CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

History in Australia, including in Western Australia (WA), has faced a paradoxical situation in the last twenty-five years. On the one hand the school subject has experienced a decline in the proportions of students enrolled. This has been attributed to popular perceptions of its irrelevance in a period of increased emphasis on utilitarian, technical school curricula (Kelly, 2004; Marginson, 1997; Smith & Lovat, 2003), its limitations for Australia's expanding multi-cultural society (Barcan 1997; Halse, 1996; Macintyre 1997) and it being increasingly subsumed into such integrated subjects as 'Social Studies', 'Society and Environment', 'Peace Studies' and 'Discovering Democracy' (Moroz, 2001; Thiveos, 1999). On the other hand, history has become of keen interest to adults, in part due to the burgeoning tourist industry. It has also become an issue of political concern as state and particularly Commonwealth politicians have exerted growing interest and influence in schools' History curricula, with regards to content, skills and processes, and outcomes (Barcan, 1997; Clark, 2003; Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Taylor, 2000a). As a result, school History curricula have become increasingly significant issues in Australian education policy, due to a concern among some groups to institute measures to halt its decline and restore its popularity, and due to a concern among other interest groups and policy actors to have a greater say in the content and nature of the subject.

The aim of the research reported in this study was to analyse the policy processes behind changes to History curricula in the post-compulsory years of schooling in WA in the last two decades of the twentieth century. The study seeks to explain the changes to History curricula in the state and to analyse the policy process behind those

changes. This chapter introduces the study by outlining a number of its features. First, there is a section that explains the purpose and significance of the study in more detail. This is followed by an historical background to the study. Attention is then turned to an overview of the policy context of History curriculum within WA. The next section introduces the theoretical framework within which the research was located. A section which provides an overview of the research methods used in the study follows. Finally, the structure of the remainder of the thesis itself is outlined.

Purpose and significance

This study focuses on the policies of three statutory authorities with regard to the curriculum for History in Years 11 and 12 of secondary schools in WA. The statutory authorities were the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) from 1974 – 1984, the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) from 1985 – 1996 and the Curriculum Council of WA (CCWA) (1997 onwards).

The proposed research represents a substantial and significant contribution to knowledge, in three domains. First, it contributes to the knowledge and understanding of changes to the History curriculum in a particular educational setting, that of WA. Although these changes have occurred at a time of considerable reform to the nature of the subject in the international context, the research provides detailed knowledge of the changes in one Australian state within that global context.

Secondly, the study contributes to our knowledge of the policy processes involved in curricular change more broadly. It does so by extracting from key players and stakeholders in the process their understandings of what happened, and why. Such

knowledge helps to improve an understanding of policy making processes in the future by rendering those involved in policy making more aware of the previous experiences of key players or actors.

Thirdly, the study contributes to knowledge about the consequences of curricular policy statements, through the communicated experiences of those affected by the policy texts. As Finch (1986) has stated, most evaluations of policy involve quantitative data, usually focussed in terms of the expected outcomes of the policy makers. On the other hand, a policy study using qualitative methods such as that reported here elicits the understandings that the people directly involved have of the context of practice of the policy. The findings may be of significance to those interested in increasing understandings about the differences between the intentions of policy makers and the outcomes identified by those involved in its enactment.

Curriculum policy with regard to History since the 1980s has been well chronicled and analysed in England and Wales (eg. Ball, 1990, 1994a; McKiernan, 1993; Phillips, 1998b; Taylor, 1999), Canada (Osborne, 2003), and in the USA (Ravitch, 1998; Symcox, 2001; Whittington, 1999; Yoder et al., 1994), but there has been limited research of developments in History curriculum from a policy perspective in Australia during this period. Contestations between different interest groups over the nature and direction of History have been illustrated recently (Macintyre 2003), but more at a tertiary and generalist level, although Clark (2003) has described the strife that has developed over school History in Australian states. Studies in policy developments for History in NSW have been undertaken (Harris, 2001; Harvey, Maxwell & Wilson, 1996; Reynolds, 2001), but they have generally focussed on History in the compulsory years of schooling, and have invariably involved only one

phase of change. This study analyses the situation in Western Australia in the post-compulsory years of schooling, in a longitudinal study across three phases of changes, and in an in-depth manner.

Background

WA is one of six states within the Commonwealth of Australia, and under the terms of the Constitution which prescribes the Federal system of government within the nation, the determination of educational matters, including the production of school curricula, remains a 'residual power' of the State Government. Control over school curricula in the compulsory years of schooling was, for a long time, exercised by the Director General of Education and the Department of Education. From 1915 to 1974 responsibility for school curricula in the post-compulsory years was devolved to the Public Examinations Board (PEB), an institution with the authority to conduct public examinations for secondary accreditation and for entrance to The University of Western Australia (UWA) and to other tertiary institutions as they evolved (White, 1975). The PEB actually emanated from UWA. Following reforms to the public examination system in WA after the Dettman Report (1969), post-compulsory school curricula were brought under the umbrella of a government statutory body, initially the BSE, from1972 to 1984, later the SEA, from 1985 to 1996, and currently the CCWA, since 1997. The account of the historical background to modern upper school History curricula in WA which follows illustrates the tight coupling of upper-school curricula with the system of public examinations.

History curricula in Western Australia before 1983

Fletcher (1982) and Williams (1957) both identify the formal beginning of History as a school subject in WA with its addition to the primary curriculum in 1893 (*Minutes, Votes & Proceedings* (*MVP*), 1893, Schedule V, p. 981). However, earlier records of teaching History in the colony appear, in a statement of curriculum in Catholic schools in 1870 (*MVP*, 1870-71, pp. 109 –111), and in the regulations for the examination for a University Exhibition (*Government Gazette*, 1886, p. 142). By 1913, there was a formal History syllabus for Classes 4 – 6 of primary schools in WA, with the emphasis being entirely on British History. In the 'central' (post-primary) schools, History was a compulsory subject, with an expectation that there be between 135 and 150 minutes of study in it a week. The course, *History and Civics*, was entirely utilitarian and students were required to study the history of industry, commerce, and work in the previous two centuries and a course in citizenship and democratic institutions (Education Department of WA, 1913).

A secondary school History syllabus was first reported in 1913. It was the syllabus prescribed for the new Perth Modern School, which opened in February 1911 (EDWA, 1913), and it became the basis of History curricula for the new secondary schools that appeared during the next two decades. The syllabus coincided with the beginning of the examination system that came to dominate secondary education in WA. Before 1915, WA school students seeking university entry had to sit examinations provided by The University of Adelaide. With the establishment of UWA in 1911, demand arose immediately for a local examination system, a call answered by 1914 when students sat the first public examinations sourced in WA (Helm, 1979). The *Syllabus Manual* of the

Public Examinations Board (PEB) was first published in 1915, and for the next 59 years it contained the syllabus statements for examinable secondary school subject curricula in lower and upper years. Two levels of examination were available, the Junior Certificate to accredit students completing the compulsory three years of secondary school, and the Leaving Certificate for those completing the post-compulsory, upper two years of secondary school. At first, the two purposes of school certification and matriculation were incorporated into the one Leaving examination, but later separate matriculation examinations were held.

An analysis of the History syllabuses in the PEB manuals from 1915 to 1974 reveals the dominating influence of examinations upon secondary school syllabuses and suggests a number of stages of development of secondary History curricula, based on the examination system. In the first five years, there were a series of revisions to course content made in what seems to be a period of adaptation and adjustment. From 1920 to 1950 there was a period of consolidation, with only minor changes to a relatively stable framework. Collins (1951) conducted a survey of principals, teachers and a sample of university students, and the findings of his study provide a comprehensive snapshot of History teaching in WA in the 1950s. Of particular relevance was the widely held perception of the negative impact of the examination system on the nature of the History curriculum. The teachers surveyed complained of difficulties in completing the examination syllabus and of the constraints that the syllabus placed on their teaching methods. Too often, they stated, they were driven to didactic methods simply to get through the syllabus (Collins, 1951, pp. 95 – 98), which resulted in negative perceptions of History among school students (pp. 103 –114). Both students and teachers surveyed stated the potential benefits of reducing examinable content, by giving them time to

explore issues and ideas, and the opportunity to practice a greater variety of methods, and thus spark greater enthusiasm among students.

Evidence from the developments in the late 1950s and 1960s suggests that some of the concerns expressed by teachers and principals in Collins's study were addressed by the PEB. White (1975) suggests that the influence of certain lobby groups, in particular the State Schools Teachers' Union of WA, did much to reform the examination system. However, some of the anxieties over History teaching expressed by teachers in 1952 were very similar to those expressed by teachers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and clearly had not been addressed.

One development in the 1960s, which was to impact on secondary school History curricula, was the State government's commissioning of specialist reports by individuals or working parties into aspects of the education system. The first was the Petch Report (1963) on public examinations in WA, followed by the Neal Report (1964) on the curriculum of the lower secondary years. The Dettman Report (1969) recommended the implementation of the findings of Neal's report, but also went further. One additional recommendation was that there be greater integration of subjects in lower secondary schools, in response to the problems of an overcrowded curriculum and to reflect the greater breadth of ability in the secondary student cohort. Thus Social Studies, an integrated course based on Geography and History, as advocated by Neal in 1964, became a major component of the new Achievement Certificate established in 1973. Dettman's major recommendation was the ending of all public examinations as the means of secondary school assessment, both lower and upper.

While the subsequent excision of the Junior Certificate examination had been foreshadowed in the Neal Report, the attack on the Leaving Certificate was more of a surprise. The champions of the existing system at upper secondary level rallied to the defence of common, external public examinations, for several reasons (White, 1975; Collins, 1992) and they were to remain the sole means of upper school secondary certification and university matriculation for another decade. However, the demise of the PEB, and the longstanding domination of UWA in the examination system, was inescapable. The 1975 public examinations for school leavers were conducted under the auspices of the new Tertiary Admissions Examination Committee (TAEC), overseen by the BSE and supervised by the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) (Chase, 1974).

By 1980, some important features behind the initial context of influence for History curriculum policy can be identified. First, History as a discrete subject was now only available in Years 11 and 12, the upper, post-compulsory years of schooling. In the other years of secondary schooling, the subject had become subsumed in an integrated course of study known as Social Studies (Barcan, 1997; Moroz, 2003). The unique identity of history and its related skills, knowledge and disciplines were often not evident to students in the lower secondary years (Thiveos, 1999), nor to some Social Studies teachers who had no historical training or education.

Second, the History curriculum continued to be driven entirely by the public examination syllabus, now the TAE. This syllabus involved the examination of five to six content areas taught across two years of study. Significantly, the examination was solely by essay, initially five essays in a three hour examination, later reduced to four essays. This situation, however, would be increasingly challenged. As teachers took

greater responsibility for assessment of students in the lower secondary years of schooling, so they would begin to demand greater participation in curriculum construction and assessment in the upper secondary years, a trend identified by Shepherd (1980) although suggested much earlier, in Collins' (1951) survey.

A third feature was that History itself was becoming increasingly receptive to external forces for change, as teachers and their trainers were becoming aware of the trends in history teaching emanating from England and Wales and the USA, and of a desire to see them implemented into curricula within the state of WA. Changes were also occurring in the teaching of university courses of study (Evans, 1997; Marwick, 1989). The global changes in the overall nature of History curricula are reviewed in the next chapter.

Finally, flexibility and choice had become essential features of the curriculum, and this coexisted with a declining emphasis on specified content and textbooks. These trends reflected changing views of the nature of the subject, from one of definitive knowledge of specified content to one where differences of interpretation were recognised. Within the Australian context, Davison (2000) explained this as a response to generational conflict, reflected particularly in divisions over the country's involvement in the Vietnam War. This development would impact on the nature of pedagogy in History classrooms, and on the common examination as examiners and markers would have to accommodate a variety of interpretations in student answers.

The curriculum policy context in Western Australia

In 1989, the (national) Curriculum Corporation noted that "over the past two decades there have been considerable changes in school and system policies" (*National*

Report on Schooling in Australia, 1989, p. 6*)*. In WA, those changes have impacted on schools in two main areas of education, the operational and the curricular. In the operational area, the general trend has been one of devolution, with schools having to adopt greater responsibility for the management of resources, both human and capital (eg. *Better Schools*, 1987). However, the devolution of school management has been accompanied by increased accountability to the central authority, in a process of 'steering at a distance' (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995). In the area of curriculum it can be argued that the pattern has been in the other direction, towards far greater centralised control (Marsh, 1994, Piper, 1997).

The beginnings of the WA State Government intervention in curricular policy began in 1964 with the commissioning of Reports such as the Neal Report (1964), the Dettman Report (1969) and the implementation of some of their recommendations. However, State Government intervention in curriculum policy escalated with the commissioning of the Beazley Report (1984) and the McGaw Report (1984), and the subsequent implementation of many of their recommendations (Marsh, 1994). The recommendations focussed most significantly on school curriculum, although those of the former report were used to justify the devolution of school management in the *Better Schools* policy (1987). The Andrich Report (1989) led to further changes in upper school curricula following negative reactions to some aspects of the post-McGaw system. Like other states, the WA State Government was involved in the process of developing a national curriculum (Piper, 1997) before its demise in 1993. Nevertheless the government remained wedded to some of the structures of the national curriculum and in 1997 published a comprehensive curriculum, the *Curriculum Framework*, for all age-groups in WA schools, to be fully operational by 2004.

The reasons for increased government intervention in curriculum policy making since the 1970s, in Australia as well as in other western countries, lie in the stated connection between schooling and the economy (Kelly, 2004; Marginson, 1993, 1997; Teese and Polesel, 2003). In response to severe economic downturns and rising youth unemployment, successive State and Commonwealth governments in Australia identified aspects of school curriculum as necessary agents to address the problem. Smith and Lovat (2003) identify the trend as a shift to "an economistic and utilitarian view of education" (p. 224). School curricula became the focus of government efforts to retain students at school in the post-compulsory years and to generate a level of vocational or skills training in all subjects to improve students' chances of securing employment after school.

As a result, there has been increased scrutiny of post-compulsory courses, with the effect of increasing number and broadening range of subjects available for study in these years, as well as the review and revision of existing courses to reflect the demands of the changing post-compulsory cohort. Reflecting the latter, since 1983 there have been three significant changes to the History curricula provided for upper secondary school students in WA, and it is the particular concern of this study to examine these changes in curriculum policy and practice.

Changes to the upper school History curricula in WA have paralleled the changing nature of History curricula within western educational systems, particularly those in the United States of America (USA) and in England and Wales. Australian education systems have principally drawn on developments in these two countries to influence the structures within their own systems. Within the USA, England and Wales, and Australia, from 1970 to 2000, there have been significant changes to the nature of

school History curricula, what many refer to as 'new history' (eg. Barcan, 1997; Booth, 1996; Harvey et al., 1996; Macintyre, 1997; Phillips, 1998a, 1998b; Taylor, 2000b). Principal themes common to the changes in each country have included the following: a movement away from meta-narratives and the predominance of content; a greater influence of skill development, particularly in the critical analysis of primary sources; greater recognition of minority groups in national histories, particularly women, but also indigenous groups and immigrants; and the growing appearance of thematic courses of study (Booth, 1996; Taylor, 2000a; Taylor 2000b).

In part, these changes have been in response to the practical consideration of declining interest and subsequent falling student enrolments in History courses. In part also, they have been responses to shifting educational theories, in particular a move away from the predominance of educational philosophy towards educational psychology (Taylor, 2000a, 2000b). A third influence has been growing political intervention in England and Wales, the USA and Australia, where conservative academics and politicians, in particular, have led an attack on the 'new history', often through the media or by direct communication with the government of the time (Crawford 1995; Hayden et al., 1997; McKiernan, 1993; Phillips 1998a, 1998b). This has been particularly well documented in the context of England and Wales, in the analysis of the policy process of the National Curriculum, where successive Conservative Ministers of Education and the Prime Minister herself, Mrs. Thatcher, played a central role in the design and development of the National History Curriculum (Ball, 1990, 1992; Crawford 1995; McKiernan, 1993; Taylor, 1999). A particular interest of politicians in school History is the question of ownership of national identity and students' sense of citizenship that their systemic school histories promulgate, what Phillips (1998a, 1998b) calls the 'big prize'.

Within WA, reflecting national and international parallels, the corresponding period (1983 – 1997) has seen significant changes to the History curricula for school students. Curriculum changes in 1984 recognised, and assessed to a small extent, the skills of document analysis and interpretation, and this change was expected to have a considerable impact on the teaching and learning of the two-year History syllabus, although the level of content knowledge remained unchanged. By 1990, the History curriculum of WA reflected other major developments. These included a focus on stated outcomes required of each student; an examination that assessed only one year of study; and recognition of school-based, continuous assessment to the value of 50% of the final assessment. These were not so much developments generated from History curriculum specialists, but rather they were instituted from higher strata of policy making in a 'top-down' process to ensure uniformity across all subjects examined for Tertiary Entrance.

In 1997, the most radical changes to the upper school History curricula took place. These included a decline in assessable content, which was reduced by one third, and the skills components being formally assessed both in the examination (50% of weighting) and in school-based continuous assessments (between 60% and 80%). These changes were expected to lead to considerable changes in the nature of teaching and learning of History in the upper-school years, as suggested by the extent of professional development courses and literature published by the supervisory body, but the consequences of this policy were not as they might have been expected.

This study identifies, evaluates, and assesses the various forces that impacted on the development of BSE/SEA/CCWA policies with regards to History; it also assesses the nature of the policy texts, and assesses the consequences of those policies, within a

theoretical framework for policy analysis. It focuses on three stages within the period 1983 to 2000. The first is the period surrounding the policy texts of 1983-1984; the second is the period containing around the policy texts of 1990; and third is the period containing the contexts surrounding the policy texts of 1997. In each phase, the principal policy texts comprise the History syllabus statements issued by the regulatory curriculum authority for the years 1984, 1990 and 1996-7, and the concomitant examination paper, although in the first phase the examination paper is that of 1983, because changes to the examination preceded the syllabus change. In 1990, a third policy text is analysed, the *Assessment Guidelines* that accompanied the Syllabus statement in 1990.

A theoretical framework for policy analysis

One point of agreement within the literature on policy analysis is the difficulty of defining the term policy. Ozga (2000, p.2) says that there is "no fixed single definition of policy". Hill (1997, pp. 6 - 18) spends some twelve pages wrestling with "the definitional problems posed by the concept of policy", while Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry refer to "the vast literature…which attempts to define policy. The one thing all of these attempts have in common is their recognition that achieving such a definition is not an easy task" (1997, p. 23).

Ball (1993, 1994), Taylor et al. (1997) and Ozga (2000) do agree on one aspect of the nature of policy, that of it being a process rather than simply a product, a process "involving negotiation, contestation and struggle" (Ozga 2000, p. 2). Hill adds to this by seeing policy as having two important dimensions. One is that it is "a course of

action, adopted and pursued by (an institution)" and the second is that policy consists of a "web of inter-related decisions and actions that allocate values" (1997, pp.6 – 9). Hill states that policy is also about non-decisions, what policies ignore or fail to address.

Ball (1990, 1993, 1994) and Taylor et al. (1997) describe the policy process as freewheeling, cyclical and sometimes even chaotic, and refute the view of policy as an orderly, rational process that some analysts suggest (e.g. Bridgewater and Davis, 2000). Policy involves "competing interests" and "compromises over struggle" (Taylor et al. 1997, p. 26-7), thus giving it a political character, which is an integral part of the process. Ball (1990, 1994) uses the ideas of Foucault, to analyse the relationship between power and knowledge in such processes. The power struggles of the political processes are reflected in a struggle for language, and the winners of the struggle set the discourse, which then becomes the predominant language of the policy text or statement. In this regard, Yeatman (1990) has described policy making as "an arena of struggle over meaning" or "the politics of discourse". Discourses become important in the textual analysis of the policy documents, as will be outlined later.

The conceptualisation of policy adopted for the purpose of this research is based on the model proposed by Ball and his associates (Ball, 1990; 1993; 1994; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992), and further amended by Vidovich (2002, 2003). It also draws on aspects of the model proposed by Taylor (1997) and Taylor et al. (1997). Within the model of policy proposed are three contexts, which are not stages in a linear process, but are co-existing features of what Ball (1993, 1994) prefers to call a 'policy cycle' and Bowe et al. (1992) refers to as a 'policy trajectory'. These are context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context of practice.

The context of influence is concerned with the antecedents and pressures leading to the gestation of a policy. Research at the level of context involves focusing on the various factors and forces driving the policy. These include the influences of individuals and pressure groups; the broader social, political and economic movements, and the historical background of a policy, including previous developments and initiatives. The context of policy text production is concerned with the generation of the policy texts and includes an analysis of the content of the policy documents. Text analysis involves an examination of the assumptions underlying the document, the dominant ideology underpinning it and the nature of the language used in the document. It also examines the 'silences' of the policy statement. The third context of the policy process is that of practice. This is sometimes referred to as the stage of implementation, but this is really an inadequate term as it implies a faithful translation from intent to practices. Analysis at this level involves investigating the reception of the policy both by those for whom it is intended, and by those responsible for its enactment. It also involves an assessment of both the identifiable outcomes and the less tangible ones.

To adopt this all-embracing view of policy as a process and the nature of its analysis is to engage in what Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) and Ball (1993) call a "policy trajectory" study. Such a study, as they see it, employs:

> a cross-sectional rather than a single level analysis by tracing policy formulation, struggle and response from within the state itself to the various recipients of the policy (Ball, 1993, p.16).

Such an analysis succinctly summarises the nature and purpose of this study. However, to facilitate the analysis the three contexts are artificially separated within each phase, and the treatment of each context forms the basis of reporting the research.

This conceptualisation of policy and policy analysis as a trajectory study directs the research towards the approach and the theoretical framework that underpins it. Policy as a process tends towards a descriptive rather than a numerical approach, that is a qualitative approach. Data include document analysis and interview transcripts, focussing on explaining 'why' something has occurred as well as 'how'. For these reasons, qualitative research methods provided the only suitable approach for this study.

The frameworks of the policy analyses proposed by Ball (1993; 1994a), Taylor et al. (1997) and Vidovich (2002, 2003) are largely within the critical paradigm, and focus on the power relations within the contexts of policy. For the purpose of this particular study, interpretivism has been chosen as the principal research paradigm, to elicit the meanings that participants have of the policy process in which they were engaged. Interpretivist studies are underpinned by a belief that people act for a variety of reasons and these reasons are based on the meanings that the people have of others, events and things. This paradigm stresses the importance of the meanings or understandings that people bring to any activity, the construction of meaning by experience, and that these meanings can only be expressed through the language of the actors or agents themselves (Crotty, 1998). In the case of a policy making process, it is the actors or agents in the process who bring certain understandings to the process. In turn, their experiences will affect the understandings that they hold, either confirming them or remoulding them. These reworked understandings are then brought to the next set of actions in which they are involved.

Methodologically, the implication of this theoretical framework is that the actor's or agent's views of actions, decisions and policy have to be ascertained from his/her accounts of them. Thus, the onus was on the researcher to record all those

understandings of the process that the actor or agent made available. The data were the information supplied by the actors and agents, or, as referred to by Taylor et al. (1997), the 'key players' or 'stakeholders'.

Based on the conceptualisation of policy stated above, and the paradigm of interpretivism, the design of the research becomes clearer. The research was concerned with exploring the policy process with data from the key players, or stakeholders, involved in each of the three aspects of the policy process, to generate the meanings that these people brought to or took away from them. The data were then analysed to construct conceptualisations about the policy process, which in turn increased the knowledge of the process. In addition, in the meta-analysis, a critical perspective is brought to the meta-level themes that emerged from the research.

An overview of research methods

The conceptualisation of policy, the thrust of a 'trajectory study', and the major propositions of interpretivism shaped initial thinking about the research questions. The questions were then developed in terms of the different contexts of the policy process; the contexts of influence, of text production, and the context of practice. Also, they were focussed on the three sets of policy texts. The documents informing the first phase of change were the BSE TAE History Examination of 1983 and the BSE History Syllabus statement for 1984. The documents informing the second phase of change were the SEA History Syllabus statements for Years 11 and 12 in 1990, the TEE Examination for 1990 and the *Assessment Guidelines* document for 1990. The documents informing the third phase of change were the Curriculum Council History

syllabus statements for Years 11 and 12 in 1997, and the TEE Examination paper for that year.

What emerged from this thinking was a set of guiding questions which linked the approach, the paradigm, and the policy documents. The following set of guiding questions formed the basis of the research, and addressed the issue of the empirical criterion (Punch, 1998) for each of the three phases of curriculum change.

Research guiding questions:

Context of influence

1. In the period leading up to the emergence of each of the major policy documents, what were the understandings that the various stakeholders had with regard to the factors influencing changes in the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of Western Australian schools?

Context of policy text production

2. Which stakeholders dominated, and why, with regard to the eventual written policies in each of the phases of change?

3. What were the characteristics of the policy texts of the BSE/ SEA/CCWA contained within each set of the documents, with regards to the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of Western Australian schools?

Context of practice

4. Within the context of practice of each set of policy documents, what were the understandings among practitioners of the policies of the BSE / SEA/ CCWA with regards to the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of Western Australian schools?

Data Collection

Two of the three central methods of data collection in qualitative research, namely interviews and document analysis, were utilised in this study. The retrospective nature of the analysis precluded the use of the third central technique, field observation.

Documents as data. The initial sources of data for this study were the appropriate documents. Documents played three important roles in the collection of data. First, they were an important, identified source of data in their own right, to ensure the necessary 'thick description' as suggested by Punch (1998). Second, careful analysis of the appropriate documents was necessary before conducting interviews as this helped to elicit richer data from the interview respondents. Third, the documents contributed to a process of triangulation in the analysis of the data.

For the purpose of data collection, the documents were classified in terms of their source and purpose, in the context of this study (cf. Hodder, 1994). The first group of sources included the three sets of policy texts drawn from each of the phases of the process, as outlined previously. Also included were official Reports such as the Beazley Report (1984), the McGaw Report (1984) and the Andrich Review (1989) which impacted on the nature and direction of policy making in History curricula. Because of the central role played by the History Joint Syllabus Committee (1975 – 1992) and the History Syllabus Committee (after 1992) the minutes of the meetings of these committee meetings, from 1975 to 1998, were among the most important sources of data for the purpose of this study, in that they provided evidence of the policy process across all three contexts.

Other groups of documents included articles, letters and contributions to relevant publications, and customised syllabus statements written by those Year 12 History teachers who were interview respondents, and personal observations and reflections, such as from diaries or personal letters, which were tendered by respondents to the researcher during the course of interviews, or their follow-up.

Interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews was the second method of data collection, principally to locate the understandings of the main actors involved in the policy processes around the three documents. Some structure to the interviews was required, as there was the need to ascertain the different respondents' opinions and interpretations of particular decisions and events. It was the intention in interviews to elicit a response from particular individuals about particular phenomena, incidents or views that were both common and different to them. The limited structure of each interview was based on the four guiding questions of the research.

Respondents were selected from a list drawn up from people mentioned in documents, and to that extent it was purposive sample. Some of those listed were unavailable for interview, either because they were no longer contactable, or had migrated, or in one case was seriously ill. Eight respondents were interviewed and because they had adopted several roles in the policy process, they provided a satisfactory cross section of policy actors.

Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data began early in the research and was an ongoing process. Data for the purpose of this research were collected over an eighteen-month period, and data reduction and analysis was almost simultaneous. The model of data analysis was based on that of Huberman and Miles (1994) which has three main components. These are (i) data reduction (ii) data displays, and (iii) drawing conclusions.

Coding was the principal feature of the analytical methods, what Berg refers to as 'category development' (1998, p.229), and Neuman calls 'concept formation' (2000, p. 420). The coding process for the purpose of this study involved iterative analysis of the texts to draw out codes, on the basis of coding categories, or "families of codes", as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1997, pp. 171 – 177). The method was an ongoing process, as these methods had to be carried out within a context of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and a context of constant questioning (Berg, 1998).

Structure of the thesis

There are eight chapters in this thesis. Following this introductory chapter, there is a review of literature that is concerned with the developments in the school subject of History within an international context, from the 1960s to the 1980s, and the growth of what is often referred to as 'new history'. It outlines the major changes and developments in History teaching and learning with regard to Western systems of education, particularly in the USA and England and Wales, as these are considered

important sources of influence in the changes to the upper school History curricula in WA.

Chapter Three focuses on two aspects of the study; first it considers the theoretical framework of policy analysis, and from there it describes the methodology used in the research. Data gathering and data analysis methods used in the study are outlined in detail in this chapter.

Chapters Four, Five and Six take a chronological approach to the analysis of curriculum policy with regard to upper school History in WA in the period 1983 to 1997. Chapter Four analyses the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice surrounding the publication of the policy texts of 1983-1984. Chapter Five analyses the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice surrounding the publication of the policy texts of 1990, and Chapter Six provides a similar analysis of the contexts surrounding the policy texts of 1996-1997.

In Chapter Seven there is a meta-analysis of the findings of the research, relating the findings to broader issues in policy and curriculum. The final chapter, Chapter Nine, suggests a number of implications raised by the research and their application for theory and practice with regard to policy and curriculum, with specific reference to changes mooted by the Curriculum Council of WA for upper secondary curricula after 2007.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENTS IN HISTORY TEACHING SINCE 1960, IN ENGLAND AND WALES, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND AUSTRALIA

Introduction

A central theme within the development of History curricula in several countries in the second half of the twentieth century has been the growth of what is called 'new history' (Phillips, 2000, 1998a, 1998b; Taylor, 2000a, 2000b) or an 'alternative tradition' (Husbands, Kitson & Pendry, 2003). The growth of 'new history' has been an issue of much academic interest (Booth, 1996; Rogers, 1987), of growing political interest (eg. Macintyre & Clark 2003; Osborne, 2003; Phillips, 2000, 1998a, 1998b), and it has become a crucial issue in curriculum policy development in the period under study in this research (Ball, 1994a; Phillips, 2000, 1998b). In the first place, it has provided a framework for change to traditional curricula and has been widely embraced among many in the History teaching community. Subsequently, however, there has been considerable criticism of new history, largely from the forces of the 'new right', through their 'discourses of derision' as Phillips (2000, 1998b), Marginson (1997), Crawford (1995), Ball (1994a) and McKiernan (1993) would describe them.

The development of new history was a response to perceived crises in History teaching in schools during and after the 1960s. A 'crisis' was identified first in England and Wales in the late 1960s (Booth, 1969, 1996), but similar crises had been noted in the United States of America (USA) by the 1970s (Symcox, 2001), and in Australia by

the 1980s (Macintyre, 1997; Barcan, 1997, 1999). While the nature of the 'crisis' in each country had different elements, there were also several common themes that ran through them, and this led to a number of common features within the 'new histories' of the different contexts, which were, in large part, a response by History teachers and teacher-educators to what they perceived as the crisis in the teaching and learning of History.

Two contentions arise from this and explain the significance of this chapter in this study. The first is that 'new history' was a principal feature of the contexts of influence in curriculum policy development of upper school History curricula in Western Australia (WA) in the 1980s and 1990s. Teachers and other interest groups believed that History curricula in WA had to reflect developments in the subject from the international context. Second, the international contexts, and sources of influence for this change, were overwhelmingly England and Wales and the USA (Barcan, 1993, 1997; Marginson, 1997). Interest groups in curricular and school system reform were guided by the literature and policies that emanated from these two countries. Therefore, while some may regard England and Wales and the USA as too limited to constitute an international context, in the case of History curriculum policy in WA, this is the reality.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to define clearly the nature of the international and national circumstances behind the development of policy in History curricula in WA. It seeks to do this in two ways. The first half of the chapter outlines the nature of the crises in History teaching and learning in England and Wales, the USA, and Australia, and the respective responses to the crises, although the principal response in each situation was the development, in some way, of 'new history'. The second half of the chapter explores the proposition that 'new history' was the result of

changes in the conceptualisation of History teaching and learning in four areas. Based on a model of curricular design posited by Print (1993), four sets of factors explain the design and development of new history curricula. These are philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, and sociological. The second half of the chapter considers the influence of these four areas on thinking about History curricula.

The nature of the crisis in History teaching in an international context, and some responses

The nature of the crisis in History teaching in England and Wales, and some responses

In England and Wales, the nature of the crisis in History teaching that was identified in the 1960s lay in pedagogy and curricular content. Two authors, Booth (1996) and Haydn, Arthur & Hunt (2001), both refer to the warnings of Mary Price in 1968, "that in a great many schools (History) is excruciatingly, dangerously, dull, and what is more of little relevance to the pupils" (Price, 1968, p. 334). As a result, History was in "real danger of disappearing from the timetable in its own right" (Haydn et al., 2001, p. 13). One response was to address the crisis in terms of the new understandings of teaching and learning put forward principally by Jerome Bruner and Benjamin Bloom, which had become increasing well known in the 1960s.

Coltham and Fines (1971) were among those who took up the challenge with the production of a new 'framework of objectives' for the teaching of History (Booth, 1996; Harvey et.al, 1996). Several curriculum groups took these developments further, and the most well known outcome of the movement was the creation of the Schools Council's History 13 – 16 Project, in 1976. Booth outlines its features:

> Four premises underwrote the project. First, the development of the curriculum and teaching materials would stem from the structure of the subject itself; second, the needs of students aged 13 to 16 would also determine the focus and thrust of the new curriculum; third, the project would involve teachers and students in the development and trialling of material and teaching approaches, thus avoiding the dangers of a top-down model of curriculum innovation; fourth, the effectiveness of the new regime would be assessed by novel means through the public national examination system at 16-plus. (Booth, 1996, p.34)

The Project was widely hailed as a great success and its format has been adopted, or adapted, in many countries, not least in Australia and in WA. For example, the first teaching pack of the project, *What is history?*, was used in several Australian states and became the basis of a unit of the Year 11 syllabus of the History curriculum in WA, carrying the same name (Homden, 1993).

The Project, and Coltham and Fines' (1971) framework, where not wholly copied, inspired further developments in pedagogy and assessment, and the result was an increasingly skills-based approach in most schools in England (Booth, 1996: Husbands 1996; Taylor, 2000b). These thrusts within the subject became known as the 'new history' and, to many commentators, it was a much-needed change that had revitalised the teaching and learning of History, especially in the lower secondary years, up to the first public examinations at 16+. There were critics of the development, however, and they pointed to the decline of content knowledge among students, significant in a nation with a history as rich as that of Great Britain, which was now a part of Europe as well. They also berated the loss of a sense of chronology and cultural affirmation that the traditional nature of the subject had emphasised.

By the late 1970s and into the 1980s, those critics of progressive History curricula were able to line up alongside critics of the broader educational system within England and Wales as a whole. History, its nature and its content, became a topic of the debates on what should be taught in the nation's schools, and how these subjects should be delivered. In 1978, James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister, sparked the 'Great Debate' and Conservative politicians intensified the process after their return to government in 1979. While the Conservatives extolled the devolution of financial and resource management to schools, they became increasingly anxious to centralise control of what was taught, and this culminated in the development of a National Curriculum. The trend was instituted by Margaret Thatcher, who increasingly trained the education system in her sights, as part of her agenda to reform the economy and society of Great Britain. The move provoked heated confrontation between different stakeholder groups (Ball, 1994; Crawford, 1995; Haydn et al., 2001; McKiernan, 1993; Phillips, 1998b) for what Phillips (1998b, 2000) termed the 'big prize', the control of schools' History curriculum. Also significant was that successive Ministers of Education, and Mrs. Thatcher herself, showed increasing personal interest in the History curriculum. Their interest lay in the opportunity that History provided for cultural transmission and the belief that the subject had been captured by left-wing ideologues.

The results were ironic. On one hand was the enactment of History as a compulsory Foundation subject for all pupils up to the age of 16, a decision that most interest groups welcomed. However, those who regarded this favourably objected to the extent of prescription in the content and assessment of the subject. History was now reduced to three sets of attainment targets, each containing three 'strands'. Within each strand there were programmes of study and general requirements. Students could only meet the attainment targets by acquiring the knowledge of historical content prescribed

in the programme of study. As Husbands et. al. (2003) observed, in some ways the National Curriculum History syllabus symbolised a return to the 'great traditions' of History teaching, but Ball referred to the reformed syllabus, one of "preservation and transmission of the best of all that has been said and written", as the "curriculum of the dead" (1994, p.46)!

In a further irony, Mrs. Thatcher's political demise in 1991 was followed by a similar demise for History. As a result of the Dearing Report of 1994, History found its status reduced, and it was now compulsory only up to the age of 14. This was much lamented by History teachers and others associated with the subject, who still met resistance to reforms in content and assessment. There have been further pressures on History teaching since the election of a Labour government in 1997, with further erosion of time available for History teaching and the subsumption of the subject within a broad course on Citizenship, and declining student enrolments after the age of 14 (Husbands, 2001).

The issues and reforms in England and Wales outlined above applied largely to History curricula in the compulsory secondary years, but many of the criticisms that applied to the subject as a whole in the late 1960s were still felt by teachers of the tertiary admission examination syllabuses, Advanced Levels (A-levels), in the 1990s. Crinnion (1987) effectively summarised a number of common trends in most post-compulsory History courses and proposed a number of solutions. The trends included declining enrolments and a declining percentage of the total examination population studying History. Figures from the Joint Matriculation Examination Board showed that, from 1974 to 1984, the number of 'A' level examination candidates that studied History fell from 22.8% to 15.8%. Crinnion also noted a decline in the intellectual composition

of the post- compulsory cohort as retention rates increased, a broadening of the curriculum choices, and the apparent 'irrelevancy' of History identified by many students. There was considerable student dissatisfaction with teaching methods and he cited a report showing that 75% of class time was taken up with "information transmission". University History departments were also reporting dissatisfaction with the quality of incoming students (Crinnion, 1987).

Crinnion argued that reformed post-compulsory History courses required four characteristics, which recognised the need for university entry assessment, but also demanded greater rigour in teaching and learning. They were that students' work be 'historical' and should be, at its best, 'scholarly'; that 'important cognitive skills' should be developed during the courses; that the courses provide the students with an understanding of their own society; and that some internal assessment be conducted.

Haydn et al. (2001) have described the developments in the teaching of A-level History over the decade since Crinnion's (1987) paper. Concerns still remain over the increased heterogeneity of classes in upper school years, with regard to ability and cultural mix, the value of external examination systems; and the subject being "dull and badly taught" (2001, p. 262). The authors argue that "A-levels have been more resistant to change than other areas of the school curriculum and public examination system" (Hayden et al., 2001, p. 262), and that enrolments in History have continued to decline in the face of a greater variety of post-compulsory courses available.

Nevertheless, some positive changes have occurred in the syllabuses of some examination boards, particularly in the reduction of content to be learnt, and in the increasing assessment of skills (Haydn et al., 2001). This shows that changes to the subject in the compulsory years of schooling have followed on into the post-compulsory

years, even if, as Haydn et al. qualify, "A-level History still flourishes on a bedrock of traditional practice" (2001, p. 266).

The nature of the crisis in History teaching in the United States of America, and some responses.

Educational practice in the USA has several important similarities with those of Australia, not least the organisation of curricula along state boundaries. Also, as Barcan (1997) has noted, there has been an increasing movement of ideas from the USA to Australia in the previous twenty- five to thirty years. Another similarity has been the trend of Social Studies replacing History in many state secondary school curricula since the 1950's, although it would appear that History has a greater profile in American states' Social Studies courses than their equivalents in Australia. Another similarity has been the impact of new pedagogy on History curricula. Tanner and Tanner (1993), among others, identified a move towards greater objectivity and didactic teaching after the Sputnik launch in 1957, but observed a return to the ideas of neo-progressivism by the 1970s.

As in England and Wales, History in the USA has become a major educational issue among certain interest groups since the 1980s. Yoder (1994), in a chapter entitled 'Reflections on the crisis in history', pointed to the growing concern of President Reagan (1981 – 1989) for the subject's welfare in schools. What was significant about Reagan's interest was that it reflected a concern among conservative groups about what was being taught in History in US schools. These conservative groups were anxious that traditional content was no longer receiving the attention that it was due. For them, traditional content meant a meta-narrative which told of the American people's struggle

for liberty through a number of significant events such as the War of Independence, the framing of the Constitution, 'manifest destiny' and westward expansion, the Civil War and the emancipation of slavery.

Conservative concern was abetted by two sources. The first was a report by Ravitch and Finn (1987) of the results of a national assessment of the knowledge of American history of 17-year-old high school students. Their findings were presented in an alarming way:

> If there were such a thing as a national report card for those studying American history and literature, then we would have to say that this nationally representative sample of eleventh grade students earns failing marks in both subjects. (Ravitch & Finn, 1987, p.1)

At the same time, in 1987, E.D. Hirsch published an influential book, *Cultural literacy. What every American needs to know.* The product of seventeen years of personal interest and research, he expressed his concerns about the paucity of knowledge of American high school graduates in the field of cultural literacy. He produced a text of 145 pages devoted to his thesis, and a 70-page appendix listing what he believed a culturally literate American should know.

The views contained in these two works were reflected in a summary of educational research produced by the Reagan administration, *What works* (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1987). The booklet referred to the curriculum pressure on History as students were faced with a greater choice at graduation; "Students enroll [*sic*] at half the rate they enroll for honors courses in English and science". It went on:

> Typically, requirements have also declined for writing essays, producing research-based papers, and reading original sources. Similar declines are

> reported in the requirements for such reasoning skills as evaluating sources of information, drawing conclusions and constructing logical arguments. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1987, p.77)

These concerns led to one important outcome, the Bradley Commission on the Teaching of History in American Schools (1988), which produced a number of recommendations and a flood of 'post-Bradley textbooks'. The Commission proposed that state Social Studies curricula in Grades 7 – 12 contain no less than four years of required history. It also recommended that all students in secondary schools be required to study American history, world history and some history of Western civilisation. However, because of the disparity of curriculum boards in the USA, the recommendations were implemented at varying degrees. The debate over standards continued, with other curriculum task forces and commissions making similar recommendations, either for History or for the inclusion of other social sciences, which furthered the pressure on History's place in the curriculum.

Whittington (1991) responded to the report of Ravitch and Finn (1987) with research of her own, which had two principal findings. First, she attempted to discredit the findings of Ravitch and Finn on the basis of their methods, particularly in the use of standardised, norm-referenced tests, arguing that the tests were designed to produce a mean score of around 50%. More importantly, following her own tests on a sample of 17-year-old students, Whittington found that the perception of a decline in the results of American education was:

> open to question. Indeed, given the reduced drop-out rate and less elitist composition of the 17-year-old student body today, one could argue that

students today know more American history than did their age peers of the past. (Whittington, 1991, p. 778)

However, the content of the 'new history' in the USA was still a concern to many. 'New' curricular content in American History was concerned to give attention to the marginalised groups of the past. Revised content included the history of feminism, of African -Americans, of Hispanics and other minority or oppressed groups. This was, of course, perceived to be to the exclusion, or compression, of the traditional content of previous courses. Such a trend provoked the ire of a longstanding liberal Democrat, Arthur Schlesinger, for whom the demise of traditional history within the school years was a key factor in the theme which was also the title of his polemical book *The Disuniting of America* (Schlesinger, 1992).

Garrett (1994) provides an account of the dichotomous choices facing many American teachers. She describes trying to work through a syllabus proscribed by state curriculum boards, which was far too demanding in terms of content, and trying to use strategies in the classroom to create interest and promote an appreciation of the processes of the subject. This is hardly unique to history teachers of the USA, but it is interesting to note the positive signals about History teaching in the USA from two longstanding champions of History teaching in England and Wales, Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby (1998). They describe the moves towards establishing in US History curricula the best practices from British History teaching, at a very time when "history seems in danger of losing its impetus and its place in schools in (Britain)" (p.13). The authors identified five themes that they saw percolating into American practice. These included

(i) the construction of multiple, coherent, but open-ended frameworks of world history into which national and more local or particular perspectives can fit;

(ii) an examination of developing approaches to history education that provide students with a basis for understanding the discipline;

(iii) research into the tacit understandings that children bring to History. (Lee & Ashby, 1998, p.14).

These observations from Lee and Ashby serve to show the increasing convergence of ideas on the teaching and learning of History over several decades in England and Wales and the USA. The next section reveals similar patterns in Australia.

The nature of the crisis in History teaching in Australia, and some responses.

A review of the literature in Australia reveals a similar pattern of History having experienced a state of crisis similar to that experienced in England and Wales and the USA. "For some time history has been in a state of crisis" argued Macintyre (1997, p.189). Barcan (1997, p.199) noted that "the deteriorated position of history in our schools is undeniable" while Halse (1996) maintained that "the last decade has been a tumultuous one for History." (p.16). These views place the subject squarely in its context. History appears to have been, in the 1950's and 1960s, a once-proud subject and "the queen of disciplines" (Macintyre, 1997, p.190), compulsory in the lower secondary years of schooling and among the most popular in the post-compulsory years. It now faces demise, extinction or "going the way of the classics" (Booth 1996, p.31). What had been the main features of the development of the subject in the context described to warrant such alarm about its current state and anxiety for its future?

In the Australian context, there is a general agreement among commentators on the main developments that have created this situation. Macintyre (1997), Barcan (1972, 1997), Craik / Macintyre (2000), and Halse (1996) cite a number of factors to

account for the parlous state of the subject. The first of these, which was to impact on post-compulsory Australian History curricula, is the dilution of History in the compulsory years of schooling into integrated course of studies, once known as Social Studies, but more commonly known recently as 'Studies of Society and Environment'. Barcan (1972), in a critique of the emerging trend of Social Studies when all states other than New South Wales had embraced Social Studies, was particularly scathing of the nature of this course of study and its introduction and, prophetically, rued the demise of History. He returned to this theme, in hindsight, in his article on History in schools in the *Australian Journal of Education* (Barcan, 1997). One outcome of instituting Social Studies in the compulsory years of schooling has been a failure among the school population to identify the discipline of History *per se*. The result of this is that History has become increasingly unpopular in the post-compulsory years of schooling, where the subject is just one elective in an increasingly wide range of choices. Barcan (1997) argued that where the aspects of History have been taught badly in the Social Studies courses, often by teachers with no historical training or background, the student has no desire to proceed any further with the subject.

Macintyre (1997) identifies another problem in the post-compulsory stage of schooling and the issue of students facing electives. In the tertiary admission courses that appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was some requirement for students to have balance in their programmes between the humanities subjects and the mathematical/scientific ones. In Victoria, of which he had most experience, that requirement was largely diluted, if not dropped altogether, with a subsequent erosion of History. A similar pattern has emerged in WA where the minimum number of subjects a student is required to study in Years 11 and 12 to qualify for tertiary admission has been reduced from twelve in 1984 to ten in 1995 (SEA,1995). In the period when

English was not counted as a humanities subject, the chances of students choosing History was greater, but a decision in 2002 (Curriculum Council, 2002) to list English as a humanities subject has led to a further erosion of History as an elective in the post compulsory years of schooling.

Other factors also have influenced the smaller number of students choosing History as an elective for tertiary admission nationally. Halse (1996) argues that different factors, such as "staffing, competition from other subject areas, parental or peer influence, lack of resources" (p. 17) have varying influence from time to time, or from school to school. In the broader context, however, the decisive influences on the changing pattern of History enrolments in the upper years of secondary schooling are the results of "a number of broad contextual changes in the contemporary educational environment" (Halse, 1996, p.17).

The first of these is the "explosion in the number of subjects available for study in tertiary and non-tertiary admission" (Halse, 1996, p.17), an observation shared by Barcan (1997) and Macintyre (1997). In New South Wales, in 1969, students could choose from 28 subjects for the state's tertiary admission examination, the Higher School Certificate (HSC); in 1995, students could choose from 81 subjects. In 1969, the total number of courses available to students in the post-compulsory years was 69. By 1995, the choice across HSC courses, a number of approved TAFE courses and additional non-examinable subjects, had mushroomed to grand total of 2,857 courses. This huge increase in the number of courses available to students had "effectively eaten into the potential pool of history candidates" (Halse, 1996, p.17). Barcan (1997) qualifies this by providing data for the proportion of students selecting History in the NSW HSC during the approximately corresponding period. In 1967, 57% of the total

HSC population took History; by 1978, the proportion was down to 35.7% and by 1993 that figure had dropped to 21.9%. Importantly, both Barcan and Halse point out that the actual numbers of students studying History has remained relatively stable; it is the proportions that have declined markedly because the HSC population has nearly doubled from 1978 to 1995 as retention rates have multiplied.

The increasing retention rates in the post-compulsory years of schooling since the late 1970s, and a consequent shift in the academic profile of the students in the later years of schooling, have also impacted on the nature of History in schools. The post-compulsory cohort comprises a greater number and a broader range of students "with diverse talents, abilities, learning styles and needs" (Halse, 1996.p.18). The cohort has also been affected by the changed cultural mix of Australia's population since the end of the Second World War and especially since the 1970s. Diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds have created an extremely heterogeneous school population, with an impact on what is to be taught in History classes, how it should be taught, and whether students will choose the subject when it becomes one of a large number of electives. The sociological implications of these changes will be reviewed in a later section of this chapter. Nevertheless, it can be said at this stage that this changing population, with different ideas and interpretations of the significance of History, together with different literacy standards to those of thirty years earlier, has impacted on the teaching and learning of History in Australian secondary schools.

The third area of change that Halse describes is the altered status and nature of the subject, in effect the 'new history' that had developed in response to the problems outlined above. Barcan (1997), Macintyre (1997) and Clark (2003) also point to the changes in the nature of the subject during the second half of the twentieth century, and

both do so with some concern, notwithstanding their recognition of the need for some reform. From the early 1970s, the subject became one that increasingly reflected the nature of the discipline at university. It had, as a major focus, the handling of sources, the interpretation of evidence, the consideration of continuity and change, and cause and effect, the attempting of empathetical writing, and an increasingly historiographical approach. The emphasis moved away from the learning of factual knowledge to the acquisition of skills. While the departure from a sole focus on content may be appropriate, there was some concern about the extent to which this has gone. The concerns include the loss of a subject that provided an affirmative account of the students' inheritance, to be replaced by a list of topics that can best be described as "balkanised", and whose relevance to students is only apparent from the skills that they may be learning.

A significant comment comes from Macintyre (1997), who reflects on the coincidence of the decline in History as a school subject with the changing nature of the subject, to one mirroring academic study at university. While he admits (p.193) that there could be no causal connection between the two, it poses an interesting, if untestable relationship. Harvey et al. (1996) also describe the changing nature of the subject, and illustrate the tensions caused by this. While many of the changes were warranted on reasonable grounds, they have not been universally welcomed and the authors cite the divisions that these changes generated within the teaching profession. Those against the introduction of an increasing skills-orientation saw the development as a further example of the decline of the subject.

Professional disenchantment in the teaching of the subject is identified as another significant factor in the changing nature of History and therefore a further

development within the subject. Studies by John (1994) in the United Kingdom have shown the deleterious effects of low levels of teacher morale and skills on curriculum adaptation, which is bound to affect student enrolments in elective courses later. Such disenchantment was also seen in Australia (Harvey et al., 1996), as a response to a number of factors:

(i) the difficulties in teaching the subject to the changing secondary school population, and, in New South Wales, having to teach the subject through to the standards required by public examination of children aged 15-years-old;

(ii) the changing nature of the subject and a lack of professional development to keep abreast of those changes;

(iii) the increasing marginalisation of the subject in the state secondary schools; private schools appeared to retain the traditional aspects of the subject for longer, and to retain a greater proportion of students.

It is against this international and national background that curricular changes in History have occurred in WA schools in the last twenty-five years. Common issues in the three countries have included changing student cohorts, and a demand for syllabus change to meet the needs of those changing student populations, their level of ability and their desire for 'relevance'. This has led to changing pedagogical concerns and a move away from content-based syllabuses to skills-based syllabuses, partly in response to pressure on the subject from a plethora of other subjects and courses available to students in the post-compulsory years. Finally, there has been increasing interest and manipulation of History curricula from central governments, and a concern about cultural literacy and cultural transmission, particularly from conservative groups. Now, these changes also need to be contextualised within a number of influences and movements that impacted on the nature of the new curricula.

Developments in philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, and sociology and their influence on History curricula

Attention will now turn to explore other forces upon the subject of History that have influenced the changes that have occurred as outlined above. Print (1993), a former History teacher in WA, proposed an algorithm of curriculum development and design, with the first stage called curriculum presage. In this stage, the foundations of the curriculum are established, and Print suggests three categories of sources for curriculum foundations. These are psychology, philosophy, and sociology and culture. However, in the light of developments stated in the previous section, there has been a fourth foundation, or force of change, to add to Print's model, that of pedagogy. While pedagogy may be seen to emerge from the other three considerations, it is argued here that it has emerged as an issue in its own right in history. Many teachers may relate to pedagogical issues without necessarily being aware of the psychological, philosophical or sociological contexts and the research that informs them. It is proposed that the four forces of change, therefore, are: changes in the ontological and epistemological basis of the discipline, and in the nature of the subject (philosophy); changes in the pedagogy associated with History; changes in theories of learning and the cognitive processes involved in the learning of the subject (psychology); and the influence of sociology and cultural changes in these countries, in the second half of the twentieth century. Each of these will now be considered in turn.

Ontology, epistemology, and the changing nature of history

History's foundation as a worthwhile school subject was largely due to an unchallenged status as a clearly defined discipline, a distinct form of knowledge as defined by Hirst (1973), the eminent educational philosopher. He argued that there were several distinct forms of knowledge, classified by four criteria. First, they had certain central concepts, and second, these concepts formed a network of possible relationships in which experience could be understood. In other words the form had a distinct logical structure. Third, the form had expressions or statements that, in some way or other, were testable against experience; and finally, the form had developed particular techniques and skills for exploring experience and testing their distinctive expressions (Hirst, 1973).

Hirst (1973; 1974a, 1974b) argued that History satisfied these criteria and that, on this basis, History stood clearly identified as a distinct form of knowledge. This was a view shared by Phenix (1974), who argued that there were distinct realms of meaning associated with two generic classes, quantity and quality, and that History formed a distinct discipline within this framework. Importantly, Hirst (1973; 1974a) framed much of his thinking about curriculum and forms of knowledge in the context of a liberal education, which he saw as the basis of a 'proper' education. In many countries this is now a concept that is perhaps as dead as the idea of a form of knowledge, since utilitarian and other models of education have usurped it (Kelly, 2004; Preston and Symes, 1992).

One challenge to this strong position of History within the curriculum came in part, and surprisingly, from interpretations, or misinterpretations, of the ideas of Carr.

In *What is history?* (Carr, 1961), a widely read and prescribed book, based on a series of lectures given in 1960, Carr argued that traditional views of the indisputability of historical facts were erroneous and that writings about the past were largely interpretations of those events based on the facts that the historian chose to use. An historical fact was very much what an historian chose to make use of, in the way that he/she determined. Whitty (1985) remarked how reading Carr's work in his final year at school was the first instance in his education that suggested that there might be different views on the same topic. Carr's thesis did not take him to the logical conclusions of some more radical post-modern historians today who may suggest that any interpretation is possible, and he clung to a meta-narrative of history that was premised on the 'march of progress'.

Such was the influence of Carr in courses on historiography among student teachers of History that the ideas of 'tentative interpretation' and questions of evidential reliability became a keystone of the subject. This was a challenge to the pre-eminence of what many have described as the 'grand narrative' view of history; unassailable facts put together to present a picture of the continuous progress of civilisation, marred only by aberrant descents into major wars or other catastrophes. This changed view of history in the 1960s, resulting from Carr's ideas and their assumption or misappropriation by so many teachers and others, led to a re-assessment of what history meant for teachers and students alike.

Geoffrey Elton, in *The practice of history* (1967) responded to Carr's ideas with a strong affirmation of the philosophical basis of what might be called 'traditional' history. Emphatically, as was his wont, Elton argued that there was an ontological basis for history, that there was a definite reality that had existed, even if it was apparently

contestable now. He argued that "the study of history is concerned with a subject matter more objective and more independent than that of the natural sciences" (Elton, 1967, pp.71-2). Elton argued that it was the role of the historian to try to recreate that past as accurately as possible, even if, as he suggested, that was practically impossible. Theoretically, though, it was possible, and it was the responsibility of the academic historian to strive towards that ideal. Interpretation was still a part of the epistemological process, but only within a framework of a constant search for the truth, within the bounds of the reality of the historical situation that was being explored, and not from some contemporary framework or ideology.

Elton's views, and those of other empiricist historians, have found support from Gorman (1994), a President of the Society of the Philosophy of History. He argued from a philosophical basis that, through empirical methods based on the ideas of David Hume and Immanuel Kant, it could be shown epistemologically that there was a real past. Nevertheless, Elton, Gorman and the absolutists are in a minority, and it has been the more recent vogue to follow Carr's views, or indeed to extend them, which has had a major impact on the status of the subject.

In no small part, these changed views on the nature of history led to a redefinition of, and re-emphasis on, the processes of the subject and the subsequent reworking of the nature of the discipline. School History teachers have moved away from the transmission of facts in content-based courses, as many shared a growing concern that one could no longer be sure about what was taken to be known. The teaching of History moved towards an immersion in, understanding of, and appreciation of the academic processes of the subject. Elton, however, believed that this was

inappropriate as he argued that the young historian simply lacked the knowledge and 'maturity' to make sense of the past (Elton, 1970, p.221).

While Carr presented the case for a more liberal view of history, he continued to argue that there was still a framework that gave authority to the subject, and this has been the philosophy of most who have hung onto his views of the subject. However, despite the criticisms of Carr by post-modernists like Jenkins (1991, 1995), it could be argued that views on tentative interpretations of the past might be logically developed to take a post-modernist view. The postmodernist view takes the position that history is, as Jenkins (1991) puts it:

> a shifting, problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, that is produced by a group of present minded workers…who go about their work in mutually recognisable ways that are epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned, and whose works once in circulation, are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite, but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist in any given moment and which structure and distribute the meanings of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum. (p. 26)

Such a view of history may seem attractive to some History teachers in that it appears to justify students' attempts to interpret knowledge about the past and write about it from a purely personalised position; the logical conclusion, it would seem, of the idea of tentative interpretation. Post-modernists refer to reflexive thinking about the past, rather than reflective analysis, and these mirror significant positions about the nature of the subject.

Two articles in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* in 1994 and 1995, illustrated these conflicting positions. In the first, Gabella reported on research in a case study of the attempts by a progressive American History teacher to enrich her students' understanding of the past by using different, non-discursive forms of representation about the past, particularly film, poetry, music, painting and photography. The premise of Gabella's research and stance was that the impact of postmodernist thinking had led to a "re-examination of the role of the inquirer and method in shaping the outcomes or knowledge of inquiry" (Gabella, 1994, p.141). Norman (1995), in the second article, heavily critiqued Gabella's stance, arguing that it was far from post-modern in that it still assumed an identifiable past, a "there, there" which was untenable to the post-modern view.

As the views of Gabella (1994) and Norman (1995) illustrate, understandings about the nature of history have become confused. Much of what is taken for modern practice of history in an orthodox sense might be apparently taking a post-modern position. It does this by asserting the right of any student to make a 'tentative interpretation' based on the reading of one or more texts of professional historians, and taking a reflexive view of the topic being studied. On the other hand, as Jenkins (1991) has pointed out, a post-modern position refutes, by its definition of the nature of the past and the nature of discourse, the concepts of empathy and bias, and even concepts such as cause and effect, and chronology. Such processes are philosophically unacceptable when one takes a genuinely post-modern stance on the nature of history.

Two conclusions arise from this overview of the changing philosophical basis of history. First, it behoves History teachers or curriculum makers to be aware of exactly what philosophical stance they take towards history. The post-modern position appears

seductive, exciting and apparently relevant to modern constructs, and, so, appropriate to new curricular practice. The danger is that once one is seduced by these views they carry other important premises that threaten the foundation of the subject they cherish, as Jenkins (1991) has shown in his attack on empathy work in school History. Second, it reveals increasing confusion about the nature of the subject, and that, as more and more teachers and students have wrestled with the question of "What is history?", their answers have only generated more misunderstanding and lack of clarification.

Pedagogical influences on the changing nature of History

It may seem inappropriate to identify pedagogy as an influence in curricular change in History as it may be regarded as more of an outcome of curricular change. However, it is argued here that there have been pedagogical trends which are independent of the subject that have driven changes in the History curriculum. Also, changing views on the nature of the subject, as outlined above, have impacted on the pedagogy of the subject, with an impact on resulting curricula. Barcan (1997), for instance, is emphatic about the influence of the pedagogies of the 'neo-progressives' who returned to vogue in the late 1960s and 1970s. He regards their influence as a critical factor in the introduction of new social studies curricula in the lower secondary years of schooling, to the exclusion of, and subsequent damage to, History.

An important change in pedagogy appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the re-emergence of child-centred learning that had been somewhat discredited in the period of re-evaluation following the shock of the Soviet launching of the Sputnik in 1957. This was 'neo –progressivism' and its re-emergence coincided with the growing challenge of the reliability of the content of the traditional History, as outlined above.

The impact of the two movements was to promote the idea that a more appropriate way of History teaching and learning was to move away from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred approach, thereby rejecting the formal, instructional pedagogy that had dominated the subject for so long.

Moves away from a traditionally didactic approach to teaching coincided with the perspective that skills rather than content should be taught, and that there was no better way of learning the skills of the historian than to experience them (Harvey et al., 1996). Students would handle documents, assess them for bias and reliability, and draw their own, appropriate interpretations. They would engage in the process of empathy, trying to 'experience', and re-create, the features of life in the period that they were studying. The teacher's role changed from one of instructor to facilitator, someone for the students to refer to if they encountered difficulties in their increasingly self-directed learning. Teachers were expected to shun the idea that they were some authority on the subject; rather they were just one more authority among many.

The strongest drive for pedagogical change emerged from reformers principally in England and Wales, partly in response to the crisis within History teaching emerging in the late 1960s. Coltham and Fines (1971) produced their 'framework of objectives', based on the ideas of Bloom and Bruner (Harvey et al., 1996). Booth (1983), Dickinson, Gard and Lee (1978), Lee and Ashby (1987), Sansom (1987) and Shemilt (1987) were among those who produced a wealth of literature on new teaching methods, and these ideas underwrote many of the curricular changes that occurred after the 1970s. One example reflective of the change in approach is a work by Gunning published in 1978. In *The teaching of History* (Gunning, 1978) there is not one chapter devoted to matters of content in History syllabuses. The first eighteen pages are concerned with

the explication of concepts, and the rest of the text is concerned with the facilitation of process skills among the students.

This new pedagogical approach had important repercussions for History curricula. New methods of teaching, based on student immersion in the processes of History and the acquisition of skills, required much more time to cover traditional material and this meant that the content of courses had to be reduced. Reflecting challenges to traditional historical knowledge, the content of syllabuses was reviewed and often completely revamped, frequently into thematic or 'patch' approaches. Content was increasingly selected in terms of its appropriateness to student interest, and to student 'relevance', and the amount of documentation available.

Two texts serve to illustrate the changed emphasis in the pedagogy of History curricula. In 1960, Lewis, a lecturer in History method in a London teaching college, produced a condensation of his reflections on his work, *Teaching history in secondary schools* (Lewis, 1960). For him, "the root of failure in history teaching is almost always found in the teacher's selection of material" (p.1), and his book was largely guidance on content selection. By contrast, in *What is history teaching?*, Husbands (1996) stresses the importance of language selection, strategies for evoking ideas, the importance of, and suggestions for, group discussion and creativity in writing. The first book was about <u>what</u> to teach; the second about <u>how</u> to teach. The contrast in the two texts testifies to the changing nature and increased importance of pedagogy in History curricula over the period.

Educational psychology and theories of learning

Pedagogical changes have, in large part been affected by developments in educational psychology and in learning theory, and it is argued that this area has also been a major influence in changes to History curricula. One predominant theory of learning at the end of the 1960s that impacted on History curricula was that of Jean Piaget. Piaget argued that children think in different ways to adults; that there were certain stages in the development of logical thought, and that these stages were closely linked to age. He identified three stages in the development of thought; pre-operational thinking, concrete thinking, and formal operational, or abstract thinking. Hallam (1970) conducted research to assess the application of Piaget's theories in the learning of History at secondary school. He wished to establish a correlation between a student's ability to understand historical concepts and his or her age. Hallam's research led to two conclusions. One was that the types of responses that Piaget had discerned in his work on children could also be seen in the answers secondary school students gave to questions about history. Secondly, school students were reasoning about history at a lower level than had been expected. Students moved into the concrete operational level of thinking only at the age of about twelve years old, and most were unable to grasp abstract concepts (formal operational thinking) until the age of at least sixteen and a half (Hallam, 1970, p.164 –166).

Hallam listed other researchers whose findings produced similar results to his and their findings appeared to confirm the views of those who held that school students were not in a position to engage in a more academic study of history because they were not mature enough (Elton, 1970, p.221). Even in the late, post-compulsory years, students would not be able to handle ideas such as causation and chronology. This

meant that History curricula should remain largely concerned with choosing appropriate content, as most skills and concepts would be beyond the ability of the majority of students. Hallam (1970) pointed out the consequences of a curriculum that was too demanding of the thinking ability of students. Either students would simply assimilate what they were being made to learn, in a parrot fashion without any understanding, or else they would be so confused and dismayed that they would drop the subject at the earliest opportunity.

Booth (1987, 1996) was among the first to question these theories. He contended that the questions on historical understanding put to students by Hallam were inappropriate and affected the data he was producing. His own research suggested that secondary school students were capable of abstract thinking at a much earlier age and could grasp concepts of greater complexity than Hallam claimed. His theses have been supported by the work of Shemilt (1987) and both argue that theories based on Piaget's stages of thought development do not stand up to analysis of how students learn history.

Shemilt (1987) proposed four stages of thinking about historical evidence and methodology, and, importantly, these stages are not related to age. Shemilt argued that children can be led through these four stages, and his writings stress the importance of quality teaching methods in aiding the progress of students through the respective stages to the highest level of operation. Ashby and Lee's (1987) research with secondary History students produced similar results. They identified five levels in students' ideas of what is involved in the process of empathy and understanding in history. These levels are stages that children appear to progress through but are not specifically related to age. It is the implied contention of both sets of findings that it is high quality teaching that

will aid students to move through the stages or levels to the highest one, not simply development by age.

These findings have been the subject of debate among researchers. Carratero (1991) seemed to support Hallam's theories when he found that students at ages 12 – 14 had difficulty in establishing causal relationships. Agreeing with both schools, he found that the ability of older students to establish causal relationships in their thinking improved in large part with their exposure to greater knowledge or domain experience. O'Reilly (1991) and Wineburg (1991), among others, also concluded that students in the middle secondary years had difficulties in conceptualisation, but these were overcome with experience; the more historical content they were exposed to the better their ability to conceptualise. Linaza (1994), in a critique of research into cognitive development in the understanding of historical concepts, refers to some views still based on Piagetian ideas, but takes a different approach in criticising maturational theories. He argues that the highest level in any of these progressions is always 'adult based', in that this level is based on evidence of adult thinking as the 'norm'. Linaza suggests that descriptions of the stages should be child-referenced, because children have their own conceptualisations, and their patterns are not simply stages en route to an adult way of thinking.

The impact of the changing theories on how children learn history has been significant. The research leading to the abandonment of Piagetian ideas, and the impact of new theories based on the ideas of Bruner, Bloom and others, had the effect of removing a 'strait-jacket' as far as curriculum development was concerned. On this, Husbands (1996) stated:

> …such research had buttressed the emphasis placed on the use of evidence in History teaching. Most teachers of History would now argue that if evidence is the 'basis of the discipline', then the development of 'historical skills' in the use of evidence is an essential pre-requisite of accumulating information about and understanding of the past. (Husbands, 1996, p.16)

Research suggests that students can be exposed to, and work with, ideas of cause and effect, continuity and change. They can begin to handle the rigours of documentary analysis and attempts at empathy, and the idea that students simply had to be fed a diet of plain content, because that was as much as their minds could cope with, has been abandoned. Equally important are the other findings of those dispelling Piaget's theories, that there are still stages of development and good quality instruction and exposure to historical ideas and knowledge will only help to move students through the different levels of understanding.

Sociology and its impact on History curricula

Commentators on the changing nature of secondary school History have pointed to the impact of major social changes in the western nations reviewed here. In part, these have already been noted in the descriptions of the contexts of changing history curricula above, but this section seeks to examine the effects that social and cultural changes have had on History curricula, and the impact of the critiques of some educational sociologists. There is also a brief consideration of sociological perspectives on the nature of knowledge, and its impact on history curricula.

Barcan, initially a sociologist by training, identifies seven major societal changes in the second half of the twentieth century that have impacted, directly or

indirectly, on the nature of History curricula and teaching in Australia, as well as the curricula and teaching in other subjects (1997). The first four are: the raising of the school leaving age; greater access to secondary education and equality of opportunity through the 'comprehensivisation' of schooling; increased retention rates in the post-compulsory years of schooling; and greater cultural and ethnic diversity. As already noted, these trends have also been observed in England and Wales and in the USA. They have had the effect of vastly increasing the numbers of students in the secondary years of schooling and, more significantly, increasing the range of abilities of students in the classroom. What Macintyre (1997) calls the 'grammar school' days of teaching History have been lost forever and teachers and curriculum designers faced the task of rewriting syllabuses and curricula to meet the demands of this enormously changed cohort of students. The responses and their impacts on curricula and teachers have been outlined in the writings of Halse (1996) and Harvey et. al (1996).

Three other social changes which impacted on History curricula were listed by Barcan. The first was the growth of a "media generation" in the school population. While mass media had played a part in raising levels of interest in some things historical, it had also led to developments which had "subverted the historical sense" (Barcan, 1997, p. 201) with its methods of 'sound-bites' and uncritical procedures. The second was the emergence of a family life which was increasingly anti-intellectual and anti-school; and the third was a decline in Judaeo-Christian values which were based on historically handed-down truths and ideals. The effects of these social changes are also evident. History teachers or curriculum framers, no more or no less than in any other subject, would have to adapt curricula to meet the demands of this changing population. However, Barcan (1997) suggests that these developments particularly impacted on

History in a negative way by shaping the attitudes of students to the subject and to its demands.

The link between the two groups of societal trends lay in the selection of content and skills in curricula. 'Relevance' was now the 'buzzword'. It demanded that topics related to minority, ethnic or oppressed groups should increasingly figure in curricula, and, at the same time, content that affirmed the traditions of the previous establishment should be ignored. There was also the view that the teaching and assessment of identifiable, generic skills or 'competencies' (Finn, 1991; Carmichael, 1992; Mayer, 1992; Borthwick, 1993; Burrow, 1993) should be the core of the History curriculum for this changed population (Jones, 1992). The problem for framers of History curriculum was the pertinence of these generic skills in History, but to cling to traditional ideas of forms of knowledge and specific skills would only lead to the further demise of History.

Parallel to changes in social composition were changes in the sociology of education as a discipline, as described by Whitty (1985) and Young (1971, 1998). Before the 1970s, Whitty argues, sociology of education had been much concerned with the problems of working-class children failing at school. The emphasis was on the children who failed and the nature of their background that caused them to fail at school. There was no real consideration of the school system itself. By 1971, the focus, said Whitty (1985), had reversed; the school system itself was now under scrutiny. Sociologists, such as Young (1971, 1998), Bernstein (1971) and Apple (1979), now analysed and questioned the cultures and structures of the school system, arguing that failure was not due to the nature of the children failing but due to the inadequacies of the system that was failing the children, and in particular to definitions of the nature of knowledge.

The ‘new sociology of education’ (Young 1971, 1998) led to an examination of the curriculum and particularly the content of the curricula of different subjects. The sort of questions asked by the sociologists such as Apple (1979, 1990) and Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (1997) included: What subjects were selected, and which versions of subjects? Whose subjects are these and who selects this knowledge? Why such subjects, and what kind of knowledge is this? How are subjects implemented and what kinds of presentations are adopted?

In answering these questions, sociologists found fault with History curricula at a theoretical and practical level. Young (1971, 1998), Bernstein (1971) and Whitty (1985) argued that such curricula were marked by their rigidity and their limitations in defining knowledge. Whitty (1985) and Meighan & Siraj-Blatchford (1997) critiqued history curricula that affirmed the past, or seemed obsessed with the purpose of cultural transmission. They argued that the curricular content and skills taught should reflect the needs of the modern, multi-cultural, comprehensive school population. Failure was occurring because the students and the curricula were hopelessly mismatched. Furthermore, sociologists criticised the bias of most textbooks, noting that they invariably transmitted nationalistic, pro-establishment versions of History, and ignored the contribution of minority or other oppressed groups such as women and ethnic groups. In the climate of social change described above, History curricula could not go without review and thus major changes resulted, in the light of the qualifications posed by these sociological perspectives.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed some of the literature that informs the developments surrounding change to History curricula in settings that were identified of influence in determining the nature of the upper school History curricula in WA in the 1980s and 1990s. The developments have been partly historical, in that they reflect educational and political responses to perceived crises in history teaching in all three settings, and they have been partly theoretical, in that aspects of educational theory have informed changes to practices and beliefs about the nature of history teaching and learning. The study now moves to a review of the literature on policy analysis and the impact of that on the research methodology employed for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the research methodology that underpins the study. It is in four parts. The first part is an outline of the aims and the guiding research questions of the investigation. The second part involves a consideration of the policy framework adopted for the study. The intention here is to outline what Ozga (1987) calls the 'policy sociology' behind the research and is based on her contention that research for policy analysis should be "rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative techniques" (Ozga, 1987. p 14). The third part outlines the nature of the underlying paradigm which links the policy framework to the research methods. Finally, in the fourth part, the specific methods used to collect and analyse the data are described, thus completing the details of the research design.

Aim and research questions

The aim of the research reported in this thesis was, it will be recalled, to conduct an analysis of curriculum policy for senior secondary school History in Western Australia (WA) from 1983 to 1997. It focused on the policies of three statutory authorities, the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) (1975 – 1985), the Secondary Education Authority of WA (SEA) (1985 – 1997) and the Curriculum Council of WA (CCWA) (after 1997), with regard to the History curriculum for students taking the

public examinations and other assessments in History, as part of meeting the requirements for entry into tertiary institutions. This curriculum comprised syllabuses of study for Years 11 and 12 of schooling in WA, culminating in public examinations held at the end of Year 12.

The conceptualisation of policy analysis as a trajectory study, outlined in detail in the next section of this chapter, meant that from the outset the research was focused on several research questions. These questions were developed in terms of the different contexts of the policy process, namely the contexts of influence, policy text production, and the practice (Ball, 1993, 1994a; Vidovich, 2002). Also they were addressed in relation to the three major sets of policy documents which emerged during the period. The first was the Tertiary Admissions (TAE) examination in History for 1983, and the BSE History Syllabus statement for 1984 (BSE, 1984); the second was the SEA History Syllabus statements for Years 11 and 12 in 1990 and the Tertiary Entrance Examination in History of 1990 (SEA, 1990); and the third group was the SEA History Syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12 in 1997 and the Tertiary Entrance Examination in History for 1997 (CCWA, 1997).

The research questions were as follows:

Context of influence

1. In the period leading up to the emergence of each of the major policy documents, what were the understandings that the various stakeholders had with regard to the factors influencing changes in the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of WA schools?

Context of policy text production

2. Which stakeholders or actors dominated, and why, with regard to the eventual written policies in each of the phases of change?
3. What were the characteristics of the policy texts of the BSE/ SEA/CCWA contained within each set of the documents, with regards to the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of WA schools?

Context of practice

4. Within the context of practice of each set of policy documents, what were the understandings among practitioners of the policies of the BSE / SEA/ CCWA with regards to the teaching and assessment of History in Years 11 and 12 of WA schools?

It can be seen that the first question was concerned with identifying the factors behind, and processes leading up to the decisions to create a new policy in each phase, that is, the context of influence (Ball, 1993, 1994; Vidovich, 2002). The context of influence is partly concerned with the macro level of the policy and involves factors of global, regional and national status. The second and third questions were related to the context of policy text production asking questions of the policy documents themselves, their language, their discourses, and the prescriptions and meanings attached to them. The context of policy text production operates principally at what can be labelled the intermediate or meso- level, namely, the level between the macro-level of the earlier context and the micro-level of the next context. This intermediate or meso- level operates principally at the level of the state in WA. Finally, the fourth question was related to the consequences of the policy; the understandings that practitioners, principally at the school level, had of the policy documents and how these practitioners

understood the policies would be enacted. For the purpose of this analysis, the level of the schools themselves is referred to as the micro-level.

It is important to stress, however, that the policy trajectory is identified as a continuous, seamless process across the different levels and contexts, and the separation of the different contexts and levels is artificially imposed to facilitate the analysis (cf. Vidovich, 2002). Furthermore, during the course of the research a number of questions arose which guided a meta-analysis. These questions are stated at the beginning of Chapter 7, the chapter devoted to the meta-analysis.

The policy analysis framework

From a range of sources, three frameworks of policy and policy analysis were influential in guiding the thinking of the present researcher in understanding the nature of education policy and practice. The first was that put forward by Ball and his associates in the early years of the 1990s. The conceptual framework was developed primarily in five publications (Ball 1990; Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Ball and Bowe, 1992; Ball, 1993; Ball 1994a) although the framework has been further delineated and developed in response to several critiques (Ball, 1994b; Gale, 1994; Henry, 1993; Hatcher and Troyna, 1994; Lingard, 1996). The principal features of Ball's framework relevant to this study include the following: the idea of a policy cycle and its three inherent contexts (influences, text production and practice); the concept of a trajectory study, which analyses the policy process across the three contexts; its flexibility in approaches to analysis, reflected in his idea of a "toolbox" for analysis rather than a single theory (1993, p. 14); and the application of the framework to curricular policy,

with particular concern for the policies of the National Curriculum in England and Wales.

The second influential framework was that posited by Taylor (1997) and Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997). This framework shares some similarities with the approach of Ball, although it focuses more on the role of the state and has a greater reliance on critical theory and other perspectives, including feminism. The relevance of this framework to the study is that it has been developed with greater application to Australian contexts than those of Ball.

Vidovich (2002, 2003) synthesized the ideas of Ball, Taylor and others into the conceptual framework for education policy and practice to be considered here. It is a framework which retains Ball's three principal contexts, and the idea of a trajectory study, but has modifications relevant to the nature, direction and methods of this study. The remainder of this section outlines briefly the framework of Ball and his associates, and that of Taylor and her associates, before outlining the modifications and adaptations for empirical research developed by Vidovich. It is this last framework that underpinned the research being reported in this thesis.

The framework of Ball and others

The principal features of Ball's conceptualization of policy and policy analysis revolve around what he calls a "messy complexity and serendipity" (Ball, 1993, p.14 - 15) where a clear definition of policy and particular stages becomes impossible. Analysts such as Hill (1997) and Hogwood and Gunn (1984) have referred to the difficulty of defining policy, and to the argument that traditional 'public administration'

models of policy (viz. Bridgeman and Davis, 2000) often simplify the policy process into a 'top-down' linear pathway or circular cycle. Ball, however, works to several definitions of policy, definitions that sit side by side rather than one succeeding another. One definition he gives is of policy as a messy, complex process, in a freewheeling, loosely coupled, series of stages, or 'contexts', as he calls them, operating at different levels. This leads into the idea of policy analysis as a 'trajectory study', a cross-sectional analysis across the three contexts, which are not necessarily successive, rather than a study along a traditional, linear concept of policy that follows a top-down structure.

Within the policy process Ball identifies three principal contexts, namely, the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context of practice (1993, 1994). Each context represents an area of contest and tension as different parties within the policy process struggle to bring their interests, ideologies or points of view to the fore. The context of influence refers to the various sources of the policy: the causes and background issues and the factors that give the policy process its gestation, initiative and direction. The context of policy text production refers to the struggle over the actual text of the policy, traditionally considered to be the central feature of the linear policy process. Again the context is represented as a struggle of interests, and this is reflected in two dimensions which lead to two further, and different, concepts or definitions of policy. One is the idea of *policy as text* while the other is the idea of *policy as discourse*. Policy as text borrows ideas from literary theory and involves a conceptualization of policy as a text to be read in as many ways as there are readers. Ball refers to 'writerly texts' (1993, p.16), texts which are clearly directive, can be interpreted relatively simply, and are relatively uncontested. The other type is 'readerly texts', texts which are more ambiguous and open to a wide range of interpretations.

Here the practitioner, as reader, is able to bring his or her own understandings to the text, thus leading to a wide range of possible consequences in the practice of the policy.

The context of practice is the third context of the policy process, the area that was traditionally known as 'implementation'. The latter label is increasingly seen as inadequate as it suggests simply putting into practice the directives of the policy text. Ball and his associates have gone to great lengths to show that practice is a significant part of the policy process, as practitioners bring to bear a multitude of ways of carrying out, reinterpreting, reinventing or resisting the policy text. This is the principal feature of two studies published in 1992 (Ball and Bowe, 1992; Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992), out of which was developed a theoretical approach to policy analysis based on post-structuralism. It is also an area in which much criticism has been levelled at Ball, as critics have identified and challenged what they believe to be an over-emphasis on the reception of policy to the exclusion of the state's role in generating policy (e.g. Dale, 1992; Henry, 1993).

The analysis of responses to, and reworkings of, policy texts has brought another dimension to policy analysis, that of different levels of the policy process. The contexts of influence and of policy text production may operate at one level, for example at the macro-level of global influences or federal/national incentives. Equally, the two contexts could be influenced by factors operating at the micro level. The context of policy text production may operate at another level, for example the intermediate or meso-level, of the state, while the context of practice operates at another level yet again, namely the micro-level, such as at the school or even at the subject department level (Ball and Bowe, 1992; Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992).

Ball argued (1993, 1994a) that the effective analysis of the complex, messy policy process that he had identified was not possible within a single theoretical framework and instead he proposed a "toolbox" of theoretical approaches (1993, 1994a) for a more satisfactory analysis of policy: "What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories – an applied sociology rather than a pure one" (Ball, 1994a, p. 14). Ball put forward three principal approaches: one was critical theory, a second was post-structuralism, a rejection of structural/functional conceptions of behaviour, and the third was critical ethnography. These approaches heralded a major change in the way that policy was analysed. They were a development of his view that policy analysis had become too much the province of "commentary and critique" (1994a, p. 15) and was lacking in empirical studies. Thus, Ball called for a greater emphasis on empirical research in policy analysis and he provided a challenging framework for the means of doing so.

The framework of Taylor and others

Taylor (1997) and Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) also made an appeal for greater empirical study in policy analysis and together they suggested a framework for policy analysis which reflected much of Ball's 'policy sociology' but which also made important modifications.

Taylor (1997) identifies three areas of policy analysis, namely context, text and consequences. These are not dissimilar to the conceptualization of Ball's contexts, but in the first of them, there is some difference from the context of influence of Ball. Taylor (1997) stresses the importance of understanding the historical, political, social and economic context of any policy, and sees this as an essential ingredient in policy

analysis. Similarly, Reynolds (2000, 2001) offers a 'model' (2000) or 'framework' (2001) for researching syllabus development and curriculum change, whose components are environment, process explanations, individuals, and syllabus text. By the environment, Reynolds means the social, economic, political, cultural factors of the historical context of the syllabus, as well as the educational ideology surrounding the curriculum issues. Taylor et al. (1997, pp. 40 –41) also place greater emphasis on the role of the state in their framework of policy analysis than Ball and his associates do, and they argue that this reflects the Australian context more accurately, where state-centred policy is more prevalent than, say, in Great Britain, the locus of Ball's research.

Like Ball, Taylor (1997) and Taylor et al. (1997) also state the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to policy analysis, and offer feminism as a major feature of their critical perspective which, they argue, leads to a greater concern with social justice. Furthermore, Taylor (1997) provides more clarity than Ball on the nature and importance of discourse theory as an approach to policy analysis. She argues that unravelling the politics of discourse leads to a greater understanding in the three dimensions of a study, namely context, text and consequences. Discourses highlight the various features of the context in which the policy gestates. Discourses also substantiate the struggles of interests and ideologies in the production of the text, and discourses help to unravel the variety of responses that may occur in the implementation of the policy text.

Discourse theory leads to an emphasis on the language and meanings contained in the text, a dimension of policy analysis to which Taylor et al. (1997) give more clarity in the framework that they propose for research methodology. In referring to theories of discourse, Taylor (1997) and Taylor et al. (1997) are again similar to Ball in

stating their debt to the work of Foucault and his ideas of discourse for an understanding of the nature and locus of power in struggles at each stage of the policy process.

Where Ball sees policy as having two definitions, namely, policy as text and policy as discourse, Taylor (1997) suggests two similar approaches to discourse analysis which would impact on the analysis of data in a research project. She distinguished between sociological discourse theory, based on the ideas of Foucault, and literary theory, based on the ideas of de Saussure and other post-structuralists in this field. Such a distinction illuminates much more clearly Ball's (1992, 1993, 1994a) call for a post-structuralist approach to policy analysis, and is reflected in recent distinctions on discourse analysis made by Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004).

Finally, Taylor (1997), and Taylor et al. (1997), stress the importance of understanding meaning in the analysis of policy, arguing that an important feature of research in policy analysis is to gain an understanding of the meanings that key players at the different levels in the policy process, bring to it. Meaning is in part gained from an analysis of the discourses in the documents and texts of and around the policy, but meanings can also be gained from the understandings communicated by interviewing key players who thus become involved in the data collection process.

Vidovich's framework

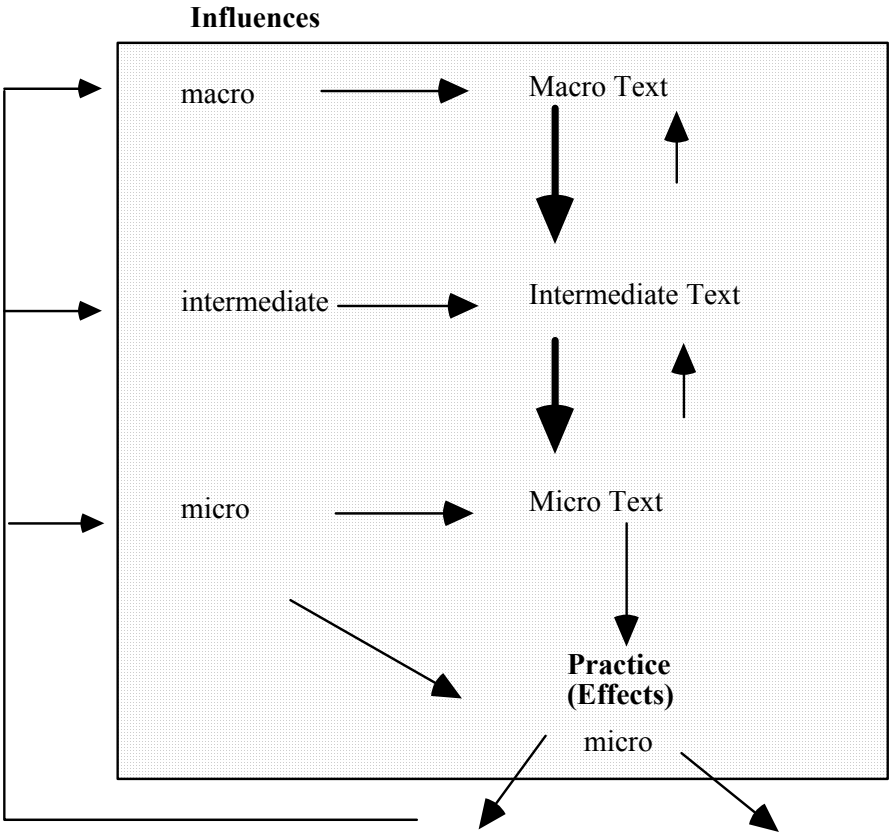
Vidovich (2002) has offered further detail, elaboration and development of Ball's framework for empirical policy studies. Her conceptualisation brings together many of the aspects of the other frameworks yet clarifies or adds others. By synthesising the frameworks of modernist approaches, which stress the importance of

the state in the policy process, and postmodernist frameworks, which have been criticized for underplaying the role of the state with an emphasis on the consequences, Vidovich produced a model which provides a highly relevant and detailed framework for the purpose of the research reported later in this thesis.

Vidovich's framework retains the three principal contexts of Ball's model – the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context of practice – and assumes the cross-sectional basis of a "trajectory study" (Ball; 1992b, 1994). However, she makes the following modifications. First, there is a clear recognition of global influences, a feature and a result of the improved communications, information technology and ideological shifts in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Second, her framework gives greater recognition to state-centred constraint, thus emphasising the importance of state-mandated policies, which have been an important feature of Australian policy, and endorsing views of Dale (1989, 1992), Henry (1993) and Taylor (1997). Nevertheless, Vidovich is careful to stress the difference between state-*controlled* policy and state-*centred* policy (2002, p.10). The first gives too much primacy to a limited conceptualization of the modern state and its influence over the whole policy process, conceived as 'top-down', whereas the second recognizes the significance of the state by emphasising the often central role taken by governments in policy.

Thirdly her model highlights the linkages between the three contexts and the different levels of the trajectory, to produce a framework, which can be shown diagrammatically below.

Figure 3.1 A Modified Policy Cycle: Incorporating Macro Constraint and Micro Agency



Source: Vidovich, L. (2002). Expanding the toolbox for policy analysis: Some conceptual and practical approaches. Hong Kong: City University Comparative Education Policy Research Unit. p. 11)

Implications of the policy framework for the research methodology

The framework for analysis of policy as iterated above brings several logical premises to the nature of the research and the choice of methods for this study. First, the analysis of policy according to this framework requires a qualitative approach, to be able to describe and unravel "the complexities and messiness" (Taylor, 1997, p.24) of the process, and to gain understandings of the meanings that actors brought to, or had of, the process. This concern for discovering the meanings of actors leads to the second premise, namely, that for the purposes of data collection and analysis, an interpretivist

paradigm should underpin the research methods. Thirdly, there are issues of reliability and validity that relate to the research methods employed.

Qualitative research approaches

Qualitative research places an emphasis on inductive, constructive processes which aim to build up a 'thick description' (Punch 1998) of the policy cycle. The importance given to context in qualitative research was most appropriate to this study as one aim of the research was to locate the changing curricular policies within their contexts. The research was also concerned to discover the meanings that key actors have of the policy process, and these meanings are more satisfactorily teased out by qualitative methods. As Bogdan and Biklen have put it, "If you want to understand the way people think about their world and how their definitions are formed, you need to get close to them, to hear them talk" (1998, p.32). These considerations behove the adoption of techniques of qualitative research such as in-depth/semi-structured interviews, and the use of documents.

Interpretivism as the principal research paradigm

Just as there is much dispute in the literature about the definition of policy analysis, so too there is a lack of agreement on the definition of some of the terms that apply to the theoretical basis of qualitative research. Crotty (1998) suggests four levels of "scaffolding", as he calls it (pp 1 – 17), to underpin the research process. These are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods and these provided the 'scaffold' for the research in this study.

The importance of attempting to understand the meanings of key actors in the policy analysis put the emphasis in the stages of data collection and analysis on a constructionist epistemology, a way of knowing based on the idea of shared meaning. Crotty explains it as a view 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)

Within this research, there is a qualified approach to this epistemology, arguing that reality does exist *per se*, but that it has meaning because of the social ideas or meanings given to those objects or activities.

The second stage of the scaffold is the theoretical perspective, "the philosophical stance behind a methodology, a context for the processes involved and the basis for its logic and criteria" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66 – 67). The techniques of data collection and analysis reported later were guided principally by the perspective of interpretivism. The interpretivist approach, says Crotty, looks for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (1998, p 67). Schwandt (1994; 2000), however, identifies interpretivism as both an epistemology and a method of research, which he sees as having three characteristics or definitions. The first is "that to understand the meaning of human action requires grasping the subjective consciousness or intent of the actor from the inside" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 192). This he calls the empathetic approach of interpretivism. The second is "to grasp how we come to interpret our own and others' actions as meaningful" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 192), a view based on the phenomenological tradition. The third definition he gives is that human action is meaningful by virtue of the system of meaning (language) in which it belongs.

Both Schwandt and Crotty largely agree on the identity of these three different forms of interpretivism, and differentiate them from another tradition which is the hermeneutical tradition, although there are still significant differences between their categorisation and definition of the latter. Ezzy (2002) offers different interpretations again. Synthesising these different interpretations produces the theoretical perspective of hermeneutics that has guided the research process of this study.

The hermeneutic form of interpretivism that has underpinned the research behind this study is based on the traditions of Dilthey (1962) and Gadamer (1993). This is because their traditions were based on an historical dimension to the understanding of meaning, and due to the historical dimension of this study, they seemed most relevant to it. Although their understandings do differ, both stress the importance of the historical aspect of human cultural experience and the need to engage with that experience in the interpretation of texts. Dilthey (1962), Gadamer (1993), Crotty (1998) and Ezzy (2002) all, in their own way, make continual reference to the nature of the 'hermeneutical circle', a movement between the understandings and pre-existing interpretations of the researcher and the data and life experiences generated in the texts and interviews during data collection (Ezzy, 2002, p. 26). The 'circle' also refers to a movement between understanding the whole through the grasping of component parts and understanding the parts by "divining the whole" (Crotty, 1998, p. 95). The essence of the approach is one of continuous development of understanding in the form of an ever widening circle.

This interpretive perspective was fundamental to the research basis of this study, as the guiding research questions also reveal. However, the later meta-analysis was committed to an approach involving more than one perspective, as three authors from whom the framework for policy analysis was gained, namely, Ball (1994a), Taylor

(1997) and Vidovich (2002), have all used different theoretical perspectives including critical theory, post structuralism, and feminism. The application of the first of these was useful in informing aspects of the meta-analysis, particularly in the construction of questions that guided it. The second perspective was also useful in the same chapter when it came to re-visiting the issue of the most appropriate policy model for conducting analyses in this study

Issues of reliability and validity

The choice of qualitative research methods demands rigour in a number of areas to ensure what some refer to as reliability and validity, terms usually associated with quantitative methods. Reliability is usually concerned with the ability of the research design to be replicated and to produce the same results, while validity is concerned with the extent to which researchers are observing or measuring what they think or wish they are measuring (Punch, 1998, p.100). However, to highlight the quality of their research several researchers using qualitative methods prefer to use other terms. For Berg (1998), concepts of reliability and validity apply only to the data used in the research, and he suggests methods to ensure this. Neuman (2000) similarly applies the terms reliability and validity to the matter of ensuring 'high quality data' (p. 368). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) offer a loose definition of reliability and ignore the term validity altogether, while Le Compte (2000) sees validity as an issue of "creating meaningful results… (and) whether or not the research findings seem credible to the people who were studied" (p. 152). Vidovich (2003, p. 77) prefers to use terms such as 'comparability' and 'translatability'. Comparability is achieved by the use of standard terms and analytic frames, as well as clear delineation of the group studied. Translatability

assumes that methods and analytic categories as well as characteristics of the phenomena and groups are clearly identified.

To synthesise the views and arrive at a process which ensures the highest quality of research, attention was paid to a number of issues. One is the clear explication of the research and theoretical perspectives. Another was in paying attention to the quality of the data, following the advice of several authors (e.g. Punch, 1998; Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Neuman, 2000). A further consideration suggested by Berg (1998) was the need to minimise researcher bias. That the researcher has been a history teacher in WA for some twenty years and has been affected by the policy processes outlined in this study demanded constant attention to this consideration. This was achieved by trying to adopt a position of critical self-awareness at all stages of the research, by means of a constantly reflexive approach.

Huberman and Miles (1994) and Vidovich (2003) also stress the importance of triangulation as a means of improving the reliability and validity of the research. Triangulation has two aspects in social science research. One is a 'mode of enquiry' towards verification, "by self-consciously setting out to collect and double check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence" (Huberman and Miles, 1994, p. 438). The other aspect is that understandings or perceptions are more generalisable if they appear in more than one source. Both of these approaches were used in this study, through the use of different data collection methods and the range of sources within each method. Fraenkel and Wallen summarise this succinctly:

> When a conclusion is supported by data collected from a number of different instruments, its validity is thereby enhanced. This kind of checking is often referred to as triangulation. (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 400)

Data collection and analysis

Two of the three central methods of data collection in qualitative research, document analysis and interviews, were used for this study. The retrospective nature of the analysis precluded the use of the third central technique, field observation.

Documents as data

The first source of data for this study was a range of appropriate documents. Hodder (1994) refers to a distinction between documents and records on the basis of whether the text was prepared to attest to some formal transaction. As he put it:

> Records are those texts which are the formal transactions, such as contracts, legal documents, official government gazetted statements and the like. Documents are prepared for personal rather than official reasons and include diaries, letters, field-notes and so on. (Hodder, 1994, p. 394)

This classification is useful, but not entirely satisfactory for this study, as there was much documentation that fell somewhere between Hodder's two categories. Instead, the use of the word 'document' in this study refers to all written sources of material evidence that were used for the purpose of data collection. These will be categorized below.

Documents played three important roles in the collection of data. First, they were an important source of data in their own right, used to ensure "data rich in description" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 58) or 'thick description' (Punch, 1998). In particular, the documents elicited important data for the two higher levels within the

policy trajectory, the macro- and the meso-, in the first two contexts of the policy process, the context of influence and the context of policy text production. Second, careful analysis of the appropriate documents was necessary before conducting interviews as this directed the course and nature of the interviews and helped to elicit richer data from the interview respondents. In several cases, interview respondents had authored some of the documents used, or had sat on committees, the minutes of which were significant sources of data. Elucidation of their meanings and understandings of these documents was part of the interview process. Third, the data from documents contributed to the process of triangulation within the data analysis, which contributed to the quality of the research undertaken.

Documents were selected on the basis of knowledge gained from literature reviews and previous document analysis, which determined those that were most appropriate. There were also cases in which the researcher was directed towards documents by interview respondents, or in some cases given them by a respondent.

For the purpose of data collection, particularly with regard to the two contexts of influence and policy text production, the most important documents were the minutes of meetings of the History Joint Syllabus Committee (HJSC) (1976 – 1992) and the History Syllabus Committee (after 1992). Meetings were held four to five times a year, and from time-to-time there were also special meetings, usually held at times of major syllabus revisions. Minutes of every meeting from 1976 to 1998 were analysed and noted. Very limited, yet valuable, photo-copying of a few documents was permitted, which allowed a later, secondary perusal of significant texts and their closer analysis. Accompanying these minutes were documents such as the Examiners' Reports for the History examination of the preceding year, which were always tabled at the first

subsequent meeting of the History JSC/History SC, and associated correspondence received or sent by the committee. The reading and analysing of all documents associated with the History JSC / History SC proved to be the most time-consuming part of the data collection.

Also included in the study of documents were the three sets of policy texts, which formed the basis of this study. The first of these was the paper for the History TAE for 1983 (SEA History 1983) and the History Syllabus statement for 1984. The second set comprised the History Syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12 in 1990 (SEA, 1990), the accompanying set of Assessment Guidelines, and the paper for the History TEE in 1990 (SEA Examinations 1990). The third set of texts included the History Syllabus statements for Year 11 1996 – 1997, the History Syllabus statement for Year 12 in 1997 and the paper for the History TEE for 1997 (CCWA 1997). Also included among the official documents were the government-commissioned reports on education in WA, such as the Beazley Report (1984), the McGaw Report (1984) and the Andrich Review (1989), which impacted on the nature and direction of policy making in upper-school History curricula.

A third group of documents were the articles, letters and contributions to publications such as *Historicus* and *Hindsight*, the official publications of the History (Teachers') Association of WA. In these publications, several authors were deliberately expressing views, opinions and reactions about the teaching of History, to disseminate these views to a wider audience. These articles included observations and thoughts on the teaching and assessment of History in WA, and by being placed in the public domain, in a formal manner, they had an 'official' status to them.

A fourth, smaller group of documents were those texts written for restricted audiences, such as History syllabuses written by individual teachers of Year 11 and 12 classes, which outlined the plan of course content for the year, the programme of teaching and the timetable and methods of assessment. These documents form part of the group of 'micro-texts' in Vidovich's (2002) model. Another group of documents were personal observations and reflections, found in diaries or personal letters. Documents from both these groups were tendered to the researcher by respondents from their personal collections during the course of interviews, or afterwards.

The use of documents enabled the researcher to achieve the goals of "look(ing) at something holistically and comprehensively, to study it in its complexity, and to study it in its context" (Punch, 1998, p. 192), as they provided significant data that built up a comprehensive picture of the policy process. Data from the documents were also essential in analysing and understanding the predominant discourses that influenced or drove the policy process, and they were the principal focus of the discourse analysis used in the research (Gee, 1998, Olssen et al., 2004). Data from documents established the context for the data collected from interviews, and data from the interviews served to fill gaps in the contexts and understandings not furnished by the data from documents, by adding extra information to what was gained from the documents. During the course of research a definite trend emerged. In researching the early years of the period of study, documents provided more reliable, higher quality data than that provided by interview respondents. This was because, before 1991, the more elaborate methods of minute-taking used provided rich seams of information about the thinking of members of the syllabus committees, and this contrasted with the less satisfactory memories of interview respondents recalling their understandings of events at that time. After 1991, a new method of minute-taking had been instituted which provided much

less information on the deliberations of the syllabus committees, but this was compensated for by the much more detailed memories of respondents about events and decisions at this time.

Interviews

The use of interviews was the complementary method of data collection for this study and was the principal means of determining the understandings of the key actors or stakeholders involved in the policy trajectory. In interviews respondents told their stories and versions of events, decisions and practice and it was to satisfy this end that the type of interview technique was selected.

Berg (1998), Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Burns (1997), and Fontana and Frey (1994) all describe the various types of interview available to the researcher. The common feature of their accounts is a continuum of interview types, ranging from the structured, or standardized, interview at one end, to the unstructured interview at the other end. For the purpose of this research, the semi-structured interview, lying somewhere in the middle of this continuum, was preferred. The reason for this was that some structure to the interview was necessary, as there was a need to ascertain the respondent's opinions and interpretations of particular decisions and events, often in relation to gaps identified from the analysis of documents. At the same time, it was also the intention of the research that each respondent would feel comfortable enough to talk freely about the policies and the meanings of the policies they carried at the time, or later; their roles in the policy making, and their understandings of subsequent practice and developments. The limited structure of each interview was initially based on the four guiding questions of the research.

The sample of respondents for the interviews involved key actors or stakeholders identified in the policy process, either from the literature and documents reviewed, or from the recommendations of other respondents. As such, it represented a deliberate, purposive sample. The respondents included: members of the History JSC / History SC during the period of study; a Chief Examiner of the History TEE ; Curriculum Officers of the SEA and CCWA; members of the HAWA/HTAWA; and teachers of senior secondary History during the same period. For a number of reasons, such as the nature of membership of the History JSC/SC, and the membership of the HAWA/HTAWA, most respondents filled two or even three of these roles over the period of study, which was to impact on the size of the sample. The eight respondents interviewed proved to be a representative sample of the groups and individuals identified for data collection, reflected in the quality of the data provided and by the realization that little new data emerged in later interviews. Convenience was also a factor in determining the size of the sample, because there were problems in locating some of the actors or stakeholders. Some who were identified as useful could not be traced, while others had migrated. An attempt to conduct one interview of a relocated member of the History JSC by electronic-mail ultimately proved impossible due to the respondent's personal circumstances. One other person identified as extremely useful for information on the early stages of the policy trajectory had been seriously ill and was not available for interview.

Successful interviewing demanded careful attention to several phases of the process. The first of these was preparing for the interview beforehand. Preparation involved two considerations; preparation of the interviewer and preparation of the respondent. In the case of the former, attention was paid to the drawing up of a

schedule, a loose structure to ensure that the situation was always under the control of the interviewer. The semi-structured nature of the interview demanded that certain questions to elicit understandings of the respondent about certain matters were put forward in the interview, hence the need to draw up a list of questions before each interview. Some of these were common to most interviews; others were specific to one person. To further enhance the quality of interviewing, Burns (1997), Berg (1998) and Seidman (1990) advised the use of a pilot interview with a suitable candidate, to rehearse and familiarise oneself with the procedure, and to foreshadow any difficulties, and this was done with the help of a 'critical friend' (Vidovich, 2003, p. 86).

Preparation of the respondent was also important, to ensure that he/she was at ease as far as possible. To assist this, Burns (1997, p. 334) suggests that a 'cover story' be given to the respondent beforehand. Therefore, each participant was formally invited by letter which included a short written presentation about the interview and the aims and nature of the research. It also let the participants know what would happen with the data; how it would be recorded and analysed; how long a session would last; reassurances regarding confidentiality and the supervision of the Ethics Committee of The University of WA; and the names of the researcher's supervisors (see Appendix 1). A one-page summary outline of the History curricula in WA from 1983 to 1997 was also attached to each invitation (see Appendix 2). In some cases, as contact was initially made, it became clear that some of the respondents were hesitant about recalling details of events or decisions that occurred over fifteen to twenty years beforehand. To alleviate this discomfort, the researcher arranged a meeting a week or so before the actual interview, and provided the respondent with a 'pack' of information, usually in the form of a collection of pertinent documents, some of which had been written by, or involved, the interview respondent. Some preliminary discussions took place at his time, with the

effect of reassuring the respondent that whatever information they provided would be valuable. It was the experience of this researcher that this technique realised significant results in terms of the quality of the data generated.

Successful management of the interview demanded careful attention to a number of techniques, handled in such a way that the respondent felt comfortable and relaxed. Patton (1990), Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) and Fontana and Frey (1994) stress two features: the importance of establishing rapport with the respondent and ensuring that the empirical data is collected and recorded. Ensuring rapport with the respondent was achieved partly by the quality of preparation beforehand, as described above. It was furthered by attention to presenting oneself as a highly motivated, well organized, knowledgeable interviewer, knowledgeable about both the topic and the respondent. Interviews were handled in a friendly, open manner in which every effort was made to make the respondent feel at ease and talk willingly. The success in achieving rapport can be measured by three outcomes. The first was that most interviews extended well beyond the hour requested and set aside by the respondent; the second was in the quality of the data provided, which , in turn was reflected in the third outcome, the nature of the subsequent transcript. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) make the point that the transcript of a successful interview can be seen in the proportions of the interviewer's statements to those of the respondents. The best interviews are usually those in which the statements of the respondents heavily outweigh those of the interviewer.

To ensure that the empirical data were collected and recorded, interviews were recorded electronically, by means of a tape recorder with the prior permission of the respondent. This generally ensured that both parties were relaxed; surreptitious placement of the recorder, and the absence of feverish note taking, meant that the

interviewer and the respondent could focus on the flow of the conversation. Nevertheless, some brief notes were taken during the interview. This helped in recalling particular points of emphasis from the interview, and often aided clarification in the transcribing and subsequent coding process. Some note taking was also suggested in case of recording equipment failure (Vidovich, 2003), but such a situation never occurred.

Following the interview, each tape-recording was fully transcribed and then returned to the respondents if they requested. Only one respondent asked for a transcript to be returned, and the respondent took the opportunity to make some additions, alterations or deletions. An amended copy was then returned to the respondent. All transcripts were typed up by the researcher, which served to increase familiarity with and understanding of the data. Each transcript was given a reference number to preserve the anonymity of the respondent, in the form of a two-figure number, involving the order and the date of the interview. This reference number was used throughout the study. Following Burns' (1997) suggestions, the transcripts were typed with a large space on both margins, for the purposes of notes, memos and cross-references on the left-hand side, and for the purpose of coding on the right hand side (see Appendix 3).

Data analysis

The analysis of the data began early in the research and was an ongoing process, as suggested by Ezzy (2002). Data for the purpose of this research were collected over an eighteen-month period, and data reduction and analysis were at times almost simultaneous with data collection. The model of data analysis was based on the model

proposed by Huberman and Miles (1994), which has three main components. These are data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Huberman and Miles' model of data analysis is referred to as analytical induction, and is based on the theoretical assumption that there are "regularities to be found in the physical and social world" (1994, p. 431). Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p. 157) refer to the process as "systematically searching and arranging" one's data sources. Huberman and Miles (1994) describe the main process of data analysis as coding and memoing, but Neuman (2000) and grounded theorists such as Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer principally to the processes of coding as the primary means of data analysis. For the purpose of this research, the processes of coding and memoing are identified separately. Coding involved a method based on techniques described by Berg (1998), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Neuman (2000), while the use of memos was a separate technique within the analysis. As the coding process will take longer to outline, memoing will be considered first, although as Punch points out (1998, p. 206), "the operations are not sequential; memoing begins at the start of the analysis, along with coding."

Memos are essentially notes, and "the analytical memo is a special type of note" (Neuman, 2000, p.424). Memos were used as ongoing records of suggestions, or elaborations, of higher order concepts, not making descriptions but rather in moving the researcher from the data to concepts, i.e. to first, and then higher, levels of abstraction. Neuman sees the memo as forging "a link between the concrete data and the more abstract theoretical thinking" (2000, p. 424). Punch refers to memoing as the "creative-speculative part of the developing analysis" (1998, p. 206) (see Appendix 3).

Coding was the principal process of analysis, using methods which Berg (1998) refers to as "category development", Neuman calls "concept formation" (2000, p. 420) and Le Compte calls "finding items" (2000, p. 148). An analysis of the documents used for data collection generated a number of concepts categories or items, that is codes, which were noted and recorded. Some of these codes related to concepts raised by the literature review with regard to 'new history', while others arose 'naturally' from the texts and notes. These codes were drawn up on a simple, preliminary list. The interview transcripts were then analysed by noting the appearance of the codes already generated from the documents as well as ascertaining new concepts or categories produced from the interview data exclusively. This first level of coding is what is widely referred to as "open coding", although it was informed by knowledge gained from the literature review for this study.

The two sets of codes were synthesised, and then re-tabulated into one set of codes and then organized under headings, a process which amounted to a second level of coding. This stage of coding, involving the systematic linking of all the items or categories produced in the first stage of coding, is a higher level of the process, what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call "axial coding", and what Berg (1998, p. 238) calls "coding frames". Punch (1998) refers to the first stage, open coding, as the 'fracturing' of the document or text; the second stage, axial coding, is "putting the categories back together again" (p.215) but in conceptually different ways. The cases and categories are interconnected, thus producing a set of propositions, which represent a higher level of abstraction.

Subsequently, a second analysis of the transcripts was made. This was partly to check for any codes that might have been missed on the first analysis, but primarily to

count the number of times each coding category appeared, a technique suggested by Berg (1998) (see Appendix 4).

The third stage of coding is what Punch refers to as selective coding, "where the analyst deliberately selects one aspect as a core category and concentrates on that" (1998, p.216). Analysis of the text now revolves around this one core category and it becomes the centrepiece of the study. The purpose of this stage is to develop the highest level of abstraction in answering the research question, by further pulling together the developing analysis. Thus, the overall coding process was one of moving from the level of description to the highest level of explanation, as demanded by Huberman and Miles (1994).

To ensure high quality of analysis, methods were subject to an approach of "constant comparison" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and one of constant questioning. Strauss and Corbin preface their outline of the coding processes by referring to "two analytical procedures … basic to the coding process" (1998, p. 73). The first is the making of comparisons constantly throughout the process; the other is the constant asking of questions. They refer to this as "the constant comparative method of analysis" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 78). This method was an ongoing feature of the data analysis used in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to state the aims and research questions that guided the study, and to provide an overview of the frameworks, perspectives and methods that informed the research behind it. Attention to the latter has been identified as essential

for ensuring the quality of the research, in terms of what some have called its reliability and validity. The next three chapters turn to the outcomes of the research, in elaborating the findings across three phases of the policy trajectory. For the purposes of facilitating the research, the contexts of policy within each phase are separated, but the framework described above assumes that the boundaries between the contexts are usually indistinguishable.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST PHASE OF CURRICULUM CHANGE: 1983 – 84

Introduction

The next three chapters follow a similar format in that each explores the changes in curriculum policy for the upper secondary school subject of History in Western Australia (WA) within a particular timeframe. Following the trajectory model of Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992), each chapter focuses on the three contexts of the policy process, the context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice.

This chapter is concerned with the first phase of changes to the senior school History Curriculum in WA, those changes that occurred in 1983 and 1984. It begins with a preliminary section, which describes the policy making bodies involved in the production of upper school History curricula in WA in the period leading up to 1983 – 84, the first phase of the policy process. In subsequent chapters, reference will only be made to the changes that have occurred to these bodies within the respective period. The present chapter then proceeds to consider the curriculum changes in 1983 – 4. It does so by centering on each of the contexts in turn.

The data for these three chapters is drawn principally from documents and interviews. When referring to interview data in the text, reference is made to the code number given to the interview transcript of the respondent, to protect her/his anonymity.

The institutions of upper school curriculum policy making in Western Australia, with special reference to History curricula

It is necessary at this stage to clarify the institutions and mechanisms of curriculum development for upper school curricula in WA, as they existed in the period leading up to 1984. This time frame has been selected as it marks the period leading up to the first changes to the upper school History curriculum, the first significant 'moment' in the policy trajectory which forms the focus of this study.

In 1975, the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) was established as the principal statutory body to certify all courses for Years 11 and 12, and ultimate authority for the curricula in upper secondary schools in WA lay with it. The Board was composed of a cross-section of the educational vista, including members appointed by the Minister of Education. With regard to those curricula which were examined for the purpose of tertiary entrance, the BSE was advised by the Tertiary Admissions Examination Committee (TAEC), a committee drawn from representatives of the four tertiary institutions, Education Department schools (referred to as government or 'public' schools) and independent or 'private' schools (Association of Independent Schools, or AIS). The three higher education institutions (The University of Western Australia; Murdoch University and the Western Australian Institute of Technology) each had three representatives, as did the Western Australian College of Advanced Education. The sum of government schools in the state was represented by three delegates, while the AIS had two representatives. The TAEC had responsibility for deciding examination policies across all subjects, and together with the BSE was the overarching supervisory body (see Figure 4.1, p. 91 below).

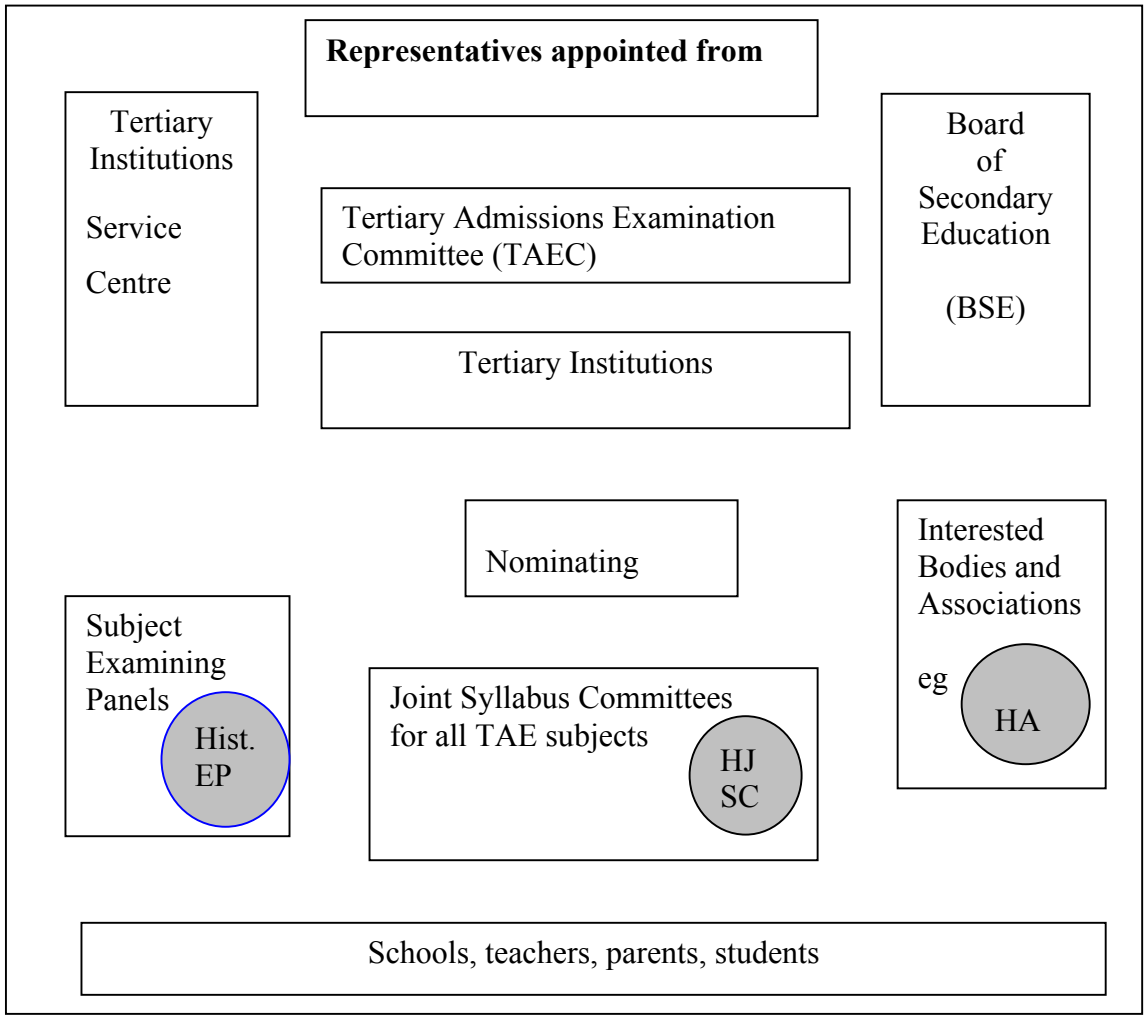
A central body was the Nominating Panel, which had representatives from each of the four tertiary institutions. This panel nominated 40% of the members of each Joint Syllabus Committee, the committee initially responsible for curriculum policy in each subject area. In the History Joint Syllabus Committee (History JSC), there were twenty members, with eight nominated by the Tertiary Institutions and the other twelve coming from the BSE, Education Department schools and AIS schools, not necessarily in any strict method of proportion.

The Joint Syllabus Committees were responsible for reviewing syllabuses and proposing alterations or major changes to the official statements of the different subject syllabuses for the Tertiary Admissions Examination. In this respect they were the principal policy making institution of curriculum change in a particular subject area. However, the Joint Syllabus Committees were responsible to the TAEC and the BSE, who had to approve the changes. A process of consultation with schools then followed this before the changes were finalized and became official policy. Also of significance at this stage was the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) which was generally responsible for servicing the examination process and handling applications to the tertiary institutions. Its powers included the approval of the format of the Tertiary Admissions Examinations and any other related assessments, and on this basis, it played a part in the policy making process.

Finally each TAE subject had an Examining Panel, comprising three members appointed by the TAEC, two from the tertiary institutions, and one from a school. It provided a report of the conduct of the previous year's examination to the various bodies. This was often the cue for discussion or debate in the JSC that year. Changes in

the format of the examination would be considered by the TAEC and reviewed by TISC.

Figure 4.1: The bodies involved in determining upper school syllabuses and examinations in WA, before 1984, with particular reference to History curricula.



Based on Chase, D. (1974). The hydra-headed beast. Historicus, 8 (2) p. 23

Interested bodies and associations, such as the History Association of WA (HAWA), essentially a body established to represent History teachers, had an official channel of communication to the TAEC. This was the only channel of communication for students and teachers. Teachers (and students) had, for some time, an unofficial channel to the History JSC, as members of the History JSC were often active in the HAWA. In 1980, however, a BSE directive mandated that JSCs were in future to have

no official communication with schools, teachers or students, a matter that was to cause much resentment and frustration within the History JSC as it moved towards some major reforms and wished to appear consultative in its deliberations (HJSC Minutes, 28/10/80).

To summarise, then, it is clear that the primary body for curriculum change was the JSC of each subject, but there were other bodies which had to approve any changes. Also the BSE required a period for mandated change of over a year, so that teaching, resources and other factors could be adjusted in preparation for any new examination, which would occur at the end of the first year of change. One further point that the description highlights is the considerable influence of the tertiary institutions in all sections of the process. This was to shape some of the major criticisms of the History curriculum in upper secondary years, particularly that it was not a school curriculum, but rather a curriculum to prepare and select students for university courses.

The context of influence

The influences which impacted on the members of the History JSC during the period of deliberation from about 1980 to 1984 can be garnered from three main sets of sources. First, there are the texts which describe and interpret the social, political, cultural, and economic changes in Australia and WA during the period. Second, there are the primary historical sources, in particular *Historicus*, the official publication of the History Association of WA, in which the principal dialogues and discourses were aired. Third, there are those factors identified from the interviews conducted. From these sources, five sets of factors which influenced the policy process to differing degrees can be identified. These are the social forces, the economic forces, the cultural forces, the

political forces, and educational forces. These five sets of factors will now be considered in turn.

Social factors influencing the policy process

The principal social factor was the growing population of WA, and its increasing diversity, in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Between 1945 and 1966, the restrictive immigration policy known as the 'White Australia policy' had been gradually eroded and in 1966, following the retirement of Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister, racial exclusion was abandoned as a feature of immigration policy (Lack, 1998; Markus, 1998). Its official end is usually marked by the policy statement of the Whitlam government in 1974, in which immigration was applied uniformly with no racial discrimination (Fraser, 1998). The erosion and final collapse of the policy led to the later arrival of a significant Asian immigrant population, which augmented the increasingly diverse population allowed into Australia since the end of World War 2. These included Italian, Greek and other Southern European groups, the second and third generation of whom were progressing through schools in the 1970s and 1980s. According to the 1981 census, 348,386 people in WA were born overseas (Birch & Parker, 1984), of whom only 53.5% were "from Britain" [*sic*]. Of the non-British population, 77.6% were from Europe, 5.7% from Asia and 3.3% from Africa. On this, Barcan identifies the emergence of a 'pluralist' society as one of the major influences on educational change at this time, both generally (1993, pp. 217 - 285), and with regard to the subject of History (1997, p. 200).

Despite these developments, there was only slow recognition that the nature of WA society was changing. Goddard (1992) provides an interpretation of the

circumstances of WA society before 1983 by referring to Durkheim's idea of 'mechanical social solidarity', an analogy to a society that is dominated by similarity. Members are like one another, undergo similar life experiences, have similar skills and attitudes, and develop similar thoughts and values. Molony (1988) supports Goddard's interpretation in asserting that, even at the beginning of the decade, Australian governments and society were slow to accept the changing nature of social context. He refers to those institutions of continuity within the nation, a predominant skin colour and language, and legal, political and education systems inherited from the United Kingdom; "with those things, the majority of people felt at ease" (Molony, 1988, p. 371). This sense of ease and confidence in the strength of existing institutions was reflected in the vision and policies of successive WA governments which had dominated state politics since 1960.

Political factors influencing the policy process

The early 1980s marked the twilight of the WA State Liberal Party government (1974 – 1982) of Sir Charles Court, who had been personally identified with the mineral and economic booms of the 1960s (Bolton, 1985). The government clung to traditions of economic growth as paramount and ignored social issues and developments that were becoming increasingly prominent, such as those concerned with the environment, sex and gender, and minority group issues. Traditional patterns of education were maintained during this period of government and there were few attempts to reform the system before 1982.

In the state elections of 1977 and 1980, education had hardly figured in the policy statements of the major parties, and was not identified as a major issue in either

election. Both major parties highlighted unemployment as a key issue, but did not relate this economic problem to a need for any overhaul of the education system, particularly in the post-compulsory years of schooling (Hamilton, 1979; Black & Peachment, 1982). In the early 1980s, the Court Government had generated much public resentment in the Noonkanbah issue, where mining rights were forcibly imposed on a group of Aboriginals who claimed land rights (Bolton, 1985). Resistance to Premier Court and his Ministry, such as on this issue, often emanated from the more radical elements of university academia, including members of the History JSC (Interview 11).

Barcan (1980; 1993) describes the states of WA and Queensland at this time as 'pioneer societies'. His argument is that these two states were slower than others in Australia to adopt the radical changes in education and other areas during the 1960s and 1970s, because of the strong influence of the rural sector in state politics and the resultant conservative nature of their political thinking. As a result, liberal-humanist traditions in education had been slower to die out in these two states. Evidence to support Barcan's claim lies in the fact that from 1948 to 1980, successive Ministers of Education came from the Country Party/ National Party, a conservative party representing rural Western Australians (Smart and Alderson, 1980). It can be argued that the WA presided over by the Court government up to 1983 was the last vestige of the pioneer society that Barcan describes.

Economic factors influencing the policy process

Economically, the principal influence was the economic uncertainty of the period. A worldwide depression after 1974 had hit Australia hard, and the numbers out of work were higher than those of the 1930's, although because of the increased

population, the proportion was smaller (Barcan, 1993). From 1974 to 1975, the numbers of unemployed had jumped from 141, 000 to 278, 000, almost a one hundred per-cent increase. In 1980 the numbers out of work had reached 392, 000, and in 1983, the unemployed numbered 684, 000 (Stegman, 1999). Economic cycles of prosperity and recession shortened and were often more extreme (Dowrick, 1999) and another downturn had occurred in 1981-82.

In WA, economic problems tarnished the façade of a long boom based on mineral exploitation that had occurred since 1960, and which had changed WA from the 'Cinderella state' of the early twentieth century to a 'State on the move' or the 'State of excitement' as proclaimed on car licence plates at the time. While exports of iron-ore and other minerals continued to earn foreign currency (exports doubled in value from 1975 to 1980 and were twice the value of imports), much of the means of production were highly capital intensive, and demands for labour had dropped. These economic patterns generated concerns about the provision of new avenues of education, and focused more on employment, and on the subject choices of students entering the post-compulsory years and their subject selections for tertiary entrance (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1980).

Equally significantly, the economic problems of the state and the nation signalled the emerging influence of a political movement uniting market liberals and mainstream political conservatives, known as the 'New Right' (Marginson, 1997, p. 78). This group was largely based in the business world and exerted increasing influence in the economy and in education (Marginson, 1997). Its influence, as later chapters show, was to be significant in later periods of change.

Cultural factors influencing the policy process

The most significant cultural influence to impact on curricular change at this time was the perceptible re-emergence of a strong sense of nationalism. This was evidenced in a number of ways, such as in the official adoption of *Advance Australia Fair* as the national anthem in 1975, confirmed in 1984, in place of the British anthem, *God Save the Queen*. There was renewed interest in occasions such as Anzac Day, which commemorated the myths, legends and realities surrounding first engagement of Australian troops at Gallipoli, in Turkey, in 1915. There was also a spate of films produced in Australia with a nationalist/historical theme, such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *My Brilliant Career* (1978), *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978), *Breaker Morant* (1980), *Gallipoli* (1981) and *The Man from Snowy River* (1982). The year 1979 was the 150th anniversary of the founding of WA and the state government marked this event by the publication of a number of historical texts which drew popular and widespread attention to the history of the state (Bolton, 1985; Neal, 1979).

This tide of nationalism and growing interest in the history of the state and nation had a significant influence on the teaching of History in school classrooms at the time. This is evidenced in articles appearing in *Historicus* (Zani, 1975; Editorial, September 1977; Chase, 1980), and by a concern stated in those articles that History needed to reflect the interests and trends reflected in the population at large. It was also cited in the views of two respondents in interview (Interviews 24; 25).

Educational factors influencing the policy process

There were several features of the educational context behind the policy issues of the period, not least the increasing numbers of students in secondary schools since the 1960s (Mossenson, 1980), and, more significant to the area of upper secondary schools policies, the growing number of students remaining at school for post-compulsory education in Years 11 and 12. Smart and Alderson (1980) describe the growth of schooling in WA between 1960 and 1977 as "spectacular" (p. 4). In 1960, there were 522 schools catering for 119,788 students. By 1978, three were 648 schools comprising 211,988 students (Smart and Alderson, 1980). A great proportion of this growth had been in secondary education, particularly with the expansion of large, 'democratic' comprehensive high schools (Mossenson, 1980; Helm, 1979). Parallel with this overall growth was an increase in the retention rates of those staying on in the post-compulsory years of schooling. In 1963, of the cohort of students who began secondary school in Year 8, 19.9% completed Year 12. By 1973, that proportion had reached 30.8%, and in 1983, 38.0% (McGaw, 1984). In raw figures, there were 8,446 students in Year 12 in 1983, compared with 4,600 in 1973. The number of students in upper secondary years had, therefore, almost doubled. One issue of concern by the 1980s, however, was the disparity in continuity over the two post-compulsory years, in the number of students who had begun Year 11 but had not gone on to Year 12. In 1980, 54% of the 1976 Year 8 cohort had started Year 11, but only 34% had finished Year 12.

In terms of educational ideology, Kenway (1987) provides an analysis which offers an interesting interpretation of the educational influences on the curriculum policy of this period. Kenway identifies a 'hegemony' created by the 'high status

private schools' of WA. She argues that the large increase in the number of upper secondary students in state schools in WA posed a threat to these high status private schools, a threat they met by adhering to a highly academic, competitive curriculum, within a nominally meritocratic selection process. Ashenden et al. (1985) refer to this type of syllabus as a 'competitive academic curriculum' (1985, p. 49), with particular features. Its content is drawn mainly from the university disciplines and is organized into a form ('subjects') determined there. It is highly competitive, and is usually taught by transfer, that the teacher's job is to embed it, nearly as intact as possible, into the students' heads. There is a fairly uniform and rigid pacing and sequencing of the learning process, which emphasizes the separation of the experience and knowledge of the learner and it is guaranteed by a nearly universal public testing and accrediting system (Ashenden et al., 1985). Kenway argues that this competitive academic curriculum became the "benchmark of curricula in this state" (1987, p. 358), dominated by the universities in alliance with the high status private schools. She concludes that "their reputations and therefore their market came to be built upon their retention and tertiary entrance rates and their external examination results…permitting them little curricular flexibility" (1987, p. 351).

An analysis of articles, correspondence and the 'Dialogue' sections in the HAWA's publication, *Historicus*, from 1972 to 1983, largely support the theses of Kenway and Ashenden, and also suggest the existence of two discourses in competition with each other over the issue of developments in upper school History curricula. On the one hand is evidence of a set of discourses supporting the retention of a highly academic subject. These discourses emanated from members of the university sector, whose representation on the History JSC was 40%. They also emanated from a number of teachers who were on the History JSC. Of these teachers, 20% were from high status

private schools (Kenway, 1987). On the other side of the debate was another set of clearly-voiced discourses, often of discontent at the current arrangements. These voices emanated most noticeably from teachers in government schools (*Historicus* 1972 – 1983; Interview 11).

Evidence to support the claim of undue influence of these teachers from high status private schools as a force of conservatism during this period of reform was highlighted by a member of the History JSC during interview (Interview 11). This respondent referred to the attempts of certain teachers to countermand the proposed introduction of the examination of primary sources and questions that did not require essay-type answers as part of the reforms to the Tertiary Entrance Examination in 1982. She was also quite sure that the source of this resistance was "largely male teachers from the elite private boys' schools" (Interview 11).

Evidence from *Historicus* from 1972 to 1983 suggests that there were three major problems in the teaching and learning of History in the upper secondary years of schooling in WA. First, there was the decline in the numbers of students studying the subject. From 1976 to 1983, student numbers sitting TAE History had declined from 2,901 to 2,300, a fall of 21%. Furthermore this decline had occurred in the face of the increasing general retention rates mentioned above. Therefore, the proportion of students taking History in any one year was declining rapidly. One teacher at the time described this succinctly; the number of students at his school choosing History in Year 11 had fallen from 50% of the year group to a " disastrous and alarming 25%" (Bennett, 1980, p. 26). Anxiety arose that such a decline in student numbers would mean that History would 'fall off the grids' for subject choices in Years 11 and 12 altogether unless the numbers picked up. The second major problem lay in the nature of the

examination on which much subsequent argument was to focus. The third problem lay in concerns about the loss of the subject as a discrete discipline in the lower years of secondary schooling, although some private schools insisted on keeping the subjects of History and Geography in these years. There was a widespread belief that students entering Year 11 in the early 1980s were poorly prepared for upper school curricula in the face of a 'dumbing-down' due to the Social Studies syllabus of the Achievement Certificate, the certification for lower school courses (*Historicus*, December 1979, p. 35 – 36; Interview 13).

Two of these issues did unite parties on both sides of the debates that appeared in the magazines. All teachers, whether secondary or tertiary, would be hit hard by the number of students forsaking History, even if the status of tenure among university teachers provided some greater measure of security for them. Also, both parties were in agreement on the necessity to maintain an interest in Australian history, a matter which is unsurprising considering the growing nationalism of the time. University-based contributors to *Historicus* had, in most cases, developed their academic reputations as Australian history scholars. Other than on these two issues, there were clearly two different discourses that appeared in the texts of the publication.

On one side the discourses supported the status quo, and statements in *Historicus* from time-to-time argued strongly for the retention of an academic curriculum, based on sound knowledge of content, preserving the traditional status of the subject and referring to the unique features of a distinct 'field of knowledge'. In the editions of May 1980, May 1981, July 1981 and September 1981, each of the tertiary institutions submitted an article on the nature of the subject in their departments, in part to advertise the developments that were occurring at that level, but carrying the

suggestion that they were advertising the 'higher form of knowledge' which the school subject should look up to. Nevertheless, the most ringing defence of the traditional subject came from a schoolteacher (*Historicus*, May 1980). In this article he outlined the beneficial qualities of the current syllabus and castigated those members of the History teaching profession for criticizing the status quo without offering a viable alternative. At the same time, it needs to be said that evidence of this discourse was limited and the number of articles along these lines were much fewer than those holding opposing views.

The discourses emanating from those wanting to see change were certainly much more explicit, and were more numerous and more powerfully stated. The main features of these discourses included a more pessimistic nature, a concern with progressive pedagogy and alternative assessments, to generate greater student engagement with the discipline, and a criticism of essays as the sole means of assessment.

The desire to employ a more progressive pedagogy was stated in several ways. One involved a drive to study more local history, which was seen as a 'hands-on' approach to the subject, generating greater levels of interest among students. Several articles appeared in *Historicus* at this time on the virtues of local history, and carried information on possible expeditions or tasks. Accompanying these was a series of articles on subjects such as local architecture. Also, from 1979 to 1981, illustrations for the magazine were invariably pictures of old houses and buildings, often with no reference to the articles around them (cf. *Historicus*, Vol. 13 (2) to Vol 15 (2)). In the edition of July 1981, the section of the publication devoted to debate on historical issues, 'Dialogue', had the theme *Learning through the historical environment*, and this

became a topic for subsequent articles and correspondence. Thus, teachers and students were being increasingly directed to look to other sources of historical information beyond the traditional textbook, such as music, literature, and the arts (cf. Gabella, 1994).

One of the most strongly held views among many History teachers was the negative impact of the public examinations on the History curriculum, and, in particular, the fact that the examinations comprised only one type of assessment, the essay. These views were not new and appeared in Collins' earlier survey of History teachers (1951). Before 1983, candidates for examination were required to answer five essays, one to test each unit studied. Criticisms of this format included its limited nature; a perception that students were actually given prepared essays to learn and a growing concern for the 'less able' students, or those with deficiencies in English literacy, such as immigrant children from non-English speaking backgrounds. While there was no strong argument urging an end to examinations, there were many loud voices complaining about the undue influence of the examination and its structure. The views of those advocating this stance were well represented by Ashenden et al:

> assessment and credentialing came to have a different place in the curriculum. Rather than following and recording learning, they invaded and determined it. In the process of coming to grade all students rather than selecting some, the curriculum changed its content, organization and social relations (1985, p. 48).

Their views were stated in articles in *Historicus* before 1983, and in alternative assessments published in the magazine *Historicus*. This trend began in 1977 with a strongly worded editorial attacking the format of the examination comprising five essays, with the Editor (a government school teacher) offering the first alternative assessment (*Historicus*, September 1977). In the edition of October 1978, the whole

publication was devoted to five alternative examination formats, four based on units of the WA syllabus at that time, and the fifth on an example from New Zealand. The editor proclaimed that the examinations "were designed by History teachers who believe that History is more than learning how to write essays and that a number of skills can be taught and evaluated in the History course" (*Historicus*, October 1978, p. ii). The pattern of such editorials, themes and model assessments continued through the editions up to 1983. The features of these alternative assessments varied. Some were substantive document-investigation tasks which drew on previous knowledge and required a reasonable degree of critical analysis; others were simple cognitive recall exercises, such as multiple choice questions or 'pairing-up' tasks which were low-level tests of knowledge demanding minimal writing skills.

One emerging discourse was the pedagogical one of the use of historical documents as the basis of classroom activity. In October 1972 an article in *Historicus* (pp. 2 – 6) was included to provide assistance to teachers on the use of documents and cartoons as sources of information and as pedagogical tasks. It is remarkable for the simplicity of its detail, especially when compared to the expectations that teachers would have of such techniques today, and it serves as an indication of the lower level of understanding of such methods at that time. Very late in the period was the appearance in WA of the British Schools Council History Project (SCHP) curriculum package, *What is History?*, which was introduced into WA's John Forrest Senior High School as a trial in 1981 (*Historicus*, May 1981). The SCHP had been a vanguard of the 'new history' movement in England and Wales and its introduction was to inform the discourses of new history in WA as well as to provide exemplars of quality practice in this field. Its significance was emphasized by one respondent, who recalled that "we borrowed a lot from the Schools' Council History Project….It was quite fascinating and

a lot of the materials with a focus on primary sources and investigation were something that we borrowed from the UK" (Interview 24).

There was also an element of derision (cf. Phillips, 1988a; Crawford, 1995) contained within this set of discourses. There was, for example, the tendency to blame those outside the profession for the misfortunes of the subject. Blame was directed towards three groups. One target was career-guidance officers who were perceived to be directing student choices away from History towards Mathematics and the Sciences, or other Social Sciences, particularly Economics. Another target was employers who were perceived to be ignoring the generic skills History students brought with them. The third target was their administrative colleagues, responsible for drawing up school timetables, and who were perceived to be determined to see History 'fall off the grids' and disappear as an upper school subject. The phrase 'falling of the grids' appeared several times in articles in *Historicus* (e.g. Bennett, 1980) and was a reflection of the pessimistic concern many teachers felt about the future of the subject. The blame itself was largely misdirected and was countered by several editorials and articles exhorting the History teaching profession to look to its own endeavours to rectify the problems (eg. *Historicus*, May 1980: May 1981).

In concluding this section, emphasis needs to be placed upon the predominance of what Ashenden et al. (1985) and Kenway (1987) refer to as the competitive academic curriculum and its centrality to the nature of the upper school History curriculum. Clearly, the features of this curriculum that they identify predominate in the discourses of both sides of the debate over the nature of the upper school History curriculum in WA before 1983. While several groups in the policy process mounted a strong defence of the nature of this curriculum, its critics argued that it reflected too heavily the

university discipline of History, in a form determined there. Critics also argued that it was taught by transfer, that there was a fairly uniform and rigid sequencing of the learning process, that it was perceived as separating experience and knowledge of the learner, and that the public testing and assessment compared individual position in abstract performance.

The analysis now moves to the deliberations of the History JSC and their wrestling with these discourses, and those of other bodies, as they attempted to devise a curriculum that could meet the aspirations of most of those involved with the teaching of History in WA.

The context of policy text production

This section of the chapter is concerned with two principal features of the second context of the policy trajectory. The first is an analysis of the issues, deliberations and contestations that occurred in the process of formulating curriculum policy. The second is the analysis of the policy texts themselves, which comprise the examination paper for the Tertiary Admissions Examination (TAE) in History in 1983, and the Syllabus statement for History in 1984, both published by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE).

A feature of the curriculum process in this stage is that the role of the two principal policy texts was reversed. In most curricula, the public examination held at the end of the course is usually the principal feature of 'implementation theory' (Walker, 2001, p. 338), the means of ensuring that the policy, as outlined in the syllabus statement, is carried out. In the case of History in WA in 1983-4, however, it was

changes to the public examination paper that actually drove the resultant changes to the syllabus. The reason for this lay in the fact that some influential members of the examining panel, particularly members of the History Association of WA (HAWA) and members of the History JSC came to the realization that the most significant changes to the teaching and learning of History would be enhanced through a major change to the examination. What they sought in particular was to make documentary analysis part of the assessment process (Interview 11). They believed that this would force teachers to teach related historical skills, and to move away from the didactic 'transfer' of content and the situation where students prepared for the examination by rote-learning prepared essays (Interviews 11; 24).

A new style of examination was introduced in 1983, but it was still based on the existing syllabus statement as had been *in situ* since 1980. A new syllabus statement was then introduced in 1984, involving some structural changes and emphasizing the changed direction with regard to the nature of the subject. One person involved heavily in the production of both the new-style examination and the syllabus statement provided a glimpse of the atmosphere behind the policy making from 1980 to 1984, describing it as a "creative period… where we were really thinking about the meaning of History" (Interview, 11).

Analysis of the contestations in the process of formulating curriculum policy

Analysis of the minutes of the History JSC reveals some interesting themes regarding this phase of the period under study. The first of these is evidence about the dynamics in and around the committee. What the minutes suggest was the existence of three groups. One was a large group that actively sought and promoted change; the

second was an amorphous group, usually involving individuals from higher statutory bodies such as the BSE, TISC and the TAEC, who seemed intent on resisting change. The third was a 'fringe' group, which did not appear to take sides in the debates but appeared to concentrate on a diversionary strategy, while not apparently attempting to be destructive of, or hijack, the process of change.

Those advocating change appear to have been driven by those issues which formed the discourse of the 'new history' group referred to in the previous section. This group included those who most wanted to see change to the existing curriculum take place. The first aim of this group was a desire to promote the subject of History. This was related to a concern about the popularity of the subject, and a definition of its relevance and use for students of the 1980s. The Examiners' reports presented to the HJSC in 1977 and 1978 made reference to the declining numbers of students sitting for the History TAE and also raised some concerns about the standard of answers among those at the lower end of the marks' distribution. This matter was to re-appear almost every year, coinciding with the publication of the Examiners' report and the statistics revealing the declining student enrolment in History.

Concern over the declining numbers studying History in upper school classes led to discussions and debates in the History JSC about the nature of the subject, its role and its purpose. There was much discussion about the development of skills in history, particularly regarding the handling and analysis of primary sources. One member of the History JSC referred to the need to "bring into schools what we were doing in universities" (Interview, 11), her view being based on the 'progressive' nature of the subject at the university at which she taught. Her view stood in stark contrast to the perceptions of university History held by most of the teachers interviewed, whose

memories of teaching and learning History were invariably disparaging (Interviews 12; 25; 37). For this group, a movement away from university practices of history was what they sought.

Related to this desire to make the subject more interesting, relevant, and more appealing, was the desire to place more emphasis on local history in the syllabus, in order to encourage greater application of historical skills and to promote greater interest in the subject. 'Problem solving' approaches, 'in-depth studies' and 'specialization' were often mentioned in History JSC minutes and *Historicus* as means of generating a new approach to the subject and redefining its role, aims and purposes.

One of the principal concerns of the History JSC was the place of Australian history within the syllabus. There was an implicit desire to give greater prominence to the Australian unit(s), which was/were now equal in status to the other units. At the same time, members of the committee believed that the Australian unit(s) had to be reworked to make their teaching and learning more attractive. It was clear from Examiners' reports that the Australian unit was the one most teachers were not teaching, or not teaching well. One extract illustrates this:

> The second least popular section of the course…the standard of answers was generally lower than that in other sections. It is a sad fact that 17 year olds can write better about Germany or China than they can about their own country. (History Examiners' Report, 1979)

The concerns over the extent and quality of teaching of Australian history were continually discussed but largely unresolved until the changes in the third phase, in 1996-7.

Several members of the History JSC from 1981 to 1983 were active in a systematic reworking of those components of the syllabus concerned with Australian and WA historical topics. This can also be seen as part of the drive towards an approach based on local history. Words in the minutes that often accompanied this topic were 'elevation' and 'separation', both of which give clues as to the direction of the thinking of this group. Australian and WA history, it was argued, needed to be 'elevated' to a prominence that would encourage a greater numbers of teachers to teach it and therefore students who would learn it. This went hand-in-hand with the idea of 'separation', but this idea was lost in the greater concern for the next issue, which was that of 'choice' and 'alternative'. The process of 'elevation' involved gaining information on courses taught in other states, with those of New South Wales being considered the most attractive for some time. In October 1981, however, the NSW syllabus as such was rejected, and a new working party was established to produce an original unit more relevant to WA students.

Despite the efforts of the History JSC to give greater prominence to Australian history, the reformers appeared to be keen to maintain a format where choice was the principal feature of the syllabus. An anxiety to provide 'alternatives' was evident, and the word itself, or such synonyms as 'choice', 'flexibility' and 'individual discretion' appear abundantly in the minutes of the meetings from 1980 to 1983. While this was not something new, there was a drive among the 'reformers' on the committee of this period to place a greater range of alternatives in front of schools, and to do so within the context of a more rational, orderly and logically consistent syllabus. The issue of choice, as suggested earlier, has become what could almost be described as a 'non-

negotiable' or 'sacred cow' as far as the curriculum policy elite and many teachers have been concerned.

The influence of editors of *Historicus* who had been inserting alternative assessments in their publications since June 1977 had not been lost on the 'reforming' members of the committee who had taken what was a radical step in that year of proposing that 20% of the TAE mark should be based on an extended piece of work conducted at school. This would allow individual students to engage in a topic of their own choosing and to research it in depth. It would be marked within schools, subject to external moderation. It was also suggested that this activity could be connected to topics of local history, which, as stated earlier, was regarded as an avenue for a more 'hands-on', skills-oriented approach to History. This method of assessment had become a feature of some recent 'O' level syllabuses run by examination boards in the UK (eg. the Oxford and Cambridge Examinations Board Alternative Syllabus for Ordinary Level History, 1976). Thus, the suggestion was not radical and was well-thought through by the members. However, there was no response from the BSE until 1978, and the negative, dismissive nature of their response caused one of the state's most eminent university historians to resign his position on the History JSC (HJSC Minutes, August 1977). Nevertheless, members of the committee continued to explore alternative assessments as a means of changing the nature of the curriculum, and these influences were clearly reflected in the drive to change the nature of the examination.

From 1981, the records of the History JSC give clues about the move to shift the locus of curricular reform to the examination, rather than in the Syllabus statement. In part the sources on this issue remain relatively 'silent', which is understandable considering that the examiners were meant to be different individuals to those who were

members of the History JSC. Overlap did exist, however, due to the dominance of the university sector, and through membership of the HAWA. As a result of this 'silence' in the minutes of the History JSC, most of the evidence for the reasons and nature of the change to do with examinations comes from the interview with a leading Examiner of History in the years 1982 – 3 (Interview 11).

The significance of this changed focus from the syllabus statement to the examination is because the latter are usually identified as the 'implementation theory' of curriculum policy (Walker, 2001). There has always been the expectation that curricula, as represented in the syllabus statements, will be taught as prescribed largely because teachers prepare students to face a common public examination at the end of the teaching period. There is also an expectation that both parties, students and teachers, are broadly committed to the maximization of student performance. As a result, those individuals committed to change shifted the locus of their attention from reforms to the syllabus statement to reforms to the examination. They increasingly subscribed to the belief that changes to the format of the examination would be the more likely avenue to encourage teachers to modify their pedagogy. As a member of the Examining Panel at the time stated in interview, "the most important point…in the change in the exam format was that we were trying to promote skills as well as content….so we moved into changing the exam format" (Interview 11). This was a process that she referred to as a "form of social engineering" (Interview 11).

Interviews with other respondents, who were teachers at the time, concur with this view on the influence of the changed format of the examination. These individuals revealed stronger recollections of the influence of the changed examination in 1983 on their teaching of History, in comparison to the changes made to the syllabus in 1984

(Interviews 13; 24; 26). Indeed, one senior History teacher and later curriculum leader remarked on the changes to the examinations by saying that "this was still the most significant reform of the whole period as it changed that way that we all taught" (Interview 25).

Changes to the examination were proposed in 1981 and following approval by the TAEC and TISC, were presented to teachers at a forum in 1982. At this forum teachers were presented with an examination paper which still included questions that demanded an essay-type answer. The significant change was that half of the available questions followed a different format. These questions comprised two or three parts. The first part-question referred to a primary source that headed the question and demanded some analysis or interpretation of that source. The remainder of the question(s) involved a guided response to the theme contained in the primary source, or the topic to which the source was related. On that basis, the source was often referred to as a 'stimulus'. The part-question involving interpretation or analysis of the document was worth five marks, within the whole question which carried twenty-five marks.

The memory of that meeting held by the Chief Examiner was that there was a "very, very big majority for the change, and a small minority against the change…and most of those against only wanted some halfway modification as they went into it" (Interview 11). The Chief Examiner recalls that the opposition went no further at the meeting, but was channelled through other institutions. She recalls "getting contacted by the TAEC in some nervousness, to say that there was some opposition to this", before being contacted by telephone "by the head of the department at UWA to say that these teachers had been in touch with the history department at the university to say 'Did the real historians know what was happening?'" (Interview 11). The opposition by these

teachers was effectively ended at this stage by the department of History writing a letter of support to the TAEC, following the appearance of the Chief Examiner at a departmental meeting to explain the rationale and process of change. It was the recollection of the respondent that this concerted opposition was "largely male teachers from the elite private boys schools' and could be explained by the success that they enjoyed under the existing examination arrangements (Interview 11).

This example serves to illustrate an aspect of the policy process, in terms of the different parties aligned within the process. It also serves to illustrate the influence of the high status private schools in maintaining the competitive academic curriculum that Kenway (1987) referred to as the principal feature of the post-compulsory schooling in WA at that time.

As stated earlier, there were other currents of resistance to the group of reformers that existed in the History JSC or on the Examining Panel for TAE History. One source of resistance came mainly from higher committees or personnel to whom the JSC had to report. A number of objections to the direction in which the committee was heading can be identified. These included a concern with 'proliferation' and 'experimentation'. The tone and language of the missives in which these views were aired suggest that there were strongly-felt misgivings about the reforms being mooted. These were related to another misgiving, that of the amount of change being proposed. There was conflict between the History JSC and their superiors over the issue of policy making. These included conflicting ideas on the protocols of the policy making process itself. These led on more than one occasion to threats of resignation from the History JSC, and, as previously stated, the actual resignation of one of the state's most eminent historians.

A source of tension, and an obstructing tactic used by the BSE, was the denial to the History JSC of funding for a Curriculum Officer to advise the committee in areas about which they clearly felt inadequate in terms of their knowledge base (HJSC Minutes 18/10/78; 23/7/80). The History JSC's desire to be advised and led by a curriculum expert reveals a growing awareness about the changing scope of its work and the movement towards having a more all-embracing curriculum rather than merely a syllabus statement of content to be taught.

The History JSC also contained a third group, who focused on a tangential matter. During debates over curriculum change, this group seemed to become concerned with what they referred to as the 'amplification' of the existing syllabus. This entailed generating greater detail about exactly what should be taught in each topic or area of the existing syllabus. This move towards creating greater uniformity of approach and knowledge, would, ultimately, prove useful in the next phase of policy, after 1985, when issues of conformity and uniformity predominated. At the time, however, they constituted a group which was slightly detached from the main players generating the changes. Their work was always warmly received by the group, on paper at least. What was also of interest was that one of this group had been a leading and ardent advocate for change when acting as the editor of *Historicus* some years earlier.

Analysis of the policy texts

The TAE examination 1983. The TAE History examination paper of 1983 (BSE, 1983) stands in marked contrast to that of the previous year. Its predecessor was ten pages in length, comprising fifty-one questions all of which demanded an essay-format

answer. The 1983 paper was thirty-two pages long, yet contained one less question. This was due to the fact that twenty-one of the fifty questions contained a primary or secondary source which demanded students either to ascertain the information contained within the document, or analyse viewpoints contained within, or make some comment on the significance of the document. As these documents were 'unseen' in that they were not expected to have been used previously by students, it was hoped that the student answers would display original, critical thinking, as opposed to the prepared answers about which the examiners of previous years had continually complained. Twenty of the twenty-one questions containing a primary source, which became known as a 'stimulus', contained part-questions that together generated a 'guided response' or 'structured response' from the examination candidate. The format of these questions followed a predictable pattern. The first part of the question might be an analysis or interpretation of the source, worth 20% to 25% of the marks allocated to the whole question. The second part might be a question demanding some detailed knowledge to be recalled by the student, and be worth between 28% and 40% of the marks. The third part of the question would demand some evaluation or analysis of the topic, and be worth between 40% and 65% marks.

Despite the radical nature of these changes, traditional assessment practices still permeated the paper. There remained twenty-nine questions demanding a single, essay-format type of answer, so it would still be possible for a candidate to answer the required four questions by using those prepared essay-format answers which the examiners had been so keen to remove. This retention of essay-type answers reflects an attempt at compromise, between those who argued the merits of the essay-type answers and had expressed animosity at the changed format, and those who wanted to see

alternative types of answers, especially those types identified as being helpful to students of lower ability.

The significance of the changed format of the examination within the overall upper secondary school History curriculum lay in its impact on pedagogy. It was held by many of the key policy makers that the inclusion of such questions would require teachers to prepare students to 'handle' such questions, and this in turn demanded that teachers spend time in their classes ensuring students were able to engage with primary sources of evidence. As the marks appropriated to those parts of the questions were worth from 20% to 25% of the marks carried in the whole question, many believed that teachers who ignored teaching such skills and techniques would be likely to damage seriously the potential of their students to gain the highest possible marks in the examination.

The other significance of these new questions was that they reflected the discourses and demands of teachers and others, which had permeated editions of *Historicus* since 1977. It had long been held by teachers critical of the current curriculum that the limited examination format had had a deleterious effect on the number of students studying History in Years 11 and 12, due to the stultifyingly tedious teaching methods that the curriculum generated (Interview 26).

2. The History Syllabus statement 1984. The Syllabus statement of 1983, the last before the changes in the policy text of 1984, was, in the words of a former member of the History JSC and Chief Examiner "a final statement of high modernism" (Interview 11). The Syllabus statement of 1984 reflected a different philosophical basis

to the subject of History, although it did not entirely shed a modernist view of history as a meta-narrative.

The first striking change to the policy text was in the opening sentence of the statement. The nature of the subject was defined as "an attempt to interpret the past in order to gain an insight into the present" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). While this was a limited definition of the nature of the subject, it represented a move towards the more post-modern view of history as a set of tentative interpretations of the past, without necessarily agreeing on one correct version. This changed view of the subject continued in the first paragraph, with a further development on the nature of the subject as "a method of inquiry for investigating the often fragmentary nature of the past…within a personal frame of reference" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). The paragraph reflects a change in both the ontology of the subject and its epistemology. The traditional view of school History as a definitive account of the past, requiring students to display a highly detailed recall of knowledge to ensure success in examination, had been relegated to a view of the subject where history was rather a series of tentative interpretations. According to this new view, all individual interpretations would be permissible so long as they pursued a suitable process. The earlier view was expounded by the eminent historian, Geoffrey Elton, who had said previously that "(history's) objective reality is guaranteed" (1967, p. 73). Now, however, the new view reflected more that of Elton's nemesis, Carr, who described history as a "continuous process of interaction between the historian and his [*sic*] facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (1961, p. 30). The latter view became what could almost be described as an ideological position among those most involved in upper school History curricula in the state and all interview respondents referred to their belief that one of the definitive features of the new emphasis in history

teaching that arose at this time was the ability of students to write their own histories, and arrive at their own conclusions.

The opening paragraph of the Syllabus statement also made clear that History as a school subject was now identified as a process, rather than simply as a form of knowledge. Reference was made to the activities in which students were expected to engage to pursue the subject successfully. History as a "method of inquiry" involved asking questions, selecting evidence and imaginatively reconstructing the past (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). Specifically, the Syllabus statement exhorted the following:

> teachers should encourage students to examine a range of different types of evidence…No evidence should be accepted uncritically, and students' ability to analyse and interpret a variety of sources will be examined (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144).

This last sentence was a somewhat late instruction as to the nature of the new examination, which had been the basis of the assessment for students the year before the changed Syllabus statement had been introduced. Nevertheless, it was the statement that reflected the predominant discourses that had driven the reformers within the policy process and marked the advent of 'new history' officially into the examined course of History within the upper school curriculum.

If 'new history' was the predominant discourse contained within the first paragraph of the new Syllabus statement, the second paragraph revealed that modernism was not entirely dead. Reference was still made to "the important themes and topics in the recent history of the world" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144), suggesting that ideas of a meta-narrative were still extant. The belief was still stated that

there were topics of significance that students ought to know, and therein lay the implication that these themes followed a notion of progress from one epoch to the next. This is evidenced in the first paragraph of the outline of the syllabus content, where reference is made to "the dramatic political, economic and social changes which initiated 'modern' history" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). The quotation refers to the first two units of the new syllabus; the first was titled "Atlantic revolutions and reform" and itemized three topics of European revolutions and one of political evolution in Great Britain. The second was called "Industrial revolutions and imperialism" and the topics for study were concerned with the economic ascendancy of Europe and the USA in the nineteenth century world. Both units reflect a conceptualization of a Eurocentric view of world history, with these 'Great Powers' leading the political and economic evolution of the modern twentieth century world.

The Syllabus statement also referred to the opportunity for "students to study Australian themes in some depth in order to understand their own society" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144), reflecting the anxiety that the History JSC had expressed in their deliberations of the previous five years over the low levels of teaching Australian history. However, this concern was overpowered by the discourse of choice, which was considered more important. Despite pressure from some teachers to mandate compulsory Australian topics (Interview 11), the revised syllabus statement would only offer a revamped syllabus for such topics. The significance of students studying Australian themes was paralleled by the opportunity "to explore the relevance of Asian studies to Australians, and investigate some themes which have a world significance" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). The Australian units were re-arranged in the new syllabus along chronological lines, rather than the perceived unpopular thematic approach that had existed up until 1983. Further, to sweeten the choice it was

stated that Australia "may be taken as two units" (BSE History Syllabus statement, 1984, p. 144). This meant a greater choice in the number of questions from which students could choose in the TAE examination, and it reflected some privileged status for the Australian units thereby.

The efforts of what was referred to earlier as the 'amplification' group had not been lost in the new Syllabus statement. Under each sub-heading of the unit descriptor was a markedly more detailed list of the items to be studied. These were to be a form of 'checklist' for teachers as they worked their way through the syllabus. What the amplification of each topic had not done successfully was to identify the size or weighting of each of these items. For instance, 'Napoleon's armies in Europe' was one of the amplified statements. This was a topic of enormous detail covering campaigns and developments from 1798 to 1814, yet it sat alongside, in apparently equal status with 'The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen', a topic undoubtedly of equal significance but of far less detail. It was with this deficiency that the reformers of the next phase, from 1985 to 1990 would have to deal (Interview 11).

Context of practice

There are five principal issues that dominate the context of practice following the announcement of a revised examination paper in History for 1983 and the publication of a revised syllabus statement in 1984. The reforms to the curriculum had been an attempt to break the stranglehold of didactic teaching methods, which were to cram, or "force-feed" (Interview 24) factual detail into the memories of students, to be regurgitated to as high a degree as possible in the public examination that occurred at the end of the two years of study. It was the expectation that teachers would respond to

the Syllabus statement of 1984 and the new examination format after 1983 by providing students with the opportunity to broaden their study through a variety of sources that would encourage a more critical analysis of this evidence and so engage the students in the processes of the historical method which was seen as the core activity of the discipline.

The first issue is whether the policy texts did have an impact on the practice of teaching and learning within History curricula in upper secondary schools in WA. Did teachers adapt pedagogy to meet the opportunities afforded by the provisions of the syllabus statement and the examination? Related closely to this issue is the second; whether the changes in policy impacted on the high levels of dissatisfaction felt by many History teachers at the time, as expressed in articles in *Historicus* and from evidence in interviews (Interviews 11; 12; 24). Also related to these issues of teaching is whether the curriculum changes had any impact on the number of teachers electing to teach an Australian unit of History.

The fourth and fifth issues are also closely related. The fourth is concerned with the impact on what could be termed 'curriculum pressure', the ability of History to compete as a viable alternative in the face of other subjects offered in Years 11 and 12 as an examinable subject for students wishing to gain entrance into tertiary education. This ran parallel to the fifth issue, which was the impact of the policy on the number of students choosing to study History in those Year groups. All five of these issues contributed to the nature of the History curriculum in upper secondary schools in WA, in that they make up the 'total curriculum' which includes the planned curriculum of the syllabus and the curriculum received by the students (Kelly, 2004).

Impact of the new curriculum on teaching and learning of History

Of the interview respondents who were teachers (five) during the period 1983 to 1984, all but one welcomed the opportunities to expand their teaching and learning strategies, and to practice a pedagogy that provided greater variety and stimulation to teachers and to students, by incorporating methods of the 'new history'. At the same time, these teachers also stated a conviction that their responses to the opportunities provided by the new examination and syllabus were not repeated broadly across the state. From their experiences as markers of examination papers or as members of the History JSC, they stated a strong belief that in many schools the practice of teaching History continued largely as before.

One interview respondent, a teacher at a government school at the time, recalls that the changes

> gave more scope to do more interesting teaching, and to use more small group work. You would give small groups of students a cartoon to look at or a diary extract, and build up a set of questions around that. (Interview 13)

Another government-school teacher regarded the period as a "sea change…The sea change was to use more primary evidence and there's no question that it did that" (Interview 24). He went on to elaborate a recollection of changed practice:

> where you actually got teachers to think about, and this is the really important thing, you got teachers to think about sources, what they mean and the way in which History as a craft can be practiced, as distinct from just a subject where you've memorized a whole lot of facts. …And that flows onto the (students) because they have to understand how sources are put together and why. So you got that original change. (Interview 24)

A third teacher, at an all-girls independent school, relived what she regarded as a liberating experience "that really allowed you to get into what it was all about. It really opened History up a bit" (Interview 26). What was remarkable about this teacher was that her tertiary education had differed from that of the other interview respondents. She spoke in glowing terms about the History she had studied at an institute of technology, where the use of primary materials was a rich part of her tertiary History programme. This was in stark contrast to the other respondents who variously recounted the tedious experiences of their training in History at one of the universities in the State.

A fourth respondent, a teacher at the time who quickly moved into the Curriculum Branch of the Department of Education, also referred to the period as signifying a 'sea change'. He described the changes in 1983/84 as "the most significant of the whole period", believing that the direction the changes had pointed some teachers was the beginning of further curricular improvement. He recalls that:

> It drove people to look at sources beyond the stereotype secondary historical text available at that stage and drove people to start looking for more interesting ways to describe history for their students. (Interview 25)

This respondent also identified a strong link between the nature of the examination and the teaching that would result in schools, because "the significant change for us was in the change to the History examination because it's the backward mapping that follows the change in an external examination" (Interview 25).

The experiences recounted above clearly represented deep and significant changes to pedagogy for some teachers, but two of the four teachers, drawing on their experiences as examination markers, examiners or as a curriculum officer, were anxious to point out in interview that their responses to the new policy texts were not universally

shared across all schools. From their observations they argued that large numbers of students presented themselves for examination unprepared for analysis of primary sources, and still relying on the regurgitation of rote-learned, pre-packaged answers to ensure success in the examination (Interviews 25; 26). Because the examinations of 1983, 1984 and 1985 contained large numbers of questions that still demanded essay-type answers, it was not obligatory for any student to attempt one question which required some analysis of a primary source. Furthermore, as another respondent who was to become a Chief Examiner pointed out, even the questions relating to a primary source often demanded a factual response rather than an analysis of the source itself (Interview 37). He regarded the inclusion of questions with primary sources in the syllabus of the time as "really not a dramatic development…probably just a modification of what people were doing anyway" (Interview 37).

As stated earlier, one respondent who had been a Chief Examiner and Chair of the History JSC for a period recalled there had been resistance from what she called 'conservative' groups within the profession (Interview 11). These teachers resented the advent of a new approach to the teaching, learning and assessment of History. They had tried to stall or prevent the mooted changes by enlisting the support of the History Department at UWA to block the move through the University's influence on TISC and the TAEC, whom they had also notified of their objections. Two respondents (Interviews 11; 12) had argued that such individuals would have been slow to make changes to their pedagogy because of the impact of their training, the entrenched strength of the curricular systems that they had established at their schools and the limited changes to the new examination paper.

Impact of the new curriculum on levels of professional morale

Ball and Bowe (1992) cite the role of teachers' perception of their status and professionalism as a major factor in the context of practice, as it affects their willingness or resistance to adopt new practices, and in their interpretation of policy texts. Evidence in the textual sources, such as *Historicus*, and that gained from interviews, reveals a high level of teacher dissatisfaction with the History curriculum as it existed before 1983/1984, and a perception that their status as teachers was at a low level.

The four teachers, whose responses to the opportunities for pedagogical change have been described earlier, stated that their levels of professional satisfaction rose markedly. One respondent described her teaching experiences before 1983 as "dreadful!… just battling through content. Now I look back and hope that none of those kids [*sic*] I taught ever catch up with me". Recalling the changes in 1983/1984, her tone changed: "I thought that was exciting because I am very visual. I love cartoons….I just had a ball with that really, so much time just looking for cartoons to stimulate interest" (Interview 26). This respondent also claimed that this period of change had a marked impact on her career, motivating her to make considerable contributions to the HAWA, to become a marker of TAE, later TEE, papers, to eventually become Supervising Examiner, and to be elected onto the History JSC/SC in the 1990s where she made a major contribution to the third stage of the policy process.

Another respondent who was a teacher at the time remembered the changes as making "the teaching and learning more enjoyable… and it just added a different dimension. I found it quite stimulating actually" (Interview 13). A colleague of his, however, saw little correlation between the curriculum and his own professional

satisfaction, although he had welcomed the reforms as a 'sea change'. He believed that his own enthusiasm and passion for the subject had never been dented by the restrictions of the curriculum before 1983; the new syllabus and examination simply allowed him more opportunities to express his feelings for the subject (Interview 24).

One of the respondents claimed that the changes had no positive impact on the level of disillusion that he had first expressed as far back as 1973 in an article in *Historicus*. The changes coincided with, and, he held, failed to alter his decision to leave History teaching, to move to teaching Economics. He had less training for the latter but was attracted by the fact that it "was experimenting with alternative types of questions which was to try and test students' ability to process data in an examination…and was more interesting because it was more contemporary…(and) had a lot more variety" (Interview 12). He stated that he had failed to be impressed by the changes to the History curriculum at the time. Also, during the interview, on perusal of copies of the Tertiary Entrance examination papers of 1983 and 1984, he was quick to point out the deficiencies in the examination questions testing primary sources and stated his belief that the changes were little more than cosmetic. His sense of disillusion was such that he was not to return to History teaching until 1996, when he became attracted by the opportunities offered in the new curriculum in the third phase of change.

Impact of the new curriculum on the teaching of Australian History

It had been an intention of the History JSC to address the units of Australian history to make them more attractive to teachers so that they might choose at least one as a unit of study for their upper school History classes. The new curriculum appears to

have made no impact on the decisions of teachers at this time, and the frustrations felt by those who had wanted to mandate the teaching of a unit of Australian history continued to grow in the next decade.

One of the respondents claimed that she had always taught an Australian unit as a part of her programme in upper secondary classes and therefore the changes had no impact on her teaching, although she did admit to approving of the new direction of the syllabus to a more chronological treatment (Interview 26). Another teacher did teach one unit, but recalled that "it was certainly always the last one covered….that decision was based on availability of resources and student interest" (Interview 13). He also recalled this as a time of concern about student enrolments in History, and that it was considered to be most ill-advised to force students to study Australian history which, this teacher believed, was most unpopular. A third teacher stated that he simply refused to teach Australian history to students, principally because he believed that his students would detest the topic as much as he had when he was at university: "I was bored out of my cotton-picking brains with Australian history at university" (Interview 24).

This cross section of responses may reflect the situation at a wider level. If so, it indicates that the changes to the Australian units had little impact in changing the attitudes of teachers towards this aspect of the subject at the time.

Impact of the new curriculum on curriculum pressure

Several respondents stated in interview that they had shared a concern for the survival of History in the face of alternatives in the upper school curricula that were attracting students away from History. One initiative for reforms to the subject in the

early 1980s had been the desire to produce a History curriculum that was more attractive to students and which would encourage them to choose History rather than one of the alternatives. Of the six respondents who cited curriculum pressure as a matter of concern at the time, four identified Economics as the subject that provided the largest challenge to History (Interviews 12; 24; 26 37). Two of these four explained the attraction of Economics at that time occurred "because the 1980s was period of entrepreneurship, and so there was this huge commerce-type push" (Interview 24), and "because Economics got you a job…and there was a bit of pressure from that in some schools" (Interview 26). These respondents also stated that the threat that curriculum pressure posed ultimately lay in a decline in the number of employment opportunities in the future for History teachers.

If curriculum reform was to have been successful in this area, the syllabus and the examination would have to have been identified as being able to provide a vehicle of achievement for both students of higher ability and of lower ability. Members of the History JSC, as claimed in interviews, hoped that the introduction of 'stimulus' questions containing documents and guided-response questions would appeal to students of lower ability, and those who faced examinations with a greater degree of trepidation than most (Interviews 11; 25). For those who were convinced that essay answers were the medium for students of the highest ability to display their skills (Interview 24), there were sufficient questions in the examination to meet that demand.

While simple statistics of student enrolment may provide some answers to this issue, respondents referred to matters in their own experience which go further than numerical data can reveal. One respondent (Interview 24) claimed quite forcefully that the appeal of the subject lay not in the syllabus, but in the quality of the teachers

associated with the subject in a school, and cited the pressure that Ancient History posed to History at his school at that time. He claimed that this was not because the syllabus was more attractive, but because "the teacher running Ancient History was a dynamic guy and so we split the numbers in History" (Interview 24). This same respondent was also prepared to concede in interview that the examination results in any one subject in a school would affect student choice of upper school subjects, irrespective of the nature of the curriculum, "because at the end of the day, TEE is the only game in town" (Interview 24). One other respondent stated a belief that an influential factor lay in individual school policies towards certain subjects. She recounted her experience at the time, where "it was OK to have 52 kids and have three classes of Economics, but it wasn't OK to have 52 kids and three classes of History (Interview 26). As a result, she recalled finding herself teaching upper school History classes of twenty-nine students, which put pressure on her pedagogical skills, while her colleagues teaching Economics taught classes of eighteen to twenty.

Finally, more than one respondent argued in interview that, in their experience, History was not a subject that produced the highest marks in the tertiary entrance examinations. As a result, they claimed, many of the best students would always choose subjects like Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics because their chances of securing marks over 90% were far greater in those subjects than they were in History. One respondent recalled that he always rued the fact that:

> We would often lose our best kids because they would say 'We have to get into medicine'. One of the best kids I ever taught said to me 'Sorry Mr.___, I can't do History because I'm doing Maths II and III, Physics and Chemistry'. (Interview 24)

Another respondent whose involvement lay in setting examinations over a period of over twenty five years stated his conviction that "History doesn't have the elite populations of Physics and that kind of subject, (because) the fact is that to get a high mark in History you belong to a very rarefied group" (Interview 37).

If the evidence of the small number of respondents interviewed reflect those of the greater body of history teachers in the state at the time, then it may be reasonable to conclude that the curricular changes in this first phase had not entirely addressed the issue of curriculum pressure on History, as the policy makers had hoped. The situation as outlined in this section shows that the context of practice reveals complexities well beyond the expectations and intentions that the policymakers hoped for in the production of the policy text documents.

Impact of the new curriculum on numbers of students taking History in Year 11 and 12

The section above has attempted to outline the difficulty in using simple statistics of student numbers to reflect the impact of the curriculum on student enrolments, and this is further complicated by the fact that the statistics relevant to this part of the study only go as far as 1986. The inadequacy of the statistical data is due to the impact of the wholesale changes to all upper school-subject curricula after 1985, analysed in the next chapter. The Year 12 student cohort of 1985, and the subset of those who had elected to take History, would have made their choices for upper school subjects in 1983, a time when the changes in the History curriculum were still only notional rather than real. Students who sat the new Tertiary Entrance Examination in 1986 would have made their choices in 1984, when the new history syllabus statement

was already in place, the new examination had already been carried out, and the recommendations of the McGaw Report (1984) were already mooted.

Available numerical data reveal that there had been a marked downward trend in student enrolments in History from 1975. From 1975 to 1983, student enrolments in Year 12 History declined by 21% (McGaw Report, 1984). However, by 1985, the numbers of students enrolled in History in Year 12 had increased by 23% in just two years, and by 1986 increased by another 8% over the previous year (SEA Statistics 1985, 1986, 1987). One respondent recalls that in her experience "the syllabus change did bring increased interest in the school because the numbers increased…classes went from about 41 to 52" (Interview 26). Another respondent could not recall any significant change in the numbers of students taking History in his school, although his view was that numbers had not declined in the period before 1983-4 (Interview 24). However, in terms of the proportion of the Year 12 cohort that was studying History, the news was not all good. The 2,829 students studying History in Year 12 in 1985 represented 22.54% of the total Year 12 cohort, whereas in 1986, the 3, 051 Year 12 History students represented only 21.75% of the Year 12 cohort for that year. At the same time, the Year 11 population of History students represented only 20.03% of their cohort. Overall retention rates were rising in the 1980s yet the proportion of students studying History was failing to match that increase.

Conclusion

The overall findings of this chapter are that while the syllabus changes of 1983-4 represented a set of major reforms in some areas, they were limited changes within the existing curriculum format, which in itself remained unchallenged. Far from heralding,

or leading, fundamental changes to upper secondary school curricula, the changes by-and-large represented adjustments within the liberal-humanist academic curriculum (Barcan 1994), or 'competitive academic curriculum' (Ashenden et al., 1985; Kenway 1987). An apparent, and illustrative, paradox lay in the philosophical basis of the new syllabus of 1984. It contained the seeds of a post-modernist approach, with regard to tentative interpretations and a focus on process rather than fact. It still contained, however, strong elements of a modernist epistemology and ontology, and a re-statement of fundamental knowledge that was considered important for a well educated young person. There was no challenge to the cultural assumptions of academic success held by significant groups within the state, centred on a competitive academic curriculum where the prize was entry to university for the selected few (Collins and Vickers, 1997).

Armed perhaps with the wisdom of hindsight, none of the respondents interviewed identified the reforms as ever being final, but rather as the first stage in a period of transition, a step towards further developments, a "halfway house" (Interview 37). The reforms described and analysed in the next two chapters involve changes which challenged the hegemony of the competitive academic curriculum which had existed since the advent of public examinations in 1894 and the examination system in WA since 1913.

CHAPTER 5

SECOND PHASE OF CURRICULUM CHANGE: 1984 TO 1990

Introduction

This chapter traces the second stage of the policy trajectory of this study. This stage resulted in what was, on the surface, a much-altered curriculum by 1990. Regarding the whole curriculum in Western Australia (WA), Kennedy (1988) identified changes in the policy context of the 1980s that would lead to increased demands upon school curricula to encourage more young people to stay at school longer, a more relevant and flexible curriculum that offered more opportunities and options for accreditation and certification, and a curriculum that was increasingly vocationally oriented. Such demands would impact on upper school History curricula in specific ways, but would also challenge the competitive academic curriculum (Kenway, 1987) and its cultural assumptions (Collins, 1992), of which History was a part, and test its resilience to change.

The History curriculum as outlined in the policy texts of 1990, together with broader curriculum reform, was to change the experiences of upper secondary school students in WA studying History quite remarkably. In other ways, however, elements of continuity remained and for some teachers and students there may have been little change in the curricula they actually experienced, and some teachers experienced a sense of regression, rather than one of progress.

The structure of this chapter follows the format of the previous one. The first section examines the policy making bodies and statutory authorities during the period, but only in the ways that they varied from those outlined in the previous chapter. Consideration is then given to each of the three contexts – influence, text production and practice.

The changing institutions of upper school curriculum policy making in Western Australia after 1984, with special reference to History curricula

In 1984, the publication of the Beazley Report and the McGaw Report were to generate widespread and deep changes to areas of education in WA. Part of the latter report comprised recommendations to restructure the institutions that regulated the policy making processes for upper secondary school curricula, and the certification and assessment of students in those years.

The implementation of those recommendations in this area involved the dissolution of the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and the Tertiary Admissions Examination Committee (TAEC), and the creation of a new institution to manage curriculum, examination, assessment and certification, the Secondary Education Authority (SEA). In addition, the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) lost its supervisory oversight of examinations and its redefined role meant that it would simply process and service applications for admission to the tertiary institutions of the state (McGaw, 1984).

While the reform resulted in streamlining many of the procedures of the management of upper school curriculum and certification, the loss of the TAEC and the

changed role of the TISC would have ramifications for the extent of the control of tertiary institutions over upper secondary school issues. 60% of the membership of the TAEC comprised university appointments and TISC was wholly made up of tertiary representatives. McGaw (1984, p. 61) referred to the administrative changes creating a "balance of power" over the curriculum and assessment in Years 11 and 12. By this he is taken to mean striking a balance between the secondary sector and the tertiary over these matters. The new SEA still had representatives from the secondary and tertiary sectors, but to these were added members from the general community, reflecting an awareness that there were other groups that were identified as stakeholders in the upper school curriculum. This principle would be extended in a later directive, in 1992, to have members from the broader, non-education community on the Joint Syllabus Committees.

The History Joint Syllabus Committee (JSC) remained at the centre of the policy making process for upper school subject curriculum, and within this committee the deliberations and decisions of members would have the largest influence on the creation of policy texts. Lines of responsibility were clarified under the new regime and the History JSC found itself much more subject to directives from SEA management, which now assumed the identity and powers of a public service institution. As one member of the History JSC at that time remarked, "the SEA became a far stronger organizing force than the BSE had been prior to that" (Interview 25). The impact of this was that the History JSC found itself subject to greater steering from the Director of the SEA and higher committees than had occurred in the previous phase. A Chair of the History JSC recalls that "Once Beazley and McGaw came in…it was much more top-down. It was <u>really</u> top down" (respondent's emphasis) (Interview 11). The nature of this change was

reflected in a markedly different policy making climate in the second half of the 1980s, as will be described below.

Context of influence

Many of the influencing features of society, the economy and politics that were to be significant in the context of influence in this phase of the development of the upper school History curriculum were already *in situ* by the time the changes described in the previous chapter were created. What is significant about the context of influence in this stage is that, as some key players in the policy processes changed, the social, economic and political and educational forces were interpreted differently, with changing impact on the policy context. The changes in perception were largely due to the political changes that occurred in 1983, notably the end of long periods of rule by the conservative parties, and the election of Australian Labor Party (ALP) governments at both state and Commonwealth level. As Goddard (1992) has explained:

> The Labor party was not the source of the complexities…its role was as a vehicle for the communication of ideas and beliefs, through which specific decisions were made and with the support of which specific events occurred. (Goddard, 1992, p. 7)

The ALP government at this time, particularly at the state level, perceived its role as one of identifying problems and issues in WA in a new light. Economically and socially, the forces which contributed to the context of influence were already largely extant, but government and policy makers of this period interpreted their significance in a different light. Acting as a 'vehicle', as Goddard (1992) says, but also acting as an enthusiastic and energetic agent of change, the advent of the ALP government in WA had the effect

of creating a climate for policy making that had significant consequences for the next stage of the development of the upper school History curricula.

Economic forces influencing the policy process

Kennedy (1988) quotes from a report of the Department of Employment, Education, and Training, which identified three specific problems within the economy. These were:

> Australia's poor productivity performance over the period 1960 – 1982 compared with its OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] trading partners, the lack of Australian success in exploiting technological innovation as measured by the per capita export of technology based products and the extent to which Australian living standards are subject to the fluctuations in international commodity prices. (Kennedy, 1988, p. 358)

The economic situation in WA in the 1980s largely reflected this assessment which applied to the whole of Australia.

The WA economy of the 1980s continued to be cyclical, with notable upturns followed by distinct downturns, often in shorter periods. This was due in part to an over-reliance on the export of primary products to generate wealth. Japan was the principal market for mineral exports but the Japanese economy had plateaued since 1974 as a result of the rise in oil prices worldwide, and the markets for all commodities receded. Until 1988, iron-ore exports to Japan remained below those of 1975 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1993, pp. 406 – 7). Between 1981 and 1989, the income from wheat exports fluctuated wildly, as prices for agricultural commodities followed a 'boom and bust' cycle for much of the period. To compound the problems,

in the decade 1980 to 1990 inflation ran at an average of over 5% each year (ABS, 1993, pp. 398 – 410).

Negative trends in the labour market impacted on many Australians and West Australians, as noted by Kennedy (1988). This was marked by steep rises in unemployment, particularly in youth unemployment. In Australia as a whole, between August 1981 and August 1983, the total number of jobs for young people aged 15 to 19 fell by over 100, 000 and the rate of teenage unemployment rose from 16% to 24 % (Marginson, 1997, p.180). These rates were three times higher than the rates for people over the age of twenty. In WA, the rate of youth unemployment (ages 15 – 19) had reached 25% in December 1979, and 28% in December 1983, rates that were, respectively, two to three times higher than for the state's population as a whole (ABS, 1986; 1992). While youth unemployment rates within the state did fall slightly after 1983, this was due in part to the removal of young people from the participation rate, as a result of increasing retention rates at schools.

Governments after 1983, at state and Commonwealth level, identified one way to reduce the youth unemployment rate, by encouraging young people to stay out of the job market, and to stay at school longer to improve their skills and therefore increase their chances of employment at a later date. This course of action was to be a major influence on government policy making and on curricular reform, at a national and at a state level.

Social forces influencing the policy process

Commentators such as Goddard (1992) and Molony (1988) suggest that the 1980s witnessed a growing realization and articulation of the changing nature of Australian and WA society. These social changes have been described in the previous chapter, but had been viewed by contemporaries in a traditional framework, which limited their responses to the changes.

Goddard (1992) in particular identifies a major influence on WA education at this time as analogous to a movement from a conceptualization of society as one of 'mechanical solidarity' to one of an 'organic state'. Basing his thesis on the ideas of Durkheim (Worsley, 1977), Goddard perceives a mechanical state as one that is conceived along ideas of uniformity while an organic state is conceived along ideas of difference. In this concept of an organic state, society is complex and differentiated, characterized by a high degree of division of labour and containing many different occupations and lifestyles, each with its own associated practices, skills and esoteric knowledge.

While the growing complexity of WA society had been recognised earlier (Birch and Parker, 1977), it was the advent of a Labor government in 1983, Goddard argues, that articulated more powerfully this view of society and promulgated policies to reflect its nature. This articulation and the policies that arose from it were to apply in education as in other areas of the government's ambit, as described below.

Political forces influencing the policy process

The most significant political influences occurred within one week of 1983, with election of ALP governments at both the state level (February 28th) and at the Commonwealth level (March 5th). The former was to be of greater significance to curriculum formation in WA, but the concurrent presence of an ALP government at the Commonwealth level would have ensured greater confidence and resolve among the members of the state party in their commitment to reform.

The ALP policy statement for the 1983 election (ALP, 1983) left no illusions about the party's commitment to reform and emphasised the link between economic and social change and education. The new Minister of Education in WA, Bob Pearce, a former teacher and union leader, announced his party's intentions which included:

> A thorough review and restructuring of courses at all levels will be conducted to make them more appropriate to the needs of modern society. Emphasis will be placed on the development of necessary skills to prepare students to cope with changes in society and patterns of employment…A comprehensive inquiry, headed by the Hon. Kim Beazley, will recommend the measures necessary to make courses, curricula, teaching strategies, assessment and certification more relevant to today's needs. (ALP, 1983, Education)

The extracts confirm what Loreck (1985) has pointed out, that state education policies after 1983 were to be more closely tied to broader social and economic policy. They were to be linked more closely to contemporary issues such as youth unemployment, technological change, sexism, multiculturalism, and Aboriginality. Specifically, they would involve reforms to traditional curricula, accreditation, social justice and increased

accessibility to 'post-secondary education' which would impact on the current credentialling aspects of the post-compulsory syllabus.

The election of the new ALP government quickly generated an atmosphere of reform, and a perception of the need to change or be left behind (Marsh, 1994, p.33). For the History JSC, the change in the political scene was to lead to changes in policy practices and broader curricular issues that would impact heavily on their deliberations and their decision-making. As one member of the History JSC described it, "From 1984 to 1990, we were constantly being told what to do, rather than creating anything ourselves" (Interview 11). Like other long-standing educational institutions and practices in WA they were to experience a sense of confrontation at this time, but resultant changes were not always commensurate with expectations.

Broader educational forces influencing the policy process

In consequence of the State elections of 1983, the context of influence from the educational perspective was dominated by the publication of two reports in 1984. As the Minister of Education, Bob Pearce, had foreshadowed in his policy statement for the election of 1983, a Committee of Inquiry into education in WA was launched "with the utmost speed" (Marsh, 1994, p. 33), under the chair of Kim Beazley (Senior), a former Commonwealth Minister of Education. It presented its report to the Minister in March 1984. One month later, another committee, the Ministerial Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admissions Procedures presented its report, better known as the McGaw Report (1984), after its Chair, Professor Barry McGaw, from Murdoch University. The recommendations of both reports were to have a pivotal impact on the

future direction of education in WA, and on the development of subject curricula in upper secondary schools.

An important theme established in the Beazley Report was the strong coupling of schooling, employment and post-school life, a nexus that was to direct patterns of curricular change in WA to the end of the century, and to pose a challenge to the competitive academic curriculum that Kenway (1987) and Collins (1992) identified as enjoying a privileged status within the education systems of WA.

The section of the Beazley Report concerned with curriculum (1984, Chapter 2) focused more on lower school curriculum but there were recommendations made that were to impact on upper school curricula. First, the Report identified the undue influence of upper-school curricula on lower-school curricula, and the blame for this was laid with the inappropriate sway of the tertiary admissions process. The domination of tertiary-influenced upper school courses on lower school curricula contributed to what the committee identified as the most pervasive problem of WA schooling: "The fiercest criticism of …schools is that they teach working class children failure…They (working class children) are unable to cope with what comes easily to their better-off peers" (Beazley, 1984, p. vi).

Related to this, Beazley referred to the exaggerated yet inappropriate influence of the TAE on upper-school curricula in WA secondary schools. It noted in particular the anomaly that 96% of students in upper secondary schooling were studying TAE programmes, but only some 30% of them qualified for university entrance. The predominance of TAE programmes was incompatible with the increasing retention rates being experienced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and there was a need to increase

the range of curricular options for the very students increased retention rates were likely to attract. The Report also voiced its criticism of the existing system that forced students to choose in Year 10 the subjects they would be examined on in Year 12, which gave students no realistic opportunity to change their selections in the light of their experiences in Year 11.

Beazley noted in the Report that there had been strong deputations arguing for a return to examinations in Year 10. He rejected these, and stated the committee's belief that Year 11, rather than Year 10, should be 'a year of transition' (1984, pp.45 –46). In this way the Report further foreshadowed the separation of the Year 11 syllabuses of upper school curricula from those being examined in Year 12, as recommended later by McGaw's Report (1984).

The other major report was that of the Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admissions, better known as the McGaw Report. Specifically concerned with upper-school curriculum, its terms covered three principal areas: the procedures for general admission to tertiary institutions; the procedures for selecting students for tertiary programmes with limited enrolments; and the curriculum in Years 11 and 12 of secondary schools (McGaw, 1984, pp ix- x).

The recommendations of the McGaw Report relevant to the upper school History curriculum represented a desire to broaden the whole curriculum available to students. The Report envisaged students in Years 11 and 12 being able to pursue a broader curriculum by choosing from a greater range of options. It recommended the availability of a greater number of subjects which did not have tertiary admission status, but which tertiary bound students could still choose to study. This would be possible

because recommendations proposed that it would no longer be necessary to calculate a student's tertiary admission score from six TAE subjects, but rather from three, four or five. Interview respondents recalled an initial sense of trepidation over this recommendation. They believed that, in the light of falling numbers over the previous decade, enrolments would be further threatened as a significant number of potential candidates would be unlikely to choose less popular subjects like History as they no longer needed to maintain a six-subject TAE profile (Interviews 11; 23; 25).

Related to this development was the Report's recommendation that "subjects offered in the upper secondary school be offered in modules which have a maximum of one year's duration" (McGaw, 1984, p. xi). This would mean that for upper school subjects like History, there would be one module for Year 11 and one for Year 12, each of one year's duration, with a recommendation that the modules be sequenced courses with the Year 12 unit presuming the content of the prior Year 11 unit. As the existing two-year History syllabus was not a 'spiral' syllabus, with mandated units for each year group, members of the History JSC realised that it would be difficult to develop 'sequenced courses', especially in the face of 'limited change' as the recommendations suggested (Interview 11).

One intention of this recommendation was to give students the opportunity to study a subject in Year 11, with an option to change at the end of the year when finalizing their subject selections for Year 12. This would address the Beazley Report's concern for flexibility regarding students who previously had to finalise their choices for Year 12 when in Year 10. However, two respondents recalled their anxiety over students being able to pick up History in Year 12 without having studied it in Year 11, an anxiety intensified by their perception that students were already coming from a base

of much reduced history content in the lower secondary integrated social studies courses (Interviews 23; 24).

McGaw (1984) recommended the retention of external, or public, examinations for tertiary entrance, although these would now be called Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects. The examinations would only test the syllabus content prescribed for Year 12 modules. Furthermore, the examination mark would only constitute 50% of the final Tertiary Entrance Score (TES) for each student in Year 12. The other 50% would come from a score based on assessments carried out at school, which would be marked and graded on site. Students' final, composite mark, the TES, would be 'scaled' against their result in the compulsory Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT), a generic test of broad intellectual functions, produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). As well as a TES, students would also receive a grade for each of the units they had studied in Years 11 and 12. In the case of Year 11, the grade would be based solely on internal, or school-based, assessments.

The calculation and standardization of these internal marks and grades, in Year 11 and in Year 12, would require a vast network and process of moderation across the many schools of the state. The management of these would increase the demands on the certificating body, hence the need for administrative changes in the new SEA, outlined previously, and the need for new positions within the institution. These included the appointment of a SEA Curriculum Officer for each subject area, who became an integral member of their respective JSC.

The ramifications of the recommendations of the Beazley and the McGaw Reports, and the implementation of those accepted by the government, were

considerable and widespread, with significant impact on the policy making processes for upper secondary school History curricula after 1984. Both reports led to a raft of reforms which were to transform aspects of schools and their governance within WA over the next five years. The procedures for such change in the 1980s were described succinctly by Marsh:

> Pearce acted speedily and single-mindedly to implement the recommendations of the Beazley Report. His aggressive style led inevitably to massive confrontations with the teachers' union and other sectors. (1994, p. 33)

The 'confrontations' Marsh refers to culminated with the state-school teachers' strikes of 1989 over issues beyond curriculum, but the nature of the reform process shaped by Pearce, and the directions established by the recommendations of the two Reports impacted on the decision-making processes of the History JSC and the resultant policy texts. It is to trace the resultant processes and outcomes that the study now turns.

Context of text production

The policy texts that form the basis of the study for this phase of the policy process are the Syllabus statements for History in Year 11 and in Year 12 in 1990, both published by the SEA in 1989 for implementation in 1990. Accompanying the Syllabus statements for all subjects in each year group was a document entitled *Assessment Guidelines*, which covered the assessment procedures for each of the subjects that were to be examined in the TEE in that respective year. The examination paper for TEE History in 1990 is also considered a part of the policy text.

While there had been revisions of syllabus statements, assessment guidelines and examination papers continuously from 1985 to 1989, the study focuses on the texts

of 1990 as they represent the culmination of a process of decision-making that reached its apogee in that year. This is particularly the case with the syllabus statement, which differed markedly from the syllabus statements of the previous four years. The documents of 1990 are also shown to be 'watershed' statements; on the one hand they represent a culmination of deliberation and decision making in the History JSC over five years, and on the other, they become a set of texts which encapsulated many of the problems of the History curriculum which different members of the History JSC were to address over the following seven years, i.e. in the third phase of the policy trajectory.

With regard to the production of the Syllabus statements and the accompanying assessment guidelines, the policy process in this phase stands in remarkable contradistinction to that of the previous period. As recalled by a member of the History JSC in both phases, the period before 1983 was one of "creativity" whereas the latter period was largely one of carrying out directives from above, a process described as "entirely top-down" (Interview 11). This was due almost entirely to the changed environment within the government educational agencies after the publication of the Beazley and the McGaw Reports, and to the changed policy environment following the election of the ALP government of 1983. The changed policy environment resulted in changed roles for certain members of the History JSC, whose importance now lay in their ability to interpret the directives of higher authorities and re-work them into a syllabus that would reflect the understandings of the majority of the History teaching profession (Interview 11). One member of the committee, a teacher educator at one of the two universities at the time, was identified as a particularly important figure in this regard as she was able to "interpret and re-work into language we understood" the directions of the higher authorities, and was able to draft responses to their directives (Interview 11).

The deliberations of the History JSC after 1985, as evidenced in the Minutes of the Committee meetings, reflect this very different agenda, and there are few similarities between the deliberations of the committee from 1985 to 1990 and those of the committee in the previous five years. Discussions about historical philosophy and methodology disappear and the records reveal increasing concern with the minutiae of technical detail and contestations between the committee and higher authority. The trend indicates the shift towards bureaucratic managerialism. Interviews with members of the History JSC (Interviews 11; 25; 48) during the period 1985 to 1990 confirm this interpretation of the documents, in that respondents describe the greater 'presence' and organisational force of the SEA and severally use the term 'top-down'.

The directions imposed by the new authority, the SEA, on the upper secondary school History curricula after 1984 were several. The first and most contentious (Interview 11) was that the single, two-year curriculum that had existed in 1984 would have to be changed to two one-year modules, therefore requiring a separate syllabus statement for Year 11 and another for Year 12 (HJSC Minutes, 9/1985). While this may have seemed a welcome opportunity to members of the committee in that it would allow the construction of two sequential modules leading to a spiral curriculum, it was not the case. The Chair of the HJSC for some of the time remembers clearly that instructions accompanying the directives to split the existing course stated that the changes to the new syllabuses should be absolutely minimal (Interview 11), a view supported by documentary evidence from meetings of the HJSC from 1985 through until 1988 (e.g. HJSC Minutes, 12/11/1985; 11/9/86; 25/2/88). The SEA instruction was that as far as possible the new modules were simply to reflect what had previously been taught in Year 11 and what had previously been taught in Year 12 (Interview 11). This instruction

proved problematic in the History curriculum, as the previous syllabus statement was simply compartmentalized horizontally into seven discrete units, any five of which could be taught at any time over two years, in any school, at the discretion of individual teachers or departments.

The resistance of the SEA to any syllabus change was clearly frustrating to members of the syllabus committee, who had welcomed the move to a modular system as an opportunity to effect significant curricular change. In the first meeting of 1986, the committee had looked forward to "begin(ning) long term consideration of possible changes to the syllabus" (HJSC Minutes 25/2/86). The minutes provide evidence of proposed changes that would include the rationalisation of the two modules and the insertion of new units to broaden the pedagogy of the subject particularly in Year 11. However, the opportunities for such innovative thinking would be limited until 1988.

The History JSC seized one opportunity thrown up by the possibility of limited change. This was the development of a new unit, called *What is History?* in the Year 11 module. It was devised to allow schools to introduce students to the skills and disciplines of the subject, by following themes, contexts and content of the teachers' own choice (Interviews 11; 25). Unashamedly drawing on the (English) Schools Council History Project unit of the same name (Interview 24), the establishment of the course marked the advent of some of the major ideas of the 'new history' that were now increasingly part of the discourses among members of the History teaching profession (Homden, 1991). However, because of the instruction from the SEA that the initial changes from the existing syllabus to the new modules were to be minimal, *What is History?* could not initially be placed in the History Syllabus statement as a discrete unit for Year 11, and so it would not officially count towards fulfilling the requirements of

the course of study for Year 11 students. This only became possible after some revisions were allowed, after 1987, to be implemented for the first time in the 1990 syllabus statement (Interview 11).

As there had been no distinct Year 11 or Year 12 components to the previous syllabus, the decision over what units should be placed in each of the respective modules now fell to the History JSC and was taken away from schools. One option for the History JSC was a Year 11 module of 19th century topics and a Year 12 one of 20th century topics. Such a sequence might be seen to be following the recommendation of the McGaw Report, and the directions from the SEA (Interview 11), which stated the need for the Year 12 syllabus to be a logical post-cursor of that of Year 11. Other options included one that there be regional variations across the two modules, for example units drawn from Europe and America in one year and from Asia and Australia in another. Discussions over these options were clouded by another issue, that of declining numbers in History. Now that students pursuing the new Tertiary Entrance Examination (formerly the TAE) programmes need only study three TEE subjects, it was feared that the number of students studying History would drop by even more than had occurred in the last decade. As a result, certain members expressed the conviction that certain units should be placed in each module that would be attractive to students in Year 10, as they made their choices for Year 11. The two most popular units in the previous curriculum, judged by the number of questions answered in the examinations and the quality of those answers, were the units on the Russian Revolution, and on Weimar Germany and the Third Reich. The committee moved to a decision that one of each of these units should be placed in each of the year syllabus statements, with the Russian Revolution in Year 12 and the German unit in Year 11. According to two respondents (Interviews 11; 25), the rationale for this decision was entirely based on

what committee members perceived would be popular student choices. Two other respondents, however, were emphatic in their recollection that the decision purely reflected the personal stance of a significant member of the History JSC (Interviews 24; 25).

The stated reason for the decision was that the German unit in Year 11 would prove attractive to Year 10 students who were making their choices for subjects in Year 11, and members believed that if students chose History in Year 11 and experienced a stimulating course, they would be more likely to continue studying History into Year 12. Although the option for students to pick up History for the first time in Year 12 was still in place, members of the committee believed that this was unlikely to occur. Furthermore, some members of the committee held the belief that the levels of conceptualization required by the Russian Revolution were sufficiently complex for its inclusion only at Year 12 level, while the level of conceptualization demanded by the course on Weimar and Nazi Germany need not be as high for students in Year 11 still to benefit and derive interest.

The decision was significant for several reasons. First, both the Russian and the German units were from the twentieth century, so the decision to place one unit in each year syllabus would negate the option for a chronologically ordered set of modules. Second, and more importantly it would mean that there would, by implication, still be a wide range of choices exercised among the units in Year 12. This held ramifications for standardization and moderation, which were increasingly of concern to the SEA. Previously, both the TAEC and TISC had expressed concern that the wide range of choices contained within the History syllabus meant that the external examination was not an entirely valid assessment because a large number of students could sit the History

paper and all could answer four completely different questions. Therefore, it had become an aim of the SEA to establish greater uniformity and reduce the choices available, but this was something anathema to the beliefs and values of members of the History JSC (HJSC Minutes 13/2/1986; Interview 11). If the Russian and German units had both been placed in the Year 12 syllabus, then it could safely be assumed that a very large proportion of schools would be teaching those units and that most students would be answering common questions. This would provide the scenario that those concerned with the educational measurement of the students, rather than the content of the syllabus, wished to see happen (Interview 11). As stated in the previous chapter, the issues of freedom of choice and flexibility had become almost sacrosanct to members of the syllabus committee, and this resulted in conflicting correspondence between the SEA and the HJSC over the issue of reducing the choice in examinations, to ensure greater similarity in the students' range of answers and, therefore, comparability among the students' performances (HJSC Minutes 13/2/85; 25/2/88). At this stage, the stance of the members of the History JSC prevailed, and the success of the committee members in this issue challenges the perceptions recalled by members of the History JSC that the period was solely one of 'top-down' policy making (Interviews 11; 25).

The second area of the curriculum to be addressed by the members of the History JSC as they came to terms with the recommendations contained in the McGaw Report was in assessment. As previously stated, only the Year 12 syllabus would now be (part-) assessed by public examination, so the provision of internal assessment guidelines for Year 11 and for Year 12 would be a new policy consideration for the committee. The consequences of their decisions added a further dimension to the scope of the curriculum. At the meeting of the History JSC in February 1986, consideration was given to the nature of assessment and the assessment guidelines for Year 12

students. There were two sets of issues facing the committee. One was the issue of the nature of assessments that the opportunity for school-based assessment would bring. The other focused on questions of moderation and comparability among the huge number of different assessments that would be conducted within the schools of WA.

The opportunity for school-based assessments raised the possibility of creating new types of assessments which would allow students to express their understandings of history in ways other than the essay format. One member of the History JSC saw this as the most attractive feature of the new arrangements. His recollections were of "an interesting debate":

> If you were going to separate the school-based assessments from the external system, then they should be measuring different things. I mean otherwise what's the point? And so the early discussion was about developing forms of assessment in the school 50% that couldn't be assessed in a paper and pencil, one-off external examination. (Interview 25)

He recalled that this conviction was swiftly defeated by the views of those who believed that the assessments had to be

> based on the skills that will be useful for them (students) at universities. And so what happened was increasingly the requirements reflected more closely the external examination needs…built around the fact that the key in terms of assessment was still the examination and you had to prepare the kids (*sic*) for the examination. (Interview 25)

This view appears to ignore the fact that in reality teachers were given considerable scope to pursue assessment types of their own choice, and the categories of assessments prescribed in the *Assessment Structures* from 1985 to 1990 were remarkable for their lack of definition. The syllabus committee categorized assessments into three types:

'assignments', 'tests' and 'examinations' and different weightings for each of these were suggested (HJSC Minutes, 13/02/ 86). The committee believed that "content, skills and processes will be covered within types of assessments suggested" (HJSC Minutes, 13/02/ 86). 'Assignments' appear to be conceived of as research essays, although there was to be controversy over the conduct of these within a year. The definition of 'tests' was muddier, probably deliberately as the History JSC hoped that teachers would develop a range of assessments appropriate to the context of their own schools. From the evidence of exemplars offered by teachers for dissemination through *Historicus* magazine during the period 1985 to 1990, the concept of 'tests' covered a range of different formats, and tested a variety of skills. These ranged from simple cognitive tests such as multiple-choice items to sophisticated exercises on document analysis. By 1990 there was also a concerted drive from some members of the HAWA to have oral presentations count as a prescribed form of assessment, so as to remove the emphasis on written media. Clearly, at this early stage, the committee made little attempt to identify and list the particular skills that could be tested and relate them to the appropriate assessments in which to do so. In the 1990 Syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12, suggested assessments of process skills were stated, and these were: multiple choice tests; documentary, cartographic and pictorial analysis; in-class and research essays; oral presentations; and examinations. The third of these obfuscated the intensity of the debates that had occurred in 1988 over how and where these essays were going to be conducted, as outlined below.

What were to be of equal concern to the History JSC and the SEA, and particularly to its Curriculum Officer for the Social Sciences, were the issues of comparability and procedures for moderation among the vast numbers and range of assessments occurring in schools across the state. Themes, words and phrases that

appear repeatedly in the minutes of the History JSC from 1986 to 1990 with regard to assessment include “standardization”; the need for “grade related descriptors” to ensure that “assessment structures” meet “prescribed procedures”. These terms appear often in directives to the History JSC from the SEA or in the committee’s deliberations on those directives. The anxiety of the SEA was understandable because the success of the new upper-school curricula would, in large part, stand or fall on the evaluation by the tertiary institutions of the ability of the new assessment format to rank students for tertiary entrance. This had been raised for the first time in the meeting of the History JSC in September 1986, following a review of the assessment structures being used in schools carried out by the SEA Curriculum Officer. Some schools were clearly having difficulty implementing the school-based (internal) assessments, while others were ignoring the prescribed procedures altogether. The minutes noted that there was concern expressed by the tertiary institutions, particularly The University of Western Australia (UWA) of non-compliance (HJSC Minutes 11/9/86), and continued by stating that if greater uniformity was not achieved, then UWA might select students for entry to its courses only on the scores students achieved in the external examination. Following the first of the TEE examinations in 1986, when the whole Year 12 cohort was being assessed under the new conditions for the first time, the results appear to have reduced the anxiety of the tertiary institutions, but deep concerns within the History JSC remained.

One example of these concerns clearly and succinctly illustrates the changed emphases within the nature of school-based assessment. The issue involved questions of uniformity and validity in school-based assessments but it also explores the increasingly contested nature of the historical discipline and the processes of the subject. In 1988, concerns were brought to the attention of the History JSC, partly through correspondence from schools, and particularly from evidence provided by the

SEA Curriculum Officer for the Social Sciences. The issue of these concerns was research essays, which had been a staple assessment tool of the subject for countless years. In the previous curriculum, where the only accredited assessment was the public examination, this type of assessment was uncontroversial, as the exercise simply provided the student and teacher with an indication of the student's progress.

In the new curriculum, however, the marks gained for these essays now contributed to the student's final mark. In the case of Year 11 students, these internal assessments were the only source of marks, while in the case of Year 12 students, they comprised 50% of the their TES. Because of this, anxiety arose in the Syllabus Committee about the validity of this assessment format, as to whether teachers could be sure that the work presented was that of the student her/himself, either in the preparation of the researched material or in the final production of the essay. The issue was the basis of a long discussion at the History JSC meeting of August 1988, and it collided with other beliefs of members of the committee. Some members were reluctant to impose strict parameters for assessments; issues of teacher choice and flexibility were inevitably raised in opposition to the recommendation for mandated types of assessments; and arguments about the nature of the subject itself appeared. One proposal was that all written assessments should be completed in class, with preparation (reading and note-taking) done at home or in the school library or in class beforehand. This led to unease about the extent of notes being brought into the testing situation, and in case someone else had prepared the student's notes. If teacher choice over the types of assessments was to be retained, then the weighting of those assessments needed to be altered accordingly. Finally, it was recommended that research essays completed outside the classroom could only count for 20% of the final year mark, whereas those

prepared outside but written inside the classroom could carry a weighting of 60%. The resolution of the committee was still non-committal; it was

> keen to see flexibility retained in assessment requirements… (and within) the minimum assessment requirements, provide sufficiently tight guidelines. Moderation should then ensure that all teachers conform to these guidelines. (HJSC Minutes 31/8/88)

The issue had not been resolved entirely, and when considered in the context of practice, became an issue in the context of policy text production in the third phase of the trajectory, traced in the next chapter.

In 1988, there were further attempts by the SEA to engender greater similarity between the syllabuses of the different TEE subjects. With regard to assessment, the History JSC was informed by the SEA that it had come to their notice that here was no opportunity for testing History students in the affective domain, as there was in other subject syllabuses, and that this had to be addressed (HJSC Minutes 15/10/87; 30/3/88). Other than the tabling of the correspondence, the matter seems to have received little further discussion or proposal. This may have been partly answered by the flexibility offered in History assessments, in which it was possible for teachers to provide opportunities for empathetic writing to address the concern. The introduction of oral presentations as a form of assessment also provided opportunities for student work in the affective domain, as these tasks usually involved students studying an event from the perspective of a central figure in their course. Irrespective of the outcome, the correspondence from the SEA over the matter seems to reflect their desire for all subjects to have similar types of teaching and learning opportunities, and in that regard appears to be a movement away from the idea of a distinct form of knowledge for each subject.

A theme appearing regularly in the minutes of the History JSC during the period 1986 to 1990 was that of objectives. “Objectives met”; “objectives to be met”; “measurable objectives”; these phrases appear with great frequency throughout the minutes of the History JSC from 1985 to 1990 and reflect both the concerns of the group and directives from above. Members of the History JSC had noted earlier that the History curriculum lacked clear objectives, as Zani (1973) had pointed out over a decade earlier, and several members of the History JSC (Interviews 11; 25; 26) recalled that there was a positive side to itemizing objectives. These respondents recounted a belief that it was an opportunity to review and evaluate the syllabus methodically and think carefully about the weighting of the content in each section of the syllabus. The Chair of the History JSC at the time stated it thus: “One sentence in the old syllabus statement could mean about a term of teaching, while another sentence could be taught in a lesson” (Interview 11). However, the opportunity to change the syllabus creatively in this regard was denied by the directives of the SEA (Interview 11) who demanded the construction of the syllabus into a format based entirely on objectives to be met by the students.

The SEA demanded a prescribed formula for the syllabus statement of each TEE subject. Each unit was to comprise ten subheadings and each subheading was to have three objectives to it. As a member of the History JSC recalled, all the objectives had to be in ‘action words’. The objectives were to require students to ‘explain’, ‘understand’, ‘describe’ or ‘account for’; they could not ‘think about’, ‘reflect’, or ‘consider’ (Interview 11). The intention behind this directive was that the syllabus statement of each TEE subject should be as similar as possible in terms of content and objectives to be covered, so that students would not choose subjects they might identify as a soft

option, or steer away from subjects that were considered to be too demanding. Each course was required to be completed in a mandated number of hours of classroom time (110 – 120 hours for Year 11 and 100 for Year 12). One interview respondent remembers having to review one of the units in the revised syllabus and being told by a member of the History JSC that the changes were so that "History was the same as human biology" (Interview 26).

The comprehensive re-drafting of the Syllabus statement in 1988, to be published in 1990, allowed the introduction of *What is History?* as a discrete unit in the Year 11 syllabus. It also permitted the reworking of several units to tidy up the components of each module, with regard to their size and content prescription (Interview 11). The revision meant that the syllabus statement now took on a new format, with objectives clearly stated, and it carried the implied presumption that the testing of these objectives were to be the basis of the TEE examination at the end of Year 12. This engendered some concern that the teaching of the syllabus might resort once more to the didactic presentation of content required by the students to meet the objectives, and so result in a broadly uniform pedagogy across all schools. This would affect particularly classes in Year 12, where the pressure of the public examination still remained. Although the examination was meant to be worth 50% of a Year 12 student's final TEE mark, it was in fact of greater consequence as the examination result was used to standardise the internal, school-based marks to ensure a measure of uniformity across the state. It was not lost on some teachers that the highest possible examination score would only improve the overall TEE scores of their tertiary bound students, when the two marks were combined (Interview 23).

Analysis of the policy texts

The Syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12 in Modern World History. (SEA Syllabus Manual, 1990). There were several important differences in the policy texts of 1990 from that of 1984 considered in the previous chapter. One visible difference was that there were now two statements, one for Year 11 and one for Year 12. The other difference lay in the format of the details of the content of the units of work, which as explained below, may have produced contradictory processes between what some describe as the curriculum of intention and the curriculum of action (cf. Kelly, 2004; Smith & Lovat, 2003).

Although there were separate syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12, there were similarities between the two. Each began with a rationale, the first three sentences of which were exactly the same as the introductory paragraph of the 1984 syllabus statement. The fact that the rationale for the 1990 syllabus was almost exactly the same as that of the 1984 Syllabus statements is a strong indication of the nature of the policy text production in this phase. It suggests that philosophical issues had little influence in the deliberations of the History JSC; instead the issues were technical and mechanical, those of comparability, standardization and uniformity.

As a departure from the previous syllabus statement, both statements in 1990 contained a similar statement of "Educational Objectives", which listed the process skills students should display by the end of the course, and the means of assessing those skills. Here the policy makers were attempting to delineate the processes of the subject as they could be practiced and assessed in the school classrooms, but the statement appears to be one of faith rather than prescription. The statement reveals an inherent

weakness in the coupling between the skills required of students and the types of assessments suggested for their testing. This proved to be a fundamental flaw of the intended curriculum. Both the means of assessment suggested and the weaknesses in the coupling will be explored more carefully in the analysis of the Assessment Structure document below.

The bulk of each of the Syllabus statements in 1990 (SEA Syllabus manual, 1990, p.369; p. 381) consisted of a number of units available for selection, and in each Year module, the minimum number of units to be studied was three. The most significant feature of the units was their breakdown into components, each with an appropriate heading. Each unit component had ten subheadings, and within each sub-heading there were three specific objectives in 'dot-pointed' form. All but one of the interviewed respondents referred to these as the 'dot-points', recalling in different degrees an early recognition of their worth and later their deadening effect on the syllabus. The objectives listed under each subheading followed the SEA directive that they should be in concrete, behavioural terms, such as "students should be able to: describe… outline… assess…use primary and secondary sources" (SEA Syllabus manual, 1990, p.369; p. 381).

The Year 11 syllabus comprised seven units, three of which were Australian topics. The unit 'Western Australia to 1980' had been transferred from the Year 12 syllabus to Year 11, in the hope that teachers might use local contexts together with the '*What is History?*' unit (Interview 11). It would appear that this range of choice reflected the hope of members of the History JSC that students would attempt at least one of these in Year 11, as they were required to study at least three units. "*What is history?*" was now a discrete, recognized unit, but one that gave teachers the

opportunity to select their own contexts and content in which to pursue this theme. The units on Asia and Europe 1918 – 1945 contained topics, Japan and Weimar and Nazi Germany, which had been popular courses in the years when they were all examined externally (BSE Examiners Reports 1980 – 1984).

The Year 12 syllabus contained six units, with a minimum of three required to complete the course satisfactorily. The Editor of *Historicus* (March 1985) particularly welcomed the unit containing the French and American Revolutions. There were two Australian units, Australia 1914 – 1945 and Australia 1945 – 1983, each broken up into four parts of five sub-headings each. This was so that the study of two parts was necessary to satisfy the demand for conformity in terms of objectives attained. With Australian units comprising one-third of all the units available for study, this reflected the hope among committee members that some schools would choose one of the two Australian topics from the limited choice of units available.

As one interview respondent described it, the two syllabus statements together still represented a 'smorgasbord' (Interview 25), with no clear pattern of scope and sequence across the two years of study. Teachers could create a pattern conforming to some sequence; for example they could choose 19th century Australian topics in Year 11 and then study one of the 20th century Australian topics in Year 12. A similar pattern of continuity across the two years could also be achieved by selecting topics on Russia in the 19th century in Year 11 and Russia/USSR 1917- 1945 in Year 12 or through a pattern such as Germany 1918 – 1945 in Year 11, and then Russia/USSR 1917 – 45 followed by International Affairs in the Atlantic region in Year 12. In contrast, to illustrate the irregularities of the syllabuses, a school deciding to pursue some American

history topics could find themselves studying the 19th century American history unit in Year 11 and then studying the 18th century unit on the American Revolution in Year 12.

The most glaring incongruity of the syllabus statements lay in the contradiction between the 'Educational Objectives' stated in the precursor of each statement and the objectives stated in the 'dot-points' under each content area subheading. The demand on the History JSC to produce a syllabus statement containing 'concrete' objectives in this part of the document, such as "Students should be able to describe the interdependence of Britain and the colonies" or "Students should be able to explain the origins and outline the main features of the Declaration of Independence" in the unit on the American Revolution (SEA Syllabus manual, 1990, p. 381), meant that teachers could easily resort to simple, didactic 'information transmission' to meet these objectives. Students could then simply rote-learn these for tests and examinations. Furthermore, as one of the prescribed testing mechanisms was multiple-choice tests, teachers and students would still be meeting the stated requirements of the syllabus, but this would not be in the spirit that members of the History JSC would have hoped for.

The Assessment Structure 1990. The syllabus statements for History, indeed for all subjects in Year 11 and 12 were accompanied by a separate document entitled *Assessments Structures* (SEA Assessments Structures, 1990), a list of mandated assessment structures for all subjects examinable in the Tertiary Entrance Examination system. The form of the Assessment Structures document for History comprised three tables on one page. The first table provided a weighting percentage range for each of the three units covered in the syllabus. Remarkably, the weightings were not 33⅓% to each unit, which seems anomalous considering the demand by the SEA for uniformity in the

units outlined above. Instead the structure provided that there was to be "no more than 40% to any one unit" (SEA Assessments Structures, 1990).

The second table of the assessment structure provided weighting percentage ranges for the two 'learning outcomes' of the syllabus, 'knowledge of course content' and 'process skills'. The weighting for knowledge of course content could be worth between 40% and 50%, while the 'process skills' could carry a weighting between 50% and 60%. The weighting provided an opportunity for those teachers who wished to concentrate more on the process skills of the curriculum, an opportunity welcomed by one respondent, a teacher at the time (Interview 26). Yet this same respondent recalled her disappointment that so many of her colleagues still retained a focus on the transmission of factual detail, a reminiscence shared by a member of the History JSC (Interview 25) who stated his belief that the pattern of weightings represented a lost opportunity to further reward the teaching and assessment of process skills. There seemed to be an inherent incongruity of emphasis between content and process skills throughout the texts of the Syllabus statements and the assessment structure, which is further revealed in the details of the third table of the structures.

The third table in the Assessment Structures for History provided weighting percentage ranges for three types of assessment, 'class tests', 'term/semester examinations' and 'assignments'. 'Class tests' suggested a range of assessment strategies, and these could carry a weighting across the year of 10 – 30%. Term/semester examinations could be worth 30 – 40% while assignments should be weighted between 40 – 60%. The examples provided of 'assignments' in the assessment structure were 'in-class essays' and 'research essays'. Furthermore, included in the category 'class tests' were 'in-class essays'. Also, the term/semester examinations could

be largely essay-based. Therefore, within the regulations of the Assessment Structures, the essay could continue to be the prime vehicle for assessment in History, despite the best intentions of certain members of the History JSC to change this. One such member recalled his hope that the directions on school-based assessments would encourage teachers to use assessments other than essays, but his hope had been quickly dashed in a meeting of the History JSC: "That was a debate that lasted about five minutes" (Interview 25).

The TEE examination 1990. The format of the examination paper for History (not Modern World History as in the Syllabus statement) in 1990 (SEA TEE Examination 1990) was not dissimilar to the examination papers that had preceded it since 1986. It did reflect the revised structure of units in the 1990 Syllabus statement for History in Year 12, with two questions allocated for each of the sections within each unit. There was also a further pattern, in that of the two questions for each section being examined, one was a set of 'guided-response' or 'structured-response' questions based on a 'stimulus' document, while the other was an essay-type answer. This provided examination candidates with a range of options in answering the questions related to the syllabus they had pursued. Students had to study sections drawn from at least three units and answer four questions in the examination. Based on the pattern above, they could either answer three essay questions and one structured response based on a stimulus document, or two of each, or three structured responses based on a stimulus document and one essay. These permutations allowed candidates to answer questions largely by preferred format, while still testing two sets of skills. One respondent, a teacher, argued passionately that it was his belief that essays were still the best medium for the students of highest ability to display their talents (Interview 24), so teachers such as he would have been largely satisfied with this format. Others who saw the advantages of the

structured response answers and the opportunity to analyse documents would also have been pleased that students had the opportunity to cover three such questions in the examination (Interviews 23; 24; 25; 37). They also believed that such questions were of particular help to those who were less capable of writing essays and to those who were less confident in the examination hall. Such questions guided them through the responses they could make.

Three interview respondents (Interviews 23; 25; 37) did point out weaknesses of the document stimulus response questions, a criticism that existed in the previous examination. This was that the questions containing a document often required no analysis of the documents themselves. For example, Question 6 of the 1990 examination (SEA History Examination, 1990, p. 5) asked candidates to "Explain the political circumstances in which the above poster was produced", while Question 9 asked candidates to "Explain how the above advertisement and photograph illustrate two very different facets of life in the USA in the 1920s". Such questions would have assisted those who wished for some guidance through their answer, but would not have helped those whose teachers had spent much time in the process skills of document and critical analysis.

Such criticisms, and the logical inconsistencies outlined in the analysis of the policy texts above, were to arise in the 1990s, as teachers became increasingly vociferous about the inadequacies of the History curricula. They appeared in the discussions of the History JSC as they contemplated, and then moved towards, the creation of a radically different curriculum and its assessment, which attempted to address the shortfalls of the curriculum as it had been developed by 1990.

Context of practice

To some extent there is a sense of overlap in the context of practice in this phase of the policy trajectory and that of the previous phase. This is due in part to elements of continuity across the two phases, as evidenced in similarities of the content areas of much of the syllabus statements and of the examination format. Therefore, this section of the chapter approaches the assessment of the context of practice using similar headings to those in the previous phase. These are the impact on the teaching and learning of history, the impact on professional morale, the impact on the teaching of Australian history, and the impact on curriculum pressure and the impact on student numbers.

Impact of the new curriculum on teaching and learning of History

Some of the issues raised in this aspect of the context are a continuation of those arising in the previous phase. In that phase it was noted that the new syllabus statement and the new examination format had provided opportunities for those teachers keen to expand their teaching styles and respond to new theories of teaching and learning. At the same time, the limited changes to the examination format, and the failure to provide satisfactory alternative assessments, meant that teachers who wished to pursue their longstanding methods could continue to do so without penalizing their students.

The evidence gained from respondents suggests that, in one regard, little was to change in the period from 1986 to 1995. Those who seized the opportunities provided by the syllabus changes of 1983 – 84 saw them increased by the changes after 1985. The separation of Year 11 and Year 12 significantly allowed them to expand teaching

strategies for Year 11, as content assumed less importance now that there was no external examination to prepare the students for. The word 'freedom' was used by one respondent several times in her memories of the impact of the change; she also recalled that:

> you could make Year 11 a lot of fun; you could stimulate their interest. At the same time you could teach them the skills they needed without burdening them with all that information that they just simply had to rote-learn and regurgitate. It was that break, that nexus from Year 11 to Year 12, that made all the difference. (Interview 26)

Another respondent recalled that "it enabled you to…spend a lot more time in developing skills, interpretation of resources, understanding of historical methodology, without the pressure of a public examination at the end of the year" (Interview 23). A teacher in a government school at that time claimed that the change

> enabled you to encourage what you would see as weaker students into the subject, knowing that you could actually help develop them to an appropriate level, whereas under the previous arrangements you couldn't because what they learnt from day one was going to be examined in Year 12. (Interview 23)

Thus, one further benefit of removing Year 11 students from the examination process was that teachers believed that less-able students were better catered for.

To extend the opportunities for new teaching and learning strategies, the unit "*What is History?*" had been included in the syllabus since 1986. Some teachers' decisions on whether to study the unit appear to be based on the same pattern of reasoning as revealed in most decisions on pedagogical change at this time. One respondent remembered it as a welcome opportunity to expand their teaching strategies, and rued its absence in the syllabus changes in 1996 – 97: "Teachers still talk about that

(*What is History?*). They wanted it included in the new syllabus and they couldn't see how they could do all that methodology in the new courses" (Interview 26). Another "did it as a bit of an introduction. I never took that as a whole unit….Most people did it that way" (Interview 24). Nevertheless, such was the concern among members of the HAWA that more teachers were not availing themselves of this opportunity that one member of the History JSC was asked to write an article, *A case for 'What is history?'* in *Historicus*, the publication of HAWA. In this article the author exhorted teachers to grasp the opportunity to develop exciting, alternative strategies for teaching History that the unit afforded (Bennett, 1987). In the article he provided ideas for teaching and learning strategies, lists of resources and examples of student work. In interview the author expressed his deep sense of disappointment that much of the reaction to the article was negative and in particular he was dismayed that the reasons teachers gave for not choosing that unit was that they had expressed "great fear that if you opened kids up to these interesting approaches to history learning, then they would want it to continue" (Interview 25). Such negativity, however, stands in stark contrast to the enthusiasm of those teachers who embraced the opportunity and highlights the variety of responses to the curricular reforms.

With regard to the context of practice in this phase, respondents outlined further evidence of reluctance among some teachers to abandon the traditional, limited strategies of teaching that had been widely condemned by many before 1983-84. One respondent, a teacher at the time, offered an explanation in hindsight. It was his perception that this reaction was a result of two simultaneous forces. One was the increased pressure of time on the Year 12 syllabus as a result of the modularisation of the courses and the other lay in the way that course content was drawn up in objectives in the 1990 Syllabus statement, particularly for Year 12 (Interview 24).

Before the modularization of courses in 1985, students were required to study five units over the two Years, 11 and 12. As this respondent recalled, a common strategy in schools was to cover three or more units in Year 11 leaving only two to be completed in Year 12. This would give ample time for the revision and consolidation of the work covered the previous year before the public examination (Interview 24). After 1986, the Year 12 syllabus statement prescribed three units of study in Year 12, made necessary by the requirement in the public examination to answer at least one question from three different units. As a result, students in Year 12 after 1985 had to learn more content in one year and in a shorter timeframe, due partly to the introduction of a four-term year which had occurred at that time. As this respondent remembered, "The content was more squeezed up and you've got less time for revision….that put a huge constraint on what you taught and how you taught it" (Interview 24).

The listing of objectives for syllabus content in 'dot-point' form added to the difficulties facing teachers in this regard. As another respondent put it:

> What people were trying to do was to get through the stuff they had to get through, because you had to get through every one of those dot points, because any one of them could be examined. (Interview 48)

As explained earlier, the listing and precise directions of the objectives meant that one straightforward, rapid way of getting through this "crowded syllabus" (Interview 48) was to "force feed" (Interview 24) the students with the necessary information to satisfy meeting those objectives. Students would then have to resort to rote-learning the information transmitted to them, before regurgitating it in the examination. As an examiner of the TEE examination in the 1990s pointed out, it also encouraged students and teachers to resort to what he called the "tipping of questions" (Interview 37), that is,

predicting what questions might appear in the current year of study, based on what had appeared in previous years.

To conclude, in the 1990s it would seem that with regard to the teaching and learning of history the impact of the policy had been varied. The changed situation in Year 11 increased the opportunities for extending one's pedagogy, and the range of learning experiences for students. In Year 12, it was almost the opposite. A crowded syllabus, confusion over the nature of assessment, continued predominance of the examination and the requirement to meet all the objectives for that, and a resort to traditional practice led to growing frustration and a decline in professional morale among History teachers, as charted below.

Impact of the new curriculum on professional morale

The developments outlined above began to have a negative impact on the levels of morale among teachers in the late 1980s and for the first half of the 1990s, and respondents recalled an emerging a crisis in professional dissatisfaction not dissimilar to that experienced in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Most of the respondents who were teachers at the time regarded the separation of Year 11 and Year 12 into different modules of study as beneficial and they spoke of fond memories of teaching classes in Year 11. Some retraced the opportunities to develop new teaching strategies and to develop their own contexts of study in the 'What is history?' unit. These opportunities generated a sense of freedom and excitement (Interviews 23; 26). One respondent drew attention to the positive impact he believed

that the change had for teachers new to the profession, in terms of inducting them into teaching upper school History classes:

> I think it helped quite a few teachers too because if you were a recently appointed graduate, and I think quite a few schools did this, they were happy to give inexperienced teachers Year 11 students so that they could learn the craft as well and they weren't under the pressure of examinations. It also allowed you to mentor them and they could come and watch you teach and you could watch them teach, and they could give a talk to the Year 12 class on something they happened to be a specialist in… So there was teacher flexibility brought about there. (Interview 23)

These examples appear to reflect some of the more positive impacts the curricular reforms had on the morale of History teachers at the time. Nevertheless, those respondents who had welcomed the opportunities afforded by the changes to the syllabus and the separation of Year 11 and Year 12, expressed some levels of dissatisfaction and frustration as they recalled their experiences of the period (Interviews 23; 24; 26). All three remembered a growing sense of frustration with the demands of the Year 12 syllabus in particular, and the negative impact that this had had on their teaching. As these three respondents were clearly teachers committed to the practice of new theories of teaching and learning, they found the necessity to resort to traditional methods annoying and confronting to their professionalism. As one respondent put it:

> Everyone was feeling overwhelmed and they felt they weren't giving (their teaching) the attention that they should; they were skating over things. We were very concerned as teachers that we weren't attending to everything in enough detail and therefore we weren't covering things properly (Interview 48).

Another respondent recalled her frustration with the practice of the curriculum; "still dot-point dominated and once you got past the '*What is History?*' everything else was much the same as it ever had been" (Interview 26). It was partly that sense of frustration that compelled her to stand for election onto the History JSC and to lead the reforms in the next phase of the policy process.

Teacher morale was also negatively affected by the extent and nature of the reforms to schooling in WA as a whole, due to the "aggressive style" (Interview 12) of the Minister of Education from 1983 to 1988. As one respondent said, in parody of the lynchpin of the reforms known as "Better Schools", it was a period of "bitter schools" (Interview 12), and culminated in a strike by government schoolteachers in 1989. Evidence of the state of declining morale among History teachers lay in a newsletter of the HAWA in 1988. The editor referred to WA History teachers being castigated for not enrolling more schools in a Bicentennial History project, to which her response was "Maybe Dr.____hasn't heard of the unit curriculum!" (HAWA Newsletter, May 1988). The unit curriculum was a major thrust of post-Beazley curriculum reform in the lower secondary years.

One respondent identified the attendance at the annual meetings of teachers and examiners as a barometer of the morale of teachers in upper-secondary school History classes (Interview 25). The greater the number of teachers attending, the lower was their morale. In 1994, a teacher wrote to *Hindsight*, a publication of the History Teachers Association of WA (formerly HAWA) about her experience of the meeting of 1994. In her article she described "the frustrations of History teachers…and the need for changes to occur at both the syllabus and examining panel levels". The mood of the "large number of people who attended" was reflected in her view that "some teachers

complained that they no longer enjoyed teaching history [*sic*] and only taught the Year Eleven [*sic*] course" (Wells, 1994, pp.56-7). Such professional dissatisfaction was identified as a principal cause behind the drive to reform the History curriculum for upper secondary school in the 1990s, and much of the leadership came from one of the respondents who had been among the most enthusiastic supporter of the changes in 1983-84 but was totally disillusioned by 1991 (Interview 26).

One other issue affecting teacher morale and their status as professionals was in the area of the new assessment procedures. The opportunity to conduct one's own assessment and for that assessment to be recognized of value in determining a student's credentials appeared to reflect a belief in increased status of teachers and their professional judgement. Yet, by September 1986 (HJSC Minutes) it was clear that a crisis had developed, when UWA was threatening to remove school-based assessments from their calculations of a student's TES. The crisis was largely around issues of 'standardisation', or 'uniformity' or 'comparability', the leitmotifs of the SEA during this period, but such concepts sat uneasily with members of the teaching profession who valued difference and self-determination as reflections of their professionalism.

To achieve uniformity and standardization, the SEA had issued the *Assessment Guidelines* and appointed Curriculum Officers across a range of subjects. Among the Curriculum Officer's responsibilities was the holding of 'consensus meetings' where teachers of the same subject within a school district would convene to share assessment tasks and engage in common marking activities, of either a common example of work brought by the Curriculum Officer, or to exchange and mark work brought by teachers to the meeting. The intention was to generate common marking and grading procedures, assisted by the provision of 'Grade related descriptors' published for each subject area

of the SEA. Nevertheless, the situation opened what one respondent called a "Pandora's box" (Interview 25).

As stated earlier, the *Assessment Guidelines* provided little detail as to what were acceptable assessments. Suggested tasks lacked definition and in some cases appeared in contradictory categories. As a result, there was minimal guidance as to how to assess process skills and content and teachers were left to experiment. Their responses to assessment undoubtedly would reflect their response to the opportunities for pedagogical change outlined earlier. Those who embraced the new teaching opportunities appeared to embrace new, alternative forms of assessment, as analysis of the interviews of those who were teachers at the time reveals (Interviews 23; 24; 26). Those who shunned the opportunities would shun opportunities to assess those broader areas of learning that they chose to ignore.

The issue of research essays conducted and written out of class as an assessment tool revealed the dissonances among teachers over the nature of assessment. Some teachers clung to a method they believed to be staple of History teaching, reflecting the influence of the traditional university teaching methods that three respondents identified (Interviews 12; 24; 25). However, in a curriculum where the research essay was one of the forms of summative assessment, questions over who may have researched or written the assignment assumed considerable importance. The History JSC responded through the SEA, without trying to be completely prescriptive, by stating in revised *Assessment Guidelines* that externally conducted and written research essays could not carry a weighting of more than 20% whereas essays written in class could be worth 60%.

On the basis of this direction, some teachers moved to conduct in-class essays (Interview 23), of 45 minutes duration, in the belief that such practice would help students prepare for answering questions in the TEE, where four questions in a three-hour examination demanded 45 minutes to answer each one. However, as two respondents (Interviews 24; 25) recalled, one of the principal reasons for providing alternative assessments was to break the predominance of essays done under examination conditions as an assessment tool. So the solutions provided by the History JSC and the Assessment Structures only served to create further doubts about what were suitable assessments for History students in either Year 11 or Year 12. Ultimately, as one respondent remembered, what happened in Year 11 did not matter, as the marks in that Year only contributed to the ability of the student to graduate across two years of schooling. The principal issue lay with Year 12 assessment and the validity of the school-based mark that was used to calculate the TES of the student and rank him or her among all the other students in the state, for the purpose of selection to course in further education.

Members of the History JSC in the 1990s were aware of the dilemmas that the prescriptions, or lack of them, were causing within upper school History curricula, and part of the third phase of the changes to the History curricula involved their attention to clarify and defining assessment structures for school-based assessment, but this was to have further ramifications for issues of teacher professionalism.

Impact of the new curriculum on the teaching of Australian History.

Further rationalization to the Australian history units from 1985 to 1990, and the reduced number of choices in both the Year 11 and the Year 12 syllabus statements had

increased the likelihood of some teachers choosing an Australian unit for study. One respondent, a teacher before becoming a superintendent with the Department (and sometime Ministry) of Education, was reminded that some teachers had combined aspects of the 'What is history?' course with topics of local history (Interview 25), under the guise of WA history. None of the teachers interviewed could remember teaching the 19th century Australian history units in Year 11, while one positively steered away from them, in the light of his own university experiences (Interview 24). However, this same teacher admitted to his views being slowly changed by the media coverage of the Bicentenary of Australia in 1988, particularly in popular media, and although it did not affect his choice of units in this stage of the policy process, his attitudes to Australian history were far more positive by the time of the third curriculum change in 1996 – 97.

Statistics of the History examination in 1986 (HJSC Minutes, March 1987), the first year of the post-McGaw syllabus, showed that 35% of the students had attempted questions testing the unit 'Australia 1914 – 1945', well below the 80% answering questions on China and Russia, but a favourable response compared to those answering other units. One respondent, a member of the Examining panel in the 1990s, offered his explanation for the growing popularity of the Australia 1914 - 1945 unit at that time. It was, he believed, not dissimilar to the previously popular unit of American history 1917 – 1945, and contained topics of study that were always popular with teachers and students, the two World Wars and the Great Depression (Interview 37). His opinion may be supported by the coincidental similarity in the number of students attempting questions in each of the units (1,128 in Australia 1914 – 1945 and 1,237 in America 1917 – 1945).

The limited evidence that Australian history units were becoming more popular with teachers and their students during the period 1985 to 1995 and the views of a small number of respondents may suggest that there were some signs of more positive attitudes to the teaching of Australian history. These positive signs would be developed further by the reforms of the third phase of the cycle.

Impact of the new curriculum on curriculum pressure and student numbers

Curriculum pressure may have been affected in two ways by the reforms of 1985 to 1990. First, the implementation of the McGaw Report (1984) was believed to have increased the pressure on History, as one of its recommendations was that only three, rather than six subjects were now needed to compile an aggregate score for tertiary entrance purposes. As several respondents stated, History was not identified as having any utilitarian purpose at that time, and therefore they expected that History would be one subject that many students would drop (Interviews 24; 25; 26; 37). In qualifying this view, one of those respondents pointed out (Interview 24) that students were also required to choose their subjects from two lists, one a list of what were called 'quantitative' subjects, such as Mathematics, the Sciences and Accounting; and the other a list of 'qualitative' subjects which included History as well as English Literature, Modern Languages, Geography and Economics. It was his belief that this furthered the cause of History in the choices students made.

In response to concerns expressed about the validity of tertiary entrance scores (TES) being based on only three subjects, and in response to other concerns the Minister of Education in 1989, Dr. Carmen Lawrence, had established a small committee of inquiry under the Chair of Professor David Andrich, from Murdoch University. The

Andrich Report of 1989 (Andrich, 1989) recommended, among others, that the Tertiary Entrance score of students be based on a minimum of four subjects rather than three. It also recommended that students gaining awards in the TEE examinations study at least five subjects. Both had a positive effect on general patterns of student enrolments into TEE subjects, and the latter recommendation had the effect of encouraging the students of higher ability to choose more subjects.

One of the intentions of the format of the 1990 Syllabus statements was to reflect a directive from the SEA for uniformity across all TEE subjects as it was believed by the SEA that this would prevent students from choosing what they might identify as 'easier' subjects (Interview 11). However, as another respondent claimed, students chose subjects for a variety of reasons, which this hardly addressed (Interview 24).

In 1986, 20.03% of the Year 11 cohort and 21.75% of the Year 12 cohort were enrolled in History. By 1991, absolute numbers in both year groups had increased, but the proportion of the cohort had fallen further. By 1996, the year of transition from the syllabus that had been in place since 1990 to a new syllabus, numbers had fallen and proportions had plummeted. Only 3,174 students were enrolled in History in Year 11, which was 16.46% of the total cohort, and in Year 12, there were 2965 students in History, representing 17.13% of their cohort. The anxieties that teachers had expressed about subject choices and the status of History appeared to have been emphatically realised.

In this area of the context of practice, as well as in the other areas described above, the analysis suggests that developments at this time were those of regression

rather than progress, and that the reforms had not addressed the problems, but rather had consolidated existing or dormant ones. These issues were to be significant in directing the thinking and energies of the members of the History JSC in the next phase of curricular change.

Conclusion

The problems of attaining common standards in, and definitions of, assessments were a further factor in the criticisms of the History curriculum as it stood after 1990. A member of the History JSC in the next phase of curricular development argued that the failings in the area of assessment, which in turn reflected a lack of direction over what process skills were meant to be achieved by students, drove the committee to consider very carefully the specifications for assessment in the new curriculum that was mandated in 1996 – 97 (Interview 48). The problems with teacher responses to the directives on assessment reflect the features of the context of practice in this phase of the study, where regression, disappointment and frustration increasingly epitomized the responses of those most affected by the changes. That these emotions were felt most by teachers may begin to explain why teachers were such a significant force in the context of policy text production in the next phase.

The phase marked the period of the greatest level of direct intervention by the state government upon the policy making processes with regard to upper school History curriculum, indeed with regard to curriculum and schooling generally. It had begun with the heralding of much vaunted reforms on a grand scale, but for those involved, the processes of policy making had been increasingly difficult, in some cases disappointing and frustrating, and the impact of the policies had not achieved the aims of the

reformers. The reforms from 1985 to 1990 appeared to create as many problems as they attempted to solve, a situation apparently recognized by the state government which appeared to withdraw from such a level of intervention for the next decade. It was in this light that conditions for the next phase of change occurred, as previously marginalized groups, particularly teachers, attempted to assert some control over the policies regarding upper school History curricula.

CHAPTER 6

THIRD PHASE: 1991 TO 1997

Introduction

This chapter is the third and final 'data' chapter and seeks to analyse the policy process during the third phase of curricular change, from 1991 to 1997. The phase culminated in what interview respondents identified as a radically new syllabus and is significant in that it marked a shift away from the influences of the state government and its associated bodies, which had been such a strong feature of the developments of the previous five years. Forces affecting upper school History curricular policy emanated from two major sources; much indirect influence came from initiatives launched by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, while the more direct influence on the policy process came from teachers and their representatives. It was as if a vacuum had emerged at the meso-level of state government, and forces from the micro-level moved in to fill that void and establish a measure of control over the policy making process again. In that process, however, they attempted to be faithful to what they interpreted were the developments in post compulsory schooling at the macro-level, particularly those promulgated by the Commonwealth Minister for Education from 1987 to 1991.

The format of this chapter follows that of the previous chapters. It begins with a brief overview of changes that occurred to the institutions of policy making with regard to History curricula for upper secondary schooling in WA in the period of time that marks this phase of the process. The three principal sections of the chapter each relate to

one of the three contexts of the policy cycle, the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context of practice. This continues the format found in the previous chapters, with one exception; the section on the context of influence has two subsections not found elsewhere, both relating to the impacts of Commonwealth policies in the field of education.

Changes to the institutions of upper school curriculum policy making in Western Australia, from 1990 to 1997, with special reference to History curricula.

There were few changes of substance to the main institutions of policy making with regard to History curricula in WA during the 1990s. In 1997 the Secondary Education Authority was abolished, its functions being taken over by a new government body, with its own statutory authority, the Curriculum Council of WA. The new name of a largely unchanged institution was to recognise the responsibility of the new body for the establishment of the Curriculum Framework. This was a curriculum for all schools in WA, through all levels from Kindergarten to Year 12, comprising the eight Key Learning Areas, strands and outcomes that survived the demise of the proposed 'National Curriculum' of the early 1990s.

In 1991, the Director of the SEA announced changes to the structure of all Joint Syllabus Committees (JSCs), which had been in place since 1976, with regard to their composition and therefore their title. The principal change was in the composition of its membership, by adding two further representatives who would be drawn from industry, a reflection of the growing influence of this sector upon educational policy and practice in the decade. This change meant that the title of these committees was now redundant as they were no longer 'joint committees' of school and university members. They

would now simply be Syllabus Committees (SC). As a result, the central policy making committee for upper-secondary school History curricula after 1992 was the History Syllabus Committee (History SC).

One item of note in this regard is the declining influence of the university representatives on the History SC. In 1993, one university had to report to the History SC's secretary that it had been unable to find one person willing to sit on the committee (HSC Minutes 4/5/1993) while two members of the History JSC/SC recalled in interviews the lack of significant influence from the university sector in the work of the syllabus committees at this time (Interviews 24; 26). This may be seen as another contributory factor to the extraordinary influence teachers were able to bring to bear on the shape and direction of curricular reform in this phase of the study.

Context of influence

In the 1990s the influences on the policy process affecting the History curriculum were dichotomous. On the one hand the more significant political forces affecting patterns of educational change swung from the State level to the Commonwealth, while on the other hand, the predominant influence in the History curriculum policy making process appeared to fall back into the hands of teachers. One of the respondents, Chair of the History Syllabus Committee during the 1990s, identified two sets of influence; one was the curricular reforms promoted by the Commonwealth Government and the other was the goals of a significant group of teachers who shaped the direction and nature of the new history curriculum (Interview 48).

This section of the chapter begins with the economic and the political forces influencing History curriculum policy, and the latter is developed in an assessment of the impact of the Commonwealth government on the educational 'environment' of the 1990s.

Economic factors influencing the policy process

The early 1990s marked another downturn in the Australian economy, with indicators pointing to a major recession. From 1984 to 1989, the Australian economy had experienced impressive expansion, based on strong business and consumer confidence. These had led to a construction boom, which had a positive impact on manufacturing, but while employment rose strongly, so too did inflation rates and the current account deficit (Shade et al., 2000, p. 202). The Commonwealth government had implemented a policy of high interest rates to overcome the problems of the balance of payments, trade and foreign debt, but these were to contribute to a recession in the early 1990s. Between 1990 and 1992, real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined over four quarters, and the annual growth rate of GDP plummeted from 4% per annum in 1990 to –2% in 1992 (Dowrick, 1999, p.9). The impact of the recession was again felt in steeply rising unemployment levels, and this situation sharpened a focus on the provisions and nature of the education systems of Australia and their contributions to stabilizing levels of employment. A consequence of this was that education itself was to become a part of the micro-economic reform identified as necessary for Australia's economic recovery and future strength (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995).

As in the previous decade, figures for youth unemployment were most spectacular; despite the increased retention rates of the 1980s, by 1992 youth

unemployment (for ages 15 – 19) had peaked at 25%. As Stegman points out, the crisis of youth unemployment is not current and immediate, but has long-term implications:

> High youth unemployment today will mean future shortages of the labour skills acquired through on-the-job training. Future recovery in labour demand may run into shortages of skilled labour and result in inflationary pressure rather than reductions in unemployment. (Stegman, 1999, p. 59)

It was to address this problem that a number of reviews and reports were commissioned in the early 1990s. Each was chaired by a representative of industry, rather than by an educationalist as had been the case in the 1980s. They brought into broader focus the issue of preparing young people for the job market while they remained at school or in further education. What was also of importance in this regard was that the connection between unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and the role of education, was to occur at the Commonwealth level of politics, rather than at the state level, as had occurred in the previous phase of this trajectory.

Political factors influencing the policy process

By the early 1990s the reform programme of the WA Australian Labor Party (ALP) government had ground to a halt, and the government itself was facing intense scrutiny over what became known as the 'WA Inc.' saga. The ALP state government had become engulfed in a crisis over links between some Ministers and a number of business people in the state, and its role in the funding and bankrolling of some massive business failures (O'Brien, 1986; Peachment, 1990). In the area of education, the government also faced a crisis. State-school teachers had struck in 1989 in response to turmoil generated by the reforms proposed in the policy document *Better Schools*

(MoEWA, 1987) and the then Minister of Education, Carmen Lawrence, was appointed Premier in 1990 creating a vacuum of leadership within the portfolio.

By this time, however, the Commonwealth Government had assumed the initiative in educational reform 'in the national interest' (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995) and the spotlight fell on the policies of the Commonwealth Minister of Education from 1987 to 1991, John Dawkins. From 1987 to 1993, Dawkins' policy initiatives dominated the educational landscape, impacting on tertiary education, compulsory schooling and post-compulsory education. They compounded the link between schools and further education, particularly with regard to the issue of vocational education (Bartlett, Knight, Lingard & Porter, 1994; Dudley & Vidovich, 1995).

The influence of the Commonwealth government on the policy making processes behind the History curriculum of upper secondary schools of WA occurred in two areas. The first stemmed from the policy areas driven by Dawkins, and the commitment of his government to economic rationalism and micro-economic reform, as well as to the greater centralization of national programmes (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Although Dawkins left the Commonwealth Education portfolio in 1991, his influence was to extend through until 1993 (Bartlett et al., 1994). The second area of influence of the Commonwealth Government on the policy making processes of upper secondary History curriculum occurred after Paul Keating had assumed the position of Prime Minister in 1991. As well as continuing the Government's commitment to micro-economic reform, Keating was instrumental in generating a greater public awareness of issues to do with Australian citizenship and an increased sense of nationalism. These were part of a context in which Keating wished to position the nation towards severing its remaining ties with the United Kingdom, by becoming a republic. The remainder of

this section of the chapter will look at each of these two areas of influence in some detail.

The Dawkins' reform policies and the nexus between school and work. Dudley and Vidovich (1995) identify three areas of reform in education during the period 1987 to 1993; these were in higher education, compulsory schooling and post compulsory schooling and training. This section refers briefly to the second of these, and deals with the third in some detail as they impact most on the making of the History curriculum in WA in the 1990s. The reforms in higher education were of less relevance to this study, although they did reflect the general context and ideology behind the Minister's reform programme, and the creation of a 'mass system' of higher education was to impact on the ambitions of many young people in post-compulsory schooling after 1988.

The Commonwealth reforms in the area of compulsory schooling are usually identified with the drive towards a national curriculum. This emanated from what Piper (1997) calls a 'watershed' speech, *Strengthening Australia's Schools* (Dawkins, 1988) which was part of the Commonwealth Government's May Economic Statement in 1988. With the support of a co-operative Australian Education Council (AEC), which comprised the State Ministers of Education (all ALP) as well as the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Training (also ALP), the momentum towards some uniformity in school curricula in Australia continued with the publication of the *Common and agreed goals for schooling* (AEC, 1989) in Hobart in 1989, and later the publication of a national statement, comprising eight key learning areas, with common profiles of outcomes and levels. However, during the period of the statement's gestation, from 1991 to 1993, ALP governments in all states were replaced by their Liberal-National Coalition oppositions. The new state Ministers of Education, from a

standpoint of party politics and 'states' rights', expressed strong reservations about what was increasingly being touted as a 'national curriculum'. In particular, they viewed a 'national curriculum' as a 'Commonwealth curriculum', resulting in a loss of their constitutional control over curriculum. At the meeting of the AEC, in Perth in July 1993, the scheme was effectively shelved (Bartlett et al., 1994), and Commonwealth/State relations on a common curriculum followed a different path. .

While these attempted reforms were concerned principally with the area of compulsory schooling, they were to have some impact on the post-compulsory History curriculum in WA. One was that the initiative for reform in this area preceded reforms of the post-compulsory schooling area, and the nature of the reforms mooted influenced the direction and nature of the latter. Another was that the attempted reforms had generated new discourses into the educational field, the discourses of micro-economic reform and human capital and the impact of this was to continue into policy making at other levels, in other areas as Dudley and Vidovich stated:

> (T)he economic emphasis in education policy statements has been reflected in the increasing use of terms such as efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, productivity, quality, performance, competition and national co-ordination. (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995, p. 127)

A third impact was the appearance of new key players in the generation of education policy. Dudley and Vidovich (1995) have pointed out that the key players of this period were often figures from business and industry and the trades unions, often to the exclusion of teacher and parent bodies. This trend was reflected at the level of the History JSC in 1991. The Director of the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) announced changes to the syllabus committee by demanding the inclusion of two

members who were “industry representatives with expertise in the field” (Marsh, in a letter to History JSC: HJSC Minutes, June 1991).

One outcome of this general trend was that much of the criticism of the national statements and profiles were to come from university and school teachers, thus having the effect of polarising the debate, rather than creating a partnership that the reform processes probably required (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995).

Whereas the Commonwealth policies for compulsory schooling had begun in 1988, those addressing post-compulsory schooling began in the early 1990s, and focused on the AEC establishing three committees of inquiry and their subsequent reports. The first was the Finn Review (Finn, 1991). The second was report of the Employment and Skills Formation Council (ESFC) (Carmichael, 1992), usually referred to as the Carmichael Report after its Chair, Laurie Carmichael, an industrial union leader. The third was the Mayer Report (Mayer, 1992). Common to each report were three features: one was a strong emphasis on linking post-compulsory education with the world of work; the second was an emphasis on the inculcation of ‘key competencies’ in both the schooling and training processes; and the third was that the Chairs of each committee had no background in education.

The primary finding of the Finn Review was “the convergence of general and vocational education” (Finn, Executive summary, 1991, p. 1). Post-compulsory schooling or training would be in the development of ‘Key Areas of Competence’ or ‘Key Competencies’ (1991, pp. 2 - 3). Six areas of competency were identified within learning areas, with the area of ‘cultural understanding’ most relevant to History. The task of developing the key competencies in detail was passed on to a second committee,

that of Mayer (Mayer, 1992). Significantly, the Finn Committee's recommendations were accepted by the AEC (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995), and endorsed by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Trades Unions (ACTU) as well as by the coalition of parties in opposition to the Federal ALP government (Marginson, 1993). Thus they had the support of what Marginson (1993) calls a tripartite group of government, industry and unions, but, as Dudley and Vidovich (1995) point out, to the exclusion of the main teaching and parent bodies.

The Carmichael Report was largely concerned with the establishment of a new Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (Carmichael, 1992). While focusing on post-compulsory training, the report stated its commitment to schools "building the key competencies that are needed for work, further study and for life generally" (Carmichael, 1992, p. 10). In this way, the Report contributed further to the discourses of education for employment, convergence of education and training and key competencies.

The Mayer Report (Mayer, 1992) reiterated the conviction that key competencies were "the basis for improved articulation between general education and vocational training that is the foundation for the new system" (Mayer, 1992, p. 1). Nevertheless, the key competencies proposed by the Mayer Committee differed significantly from those proposed by the Finn Committee. Where Finn's had six, Mayer's committee proposed seven. Where Finn proposed four of his six competencies as having a knowledge foundation, language and communication, mathematics, science and technology and cultural understanding, the key competencies of the Mayer Report were largely generic. Foundation knowledge was assumed for the successful acquisition of the competencies (Mayer 1992, p. 6), but the principal thrust of the recommendations

was that none of the key competencies had a distinct knowledge basis. Of relevance to History curricula, the report took some space (p. 8) to justify its decision to ignore the area of 'cultural understanding' proposed by the Finn Review, arguing that cultural understanding was important but could not be defined as a key competency.

The national impetus to implement the Mayer Committee recommendations was negated by the reorganisation of the AEC and MOVEET in 1993 and the demise of the national curriculum. As Bartlett et al. (1994) point out, the recently elected Coalition state governments had 'fought back' to capture control of an agenda that they believed had slipped from their control. These state governments did retain a commitment to the development of competencies and closer links between school and employment, but these would be through curricula generated within each state's own institutions.

The influence of these developments was felt in the changes to the History curricula for upper secondary schooling in WA, most notably in the provision of a powerful discourse on the convergence of general and vocational education. It was a discourse that several members of the History JSC/SC found attractive, and evidence of it appears in the deliberations of the committee in the 1990s. Of particular interest were some conclusions of the Mayer Committee, that there is a range of 'generic' competencies that arise out of, but stand above, the bases of traditional knowledge. This suggested to members of the History SC that the study of History could impart to students a range of generic competencies which school leavers could carry forward into the labour-market.

One further influence of the momentum towards a national curriculum in the late 1980s and early 1990s lay in the emergence of outcomes as the basis for the national

curricular framework. Marsh, in a review of curricular developments in Australia at that time, argues that, "the 1980s and 1990s have ushered in a new phase with the emphasis more on student outcomes and curriculum frameworks" (1994, p. 15). Outcomes, he argues, provides a framework which

> are not syllabuses which teachers will translate directly into their teaching. They are more general in that they provide a platform for a curriculum area, dealing with major principles, values and assumptions (Marsh 1994, p. 15).

Brady (1994) provided a critique of outcomes-based education as a basis for curricular development at that time, saying that "there is little available research to authenticate its benefits" (p. 25) and that "it is not an isolated or merely educational phenomena, but one which regards schools as the foundation of a more productive workforce" (p. 26).

Clearly, outcomes-based education dovetailed neatly with the current perspectives on the direction of curricular reform, and as such would prove equally attractive to policy makers in the area of upper secondary school History curricula. As one interview respondent, an officer in the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education during this period of time, explained, outcomes-based frameworks, in the spirit that Marsh and Brady describe above, became a significant influence on the thinking of some members of the committee in the formulation of the syllabus that emerged in 1996-97 (Interview 48).

The issue of civics and citizenship education. In the last decade of the twentieth century many politicians, particularly at the Commonwealth level, found cause to consider the extent of civics education among Australian children (Pascoe, 1996). Their consternation was based on several factors, including the approach of the Centenary of the Australian Federation and Constitution, and the growing public engagement with the

Republican debate. Both issues were very much associated with the Prime Ministership of Paul Keating, who assumed office in 1991, and whose political style was to push such matters into the public arena for debate (Watson, 2002).

Members of the Senate were among the first to state an interest in civics education, perhaps sparked by a commitment in the *Common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia*, the Hobart Declaration of 1989. The seventh of these goals stated that the Commonwealth and State Ministers of Education would aim to:

> develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context (AEC, 1989).

In 1989, the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Training (SSCEET) released the report of their inquiry into civics and citizenship, *Education for Active Citizenship* which noted a substantial gap between the "formal statements of curriculum objectives (which) regularly feature a commitment to equip students with the capacity to understand and participate in the democratic processes around them" and "what is actually taking place in schools" (SSCEET, 1989, pp. 20 – 21). In a second report, in 1991, *Active Citizenship revisited* (SSCEET, 1991), the Senate Standing Committee expressed their frustration at the lack of progress towards closing the gap.

Concerns about civics education were amplified in the debate over Australia becoming a republic. It was an impetus given further weight in 1991, when Paul Keating became Prime Minister. Openly and avowedly committed to the cause of republicanism, Keating ignited the debate on the issue. However, many regarded the 'debate' as revealing the inadequacy of popular knowledge on associated political issues, such as the procedures for the appointment of the Governor-General or the issues

over ‘reserve powers’. Keating’s Republican Advisory Committee (1994) reported a need for increased knowledge about Australia’s constitutional arrangements, which prompted the Prime Minister to establish the Civics Expert Group in June 1994, under the chair of Stuart Macintyre, Professor of History at Melbourne University. Keating supported the recommendations of the group’s report in 1995, *Whereas the people…*, with $25 million to fund some of its recommendations. As Pascoe states:

> The Civics Expert group found overwhelming evidence of inadequate teaching of civics and citizenship education over a thirty year period, a strong community sentiment that something should be done about it, and the bipartisan and political will to make it happen. (Pascoe, 1996, p. 22)

Watson, Keating’s speechwriter and later biographer, disagrees strongly with the last remark. In his analysis of the purpose and course of the Civics Experts Group, Watson re-iterated the worth of the thrust of the Civics Expert Group’s report, but states that the recommendations were never carried out, and this was because of the obstructionism of the state education departments, who “resisted civics as they always resist national initiatives in education” (Watson, 2002, p. 492).

Both interpretations have some merit; for example, one of the principal outcomes of the recommendations of the Civics Expert Group was the production of the *Discovering Democracy* curriculum package by the Commonwealth Curriculum Corporation for use in lower secondary schools. Furthermore, reaction in the states was not purely one of resistance. It was not lost on some observers that the primary vehicle for civics education suggested by the Civics Expert Group was the classroom subject of History, and several History teachers in WA became aware of the opportunity that civics education could bring to improving the popularity and reputation of the subject, which in WA schools only existed in the upper secondary years. Moroz (2001) has

noted that civics education in WA had declined after the 1960s as a result of the demise of lower-secondary school History and the introduction of Social Studies into the lower school curricula. An opportunity existed for History curricula policy makers to seize the initiative in this regard, although others rejected the idea of such a 'marriage of convenience' (Hogan, 2000).

In summarizing this section, two important strands among the influences outlined above impacted on the decision-making of policy groups involved with upper secondary school History curricula. The first of these was the initiative of the Commonwealth Government to generate micro-economic reforms in the Australian economy, and to link education firmly to those reforms. This was to be achieved by directing educationalists towards a consideration of the outcomes of education systems, and to link these to the concept of key competencies. The second influence was to promote national attention to the issue of citizenship, again through the channels of the education systems. In this, several history teachers identified an opportunity to raise the profile of History by making it the principal vehicle for civics education programmes.

Context of policy text production

Of the three interviewed respondents who were members of the History JSC/SC during the 1990s, two stated, without prompting, the significance of the initiatives outlined above in the deliberations of the committee in the 1990s. These two respondents had been teachers in the 1980s but had moved to positions within the area of curriculum development in the Ministry (later Department) of Education, and therefore brought to the syllabus committee a broader perspective of influences at state, national and international level (Interview 48). In contrast, for several of the teachers

involved in the policy process, the broader, national or international issues weighed less heavily than their dissatisfaction with the current syllabus, especially with regard to the teaching of Year 12. As stated in the previous chapter, the syllabus finalized by 1990 had engendered a level of dissatisfaction similar to that felt by teachers before the first curricular change in 1983 –84. These views contributed to the nature of this context, which in some ways shared similarities with the context of policy text production in the first phase, although in other ways it was significantly different. In the first phase, the levels of teacher dissatisfaction with the current syllabus had generated much of the energy and direction of the policy process, but the influential agents were those members of the History JSC who were principally from the tertiary sector. In the context of policy text production outlined below, it is teachers who both provide the energy for, and direction of change, and play a dominant role in the policy decision-making processes. Furthermore, after 1992, the influence of the tertiary sector on the History SC had become almost non-existent and teachers dominated its activity. Several key members recalled a context in which they could have a decisive impact on the outcomes of the committee, a situation they welcomed and responded to with energy and commitment (Interviews 25; 26; 48).

In interview, the respondent who had been Chair of the History SC outlined his recollection of two predominant sets of influences; on the one hand was the extent of dissatisfaction with the current History Curriculum, while on the other there was what he called a "movement to outcomes and an outcomes approach" (Interview 48), reflecting some of the curricular trends outlined in the previous section. Another respondent, who was a member of the History SC and a teacher, recalled only the first of these two sets of factors, while a third respondent , a curriculum officer, focused on the latter. Evidence from the minutes of the History JSC/SC over the period shows that

both sets of factors were to influence the policy making process that culminated in the new syllabus statement and examinations of 1996 -7.

The dissatisfaction with the existent History syllabus has already been considered in detail in the previous chapter, in the section under the heading of context of practice. Principally, dissatisfaction lay with the Year 12 component of the syllabus, which had become dominated by the objectified nature of the content requirements. The Chair of the History JSC recounted his experience of "a pretty crowded syllabus, a crowded curriculum" which had become "a time issue; it was about managing your time. It was about the fact that no-one could do it" (Interview 48).

The other set of issues that this respondent identified reflected the curricular developments that had occurred around the development of the national curriculum from 1989 to 1993. He used the word 'outcomes' as a collective phrase to define this, but as the interview proceeded the extent of meaning of this phrase became clear. He described the new approach as "a shift from an inputs-content focus" towards something that was "more about the processes and understandings, rather than specific pieces of content" (Interview 48). As explained in the previous section, outcomes-based education (OBE) had become the lynchpin of the curriculum frameworks of the national curriculum, which had been more concerned with schooling at the K – 10 levels, but the discourses of OBE were part of a larger set of discourses that were clearly being transferred to thinking on the upper school curricula as well. The impetus of the Finn Review (1991) and the Carmichael (1992) and Mayer Reports (1992) had resulted in members of the History JSC/SC looking for ways of linking generic competencies to the upper secondary History curriculum. Nevertheless, for anyone who was disillusioned

with the extent of content to be covered in the History syllabus, OBE, with an emphasis on skills and processes, had much appeal, on the surface at least.

This view, of the significance of skills and processes, was supported by another respondent, a member of the History JSC/SC whose interpretation of events at that time was that "the focus was on a constructivist syllabus, which included skills and processes and was built around investigations" (Interview 25). Constructivism in this sense was an emerging theory of learning based on four sets of theories: constructivist epistemology; neurobiology of cognition; systems theory; and new conceptions of learning (Terhart, 2003). From these emerge a number of features of the theory, the principal one being that students learn through the construction of meaning. Learning is a search for meaning and meaning is constructed internally, not imposed from outside. Knowledge, content and abilities are not acquired or absorbed but instead are constructed by the learner. Successful learning depends on the context based on student participation and engagement in the learning processes; "The participation of the learner in the learning process has changed from the largely passive to the (hyper)active" (Terhart, 2003, p. 31).

At the meeting of the History JSC in November 1991, a member of the committee presented a paper, the main contention of which was that the upper school History syllabus should be "more skills and process oriented" (HJSC Minutes 13/11/91). The thesis reflected that of the member's Bachelor of Education dissertation on the connection between employment, education and training in the formation of the national curriculum (Jones, 1992). The minute signals the first portent of a movement towards reforming the History curriculum and also signalled the nature of that reform

and the primary discourse that was to shape its direction, the idea of generic, portable competencies.

At one of the early meetings of the re-formed History Syllabus Committee (History SC), September 1992, its new Chair "spoke to the need for major syllabus change in History" (HSC Minutes 23/9/92). He identified three areas of concern, a skills focus, that Australian History should be compulsory, and that inequality between units should be addressed. Outlining the future policy process, he stated that "Should a major change be contemplated, the syllabus committee would need to prepare a statement of intent, outlining the rationale, structure and format of the new syllabus" (HSC Minutes 23/9/92). A special meeting to discuss and debate the issue would be held in November; all members had to be present, and if unable to do so, they were to send a deputy who would have full voting rights. Remarkably, considering its importance, there are no records of the meeting, only a notice that it was postponed from November 11th to November 24th. However, it can be surmised from future developments that the meeting approved the thrust for curricular reform, and a working party was established to prepare the statement of intent (Interview 26).

The statement of the Chair at the meeting of the History SC on September 23rd 1992 referred to another issue in the reform process in this phase, that of Australian history being a compulsory unit of study within the syllabus. This issue had been raised in previous phases of change, but with no effect. In 1989, as part of the responses to a survey on the proposed curriculum for 1990, those who wanted some compulsory Australian unit(s) had taken the opportunity to raise the issue. Respondents to the questionnaire made the first suggestions that Australian history should be compulsory, although they did suggest that Year 11 may be more appropriate for this. In 1991, the

Chair of the History JSC had received correspondence from the Social Studies Curriculum Advisory Committee "regarding the need for a compulsory section on Australia Year 11 and the Year 12 courses" (HJSC Minutes 10/4/91). The matter was put to review by a sub-committee, which reported back in November with three proposals: that the '*What is History?*' unit should be made compulsory for Year 11; that it should contain Australian contexts; and that there should be no compulsory Australian history unit in Year 12. The Syllabus Committee unanimously endorsed the last proposal, while the other two were modified before being accepted in principle (HJSC Minutes 10/4/91).

The issue of a compulsory Australian unit was to prove problematic for many members of the History JSC/SC. Many could rationalize the need for some compulsion in terms of the need for young Australian people to study the history of their own country, and particularly in the context of the push for more civics education. As one member of the History JSC/SC reflected, "I really pushed to make it compulsory at Year 12 level. I always thought of it in that way, that Australians should know something of their own history" (Interview 26). However, that argument ran counter to two very strongly held opinions among History JSC/SC members and in the broader History teaching community. The first was that the issues of flexibility and choice in the syllabus, as explained earlier, were almost sacrosanct (Interview 11) and members of the committee might expect a strong desire among members of the committee not to overturn this principle. The second belief, even more widely subscribed to, was the fear that making an Australian unit compulsory would threaten even more seriously the number of students choosing History in the upper school years. Six of the respondents interviewed recalled their deep levels of apprehension at that time, at the thought of Australian history units being compulsory. The issue illustrates the situation of that

time, that while pedagogical, philosophical and psychological issues were often brought to bear on the thinking behind the curriculum process, the spectre of declining student enrolments was never far away from the thoughts of the Syllabus Committee members and associated interested individuals and groups.

Considering the centrality of the 'statement of intent' to the curriculum process, in that it had to be approved by the SEA before any further change could be mooted, the number of people involved in its production was surprisingly small. A working party of three was elected, one of whom had been elected onto the committee because of her strong desire to see the syllabus changed (Interview 26). This person recounted how she and one other member of the working party drew up the statement almost entirely on their own:

> We had meetings…and nutted it out, what it perhaps should be like, and then we wrote it and submitted it to the committee for approval. And then it came back and we were asked to make a few changes and it was accepted. (Interview 26)

This document, pivotal to the policy process, had been almost entirely put together by two teachers, each from private, all-girls' schools. It refutes in part the claim by another that the policy process in this phase had been "cross-sectoral and consultative" (Interview 48).

The statement of intent was a document of two distinct parts. The first part was a 'rationale' for change to the study of History in Years 11 and 12 in upper secondary schools in WA. Large parts of the rationale re-appeared almost verbatim to the rationale that headed the Syllabus statements of 1996 and 1997 and so it will be analysed in more depth later, but at this stage it needs to be noted that it contained an expanded statement of the epistemology and legitimacy for the study of history, before listing a number of

"curriculum needs" (Statement of intent tabled at History SC meeting 22/2/94). These curriculum needs included:

1. The encouragement of critical thinking and skills based outcomes
2. A greater understanding of Australian cultural heritage
3. To ensure greater compatibility with the National and State frameworks in Studies of Society and Environment
4. To ensure comparability of units
5. To alleviate the constraints of the final examination
6. To provide a curriculum that is more relevant to the changing nature of the student population brought about by the increased retention rates in schools
7. To accommodate the S.E.A. desire for modulisation [*sic*]
8. To encourage the practice of history through the use of a broad range of resources and active learning. (Statement of intent tabled at History SC meeting 22/2/94)

The influence of discourses traced in the earlier part of this section and in the previous section of this chapter are clearly stated or strongly implied within this statement, and, taken together with the nature of the process in drawing up the document, appear to reflect a committee almost united in its views of the reasons for, and the nature and the direction of reform, in the form of a 'policy settlement' (Gale, 1999).

The first part of the statement concluded with a list of aims of the proposed course, referring to enabling students to develop skills, awareness, understandings of concepts; to use of variety of sources and present a variety of representations of the past; and to be able to asses the worth of these different representations. The second part of the statement then proposed an 'outline of course and content', one for Year 11 and one for Year 12. Significantly, each year group course would "be structured in Semester

length modules" (Statement of intent tabled at History SC meeting 22/2/94), meaning that only two units would be studied in any one year, a reduction of course content from the existing syllabus of one-third. Units were no longer to be classified by national/regional/chronological terms (e.g. 'Germany 1918 – 1945') but by process or concepts (e.g. 'The rise of fascism'). For the Year 11 course, a compulsory module was proposed, namely, 'Investigating the past'. Essentially, this was 'What is history?' drawn up in a new format. Schools could then choose from 'Imperialism and colonialism' or the 'Rise of Fascism and its impact on the [*sic*] Twentieth Century Europe', which allowed for a long-standing favourite topic, 'Weimar Germany and the Third Reich' to continue. For the course in Year 12, the compulsory unit proposed was 'Impact of war on twentieth century Australian society', thus addressing the need for a mandatory Australian unit, but providing some choice of content, either of two world wars or the war in Viet Nam. The choice for the other semester was between 'Economic change and its impact on a [*sic*] liberal democratic societies in the twentieth centuries' or 'Revolution – theory and practice', each a reiteration of some old favourites, 'America 1917 – 45' and the Russian or Chinese Revolutions.

The finalised Syllabus statements for 1996 (Year 11) and 1997 (Year 12) reveal that the first part of the statement of intent was formally accepted with little change, but that the proposed courses and structures in the second part of the document were very much altered after the statement of intent was ratified by the SEA on July 1st 1994. The Chair of the Syllabus Committee explained this by saying that the first part was the critical part: "We had to get that through in order to get any agreement to do any work on the syllabus" (Interview 48). The committee had to agree on every word of the rationale, but the details of the courses were less problematic. With regard to the courses, he pointed out that there had been agreement on the changed nature of the

units, to ones based on conceptual understandings rather than content based courses, and on the premise that "we didn't want too much in one year" referring to the need to reduce the content of the "crowded curriculum" (Interview 48).

Following the ratification of the changes by the SEA, the Syllabus Committee turned to the practicalities of the new syllabus. What followed was described by all three respondents who had been members of the History SC as a period of "feverish activity" (Interviews 25; 26; 48). The committee had resolved to establish the new syllabus in schools for Year 11 at the beginning of the school year of 1996, and this meant that eighteen months remained to finalise agreement on the courses to be offered in each year, to write the large amount of support materials which the committee deemed necessary to encourage teachers to support the change, and to place drafts of the proposed syllabuses in front of schools for comment within the required timeframe of one year before implementation, i.e. by December 1994.

In this part of the process, the Chair of the History SC pointed to "a new level of professionalism" (Interview 48) in the conduct of syllabus committees and syllabus development. A committee of writers was hired to prepare syllabus support material, and for the first time, this group, and the syllabus committee, received remuneration for their work, all of which took place outside school or department hours. He regarded this approach as a central factor in ensuring the success of the 'implementation' of the syllabuses in schools within the desired timeframe. The writers appointed to create the support materials were also carefully chosen, as they were widely respected members of the profession and active within the History Teachers' Association of WA (HTAWA), as the History Association of WA was now known. The other dimension to this strategy was to use these same teachers/writers as leaders of the 'implementation seminars' that

were held in 1995 to inform teachers of the proposed curriculum, to outline the changes to the syllabus and to lead teachers in the necessary professional development. The strategy had the effect of forcing teachers who were unhappy with aspects, or the whole package, of the proposed curriculum change, to voice their concern at colleagues rather than at members of the syllabus committee (Interview 26).

Implementation seminars were held throughout school districts in 1995, and in several cases, the reactions of teachers were hostile. One member of the History SC recalls trying to convince teachers of the need for a compulsory Australian unit, which had been strongly supported in committee, but "it was a battle with teachers. It came as real shock to teachers (respondent's emphasis) because very few had studied it" (Interview 26). In the minutes of the History SC is a particularly damning letter from a Head of Department in a government school, complaining of a "vague syllabus", "lacking support materials" which will "contribute to teacher stress" within a timeline of implementation that is too brief. The letter ended with the threat of "industrial implications" and referral to the State School Teachers Union of WA (HSC Minutes, 7/6/95). Many other teachers took the opportunity to respond through a questionnaire, which was taken up by 48 schools representative of the different systems, and the responses were listed (HSC Minutes, 7/6/95), giving a better indication of the concerns teachers felt about the syllabus. The principal concerns stated included: a widely held belief that historical concepts would be too difficult for many students, especially in Year 11; difficulties understanding the nature, level and scope of the investigations which were central to the syllabus; the loss of favourite areas of content, and questioning the choice of some new contexts, such as India and South Africa, which had been dropped from the syllabus nearly a decade earlier; and the cost and availability of the resources necessary to underwrite the new programmes. One particularly telling

comment was in the form of a question, “How does one carry out an oral investigation of the French revolution?” (HSC Minutes, 7/6/95).

The significant developments in the policy process between the ratification of the statement of intent in 1994 and the publication of drafts of the syllabus statements for the consultation process in 1995 were the changes to the units of study. Year 11 units were now all investigations: ‘Investigating change’; ‘Investigating responses to imperialism’ and ‘Investigating Fascism’. In Year 12 the compulsory Australian unit had been reworked into ‘The shaping of a nation: Australia in the twentieth century’ with a choice of studying either events from 1900 to 1945 or events from 1945 to 1990. There was then a choice between a unit on ‘International relations 1945 to 1990’ and one on ‘Revolutions’ (Draft syllabus statement; HSC Minutes, 6/6/95). The similarity of these revised units to existing units in the current Year 11 and year 12 syllabuses was not lost on observers, but explained by the Chair of the History SC as a compromise over the extent of change. His explanation was that

> if you present a syllabus that looks totally new…(with) new content that people aren’t familiar with, well that would have been a double whammy. So it really was a compromise, but one of those things that was a do-able thing for teachers, and the majority of the committee were school-based people. (Interview 48)

He continued to dwell on the level of compromise in the nature of the assessment structure of the new syllabus and argued that these concessions had compromised the quality of the final document to meet what he considered to be the aims of the syllabus reform. In summary he stated that “it certainly went further than some people wanted to go, while for others, like me, it didn’t go far enough” (Interview 48).

To what extent the aims of the process had been compromised, and to what extent the policy documents reflected the influences on committee members and their own beliefs and aspirations, will be assessed in the next section of the chapter, in an analysis of the policy documents themselves.

Analysis of the policy texts

The Syllabus statements for Year 11 and Year 12 in Modern World History. Since 1985, the upper secondary school History curriculum had been contained in two Syllabus statements, one for Year 11 and one for Year 12. In 1996 and 1997, Year 11 and Year 12 remained discrete courses of study in all accredited courses of the Secondary Education Authority (SEA), with History no exception (SEA Syllabus Manual, 1996, 1997). There were common components to the Syllabus statements of each course, however, and although the content of each course varied, there were still similarities in their structure.

The components of both syllabus statements were alike. Each contained a 'Rationale'; a 'Syllabus framework'; a list of educational objectives; a statement about investigations; and a 'Structure and organisation'. The contents of the first four were exactly the same and so these will be analysed together, before analysing the differences in the structure and organisation of each syllabus separately.

The Rationale of the documents served two purposes, to provide a philosophical basis to the course and to establish some legitimacy. Statements of legitimacy included justifying the nature of the syllabus and the study of history, which, it stated, is achieved principally through the argument that history provides a link between the past and the

present and that it is the role of the historian to sharpen those links for the betterment of individuals and society more generally. Significantly, the opening sentence of the rationale, “A study of history can develop citizens”, refers to the issue of citizenship education which had become a topical issue in the mid-1990s, and something that history teachers saw an opportunity to develop in conjunction with the study of history. Interestingly the rationale stated that these citizens are “equipped to recognize and question myths about the structure and values of their society” but no mention is made of the ability to discover the realities. The statement generally reflects some views of broad currency about the past and suggests the influence of some ‘post-modern’ thinking among members of the committee.

The rationale attempts to redefine the nature of history that had been incorporated into the 1984 syllabus statement, and a more extended view of the disciplines of the subject is given. Ontologically, the past is represented as a problem, rather than as a definitive entity. Succinctly, it states that, “The History syllabus has as its basis the notion that there is no one definitive story of the past” (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 53; p. 125). The epistemology of the subject is predicated by this view. History is “the study and practice of making meaning of the past. It is also the study of the problems associated with establishing and representing that meaning” (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 53; p. 125). The school subject, therefore, is concerned with the journey rather than the destination, and this view underpins the nature of the syllabus. The reference to the term ‘meaning’ several times in the rationale relates to the constructivist underpinnings of the syllabus as well.

The syllabus framework around which the units of study are constructed is identified as a search for conceptual understandings, through a number of key

understandings, each of which contains a number of key elements. Students were expected to attain certain conceptual understandings through "inquiry process skills and the ability to solve problems" (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 54; p. 126). The logical connection of these links can be questioned as inquiry process skills and problem solving do not in themselves lead to conceptual development, nor does conceptual development rely on the former processes. The conceptual understandings are presented as given statements in the course outlines, and they can still be understood and enhanced by other means, including traditional teaching methods.

If the syllabus framework is a statement of hope and belief in the type of pedagogy that the courses will encourage, rather than mandate, the listing of the educational objectives adds to this. Conceptual understandings are listed and in some cases defined, but with one glaring omission. At the end of the course, it is stated, "students should be able to….demonstrate understandings of themselves and their own society through a study of <u>other</u> societies over time (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 54; p. 126) (my emphasis). In a syllabus which has included a compulsory Australian unit for the first time in four decades, the absence of a statement about students learning about themselves from a study of their own society over time appears as an oversight.

Process skills are also clearly enumerated and defined, an attempt to ensure that the deficiencies of the previous syllabus were not repeated. The four sets of process skills identified were: analysis, argument, communication and research, which are separated from the treatment of investigations which is surprising as these skills appear to be a reflection of the 'Investigation, communication and participation' strand of the curriculum framework for the national curriculum.

Three types of investigation are identified for the purpose of the curriculum: document investigations, research investigations and oral investigations. To cover all three types, a list of key components of an investigation was presented in the form of a diagram (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 54; p. 126). The contentious one of these three types of investigation was the oral one, with a significant compromise altering the meaning of the term. One respondent, a member of the History SC (Interview 26), was adamant that the term oral investigation meant just that, investigating an historical problem through the use of oral sources. Where it was impossible to find candidates for interview, the History SC member suggested that the investigation could still occur through a secondary oral source, such as an audio-tape recording or a video-recording (Interview 26). However, the syllabus statement defines the oral investigation which encourages students to use oral conventions and evidence in their research and/or in their presentation of findings. In these two words (my emphasis), the door had been left open for those teachers who simply looked to oral presentations as the assessment type for this investigation.

There were similarities in the structure and organisation of each syllabus for Year 11 and Year 12. Each syllabus provided for units of one semester's length, i.e. a module of study, and schools could choose from a limited choice. In Year 11 there was a choice from three units, the syllabus committee having abandoned the proposal to make the 'Investigating the past' a compulsory unit. In Year 12, the unit on Australian history was compulsory, and then schools could choose one from two alternatives. The units followed a similar structure; each contained five key understandings, and within each key understanding there were a number of key elements, usually between four and five. The remarkable feature of these key understandings and key elements, for traditional History teachers, was that they had no specific relation to content, but were

highly generalized, or 'generic', as they came to be called (Interview 37). For example, where the unit in the 1990 syllabus on Weimar Germany and the Third Reich expected students to understand the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazi party, in the new syllabus, under the heading 'Investigating fascism', students should understand the nature of fascism "by investigating techniques for the gaining and acceptance of power" (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 57). The understanding could also be applied to the context of Mussolini in Italy should a school choose, but in practice, few did.

The other similarity in the structure and organisation lay in the definition of assessments. Each module carried six different assessment types: a document investigation; a research assignment; an oral assignment; a skills test; a cognitive test; and an examination. The first three of these were defined in the syllabus statement earlier under the heading of 'Investigations'. However, the 'skills test' was not defined, which was to cause problems later. A weighting percentage was also given to each assessment type, and among the more startling to some teachers were a weighting of only 5 – 10 % for cognitive tests and a maximum of 20% for in-school examinations. The assessments that were tests of process skills carried a combined weighting of between 65% and 75%. This careful itemization of assessments and their weightings was to address one of the principal failings of the previous syllabus, where assessment types had been defined too vaguely, and as a result had not impacted on the practice of many teachers in the state. This new syllabus statement had attempted to correct this, but failed to do so entirely, as the context of practice will reveal.

The specific units of study for each syllabus, in Year 11 and in Year 12, need a brief analysis. In Year 11 there were three units to choose from: 'Investigating change'; 'Investigating responses to imperialism' and 'Investigating fascism'. 'Investigating

change' was not compulsory as had been proposed in the statement of intent produced by the History SC, and was an amalgam of some aspects of the old 'What is history?' unit of the previous syllabus, and some long standing, favourite topics of the previous syllabuses, such as 'Japan 1853 – 1955' and 'USA between the wars'. Contexts of local, Western Australian and Australian history were also available for study in this unit. The second unit, 'Investigating responses to imperialism' allowed contexts from South Africa, India, Ireland and China, principally from the nineteenth century. 'Investigating fascism' offered choices of Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany but such was the prevalence of the latter in Year 11 syllabuses already that the choice was expected to be straightforward one.

In Year 12, the first unit, 'The shaping of a nation: Australia in the twentieth century', was compulsory but within the unit, there was choice. Schools could choose to meet the five key understandings either through a context of 'Australia 1900 to 1945' or from 'Australia 1945 to 1990'. The five key understandings were concerned with issues of identity, international relations, economic change, a political crisis and the social and cultural experiences of some of its people. It was held by members of the History SC that there were rich examples of these in either context to ensure courses of comparable demands, although a long standing Examiner of the subject disagreed with this, particularly when engaged in searching for suitable questions for the examination across both contexts (Interview 37). Of the two units where schools could make a choice, the alternatives were 'International relations 1945 to 1990' or 'Revolutions'. Within both units teachers could exercise a choice over the content with which to study these themes.

The key understandings of the latter unit included a general overview of revolutions, including a theoretical model of the phenomena (Interview 26), and then the division of the revolutions into four stages, each of which was to be addressed by one key understanding. This has proved to be one of the most contentious areas of the syllabus. First, there are many who question the validity of a theoretical model of a revolution in the first place (Interview 11) but equally contentious have been the divisions of the revolutionary periods, which were made arbitrarily by the History SC. For example, in one of the four stages of the Russian revolution is 'the period of consolidation, from 1922 – 1928'. It has been brought to the attention of a Curriculum Officer of the Curriculum Council (Interview 23) that almost every textbook on the Russian revolution cites the period 1918 to 1921 as the period of consolidation, yet these views differ completely from the construct of the Syllabus Committee. It is a situation that results often in students writing about the wrong stage in the examination. Equally spurious is the choice of the post-revolutionary period finishing in 1941, rather than with Stalin's death in 1953. The latter would give a far more balanced view of the nature of Stalin's regime, by including a consideration of soviet experiences in World War II and the post- war USSR, but the only explanation given for not extending the period under study is that it would be too long (Interviews 23; 24). This provides a good example of what one respondent, a university professor of History and long standing Examiner called "syllabuses frozen in time…very specific periods in time that seemed to me to have been plucked out of the air" (Interview 37).

Despite a number of issues with this part of the policy text, the text reveals the significance of a number of influences that were driving those leading the curriculum policy process. Chief among these were the emphasis on generic, transferable skills; alignment with national developments within lower school curricula; engagement with

new theories and understandings of student learning; a focus on outcomes; a desire to create a curriculum that gave all students the opportunity to engage with the processes of the subject; the issue of citizenship and related to this the desire to see all students study some Australian history.

The Examination in History 1997. The importance of the first examination paper (SEA, TEE Examination in History, 1997) to the policy process was not lost on the Chair of the History SC; as he recalled: "Before people would sign up on whether they want to do this, they wanted to see what the exam was going to look like" (Interview 48). Members of the committee were also aware that despite the best intentions of the changes to the examination paper in 1983, they had not in themselves created deep and lasting reforms to the pedagogy of many teachers. It had been chiefly those who saw the opportunity afforded by the examination that changed their teaching practices, and by 1990 many had resorted to traditional practices in the face of the demands of the examination requirements.

Furthermore, there was the need to test some of the process skills learnt by students, as demanded by the new syllabus. The failure of the previous examination format to do this had contributed to the demise of new pedagogies, especially in Year 12. As the member of the History SC responsible for creating the examination remembers, the dilemma was "if students spend all their time doing this, and then needs to be reflected (in the exam), so how do you get some of that stuff embedded in there?" (Interview 48)

A further issue was that a balance had to be found between those who believed that essays were still the best positive discriminator for the students of higher ability,

and those who looked to alternative formats for the presentation of historical knowledge and understanding. The respondent given the responsibility for drawing up the examination remembers that "we agreed we wouldn't have four essays in there. So if you don't have essays what do you have?" (Interview 48). A final consideration was the demand from the Curriculum Council (formerly the SEA) that the number of questions in the History paper be reduced so that the possible permutations of answers would be fewer. This demand for greater comparability had been a long-standing issue between the SEA/Curriculum Council and the syllabus committees since 1985.

The examination that was used for the TEE in 1997, to assess the Year 12 students who had experienced the new syllabus in Years 11 and 12, or just in Year 12, was a masterpiece of compromise between these various demands. The paper consisted of two booklets, one a booklet of documents to accompany the questions of the first two sections. Being separate from the 'Question and Answer booklet' gave both the appearance of 'working texts', and a more practical, engaging nature to the examination. The paper itself contained four sections, with the first two devoted to testing process skills and the latter two containing essay questions related to each of the three units covered by students.

Section 1 of the examination contained two questions, each of similar nature. Question 1 comprised six part-questions to a range of sources on Australia 1900 to 1945, while Question 2 had a similar format, except that the sources were about Australia 1945 to 1990. Each of the group of sources followed a particular theme. The questions in this section asked what might be termed relatively 'shallow' analysis of documents, with a broader question at the end which asked the student to relate the experiences represented in the sources to her/his understandings of the theme. As the

respondent responsible for creating the examination pointed out, this first question was a smaller version of the type of document investigation that students were required to do as part of their school-based assessments. In this way, the process skills demanded by the syllabus were being assessed more closely and so exerted pressure on recalcitrant teachers to adjust their teaching methods.

Section 2 of the examination contained just one question, Question 3, divided into four parts. The four part-questions related to any one of seven 'document sets' in the Document booklet, and each set contained a pair of sources, one textual and one either graphic, pictorial or numerical, and expected students to analyse the sources in much greater depth. Although never stated, many teachers interpreted this as a reflection of the 'skills test' component of the syllabus, because it involved the analysis and interpretation of primary sources at a much deeper level (Interview 23).

Sections 3 and 4 each contained four questions to be answered in an essay format. What was innovatory about these essay questions was their 'generic' nature. For example, by reference either to the 1900 to 1945 context or to the 1945 to 1990 context, students could select their own topics to "Analyse the nature of the social and political response to at least one significant change in Australia's economic circumstances". To that end they could write about the Great Depression of the 1930s, the economic impact of one of the World Wars, the post-World War II reconstruction, the boom of the 1950s and 1960s or the recession after 1974. Similarly, in the section relating to revolutions, students were asked to "Examine the nature of the social, political and economic discontent which preceded the revolution and the extent to which this was overcome as a consequence of the revolution", and they could draw on their knowledge of which ever one of the four revolutions they had studied. The nature of these essay questions

tied in closely with two stated features of the new syllabus: the desire to promote greater conceptual understanding and the notion of knowledge being

> sufficient to enable them to discuss the historical issues outlined in their selected areas of study. Their knowledge should allow for the illustration of the key conceptual understandings for the unit. (SEA Syllabus Manual 1997, p. 127)

The examination had gone along way in promoting this changed concept of historical knowledge, which marked a significant shift from the previous situation where the regurgitation of commonly agreed, highly detailed factual knowledge was the measure of the successful student.

Of all the themes which appeared most frequently in the responses of the interviewees, one was the emphasis on the nature of history being about gaining understanding through engagement with the subject and the exercise of tentative knowledge. The fact that many of them were intimately concerned with this part of the policy process, of moving the syllabus towards this end, may explain this phenomenon. It might have appeared from the apparent tighter coupling of the examination and the syllabus that their expectations had at last been realised. The context of practice, however, does not suggest that committee members and teachers found that all their problems had been solved.

Context of practice

This section of the chapter will consider the context of practice from the same perspectives as in the previous chapter. These perspectives have been the impact of the new syllabus on pedagogy; its impact on professional morale; its impact on the teaching of Australian history; its impact on student enrolments and the impact on assessments.

In this chapter, it is appropriate to consider the impact on assessments more closely in the light of pedagogical issues, and therefore the issue of assessments will be considered after the subsection on pedagogy, whereas in the previous chapter it was considered as part of the subsection on teachers' professional morale.

Impact of the new curriculum on teaching and learning of History

Respondents who were teachers all recalled the positive impact that the changes to the syllabus had on their own pedagogy. A theme that ran consistently through the interview transcripts with regard to this phase of the policy process was 'student engagement with the practices of the subject', and the new syllabus was commended by practitioners for encouraging a move towards this (Interviews 12; 23; 24; 26).

Two respondents recalled the improvements in teaching and learning as a result of the reduction in content, and the changed emphasis on knowledge formation in the new syllabus (Interviews 12; 24). The reduction from three units to two translated simply into reducing the demand on teaching content by some 30%, although, as one respondent pointed out, the academic year has also been shortened, but not in the same proportion (Interview 24). Nevertheless, this same teacher reflected that new approaches to teaching history, "the dramatic approach, the jurisprudential model of getting the kids to really interrogate something…could only come with the freedom offered by the new course" (Interview 24).

Several respondents perceived that the most positive change in teaching and learning was a shift to a student-centred approach. One said that:

> It allowed students to get more involved in history through being able to use more of the alternative resources…they could actually get in and physically investigate them, rather than just note-take, and they were learning different skills. (Interview 23)

The most telling impact for this teacher was when students came to terms with the change in their own learning. He recounted how, when the syllabus first changed, students would ask him for packages of sources to 'learn', to prepare for the examination, but slowly the students realised that "they couldn't learn the documents as content; they had to learn a process" (Interview 23).

For another teacher, the emphasis on historiography was the most marked result of the teaching and learning demanded by the new syllabus, another reference to the extent students were expected to engage with sources (Interview 12). However, for this teacher "the excitement and challenge… in history now is the dialogue concept", the phenomenon of students engaging with the subject by producing their own ideas and interpretations of the topics covered. History for students, he recalled, had "been opened up and your response now is to a set of events and it's your understanding, it's your interpretation, which is as valid as anyone else's and that's where the excitement and interest comes" (Interview 12). This sentiment was echoed by another respondent who also recalled the shift from "a teacher-focused subject…to a student-centred course, where students have the right to write their own history, where the important thing is the evidence that they have marshalled" (Interview 25). That students were now able, and permitted, to write their own histories, in a variety of media in some cases, was identified by several of the respondents as the most important change in the teaching and learning of History to result from the new syllabus (Interviews 12; 23; 24; 26; 37; 48).

Related to this has been a change in the relationship between the teacher and student, in part positive, and in part negative. For one teacher, his recollection was having to come to terms with a changed role in the classroom, in his words "from a sage on the stage to a guide on the side" (Interview 12), a situation that he believes has enhanced his relationship with students and fulfilling the moves towards an approach based on student outcomes, which was a thrust of the changes in the syllabus. On the negative side, another respondent recalled a dimension that resulted from the emphasis on internal assessment, which will be traced in the section on professional morale.

The last of the positive impacts of the new syllabus was an emphasis on higher order thinking skills. In contrast to the earlier situation, where student success was measured in terms of reproducing transmitted knowledge, respondents identified that the criteria for academic success in History after 1996-97 included the demonstration of higher order skills, such as critical thinking, original thought, and the marshalling of detail to support a thesis. As one teacher put it,

> It rewards… the student that reflects and thinks about what she takes on, what it is they have read and studied. They can't be excellent students unless they can put some original slant on something. The document studies almost force them to do that. (Interview 12)

While much of the evidence gained from interviews links the changes in pedagogy to the opportunities provided by the new syllabus, one respondent noted the role of two other factors whose impact had peaked by the 1990s (Interview 25). These were the photo-copier and the video recorder, which together had allowed students to experience a far greater range of sources than had been possible twenty years earlier. The photo-copier had allowed the reproduction of a wealth of primary, document sources to be

used in classrooms, allowing the 'hands-on' approach welcomed by at least one respondent, while the video-recorder allowed the use of stimulating audio-visual resources in the classroom. As another respondent pointed out, his own interest in Australian history had been kindled by the vast range of documentary and drama material now on television (Interview 24). Both resources could be easily, and increasingly cheaply, reproduced in the classroom to enhance the interest and engagement of students.

Respondents who were teachers provided evidence of the positive impacts of the new syllabus and, as in previous phases, were clearly those who had seized the opportunities offered by the new syllabus to adopt a form of pedagogy that was aligned to their own philosophies of teaching and learning. By contrast, some respondents whose experiences including observing other practitioners, marking TEE examination papers, or having to visit schools to 'moderate' teachers, stated a belief that not all teachers had made the expected change to their strategies. One recalled evidence from the marking of TEE papers that revealed students who had not been sufficiently prepared in the process skills necessary to answer questions in the first two sections of the examination (Interview 26). Another respondent recalled evidence that students were obviously still preparing rote-learned essays to regurgitate, irrespective of what the questions asked. One respondent qualified this by remarking that this may have been a defensive strategy of weaker students (Interview 23), but another was less forgiving of her profession, believing that such an approach indicated that students had not been made aware, by teachers, of what the course, and the examination was aiming to achieve (Interview 26). From his experience as a Curriculum Officer for the Curriculum Council, one respondent recalled that school visits and inspection of some teachers' assessments and student work revealed that they had not come to terms with the

demands of the revised courses (Interview 23). It was, he recalled, a situation that improved with time, but his explanation for several cases was that some teachers faced the "dilemma of teaching towards a semi-outcomes based course, while still having to prepare students for a standardized examination" (Interview 23).

This tension between the demands of an outcomes-based syllabus and an examination that was based on standardisation of marks and student performance provides a suitable point to embark on a consideration of the issues that assessment, both internal (or school-based) and external, created among teachers and others associated with the upper school History curricula.

Impact of the new curriculum on assessment structures and practice

A long-standing debate over issues of internal and external assessment was the extent to which internal assessment types should relate to the assessment types found in the examination. On the one hand was the strongly held view that the principal rationale for internal assessments was that they provided alternatives to the assessment modes of the examination, and allowed students to express their knowledge and understandings in different ways (Interview 25). On the other hand there was the argument that whatever the merits of alternative assessments, it was irresponsible of a teacher not to relate internal assessments very closely to what the students would face in the examination (Interview 23). Respondents from both sides of the argument stated that they had welcomed the new format of the examination after 1997, because it did seem to couple with the educational objectives of the syllabus more closely. Nevertheless, the range of assessments demanded by the new syllabus appeared to support teachers who subscribed to the former view, that alternative, non-examinable types were encouraged.

One example of this was the oral investigation, something that was impossible to reproduce in an examination.

The oral investigation was identified in the syllabus statement as one of three types of investigation which together formed the core activity of a student's programme. Investigations were to follow the conventions outlined in the syllabus statement, which were stated both in text and in a diagram (SEA Syllabus manual l997, pp. 126-7). However, the addition of the words 'and/or' in the textual definition of the oral investigation meant what should have been an investigation could be confused with an oral presentation. In the questionnaire after one consultation, a teacher had raised the difficulty of conducting oral investigations on areas of study in the 18th and 19th century, to which a member of the History SC had responded that the investigation of any type of oral source, audio or audio-visual, was permissible. Nevertheless many teachers regarded this form of assessment as simply an oral presentation, something which disturbed one member of the History SC. It was her view that

> the part of our syllabus that is very poorly handled and poorly understood is our intention for the oral investigation. Teachers still see that as kids getting up and giving a minute's speech, but it's really about investigating oral sources. Yes! It's an investigation! (Interview 26)

Some teacher-respondents justified the use of oral presentations as a means of sharpening students' understanding of historical topics from the perspective of key individuals, something that has become a common examination question in the essay sections of the paper. However, another respondent highlighted the dangers of such assessments, because of the link between internal assessments and the examination.

From his experience as a Curriculum Officer with the Curriculum Council, this respondent identified the anomalies between the marks students in some schools achieved in their internal assessments with the marks they achieved in the examination. As a teacher, he admitted to conducting oral presentations rather than investigations, as a form of alternative assessment, which students could reveal abilities they might not do in other types. However, as he visited schools in his new role, he became aware of the dangers of such strategies. He recounts how he saw

> students presenting a play for this assessment, and they put in hours of work putting costumes together. It looked marvellous as a piece of drama, and they got very high marks. But when it came to TEE time, the statistical processes are applied and suddenly they think they are going to get 75% and they only get 55%. (Interview 23)

The problem this experience had highlighted was that after 1997, there was increasing attention paid to the correlation between the internal marks a student gained and the mark gained in the examination. Part of the reason for this was the decision to end the standardization of students' marks based on the students' scores in the Australian Scholastic Aptitude test (ASAT), which all TEE candidates had to sit. Now the only common variable on which to base standardisation of the two marks was the examination marks of the students. Therefore the marks gained in the examination had considerable impact on the students' overall tertiary entrance score (TES), both as a component of their overall mark and also as a standardizing device.

This process excited even more interest with the decision, at about the same time, of the print media in WA to publish what have become known as 'league tables', tabulations of tertiary entrance results achieved by each school. This focused attention more carefully on the anomaly between internal marks and external marks, and as two

respondents recalled (Interviews 23; 24), this created a furore in January 2002 when the *West Australian* newspaper published a banner headline "Grading not up to the mark" (Hewitt, 2002). The story below the headline related to students who had been 'failed' by their teachers because their internal marks were so much higher than their examination mark. Official and unofficial responses to the story, with regard to the different nature of the two assessment types, could not compete with the popular impact of this story, and schools turned their attention to preventing such anomalies occurring again. The Curriculum Council also responded with a policy that any subject area in any school with a disparity in the two sets of marks of 10% would receive a school visit from a Curriculum Officer (Interview 23).

The impact of this was two fold. One was to reduce the scope of assessment types carried out in schools, as experienced by two respondents who were Curriculum Officers with the Curriculum Council (Interviews 23; 24). One of them recalled the advice he gave to teachers:

> Look, the main concern of yours should be statistical moderation. So consequently you need to bear this in mind when setting your assessment tasks. You may have this fabulously creative assessment task, but this task is not going to appear in the TEE and my advice would be to prepare for the examination. (Interview 23)

From his recollections, and from those of the other Curriculum Officer interviewed, schools have increasingly resorted to limited forms of assessment, based on a 45 minute test (the time allocated for each question in the examination) and related very closely to what processes would be tested in the examination (Interviews 23; 24). This trend has directly, and negatively, impacted on the teaching and learning opportunities in History

classes, particularly in Year 12. The other impact is on the status of teachers and levels of professionalism which will be considered in detail in the meta-analysis.

Those who have analysed the policy processes in the context of the National Curriculum in England and Wales have described the influence of the print media, usually as forces of conservatism, and as vehicles of the 'discourses of derision' (Phillips 1998a; Crawford, 1995; Ball 1994). This influence was particularly significant in the first two contexts of the cycle. In an earlier chapter in this study, reference was made to the lack of interest among the media in the first two contexts of the policy process, with regard to History, but in the context of practice, in this phase of the process, the media played a significant, and largely destructive, role as far as the teaching and learning of History was concerned. Their stories have certainly contained what others would label 'discourse of derision'.

Impact of the new curriculum on professional morale

Respondents in the interview process were unanimous in their own views on the positive impacts that teachers felt from the introduction of the new syllabus. In particular, the new syllabus had led to the return to History teaching of one respondent who had turned his back on the subject thirteen years earlier, such was his level of dissatisfaction with the state of the subject in his school. In interview, he described a level of satisfaction that reflects those of other respondents (Interview 12). Words that this teacher used in his appraisal of the new syllabus were 'excitement', 'interest', 'challenge', and satisfying "a sense of curiosity" that had brought him back to History teaching. He claimed that "it is very challenging and I find that, personally far more rewarding" (Interview 12). His satisfaction also emanated from the demands of the

syllabus being much more in tune with his own philosophies of teaching, and the expectations he had about the nature of student learning. He put it like this:

> I've always, in my teaching, tried to reach higher order, higher level thinking, even with my Year 8 students. So I see much similarity with the new history course, because it's trying to do the same thing. (Interview 12)

While he still expressed some concerns with the syllabus, his level of satisfaction was in his trying to convince members of the Economics Syllabus Committee to implement some of the developments he had experienced in the new history syllabus. This was ironic as he had left History teaching earlier to concentrate on upper school Economics teaching, which he identified as far more progressive at the time.

Another teacher-respondent identified two aspects that caused some angst. Both were to do with internal assessment. The first, rather surprising, aspect was that internal assessment had compromised his relationships with students. As students' anxieties over their marks had grown since 2001, he found that this "detracted from the ability of students and teachers to work together". The teacher, he felt, was now perceived by students as "judge, jury and executioner" (Interview 23). This trend he related to the second area of dissatisfaction, "the increased public scrutiny or media scrutiny of exams and that is leading to an increased influence of the TEE on what is taught and how it is assessed and that I think is very sad" (Interview 23). An evaluation of this last concern forms a major part of the meta-analysis that follows this chapter.

Impact of the new curriculum on the teaching of Australian History

The fact that the teaching of an Australian unit of History was now compulsory in Year 12 may appear to make this part of the context appear irrelevant, but there

remained some issues with regard to the context of practice. The fact that an Australian unit of study was now mandated did not guarantee the quality of its delivery. Teachers teaching a topic under sufferance may not be inspired to do the topic justice. The nature of the student response to the topic also demanded attention. One member of the History JSC in the 1980s (Interview 11) was convinced that Australian history was far more difficult to teach than other topics, a reason for her commitment to free choice over units. For these different reasons, there was concern that one outcome of the syllabus change might be in poorer performances by students in the TEE examinations.

Certainly all the respondents except one remembered their deep reservations about History becoming compulsory before 1996-97. One was that their own experiences of Australian History at university were so miserable, while another was that students would abandon the subject when making their choices for Year 11 and Year 12. The same respondents later expressed their unqualified pleasure at noting the success of the changed syllabus, positive student enrolments and success in the Australian sections of the examination.

One teacher described it as “a positive move” although he noted that “student response is still a bit negative; they wish they could study some other course that is a bit more exciting than Australian History” (Interview 12). What he believed was changing their perceptions of the topic included a greater range of resources, especially in the audio-visual area, in the documents available, and in better quality textbooks (Interview 12). He also cited, as another positive factor, the interest in the ANZAC stories, an interest that has become a growing trend among young people (Interview 37) and due in large part to its exposure on television and film, especially the film *Gallipoli* (1980). Equally important in his perception of growing student interest in Australian history

was the ability to "go out and interview people – the oral investigation that we use to get them to interview relatives and anyone who may have some information" (Interview 12). This reflects the importance of improved pedagogy as much as the nature of the topic, but is clearly most suitable for an Australian topic.

Two respondents outlined the positive results in students' examination performances. Both noted that the highest scoring section of the examination in recent years has been Section 1, that which tested the students' responses to a range of eight or nine documents from one of the Australian contexts (Interviews 24; 37). The fact that students had scored well in the first section was identified by the Chief Examiner as both a reflection of improved teaching, particularly of process skills, and because it provided a positive opening to the examination. In the Australian documents section the 'part-questions' are worth two to four marks so they provide "a chance to get away to a good start" (Interview 37). This, he believed would lead to positive feedback for students making a decision on whether to study History in Years 11 and 12.

The respondent who has been a Chief Examiner did express some concerns about the Australian contexts, chiefly in the difficulties providing 'generic' essay questions that were fair to students across both contexts. He cited the key understanding on economic change as one that was advantageous for those studying Australia from1900 to 1945, because the Depression provided such a rich source of material, with nothing similar in the 1945 to 1990 area of study. In contrast the key understanding related to the social and cultural experiences of a minority group, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or women, would prove easier for students studying Australia 1945 to 1990. The significance of this for the examiner was to ensure that the spread of questions were fair for students across both groups (Interview 37).

Impact of the new curriculum on curriculum pressure and student enrolments

For many teachers and members of the History JSC/SC, one of the key concerns was the ability of the subject to attract students and compete with other subjects offered to students in the post-compulsory years of schooling. One of the major causes of disillusion with the previous syllabus was that it had appeared to contribute to a drastic decline in the numbers of students studying History by 1996. Equally, as several respondents had stated, one of the fears that they had about the new syllabus in Year 12 was that the mandating of a compulsory Australian area of study would have a further negative impact on student enrolments.

'Curriculum pressure' was related to this issue, but this reflected the belief that other subjects, particularly in the area of what was now known as Studies of Society and Environment, asserted a level of competition over students' subject choice in which History could not adequately compete. This reflected the nature of the subject, as it was identified by students, but it was also indirectly related to students' perceptions of their teachers, as one respondent noted (Interview 24). Morale of History teachers therefore had some influence over this issue. It may have been noted at at least one school in the state that a senior teacher had changed his subject specialization from Economics to History (Interview 12), and that same respondent recalled in interview that the number of History classes in his school had risen from an average of two to three.

Respondents who were teachers spoke of the positive impact on student enrolments that the changes in the History curriculum appeared to be having in their schools and this is supported by figures of student enrolments in History in Years 11

and 12. Between 1996 and 1999, there was an increase of nearly 8% in students in Years 11 and 12 studying History (Curriculum Council submission to National Inquiry into School History: Taylor, 2000a). By 2001, 17% of the Year 12 cohort was studying History, which compared favourably with Economics, which attracted 15.5% of the cohort and Political and Legal Studies, which attracted 5.5%. These trends were identified as a measure of the success of the curriculum change.

Conclusion

The patterns of enrolments show that student enrolments in History began and have continued to increase, steadily if not spectacularly after 1996. The views of respondents would suggest that the impact of the new curriculum was one of a number of factors contributing to this pattern (Interview 24). In its submission to the National Inquiry into School History in 2000 (Taylor, 2000a) the Curriculum Council concluded with the following:

> Teacher enthusiasm, that follows from sound understandings of why history is taught and knowledge of how to involve students their own learning, influences students to choose history courses at post-compulsory level. Best practice of teaching and learning of history occurs when teachers clearly identify the subject as history, clearly define and teach the historical inquiry process and allow students some ownership of the topics to be studied. (Taylor, 2000a)

The Curriculum Council may well have been giving their own syllabus a ringing endorsement, but it stated clearly their own perception that there had been a strong link between the reforms to the History syllabus of 1996-97 and the levels of student interest and teacher practice. Such a situation was what those on the History SC after 1991 had hoped to achieve in the curriculum changes realised in 1996-7, and to a large extent,

they could look on the results of this phase of the policy process with some satisfaction. Nevertheless, there were several trends behind the changes in this phase and across the other two phases that require deeper evaluation, which will be attempted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

META-ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The three previous chapters investigated the guiding questions underpinning this research conducted across three consecutive periods of time. The following chapter now extends the analysis beyond the guiding questions by moving to the level of meta-analysis. This meta-analysis deals with two matters concurrently, namely, a consideration of key themes which emerge across the three time periods of the policy investigated and a consideration of the contribution of this study to the process of policy analysis. The work of Elmore and Sykes (1992) provides a useful framework for engaging in such a dual purpose. While it is true to say that a number of aspects of their work have been superseded by the policy frameworks of others, nevertheless four areas of concern can be distilled from it which are most appropriate by way of providing foci for this meta-analysis. These four areas are as follows: ‘curriculum as worthwhile knowledge’, ‘curriculum policy as a form of control, and its impact upon teacher professionalism’, ‘the role of the state in the policy process’, and ‘public policy perspectives on the curriculum’. The concluding section of the chapter draws the four areas together by focusing on Looney’s (2002) argument that Ball's model of policy analysis as adapted for use in this study provides a very satisfactory unitary theory of curriculum in a 'post-Tyler' age.

Meta-analysis of the research findings

Curriculum as worthwhile knowledge

Young (1971, 1998), Bernstein (1971), Whitty (1984) and Apple (1990) are among those who have outlined the contested nature of knowledge in the curriculum and have demonstrated the 'hegemony' (Apple, 1990, p.5) of certain groups in the construction of knowledge within curricula. Their works have looked at school curricula more broadly, and have focused less on individual subjects. Nevertheless, they provide useful frameworks from which to analyse the changing nature of knowledge as evidenced in developments in the History curricula of upper secondary schools in WA. Apple (1990) poses four questions of curricula which may serve as the basis for launching an analysis of the changing nature of knowledge as evidenced in the study undertaken in this research. The questions are: Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? Why is it organized and taught in this way? Why is it taught to this particular group? (Apple, 1990, p. 6). Evidence from the research provides answers to these questions.

In the period leading up to the first phase of change located in this study, the nature of historical knowledge within the upper school History curricula of WA was that largely defined by the History Department of The University of Western Australia (UWA), although the hegemony controlling the nature of historical knowledge, as in other upper school subjects, emerged from a broader coalition, of the University and the 'high status private schools' (Kenway, 1987). The curriculum was still based on the syllabus put forward by the Public Examinations Board which emanated from UWA between 1913 and 1972, although by 1983 the statutory authority with responsibility for upper school curricula was the Board of Secondary Education. As evidenced from the

Rationale of the History Syllabus statements before 1983, the nature of historical knowledge was essentially modernist, based on grand themes such as 'Man's [*sic*] increasing mastery over his [*sic*] physical and biological environment' and 'The decline of dynastic rule and the growth of mass politics'. Such an epistemology directed the organization of knowledge into 'grand' chronological themes, which in turn affected the way that the subject was taught, through a pedagogy of didactic transmission. Historical knowledge taught in schools at that time was largely uncontestable knowledge, and evidence of the mastery over such knowledge involved the almost unquestioned rote learning and reproduction of prescribed content by students.

The changes to the History curriculum in 1983 and 1984 reflected the advent of a challenge to the long-standing hegemonic group, in that the locus of power in the History Joint Syllabus Committee (JSC) had witnessed a slight shift to other tertiary institutions, through changes in the History JSC's membership. One of these was the only other university in WA at that time, Murdoch University, which was founded in 1975 and which had been described by Print (1993, p. 54) as a institution committed to a 'social reconstructionist conception'. Other influential members of the JSC came from the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, which included an amalgamation of several teaching colleges in the state, thus suggesting an alternative perspective to the teaching of History at secondary level. There was also evidence of the influence of an 'activist' group of teachers behind these representatives from the newer tertiary institutions. The threat that their combined conceptions of knowledge posed to the hegemonic institutions described by Kenway (1987) was reflected in the reaction and resistance to the changes proposed in 1983. The resistance to the changes was identified by the Chair of the History JSC at that time as emanating from the "more prestigious, boys' private schools", who sought to abort the changes through appeals to

the History Department of UWA, since they seemed to believe they would stall the proposals and restore the traditional curriculum.

In answer to the third of Apple's questions, the changes in the stated epistemology of the subject in the reformed examination of 1983 and the new syllabus of 1984 were designed to generate a change in the pedagogy of the subject, with particular emphasis on greater student engagement with the subject, rather than by simple transmission and rote learning. Contestation over the nature of knowledge appeared again in the context of practice, evidenced by those who resisted the change being able to do so by retaining traditional methods which the breadth of questions in the public examination allowed them to do without penalising their students. The limited extent of the changes in pedagogy, as evidenced from statements of some respondents, also suggests that the changes in epistemology and pedagogy, while identified as pioneering by one, had failed to threaten the hegemonic conceptions of knowledge that existed before 1982.

If the History JSC revealed a slightly radical approach to the nature of knowledge when creating the changes of 1983-84, the evidence of the research suggests that they took a more conservative line in the period of change between 1985 and 1990. In this period they faced a challenge to their conceptions of knowledge from state government directives and from having to enact the recommendations of the two principal Reports commissioned by that government. Evidence suggests that the role of the History JSC was to generate compromises between the 'top-down' directives and to retain the values that the committee wished to retain. This was reflected in members of the History JSC recognizing the contribution of one of the committee, a lecturer in Education at a tertiary institution who was identified as having the necessary skills to

interpret the state government directives and to rework them into acceptable forms within the History Syllabus statements and other policy texts.

Still keeping in mind Apple's (1990) four questions across the three phases, the History Syllabus statement that was published in 1996-97 represented a major shift in the nature of knowledge, which in turn reflected a shift in the locus of power within the History Syllabus Committee. There had been a significant decline in the influence of the tertiary sector, with little input from members of any of the now four universities that existed in WA. The key activists in the policy process were a group of teachers led by a Curriculum Officer from the Ministry (later Department) of Education in the State government. The nature of historical knowledge was largely redefined, with considerable emphasis being placed on the tentative nature of historical interpretation, not just baldly stated in the Syllabus statement's Rationale, but actually recognised in the teaching and assessment patterns of the syllabus and the examination. This re-conceptualisation of knowledge was taken further by the organization of the syllabus into 'key understandings', rather than along the lines of specific narrative or chronological content to be learnt. The syllabus was now devised in terms of broad outcomes rather than the specific, content-based objectives as existed in the 1990 syllabus statement. Additionally, emphasis in the syllabus was given to the students' acquisition of 'generic' skills or 'competencies', which reflected broader conceptions of knowledge beyond those identified by Hirst (1973, 1974a, 1974b) and Phenix (1964) as being unique to the subject or 'form of knowledge' of History.

The developments in the nature of historical knowledge outlined above reflect the trends identified by Young (1998) when he described a pattern of secondary school curricula moving from what he termed integrated forms of knowledge, with high levels

of stratification and specialization, to collection forms of knowledge, of lower stratification and specialization. While his analysis is based on broader conceptions of curriculum, its value lies in it being largely concerned with the curricula of secondary, and particularly post-compulsory, schooling, and although it is located within an English context, it has much relevance to the situation in upper secondary History curricula in WA.

Young's (1998) thesis in this regard is that the highly stratified, highly specialized, integrated forms of curricula in (post-compulsory) secondary schools developed when the post-compulsory school population was less than 30% of the post compulsory age cohort, and was almost entirely university-bound. Changes to the nature of curricula have been driven by the fact that more than 70% of the (Australian) post-compulsory cohort now attends school, although some 37% of that population still has ambitions for tertiary education. What has emerged in the intervening period is the development of three 'tracks' of education, namely, an academic curriculum focused upon entry to university, a vocational, in-school curriculum which focuses on qualifications for work, and an out-of-school vocational programme. Young argues that these three tracks also reflect a hierarchy of value, with the academic curriculum being identified as the most worthy and the out-of-school programme identified as the least desirable (cf. Collins and Vickers, 1999). However, within the academic curricula such as History, there has been a move within policy making circles to create lower levels of stratification and specialization, as evidenced in the developments of the third phase of the policy trajectory when there was a move to incorporate generic 'key competencies' among the skills demanded of students, and the focus on outcomes. Nevertheless, as will be argued later, there still remained among the policy-makers a commitment to the specific qualities of an academic competitive curriculum (Ashenden et al., 1985), which

has led the State government of WA to propose changes to all post-compulsory curricula by 2007. Within these proposals is an attempt to end the existence of the three 'tracks' and reconceptualise the nature of knowledge once more. The implications of these proposals, designed to lead curriculum reform in WA into the future, will be discussed in greater length in the last chapter.

The changing nature of knowledge, as identified in the analysis so far, is complemented by the changing nature of school History over the period 1983 – 1997, and the advent of what was termed 'new history'. The development of 'new history' as outlined in Chapter 3 of this study represented a number of features. These included a changing epistemology and ontology; there was a greater focus on skills rather than content, with some of these skills being identified as uniquely historical and others being identified as generic, suitable for a broad range of occupations in the future workforce. These led to a major change in pedagogy, with emphasis on student immersion into some of the skills and practices of historians and an emphasis on student-centred learning, rather than transmission of factual detail (Husbands et al, 2003; Taylor, 2000b). There was also a growing emphasis on what Bottery (2000) calls education *for citizenship* rather than education *about citizenship* (p. 217). Although the term 'new history' rarely appears in the discourses within the policy contexts of the three phases from 1983 to 1997, the influences of developments in England and Wales, and later in the USA, are clearly identifiable and important, and were occasionally recognized by interview respondents. It seems that the terminology itself was never in vogue in WA to the same extent as it was in the international context. However, other terms to describe developments in History in Australia did appear in the discourses, including 'black-armband History' (Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Taylor, 2000b), a term

which reflected the ‘discourses of derision’ among the New Right in the same way that ‘new history’ did for similar groups in England and the USA.

In comparing the developments of the nature of History in WA with the international context, the trend in WA is markedly different from that in the USA and in England and Wales. In WA, the trend across the period of study has been a move towards the ideals of ‘new history’, but this is in marked contrast to the experiences of the other national settings mentioned. In the USA, after 1988, there was greater emphasis on ‘standards’ across all systems, resulting in greater emphasis on standardized tests, which prevented the developments in teaching and learning expected by the ideals of ‘new history’. In England and Wales, the imposition of the National Curriculum, in which History was initially a Foundation subject, largely saw the return to prescribed content, and greater emphasis on knowledge rather than skills, assessed through more uniform examination systems (Husbands et. al,. 2003; Phillips, 1998a).

One further mode of analysis of the developments of knowledge evidenced within this study lies in the theory of ‘cognitive interests’ of Jurgen Habermas, as outlined in Smith and Lovat (2003) and in greater detail by Grundy (1987). Grundy’s idea of curriculum as both conceptual and cultural is based on Habermas’ theory of cognitive interests, an attempt to identify the “fundamental human interests which influence how knowledge is ‘constituted’ or constructed” (Grundy, 1987, p. 7). Based on Habermas, Grundy proposes a ‘hierarchy’ of cognitive interests from the technical interest, through the interest of understanding, to the emancipatory interest. Each cognitive interest generates a different form of knowledge. The technical interest sees knowledge as ‘empirical-analytical’, the interest in understanding leads to an ‘historical-

hermeneutic' view of knowledge, and the emancipatory interest leads to a conception of knowledge as 'critical-self-reflective'.

The 'empirical- analytic' knowledge of the technical interest is grounded in experience and observation, that is the knowledge of positivism. With regard to History, it reflects a view of historical knowledge based on a definitive past, a past 'out there' which can be discovered, as Elton (1967), the champion of such a view, suggested. Knowledge is based on meta-narratives and predictable themes which cause 'History to repeat itself'. As both Grundy (1987) and Lovat and Smith (2003) suggest, the transmission of this type of knowledge is through a didactic pedagogy, where the teacher is seen as the sole authority, and the role of the learner is to absorb and reproduce transmitted knowledge as evidence of her/his mastery of it. This conception of knowledge and resultant pedagogy comes close to describing the nature of the History curricula as it existed in WA before 1983, with an emphasis on given knowledge, a pedagogy of transmission, and reproduction as evidence of learning.

There is strong evidence that the developments in the History curriculum in WA since 1983 have seen a move into the next level of cognitive interest and form of knowledge. Grundy (1987) explains the cognitive interest of understanding as that required to "interact or engage with the environment within which one exists" (p. 13). This leads to development of the 'moral sphere' in learning, learning to make judgments, about taking the right or appropriate action (p. 13). The dominant feature of pedagogy towards achieving this cognitive interest lies in 'student-teacher interaction' towards a "consensual interpretation of meaning" (1987, p. 14), a conception of pedagogy very similar to that proposed by Stenhouse (1975). The History curricula after 1983 reflected attempts by policy makers to provide students with the opportunity to

engage with the 'raw materials' of the historical process, i.e. primary sources, and to emulate, to some degree the activities of the professional historian, as suggested by the protagonists of 'new history'. In these activities and in the commitment to the students' production of their own tentative interpretations, there is clearly evidence of the 'historical-hermeneutic' form of knowledge which reflects the cognitive interest of understanding.

To what extent the WA History curriculum of the 1990s, and especially that in place after 1997, provides opportunity for the highest level of cognitive interest, the emancipatory and the 'critical-self-reflective' form of knowledge, is debatable. The emancipatory interest is concerned with a "liberation from dogmatic dependence" (Grundy, 1987, p. 16), a search for autonomy through critical self-reflection. The emancipatory interest, she argues, generates critical theories within knowledge and from this the development of "authentic insights". Smith and Lovat take an optimistic view of self reflective or critical knowledge, which they believe would be achieved when students ask:

> whether the information we have received is reliable, whether there might be points of view other than the ones we have heard, whether we are in a position to learn of the truth or whether we might not be controlled somehow by the forces of propaganda which surround us (2003, p. 89).

There would be those who argue that the upper school History curriculum since 1997 has moved in a considerable way towards Smith and Lovat's view of an emancipatory curriculum, pointing to the levels of critical analysis and textual deconstruction demanded in the new course. A movement towards this end is clearly evident but it does not suggest an arrival. The predominance of a public examination based upon standardized testing methods, and the belief among students that there are still accepted

versions of what is right and what is wrong when it comes to the marking of a student's examination paper, negate any conviction towards the present curriculum having an 'emancipatory' nature to it.

Again, as will be seen in the next chapter, a real opportunity for the more successful attainment of this ideal lies within the new post-compulsory History curriculum proposed by the Curriculum Council for 2007, but other features of the proposed curriculum are likely to see the opportunity lost.

Curriculum policy as a form of control, and its impact upon teacher professionalism

Several authors, some writing about the Australian context (Harris, 2000; Reid, 1999; Sachs, 2000) and others about the international context (Goodson, 2003; Sachs, 2003) have described the process of the centralisation of curriculum policy as one of 'curriculum control'. The phenomenon is part of a broader trend in educational policy making that has seen a centralizing of certain procedures on the one hand, and decentralization, or devolution, on the other. Curriculum policy making falls into the former category, and these authors have related this centralizing trend as one that has served to effect a form of curriculum control, coupled with a denial, or erosion, of the professionalism of teachers. In their different accounts these authors have severally described the means by which curriculum control has occurred and its impact on teacher professionalism. Some (Goodson, 2003; Sachs, 2003) have also suggested remedies for improving teacher professionalism in the current national and international context. Part of this analysis of policy with regard to History curriculum in upper secondary schools in WA demands an evaluation of the extent of curriculum control in the period 1983 – 1997 and whether there has been an erosion of teacher professionalism among History teachers in the state as a result.

Kirk and MacDonald (2001) have provided a framework for analyzing the extent of teacher ownership of curriculum change, a decline of which is seen as evidence of greater curriculum control. Their framework is based on Bernstein's writing about the social construction of pedagogic discourse, which analyses 'the relationships between meaning-making processes at a range of levels and the actual communicative processes that take place within and between the sites of the production of meaning making' (Kirk and MacDonald, 2001, p. 553). The critical field within this model of meaning-making lies in the "recontextualisation phase", where the mediation between the primary field (the sources of intellectual ideas) and the secondary field (education advisors, trial schools, school implementation) takes place. Kirk and MacDonald's findings revealed that there was little demand for 'teacher voice' at this important stage of the meaning-making process, and that policy makers only heard the 'teachers' voices' at the secondary phase where their expertise had some value, but only to a limited extent, in the form of identifying practical issues.

There are sufficient similarities between Bernstein's 'recontextualisation phase' and aspects of the context of policy making in Ball's model to apply Kirk and MacDonald's argument to the experience of teachers in the meaning-making process of History curriculum in upper secondary schools in WA. The evidence of the findings of the research in this study suggests that what Kirk and MacDonald found is essentially repeated with regard to History teachers in WA.

Ostensibly, teachers were involved in what might be termed the 'recontextualisation context' of the History curricula, in the first phase (1983-4) and in the third phase (1996-7). However, closer examination reveals that in both cases there

were limitations to the extent of teacher involvement which deny the belief that teachers, broadly, were involved in the meaning-making process. In the first phase (1983-4), evidence from interview respondents and some documents suggested the involvement of a broad cross-section of teachers, but closer analysis reveals that the teachers positively involved in the context of policy text production were those whose views on History teaching and learning, and on assessment, coincided with those of the influential members on the History JSC from tertiary institutions. This was largely achieved through common membership of the History Teachers' Association of WA, where the 'activist History teachers' shared ideas and collaborated with the members from tertiary institutions. The lack of broader consultation or involvement was reflected in the reactions and responses of those teachers who were not involved in the 'meaning-making' processes. Frustrated, or angered, by the announcement of change to the examination and subsequent syllabus in 1982, they resorted to 'underhand tactics' of looking to sidetrack, or deflect the movement by contacting members of the Department of History at UWA, who, they believed, held similar views to their own. At the local level, that is in the secondary context of Bernstein's (1990) model, or in the context of practice in Ball's (1994a) policy model, these teachers were able to resist some of the main thrusts of the curriculum change by clinging to traditional pedagogies and practices, which they were able to do as the examination provided sufficient scope for them not to have a deleterious impact on the examination performance of their students.

Regarding the third phase of curriculum change, again on the surface the evidence is that teachers were central to the policy- text production process in so far as two teachers were predominantly active in drawing up the text of the new syllabus statement. Furthermore, these teachers acted on behalf of a History Syllabus Committee now largely dominated by teachers, with little significant input from tertiary members

or the industry/community members who had been placed on the committee after 1992. Nevertheless closer analysis belies the simple appearance. The two teachers involved in drawing up the syllabus statement were both teachers at private, denominational, all-girls schools, located no more than ten kilometers apart. While in no way decrying the good faith with which these teachers pursued their task, nevertheless they were hardly representative of the broader History teaching profession. Rather they were an extension of the group mentality that existed among members of the History Teachers' Association of WA at that time, a similar situation to that occurring in the first phase of change.

While members of the Secondary Education Authority (later the Curriculum Council of WA) could refer to the extent of consultation that existed before the implementation of the new syllabus in 1996-7, the consultation process reflected the findings of Kirk and MacDonald that such processes are often little more than 'pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy' (2001, p. 565). At such consultation meetings, teachers were presented with what was largely a *fait accompli*, and teachers' voices were only heard with regard applying the thrust of the curricular change to teachers' local knowledge (Kirk & MacDonald 2001, pp. 558 – 561). Evidence of a lack of broader, meaningful consultation in what was essentially a diffusion of the proposed History curriculum for 1996-7 is evidenced in the number and nature of responses to the questionnaire supplied by the Authority at the consultations, and most graphically by a threatening letter to the SEA Social Studies Curriculum Officer at the time.

In the second phase of the trajectory, leading to the changes in 1990, all the evidence points to a 'top-down' imposition of curriculum within a broader policy ensemble, including features such as local management of schools and changed working

conditions for teachers. Frustration at the loss of teacher autonomy and erosion of professionalism was reflected in the action of government-school teachers going on strike in 1989. While the state government may have beaten a retreat in the early 1990s as a result of this action, curriculum control and reduced teacher professionalism was soon achieved in other ways.

Williams et al. (1999) have illustrated how curriculum control is further achieved through the nature of assessment. Arguing that there is a continuum of assessment from standardized tests at one extreme through to authentic testing at the other, the authors state that the use of standardized methods and traditional testing are forms of control over teachers in that they deny any trust that teachers are able to devise authentic tests to faithfully represent the progress of their students (Williams et al., 1999). This trend towards greater control is evidenced by developments in the area of assessment in the upper school History curricula since 1983. Before that time, public examinations were the only form of assessment and were the sole 'agent of constraint' as far as the 'implementation' of the syllabus statement was concerned (Crump, 1993). In 1983, changes to the TAE examination paper provided teachers with a broader range of options with regard to pedagogy as the range of questions provided opportunities for a range of student responses. This flexibility was increased by the introduction of internal, school-based assessments after 1985. At first, this broader range of assessments was welcomed as an opportunity to provide students with a greater range of methods to demonstrate their skills, as well as giving teachers scope to draw up their own assessments within a reasonably flexible structure. By the end of the 1990s, however, with the publication of 'league tables' of schools, based on TEE examination results, and media attention which directly linked students' examination scores to their internal marks, teachers were forced to alter their internal assessment strategies and programmes

to ensure that the students' internal marks correlated as closely as possible with their examination scores. Thus the original intentions of internal assessment had been destroyed, and, as Williams et al. (1999) point out, greater control had been exerted over History teachers (and those of other subjects) through the central direction of assessment patterns and the role of the media.

In this regard, Rowe (2000) has demonstrated the use of 'league tables' as a method of curricular control, and the advent of published 'league tables' in *The West Australian* newspaper in the last decade has contributed significantly to the process of curricular control. Interview respondents referred on several occasions to the impact that the 'league tables' had on the teaching of History, particularly in Year 12. While successive Ministers of Education and Chief Executive Officers of the SEA/Curriculum Council have ostensibly voiced their doubts about them as a means to judge the effectiveness of schools, and by implication, the effectiveness and efficiency of teachers within those schools, one Minister's response suggests otherwise. In 2004, the Minister of Education in WA appointed a 'hit-squad' or 'flying-squad' of ten specialist advisers within the Department of Education with the specific role of improving the performance of government schools in the league tables (Lam, 31/01/04). Such action may be a more accurate reflection of his views on the use of league tables, and further evidence of a decline in his confidence in the system's teachers.

The impact of curriculum control on teachers and their professionalism has been analysed by several authors. For Reid (1999) the destructive impact of curriculum control involves damaging effects on the 'labour process' of teachers, which he sees as the defining feature of teacher professionalism. Harris (2001) arrives at a similar conclusion referring to the imposition of 'political accountability' rather than genuine

'professional accountability' that other professions, such as doctors or lawyers, are able to command. Sachs (2002, 2003) has seen curriculum control as part of a process which generates a 'managerial' perspective on teacher professionalism. This leads to an 'entrepreneurial identity' in which the dominant discourses include 'a cult of individualism'; competition over limited resources, rather than collaboration; submission to control and regulation; and a concept of 'designer teachers' whose identity is defined externally rather than by members of the profession themselves (Sachs, 2002). As Young (1998) points out, History teachers are particularly susceptible to such trends, "feeling increasingly vulnerable" in teaching a subject "which faces declining enrolments and competitive, uncertain discourses" (p. 52).

Role of the state in the policy process

The issues of centralization of the policies of curriculum making, curriculum control and evidence of a deliberate policy to deny or erode teacher professionalism leads logically to an evaluation of the role of the state in the curricular process outlined in this research study. This section of the analysis seeks to tease out the role and influence of the state in the policy making process, first by identifying what is meant by the state; and second by examining how that state can bring its influence to bear on the policy making process.

Several commentators have criticised the model for policy analysis, or policy sociology of Ball (1990, 1993, 1994a), and Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992). These criticisms include a failure to recognize the predominance of the state in the policy process (Dale, 1992; Henry, 1993; Gale, 1994; Hatcher & Troyna, 1994). Common among these critiques is the view that Ball and his associates adhere too strongly to a

post-structuralist perspective which pays too little attention to the significance of the state in the policy making process. Related to this is a critique of being over-concerned with the micro-political level. This in turn raises the issue of 'writerly' and 'readerly' texts and the issue of agency at the micro level. Gale (1994) refers to this as the 'macro-micro divide', arguing that the issue revolves around two 'caricatures' of the nature of policy, neither of which serves to address the principal matter of worthwhile analysis which offers both "rich description" and explanation (Henry, 1993, p. 182). Vidovich (2002) has addressed this in her approach to policy analysis which lies 'on the cusp' between structuralism and post-structuralism. She argues that these perspectives can be combined within a successful analysis of policy. It is therefore appropriate to consider the role of the state in this study and to draw some conclusions from the research findings.

As Reid (1999) and Dudley and Vidovich (1995), among others, have pointed out, the 'state' in a study of Australian educational policy has two meanings, the state government and the Commonwealth government. From 1988, and beginning with the period when John Dawkins was Minister of Education, the Commonwealth government exerted increasing influence in curricular policy, largely in the drive both towards a National Curriculum and the use of competencies to underpin general as well as vocational education. These influences were significant in the context of influence in the third phase of the policy trajectory analysed in this study. The research findings revealed that these influences were important in shaping features of the policy text, in that they reflected a move towards outcomes which was one of the major thrusts of the national curriculum, and a move towards generic skills or competencies which were to be taught and assessed within the new syllabus. It was also suggested that there was significance in the Chair of the History SC being a senior officer in the Ministry (later

Department) of Education in that he was aware of the nature and direction of these trends.

The role of the state government in WA's History curriculum policy process appears more ambivalent. On the surface, the state government imposed itself with much effect in the second phase of the policy trajectory, from 1984 to 1990. This was during the period of the ministry of Bob Pearce, the ALP Education Minister, and a former teacher, whose commitment and energy contributed to the establishment of the two significant committees, the Beazley Committee and the McGaw Committee. Their reports were to have enormous effect upon post-compulsory curricula within the state, including that of History. Members of the History JSC spoke of the 'top-down' nature of policy at that time, in contrast to the other two periods of curriculum change which form part of this study. Greater ministerial intervention and bureaucratic control have been a common feature of broader educational and curriculum policy in the last two to three decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, this has not been a common feature of the three phases which make up this study, suggesting that, in the case of History curricula, the influence of the state was exerted in other ways.

An analysis of the role of the state demands a clear definition of the meaning of the term 'state'. The idea of the 'state' simply being the formal institutions of government at either level of government in Australia is inadequate. Marxists and pluralists have both conceived of it in broader, if in opposite, terms, each of which suggests a 'weak' concept of the 'state'. The former see the state as a passive agent of economic capitalism, while the latter see it as an umpire or an 'honest broker' of competing views on policy (Hill, 1997; Capling et al., 1998). A more satisfactory conception of the state for the purpose of this analysis is that which sees the state as "a

set of institutions that have their own goals and objectives, which at times can be separate and distinct from other discrete societal interests" (Capling et al. 1998). This broader conception of the state, something that is complex, heterogeneous, and both contradictory and contestational (after Vidovich, 2002), satisfies the conception of the structuralists who emphasise the importance of the state and the post-structuralists who look to explanations at more diverse sources and levels.

In furthering this less centralised conceptualisation of the state, and particularly useful in this analysis of the policy process and the role of the state, are theories of policy networks or communities. Policy networks are "separate linking systems between interests within governments and those outside" (Hill, 1997, p. 71), to which Marsh and Rhodes (1992) have added a hierarchy based on the cohesiveness of the linkages. The most cohesive of these networks they term 'policy communities'. They describe them as having comparatively limited memberships, usually with similar professional interests; sharing values and interacting frequently; exchanging resources; and having a relative balance of power among members. At the other extreme are 'issue networks' which are characterised by large, diverse membership, fluctuating levels of contact and agreement, varying resources and an inability or unwillingness to regulate their use on a collective basis, and unequal distribution of power. Considine (1994) analyses a number of factors which draw these networks together, and concludes by stressing the significance of the role of ideology.

The ideology that has bound members of the 'policy community' engaged in developing History curricula for upper secondary schooling in WA has in some ways changed over the period of study, but there has also been a powerful case of continuity which reflects an over-arching political influence of the state. Ideas on the philosophy of History, content matter, skills and pedagogy have changed or developed over the

period 1983 to 1997, which in turn has led to changes in the composition of the policy community, perhaps at times weakening it while at other times strengthening it. To locate the overarching idea which provided the 'glue' binding the policy community involved in the upper school History curriculum to the broader concept of the state, clues came from the findings of the work of Collins and Vickers (1999).

From her research on patterns of post-compulsory school retention rates, Vickers (Collins and Vickers, 1999) found that there were significant differences in the retention rates of post-compulsory students across the six states of Australia, and that these differences could not be explained by the usual factors drawn up by the media and politicians, such as youth unemployment and socio-economic status. Her conclusion, which is developed by Collins (Collins and Vickers, 1999), is that the explanation lay in a number of factors. These included: the nature of the certification procedures at the end of the compulsory years of schooling and the assumptions made about the nature of young people; the nature of knowledge and what is considered important for young people to know by the time that they have left school; and the relationship of school to other institutions and society at large. In the remainder of the paper, Collins analyses three states at greater length (New South Wales (NSW), Queensland and Victoria) to show the differences, but does not include WA. Nevertheless, based on an earlier paper by the same author (Collins, 1992), conclusions can be drawn from this research of upper-school History curricula in WA to support the findings of Vickers and Collins, and to draw some important analyses on the role of the state throughout the three phases of this study.

In her analysis of retention rates among the different states, Vickers placed NSW and WA in the same 'cluster' (Collins and Vickers, 1999, p. 7), in that patterns of

retention were statistically similar for the two. In her subsequent analysis of how different states contributed to the difference in the retention rates, Collins drew up three types of state: the 'archetypal' state (NSW); the 'progressive' state (Queensland) and the 'pluralist/contested' state (Victoria) (Collins and Vickers, 1999, p. 11). Although WA was not analysed in detail in the study, there are significant similarities between NSW and WA to suggest that WA also falls under the category of an 'archetypal' state, as suggested by Collins, as well as having similar patterns of retention rates.

The principal features of the 'archetypal' state are based on "a world view which all states shared through the fifties and early sixties" (Collins and Vickers, 1999, p. 11). These features included the beliefs that: all students have varying intellectual power from birth (the ideas of hereditary IQ); a fair school system is one in which schooling is seen as a competition, or a race; the prize for winning the race is university entrance; and the fair test for the prize is a "set of solemn, three-hour, common, unseen, written examination of academic prowess" (1999, p. 11). This type of state, Collins argues, subscribes to "modernist binaries: bright and dumb kids, academic and practical streams, high and low standards, rigorous and soft subjects" (1999, p. 11). Stated in part, and also implied, is that these assumptions have become part of the culture of the state, upheld by the 'elites', such as those found within the government, among politicians and bureaucrats, and among leaders of other institutions, both public and private; among families whose members hold these elite positions; in other words, the 'winners' of previous competitions. It is even unwittingly supported by those casualties who hope that their offspring may do better in the 'race' than they did when they were in it. Of particular significance, as Collins (1992; 1997) has pointed out, State governments, such as that in WA, have also resisted opportunities to reform their

cultures when presented with the evidence of other cultures which lead, for example, to higher retention rates.

What this means is that an elite group within the state of WA has always retained its control over the curricula of upper secondary schools in WA, including the History curriculum, even at times when it appeared not to be involved. So long as the History curriculum continued to operate within the parameters outlined in the previous paragraph, any adjustments to the nature of knowledge and to the subject matter itself were of little concern to the elite. What was important was that History, like any other TAE/TEE subject retained a system of assessment and grading which was able to rank all students from 0 to 100, and which the universities could then use to select their students. The WA government did intervene in 1984-5 to make a number of changes to the system, some cosmetic, some deeper, but, as has also been shown, there was much resistance to that from other members of the policy community and from within the state at large. Beginning in 1989, with a conservative backlash which achieved its aims in the publication of the Andrich Report (Collins, 1992), and continuing through the 1990s, there was a return to much of the status-quo that existed before 1984. This was evidenced in the greater importance of the common examinations in the construction of a Year 12 students Tertiary Entrance score, despite the prevalence of internal assessment. It was achieved through the increased importance of standardization and moderation based on students' performance in the examination, to reduce the profile of internal assessment and remove as far as possible the influence of individual teachers' assessments on what may be more 'authentic' assessments.

Hill (1997) has described what he terms as 'nondecision-making' or "the practice of limiting the scope of actual decision making to 'safe' issues by manipulating

the dominant community values, myths and political institutions and procedures" (p. 38). He goes on to point out that such a process is not a passive or negative one. Rather, it involves considerable energy and resources, and most importantly, reflects a significant exercise of power. It describes a process that appeared to have much in common with the exercise of state power for much of the period covered by the policy trajectory under study.

The Labor state government elected in WA in 2001 has proposed major changes to the post-compulsory curricula, to be implemented in 2007. These changes go some way to challenging the features of the 'archetypal' state as suggested by Collins. However, the limitations imposed on the reforms, which will be reviewed and analysed in the last chapter, suggest that the 'cultural assumptions' of the state have not been eroded as far as some commentators suggest.

Public policy perspectives on the curriculum

The model developed by Ball and his associates has been used as the basis of a number of studies of curriculum development or curriculum change, in most cases with regard to cases in England and Wales associated with the passing of the Education Reform Act (1988) and the mandating of a National Curriculum. These include sections of Ball's treatises (1990; 1994a) while Ball and his associates (1992) considered the impact of the National Curriculum as well as local management of schools (LMS) on four schools in England, with particular reference to the context of practice. Phillips (1998b) used the framework of Ball's model to analyse the policy processes behind the development of the History curriculum within the National Curriculum of England and Wales through the three contexts, and the model provided an ideal vehicle for detailing

the description of the policy process and for making a number of theoretical statements. Evans and Penney (1995) have used Ball's model to analyse the introduction of the physical education curriculum, again within the context of the National Curriculum, in England and Wales, as has Rawling (2001) in a study of the policy making process with regard to the Geography curriculum in the National Curriculum in England and Wales.

However, as Rawling (2001) has pointed out, her study is the first to investigate and evaluate the findings across more than one phase of change, and her analysis of the policy process in the Geography curriculum is taken across a 'trajectory' of three phases. Rawling analyses the developments in the curriculum in each phase with reference to the three contexts – influence, policy text production and practice – before predicting a fourth phase of 'review/change' (pp. 146-8). This attention to different phases gives, she argues, the study a unique breadth and depth, and in particular is most important in providing evidence of a 'policy trajectory', rather than the linear process of policy formulation to policy implementation (2001, p. 140), which, she claims, other studies still implicitly assume. From her study, Rawlings was able to make a number of conclusions which were only possible based on the evidence of the cyclical nature of the process and the time period of the study. Her conclusions relate to the differing scales and character of curriculum change, the changing sites for struggles over subject knowledge, the growing importance of professional educators who were active within policy making arenas, and changing power structures and relations inside the state institutions responsible for developing education policy.

The research conducted for the purpose of this study has, like Rawling's work, also involved an analysis of policy across three phases within the History curriculum in upper secondary schools of WA. It shares several similar features of Rawling's work

and allows a number of conclusions to be drawn through analysis across the three phases. A study of several phases of change also provides the opportunity for 'richer description' as demanded by Henry (1993), as well as allowing a number of worthwhile conclusions to be drawn based on the changing situations of the phases. These will be covered in more detail later in the chapter, but in a similar way to that of Rawling's study, conclusions can be drawn about differing scales and character of curriculum change across the three phases. The sites for struggles over the upper school History curriculum in WA from 1983 to 1997 have been shown to have been varied, despite the centrality of the History JSC / History SC in the policy making process. The relative importance of professional educators within the policy making arenas varied across the three phases, but not in an evolutionary progression as was the case in Rawling's study. In the same way, this study of several phases of change has provided evidence of shifting power structures within the curriculum policy making processes of the state.

Rawling's account of the changes to the Geography curriculum in England and Wales occurs essentially at one level, the level of the state, i.e. the macro-level. This allows Rawling to make the claim that "the context of practice of one National Curriculum is the context of influence for the next" (2001, p. 140). This finding appears too simplistic for the purpose of analysis in this study of History curricula in WA. Contexts are continuously changing across the period and although there may be some overlap from the context of practice in one phase to the context of influence of the subsequent phase, the general pattern is that the context of influence in each phase sees the arrival of some new significant force or factor which shapes or drives the policy process. To be sure, some aspects of the contexts of influence may overlap between the phases, and some features of the context of practice in one phase become part of the context of influence of the next phase. One such example lies in the level of frustration

felt by those teaching Year 12 History in the early to mid-1990s with regard to the teaching of the stated objectives. This was part of the context of practice in the second phase and became a factor in the context of influence in the third stage of the study. Nevertheless, by adopting the suggestions of Vidovich (2003) for analyzing the contexts of the policy process at differing levels, i.e. at the macro-, the meso- and the micro-levels, changes within the contexts of each phase contained within this study are identified as significantly more complex and yet also more clear than those in Rawling's analysis.

This current study of History curriculum change across three phases within the framework of a policy trajectory also serves to clarify and deepen an understanding of curriculum policy in other respects as well. This is achieved through an understanding of 'policy as text', 'policy as discourse' (Ball, 1994) and 'policy as ideology', and more so in terms of the idea of 'policy as settlement' (Gale, 1999).

Ball (1994) argues that texts are physical codes, "cannibalised products" that carry meanings representative of the struggle and conflict of their production. These meanings are captured in the policy documents which then become the focus of "secondary adjustment" (Gale, 1999) when those in the context of practice, usually teachers, interpret them in terms of their own meanings, understandings and discourses. This produces the idea of the policy documents – in the case of this study the syllabus statements, assessment frameworks and examination papers – as the 'fulcrum' of the policy process, namely, both an end of one process and the beginning of another. This is taken further by Ball (1993) in his conception of 'writerly texts' and 'readerly texts', a conception which places policy texts along a continuum of constraint and agency respectively. The 'writerly text' allows little scope for interpretation by the reader,

whereas the 'readerly text' provides avenues for interpretation and thus allows a number of variations to occur within the context of practice. The advantage of a study of a trajectory across three phases is that this role of the text becomes even more apparent as changes in the successive documents highlight the contestations that have occurred in the production of the policy text, and serve to explain differences in the interpretation of the texts among teachers in the contexts of practice.

The idea of 'policy as discourse' further illustrates the extent of contestation within the context of policy text production. Gale states it thus: "policy as text is complemented by an understanding of policy as (and in) discourse" (1999, p. 395). Ball (1993) draws on Foucault's definitions of discourses as "ways of talking about and conceptualizing policy" that actually 'constitute' the practices contained within the policy statements. Analysis of the policy documents carried out in this research points to the appearance of dominant discourses that change from one text to another. Evidence of this can be seen in the statements about the epistemology of the subject contained in the Rationales of each of the syllabus statements in 1983, 1984 and 1997, thus illustrating the conceptions and discourses held by the different policy making groups with regard to the nature of historical knowledge. This reflects a move from a modernist to a post-modernist view of the nature of the subject.

The idea of 'policy as discourse' leads to a third feature of the policy process, 'policy as ideology', which Ball (1994) contends arises out of "the need to recognise and analyse the existence of 'dominant' discourses' (p. 24). Policy as ideology links discourses to the stakeholders in the policy process; it is stakeholders who bring discourses to the policy making process, and in the ensuing contestation to force their views, the dominant discourses become a form of ideology. Referring to Kenway's

three questions with regards to policy "What? How? and Why?" (in Taylor et al., 1997, p. 39), Gale (1999, p. 397) sees ideology as answering the 'why?' of policy, discourse the 'how?' of policy and text the 'what?' of policy. These aspects of the policy process are elucidated by this study of curriculum policy across several phases with changing texts and different answers being brought to the three questions at different stages of the trajectory. Therefore the different discourses and ideology become more apparent, reflecting the changing predominance of different stakeholders in the process, and the differing forces identified in the contexts of influence and of policy text production.

What appears most powerfully from this study of curriculum policy across three phases is the idea of 'policy settlement' which clarifies most succinctly both the policy process and the nature of curriculum that arises from the process. Gale (1999) defines a policy settlement as a "moving discursive frame which at a particular historical and geographic moment defines the specifics of policy production" (p. 400). A policy settlement is not a 'truce' or a 'compromise' or 'agreement', but rather it is a 'sedimentation', an outcome of contestation which assumes some physical form. It also has what Gale calls three defining qualities: that policy settlements are "asymmetrical, temporary and context dependent" (1999, p. 401).

Explaining the asymmetry of policy settlements lies in the fact that one or more stakeholders has achieved some predominance in the contestation at a particular time and has therefore been able to ascribe particular features to the policy text through the successful imposition of a dominant discourse(s). This asymmetry contributes to the second defining feature of a policy settlement, its temporary nature; "Policy settlements …tend to be reached temporarily since their very asymmetry or imbalance is likely to produce unsettling effects or crises" (Gale, 1999, p. 401). Evidence of this quality can

be seen across each of the three phases of the policy process examined in this study. In 1983, the creation of a new History examination paper, followed by a reworked syllabus statement created crises in several History classrooms within the state as teachers faced apparent attacks on their conceptualizations of the nature of History teaching. The reworked syllabus of 1990 with its elaboration of objectives only served to increase disaffection among teachers of Year 12 History as the objectives predicated a form of teaching that many teachers found anathema to their beliefs about pedagogy. While the text of the third syllabus statement in 1997 may have reduced a sense of crisis among teachers it caused one to emerge in another area, the statutory supervisory body, the Curriculum Council of WA, which seeks to make major reforms to the curriculum by 2007. Some implications based on these curricular proposals of the Curriculum Council of WA are considered in the final chapter.

This last point serves to illustrate the third defining quality of a policy settlement, that it is context dependent, the context varying according to site or over time. This again shows the usefulness of Vidovich's recommendations of conducting policy analysis across the different levels within each of the contexts (2002, p.8) as they serve to highlight the context-dependency of each settlement, as well as the asymmetrical and temporary nature of each settlement.

Over twenty five years ago, and just preceding the time over which this study has focused, William Lowe Boyd described the curriculum policy process as a process that 'generally is characterized by the…mundane strategy of disjointed incrementalism" (1979, p. 80). His critique of the increasing politicisation of the curriculum foreshadowed a trend that was to increase in breadth and depth across many countries, including Australia and the state of WA, and the subsequent nature of curriculum

development. His statement is also a succinct summary of the conceptualisation of 'policy as settlement' as evidenced within this study, which in turn reflects the value of the model of policy analysis proposed by Ball and his associates, and modified by others such as Vidovich (2002).

Conclusion

In concluding the chapter, this section attempts to merge the four areas of curriculum and public policy which formed the basis of the meta-analysis. It does so by addressing a question posed by Looney (2001), who sought to link curriculum and policy by suggesting that Ball's policy model, when applied to curriculum development, in the particular context of school curricula in Ireland, is the only 'unitary theory' of curriculum in the 'post-Tyler age'. Looney's paper poses questions which link curriculum and public policy and which may have relevance for the situation in WA which has some similarities with that of Ireland, particularly with regards to its school system.

Looney (2001) argues in her paper that the field of curriculum is dominated by the technical, managerial paradigm, with a loss of theoretical, philosophical substance. This is due in large part to the politicization of the curriculum with a resultant emphasis on delivery and implementation, the 'how to', rather than the 'why', of curriculum. Curriculum, argues Looney "*is* policy, and policy in its most public form" (2001, p. 153), and states that "Ball's policy cycle offers some theoretical perspectives for curriculum policy" (p. 159). Although it may be "theoretically and politically naive", the value of the model, states Looney, lies not in the contexts themselves but in the "relationships between them" (p. 160), a relationship based on *critique* (her emphasis), arising from an ongoing critical dialogue within and between the various contexts:

> Thus the agency of the context of curriculum practice, for example, would reach beyond the readerly response to curriculum policy…to a more critical agency which would seek to expose the ideological position of the context of influence. This dialogue would lead to the development, in each context of …'curriculum conscience' (Looney, 2001, p. 160 – 161).

This 'curriculum conscience', Looney concludes, offers both an alternative to the "technical bias of the Tyler rationale" and "will expose the curriculum policy cycle as ideological rather than technical….The development of curriculum conscience is the beginning of reflexivity" (Looney, 2001, p, 161).

Looney writes from personal experience as leader of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in the Republic of Ireland and her paper is an attempt to fill a theory vacuum she identifies in understanding curriculum in that country. Does her thesis have wider application, and does it have any application to the study of History curriculum in WA?

To answer the first, there is much evidence to support her thesis from other settings. One of the common features of educational policy in a wide variety of national settings is the centralization of curriculum making, and its increasing political control. In tandem with that has been the managerial emphasis on control, delivery and implementation. Ball (1994) and Phillips (1998a) have illustrated this particularly clearly in their studies of the policy making process with regard to History curriculum in the English National Curriculum, where much of the change arose from a desire to end the progressive pedagogies associated with the 'new history', so graphically illustrated by the 'discourses of derision' (Phillips 1998a & b; Crawford 1995; McKiernan 1993). If centralized control of curriculum has become an integral part of

the education policy landscape, then an understanding of the policy process is essential to make meaning of the curriculum processes of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, and to that end it provides a theoretical framework in the way that Looney calls for. The linking of the different contexts through the idea of 'curriculum conscience', with an emphasis on the centrality of the policy texts may also be of considerable value in extending the theoretical perspective.

In the setting of WA, such a thesis sits more uncomfortably. Ironically, one of the more 'academic' texts that informed the criticisms of the upper school History curriculum in the 1970s was a critique of the curriculum along the lines of Wheeler's (1967) model. In his article, Zani (1973) argued that there was no theoretical basis to the History curriculum, with no clear objectives and therefore it lacked the subsequent features of a worthwhile curriculum as posited by Wheeler. The shortcomings of the curriculum were recognized by members of the History JSC at the time who referred to Zani's critique at subsequent meetings and used it as the basis of important committee decisions later. However, at no stage of the policy trajectory which has been researched here has there ever been an attempt to design and develop a syllabus based on a unitary theory of curriculum. From the different contexts of influence can be seen the emergence of forces or factors which drove policy makers towards certain positions or viewpoints about what might be included or excluded from the syllabus under review. However, these were never in the context of an agreed theoretical framework, or along the lines of an algorithmic model as suggested by Print (1993) Tyler (1949) or Wheeler (1967). Walker's (1973) model of the curriculum process, involving stages of platform, deliberation and design fails to either describe adequately or explain the nature of the curriculum process engaged by decision-makers from 1983 to 1997. The policy process model of Ball and his associates, as modified by Vidovich (2002) and others certainly

provides an ideal means for both describing the curriculum policy process and the explaining its features.

CHAPTER 8

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND CURRICULUM, THEORY AND PRACTICE

Introduction

In this, the final chapter, there is a need to move beyond the findings from this study towards future developments and to consider the implications that the study raises for future policy and curriculum, theory and practice. It is proposed to do this through a brief analysis of the reforms to the History curriculum currently being mooted as part of a major overhaul of the whole post-compulsory curriculum in WA's educational system. In 1999, the Curriculum Council of WA, on behalf of the Minister for Education, launched a review into post-compulsory schooling within the state (CCWA, 1999). Part of the intention was to project the thrust of the Curriculum Framework, predicated by outcomes-based education, into the post-compulsory sector of schooling.

Under the title *Our youth! Our future!* (CCWA, 2002), the Curriculum Council of WA has proposed a broad and sweeping set of changes to the post-compulsory school curriculum, due to be implemented in 2006 and 2007. The proposal was to reduce the number of courses available to students in Years 11 and 12 from the current choice of 33 Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects and approximately 279 Wholly School Assessed (WSA) subjects down to 50 (or 51) 'courses of study', each of which contains components which would satisfy tertiary entrance and vocational education and training. One of these proposed 50 (or 51) subjects includes History,

which will be known as 'History: Ancient and Modern' (hereafter titled History), and the course of study subsumes the former TEE subjects of History and Ancient History, and the WSA subject Australian Studies. At the time of writing, in 2004, the reform is at the stage where a proposed outcomes-based 'course of study' has been put forward to teachers and the wider community for consultation and feedback, and from this a number of insights can be offered which will provide the basis for suggesting implications for policy and curriculum, theory and practice in future upper-school History curricula. The structure of this chapter involves a separate treatment of each of the aspects suggested by the title, with a final conclusion bringing the thesis to an end.

Implications for policy

The research contained in this study has revealed that the phase of curriculum change most cordially accepted by teachers was that implemented in 1997, due largely to the nature of the policy making process. The process was largely led by, and involved teachers as the principal policy-actors, and the evidence from the context of practice of this phase indicated many of the benefits of this aspect of the policy process. In the light of this experience, therefore, it appears to be a retrograde development to see a 'top-down' approach to policy making returning to post-compulsory curricular change. Also, evidence from the reactions of many teachers at 'consultation seminars' during 2004 suggests that there will be some considerable difficulty in securing teacher acceptance for the proposed changes (Wilson-Clark, 2004). While the 'reference groups' (which have replaced the former Syllabus Committees in creating the courses of study) are drawn largely from teachers or ex-teachers, and the syllabus writers are retired or seconded teachers, both have found that they have to work within a rigid framework in which there is little room for manoeuvre. Comments made by writers or 'reference

group' members suggest a concept of regulated autonomy. The features of the current process are reminiscent of those of the most troublesome phase of curriculum change, from 1985 to 1990, when, employing a similar 'top-down' process, there was an attempt to standardize the frameworks of all subject syllabuses that would count for tertiary entrance.

While the 'course of study' documents state on the front cover the Curriculum Council's commitment to consultation (Curriculum Council, 2004, History), scepticism abounds among practitioners because of their perception that there is no room for adaptation in the core features of the syllabus (Wilson-Clark, 2004). Thus, the process of consultation more closely resembles the "pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy" that Kirk and MacDonald (2001, p. 565) describe in their study of curricular reform. Teachers have approached the consultations with the attitude of finding out what they are going to have to face rather than with the attitude of contributing to the policy process. This is consistent with Kirk and MacDonald's (2001) view, albeit from a different context, that it appears that teacher voice is only recognized for their local experience, in examining localized practical issues, rather than as professionals being able to contribute in a worthwhile way to the critical area of 'recontextualising' in the process of creating instructional discourses.

Careful attention to the features of the policy process among the key actors in the 'policy network' is essential if the destructive features of recent trends in curriculum policy, evidenced in this study of curriculum change in upper-school History curricula, are to be avoided. These are in the areas of further de-professionalisation of teachers and the increase in curriculum control, with potentially damaging effects in the resultant contexts of practice.

Implications for curriculum

The syllabus proposed for History in the new course of study appears to represent a genuine effort to break down the three 'tracks' (Young, 1998) that exist in secondary school curricula, namely, those of academic, in-school vocational and out-of-school vocational, as part of a policy to increase retention rates. This is to be achieved by providing opportunities for students of all abilities and likely destinations to immerse within a similar syllabus. This, coupled with an absence of prescription of 'learning contexts', that is traditional content, suggests the advent of an increasingly democratic curriculum, which reflects 'post-modern' assumptions about the nature of worthwhile knowledge in school curricula (Kelly, 2004). Furthermore, the state government has now launched a separate policy initiative proposing the compulsory retention of all students to the age of 17.

Closer analysis suggests that there are areas of real concern. First, the curriculum is couched almost entirely in terms of outcomes related to levels of achievement through which students are expected to progress in a linear form. A compulsory 'content' is expressed in the form of outcomes as well, thus leading to a concern that high levels of prescription abound, in a subject in which, as Kelly (2004) has pointed out, induction into processes, rather than attaining targets or outcomes, are the kernel of real immersion. This raises the question of whether the 'course of study' provides *opportunities* for greater engagement with the subject, or whether it actually *mandates* the engagement through measurable outcomes. The initial thrust in the first phase of reform to the upper-school History curriculum (1983-4) was to provide the *opportunity* to engage with the practices of the discipline and extending this has been a principal

theme of further developments in the History syllabus through to 1997. The developments currently proposed in the new course of study may threaten the real progress in this regard that has been made so far in upper-school History curricula.

Another significant theme in the course of this study has been the issue of compulsory units of study in Australian History. In the research, respondents all stated their unqualified pleasure at the success of their compulsory introduction in 1997. Such compulsion remains a feature unique to WA in terms of upper-school History curricula within Australia (Taylor, 2000a). That there are no mandated Australian contexts within the new course of study for History therefore becomes a matter for concern, with significant curricular implications. The situation has arisen because it is the policy of the Curriculum Council to have no mandated knowledge content in any subject syllabus in the new courses of study. Therefore it follows that History should be no different. The policy, however, contradicts statements made in the Rationale contained within the History 'course of study' which seeks to justify the subject in terms of "allow(ing) students to gain insights into the current practices, problems and values of their own society" (Curriculum Council, History, 2004). Such a directive also suggests that the absorption of the WSA subject Australian Studies becomes meaningless. Evidence from this study has shown the failure of providing incentives to increase the number of teachers choosing units of study in Australian History in the face of other topics which students, and in some cases teachers, identify as more appealing, or interesting. The implication therefore arising from the research in this study is that the teaching and learning of some Australian History in upper school classes will only be achieved through a level of compulsion.

The implications contained in this last paragraph may appear to contradict those contained in the previous one, but they are not in tension as such. The point being made is that 'opportunities' within a syllabus, rather than compulsion, are required for inculcating students into the *processes* of the subject. However, a degree of compulsion is required to ensure that content deemed 'essential' for students is satisfactorily taught. The provision of opportunities gives credence to the professionalism of teachers while the limited compulsion of content recognizes a justification for History in the educative process of young Australian citizens (Mellor 1996; Macintyre, 1996; Young, 1996). Both strategies allow teachers to develop professional approaches to provide appropriate learning experiences to achieve the purpose of educating *for citizenship* rather than the education *of citizens* (Bottery, 2000, p. 156).

Finally, there is a link between policy and curriculum in one aspect of the new curricula being proposed, the implications of which may be significant. In the process of the wholesale curricular changes being touted by the Curriculum Council, including those for History, the most disappointing aspect for many teachers has been the announcement to retain the use of common standardized tests for the final assessment of student performance in each of the different subjects. This suggests that predominant cultures and assumptions are still in place, despite the rhetoric of liberation and democratization in the discourses accompanying the introduction of the curriculum. Since Collins and Vickers' (2001) advice to state governments to learn from their neighbours is still not being heard, the opportunity to move the post-compulsory system of WA closer to that of Queensland's 'progressive' system will be lost. This negates so many of the positive results of the new system, for it means that teachers will still teach to the common, standardised examination, paying lip-service to other outcomes. It also predicates further erosion of teacher professionalism with regard to the assessment and

profiling of students, and the increased curriculum control through the use of 'league tables' which will likely remain the predominant public judge of teacher and school effectiveness. The implication is that the traditional culture of education in WA (Collins and Vickers (2001), sharpened by a market orientation even in curriculum and pedagogy, has not been lost. Thus, as Burns (2002) suggests, the rhetoric of public policy will continue to be guided by Hattie's (1993) 'Muppets' (***M***inistries, ***u***nions, ***p***ublic servants, ***p***oliticians, ***e***mployers and hand-picked ***t***ertiary ***s***ympathizers).

Implications for theory

It has been argued that one of the values of this research has been the longitudinal nature of the study. It is to be hoped that this can be developed in further studies of curricular change. The study has also attempted to link the different levels of the policy process (Vidovich, 2002) and has served to show the impact of these on the upper-school History curricula of WA. Such analysis may inform research in curriculum policy in History or in other subject areas, either within other states of Australia or overseas. It has also been an attempt to show that the nature of the policy process in curriculum matches those of other aspects of education, "a view of policy making that stresses *ad hocery*, serendipity, muddle and negotiation" (Ball, 1993, p.10).

One problem arising during the research of a longitudinal study such as this was the difficulty in collecting data for the context of practice. Attempting to do this in an historical context, through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a limited number of respondents produced data with undeniable limitations. Should others wish to conduct similar studies on other school subjects in WA, or on History or other subjects elsewhere, then there are a number of issues with regard to data collection within the

context of practice that need to be considered. A greater number of respondents may be required to provide richer data about this particular context, and this in turn may demand the use of alternative interview techniques, or possibly the use of quantitative methods, such as surveys. A number of different sites for data collection may also serve to enrich the data, as seen in the studies of Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) and Ball and Bowe (1992) where the impacts of policy on different schools and types of school were studied. Again this may require different data collection methods, such as participant or observation techniques, or the analysis of action research employed by teachers.

This study has not focused on gender issues in the policy process, other than to note that the subject is much more popular among girls than boys (SEA and Curriculum Council Statistics, 1996 – 2002) by a ratio of about two to one. It also noted that, by coincidence or not, it was two teachers from all-girl private schools who played a crucial part in the production of the policy text in the changes of 1996-7. Scope exists, therefore, in future policy analysis to explore gender issues with regards to school History curricula within and between the different contexts of the policy process. Teese and Polesel (2003) have introduced the idea of History's place in a 'hierarchy of curriculum' and the socio-economic influences on students' choice of History in the post-compulsory years, thus suggesting future scope for analysis of class and ethnic issues as well.

The extent of the changes proposed in the policy document *Our youth! Our future!* (CCWA, 2002) to the History curricula and to other post-compulsory subject curricula across the state of WA provides an opportunity for extensive research in the areas of curriculum and policy and in the continuing intersection of the two. Policy and curriculum will continue to be inextricably entwined for the foreseeable future, and

studies of curriculum will demand a detailed knowledge of the analysis of policy processes (Kelly, 2004; Looney, 2001). One area of future research lies in an analysis of the use of outcomes as the principal means of curriculum control by central governments, and with regard to History curricula, the ability of outcomes to direct teaching and learning towards broad educational purposes including those contained within History curricula.

Implications for practice

The research has raised a number of issues with regard to the practice of History teaching in WA and perhaps further afield. The first is that, despite resistance in the first phase of change (1983-4), a majority of History teachers appear to have embraced the move towards what many would describe as 'new history' (cf. Taylor, 2000a). This is especially so with regard to the changed epistemology of the subject and the widespread acceptance of the move towards students arriving at their own, tentative interpretations. Pedagogy has further changed to accommodate this in the increased use of students analysing primary sources and in the decreased emphasis on the transmission of content. These curricular developments reflect a real scope for respecting and increasing teacher professionalism, marked by the willingness of many History teachers to embrace what Grundy (1987) would describe as the 'practice' of the subject, that is exploring with students the meanings of knowledge, rather than just absorbing its technical details. Paradoxically, at the same time the study has revealed evidence of greater curriculum control and the erosion of teacher professionalism in the period around and since the changes of 1997. From consideration, it would seem that some features of the new curriculum are likely to see further development of these negative trends.

Furthermore, the new post-compulsory curricula make no provisions for students having to achieve balance in their subject selection as in the current system, where students have to choose at least one subject from each of two lists of subjects, the 'quantitative' subjects (such as Mathematics, and Sciences) and 'qualitative' subjects (such as English Literature, History and Languages). This modification can be expected to place greater pressure on the subject of History, promoting fear among many that declining student enrolments may threaten redundancies among History teachers. It would appear that, as was the case in previous periods in the study, History teachers will once again have to face up to the challenge of arresting declining student enrolments, through enhancing the nature of the subject in the classrooms. While 'market-oriented' policy makers may take a 'social-Darwinist' view to this, what may well hamper the History teachers of the future in WA is that, under the new structural provisions, there will no longer be a History Syllabus Committee reflecting, sympathizing with, and even aiding them in their struggle. The research in this study has dwelt on the significant role played by the History Syllabus Committees in the policy trajectory over two decades, and the implications of its loss may well be serious for History teachers.

Conclusion

In what was at its time a magisterial thesis, but now sadly derided, Elton (1967) wrote about the study of History:

> The future is dark, the present burdensome; only the past, dead and finished, bears contemplation. Those who look upon it have survived it: they are its products and its victors. No wonder, therefore, that men [*sic*] concern themselves with history. (p. 11)

The quotation serves as a suitable mantra with which to close this study. Elton himself reflected the grand, modernist tradition of history that has declined in schools within

Australia and elsewhere in the world, and is perhaps 'dead and buried'. The statement can encapsulate many of the features of this study, including a sombre, if somewhat inaccurate, view of the role of the researcher. It recognizes the historical dimension of the policy analysis undertaken as well as commenting on the subject of the research. The policy analysis itself has alluded to the highly complex nature of policy that Ball (1990, 1993, 1994), Taylor (1997), Ozga (2000) and Hill (1997) describe, and it has attempted to describe and explain some of that complexity within one setting, the teaching of History in upper secondary schools in WA. It is to be hoped that the study will inform the practice of policy and curriculum with regards to the subject of History in what some may see as a 'dark' future. As Kelly has pointed out:

> If political power is exercised through the distribution of knowledge, the legitimation of discourse…and the bureaucratic imposition of official values, we are not necessarily powerless in the face of this. On the contrary, to understand the processes is on the way to being armed against them. (Kelly, 2004, p.44)

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APPENDICES