The relationships between mandated change, professional development and school growth

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THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MANDATED CHANGE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL GROWTH

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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M.Ed.(Hons.) (Wollongong), B.Ed. (Kuringai), Grad. Dip. (Mt. Gravatt)

Faculty of Education
2000
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of two great educators:

To Una Barton, my mother and a truly inspirational teacher

and

To Roy Williams, a principal extraordinaire
This thesis was supported by a Frameworks Scholarship. I am therefore indebted to Brian Cambourne and Jan Turbll for offering me this opportunity. Without this support the study would never have been started. Thankyou Brian and Jan for this opportunity.

There were many people who were just as much a part of this study as myself. I'm thinking here of all the participants, the principals and all the teachers of the four schools in which I worked. Working with these people was truly inspirational. Their commitment and enthusiasm was an indication of the special kinds of cultures they created in their schools, and, I believe, as this study shows, an inspiration to all other schools endeavouring to cope with the pace of change. To you all my heart felt thanks for offering friendship, sharing your knowledge and experience and for your commitment to the co-researching experience.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to develop a grounded theory of the relationships between mandated change, professional development and school growth. A case study of a period of time between February 1994 and May 1995, was developed. It charting the experiences of the staff of four primary schools' journey through the implementation of a new State mandatory English K-6 Syllabus. Specifically, during this journey, I investigated how four principals and twenty-one members of staff, caught up in this context, went about organizing people, ideas and practices as part of the change process.

Located within a naturalistic paradigm, the study focussed on the 'multiple truths' presented by participants about their school settings and the connections they made between meanings and observable actions within their schools.

A number of questions evolved and were used as a means of directing and framing the study. These included an exploration of two different contexts. The first explored the political, social and educational environment and how these external factors impacted on the case study schools. The second context was concerned with the 'setting', that is, the internal school factors that described the workplaces.

The resulting grounded theory is presented in diagrammatic form, and shows the essential elements that the schools felt were integral to the change process. This is followed by a description of each element with particular reference to the relationships that existed in these contexts between mandated change, professional development and school growth. Implications are also made that may have value for major stakeholders in public education in New South Wales. Finally a number of challenges are offered for those engaged in the change process.
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A grounded theory of the relationships between mandated change, professional learning and school growth

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