

**PARENT PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM
DECISION MAKING: A CASE STUDY**

Submitted by

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requirements of the degree of Master of
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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Human Experimentation Ethics Committee (now titled the Human Research Ethics Committee) of Latrobe University, Bendigo: Approval No. HREC 93/02.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an historical study of parent participation in school level decision making, particularly in curriculum issues, in relation to the Victorian Government policies of Devolution through the 1980s. It was conducted as a case study of one rural secondary school, examining how the role of parents in the school's curriculum development and associated decision making structures may have changed during the decade from the early 1980s to the early 1990s.

Three conceptual models were established, which served as analytical frameworks for the field data: a Theory model of how school level participation could operate, a Policies model deriving from the expectations of the major Government policies of the time, and an Historical model based on research and analyses of practice in Australia and overseas.

The findings indicate that little effective parent participation developed or took place in the school over the period under study. Major contributing factors identified are the lack of policy direction and official mechanisms, especially in implementation of change, the definition of appropriate participant roles, the culture of traditional authorities in education (teacher in the classroom, principal in school processes and bureaucracy in administration), and the local factors of community attitudes and demographic profile.

While the local factors are significant, it is concluded that the policies did not provide sufficient direction or mechanism to overcome the entrenched culture of traditional authorities in schooling. Changes in practice were directed more by the influence of specific personalities in single situations than any development of general attitude or institutional structure.

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