that have implicitly and explicitly emerged throughout this thesis. They are provided in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3

Towards an OECS Qualifications Framework:  
A Few Questions for Consideration

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(i)	What is the purpose of the qualification in terms of the learning goals of curriculum or programme or course?
(ii)	What are the core areas that are common to all fields (communication, information technology, etcetera)?
(iii)	What curriculum/programme/course content could help achieve that purpose, and any criterion for learning?
(iv)	What would be the most appropriate assessment methodology (formative, summative, continuous summative, norm referenced, criterion referenced, internal and/or external assessments) to determine Number (iii) above?
(v)	What would be the common currency for qualifications – standards, achievement standards, broader outcomes?
(vi)	What type of recognition should be given?
(vii)	What linkages are feasible with other existing courses, programmes, certificates/qualifications, regionally and internationally?
(viii)	How can these qualifications be updated and how often to cater for emerging trends?

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These questions are being forwarded based on the assumption that knowledge can be represented in a variety of ways. This shifts the emphasis from a single formula applicable to the whole system, to a threshold of criteria. A qualifications framework has the potential to raise the issue of “whose knowledge is to be taught and what kind of national identity such curricula are designed to foster” (Brown, *et al.*, 1997, p. 24).

#### 9.5.4.2 Resources: Financial

The second issue raised by Black (1998) on the human and financial resources is that of the costs involved. According to Black (1998), “the costs of public examinations is a significant item in budget, and for all schools summative assessments which have to work to shared external standards bear a high cost in terms of the time of classroom teachers and of school managements” (p. 30). The establishment of an OECS qualifications framework would have major cost/financial implications. All decisions on the establishment of an OECS qualifications framework must take account of the costs implied.

#### 9.5.4.3 Resources: Physical, Technological and Human

The third issue raised by Black (1998) on the human and financial resources is - who and what should be involved? The what has major implications for the human resource/knowledge base of the OECS. Expertise in assessment, trained personnel trained teachers, auditors, accreditors, moderators and other implementers are necessities. The physical and technological resources (electronic data bases) are also crucial.

Who and what should be involved are also closely linked to external agencies or to a combination of these (Black, 1998, p30). Qualifications systems have been shown in this research to interlock inaccessible large and complex systems, and to embrace sub-systems of curriculum development, curriculum implementation, instructional strategies, policy-making, financing, resourcing, public and private sectors, institutions and other organizations (see Chapter Three). Following from Barker (1994), the link between all of these demands is the notion of quality (Barker, 1995).

Change in the qualifications system of the OECS therefore cannot be homogenous - despite its inadequacies, there is a system in existence (Blackmur, 2004). According to Blackmur (2004), one of the major downfalls in the establishment of existing qualification frameworks is that they have ignored existing arrangements. This view is also supported by the socio-cultural view of learning (see Jonassen, 2000; Lave, 1991, 1997, in Chapter

Four, for example). As the NZQA continues to learn (see Chapter Six), any reform of qualifications has major implications for the collaboration, participation and consensus on the different perspectives, and the varied possibilities and positions of different stakeholders. Undoubtedly these come to bear on the resources.

The foregoing discussion has elaborated on a few practical implications, among the issues that were conceptualized as needing consideration in the establishment of an OECS qualifications framework. These include key principles for an OECS NQF, legitimacy (legality), political acceptance, robustness and improvability (Bardach, 2000), and critical assessment issues and resource implications. In particular, major concerns are encapsulated in the questions posed by Black (1998) – What would be the purpose of an OECS qualifications framework? Who and what should be involved, and what are the costs involved?

## **9.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

As a result of this current research, suggestions for further research are presented in the following sections.

### **9.6.1 The ‘Right’ Mix of Assessment Approaches**

It has been suggested for the OECS that a mix of types of assessment be utilized in awarding qualifications. There is need to conduct research on the right mix of assessment approaches (norm/criterion; internal/external; unit standards/achievement standards) for awarding qualifications.

### **9.6.2 The Register of Quality Assured Qualifications**

There is need to conduct research on the newly implemented Register of Quality Assured Qualifications to investigate the extent to which the concerns of the higher education institutions, specifically those of the universities, have been addressed. Their concerns included the perceived fragmented, atomistic, reductionist view of learning that was adopted by the NZQA. To what extent and how has the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications addressed those concerns?

### **9.6.3 Qualifications and Their Reflection of Societal Changes**

A third area identified as a suggestion for further research emanates from the call from sectors of society for qualifications to reflect societal changes. As shown in Chapter

Three, one of the constant calls in the discourse of managerialism has been for curriculum, education, training and qualifications to reflect content more suited to the requirements of the new economy and to enhance the human capital. The changing nature of work, particularly technology to reshape the workforce, is taking its toll on the OECS and elsewhere. Change is taking place not only through a decrease in employment opportunities, but also through (re)training, deskilling and (re)skilling within previously highly skilled occupations, and the growth of service sector jobs. It has been shown (Chapter Four) that the notion of 'the learner' has changed to one who continues to learn and to one who is equipped to understand and adapt to societal changes as they occur. From the 1980s, the OECD (1989) drew the one basic conclusion that more training and retraining will be required.

With these emergent trends, one challenge for changing the OECS qualifications system is that education and training systems must be re-worked in order to take account of the need – which is already growing and is set to grow even more in the future – for the “recomposition and redevelopment of knowledge and know-how” (CEC in Hodgson, 2000b, p. 4). Skilbeck *et al.* (1994) contend that:

All countries experiencing rapid change due to scientific and technological evolution, demography, industrial reorganization, and an interplay of social forces are challenged to rethink education ... in the quest for structural adjustment, improved quality and enhanced competitiveness. The demands made of [education] are more numerous, the criticisms sharper and the challenge all the greater to perform in accordance with socio-economic objectives as a result of these pressures (p.23).

According to the writers:

What is contentious is what that core should be, how and where it should be taught, how it should be encoded for purposes of assessment and validation, who should decide, and who should pay, and what pathways into further and higher education, work and adulthood should follow (Skilbeck *et al.*, 1994, p. 22).

All these factors have implications for designing new qualifications, as well as reforming existing ones. Research is therefore needed into how qualifications and qualifications frameworks are affected by such changes, and how qualifications might be reworked to address these changes. Any change in the qualifications system would have to consider how best to recognize broader career paths. How can the reform of qualifications be married to changing curricula and nature of societies to provide for the (re)composition and (re)development of knowledge and 'know how' - be it in the New Zealand context or the OECS context?

#### 9.6.4 Research into the Effects of Assessment Practices in the OECS and Research on the NZQA

A fourth suggestion for further research is that of research into the effects of current assessment practice in the OECS; and research on the NZQA. In New Zealand, very little large-scale research has been conducted on the NZQA in practice. There has not been any commissioned research on the effectiveness or implications of the current assessment practices of the NZQA, for example, its *carte blanche* approach to learning and assessment in New Zealand. Broadfoot (2002) presents a number of questions that are directly applicable to the OECS and arguably for the New Zealand context:

Is all this assessment activity really improving the quality of educational outcomes? Is it making young people better equipped to face the challenges of a new and very different century? Has the bridling of professional autonomy brought about the improvements in quality and transparency that users quite rightly seek and certainly deserve? Or are the enormous sums of money, the effort, the time and the expertise being directed towards these ends in fact achieving something very different: a deadening of learners, natural creativity, the demoralization of professionals and an enormous waste of precious educational resources? (p. 386).

In the OECS, policymakers, practitioners and researchers need to pay attention to the role and effect of qualifications on the livelihood seekers and on livelihood givers. Given the scale of the influence of assessment on education in the OECS, it is somewhat surprising how little systematic attention appears to be been given to evaluating the social effects (Broadfoot, 2002) of its current assessment practices, or even in discussing examination systems in small States like those of the OECS. In fact Bray (1998) points out that it is “a topic which has previously been almost totally neglected” (p. 3). In particular, research is needed on the impact of current assessment practice in which recognition is given to only some types of learning. What kinds of psychological and social damage are being done to the OECS learners? What are the effects of the role of qualifications as a sifting, sorting and selection mechanism in the OECS?

#### 9.7 Limitations

In this section of the thesis, the limitations of the research are discussed. In the quality assurance discourse, this thesis is limited in scope to the qualifications role of the NZQA as only one component in the quality assurance process in education in the New Zealand context.

A case study of the New Zealand model was undertaken. The study acknowledges that qualification frameworks adopt various typographies, structures, formats and philosophies that may differ from those of the NZQA (see Blackmur, 2004; Boudier, 2003; Ensor, 2003; Young 2003a, 2003b for examples of frameworks). While New Zealand has implemented eight and ten level frameworks, a specific number of levels has not been suggested for the OECS in this research - any number of levels suggested will always be arbitrary since there are no precise formulae and rules for the determination of levels of any framework. Findings in this research, for example, reveal that the shift from an eight level framework to a ten level framework by the NZQA epitomizes such arbitrariness. Major consideration ought to be given to the fact that the value of parts of qualifications or whole qualifications relates to factors that go far beyond the scope of any qualifications framework (Lester 2001; Skilbeck *et al.*, 1994; Spours, 2000). It is therefore possible that all the needs of the OECS do not necessarily fit neatly into the New Zealand model. The key for the OECS would be (i) to ensure the adequacy of representation and accommodation of all types and levels of learning, modes of learning and differing nature of learners; (ii) to take the epistemologies of knowledge and principles of difference into consideration; and (iii) to provide logical explanations that are appropriate to the OECS context (see Lester, 1995).

In this research, the arguments on the principles of auditing, accreditation and moderation were extended. The data provided was limited, and therefore in-depth analyses of their successes and challenges in New Zealand can be seen as an area for future research.

This thesis does not concern itself with curriculum development or curriculum reform but, as has been acknowledged in the findings of this research, interdependence with existing structures is critical. It is acknowledged that education curriculum and training are necessary components to the success and effectiveness of any reform of qualifications. The link between the two is identified as an important area for future investigations.

Another limitation is that this research was limited to “a top down” approach. This is because such a research project from “bottom up” would take an enormous amount of resources including budgetary (financial) allocations, time to allow the researcher to gather information, collect data and conduct interviews. Such broad-based research would require extensive travelling. Therefore, it is also recommended that further

research be conducted at the other levels, including obtaining the views of educationists, to provide a balanced and complete picture. This limitation points to an area for future research in which the NZQA, and the views of participants on the need for change in the qualifications system of the OECS can be studied using the “bottom up” approach.

Other limitations of the current research might have stemmed from the distance between New Zealand where this study was then being pursued, and the OECS. The cost of air transportation from New Zealand to the OECS, and the cost of air transportation within the OECS countries had an impact on the OECS sample of this study. Given these constraints, research was undertaken using the case study approach. As has been explained in Chapter Five, since this thesis is qualitative, what matters is “the representativeness of concepts and how concepts vary dimensionally” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 214). This research places emphasis on events and incidents that are indicative of phenomena and not the count of individuals per se. Rather than the number in the sample, multiple examples of the concerns, incidents and categories were teased out from each interview or document. Condensed fieldwork (for example educators’ forums) was also adopted to obviate long periods of contact or immersion in the field. Qualitative researchers (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000; Merriam, 1988, 2002) consider these approaches to be appropriate where there are limitations of time and resources.

The varying lengths and depths of interviews with NZQA staff might be viewed as a limitation in this research. The NZQA has been in existence for more than ten years. During this time staff turnover has been inevitable. The years of experience of participants at the NZQA ranged from two months to more than a decade. There were also participants at the NZQA who had had the experience of working with the Department of Education, the Ministry of Education and the NZQA. This was reflective in the lengths of interviews, which varied from one hour to more than four hours. As a result, interview data reported may sometimes reflect the views of some participants more so than others.

Other limitations are related to the data collection process. New Zealand has sometimes been described as a bicultural nation, and in recent times as a multicultural society. While it is acknowledged that “culture counts” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999), there was no emphasis in this research on any one culture. Findings reported were based on the views of the participants of the NZQA. Rather than be seen as a limitation, this can be viewed

as another area for future research in the New Zealand context - to examine the operational role of the NZQA from the perspectives of the various cultures of New Zealand.

The context-dependent nature of the results of this case study may be viewed as another limitation. It has been shown that the power and knowledge embedded within assessment and qualifications systems have been historically generated and socially constructed (Codd, 1995). Notably, therefore, the NZQA is social- and country-specific. For this reason, in making use of inferences drawn from the NZ experience, this thesis acknowledges that there may be limitations to the extent of generalizability in the OECS context on some of the issues. As a direct result, any generalizability is made with caution.

My acceptance at the University of Waikato to pursue this research facilitated my first visit to New Zealand. The final limitation is perhaps what some might see as my limited knowledge of the New Zealand context, and as an outside researcher. In this regard, Filstead (1970, p. 6 in Louisy, 1997, p. 217) refers to "first hand knowledge of the social world in question" as the particular strength of the researcher. This knowledge is described by Louisy (1997) as "familiarity with the setting, ease of access into the field, judicious selection of respondents" (p. 217). Yet, according to Louisy, these same claims of sensitivity to local context have evoked criticisms of bias, over simplicity and subjectivity when an insider conducts such research. Louisy (1997) describes this as perhaps "the real dilemma - a concern for meaning when interpreted from the involvement of those closest to the situation may not stand the test of rigour of inquiry" (p. 217). In this latter vein, my outside position provided an advantage. Also, in spite of my limited knowledge of the New Zealand culture, the insights gained from my attempt to understand and appreciate the New Zealand context were powerful tools as an outside researcher. The ethical considerations (see Chapter Five) were also major attributes. Theoretical sensitivity (as described in Chapter Five), the assistance of thesis supervisors (who are both New Zealanders), the co-operation of the NZQA staff and other New Zealand participants, and the sampling techniques employed (as described in Chapter Five) also contributed to the practicality of this research, and the "ease of access into the field, and judicious selection of respondents" (Louisy, 1997, p. 217). The practicality of the research was further determined by the special dynamic (Louisy, 1997) created between the researcher, the research and the NZQA.

## 9.8 Starting My Research Afresh

According to one writer:

The reform of [the] senior school qualification system has been undertaken by the NZQA with little regard for research, for teachers' opinions or for expert opinion. The whole process has been variously described as a bandwagon, a grand design, a steamroller, a juggernaut, a new paradigm, a revolution, the biggest reform in 50 years, a political hot potato, a tangled web, a bureaucratic nightmare, a panacea, a blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and an educational monster (Elley, 2005).

What would I do differently if starting my research afresh? Firstly, an attempt would be made to interview critics of the qualifications framework (see quote above) to investigate their experiences with the framework. What changes (with respect to qualifications in New Zealand) would they (critics) like to see take place and why? Findings would be used to make a comparative analysis with the 'inside view'. Secondly, great emphasis would be placed on to what extent the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications has addressed some concerns of major critics of the NQF. Thirdly, in addition to the 'inside view' approach taken in this research, the practitioners (implementers of the framework) would be a major part of the sample. As implementers, what are their challenges and successes with the NQF and Register of Quality Assured Qualifications?

## 9.9 Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to theorize the need for change in the qualifications system of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) towards an OECS qualifications framework based on a qualitative case study of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The New Zealand experience demonstrates that the nature of the change in the New Zealand context was such that the NZQA acquired its legitimacy as a Crown agency (non-government department) under the New Zealand Amended Education Act 1990 (see Appendix A for statutory provisions of the Education Act, as they relate to NZQA). As a regulated body, the NZQA is responsible for national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and training. The NQF and the Register allow for the formation of "a single continuum of qualifications" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20), based on assessment against defined standards and outcomes, and "a flexible system of delivery" (Barrowman, 1996, p. 20). Unit standards and qualifications are given a credit value on the Register and NQF. These credit values allow for transferability, portability and flexibility, and the progression of learners. The use of unit standards in particular was intended to bridge the gap between the academic and vocational worlds in the post-secondary educational arena: all qualifications would

become part of a 'seamless web' of courses, programmes, certificates and degrees (Barrowman, 1996; Roberts, 1997). In addition to establishing policies and criteria for registration, moderation, accreditation and quality audits of institutions and programmes that lead to certification, the NZQA was also charged with ensuring international equivalency, comparability of qualifications, recognition of all national qualifications, the recognition of all learning, certification and the introduction of the 'new' standards (outcomes) based approach to learning and assessment (Roberts, 1997).

There are lessons in the level of responsiveness shown by the New Zealand government in its attempt to provide a competitive edge for New Zealand citizens. The change towards an NQF was an effort to remove the elitism that surrounded education. Of significance to the OECS is the major attempt made by New Zealand to enhance access, increase participation rates, and recognize all learning, thereby facilitating vertical and horizontal progression. The New Zealand qualifications framework appears to be more than a regulatory instrument in the control of the expansion of the post-compulsory education sector. The NQF has a quality assurance role. The New Zealand experience shows the potential of this multiple-purpose concept of qualifications to make the connection between national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary education and training; to facilitate flexibility in gaining qualifications; and to recognize competency already achieved and to value a wide spectrum of learning. It has been shown to introduce new developments on learning and assessment in an attempt to provide a better indication and recognition of what learners have acquired.

Another main lesson for the OECS stems from New Zealand's recognition of the need for an updated assessment and certification system - one that moved away from the sifting and sorting role. One major lesson therefore is that in the reform of qualifications/certification in the OECS, learning must be viewed through "alternative lens". The establishment of a qualification framework can provide the OECS with the facility to assure quality of all kinds of learning, and for all types of learning to be valued by the State - what is learned in compulsory and post compulsory education and what types of learning are certified (Philips, 1998). Through an NQF, the OECS can raise the issue of "whose knowledge is to be taught and what kind of national identity such curricula are designed to foster" (Halsey, 1997, p. 24).

In this research, it can be concluded that reasons for change in the qualifications system of the OECS, a developing sub-region with a population of 500,000, are not very different

from the reasons why New Zealand, a developed country with a population of about four million, pursued this end. As was the case in New Zealand (see for example Boston, et al., 1991, 1996; Hamer, 2002; Hood, 1998; Levin, 2001), the reasons for qualifications reform in the OECS were found to be multiple. While modifications, alterations, and adaptations to the NZQA model are necessary as a result of historical and local context and resource considerations, an all-inclusive framework managed by a co-ordinating council of different boards with precise roles, is an applicable organizational strategy towards an OECS qualifications framework. A good starting point for the OECS has been shown to be the recent (2001) changes made by the NZQA. This base has to be extended to include a merger or mix of internal and external assessment, criterion and norm referenced based assessments; a mix of the building blocks of the original NQF – standards based assessment, the inclusion of achievement based assessment and the broader outcomes based approach of the Register of Quality Assured Qualifications. This need emanates from the lessons from the New Zealand experience, which pointed to the implications of the use of one intractable approach to all types and purposes of assessment and qualifications. From the NZQA's experience, major challenges were thought to be conflicting pieces of legislation, the overlapping roles of existing organizations, the interdependence of sectors, decoupling policy formulation with implementation and the strained interpersonal relations among key stakeholders. From the OECS, some of the likely challenges were identified as historical strife, geographical dislocation, the lack of resources, resistance from 'elites', the individual and political agendas and varying levels of economic advancements of individual OECS countries.

At a more theoretical level, this research has also attempted to explore the central argument that the need for change in national qualifications systems and the nature of the change are informed by the two loose groupings of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment – between which there is tension. This research has been successful in demonstrating that both loose groupings of the discourses of managerialism and education have helped shaped the policies and procedures of the NZQA; and that both loose groupings have tendencies to inform the need and nature of the change in the qualification system in the OECS. While it is clear that major arguments are drawn from the discourses of management and economics, the discourses of education theory of learning and assessment and managerialism have not been polarized, nor were they viewed as discrete entities (as portrayed in the literature in Chapters Three and Four) in the responses of participants and at the level of practice. The dominant discourse, however, is that of managerialism.

Despite their contesting theoretical orientations, which give rise to tension in literary debates, the interfacing between the managerial discourse and education theory of learning and assessment is inevitable in the real world. In informing the change and the nature of the change of the outmoded *modus operandi* of the OECS qualifications system towards an OECS qualifications framework, it must be considered and understood that there is a dynamic interplay between the socio-economic and educational roles of assessment. Increasingly, for example, challenges for both the discourses of education and managerialism are demands such as purchaser demands, institutional demands, inter-institutional demands, pedagogical demands and market demands (Barker, 1995; Woodhouse, 2004). To borrow from Woodhouse (1998), as the discourse of education “grapple(s) with these contrary forces, in an often unsympathetic world”, its agencies “must not be tied conservatively to the past but must provide a changing yet stable foundation for the future” (p. 270).

Any attempt to sever the two discourses in the analysis of qualifications frameworks tends to weaken explanations of the role of qualifications frameworks. The need for a better balance between the discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment than presently exists is therefore suggested. Balance for the OECS is suggested by working within both discourses of managerialism and education theory of learning and assessment to develop a new OECS qualifications framework - one which sees learning and through an ‘alternative lens’ by integrating the sociocultural view of learning and assessment with the political and economic imperatives of the changing society within which it occurs. Given its unique socio-economic context, a major challenge for the OECS would be the acceptance of the ascendancy of the changing roles and traditional views of assessment to fulfill the broadening roles of society, other than its present sifting, sorting and selecting roles.

While the two discourses have been shown to trigger tensions at the theoretical level, at the policy implementation level the discourses are not divergent in informing the need for change and the nature of the change in qualifications systems. This thesis has demonstrated that the “incompatibility of the discourses of managerialism and education theory has been exaggerated in literary debates” (Foulkes, *et al.*, 1996, p.46). Despite all theoretical doubts that the two discourses “can ever be completely compatible” (Foulkes, *et al.*, 1996, p.46), the certainty of change - social, political, economic and technological - dictates this inevitable interfacing and the need for a better balance than presently exists.

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## APPENDIX A

Sections of the New Zealand Education Amendment Act (1990) relevant to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. A full version of the Education Act and the Industry Training Act can be found at: [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz).

- [253. Functions of Authority—(1) The Authority has the following functions:
- (a) To oversee the setting of standards for qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training;
  - (b) To monitor and regularly review, and advise the Minister on, the standards for qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training, either generally or in relation to a particular institution or private training establishment or a particular course of study or training;
  - (c) To develop a framework for national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training in which—
    - (i) All qualifications (including pre-vocational courses provided under the Access Training Scheme) have a purpose and a relationship to each other that students and the public can understand; and
    - (ii) There is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications, with recognition of competency already achieved;
  - (d) Subject to subsection (2) of this section, to establish policies and criteria for the approval of courses of study and training at institutions and private training establishments;
  - (e) Subject to subsection (2) of this section, to establish policies and criteria that will enable institutions and private training establishments to be granted accreditation to provide courses of study and training;
  - (f) To ensure there are mechanisms in place to guarantee that different institutions or private training establishments providing approved nationally recognised courses have assessment procedures that are fair, equitable, consistent, and in keeping with the required standard;
  - (g) To assist overseas governments, agencies of those governments, and international agencies in the development and operation of examinations and the development of awards;
  - (h) To maintain effective liaison with overseas certifying and validating bodies, in order to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications in New Zealand and to achieve recognition of New Zealand educational and vocational qualifications overseas:
    - (i) To ensure that post-school educational and vocational qualifications maintain international comparability;
    - (j) To promote and monitor inter-institutional course approval and moderation procedures;
    - (k) Such other functions as are conferred on it by this Act or any other enactment;
    - (l) To consult such persons, authorities, and bodies as it considers appropriate for the purposes of the performance of any of its functions.
  - (2) Before establishing policies or criteria under paragraph (d) or paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of this section in respect of a class of institutions, the Authority shall—
    - (a) In the case of criteria or policies in respect of universities, consult the Vice-Chancellors Committee; and
    - (b) In the case of criteria or policies in respect of any other class of institutions in respect of which there is a body that has the function of setting up course approval and moderation procedures, consult that body;—
 and may consult such other bodies as the Authority considers appropriate.
    - (3) The Authority shall cause the criteria established pursuant to paragraph (d) or paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of this section to be published in the *Gazette*.

## REVISED SANGSTER-BETHEL MODEL (ACTI, 2000, pp. 58-63)

## APPENDIX B

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
Post-Degree Certificate	A qualification denoting the acquisition of professional competence in a specialised field of study (i.e. education) usually following a previous academic course of study.  Instructional emphasis on practical skills.	1 Year	Up to 30 credits		
Post-Degree Diploma	A qualification denoting the acquisition of professional competence in a specialised field of study, usually following a previous academic course of study. Instruction focuses on both theory and practice.	1 Year	Up to 30 credits		

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
Associate in Occupational Science Degree	A post-secondary qualification emphasising the acquisition of technical and vocational skills and designed to equip the holder to enter the vocational field at technologist level. May also lead to higher levels of study in the related field. Normally considered to be equivalent to the first two years of a four-year Bachelor's degree program.	2-3 Years	60 - 70 credits	4 or 5 CSEC general/technical grades 1, 2 and 3 or equivalent, demonstrated competence in English Language, Mathematics, and subjects related to the proposed field of study; completion of relevant certificate program, diploma (for advanced standing), or demonstrated competence in every level skills/knowledge acquired from experience.	Primary emphasis on specialist courses. Limited General Education courses. Few or no electives.
Bachelor's Degree	A qualification denoting the successful completion of a minimum of four years of post 'O' or CXC level study in a specific academic, vocational or professional field.	Minimum of 3-4 Years (depending on initial entry level)	Minimum of 120 credits	2-3 'A' levels and 2-3 'O' or CXC level passes in appropriate subjects; successful completion of relevant diploma or Associate degree program for advanced standing, CSEC general/technical grades 1, 2 and 3.	Major - Specialist Courses  Core - General Education Course  Supporting Disciplines Courses  Elective Courses

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
CAPE Qualifications Certificate	A post-secondary qualification, academic or vocational, denoting the successful completion of <u>one</u> CAPE Unit. It is designed to lead to the completion of other CAPE Units.	1 Year	10-15 credits	5 CXC General or equivalent	English A  General Education courses
CAPE Diploma	A post-secondary qualification denoting successful completion of <u>at least six</u> CAPE Units. It is designed to lead to a three-year Bachelor's degree program and may be granted advanced standing in one or more subjects <u>depending on the units studied and the grades obtained.</u>	1-2 years	60-80 credits	5 CXC General or equivalent	English A Mathematics History or Geography or Social Studies Biology or Physics or Chemistry or Integrated Science

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
Associate in Arts or Science degree	A broad based post-secondary qualification, generally academic in nature, designed to lead to completion of a full Bachelor's degree in the relevant field of study.	2-3 Years	60-70 credits	4 or 5 CSEC general/technical grades 1, 2 and 3 or equivalent, demonstrated competence in English Language, Mathematics, and subjects related to the proposed field of study; completion of relevant certificate program, diploma (for advanced standing), or demonstrated competence in every level skills/knowledge acquired from experience.	General Education Courses. Specialist Courses. General Electives.
Associate in Applied Science Degree	A post-secondary qualification combining academic and vocational field as a technician. Program may also lead to higher levels of study in the related field. Normally considered to be a level equivalent to the first two years of a four-year Bachelor's degree.	2-3 Years	60-70 credits	4 or 5 CSEC general/technical grades 1, 2 and 3 or equivalent, demonstrated competence in English Language, Mathematics, and subjects related to the proposed field of study; completion of relevant certificate program, diploma (for advanced standing), or demonstrated competence in every level skills/knowledge acquired from experience.	Significant emphasis on specialist courses.  General Education courses.  Limited electives.

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
Junior Certificate	A preliminary qualification marking satisfactory completion of a preparatory program leading to further study in a given academic or vocational area.	1 Year	0-10 credits	High school completion, demonstrated minimum competence in English Language and Mathematics, and/or demonstration of relevant entry level skills and knowledge acquired from experience.	English Language, Mathematics, Specialist Courses.
Certificate	A first level qualification, usually vocational in nature emphasising job entry level skill development.	1 Year	11-29 credits	High school completion with demonstrated competence in English Language, Mathematics and subjects related to specialist area (measures by agreed external examination passes) or demonstrated relevant entry level skills and knowledge in specialist area acquired from experience	English Language, Mathematics, Specialist Courses

TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ORIENTATION AND PURPOSE	DURATION	CREDITS	ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS
Diploma I	A post secondary qualification, usually vocational in nature, denoting the successful acquisition of acceptable level of theoretical and practical competence in a specialised field of study. The holder is deemed qualified to perform competently as a technician in the relevant technical, vocational or professional field	1-2 Years	30-60+ credits	4 CSEC general/technical grades 1, 2 and 3 or equivalent, demonstrated competence in English Language, Mathematics and subjects related to the proposed field of study; successful completion of a relevant certificate program, or demonstrated competence in entry level skills/knowledge acquired from experience	Specialist Courses.  Courses from supporting disciplines.  General Electives.
Diploma II	A post-secondary qualification at the technologist level (FTC) - full technological certificate and licentiatehip at the level of Master Craftsman in Europe; demands specialist or technical expertise and the ability to undertake professional work.	Normally 3 years	70+		

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLES OF LETTERS AND CONSENT FORMS

November 8, 2002

The Permanent Secretary  
 Ministry of Education, Human Resource  
 Development, Youth and Sports  
 Castries  
 SAINT LUCIA

Dear Dr. Jules:

Kia Ora from New Zealand!

I am at the stage in my doctoral programme where there is need to secure ethical approval and informed consent from you as Permanent Secretary for the conduct of the research for my thesis. I also wish to request your assistance in soliciting the permission and cooperation of the New Zealand government, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Governments of Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, other institutions and organizations through official correspondence via the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth, and Sports.

My research is based on to what extent and how can a quality assurance system in education be created in the Caribbean region with specific reference to St. Lucia and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. Multiple sources of evidence will be utilized including the analyses of documents, archival records, and artefacts; interview schedules, questionnaires, direct observation, educators' forums and focus groups. Findings generated will be used to (i) theorize a framework for a Caribbean quality assurance system in Education and assess how it compares internationally, ii) understand and inform the practice of quality assurance in the Caribbean region, (iii) fulfil an aspect of the objective of fostering functional co-operation in the region, (iv) contribute to the development of research and literature by documenting/advancing theories of practices of quality assurance in education locally, regionally and internationally, and (v) generate findings that could inform future policy and decision-making processes on quality assurance in the region. The analysis will focus on an evaluation of the formation, implementation and functionality of international quality assurance systems, with specific reference to the NZQA. What has been the impact of the NZQA? Has it made a difference in the quality of education in the New Zealand context? How does the NZQA theorize its practices? Can its theories, principles, and procedures be applied to the Caribbean region? Why can or can't they?

Participants from each country will be selected from three major sectors, namely education, government, and private (business and industry) sector. Participation is voluntary and all participants will be given anonymity. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the data collection stage, omit responses to research questions and request that particular data not be published.

Attached is a research package, which contains the information sheet (title of the study, its purpose, the roles of countries and participants, the rights of participants and how results will be disseminated).

I look forward to discussing any issue that warrants discussion, and anticipate your advice and continual rapport during this project.

Sincerely  
 Rufina Frederick

8<sup>th</sup> November, 2002

Acting Chief Executive  
NZQA Headquarters  
125 The Terrace  
Wellington  
NEW ZEALAND

Dear Dr Van Rooyen:

I am a PhD candidate, under the supervision of Professor Beverley Bell and Dr. Mary Hill, of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. My programme is sponsored by NZAID and supported by the Government of St. Lucia. Currently I am at the preparatory stage of the data collection process for my thesis. This letter seeks to request your participation and that of your staff in the data collection process. You have been selected because of the nature of the research.

The proposed research project will investigate "To what extent and how can a quality assurance mechanism/framework in Education be created in the Caribbean region based on the experience of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority?" The governments of the Caribbean Region have commenced the process of instituting quality assurance mechanisms in individual countries. Thus, the research is being conducted to (i) theorize a framework for a Caribbean Qualifications mechanism based on the New Zealand experience (ii) understand and inform the practice of quality assurance in Education in the Caribbean region, (iii) fulfil an aspect of the objective of fostering functional co-operation in the region, (iv) contribute to the development of research and literature by advancing theories of practices of quality assurance in Education in the region, and (v) generate findings that could inform future policy and decision-making processes on quality assurance in Education in the Region.

Participants are being recruited from all Caribbean countries, New Zealand and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. They will be drawn from three major sectors, namely Education Ministries, other Government Ministries and the Private Sector. My plan is to use the collaborative-interdisciplinary approach in collecting the data.

Should you and your staff agree to participate, I would like to procure an attachment at the NZQA's headquarters towards the end of December, if appropriate, for approximately five to eight days maximum; during which time, I can be in contact with staff members, namely:

I am aware of your busy schedules at this time of year. As a result, participation will involve an individual interview with you, and each staff member of not more than one hour duration. The interview schedule is enclosed. I have enclosed an information sheet that provides other details of the study including how participants will be involved, how data will be disseminated, and the rights of participants.

Should you accede to my request to assist with my research, I should be grateful if:

- an itinerary can be prepared with dates convenient for meeting individual staff members at their convenience

- permission is granted to contact your staff members individually. Each staff member will be sent an invitation letter seeking voluntary participation; a copy of which is enclosed.
- making available wherever appropriate documents, artefacts and archival records that may be of use in the study
- the attached forms are completed and returned to me.

Should you need further clarification, my contact details are provided at the top of the page. I may also be contacted at the School of Education, via my supervisors: Associate Professor Beverley Bell and Dr Mary Hill, or via telephone, or electronic mail at an instant.

Thank you for taking time out to read this letter. I do anticipate your positive response and your participation in this scholarly initiative.

Sincerely,

.....  
Rufina Frederick

.....  
Beverley Bell  
Chief Supervisor

.....  
Mary Hill  
Co-supervisor

8<sup>th</sup> November, 2002

Dear Participant,

### **Letter of Invitation**

I am a PhD candidate of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Currently I am at the preparatory stage of the data collection process for my research project. This letter seeks to request your voluntary participation in the data collection process. You are being selected to participate because of your wealth of knowledge, your role in the society, your contributions to Education, and your keen interest in the quality of Education in New Zealand/the Caribbean region.

The proposed research project will investigate “to what extent and how can a quality assurance mechanism/framework in Education be created in the Caribbean region with specific reference to St. Lucia and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States”. It is being conducted to (i) theorize a framework for a Caribbean Qualifications mechanism and assess how this framework compares internationally (ii) understand and inform the practice of quality assurance in Education in the Caribbean region, (iii) fulfil an aspect of the objective of fostering functional co-operation in the region, (iv) contribute to the development of research and literature by advancing theories of practices of quality assurance in Education in the region, and (v) generate findings that could inform future policy and decision-making processes on quality assurance in Education in the Region.

Participants are being recruited from all Caribbean countries, New Zealand and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Participants will be drawn from three major sectors, namely Education Ministries, other Government Ministries and the Private Sector. My plan is to use the collaborative-interdisciplinary approach in collecting the data.

I have attached an information sheet that provides details of the study including how participants will be involved, how data will be disseminated, and the rights of participants. Should you be interested in volunteering to participate, I have attached a biographical data sheet, and an informed consent form. Kindly complete these, and return them to me in the enclosed return-addressed envelope to my New Zealand address. Should you need further clarification, I can be contacted at the New Zealand address, or via electronic mail at an instant.

Thank you for taking time out to read this letter. I do anticipate your participation in this scholarly initiative.

Sincerely  
Rufina Frederick

8<sup>th</sup> November, 2002

Dear Participant,

**Letter of Invitation**

I am a PhD candidate under the supervision of Associate Professor Beverley Bell and Dr. Mary Hill, of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Currently I am at the preparatory stage of the data collection process for my research project. This letter seeks to request your voluntary participation in the data collection process. You are being selected to participate as an Executive member of the NZQA, as well as because of your wealth of knowledge, your contribution to the field of Education, and your keen interest in the quality of Education in New Zealand.

The proposed research project will investigate "To what extent and how can a quality assurance mechanism/framework in Education be created in the Caribbean region with specific reference to St. Lucia and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States based on the experiences of the NZQA?"

Participants are being recruited from all Caribbean countries, New Zealand and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. They will be drawn specifically from three major sectors, namely Education Ministries, other Government Ministries and the Private Sector. My plan is to use the collaborative-interdisciplinary approach in collecting the data.

Should you agree to participate, your role would be that of participating in an interview of no more than one hour duration during an attachment at the NZQA Headquarters that I hope to procure towards the end of December 2002.

I have attached an information sheet that provides other details of the study including how data will be disseminated, and the rights of participants. Should you be interested in volunteering to participate, I have attached a biographical data sheet, and an informed consent form. Kindly complete these, and return them to me in the enclosed return-addressed envelope. Also, should you need further clarification my contact details are provided at the top of the page. I can also be contacted via telephone or electronic mail at an instant.

Thank you for taking time out to read this letter. I do anticipate a positive response and your participation in this scholarly initiative.

.....  
Sincerely  
Rufina Frederick

## LETTER OF THANKS (Participant)

(Date)

Dear participant

Sincere thanks for agreeing to participate in the research for my doctoral thesis. Enclosed are:

- (1) An information sheet
- (2) An informed consent form
- (3) A biographical data sheet

The biographical data sheet and the informed consent form must be completed before the commencement of the research.

Information on the biographical data sheet will be used to make a balanced selection of participants with wide ranging backgrounds in terms of sector, age, educational level, and sex.

Kindly return them after completion, in the self-addressed envelope provided to my New Zealand address. Postage is prepaid. My contact details are also shown at the top of the page.

Thank you for your co-operation.

.....  
Sincerely  
Rufina Frederick

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Interview Schedule)**

Having read all the information dispatched to you, kindly indicate your consent to participate in the research by signing in the space provided at the bottom of this form.

I -----(NAME)

of -----

-----

(USE THE LINES ABOVE TO WRITE YOUR FULL ADDRESS)

Telephone number (s)-----

Email address (if any) -----

**DO** consent to be **INVOLVED** in the research by:

- (i) participating in a face-to-face interview
- (ii) allowing the interview to be audio-recorded and transcribed
- (iii) making amendments, suggestions and returning the interview transcript to you the researcher
- (iv) reviewing the draft analysis of the data that pertains to me
- (v) permitting the use of excerpts of the raw data in the thesis and subsequent papers emanating out of the thesis

I understand that all information provided will be confidential. My privacy will be respected and protected by the use of the following positive measures (i) I will remain anonymous, (ii) My personal identifiers such as my name and address from both physical and computer-held records will be replaced with ID numbers. The key which links ID number to the identifying information will be kept separate and secure. (iii) Personal identifiers will also be removed from published data.

There is a risk that anonymity may not protect my identity since it is possible that I may be identified in the data though unique combinations of my characteristics, role, position, the sector, size of organization, and the type of institution in which I am involved. These are extremely important and will not be omitted in the data analyses. The return of my transcript and a summary of the findings pertaining to me will give me an opportunity to view my responses and make the necessary changes to the data.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may decline to answer any research question. I can also withdraw my participation at any time during the data collection process.

.....  
SIGNATURE

.....  
DATE

(DATE)

## LETTER WITH TRANSCRIPT

Dear Participant

Attached is the transcript of the face-to-face interview in which you participated on . Kindly note that this is raw data and excerpts may be used in the thesis and subsequent papers emanating out of the analysis and the thesis.

Kindly read the material and make the changes that you feel are necessary. You may delete, add, edit the data, make changes and offer suggestions. You may do so on the copy or the additional sheet of paper attached.

Kindly **return the edited version** to me in the self-addressed envelope provided. It will be re-edited and a copy of the final version will also be sent to you.

If no changes are made, you may keep the copy of the transcript BUT kindly complete and **return the attached form** in the envelope provided.

Sincerely

.....  
Rufina Frederick

## APPENDIX D PROFILES OF INTERVIEWEES

Interview	Profiles of Interviewees
1	Acting Chief Ed Officer
2	President, Chamber of Commerce
3	Planning Officer, Former President Teachers' Union
4	Minister of Education
5	Manager
6	Minister
7	Technical Vocational Education co-ordinator
8	Deputy Permanent Sec
9	Chief Education Officer
10	Deputy Planning Officer Former Registrar of Examinations
11	Deputy Chief Ed Officer
12	Planning Officer
13	Gender Affairs Director Former Principal/President of Principals' Association
14	Regional Consultant Deputy Chief Education Officer
15	Minister of Education
16	TVET co-ordinator
17	Former Permanent Secretary in MOE Former Principal
18	Director of Caribbean Ed
19	Research Officer/former teacher
20	Acting Registrar of Examinations
21	Planning Officer
22	Regional consultant, Permanent Secretary, MOE
23	OECS curriculum co-ordinator
24	Governor General Former principal of community College
25	OECS project co-ordinator, Former Permanent Sect, Min of Ed
26	Minister of Education
27	NZQA
28	NZQA
30	NZQA
31	NZQA
32	NZQA
33	NZQA
34	NZQA
35	NZQA
36	Ministry of Education Official, NZ
37	Representative, Vice Chancellors' Committee
38	NZQA

### Number of Participants from OECS countries other than St Lucia:

St Kitts, Nevis Anguilla (2)	BVI (1)
Dominica (3)	Grenada (1)
Montserrat (2)	Antigua & Barbuda (1)
St Vincent & the Grenadines (2)	OECS Education Reform Unit (4)

## APPENDIX E

### LEVEL DESCRIPTORS OF THE REGISTER OF QUALITY ASSURED QUALIFICATIONS, CREDITS, & CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

#### • Level Descriptors

LEVEL	PROCESS	LEARNING DEMAND	RESPONSIBILITY
1	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are limited in range</li> <li>- are repetitive and familiar</li> <li>- are employed within closely defined contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recall</li> <li>- a narrow range of knowledge and cognitive skills</li> <li>- no generation of new ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in directed activity</li> <li>- under close supervision</li> <li>- with no responsibility for the work or learning of others</li> </ul>
2	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are moderate in range</li> <li>- are established and familiar</li> <li>- offer a clear choice of routine responses</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- basic operational knowledge</li> <li>- readily available information</li> <li>- known solutions to familiar problems</li> <li>- little generation of new ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in directed activity</li> <li>- under general supervision and quality control</li> <li>- with some responsibility for quantity and quality</li> <li>- with possible responsibility for guiding others</li> </ul>
3	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a range of well developed skills</li> <li>- offer a significant choice of procedures</li> <li>- are employed within a range of familiar contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- some relevant theoretical knowledge</li> <li>- interpretation of available information</li> <li>- discretion and judgement</li> <li>- a range of known responses to familiar problems</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in directed activity with some autonomy</li> <li>- under general supervision and quality checking</li> <li>- with significant responsibility for the quantity and quality of output</li> <li>- with possible responsibility for the output of others</li> </ul>
4	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a wide range of technical or scholastic skills</li> <li>- offer a considerable choice of procedures</li> <li>- are employed in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts</li> <li>- analytical interpretation of information</li> <li>- informed judgement</li> <li>- a range of sometimes innovative responses to concrete but often unfamiliar problems</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in self-directed activity</li> <li>- under broad guidance and evaluation</li> <li>- with complete responsibility for quantity and quality of output</li> <li>- with possible responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others</li> </ul>
5	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a wide range of specialised technical or scholastic skills</li> <li>- involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures</li> <li>- are employed in a variety of routine and non-routine contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a broad knowledge base with substantial depth in some areas</li> <li>- analytical interpretation of a wide range of data</li> <li>- the determination of appropriate methods and procedures in response to a range of concrete problems with some theoretical elements</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in self-directed and sometimes directive activity</li> <li>- within broad general guidelines or functions</li> <li>- with full responsibility for the nature, quantity and quality of outcomes</li> <li>- with possible responsibility for the achievement of group outcome.</li> </ul>
	<p>Carry out processes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a command of wide-ranging highly specialised</li> </ul>	<p>Employing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specialised knowledge with depth in more than one area</li> </ul>	<p>Applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in managing processes</li> <li>- within broad parameters for defined</li> </ul>

6	<p><b>Carry out processes that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a command of wide-ranging highly specialised technical or scholastic skills</li> <li>- involve a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures, often in non-standard combinations</li> <li>- are employed in highly variable routine and non-routine contexts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Employing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specialised knowledge with depth in more than one area</li> <li>- the analysis, reformatting and evaluation of a wide range of information</li> <li>- the formulation of appropriate responses to resolve both concrete and abstract problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applied:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in managing processes</li> <li>- within broad parameters for defined activities</li> <li>- with complete accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Carry out processes that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- require a command of highly specialised technical or scholastic and basic research skills across a major discipline</li> <li>- involve the full range of procedures in a major discipline</li> <li>- are applied in complex, variable and specialised contexts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Requiring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- knowledge of a major discipline with areas of specialisation in depth</li> <li>- the analysis, transformation and evaluation of abstract data and concepts</li> <li>- the creation of appropriate responses to resolve given or contextual abstract problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applied:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in planning, resourcing and managing processes</li> <li>- within broad parameters and functions</li> <li>- with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/or group outcomes</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Involves skills and knowledge that enable a learner to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area; and</li> <li>- undertake self-directed study, research and scholarship in a subject area, demonstrating intellectual independence, analytic rigour and sound communication</li> </ul>		
9	<p><b>Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrate mastery of a subject area; and</li> <li>- plan and carry out – to internationally recognised standards – an original scholarship or research project.</li> </ul> <p><b>Demonstrated by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The completion of a substantial research paper, dissertation or in some cases a series of papers.</li> </ul>		
10	<p><b>Involves knowledge and skill that enable a learner to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide an original contribution to knowledge through research or scholarship, as judged by independent experts, applying international standards.</li> </ul>		

## • Credits and Credit Requirements

All qualifications on the Register have a credit value assigned to them. Credits reflect the time a typical learner takes to cover the learning: 1 credit = 10 hours' learning time. Credits are still being added to some qualifications.

In estimating the amount of learning and assessment ('notional learning hours') involved in a qualification, a qualification developer or provider evaluates how long it would typically take people to achieve the stated outcomes in the context specified. This determines the credit value for a qualification.

Notional learning hours include

- direct contact time with teachers and trainers ('directed learning')
- time spent in studying and doing assignments etc ('self-directed' or 'on-task' learning)
- time spent in assessment.

For government funding purposes, a full-time single year programme translates into 120 credits.

### **Certificate**

Certificates may be used in a wide range of contexts across all levels up to and including level 7, and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training.

#### *Credit requirements*

A certificate must comprise a minimum of 40 credits at levels 1-7.

The level of a certificate is determined by beginning with the highest level credits and counting back until a total of 40 credits is reached. The level at which the total of 40 is reached determines the level of the certificate.

### **Diploma**

- Diplomas often prepare learners for self-directed application of skills and knowledge.

#### *Credit requirements*

A diploma must:

- be registered at level 5, 6 or 7, with the top 72 credits defining the level at which it can be registered; and
- have at least 120 of all credits contributing to the qualification at level 4 or above.

The level of a diploma is determined by beginning with the highest level credits and counting back until a total of 72 credits is reached. The level at which the total of 72 is reached determines the level of the diploma.

### **Bachelors Degree**

A Bachelors Degree is a systematic and coherent introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major).

#### *Credit requirements*

A Bachelors degree requires a minimum of 360 credits from levels 4 to 7. Some Bachelors Degrees, notably in professional fields such as engineering, the health sciences and law, encompass additional credits and may require a longer period of study. For example, an eight-semester (four-year) degree would normally be equivalent to 480 credits.

Of the credits required for a Bachelors Degree, a minimum of 72 credits should be at level 7. A maximum of 20 credits should be at level 4 (such that the integrity of the qualification at the higher levels is maintained).

### **Bachelors Degree with Honours**

A Bachelors Degree may be awarded with honours to recognise advanced or distinguished study in advance of a level 7 Bachelors Degree. This may occur by:

- recognising outstanding achievement in a 480-credit (or more) Bachelors Degree especially in relation to work of a research nature (typically at level 8); or
- achieving 120 credits at level 8 following a level 7 Bachelors Degree (either as part of an integrated honours degree or as a separate qualification).

### **Graduate Certificate**

A Graduate Certificate is designed primarily as a vehicle for graduates to pursue further study at an undergraduate level.

*Credit requirements*

The Graduate Certificate:

- can be registered at levels 6 or 7
- requires at least 60 credits from levels 5 to 7
- has its level defined by the top 40 credits.

Postgraduate Certificate

A Postgraduate Certificate involves credits from a specified subject and, where appropriate, the cognate areas. It serves as a qualification recognising continuing professional development in the same area as the candidate's original degree.

*Credit requirements*

A programme leading to the Postgraduate Certificate requires a minimum of 40 credits at level 8.

Postgraduate Diploma

A Postgraduate Diploma is designed to extend and deepen a candidate's knowledge and skills by building on attainment in the principal subject(s) of the qualifying degree. It provides a candidate with a systematic and coherent survey of current thinking and research in a particular body of knowledge and may include instruction in the relevant research methodologies.

*Credit requirements*

The Postgraduate Diploma requires a minimum of 120 credits from levels 7 and above with a minimum of 72 credits from level 8.

Masters Degree

A Masters Degree is normally designed to build on the principal subject(s) of the qualifying degree. Alternatively, a Masters Degree may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from occupational experience, as in the Master of Business Administration (MBA). Different discipline areas have different traditions. Thus national and international comparisons are relevant for a Masters Degree in a particular area.

*Credit requirements*

The Masters Degree requires either:

- 240 credits at levels 8 and 9, with a minimum of 40 credits at level 9; or
- when a candidate has a relevant Postgraduate Diploma or Bachelors Degree with Honours - or equivalent professional experience - 120 credits at levels 8 and 9 with a minimum of 40 credits at level 9.

Note that the 40 credit level 9 research aspect of the Masters degree may be met by a dissertation or in some instances a series of papers.

Doctoral Degree

These definitions should be considered in conjunction with the accreditation and approval processes outlined in the NZQA publication "Approval and Accreditation of Courses Leading to Degrees and Related Qualifications (2003)". See [NZQA website](#)

*Credit requirements*

A doctorate requires at least 240 credits worth of advanced research at level 10.

APPENDIX F

GLIMPSE OF NCEA ISSUES: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

New Zealand Herald, Thursday March 3, 2005

# Exam inquiry ropes in NCEA

Government accused of sneaking news of wider probe into the public arena

by Ainsley Thomson  
political reporter

The Government has quietly widened the scholarship exam inquiry to cover all results of the new national certificate of education set by school-leavers last year.

The decision means the inquiry will now cover the standard NCEA qualifications, not just the scholarship for the brightest students.

But the decision was not announced in the normal way, such as a press release. Associate Education Minister David Benson-Pope mentioned the extension of the State Services Commission's inquiry during a question time in Parliament this week.

National's education spokesman, Bill English, has accused the Government of staying quiet about about the extension as an attempt to "sneak out" news of the inquiry.

"After weeks of stonewalling, David Benson-Pope's change of heart and admission that there are problems has been followed by a bungled attempt to keep the inquiry low key."

The Qualifications Authority has been accused of running a "lotto" qualification at NCEA levels 1 and 2 offered to classes in years 11 and 12, formerly the fifth and sixth forms.

The largest variable is an information technology exam at level 1, which just a quarter of last year's students passed compared with more than half in 2003.

## ➤ The inquiries

- A review into variability in NCEA results.
- A review of the Qualifications Authority's performance.
- An investigation into last year's scholarship exams.
- An inquiry to check whether this year's scholarship exams are on track.
- An NZQA investigation of variable NCEA exam results at levels 1 and 2.
- An internal NZQA review to determine why Trevor Mallard was not alerted sooner.

Mr Benson-Pope said he was aware of public concern over variability in NCEA and the inquiry would examine the "apparent variation" in NCEA results, both between

subjects and from one year to the next. Level 1 has been running three years and level 2 for two.

"I am not yet assured that the level of variability that was observed in the 2004 NCEA results was appropriate or acceptable," he said.

Last week the NZQA said it will investigate NCEA exam results at levels 1 and 2 where "significant variability" has been found. But authority chief Karen Van Rooyen played this down, insisting it was standard practice to check a sample of results each year, and the variability was as expected.

"We are checking to see if any adjustments are required for 2005, but there is nothing special in that," and this kind of work takes place every year."

Mr English said of the wider inquiry that he was "appalled that the Government no longer believes the 2004 NCEA results are valid."

## ➤ How to understand NCEA results

New Zealand Herald, Thursday, Jan 13, 2005

The infographic explains NCEA results. It includes a table for English Level 1 standards and a grade average scale.

National Qualifications Framework registered number of each standard.	Title of each standard. Number in brackets shows how many credits are attached to each standard.	'e' shows standard was assessed externally. 'i' shows standard was assessed internally.	Shaded box shows grade achieved.	Size of box reflects proportion of students achieving that grade.	Number of credits gained for each standard.
90052	Produce creative writing (3)	e	M	E	3
90053	Produce formal writing (3)	e	A	E	3
90054	Read, study and show understanding of extended written texts (4)	e	NA	A	4
90055	Read, study and show understanding of a number of short texts (4)	e	A	M	4
90056	Write to study and show understanding of a visual or oral text (2)	e	NA	A	2

Below the table is a scale for "Total credits you have gained" from 0 to 10. The scale is divided into "Not Achieved", "Achieved", "Merit", and "Excellent". Below this is a "Total credits gained" scale from "Fail" to "A pass".

Overall quality of achievement indicated by this grade average out of 100.

You can also view your results on the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz) by entering your HSN and password.

# Parents find results hard to decipher

by Stuart Dye  
education reporter

Some parents may feel they need a degree to interpret their child's NCEA results as they arrive in letterboxes and home computers this week.

Some are simple subject and score listings. Advocates of standard-based assessment say it gives far deeper understanding of a student's abilities.

But the wealth of information — which goes live on the Qualifications Authority website today — has left some scratching their heads.

Myra Desouza said her 17-year-old daughter received her results on Monday. "It's so confusing, there's so many different papers that I didn't know what to look at."

However, Mrs Desouza, from Auckland, said her daughter got

enough credits for a university place. About 146,000 students received their results this week after the exams in November.

Qualifications Authority group manager Kate Colbert admitted that the results could be hard to understand, but that was because there was much more information.

"The numbers give you a general idea, but it's the record of learning that's really important."

She described the credits gained figure as "academic currency" which universities, polytechnics and work-place training organisations could use to select applicants.

More important for employers was the wealth of information about what an individual student was able to do, and training days would be held for employers and brochures sent out helping them to understand the results.

# NZQA chief will work out notice from home

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) chief executive Karen Van Rooyen will work out three months' notice from home after resigning yesterday over the agency's role in the scholarship debacle.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said Ms Van Rooyen would stay on the authority's books for three months, being paid while based at home.

She would be required to carry out projects as a way of working out her contractual notice period, Miss Clark said.

"I'm satisfied that people have accepted responsibility, yes," she said.

Ms Van Rooyen said she had not received a golden handshake. Mr Benson-Pope said he had also been advised no payment of any kind had been paid.

Ms Van Rooyen, whose contract would have expired in two years' time, had previously told a parliamentary committee resigning was not an option.

She explained yesterday there was never an "ideal time to consider resignation" but she had decided to go.

Ms Van Rooyen said yesterday she had not been asked to leave.

She explained yesterday there was never an "ideal time to consider resignation" but she had decided to go.



APPENDIX G  
NZQA SAMPLE GLOSSARY

<b>developer</b>	that develops qualifications that are submitted for approval to a quality assurance body; the development process must involve and have the support of the appropriately recognised expert bodies related to the subject title and major content of the qualification.	<b>mātauranga</b>	ka whakawhanake i ngā tohu mātauranga ka tāpaeia ki tētahi rōpū whakāū i te kōunga mā taua rōpū anō hei whakamana; me māua whai wāhi i te hātepe whakawhanaka, te tautoko o ngā rōpū kua mōhiotia he tohunga i roto i te tākara o te kaupapa ako me te mōhiotanga māua o te tohu mātauranga	<b>quality assured qualification</b>	a qualification that is approved by any of the recognised quality assurance bodies. (See Register for more details)	<b>tohu mātauranga kua whakaūngia te kōunga</b>	tētahi tohu mātauranga kua oti te whakamana i tētahi o ngā rōpū whakāū i te kōunga. (Tirohia te Ahurutanga mō ētahi kōrero anō)		
<b>quality assurance</b>	a collective term used for activities used to ensure that business is carried out effectively and efficiently.	<b>Back to A-Z menu</b>	whakāū i te kōunga	<b>quality management</b>	coherent management activity that ensures quality policies and objectives are set, implemented and evaluated.	<b>tino kōunga o te whakahaere</b>	Te whakamātau motuhake i tētahi pūnaha whakahaere kia kitea ai te whai hua o ngā mahi o reira ki te whakatutuki i te kōunga o ngā whāinga.		
<b>quality assurance body</b>	a body that has legislated or delegated authority for quality assurance functions. Such organisations include the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVC), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the ITP New Zealand - Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand and the Colleges of Education Accreditation Committee (CEAC). (See Register for more details)	<b>Back to A-Z menu</b>	rōpū whakāū i te kōunga	<b>quality management system</b>	a system of clearly defined organisational structures, processes, responsibilities and resources used to assure quality.	<b>Back to A-Z menu</b>	(te) tino kōunga o te pūnaha whakahaere	Tētahi pūnaha o ngā ānga, ngā hātepe, ngā kawenga me ngā rauemi ā-whakahaere kua tauhūhia hei whakāū i te kōunga.	<b>Hoki i te rārangi A-Z</b>
				<b>RCC</b>	recognition of current competency. (See recognition of prior learning)	<b>RCC</b>	te whakaatanga o ngā āheinga o ināianei. (Tirohia te whakaatanga o ngā akoranga o mua)		
				<b>range</b>	Range statements provide clarification of the <b>standard</b> , or an outline of the <b>critical evidence</b> to be considered in <b>assessment</b> , to ensure that standards have been met. They may also provide context and clarify limits. Range statements can	<b>huinga</b>	Mā te tauāki huinga e tauhūhi ai te <b>paerewa</b> , he whakarāpopotonga rānei o te tauāki mōhiu ka whakaaroarotia i roto i te <b>āromatawāinga</b> , e pūmau ai kua tutuki ngā paerewa. Ka tuku i te horopaki, ā, ka tauhūhi anō hoki i ngā here. Ka		

APPENDIX H  
NZQA QUALIFICATIONS STATISTICS (2002)



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY  
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

**National Qualifications Framework –  
Statistics September 2002**

**NQF Statistics – September 2002**

National Qualifications Framework statistics are published monthly. Please note that the statistics below are monthly updates and any analysis of trends should take into account registration and recording processes.

For further information please contact the relevant business unit within the Authority or Fiona Turnbull, Communications Unit, telephone 04 802 3046 or email [fionat@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:fionat@nzqa.govt.nz).

**Qualifications and unit standards**

	<i>30 SEPTEMBER 2002</i>	<i>1 JAN 2000</i>
Registered qualifications	855	662
Registered unit standards	16,671	15,098
Registered achievement standards	293	0

**NQF Statistics - September 2002**

## Registrations and accreditations

	30 SEPT 2002	1 JAN 2000
Registered training establishments (private)	871	816
Registered training establishments (government)	9	12
Registered Māori training establishments	190	176
Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) (recognised by ETSA)	47	51
Total providers with NQF accreditation	1147	1 095
Private training establishments with NQF accreditation	647	613
Māori providers with NQF accreditation	166	156
Schools with NQF accreditation	426	403
ITOs accredited to register assessors	40	41

## Results

	30 SEPT 2002	1 JAN 2000
Total learners registered	784 996	475 661
Total credits recorded	32 478 091	14 080 752
National Qualifications Awarded	93 784	31 983
Māori learners registered	150 752	91 858
Credits recorded for Māori learners	5 948 670	2 479 011
Qualifications awarded to Māori learners	16 499	5 318
Pacific Island learners registered	55 055	34 493
Credits recorded to Pacific Island learners	2 012 465	821 959
Qualifications awarded to Pacific Island learners	5 598	1 898

## Learners registered to 30 September 2002

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	308	524	832
Government Training Establishments	8 060	1 742	9 802
Industry Training Organisations	96 480	33 631	130 111
Polytechnics	71 779	70 543	142 322
Private Training Establishments	99 785	102 398	202 183
Schools	106 048	124 046	230 094
Wānanga	1 884	4 039	5 923
Other	37 768	25 961	63 729
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>422 112</b>	<b>362 884</b>	<b>784 996</b>

## Māori learners registered to 30 September 2002

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	16	17	33
Government Training Establishments	679	246	925
Industry Training Organisations	13 185	6 039	19 224
Polytechnics	9 163	10 945	20 108
Private Training Establishments	27 661	29 317	56 978
Schools	14 388	17 542	31 930
Wānanga	1 384	3 294	4 678
Other	10 156	6 720	16 876
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76 632</b>	<b>74 120</b>	<b>150 752</b>

## Pacific Island learners registered to 30 September 2002

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	8	7	15
Government Training Establishments	130	31	161
Industry Training Organisations	4 204	1 884	6 088
Polytechnics	4 138	3 560	7 698
Private Training Establishments	9 147	10 544	19 691
Schools	7 531	9 357	16 888
Wānanga	227	248	475
Other	2 411	1 628	4 039
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27 796</b>	<b>27 259</b>	<b>55 055</b>

## Qualifications awarded to 30 September 2002

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	60	223	283
Government Training Establishments	1 457	326	1 783
Industry Training Organisations	18 547	4 274	22 821
Polytechnics	9 266	13 340	22 606
Private Training Establishments	12 338	21 668	34 006
Schools	1 670	3 607	5 277
Wānanga	415	1 094	1 509
Other	2 309	3 190	5 499
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46 062</b>	<b>47 722</b>	<b>93 784</b>

**Qualifications awarded to 30 September 2002 - Māori learners**

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	3	7	10
Government Training Establishments	282	104	386
Industry Training Organisations	2 254	762	3 016
Polytechnic	954	1 866	2 820
Private Training Establishments	2 307	5 180	7 487
Schools	155	425	580
Wānanga	291	839	1 130
Other	301	769	1 070
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6 547</b>	<b>9 952</b>	<b>16 499</b>

**Qualifications awarded to 30 September 2002 - Pacific Island learners**

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	1	2	3
Government Training Establishments	57	15	72
Industry Training Organisations	563	262	825
Polytechnics	295	416	711
Private Training Establishments	1 069	2 244	3 313
Schools	86	253	339
Wānanga	23	54	77
Other	93	165	258
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2 187</b>	<b>3 411</b>	<b>5 598</b>

**Framework credits recorded to 30 September 2002**

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	11 828	34 351	46 179
Government Training Establishments	288 635	56 434	345 069
Industry Training Organisations	5 266 724	1 145 157	6 411 881
Polytechnics	4 798 807	4 284 518	9 083 325
PTE's	3 873 598	4 660 039	8 533 637
Schools	2 273 205	3 241 957	5 515 162
Wānanga	114 263	178 503	292 766
Other	1 363 461	886 611	2 250 072
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17 990 521</b>	<b>14 487 570</b>	<b>32 478 091</b>

**Framework credits recorded to 30 September 2002 - Māori learners**

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	854	1 633	2 487
Government Training Establishments	60 241	17 747	77 988
Industry Training Organisations	662 063	205 436	867 499
Polytechnics	612 865	706 048	1 318 913
Private Training Establishments	958 600	1 227 401	2 186 001
Schools	293 010	433 099	726 109
Wānanga	87 114	141 490	228 604
Other	349 207	191 862	541 069
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 023 954</b>	<b>2 924 716</b>	<b>5 948 670</b>

**Framework credits recorded to 30 September 2002 - Pacific Island learners**

	Male	Female	Total
Colleges of Education	512	676	1 188
Government Training Establishments	11 204	2 494	13 698
Industry Training Organisations	133 829	45 073	178 902
Polytechnics	234 084	217 563	451 647
Private Training Establishments	314 097	509 991	824 088
Schools	156 106	263 346	419 452
Wānanga	10 313	9 599	19 912
Other	54 715	48 863	103 578
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>914 860</b>	<b>1 097 605</b>	<b>2 012 465</b>